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## Declaration

I declare that ***Church and moral formation in an African context: A critical appropriation of Stanley Hauerwas's proposal*** which I hereby submit for the degree *Philosophiae Doctor* at the University of Pretoria, is my own work, that it has not been submitted before by me for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Signed: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

Place: .....



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"The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. [...] Those who sow in tears, will reap with songs of joy" (Ps 126:3, 5).

*Soli Deo gloria.*

Charles K. Bafinamene,

Pretoria, December 2016.

## Dedication

In the loving memory of:

- *my child Praise-Henriette Ngongo Bafinamene;*
- *my sister Therese Lusakueno Tomadiawa;*
- *my brother Michel Nsimba Madinda;*
- *my mother Elisabeth Kitumuini Luvumina;*
- *my grand-aunt Julienne Nkidiaka Lufulu;*
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All recalled to the Heavenly Father's home,  
while I have been working on the present doctoral dissertation.

## Summary and key words

The present dissertation is essentially an attempt towards a constructive proposal on moral formation for local churches in sub-Saharan Africa. Rather than starting from scratch, the study turns to the prolific work of the leading American theologian Stanley Hauerwas — with, however, the following presumption: his proposal, constructed in America, might not be fully appropriate for an African context.

The study compares the American cultural context with an African typical pluralist context, proceeds with a theological and ethical assessment of Hauerwas's proposal and sets forward the significant elements of a constructive proposal for African churches which includes the applicable aspects of Hauerwas's account.

In a nutshell, the study establishes that Hauerwas's proposal is designed against the background of a Western, liberal, autonomous and individualist self in a social environment of capitalist and liberal democracy. It manifests as a ***particularist character formation*** grounded in an ecclesial ethic including aspects of virtue/character ethics, narrative ethics, community ethics and the neo-Anabaptist model of socio-political involvement. Its positive aspects include merging moral formation with spiritual formation through discipleship and accountability to the church community, stressing the church's role in fostering communal identity through its narratives and traditions, and emphasizing the importance of worship, liturgy and the imitation of the saints and role models as instrumental to the enhancement of a virtuous life. Also, this proposal stresses the significance of the whole of the church's way of life in moral formation.

On the negative side, some dualist tendencies emerge from Hauerwas's proposal since it overemphasizes the priority of being (virtue/character) over doing (decision-making). It so strongly affirms the community and narrative dependence of Christian ethics that the result is a communitarianism and particularism that fails to balance the virtues of communality and individuality. With its strong anti-Constantinianism and radical church-world separation, this proposal upholds Christian embodiment as the primary mode of Christian social ethics.

In Africa, the influence of political and philosophical liberalism is significant but not as pervasive as in America. Important moral challenges come also from the traditional African communalistic and particularist worldviews, the socio-political legacy of slavery, colonialism and apartheid as well as the dualistic Christianity brought by the missionary enterprise. All this induces a serious moral crisis, nourishes tribal and racial loyalties and fuels violence, social injustice and pseudo-democracy.

Consequently, to do justice to the particularity and universality of Christian ethics and the communality and individuality of biblical anthropology and attend to African contextual peculiarities, the study argues for a ***contextual Christian character and conscience formation***. Based on Trinitarian ethics and an integrative Christian worldview, this paradigm constructively tackles the communal, individual and social dimensions of the church moral formation. It views the church as a community of virtues which also fosters personal identity and responsibility. It resorts to a critical engagement with secular sources of moral knowledge and wisdom to enhance the Christians' moral insights, emotions and skills. Through a vision of *shalom* for all, the scope of social involvement is enlarged to the Christian faithful presence in the wider society.

**Key words:** character, church, conscience, ethics, formation, Hauerwas, narrative, Trinity, virtue, worldview.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

- **AIDS:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- **AU: African Union**
- **b.[1946]:** born in [1946]
- **CLD:** Capitalist liberal democracy/Capitalist liberal democratic;
- **CFA:** from French “*Communauté Financière Africaine*,” African Financial Community;”
- **Congo:** Republic of Congo
- **D.R. Congo:** Democratic Republic of Congo;
- **e.g.:** for example (from Latin *exempli gratia*, “for the sake of example”)
- **EU:** European Union
- **GDP:** Gross domestic product
- **HDI:** Human Development Index
- **HIV:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- **i.e.:** that is to say (from Latin *id est*, “that is”)
- **IANSA:** The International Action Network on Small Arms
- **IDA:** International Development Agency
- **IFIs:** International Financial Institutions
- **IWGS:** Institute for Women’s and Gender Studies, University of Pretoria.
- **IMF:** The International Monetary Fund
- **NGO(s):** Non-Governmental Organization(s)
- **NT:** New Testament
- **OAU:** The Organisation for African Unity
- **OECD:** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- **OT:** Old Testament
- **PPP:** Purchasing power parity terms used to measure the percentage of the population living below the international poverty line \$1.25 a day.
- **rev. ed.:** *revised edition*
- **rev. & exp. ed.:** *revised and expanded edition*
- **UN:** United Nations
- **UNAIDS:** United Nations Programme for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- **UNDP:** United Nations Development Programme
- **US/USA:** The United States/The United States of America
- **SADC:** The Southern African Development Community
- **SSA:** sub-Saharan Africa, sub-Saharan African
- **vs.:** *versus*
- **WATO:** The World Trade Organization
- **WB:** The World Bank
- **WCC:** World Council of Churches
- **WHO:** The World Health Organization

The orthographic guidelines and literature references used in the dissertation are those prescribed by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria. However, an exception is made for Stanley Hauerwas's authored, co-authored and edited books in the text; the author's (authors') or editor's (editors') name(s) and the date of publication have been replaced by an appropriate abbreviation.

# Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The current study deals with moral formation within the church in an African context and it critically draws its essential insights on the work of Stanley Hauerwas. The first two sections of the present introductory chapter states the research problem after providing the background to this problem. The next section defines the concept of moral formation and its relation to the cognate concepts of moral education, spiritual formation and discipleship. The four last sections describe the study's purpose, the methodological approach embraced and its contribution to ecclesiology and contextual ethics as well as its structure.

## 1.1. Background to the problem

Churches in Africa serve within a context characterized not only by dramatic socio-economic ills such as the pandemic HIV/AIDS, persistent famine, chronic malnutrition and dehumanizing poverty, but also by socio-political plights, notably massive illiteracy, recurrent political violence as well as tribal and civil wars. For decades, this has been a daily burden for the majority of Africans across the continent. In addition, psycho-social disorders like domestic violence, sexual abuse and juvenile delinquency are increasingly spreading throughout African towns and townships.

One could hardly be unaware of the ethical dimensions of these scourges since they obviously originate, in many places, from an utterly perverted social ethics which manifested itself in poor governance, political and economic corruption, social injustice, ethnic and gender segregation or a seriously deficient personal ethics expressed through selfishness, greediness, and irresponsibility. The widespread social, political and economic ills experienced in Africa result to a large extent from a deficit of ethical awareness which, in turn, is derived from a serious lack of appropriate moral formation.

In other words, Africa is a continent where a very acute moral crisis prevails. It might not be exaggerated to say that never before has the need for moral formation in this continent been so pressing. Indeed, African people critically need to be morally educated and trained so that they may become effective moral agents — individuals who are morally conscious, responsible and capable of behaving in a worthy and acceptable manner. Various institutions such as families, schools, governmental agencies, and political parties, as well as corporative organizations and non-governmental institutions could undertake this vital task of moral formation.

For at least three main reasons, churches in Africa should not evade, but rather take their responsibility of moral formation seriously. The first reason for this inescapable commitment is that roughly half of Africans are known as Christians (including also nominal or non-committed ones). While Christians represent less than 50 % of the population in the Northern and Western Africa (respectively about 9.16 % and 34.38 %), Christianity is the faith to which a large majority claims to belong in Southern Africa (83.10 %); Central Africa (81.36 %); and Eastern Africa (61.19 %) (Barret et al 2001:321-3). Thus, Christians are more or less part and parcel of the moral crisis invading African societies. If the churches to which they are affiliated can effectively focus on moral formation, the wider society to which they are related will likely follow the paths of a remarkable ethical renewal. As a matter of fact, if Christians as a significant and dynamic social component of the larger society could adopt and practice the virtuous way of life required by their faith, non-Christians might also be strongly challenged and emulated to imitate the Christian lifestyle.

Secondly, churches in Africa are traditionally known as institutions of moral formation *par excellence*. Numerous churches, since the beginning of Western missionary work, have demonstrated and spoken of moral formation as one of their central tasks or urgent concerns. Many churches have come to be identified less by their specific beliefs or doctrines than by the high moral standards and the moral prohibitions — such as alcoholic and sexual abstinence, monogamous marriage and dressing code — set forth in their by-laws. Also, schools staffed by churches are supposed to produce not only intellectual and professional skills but also moral skills. Their pupils are expected to become good servants, leaders of high integrity or committed employees in religious and secular institutions as well.

Given at least this historical role and commitment of being the pre-eminent institution of moral formation, even the common people could rightly blame the churches with regard to the moral and ethical decline of African societies. African churches should have produced a great deal of virtuous persons needed to enhance ethical behaviour and moral practices in the wider society. Particularly where Christianity represents the prominent religion, the moral decline in African societies could, more or less, be relevantly linked to the failure of the churches in their strategic task of moral formation.

The last but not the least reason to be added to the sociological and historical arguments mentioned above concerning the moral formation task of the churches is a theological one. The church, according to the Scripture, is “intrinsically a community of moral formation” (Best & Robra 1997:24, 50). Central to this affirmation is “the subtle and significant manner” in which the indicative represented by story and doctrine and the imperative expressed through laws, recommendations, warnings and other moral teachings are



interwoven in the Bible (Forrester 1997:2). Moreover, the church is the Body of Christ, an image suggesting that Christian morality is not individualistic but it needs a community of moral formation for it to grow and flourish (1 Cor 12:26; cf. Forrester 1997:3). The Bible also uses several other metaphors whose implications depict the nature and the life of the church. For instance, the church is pictured as the Lord's family where love, caring and mutual respect are to be manifested (Mt 12:49-50; 1 Tm 5:1-2). Similarly, the church as a community of faith is God's building, an *oikodomé* where Jesus is the foundation and Christians the living stones behaving in a spirit of mutual upbuilding (Rm 14:19; Eph 2:21; 1 Cor 3:9-16). The church is called to be a holy priesthood and nation, the Lord's people (1 Pt 2:9). In addition, church members are urged to stand as salt and light in this needy and dark world, shining like stars in the universe (Mt 5:13-14; Phlp 2:15b). Even where they represent only a narrow minority, Christians must be "blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation" (Phlp 2:15a).

These sociological, historical and theological grounds suffice to demonstrate that the task of moral formation that the church is called to undertake is not only very essential, but also urgent. This task becomes very urgent in the context of globalization, which adds to the internal factors of moral decline depicted above new cultural, economic, social and ethical values challenging Christian and traditional values. Christians in Africa cannot cope with the moral complexities of their world unless their churches take seriously the moral character of Scripture, the ethical insights of Christian faith and the educational and devotional practices of communal life in order to foster the moral growth of their membership. To be genuine and faithful to the Christian faith, and effective in the African context, this task of moral formation needs an appropriate theoretical framework.

With this in mind, the present dissertation is based on the work of Stanley Hauerwas, one of the prominent contemporary American theologians and perhaps the most prolific thinker in Christian ethics and the sub-field of ecclesial ethics. The American news magazine *Time*, through a newly created category, declared him the "America's Best Theologian of 2001 in America" in its issue of September 10, 2001 (Rasmusson 2013:537). One of the central themes, perhaps the main focus of interest in his scholarship of more than four decades, has been the interplay of ecclesiology and ethics, leading to the understanding of the church as a community of moral formation. Moreover, he has suggested a specific Christian theological and ethical paradigm of moral formation drawn from several classical and contemporary theologians and philosophers. His paradigm, being without special attention to a particular denominational setting, is ecumenical in its character; it addresses

the entire body of Christianity and is intended to be applied in any local church irrespective of its affiliation.

Through his relevant and prolific as well as illuminating and provocative work, Hauerwas has developed a proposal on moral formation within the local church with other spheres of this task in view, namely the family, the school, the world of the sick and disabled persons, as well as the larger society. Moreover, his proposal has raised a comprehensive and insightful debate on Christian moral formation beyond the boundaries of the USA that can only but be very constructive in the quest for an appropriate theoretical framework of moral formation for African churches. However, as Hauerwas is working in the American cultural setting and political, social and economic environment, one should be careful and not uncritically draw on his proposal while considering the challenges of moral formation within African churches.

## 1.2. Research problem

Hauerwas, along with John Howard Yoder and John Milbank, is the most controversial and influential proponent of ecclesial ethics in our times. The three theologians deeply influenced the World Council of Church (WCC) consultations on the inter-relation between ecclesiology and ethics carried out from 1992 to 1996. The related WCC reports reflect some comments on Hauerwas's view on moral formation and especially his most controversial statement: "the church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic" (Best & Robra 1997:5; cf. *PK*:99; Rasmusson 2000:180, 183). In a sense, these reports offer some significant elements of a critical appraisal of Hauerwas's approach on moral formation for its ecumenical application. This is especially witnessed by the central issues studied like "the church as intrinsically a moral community" (1993), "the church as *koinonia* for a constant process of moral formation" (1994), and "moral formation within the churches, search for unity and witness to the world" (1996) (Best & Robra 1997:24, 50). Some theologians who were instrumental to these ecumenical consultations carried on the reflection on moral formation in their own publications. Among them, Larry Rasmussen (1993, 1997), Duncan Forrester (1997a, 1997b) and Lewis Mudge (1998) have brought in the debate thoughtful ideas that explicitly are convergent, enriching or even contradictory to some aspects of Hauerwas's approach.

The theological underpinnings of Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation can be found in his critical endorsement of a variety of ecclesiological traditions. Being a Protestant ethicist from Evangelical Methodist background, Hauerwas has endorsed the Methodist emphasis on sanctification, holiness and perfection but discarded the Evangelical practice of

moment of personal conversion characteristic of revivalism. Since he firmly asserts the mediation of the church in a Roman Catholic way, his vitriolic criticism is levelled against both conservative and liberal Protestantism. He critiques evangelicals and fundamentalists who are making the church incidental to the Christian life; and he rejects liberal theology in mainline Protestantism because of its concentration on anthropology and apologetics at the expense of church community life. Moreover, Hauerwas particularly stresses the significance of discipleship or the imitation of saints, service and devotional practices for moral life, which he relates to both Methodist and Catholic traditions. In this respect, moral formation and spiritual formation are merged and Protestant theology is called to join Roman Catholic moral theology, which has vigorously maintained the lasting tradition of virtue ethics through monastic and religious orders (Connors & McCormick 1998:148-9). Consistently, Hauerwas takes issue with liberal movements within Roman Catholicism. In addition, Hauerwas has endorsed the Anabaptist ecclesiology and the vision of a non-Constantinian social ethic championed by John Howard Yoder. Through these categories, the church is conceived as an alternative society and Christian embodiment becomes the preferential mode of Christian influence in the larger society (Yoder 1984:106-171).

At the philosophical level, Hauerwas's ethical project draws heavily on MacIntyre's social and cultural analysis of the American context presented in his *After Virtue* published in 1981 (HC:160-1). In this book, MacIntyre announces the collapse of the Enlightenment Project or the wider political civilisation of the Western modern world. He compares this situation with the break-up of the Roman Empire followed by the dark ages and finds that shoring up the old *imperium* is not the required attitude. What is needed "is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and the moral life can be sustained" through the cultivation of virtues in an Aristotelian perspective (MacIntyre 1981:224). Hauerwas comes — through a similar pattern of thinking — to the conclusion that the end of Enlightenment in the 1960s concurs with the break-up of Christendom.

Moreover, MacIntyre asserts that a better understanding of morality, and consequently adequate moral formation, in the contemporary context of post-Enlightenment or post-modern world, would be the one grounded on historical communities, their narratives, traditions and purposes resulting in virtues cultivated through social practices. Similarly, Hauerwas drawing also on Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, sets forth a conceptual paradigm of moral formation based on the church as Christian moral community, the narrative of the God revealed through the life of Israel, Jesus Christ and the continuing life of the church, Christian traditions and virtues with worship, preaching, prayers and sacraments as social practices. Thus, he has endorsed MacIntyre's communitarian agenda by opposing the

rationalistic, deontological and universalistic features of the Enlightenment liberal philosophy so well defended by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804); and at the same time, he has undermined the significance of utilitarianism and other ethical modes (emotivism, existentialism, etc.) for the benefit of virtue ethics.

With his strongly countercultural and communitarian approach to moral formation Hauerwas could only but attract the criticism of the proponents of liberal moral education who advocate autonomy and oppose any religious, ideological, political or traditional authoritarianism (Law 2006:1-3). On his own initiative, Hauerwas has critically engaged moral development theories underpinning moral education offered in American public schools. In this regard, the cognitive structural reasoning of the psychologists Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1978) as well as the corresponding theory on faith development developed by James Fowler in Practical Theology have been targeted (*HR*:221-54; *CC*:129-52). Hauerwas is very suspicious of all moral psychological approaches related to the Kantian autonomous, un-storied and non-traditioned description of the moral self (*HR*:221). Hauerwas asserts that Christians adopt psychological moral development theories “because of their lack of conceptual paradigms” (*CC*:130).

In a nutshell, it is noteworthy that ethical scholarship in the last two decades has been characterized by an increasingly communitarian understanding of moral reasoning (Grenz & Smith 2003:34, 66, 92; Gill 2000:98) mainly on account of Stanley Hauerwas’s outstanding contribution on moral formation in the field of theological ethics. His work has been very influential in North America as well as in the United Kingdom and in Australia.

The intrinsic role of the church in moral formation is one of the central problems facing the contemporary church in the Western world and worldwide. However, one cannot relevantly speak of the church as a moral community without considering the congregation in its social environment or cultural settings (Mudge 1998:79). Therefore, it has been necessary to investigate and explore how the church in Africa can generate, through community life, teachings and practices, a genuine and relevant moral formation for its membership or even for the larger society surrounding the congregation. And to be relevant, such an endeavour has to be undertaken with the peculiarities of the African socio-cultural context in view.

However, major contributions on moral formation in the field of theological ethics address the issues involved essentially from a Western perspective. Moreover, the peculiarities of the African context are neither adequately nor sufficiently taken into account. In particular, the third WCC consultation held in Johannesburg relevantly pointed out the issue of the late apartheid regime and its practices as an example of malformation in the church; it also spoke of ethnic violence and warfare as malformation. Yet the three

consultations were not meant to conduct an exhaustive reflection on moral formation about the specific issues concerning the African continent or the sub-Saharan region as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

The present dissertation has sought to explore the possibilities of a critical appropriation of the work of Stanley Hauerwas for an African context, specifically for local churches in African countries where Christianity is the majority religion. Within South Africa, a great deal of interest in the work of this notorious post-liberal theologian and ethicist has been shown since the 1980s. With special reference to the influence of Hauerwas's work, Dirkie Smith (1997:260) of the University of Western Cape witnessed at the end of the nineties that the renewed interest "in an ethics of being, of character, of identity and formation, of virtue" observed in Western Protestant circles has reached South Africa. And he added that "It is therefore not surprising that such a language of an ethics of being, of community, of character, of narratives, of saints, of disciples, and of friends, *is already becoming increasingly popular in South African ethical circles as well* (Smit 1997:260; emphasis original). Indeed, at least five scholars, in their doctoral research, have focused on his work, namely Neville Richardson (1986), Robert Vosloo (1994), Andrew Phillips (1996), De Wet Strauss (1997) and Nico Koopman (2000) (Koopman (2002:34)).<sup>2</sup> Outside South Africa, Emmanuel Katongole (2000) from Uganda also devoted his doctoral thesis to Hauerwas's ethical project. Their works have concentrated on particular Hauerwasian themes like virtue ethics (Koopman 2000), community ethics (Richardson 1986; Strauss 1997), narrative ethics (Vosloo 1994), worship and liturgy (Phillips 1996), and the particularist understanding of Christian ethics (Katongole 2000). To follow their lead and go a step further, the present work has endeavoured to systematically and comprehensively explore Hauerwas's writings, including recent publications, in order to identify the core theological and metaethical themes of his approach on moral formation. In the quest for a biblically sound, theologically and ethically coherent and contextually relevant proposal of moral formation, the present study has also considered the significant differences between the American and the African socio-cultural and historical backgrounds in order to assess Hauerwas's paradigm on moral formation and identify its promising aspects applicable to African local churches.

Thus, the present study focuses on the following central research question: "Does Stanley Hauerwas's proposal provide an appropriate approach on moral formation for the

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<sup>1</sup> The three WCC consultations respectively dealt with the following themes: "Costly Unity" in Rønne, Denmark, in February 1993; "Costly Commitment" in Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Israel, in November 1994; and "Costly Obedience" in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June 1996 (Best & Robra 1997:2-90).

<sup>2</sup> Also, several South African scholars in Systematic theology (such as Dirkie Smit and Etienne de Villiers) and Practical Theology (like Coenie Burger) have demonstrated a particular interest in Hauerwas's work (Koopman 2002:34).



local church in an African pluralist context?” To this main question, has been added the following subsidiary concerns: (1) What are the significant aspects and the core of Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation? (2) What are the religious and socio-cultural backgrounds and settings to which Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation refers? (3) Are those religious and socio-cultural backgrounds comparable to those of a typical African pluralist context? (4) To what extent can we draw from Hauerwas’s proposal of moral formation? And (5) what can be reformulated or revised in this account for a genuine and relevant Christian approach and programme for moral formation in an African pluralist context?

### **1.3. Definition of concepts**

The concept of moral formation is linked to the ones of moral education, spiritual formation and discipleship. Thus, its meaning can be better clarified by highlighting its difference and commonality with these notions.

#### **1.3.1. Moral formation**

Basically, the concept of “moral formation” refers to the shaping of moral life. It is “about the ways in which human persons come to embrace the particular commitments, attitudes and approaches that shape how they behave” (O’Connel 1998:9). It is the process that addresses the need of moral development, growth or regeneration of individuals, groups or communities resulting in their moral empowerment and helping them to become effective moral agents. The dimensions of the moral live in view include beliefs, identity, norms and values as well as vision, virtues, character, decision-making and behaviour. Perhaps, the most thorough anthropological definition on moral formation broadly speaking is the one offered by the WCC consultation of 1994:

Moral formation is a nurturing process in which a certain sense of identity, a certain recognition of community, and a certain pattern of motivation, evolve. Such formation can be the gradual work of culture and upbringing, or it may be self-conscious and intentional. Any community of which we are members “forms” us in the sense of orienting us to the world in a certain way, encouraging certain kinds of behaviour and discouraging others (Best & Robra 1997:55).

In an ecclesial context the whole way of life of the congregation and its members constitutes the source of moral formation. However, moral formation is performed especially through five dimensions of the community life. The first dimension concerns the teaching of the doctrines and narratives mediated essentially by catechesis, biblical exposition and study as well as preaching (Charry 1992:31-45; McGrath 1994:32-35; Reuschling 2008:170-7). The

second aspect is about the community practices such as, worship, liturgy, and the administration of sacraments or ordinances. The third dimension refers to the ordering of the life of the community and its institutional life or polity from the congregation up to the denominational level. The fourth dimension is related to the social involvement through diaconal services. And the fifth and last dimension is the church's involvement in social and political actions such as its "participation in public discourse, and the shaping of public policy, in secular and pluralistic societies" (Best & Robra 1997:40; Birch & Rasmussen 1989:120-140).

### **1.3.2. Moral formation and moral education**

Several authors seem to use interchangeably the concepts of moral formation and moral education (cf. Van der Ven 1998:35-41; Browning 2006:58-83; Henry & Beatty 2008:1-25). However, there is a need of discriminating between the two in the present work dealing with the moral formation as performed by the church.

In one of the seminal books on the subject, Van der Ven describes and evaluates seven modes in moral education, namely "discipline, socialisation, transmission, cognitive development, clarification, emotional formation, and education for character" (Van der Ven 1998:35). He ends up establishing this list after extensively reviewing psychological, philosophical and sociological literature in order to point out all the proposed modes. Furthermore, he accurately distinguishes "informal" and "formal moral education". The former encompasses processes that take place "in the informal setting of the broader community, and in which the primary group — neighbourhood, association, church and so on — participate" (Van der Ven 1998:35-36). In contrast, the formal moral education refers to:

[The] educational processes that take place within an organization set up primarily for the purpose of systematically and methodically coordinating educational activities, formalizing educational tasks and responsibilities, exercising professional leadership in the fields of education and explicitly legitimising its educational structures, procedures, and processes (Van der Ven 1998:36).

Again, Van der Ven (1998:36-7) accurately points out that:

Today this formal education may take place at primary, secondary, tertiary, and adult-education levels. These levels include not only the formal education processes of schools, public or private, but also those educational processes that are organized within associations, congregations and other institutions.

The author is speaking of moral education as it could be performed in secular as well as in religious institutions without discriminating between the two. As a matter of fact, he distinguishes three levels of moral education: the micro-level (family, individual, and small

group), the meso-level (church or denomination, professional corporation, etc.) and the macro-level (society and nation) (Van der Ven:35-7). It is noteworthy that the author has entitled his book, *Formation of the Moral Self*, even though it deals with moral education. Logically, according to its title and contents, the book is all about moral formation used as synonymous concept to moral education.

However, “education” seems to be, first of all, a process of teaching and learning often based on a formal curriculum (Hughes 2003:241). For that reason, it would be useful to understand “moral education” as the intentional, formal and planned moral formation which takes place specifically in schools, but which can also be implemented inside or outside the church.

In addition, the concept of “formation” means more than “education” which refers basically to a mental exercise. “Formation” is also more inclusive than “training,” which implies greater human participation and involvement. Generally, the process of “formation” is intended to combine education and training and becomes a dimension of socialisation (Mothlabi 2001:90; Kretzschmar 2004a:148-9). In this regard, the definition of moral formation through its outcomes proposed by Mothlabi using the words of Berger seems accurate:

[Moral formation] results in *learning*, *identification* with what is learnt, *being shaped* in it, *possessing* it and making it part of oneself, and also *representing* as well as *manifesting* it. One who has received moral formation becomes transformed in such a way that “the moral outlook, that is the moral approach to life, becomes a way of life for this person. It becomes part of one, part of one’s character, which means simply part of one’s behaviour (Mothlabi 2001:91; emphasis original; cf. Berger 1967:15).

Furthermore, Christian moral formation stresses the significance of nurture — the spiritual nourishment through community life — and devotional practices understood as means of graces, ordinances or sacraments — hence the specific role of Christian faith or beliefs (cf. Fergusson 2004:103-4). Also, Christian formation as moral and spiritual activity refers to a lifelong process concerned with repentance, conversion, socialization, character-building and growth towards maturity to reach the full stature of Christ (Eph 4:13; 1 Th 1:9; 2:12; 4:13; 1 Pt 2:2-3).

### **1.3.3. Moral formation and spiritual formation**

Without neglecting the force of factors external to the Christian community life, spiritual formation in the church refers to the intentional communal process of growing in the relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and Christian practices (cf. 2 Cor 3:12-18; 1 Pt 1:13-16; Wilhoit 2008:23; Reuschling 2008:124).



Moral formation and spiritual formation could be considered as the two faces of the same coin. The difference between the two is so subtle that Reuschling (2008:124) emphatically asserts that “moral formation *is* spiritual formation”. In a sense, moral formation refers to the internalisation of moral norms and values. Incarnated or internalized moral norms and values become virtues or traits of the character and conduct of a person. Moral formation involves the cultivation of virtues and character and the development of other dimensions of moral life in order to express Christian norms and values in one’s life. While the aim of moral formation is becoming good and doing good, or the transformation into being a person of virtues and mature conscience, the result of spiritual formation is the growth in godliness ending in the maturity in Christ (“God-likeness” or “Christ-likeness”). Spiritual formation as the process of becoming conformed to Christ “affects the attitudes, character and actions of the believer — hence, the vital link between spiritual and moral formation” (Kretzschmar 2005:118-123; cf. Reuschling 2008:124).

#### **1.3.4. Discipleship**

In the ecclesial context, the work of moral formation cannot be separated from the task of spiritual formation. Both are usually integrated with the wider aspects of the church’s educating and nurturing role as well as the shaping of the life of Christians after the model of Jesus Christ, especially “under the rubric of Christian discipleship” (Grenz & Smith 2003:31; cf. Wilhoit 2008:188). In fact, the task of moral formation in the church is the one of making “virtuous disciples” (O’Connel 1998:39-54). Kretzschmar (2004a:148) deservedly points out:

It is important to note that moral formation (becoming good) and spiritual formation (becoming like Christ) are linked. As the title of O’Keefe’s book puts it: we need to be in a process of *Becoming good, becoming holy* (1995). When moral [formation] and spiritual formation are combined, we can speak of Christian discipleship.

#### **1.4. Purpose**

This study results from our growing interest in Hauerwas’s valuable insights on the interplay between ecclesiology and ethics that culminated in the writing in 2008 of the Masters’ degree thesis entitled: “A Christian Ethical Assessment of Hauerwas’s Community Ethics in an African Context” which has served as a building-block to the present study.<sup>3</sup> For quite obvious reasons, Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation deserves a critical appraisal from a Christian ethical perspective taking seriously the diversity of religions and the various

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<sup>3</sup> Bafinamene, C K 2008. “A Christian ethical assessment of Hauerwas’s community ethics in an African context. Pretoria: Unpublished Mini-thesis, Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria.

socio-historical and cultural settings of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The present study has been driven by some crucial assumptions. Firstly, Hauerwas has extensively and seriously drawn attention to the particular formational role of the church. His work may be inspirational for the over-crowded churches in Africa striving to meet the challenge of qualitative growth. Given the political corruption, the family life in distress and the decline of traditionally moral formation under the pressure of modernity, post-modernity and globalization in contemporary Africa, Hauerwas's proposal may also provide valuable insights on how the church may efficiently contribute to the production of moral citizens and leaders — hence to the moral regeneration of the continent.

Secondly, Hauerwas's proposal has generated from a context considered as post-modern and post-Christian characterized by religious pluralism and moral liberal autonomy or individualistic understanding of moral life shaping the social, political and economic participation in the larger society. Conversely, the massive loss or crisis of community discerned by MacIntyre in this context (MacIntyre 1984:244-5; cf. Fergusson 2004:96-7; Forrester 1997:7) is far from being the significant feature of the contemporary African context where traditional worldviews and their communalistic perspectives are still vivid (Ikuenobe 2006:51-134; Van der Walt 2001:32-3 & 1997:29-44; Turaki 1999: 103; & 1997: 52-53, 66).

Thirdly, Hauerwas has contributed to debates on moral formation in which his work has been appraised, assessed or criticized and has given rise to a noticeable controversy (e.g. Fergusson 2004 & 1998; Thomson 2003; Werpehowski 2002; Nation & Wells (eds) 2000; Musschenga (ed) 1995; Guroian 1994). These debates present themselves as thoughtful sources for a reformulation of Hauerwas's proposal.

Finally, Hauerwas couples moral formation in the church with Christian embodiment as the preferential mode for social ethics. However, it could be substantiated from Biblical teachings, Church history and a thorough Christian worldview that holistic discipleship set in tandem with social action and public theology including moral education and persuasion in the larger society constitutes a relevant framework for the formational role of the church in the moral domain (Charles 2002:227). This alternative could be carefully considered in the search of a more fruitful, genuine and relevant approach to moral formation for the church in a contemporary African pluralist context.

Besides, two central academic aims and one strategic aim constitute the rationale of the present study. The first aim is to analyse Hauerwas's proposal and explore his contribution to the debates on moral formation in the Western context, and especially in the American context. The second academic aim is to criticize, through detailed analysis and assessment, Hauerwas's contribution in the light of significant alternative contributions to

these debates. The third and strategic aim is an attempt towards an adequate approach and programme of moral formation for African churches based on a sound interpretation, thorough reformulation, and critical contextualization of Hauerwas's proposal.

## 1.5. Methodology

To realize the aims of the study, a qualitative research is adopted. As defined by Summer (2006:248-9):

[A qualitative research] investigates aspects of social life which are not amenable to quantitative measurement. Associated with a variety of theoretical perspectives, qualitative research uses a range of methods to focus on the meanings and interpretation of social phenomena and social processes in the particular contexts in which they occur.

The work's research epistemology is based on a combination of a threefold methodological approach which consists of a set of interpretive, critical and interdisciplinary theories or paradigms.

Firstly, regarding interpretive or hermeneutic theory, Punch (2006: 21) accurately claims that "the social context, conventions, norms and standards of the particular person or community are crucial elements in assessing and understanding human behaviour." There has been, on the one hand, a need of analysing both the moral life of American people and Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation against the features of this particular context. On the other hand, it has been useful to compare these features with the peculiarities of an African plural context before embracing the possibilities of contextualization of Hauerwas's proposal in this context.

Secondly, as Hofstee (2006:125) acutely notices, "a good study utilizing a particular critical theory can provide truly valuable insights by highlighting ideological and societal assumptions that would otherwise be unquestioned." Accordingly, the research has pursued a profoundly critical perspective on theological and philosophical assumptions and forces as well as the socio-cultural structures that have produced and constrained Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation. It critically contextualizes his account by investigating the extent to which insights from this account can be promising or inappropriate in an African pluralist context.

Indeed, it seems very useful to use a hermeneutico-critical approach to combine the strengths of both theories (interpretivism or hermeneutics and critical theory). Ward accurately explains the difference between the two as follows:

[G]enerally, the presupposition of the hermeneutical tradition is a holism which guarantees that meaning can be discovered. On the other hand, the presupposition of the critical tradition is that meaning is always historically embedded, is always caught up with the exercise of individual and institutional 'will-power'. The presupposition of hermeneutics is that universal meaning exists, independent of, but assessable through, all local

expressions of meaning. The presupposition of the critical tradition is that meaning is constructed — by the way we perceive, conceive and think (Kant) and by our language (Derrida). Contrary to being discovered, meaning is created and invested with value within certain cultural matrices — the critical tradition seeks to unmask the processes of such investment and their implications (Ward 1996:6).

Consequently, since Hauerwas's account has been produced in the American context and might be related or influenced by American cultural settings, the study examines how Hauerwas's paradigm of moral formation needs to be reformulated or revised if placed in an African plural context.

In addition, “church and moral formation” is a topic which transcends the boundaries between education, psychology, philosophy and theology, where particular insights can be drawn from the fields of ecclesiology, practical theology and Christian ethics (e.g. Munsey 1980). Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach seems to be an appropriate methodological way of grasping the significant insights concerning this topic (cf. Hofstee 2006:130). Thus, it has striven to integrate empirically descriptive insights of “psychology on the one side and critically constructive insights from philosophical and theological ethics” (Van der Ven 1998:xi). Moral psychology, on its own, has categorised the various aspects of moral personhood and proposed that an integrative perspective to moral formation is to deal with the whole person as moral being. That is to say, that to be complete, moral formation must take into account the seven categories of the moral person — behaviour, values, character, reason, emotion, identity, and conscience — as well as other meta-moral characteristics such as the notion of practical reason and spirituality (Connors & McCormick 1998:139).

The study consists in a qualitative research based on three categories of sources. The first category includes essentially Stanley Hauerwas's relevant books or essays and articles selected from the comprehensive bibliographies provided by Wells (1998:181-98) and Kallenberg (2001:305-19), as well as by Berkman, Cartwright and Fodor throughout *The Hauerwas Reader*. These lists offering Hauerwas's writings up to 2001 have been updated to include his recent publications. Hauerwas's own account of the development of his theological project in some introductions to his books culminating in his autobiographical book, *Hannah's Child* (2010) has provided helpful clues for this selection.<sup>4</sup> The second category encompasses available and relevant secondary resources in the fields of theology, philosophy and psychology that either help understand Hauerwas's insights and their theological and philosophical background or provide supplementary or alternative insights for

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<sup>4</sup> For more detail on this selection, see Chapter 3 and the section 3.1.2.2 on “Corpus on moral formation.”

a critical engagement. The third complementary category of material used in this study consists of resources on American and African socio-cultural and religious contexts.

This qualitative research has used the abductive strategy which encompasses both deductive and inductive reasoning (Mouton et al 1990:103, 112-7; Leedy & Ormrod 2001:33-5). The deductive strategy has helped to analyse and interpret Hauerwas's account and its possible implications when transposed to an African context. The inductive methodological approach has allowed an investigation of the contemporary African context, its ethical perspectives and the ways Hauerwas's account might be considered relevant to them. Being cognizant of the fact that Africa is not a monolithic cultural and religious entity, the study has attempted to some extent to attend to this variety.

For the above reasons, the study deals with a theoretical problem, namely, the evaluation of arguments that support (or reject) Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation. Firstly, it contextualizes Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation, that is, it analyses the social, cultural and theological background and circumstances from which his proposal arose. Secondly, it compares and contrasts Hauerwas's view on moral formation with other insights expressed in the academic literature. At the same time, the study draws on valuable insights and criticisms of Hauerwas's views from other theories. Finally, it examines how Hauerwas's proposal in the light of the possible alternative postulations could be reformulated if placed in an African pluralist context (cf. Bak 2004:1).

## 1.6. Contribution

Hauerwas's work on moral formation has been inspirational to many scholars in the Western world. To our knowledge, theologians and ethicists in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have not yet sufficiently taken into account his outstanding proposal on the church's particularist character formation in order to apply its thoughtful and challenging insights to the African pluralist context. Thus, situated at the interface of ecclesiology and ethics, the present study based on a critical appropriation of Hauerwas's insights is an attempt towards an adequate approach to moral formation within the local churches of SSA.

The study has noticed that Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation has been generated against the backdrop of a conception of the moral self which he has identified as pervasive in America. This conception is the "Western liberal, rational, autonomous, solipsistic, atomistic, and individualist self" in a social environment of capitalist and liberal democracy (CLD) (Ikuenobe 2006:54; cf. *CC*:83, *AN*:18; *PF*:148). Instead of adequately responding to this reality by forming virtuous Christians, the church in America, in Hauerwas's view, is rather wallowing in a striking accommodation. Like non-Christians, their moral life is



largely characterized by the spirit of libertarian individualism, the privatization of religion and the consumerism of market capitalism. Thus, his proposal consists in a particularist character formation within local churches grounded on the primacy of the ethics of being, the centrality of narrative ethics, the emphasis on community ethics, as well as an understanding of the church as a social ethic through Christian witness.

The African traditional ethos, by contrast, is communalist and is still vividly influencing the moral life of the majority of Africans — including Christians — despite its interaction with modern or postmodern worldviews and world religious beliefs. Unlike the Western liberal individualistic self, “the moral self in African cultures is a robust, holistic, normative, communal and fully integrated self” (Ikuenobe 2006:57). In contrast to American CLD culture and exceptional religious political activism, the socio-political and economic environment in Africa is mainly characterized by pseudo-democracy, neo-patrimonialism, massive violation of human rights and religious escapism or wholesale endorsement of governmental politics.

For all those reasons, after a careful evaluation of the Hauerwasian paradigm, the suggested constructive proposal for an African has endorsed its promising aspects on the formation of disciples and has revised and reformulated certain aspects; in particular, it has postulated a faithful Christian presence in the world against Hauerwas’s social ethic of Christian embodiment and selective participation. Fundamentally, instead of the Hauerwasian particularist character formation, the study suggests both Christian character and conscience formation as paradigm for moral formation embedded within the church’s ministry and process of the formation of disciples. It adds the formation of conscience associated to moral reflection and ethical deliberation for the development of the moral capabilities of church members.

For Hauerwas, the dynamics of moral formation and discipleship are imbedded in an ecclesial ethic related to the cultivation and practice of Christian virtues; the role of Christian community; identity formation through community’s particular narratives and traditions and imitation of saints and role-models; and the church as *alter civitas*. Against the Hauerwasian ecclesial ethic, the suggested constructive proposal posits a Trinitarian ethic stressing that the Triune God’s is the perfect community, the pattern for Christian community life, who calls Christians to faithfully live, love and serve as *imago Dei* in every aspect of their lives (family life, work, leisure, civic duties, etc.) and to care for the world and work for its *shalom* in the world so that it may reflect God’s character and glory. As such, this proposal acknowledges the Triune God as the ultimate foundation of moral formation. The fundamental implication of the Trinity, the essential and specific doctrine of Christianity, for Christian life is that the

Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are respectively the ground, the model and the power of the Christian life.

Apart from the Triune God as ultimate foundation, the suggested character and conscience formation is enrooted in an integrative Christian worldview — a large vision of God’s transformation or renewal of the church, the world and all the creation. This vision includes three main components: (1) a propositional component made of (essential) Christian doctrines and a critical appropriation of Christian ethical approaches and secular ethical theories; (2) a narrative component which encompasses the church’s communal narratives nurtured by the Biblical narratives outlined through the story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation; these four perspectives of the Biblical story are considered as sound and relevant stances to assess Christian ethical approaches and secular moral theories; and (3) a ritual component underscoring church practices and a vibrant church community life.

## 1.7. Structure

The body of the study includes seven chapters. The following chapter (Chapter Two) provides an overview of the American socio-historical and cultural context through the theme of “American exceptionalism.” This theme is elaborated through three of its cognate sub-themes, namely, the “American Dream” at the cultural level, the “American Creed” at the political level and the American disestablishment of religion at the politico-religious level. This chapter describes the socio-economic, political and religious forces underpinning American moral life over against which Hauerwas has striven to provide a corrective through his proposal on moral formation.

The next chapter (Chapter Three) provides the first part of the analysis of Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation. It deals with the biographical sketch and the development of Hauerwas’s theological and ethical project and describes the major theological and philosophical views and traditions from whom Hauerwas has drawn on to construct his proposal. Chapter four constitutes the second analytical part of Hauerwas’s proposal. It describes Hauerwas’s theological and ethical framework. Thus, it identifies the core metaethical and theological categories included in his proposal and explains their significance in Hauerwas’s construction of moral formation. The analysis of Hauerwas’s proposal continues in the next chapter (Chapter Five) with the practical insights on moral formation in the church and four other spheres, namely public sphere, family, school and suffering.

The following chapter (Chapter Six) turns the discussion to the African context. Its aim corresponds to the one of the first chapter dealing with the American context. It consists in an overview of the African socio-historical and cultural context to highlight the peculiarities of this

context and thus provide the backdrop to a constructive proposal related to the critical theological and ethical issues identified. To this purpose, the chapter resorts to the concepts of “Afro-pessimism” and “African renaissance” as they both dialectically encapsulate the history and the prospects for the future of Africa. In addition, the chapter outlines the moral impacts of African traditional religion and culture as well as modernity and globalization on the current African way of life before sketching the main features of the African church.

In Chapter Seven, Hauerwas’s particularist character formation is assessed along the lines of its four major components: the ethics of being (including virtue and character ethics and visionary ethics), narrative ethics, community ethics, and social ethics. This assessment is extended to the additional spheres of moral formation included in Hauerwas’s proposal, namely the family, the school and suffering. Furthermore, the whole of Hauerwas’s theology of moral formation receives due attention.

The next chapter (Chapter Eight) is an attempt to a constructive proposal on moral formation taking into account the peculiarities of the religious, socio-political and economic context of SSA. While drawing on Hauerwas’s promising insights, it posits Christian character and conscience formation as paradigm for moral formation within the church rooted in an integrative Christian worldview which is itself based on the nature and actions of the Triune God throughout the Christian story of creation, the fall, redemption and consummation.

The final chapter (Chapter Nine) seeks to draw conclusions based on the work of the previous seven chapters. It highlights the significant theological and philosophical forces as well as the socio-cultural structures of the American context that have produced and constrained Hauerwas’s proposal and that have justified their critical contextualization for the African pluralist context. It also brings out some complementary insights on moral formation related to the peculiarities of African realities. Furthermore areas of interest for future work on church and moral formation in Africa are presented.



## Chapter 2: SKETCH OF THE AMERICAN SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

### *Introduction*

This second chapter is intended to outline the cultural, political and religious background of Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation. Its aim is far from being a comprehensive description of the American socio-cultural setting since this is beyond the scope of the present undertaking. However, the chapter will highlight some selected socio-historical and cultural insights which can help to show in further chapters to what extent Hauerwas's proposal addresses theological and ethical issues encountered in the context of the USA.

Obviously, depicting the cultural, political and religious aspects of the American context is a complex matter. To assist in the systematization of this process, the chapter opts for the sociological theory of "American exceptionalism" among the ubiquity of ideas for the meaning of America (McClay 2004:435). The phrase was coined by the French social philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59) in his *Democracy in America* published in 1835 and 1840 and which has become a classic of American cultural history (Tocqueville 1948:ii, 36-7; Jillson 2004:91). It has inspired Bellah and his colleagues to study the American contemporary culture and values and publish the best-seller *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life* in 1985 (Bellah et al 1996:xli; Nepo 2005:5; Thompson 2000:30-33). Popularised since the 1990s by Lipset, the concept of "American exceptionalism" has come "to define a discourse that considers the American experience to be unique and different from that of other peoples" in politics, economy, social and cultural life as well as moral values (Sonbol 2004:270; Micklethwait & Wooldridge 2004:291-5). This phrase captures significant ideologies, ideas and practices pertaining to the America socio-cultural context and underpinning its social system as well as some major ethical issues pervasive in the American society (Lipset 1991:2, 435-6). From this theory and its cognate concepts of "the American Dream," the "American Creed," and the disestablishment of religion in the USA, one can accurately draw the whole American cultural trajectory from the beginnings to the present. Furthermore, all these concepts, as many other traits of American culture are characterized by their bipolarity (McClay 2004:430). Their ambivalence, as we shall see, enriches substantially this way of accounting for the American culture. Undoubtedly, they offer a valuable starting point for the depiction of the cultural, political and religious contexts of the American society considered as background to Hauerwas's proposal.

## 2.1. Cultural context: “The American Dream”

Many concepts are used by Americans to define broadly and sometimes mythically the meaning of their country and its national distinctiveness. These concepts include, to name but a few, “The City Upon a Hill, The Empire of Reason, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, The New Eden, The Nation Dedicated to a Proposition, The Melting Pot, Land of Opportunity, Nation of Immigrants, Nation of Nations, The First New Nation, The Unfinished Nation and, [...] The Indispensable Nation” (McClay 2004:436). However, the concept of “The American Dream,” including several aspects of these concepts, deserves special attention.

This concept “is one of the most evocative phrases in [the] national lexicon” of the USA, according to Cal Jillson who links this idea to “American exceptionalism” by referring to President Clinton’s statement:

No phrase captures the distinctive character and promise of American life better than the American Dream. As former President Bill Clinton said in his 1997 State of the Union address, “America is far more than a place. It is an idea.” There are other beautiful lands, other free societies, and other wealthy nations, but America is “exceptional” because it is the home of an idea — and that idea is the American Dream (Jillson 2004:xi, 1).<sup>1</sup>

The American Dream can be understood as the living incarnation of the search for a true and common humanity. This discourse has a strong and helpful vision that has contributed to the exceptional economic growth, the prodigious industrial progress, and the rapid and vast urbanisation by fostering shared beliefs, goals and a sense of cohesion and enhancing “the articulation of the nation as a whole” (Campbell & Kean 1997:20-1).<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1.1. The American Dream through the centuries

All the significant periods of the history of America either affirmed the American Dream for all the Americans or ambiguously defended it and even denied it for some Americans (Jillson 2004:1-14). To be succinct, the historical development of the American Dream can be described through the colonial and the founding periods as well as in the contemporary era.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter owes a great deal to the well-documented study on The American Dream by Carl C. Jillson, 2004. *Pursuing the American Dream: Opportunity and exclusion over four centuries*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

<sup>2</sup> Actually, there are several American dreams: some accounts restrict this phrase to African-Americans, others enlarge it to include all immigrants; for some that idea goes back to the Civil War era (1849-1865) or American Revolution; some scholars have spoken of American dreams as social, political and cultural competitive stories. However, it seems illuminating to follow the descriptions offered here and by other scholars who have striven to present a stable understanding of the American dream, its development by, and inspiration to, great American figures as well as its lines of exclusion and perversion throughout the history of America (Nepo 2005:10-1; Pagels 2005:97; Jillson 2004:xi-xv; Wright 1996:402).

### 2.1.1.1. In the beginnings of America

As a meta-narrative peculiar to the construction of America, the American Dream could be traced back to the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus in 1492. According to Barlow's epic *Columbiad* (1807) and Washington Irving's *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828), the American Dream was very prevalent in the origin of the country and provided the ideals of "endless progress, self-creation, achievement and success" (Campbell & Kean 1997:22-3). Yet, it could even be situated beyond this historical event since the idea of America is believed to be in the European imagination "as early as the works of Homer and Hesiod which located a blessed land beyond the setting sun" (McClay 2004:435). The American Dream was also the persistent and deep "mythic idea of America as an asylum, a land of renewal, regeneration, and fresh possibility" cherished by the English, French and Hispanic settlers and afterwards by immigrants from Asia, Latin America and elsewhere seeking freedom and material achievements (McClay 2004:435).

"The American Dream," as defined by Jillson, is the ideal that underpins the "national ethos and collective self-image" of the American people (Jillson 2004:xii). In his *Pursuing the American Dream*, sketching a well-documented historical analysis of this concept, it appears that this idea as "an image of a nation offering a better chance for prosperity than any other" originated well before the American Revolution (1775-83); it has been continued, renewed and expanded throughout the American history and it has significantly "motivated leaders and common citizens to move haltingly and often grudgingly toward a more open, diverse, and genuinely competitive society" (Jillson 2004:1).

Indeed, from the earliest settlers, American people have inherited the imagery of America as "a City upon a hill," that has come down through the ages. This image was the vision of John Winthrop (1588-1649), leader of the Puritan settlement in New England and first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony who, delivering his sermon on board the *Arbella* in 1630 — *A Model of Christian Charity* — , told his fellow believers:

we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world ... till we be consumed out of the good land whether we are going (Winthrop 1630; cf. Smith & Nash 2010:439).

While presenting his vision, Winthrop was defining the Puritan's mission of creating a biblical and holy commonwealth and urging the English Puritans to "raise up a New Israel within a New Eden on Massachusetts Bay" and to form "covenanted communities to live in harmony with God and nature" (Jillson 2004:15-6, 25). The vision of conducting a holy experiment was also shared by the members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) leaving England where

George Fox (1624-91), one of their leaders, eagerly exhorted them through these words: “friends, that are gone, and are going over to plant and make outward plantations in America, keep your own plantations in your hearts, with the spirit and power of God, that your vines and lilies be not hurt” (Fox 1831:218; cf. Jillson 2004:27-8).

Persecuted in England like the Puritans, Quakers left Europe for two major reasons, “peace and prosperity,” and they were urged to strive for prospering at the same time “in their outer plantation of the world and in the inner plantations of one’s heart and soul” (Jillson 2004:27-8). Even in the new province of Pennsylvania, Quakers were reminded to observe this way of life as witnessed by an anonymous 1684 *Planters’ Speech to His Neighbors*:

Our business ... here, in this *new land*, is not so much to *build houses*, and *establish factories*, that may enrich ourselves (though all these things, in their due place, are not to be neglected) as to erect temples of *holiness* and *righteousness*, which God may delight in; to lay such lasting frames and foundations of *temperance* and *virtue*, as may support the superstructures of our future happiness, both in this, and the other world (Tolles 1963:45; cf. Jillson 2004:28; emphasis original).

America, as Thomas Ellis wrote from Pennsylvania to George Fox was considered as God’s “door of mercy” opened for the poor from England (Jillson 2004:28-9). However, through *The Advice of William Penn to His Children*, written around 1699, William Penn (1644-1718), the Quaker patriarch, founder and governor of Pennsylvania in 1681, continued to remind his fellows to attend to twelve virtues: humility, meekness, patience, and mercy and even liberality and justice on the one hand, and integrity, gratitude, diligence as well as frugality and temperance on the other (Penn 1825:604-18; cf. Jillson 2004:29).

If Puritans and Quakers, respectively in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, “dreamed of peaceful and prosperous communities in which they might tend the inner plantation of the soul and walk humbly with God,” other forms of dreams and ethics were developing elsewhere in the same time in the colonial America (Jillson 2004:20). For example, a vision of private profit, glory and life enjoyment prevailed in Virginia (Breen 1980:109; cf. Jillson 2004:20).

In the dawn of the eighteenth century, material success through working, saving and investing, as well as “social mobility eroded the dreams carried to America by the early settlers, especially the tight communalism of the Puritans and Quakers” (Jillson 2004:29-30). As explains Perry Miller, “pious industry wrecked the city on a hill [...]. The more everybody laboured, the more society was transformed. The more diligently the people applied themselves, [...] the more they produced a decay of religion and a corruption of morals” (Miller 1953:49; cf. Jillson 2004:30).

It is noteworthy that the dreams of the earlier settlers, like Winthrop and his fellows, were not characterized by individualism, choice, and diversity (Jillson 2004:15; Miller

1964:153). By contrast, the common vision of the American Dream known today is the image of “the individual as an independent, hard-working, entrepreneur” (Jillson 2004:31). Benjamin Franklin (1706-90), one of the leading figures of eighteenth-century America, portrayed this standard vision through his words and deeds. Born in Boston, from a Puritan family, and being mostly a self-educated person, he became not only printer, investor and philanthropist, but also scientist, politician and diplomat (Jillson 2004:32). In his *Autobiography*, after reviewing the works of scholars and sages, he concluded that thirteen virtues are crucial in one’s life, namely “temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity, chastity, and humility” (Franklin 1997:82-5). He believed in the existence of an “art of virtue” which, if studied and practiced, enables anybody to make virtues, and especially the above-mentioned virtues, a habitual and permanent part of character and conduct (Franklin 1997:91-2; cf. Jillson 2004:32-3). For him, personal virtues are meant to be put into the service of community, expressing a way of serving God by serving one’s fellow human beings. Being a living example of his advocated social philosophy, Franklin initiated several public projects in Philadelphia (Jillson 2004:33).

In the words of Jillson, “prepare, work hard, save, invest, catch a break, and success will be yours” is the definition of the American Dream set by Franklin in the 1870s and which would have a lasting impact in the following decades (Jillson 2004:48). However this standard version of the American Dream taught by Franklin and exemplified by his own life in the colonial period was meant for Native-born Americans only. Further versions were needed to include other groups of inhabitants.

### **2.1.1.2. In the founding period and its aftermath**

Among the visions of the American Dream emerging from the second half of the eighteenth century until the dawn of the twentieth century at least five can be considered as very significant. The first, from an immigrant perspective, is the one of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur and the other four are from pre-eminent political leaders and government policy-makers who have strongly marked the history of America — Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln.

While the image of the American Dream elaborated and exemplified by Benjamin Franklin beckoned native-born Americans, Crèvecoeur (1735-1813) expanded this vision to already established and potential immigrants. Native of Normandy, France, Crèvecoeur stepped ashore in America about 1760 to serve his country, precisely in the Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley, before settling on a prosperous farm in Orange County, New York. In his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), Crèvecoeur, according to Jillson, “provided the first



full articulation of the American Dream from the immigrant perspective” (Jillson 2004:48). In these early years of an independent nation, Crèvecoeur advocated the validity and merits of welcoming strangers to native-born Americans; and at the same time, he intended to convince the immigrant “that the American promise belonged to them too” because “if they would come, learn, work, and save, they too could prosper as never in Europe” (Jillson 2004:48, 55-6). In the later 1830s, Tocqueville spread the same message of America, holding out promise for the immigrant (Jillson 2004:92; Tocqueville 1954:1:443, 303).

In the words of Joseph J. Ellis writing in the 1990s, “the most visionary version of the American Dream” derived from Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the US political philosopher, the first Secretary of State, 1789-94, and the third President of the US, 1801-9. He was born in Virginia and was father of the University of Virginia founded in 1825 (Jillson 2004:57; cf. Heywood 2007:47). Jefferson is mostly known for being the principal author of the Declaration of Independence issued on July 4, 1776, by the Second Continental Congress and resulting from the culmination of the American Revolution against the ruling British government. Jefferson also wrote many addresses and letters. In addition, he was reputed to be a wealthy planter, close to an agrarian way of life as he frequently returned to Monticello, his county home near Virginia (Heywood 2007:47; Cunningham 2001:404-5).

Jefferson’s vision for American people was that “of sturdy yeoman farmer, standing free and independent on his own land” (Jillson 2004:169). His political theory is known as “a democratic form of agrarianism” consisting in the rule by a natural aristocracy, limited government, and economic *laissez-faire* associated with social reform including the extension of public education, greater economic equality and even the abolition of slavery, although he was a slave-owner (Heywood 2007:47). Jeffersonianism, nowadays, “stands for resistance to strong central government and a stress on individual freedom and responsibility, and states’ rights” (Heywood 2007:47).

In the light of the Declaration of Independence and Jefferson’s own addresses, the Jeffersonian vision for America appears as “liberal, egalitarian, and agrarian” (Jillson 2004:48). Indeed, the second paragraph of the Declaration reads:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness (Gillon & Matson 2002:A-1).

The liberal vision is reflected through the acknowledgment of natural and unalienable rights endowed to “all men” and including, but not limited to, “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” since the phrase “among these” suggests that there are indeed more than the listed rights. The egalitarian vision is expressed through the proposition that “all men are created equal.” Although the American society in this founding period was characterized by the evidence of inequality and difference, the Declaration affirms that it is self-evident for a free society to see all men as ontologically equal. Equality is also to be related to the notion of “happiness”, a word found twice in this second paragraph of the Declaration. Here, Jefferson substituted the phrase “pursuit of happiness” to John Locke’s (1632-1704) triad of fundamental rights: “life, liberty and property” (Heywood 2007:46; Jillson 2004:58). Jillson well explains how this substitution can illuminate Jefferson’s liberal and egalitarian vision for America:

Life and liberty remain foundational for Jefferson, as for Locke, and there is no doubt that Jefferson valued property, but “pursuit of Happiness” is forward-looking, egalitarian, and aspirational, while “property” is conservative, defensive, and exclusionary. The Founding generation believed that property supported security, independence, and autonomy, but Jefferson’s “pursuit of Happiness” suggests a goal well beyond security that we might call human fulfilment and thriving (Jillson 2004:58).

Jefferson’s vision was also agrarian since he believed that in a country of small villages and farms, people need freedom, in the sense of individual autonomy and independence, in addition to education, for real democracy to be possible. Furthermore, Jefferson believed that the agrarian life encourages people to be virtuous, as he wrote in the *Notes of the States of Virginia*, “those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue” (Jefferson 1984:274; cf. Jillson 2004:60). He bore the same conviction for a government encouraging agricultural development leading to national prosperity when he wrote to James Madison in 1787: “I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they remain chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America” (Jillson 2004:60).

In the early national period, especially the first half century, 1775-1825, “the liberal, egalitarian, agrarian vision of Thomas Jefferson” predominated over “the individualistic, competitive, commercial vision of Alexander Hamilton” (1757-1804), US Constitution framer, federalist leader, first secretary of the Treasury, and close friend of George Washington (1732-99), the first president (Jillson 2004:48-9). Hamilton created a national bank and designed an economic system based on trade more than farming. He stood for a more entrepreneurial, manufacturing and commercial economy directed by wise aristocratic elite. Hamilton’s vision prevailed only for a time, in this period of westward expansion of US, when

vast agricultural multitudes were seeking new lands. The Jeffersonian vision was more suitable for their aspirations and hopes. This “promise of opportunity and prosperity” is still central to the contemporary understanding of the American Dream (Jillson 2004:57).

In the Jacksonian America, 1825-60, the virtues of simplicity, hard work, frugality, honesty and self-reliance were still praised as in the times of Franklin’s tradesman and Jefferson’s farmer. The leading public figure who gave his name to this era, Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), US seventh President, 1829-37, and founder of the Democratic Party, identified “the real people” or “the producing classes” as citizens bearing these character traits (Jillson 2004:90). These categories, including “planters, farmers, small merchants and businessmen, craftsmen, and mechanics,” were opposed “to the bankers, merchants, speculators, and corporate stockjobbers” considered as “non-producing classes”. Jackson sought government to be “an unqualified blessing” to the producing classes (Jillson 2004:90). Being orphaned early and insufficiently educated, Jackson climbed the social ladder in becoming a Tennessee prosecutor, judge, congressman, senator, and the militia general famous in the indecisive War of 1812 against the British who won dazzling victories against the Creek Indians in 1814, and against the British at New Orleans in 1815. Thus, he experienced and defended the American Dream of “opportunities for growth, improvement, and achievement” without limits in his time (Jillson 2004:89). De Tocqueville, who visited the country in the Jacksonian era, noticed its commitment to freedom and opportunity by stating:

I see the destiny of America embodied in the first Puritan who landed on these shores [...] Their ancestors gave them the love of equality and freedom; but God himself gave them the means of remaining equal and free, by placing them upon a boundless continent (Tocqueville 1954:1:301-2; 303, 414.)

In short, the American Dream as conceived by Andrew Jackson envisioned only prosperity for “every white man willing to earn bread by the sweat of his brow” so that he may “enjoy a full and honourable role in the civic life of his community” (Jillson 2004:83). Abraham Lincoln (1809-65), sixteenth President of the US, 1861-5, was “the first major public figure in American history” to include people of colour and women as benefactors of the American Dream (Jillson 2004:97-8). Elected on an anti-slavery platform that significantly induced Civil War, 1861-5, Lincoln used the Gettysburg Address in 1863 not only to define this war but also to expand the American Dream by saying:

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. [...] we here highly resolve that ... this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth (Lincoln 1946: 734; cf. Jillson 2004:99-100).



The expression “Four score and seven years” or eighty seven years before 1863, refers to 1776, the foundation of the United States. Thus the benefits and opportunities deriving from US independence and democracy could be pursued by “all men” irrespective of their colour (Jillson 2004:99-100). In addition, women are not excluded in Lincoln’s more broad vision of freedom and opportunity in America because he expressly recognised the right of the black female to labour and its benefits for her by declaring: “In her natural right to eat the bread she earns with her own hands without asking leave of anyone else, she is my equal and the equal of all other.” (Lincoln 1953: 2:405, 520; cf. Jillson 2004:99).

Jillson perceptively interprets Lincoln’s role in the development of the American Dream through the following words:

Abraham Lincoln was the prism through which the light of the American Dream passed to become a purer, broader beam. The American Dream of equality, opportunity, and justice was clear from first settlement, but it was narrowly conceived in the beginning (Jillson 2004:99).

However, Lincoln’s vision was not only broader than that of “any of his predecessors [and] most of his contemporaries,” but was and still is for many Americans in the twenty and twenty-first centuries (Jillson 2004:84).

### **2.1.1.3. In the contemporary era**

In the beginning of the twentieth century, industrialisation, urbanisation and the habits of a consumption society, as well as threats of social Darwinism through the rise of industrial titans like John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan, were becoming increasingly noticeable in the modernising America. Consequently, several intellectuals such as Herbert Croly, Walter Weyl and Walter Lippmann recommended various policies after asserting that government action through economic “mastery, control, planning and regulation” is needed to encounter “the laissez-faire environment of the nineteenth century” and to ensure a new social environment where justice and opportunity can bloom (Jillson 2004:158, 163).<sup>3</sup> Their ideas influenced political leaders of the Age of the Roosevelts (1900-45) who defended the American Dream through economic reforms.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Social Darwinism is the application of Charles Darwin’s (1809-1882) theory of “the survival of the fittest” to society. His proponents, the Englishman, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), and his American disciple, William Graham Sumner (1840-1910), held “that if society is to progress, government must do nothing to restrain “fit” individuals and nothing to sustain “unfit” individuals — allow the poor to die off and society will evolve naturally, producing better human beings” (McEllhenney 2005:282-3).

<sup>4</sup>They include especially the Presidents Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), Herbert Clark Hoover (1874-1964) and Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), who strove to integrate their theories into policies, laws and institutions. Like Lincoln and Jackson before

Like these statesmen, civil rights activists achieved great steps towards the American promise of wealth, success and opportunity for all in the second half of the twentieth century. In this struggle, one of the milestones was Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have a Dream* speech delivered at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963. Explicitly, white servants, women, blacks (including free blacks), and Indians were excluded from the American Dream before the Revolution (1775-1777).<sup>5</sup> Despite all the socio-economic and political reforms initiated throughout the American history, exclusion based on class, race and gender have always been and continue to be — *de facto* — a big challenge to American society. However, the Civil Rights movement (1955-1970) launched through the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 resulting from the activism of African American leaders like Rosa Parks (1913-2005) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) led to a tremendous breakthrough towards equality, freedom and justice.<sup>6</sup>

By 1968, the Women's Movement superseded the Civil Rights movement in the social revolution as it gained size, power, and more attention through the media. This feminist movement (1963-1982) stood as a revival of the struggle formally dated from the convention of Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 where a vibrant call for women's "immediate admission to all rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the US." was made (Insenberg 2001:835-6). Although women won suffrage in 1920 with the ratification of the Fourteen Amendment, they had, in public life, a long way to go to suppress the remaining discrimination and prejudice. In 1963, Betty Friedan's in her best-seller, *The Feminine Mystique*, strongly opposed the traditional view of reducing women's fulfilment to their commitment as housewives rather than considering their capability of performing every type of job entitled to men. Afterwards, various and massive demonstrations were held by feminist organizations, particularly the National Organization for Women (NOW) (founded in 1966), modelled on the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) (established in 1909) from the Civil Rights movement. They demanded not just equal pay, employment and education — including being admitted into National Aeronautics and Space

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them, they all "pursued Jeffersonian ends, the benefit of the small man, through Hamilton means, the aggressive use of government to expand economic opportunity" (Jillson 2004:97-8).

<sup>5</sup> In this speech, King explicitly declared "I still have a dream. It is a dream chiefly rooted in the American dream" (Gillon & Matson 2002:1152). The speech became "a kind of manifesto for the Civil Rights movement (Balmer & Winner 2002:230).

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this movement led to historic Supreme Court decisions, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (more comprehensive than those of 1957 and 1960), the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which ended the Jim Crow laws of 1896 that legalized racial segregation between Whites and Blacks. This movement culminated the struggle of other black leaders such as Frederick Douglas (1818-1895), W.E. Du Bois (1868-1963), and Turgood Marshall (1908-1993), fulfilled the traditions of fugitive slaves, black and white abolitionists, and addressed the resentment of those seeing themselves as second-class citizens (Jillson 2004:209-10; 227-8; Arsenault 2001:126-8; Wright 1996:400-27).

Administration (NASA and the Military Academies) — but also employment opportunities and credit as well as the ending of spousal abuse and marital rape. Although their demands failed to be passed by Congress in 1972, these demands were translated into federal laws by the Supreme Court rulings and state Equal Rights Amendments (Rutledge & Zorea 2010:132; Jillson 2004:227-8; Wright 1996:427-41).

The election of President Barack Hussein Obama (b.1961) as the 44<sup>th</sup> US president on November 4, 2008 and the very first American of African-American descent to be elected to this office has been a vibrant demonstration that the American Dream is still alive. Obama's autobiography bears the following evocative title, *Dreams from my Father*. He represents a living testimony of the outcomes of the Civil Rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. and others, and his election embraces and advances the vision of promise and prosperity for immigrants held by Crèvecoeur, as Carl Pedersen (2009:2-4) states:

Obama is the son of a white mother from the American heartland with roots in Ireland and of a father from the Luo ethnic group in Kenya. He thus embodies the old immigration from Europe that Crèvecoeur referred to and the new immigration from outside of Europe that is a feature of the twenty-first century.

In a word, the American Dream has been in the contemporary era strongly defended by American political leaders, scholars, civil activists, artists and even celebrities. The Dream has been significantly embedded in culture, institutions, law, and policies to achieve a very remarkable advance. Yet “shadows on the Dream”, to use Jillson's insightful phrase, are still noticeable in American society (Jillson 2004:200).

## **2.1.2. Shadows on the American Dream**

In addition to “shadow,” critics have used the words “decay”, “perversion” or “fragmentation” resulting in an “illusion” to describe the shortcomings of the American Dream as a traditional vision of opportunity and prosperity for all Americans (Nepo 2005:1, 9; Needleman 2005:25; Wright 1996:518-83). The shortcomings in the implementation of the promising vision of America have resulted in negative and controversial phenomena like social prejudice, violence, family disintegration and war — to name but a few.

### **2.1.2.1. Social prejudice and multiculturalism**

With regard to its meaning, the American Dream is supposed to foster a very common humanity and cohesiveness according to the phrases of the Declaration of Independence: “All men are created equal.” However, Native Americans were threatened with extinction, and their lands were ravaged and spoiled. Blacks suffered from slavery, and women and even

poor whites were excluded from civil rights. The issue of exclusion is still significant, even in religious circles, as noted by the thinkers at the national conversation, initiated by the Fetzer Institute in 1999 (Nepo 2005:1,9). One of them, Elaine Pagels, points out the reality of this exclusion “through religious affiliation, race, ethnicity, economic or legal status, or even sexual orientation” (Pagels 2005:97).

The Declaration of Independence and its fundamental principles demonstrate, since the beginning of the Republic, the quest to mould a moral society based on justice and the equality of treatment for all. The idea of an America for all is well expressed through the Latin slogan *e pluribus unum*, “many made one” (or “out of many, one”) which presupposes a melting pot of all the citizens, no matter what their ethnic or religious origin might be. However, this component of American exceptionalism seems to remain largely at an ideological level (Thompson 2000:33).

The USA has had for a long time the highest number of immigrants in the world. Until the 1880s, immigrants originated from northern and western European countries and consolidated the Anglo-Protestant dominant culture of the early days. After World War II southern and western European immigrants from Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc., not only represented a noticeable shift in the origin of immigrants but also increased the visibility of the Roman Catholic Church and Judaism. In the history of America, the presence of these newcomers has emphasized the challenge of religious and cultural diversity, integration and acculturation (Thompson 2000:34). Some Americans whose ancestors came earlier into the country from Northwest Europe, particularly those of White Anglo-Saxon and Protestant origins, were led by the Atlanta evangelist William J. Simmons to launch the Ku-Klux Klan in 1915. These extremists found themselves threatened by the massive immigration of the late 1910s and early 1920s. Their hate organisation promoting “100 per cent Americanism” was linked to wide right-wing reaction of American nativism among Americans (Thompson 2000:18-9; Spickard & Cragg 1994:387).

As illustrated by Sonbol and Feldman, the issue of assimilation is very complex in the historical context of America. The majority of Jews of Western Europe who arrived from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth centuries in search of political freedom were quite ready to assimilate. However, Chassidim and other orthodox Jews of Eastern Europe who survived the persecution of czars, the Holocaust of Hitler and the oppression of Stalin found the Christian-dominant culture of post-World War II alien to their old heritage (Sonbol 2004:274-6; Feldman 2004:294-5).

The melting pot, the traditional vision of the American Dream, has been challenged by multiculturalism as an ideology and programme for American society. As American society

has become, since the late 1960s, increasingly multicultural due to the massive immigration that has created a large variety of subcultures, several “policy makers, educators, intellectuals, and activists” have called for programmes in their different sectors that “ensure cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity towards various subgroups” (Critchlow & Nash 2010:236-7). For these proponents of multicultural theory, American society does not need to assimilate or integrate into one culture the rich diversity of cultures existing within the country. Critics of multiculturalist theory, however, most dread the “cult of otherness” dividing American society into subgroups of African-Americans, Hispanics, women, and homosexuals. Thus, it remains difficult to reconcile these clear-cut stands on melting pot and multiculturalism (Critchlow & Nash 2010:236-7). Rampant crime and violence in the American society also contradict the ideals of the American Dream.

### **2.1.2.2. Crime and violence**

Needleman calls for “a sharp judgmental distinction” in our times between “the two dreams of America,” — on the one hand the materialistic illusion and on the other hand the spiritual and ethical vision:

The “American dream” in its familiar, cliché-ridden forms could then safely be relegated to the realm of illusion, or at least, superficiality. We all know the words associated with this version of the dream: wealth, success, unlimited entrepreneurial mobility, material comfort. [...] One would certainly wish to deepen this version of the dream by turning to the ideals of brotherhood, equality, and the Bill of Rights. But, in the last analysis, so a critic might suggest, these ideals themselves have now become largely instrumental — so many means for securing material gain and for lubricating the machinery of American capitalism (Needleman 2005:25).

Obviously, among those who consider themselves excluded from the vision of the American Dream many tend to be violent or criminal. In the contemporary era the escalation of crime has become a matter of serious concern as “forty per cent of all federal criminal laws enacted from 1850 to 2000 were passed between 1970 and 2000” (Critchlow & Nash 2010:95). Violent crimes, including murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, have been reduced increased by “5 per cent from 1973 to 1981” and by “16 per cent from 1989 to 1994” (Critchlow & Nash 2010:95-6). As a result, “America’s prison and jail population rose more than 400 per cent between 1980 (just over half a million) and 2008 (2 million)” due to this reinforcement of federal criminal legislation (Nash 2010:96). Despite the Organized Crime Control Act (OCCA) of 1970, including the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act (Rico) which allowed fighting vigorously drug-smuggling in the 1980s, the number of drug-related crimes has skyrocketed. The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (1994), among other provisions, dealt with the prevention of “‘hate crimes’ committed against victims

selected for their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation” (Nash 2010:96-7).

Young people are becoming increasingly victims and perpetrators of violent crimes. Since 1970, organized crimes in major urban centres have decreased and been replaced by “smaller, less organized, youth street gangs” concentrating on drug trafficking and using violence to eliminate competition (Nash 2010:97). Since 1985, most murders have been committed by 14- to 24 year-olds — before that date the most important perpetrators of murder were the 25- to 34 year-olds. On April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, two students took their own lives after killing twelve of their classmates and one teacher. According to a study conducted by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 1994, the USA had, among twenty-six industrialised countries, “the highest rates of childhood homicide, suicide, and firearm-related death” (quoted in Coleman 2002:30). In addition, “the suicide rate for children in the USA was two times higher than in the other 25 countries combined” (Coleman 2002:31).

### **2.1.2.3. Sexuality, marriage and family life**

In the second half of the twentieth century, the erosion of traditional values in sexuality, marriage and family life fuelled one of the most important crises in American society. In the 1960s and 1970s, lifestyles viewed as “alternative” in the past became “less unusual and increasingly normative” (Seccombe 2000:106). Experiences such as cohabitation, divorce and remarriage, as well as other lifestyles like same-sex relationships, never-married adults, or childfree adults, became more visible, less stigmatized, and increasing in frequency (Seccombe 2000:106). At the beginning of this period widespread disenchantment among men and women with the modern life, as described in Paul Goodman’s *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), as well as the feminist therapeutic argument for women’s careers outside home, asserted by Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), helped promote these lifestyles. On the grounds of being “exploitative of women and children, unnecessarily hierarchical and authoritarian, narrow-minded and capitalistic,” the traditional structure of the family was attacked by an increasing number of voices claiming individual fulfilment (Glanker 2010:127).

The sexual revolution of the 1960s and early 1970s, coupled with the human-potential movement and youth rebellion, proved to be a watershed in the changing patterns of sexual relations, marriage and family life. Enabled by the introduction of the birth-control pill in 1957 and the prospering economy of the 1960s, all these phenomena appeared as an appropriate solution for those longing after the quest of physical pleasure and the pursuit of intellectual,



emotional, spiritual and material self-fulfilment. They helped promote the practices of premarital and extramarital relations, cohabitation, and out-of-wedlock childbirth which “reflected the changing standards of sexual morality in the US” (Zorea & Randoll 2010:213; Glanker 2010:127).

Furthermore, two other significant factors have threatened the two-parent traditional or nuclear family. First is the increasing number of divorces. The “no-fault” divorce law passed by the state of California in 1969 had a widespread effect in 44 other states which passed similar laws within five years. Granting legal divorce was no longer subjected to an “adversarial procedure” or to adultery, desertion or proof of cruelty, but “incompatibility” or “irreconcilable differences” alone were made sufficient grounds for divorce (Settles 2005:580; Glanker 2010:127; Zorea & Randoll 2010:213). Along with the divorce rates, statistics from 1960s to 1990s indicated a dramatic increase in the numbers of single-person households, stepfamilies, single female parents, racially and ethnically mixed marriages, and the incidence of teenage pregnancies (Ibid.). Another factor was changing values, attitudes and behaviour about abortion. In 1973 the US Supreme Court, in its decision in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, ruled according to the existing positions of women rights advocates campaigning for legalized abortion. Abortion was considered as protected by the constitutional right of privacy (Zorea 2010:1-2; Jillson 2006:224-5).

No-fault divorce, legalized abortion and other family laws passed in the 1970s regarding child custody and alimony were presumed to induce equality in marriage, society and the economy, especially becoming for women a liberating experience (Jillson 2006:224-5). In contrast, many viewed the drastic increase of single-parent households, same-sex partnerships, group homes, extended kinship networks, and other replacements for incomplete nuclear families as a social disaster. According to them this shift, representing a broad definition of family, perpetuates many social ills such as child abuse, juvenile delinquency, poverty, and welfare dependency (Zorea & Randoll 2010:213-4; Glanker 2010:128). In addition, it is noteworthy to mention that war and foreign policy also demonstrate a perversion of the American Dream.

#### **2.1.2.4. War and foreign policy**

According to Nepo (2005:9), the perversion of the American dream has led to violence inside and outside the country, “to a brutal polarity by which we are slowly killing each other, and others, in the name of patriotism”. Indeed, the USA has experienced since 1755 ten major wars, including six outside US territory. Since 1890, twenty four minor wars or military campaigns have been waged against other countries. The most spectacular attacks were

undoubtedly the first use of nuclear weapons when atomic bombs were dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and killed respectively over 130,000 and 40,000 people. From this participation in World War II, the USA emerged as the world's strongest military, political and economic power. The longest war (1961-75) in Vietnam required the drafting of 2.2 million men and the enlistment of 8.7 million persons at an average age of 19. It cost 211,000 American lives and killed or wounded 1.4 million civilian Vietnamese. This war was not only very unpopular but seriously undermined confidence and trust in the political system (cf. Cook & Waller 1998: 238-48; Gillon & Matson 2002:1042-3, 1160-1).

Although it fell short of open warfare, the Cold War (1945-91) was characterized by threats, subversive activities, and other measures like the nuclear and other non-conventional arms race. This state of political hostility after World War II between the Soviet bloc countries and the Western powers led by the USA triggered anxieties and political fear as it brought about the real threat of a third global confrontation that “would lead to the annihilation of the humanity itself” (Lippy 2004:415). In his State of the Union address of 6 January 1941 known as his “Four Freedoms speech,” President F.D. Roosevelt said that the USA should “look forward to a world founded upon four essential freedoms”: (1) freedom of speech and expression, (2) freedom of every person to worship God in his own way; (3) freedom from want, (4) freedom from fear; and he added that “Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere” (Roosevelt 1938:9:663-72; cf. Doenecke 2004:323; Jillson 2004:178). However, in many occasions, these values have not been reflected in the US foreign policy and involvement in wars in foreign countries.

President Reagan made a similar declaration in his 1985 State of the Union address.<sup>7</sup> As a result he engaged “in covert operations and proxy wars” against the Marxist government in Grenada, Afghan rebels, Contras in Nicaragua, and with anti-communists forces in Angola and Ethiopia (Korasick & Sherman 2010:142). However, before him, during the energy crisis and the Arab-Israeli conflict which emerged in 1973, President Nixon and his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, contributed to the adoption of policies seen as amoral by supporting right-wing regimes and repressive dictators in America (Brazil and Argentina), Asia (Iran, the Philippines and South Korea) and Africa (South Africa, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo). These policies led to the destroying of leftist regimes like the one in Chile in 1973 (Korasick & Sherman 2010:140-1). In a thorough study, Hans Küng (1997:3-14) has demonstrated that American foreign policy since the Nixon-Kissinger administration has

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<sup>7</sup> He stated: “The time has come to proceed toward a great new challenge — a second American Revolution of hope and opportunity; a revolution [...] that taps the soul of America, enabling us to summon a greater strength than we’ve ever known; and a revolution that carries beyond our shores the golden promise of human freedom in a world of peace” (Reagan 1985:1:130; cf. Jillson 2004:242).



undergone a significant shift from ethical principles of democracy, mutual respect, fairness, win-win policies to realism, neo-imperialism and power relations.

After the end of the Cold war, there has been a sense of threat on American soil rendered more acute by the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. The President George W. Bush's doctrine of 2002, arguing that "the US retained the right to use military force on any nation that posed a threat to the security of the US or intended to procure weapons of mass destruction for use against the US or its allies," has not solved the problem of achieving long lasting peace (Korasick & Sherman 2010:142). The unilateral war of 2003 — along with Poland, Spain, Great Britain and Australia — against Iraq claimed the lives of hundreds of American soldiers (Korasick & Sherman 2010:142).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union has emerged, as revealed by John Perkins, the idea of creating a "corporatocracy," made of the global empire, multi-national corporations, international financial institutions and banks as well governments in the West and the South (Perkins 2004: ix). The top members of this system are found within the richest US families. Internally, the system seeks and has already succeeded in taking control of the financial and political American institutions as well as schools, media, and business. It demonstrates a very luxurious way of life and incites insatiable consumption. To conquer the world, the system is using "Economic Hit Men (EHM)," people working with large-scale multi-nationals (Perkins 2004: ix). In particular, they specialize in destabilizing third-world economies by using whatever means. Sometimes, to avoid overt military action and too risky intelligence activity, EHM use debt to ensure the loyalty of world leaders. Their realistic means also include fraudulent financial reports, rigged elections, payoffs, extortion, sex, and murder (Perkins 2004: 220-3).

In short, the American Dream is "a powerful rhetoric of American exceptionalism" that "has always been, and continues to be, the gyroscope of American life" (Jillson 2004:5, 245, 269). One of its most important roles is to help Americans create a country in which opportunity and success is open to all or at least to those who strive to work hard and honestly. However, the American Dream also has its shadow side. Besides the idea of the American Dream, the American Creed also has been a formative influence in the American socio-political and cultural context.

## 2.2. Political context: "The American Creed"

American society and its politics and economy hinge on some fundamental principles that constitute what has come to be called "The American Creed". Originally embedded in the Declaration of Independence, these fundamental values could also be found in studies,

documents, claims and demands drawn from this Declaration throughout American history. The American Creed includes, first of all, the three Jeffersonian ideals of “liberty, equality and individualism” expressed through the following phrases of the Declaration: “All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” (Jillson 2004:3-4, 269). In addition to the three founding ideals, Samuel Huntington concludes that “democracy and the rule of law under a constitution” are other core values of the American Creed found “virtually in all the analyses” (Jillson 2004:3-4). For Lipset, “liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire,” layered onto “Americanism,” build the general description of the American Creed. In other words, the American Creed encompasses the traditional liberal values (liberty, equality, and individualism), those of liberal democracy (populism being a kind of mass democracy prevailing in the founding and early national periods) and those of democratic capitalism — since laissez-faire and the rule of law under a constitution assert capitalism, (free) markets, and competition and limited government (Jillson 2004:4). Yet even though liberal capitalist democracy prevails in the American social, economic landscape, some alternative ideological trends, — conservatism, communitarianism and libertarianism — are also discernible.

### **2.2.1. Traditional values of liberalism**

Liberalism, the predominant ideology of Western civilization (Heywood 2007:24-5), has also so deeply permeated the American political, economic and cultural life that in the words of Hans Vorländer (2004:478),

America’s liberal tradition has often been disputed but has not yet been disproved. Liberalism not only represents the most powerful strand of political thought in the United States, but is also the pre-eminent means of collective representation and self-interpretation.

Liberal ideas emerged first of all from the collapse of feudalism replaced by market or capitalist economy and then from the rejection of the divine right as a defence of monarchism which reached its climax through the English Revolution of the sixteenth century and the American and French Revolutions. From the late nineteenth century, reflecting the aspirations of the “rising middle classes,” in a society becoming increasingly industrialized, liberal ideas tended to advocate an emphasis on minimal interference by government in the life of citizens in the previous century, a kind of welfare liberalism, the provision of welfare services like education, health, housing, and pensions, and at the same time the regulation of the economy (Heywood 2007:25). Widely accepted in the depression of the 1930s, these ideas

found expression in the New Deal of President Franklin Delanor Roosevelt using Keynesian economic theory to tackle unemployment and the needs for social security (Rutledge & Zorea 2010:209).

In contemporary America, liberalism still includes the following main features: (1) A tendency to favour change; (2) Faith in human reason; (3) Willingness to use government to improve the human condition; (4) Preference for individual freedom but ambivalence about economic freedom; (5) Greater optimism about human nature than conservatives accept (Sargeant 2006:128). However, two significant traditions labelled “classical liberalism” and “modern liberalism” are also discernible. While classical liberalism “seeks to maximize the realm of unconstrained individual action, typically by establishing a minimal state and a reliance on market economics”, modern liberalism “provides [...] a qualified endorsement for social and economic intervention as a means of promoting personal development” (Heywood 2007:25).

Liberalism opposes both socialism and communism. Liberal programmes may be similar to some socialist undertakings, but liberalism rejects the socialist ideal of complete equality induced by state control. Since liberalism praises the individual, it is firmly hostile to communism. Liberals in the US have mostly fought for the eradication of poverty, racial integration and sexual equality. Yet, their struggle has had a far-reaching influence in domestic politics, economics and religion. Liberals have battled arbitrary state power exercised against the interests of individuals, restrictions reducing opportunity for a better social status, and censorship imposing limits to liberty of expression. Monopolies and measures extending state control over the economy have also been important targets. In the religious domain, liberals have campaigned against church interference in public affairs and against religious group influence on public opinion (Rutledge & Zorea 2010:209). As a “meta-ideology,” liberalism “is embodied in a commitment to a distinctive set of values and beliefs” — the following being the most important: “the individual, freedom, reason, justice and toleration” (Heywood 2007:26-7).

### **2.2.1.1. The individual and individualism**

Undoubtedly, the primacy of the individual originated from the breakdown of feudalism, while people were embedded in or had a high sense of belonging to their social groups: their social class, their local community, their village or family. With the rising of market-oriented and capitalist societies, people began, “perhaps for the first time, to think *for* themselves, and to think *of* themselves in personal terms” (Heywood 2007:27). The collapse of the feudal period gave way to an era of industrialisation and urbanisation where people

were increasingly exposed to the idea of being individuals, having their personal and unique identities, and possessing their own interests. Indeed, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, classical liberalism, as part of the intellectual movement stressing the dignity and equal worth of human beings, taught natural rights. As rational and scientific explanations were striving to discard religious traditions and theories, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) asserted similar ideas about the value of the individual through “his conception of individuals as ‘ends in themselves’ and not merely as means for the achievement of the ends of others” (Heywood 2007:27).

A thorough and technical definition of individualism, the characteristic theme of liberal ideology, is given by A. Heywood (2007:28) as follows:

Individualism is the belief in the supreme importance of the individual over any social group or collective body. In the form of methodological individualism, this suggests that the individual is central to any political theory of social explanation — all statements about society should be made in terms of the individuals who compose it. Ethical individualism, on the other hand, implies that society should be constructed so as to benefit the individual, giving moral priority to individual rights, needs or interests.

In addition, different views are expressed by classical liberals and modern liberals: if the former “subscribe to *egoistical* individualism, which places emphasis on self-interestedness and self-reliance,” the latter “have advanced a *developmental* form of individualism that prioritizes human flourishing over the quest for interest satisfaction” (Heywood 2007:28; emphasis original). From liberal ideology two positive, yet contrasting, implications can be derived: uniqueness and equality. As individuals, human beings are defined according to their inner and specific attributes and qualities; they are also seen as sharing “the same status in that they are all, first and foremost, individuals” (Heywood 2007:28). However, egoistical individualism, with its view of the individual as essentially self-reliant and self-seeking has led some liberals to an extreme individualism labelled “atomism,” a belief that “‘society’ itself does not exist”, but it “is made up of a collection of self-interested and largely self-sufficient individuals, or atoms, rather than social groups” (Heywood 2007:28).

Acknowledged as the first to coin individualism as a particular character feature of American society, Alexis de Tocqueville, in the Jacksonian era, defined individualism as “a mature and calm feeling, which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and his friends, so that [...] he willingly leaves society at large to itself” (Tocqueville 1954:2:104-5). Consequently, individualism generated in the life of Americans “the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands” (Tocqueville 1954:2:105). Indeed, “individualism” stands as this particular aspect of American

culture that “might isolate Americans from one another and thereby undermine the conditions of freedom” (Thompson 2000:31; cf. Nepo 2005:5).

Considering contemporary American society, Bellah and others adopt Tocqueville’s concept of “habits of the heart” referring to the sum of moral and intellectual dispositions or mores shared by Americans in the 1830s that gave American society its particular character in that time. However, with their *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*, Bellah and associates bring to the fore the role of individualism by asserting that it is not equality, as considered by Tocqueville, but individualism that might be viewed as the most dominant moral and cultural aspect of American history (Bellah et al 1996:xliv). Moreover, they have distinguished four traditions of individualism, namely the biblical and the civic, as well as the utilitarian and the expressive individualism. All these traditions are basic to American identity and celebrate the dignity of the individual and the sacredness and freedom of reflection. Finally, these traditions all share the view that the highest aspirations of the individual, the society and the world are linked to individualism. Biblical individualism originated from Reformation Christianity — brought to America through Puritanism — and civic individualism from Classical republicanism (Bellah et al 1996:142-4; Vorländer 2004:478). If the former induced the voluntary participation of the individual as a mode of government, the latter suggested the citizen’s active contribution to the Republic. In some contexts, both biblical and civic individualism connected individual autonomy to the moral or religious obligation to justify freedom or obedience. Both have also provided significant cultural resources to modern individualism that have been instrumental in the struggle against monarchy and aristocracy (Bellah et al 1996:142-4).

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, John Locke, asserted a radical defence of individual rights, distanced from civic and biblical individualism, that emerged as ontological individualism. His thought has been very influential in American society, and this tendency has remained strong throughout the subsequent centuries. In the 1980s, Bellah and others criticized “utilitarian individualism”, the neo-liberal version of individualism:

*Utilitarian Individualism* views society as rising from a contract that individuals enter into only in order to advance their self-interest. According to Locke, society is necessary because of the prior existence of property, the protection of which is the reason individuals contractually enter society. Utilitarian individualism has an affinity to a basically economic understanding of human existence (Bellah et al 1996:336).

Yet, they also discovered an opposite version of individualism labelled “expressive individualism” justifying the development of the therapeutic culture:

*Expressive individualism* [...] holds that each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed if individuality is to be realized. This core, though unique, is not necessarily alien to other persons or to nature. [...] Expressive individualism is related to the phenomenon of romanticism in eighteenth- and nineteenth-

century European and American culture. In the twentieth century, it shows affinities with the culture of psychotherapy and New Age Religions (Bellah et al 1996:333-4).

Before becoming prevalent, modern individualism had long coexisted with classical republicanism and the biblical religion, since all stressed the autonomy and dignity of the individual. The invalidation of these two latter traditions goes hand in hand with the degeneration and fall in value of community life and, therefore, leads to the rise of a therapeutic ethos from the perspective of a psychology that understands the self as “the only or main form of reality” (Robert Coles quoted in Bellah et al 1996:143). Indeed, the civic and biblical forms of individualism view “the individualism in relation to a large whole, a community and tradition” and thus “are capable of sustaining genuine individuality and nurturing both public and private life” (Bellah et al 1996:143). However, by almost ignoring these traditions, the self-sufficient form of modern individualism has realized the fear of Tocqueville that “Individualism weakens the meanings that give content and substance for the ideal of individual dignity” (Bellah et al 1996:144). Besides, individualism, as the liberalist “belief in the supreme importance of the individual,” results naturally in “a commitment to individual freedom” (Heywood 2007:29).

### **2.2.1.2. Freedom, liberty, and rights**

For liberals, individual liberty is “the supreme political value and, in many ways, the unifying principle within liberal ideology” (Heywood 2007:29). To a large extent, the words liberty, freedom and rights are interchangeable in that they all “refer to the ability to act without restriction or with restrictions that are themselves limited in specified or specifiable ways” (Sargeant 2006:75). Oftentimes, some connotations are applied to each of these three terms: “*Freedom* is the most general term. *Liberty* usually refers to social and political freedom. *Right* usually refers to specific legally guaranteed freedoms” (Sargeant 2006:75).

Generally, liberals do not advocate an absolute entitlement to freedom for the individual. Three theorists have been influential in the understanding and explanation of the extent and condition of liberal views on freedom. John Rawls (1921-2002) upholds the widest possible liberty on the grounds of a more or less justifiable sovereignty that everyone has over his or her body and mind, but, only to the extent that “every other individual enjoys an equal right to liberty” (Rawls 1972:23; cf. Heywood 2007:31). Before him, Stuart Mill (1806-73) in his *On Liberty* accepted “only the most minimal restrictions on individual freedom” asserting that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others” (Mill 1972:73; cf. Heywood 2007:31). By so doing Mill upholds a libertarian stand that is leading liberals



labelled radical libertarians to defend the rights to use addictive drugs (like cocaine and heroin), to enjoy pornography, and to practice gambling or have consensual sexual relations (both heterosexual and homosexual) (Sargeant 2006:197). They considered all these actions as “victimless crimes” following Mill who spoke of “actions that are ‘self-regarding’ over which individuals should exercise absolute freedom, and those that are ‘other regarding’, which can restrict the freedom of others,” or do not harm others (Sargeant 2006:197; cp. Heywood 2007:29-31).

Isaiah Berlin (1909-97) distinguishes between “negative freedom or liberty” and “positive freedom or liberty” to explain the contrasting views held by classical or early liberals and modern liberals. The negative freedom advocated by early liberals consists in “the absence of external restrictions or constraints on the individual, allowing freedom of choices” (Heywood 2007:31). In contrast, positive freedom or liberty held by modern liberals is made of self-mastery or self-realisation through the development of human capabilities including talents, skills, and understanding, as well the achievement of autonomy (Heywood 2007:31).

In a liberal democratic regime, the USA has come to guarantee the right to vote for all, after a long and painful historical evolution of civil rights activism. Provisions are made so that citizens enjoy various freedoms like those of speech, press, assembly, religion and movement. The US Bill of Rights and other provisions include those basic guarantees as well as freedom from arbitrary treatment. In addition, as part of the Anglo-American tradition, there are guarantees for the silence of the law and unenforceability: “if there is no law prohibiting an action, that action is within the area of individual discretion” and “newly law passed cannot be used to find past acts illegal” (Sargeant 2006:78-82).

### **2.2.1.3. Justice and equality**

Another feature of liberal theory is justice that is related to moral judgement about the distribution of reward and punishment. In short, justice is “a moral standard of fairness and impartiality”; it is about “giving each person what he or she is ‘due’” (Heywood 2007:33). Liberal theory is more interested in social justice as “a fair or justifiable distribution of material rewards and benefits in society,” such as medical care, welfare benefits and particularly wages and profits (Heywood 2007:33). The primacy of individualism in liberal theory links justice to equality, “the principle that human beings are of identical worth or are entitled to be treated in the same way” (Heywood 2007:33). Thus, foundational equality implies, as the idea of identical moral worth, the notion of human rights or natural rights; and it also implies, as formal equality, “the idea that individuals should enjoy the same formal equality in society,

particularly in terms of the distribution of rights and entitlements” (Heywood 2007:33). For that reason, “liberalism is ‘difference blind’” as Heywood rightly explains:

Consequently, liberals fiercely disapprove of any social privileges or advantages that are enjoyed by some but denied to others on the basis of factors such as gender, race, colour, creed, religion or social background. Rights should not be reserved for any particular class of person, such as men, whites, Christians or the wealthy (Heywood 2007:33).

## **2.2.2. Liberal and capitalist democracy**

The USA is a federation that consists of fifty states. The political system is founded on democratic, liberal and capitalist principles. As a representative democracy, the system of rule embraces elected officers representing or supporting the views or interests of citizens — because of popular sovereignty — in the States or at the national level through multiparty elections. The liberal regime protects the individual’s rights from the power of States, the federal administration, and the democratic majorities through a rule of law. With the market-oriented economic system, the federal government, as well as the states, protects private property rights (Held 2001:196; Fukuyama 2001:201). More details are needed to describe the American capitalist liberal democracy.

### **2.2.2.1. Legal democracy**

In the late 1970s and 1980s the New Right, also called neo-liberalism or neo-conservatism, was the political ideology driving the government of Ronald Reagan (1980-1988) which was advocating the “rolling back of the state”, a strategy advocated by some theorists to combat the “overloaded government” (Held 2006:201-207). David Held (2006:201-207) typifies the democratic model related to the New Right strategy as “legal democracy”. This system considers the majority principle as a desirable and effective way of not only protecting individuals from arbitrary government but also of maintaining liberty. Yet majority rule must be restrained by the rule of law in order to allow political and economic life to be a matter of individual initiative and freedom. These dispositions are the *sine qua non* conditions for the wise and just function of the majority principle. Held notes that the clear constitutional separation of powers, the rule of law, the “minimal state intervention in civil society and private life,” and “the free-market society given fullest possible scope are the key features of legal democracy”. Moreover, Held mentions five general conditions of legal democracy: “(1) effective political leadership guided by liberal principles, (2) minimization of excessive bureaucratic regulation, (3) restriction of role of interest groups, particularly trade unions, (4) international free-trade order, and (5) minimization (eradication, if possible) [of] the threat of collectivism” (Held 2006:201-207).

Up to the present, the legal democracy and the New Right strategy of “rolling back” the state have benefited from substantial support even from citizens outside the neo-liberal political organizations. This political ideology has especially succeeded “in mobilizing the considerable amount of cynicism, distrust and dissatisfaction with many of the institutions of the interventionist welfare state” (Held 2006:207). Women and lower income groups are among the many disenchanted people who judge the provision of benefits of the welfare state “as excessively rigid, paternalistic and bureaucratic” (Held 2006:207). In fact, by limiting the democratic use of state power, the New Right, or neo-conservatism, has advanced the cause of political liberalism against democracy (Held 2006:201).

### 2.2.2.2. Political liberalism

Even though several varieties or approaches of liberalism can be singled out in the USA, as in other modern democratic societies, political liberalism is the one to begin with in view of the critique of communitarian thinkers like Hauerwas and MacIntyre (Buchanan 1998:1, 7). Furthermore, political liberalism “is merely the current fashion of contemporary political theory since the publication of John Rawl’s *A Theory of Justice* in 1971” (Kelly 2005:3, 112-4). Paul Kelly defines political liberalism as “a branch of the broader liberal tradition that places liberal-egalitarianism distributive principles at its core” (Kelly 2005:2-3). He identifies four components of political liberalism, the first two as its philosophical basis and the last two as its political implications: “(1) All individuals are of equal and ultimate moral value. (2) This individualism is ethical and not sociological or psychological. (3) Equality of concern and respect is cashed-out in terms of a set of basic rights, civil liberties and economic entitlements. These rights entail accompanying responsibilities and duties. (4) Ethical individualism and equality of concern and respect does not entail moral scepticism about objective values. It is instead concerned with the moral limitation of coercion or political power” (Kelly 2005:13).

Fundamentally, the rationale of political liberalism can be stated as follows:

- (1) It “is intended to accommodate the plurality of different views about” morality;
- (2) “It does not offer a full theory of personal morality, but instead places limits on the variety of moral and political perspectives that are found in modern democratic societies”;
- (3) “These limits are determined by its core normative commitments to the equal status and treatment of each person”;
- (4) “It involves the recognition of equal status and what is often referred to as the strategy of privatization. That is the recognition of the need to make controversial moral, political and religious views a matter of private concern, rather than a source of public political conflict”;
- (5) It “claims that this view places limits on the scope of moral claims given the fact of reasonable pluralism of moral views in modern democratic societies” (Kelly 2005:3; cf. Heywood 1992:15-52).

In reality, political liberalism is more concerned with equality and rights than with liberty. In contrast, libertarianism sees liberty as the primary political value. If political liberalism represents the leftist political theory or ideology in the USA, conservatives in both the Democratic and the Republican parties turn toward libertarianism. Three major contemporary views of liberty are associated with libertarianism and promoted by libertarians, namely the ideas of negative, positive and republican liberty. Negative liberty, associated with liberalism and with both the right-wing and left-wing of libertarianism, advocates an idea of freedom without external coercion in terms of prevention and compulsion (or restraints and constraints). While the positive idea of liberty, close to Christian moral ideals, focuses on acting in accordance with objective norms of morality, rationality and the common good, the republican notion of liberty is based on the “claims that freedom is not merely the absence of interference with the exercise of our will, but rather the absence of domination” (Kelly 2005:52-7).

### **2.2.2.3. Capitalist economy**

As far as economics is concerned, capitalism is the system related to liberalism. Indeed capitalist liberal democracy (CLD) advocates a formal recognition of the individual’s rights, namely rights to own property, to speak, associate, practice religion, participate in the political process on an equal basis, etc. Although the whole US Constitution and its amendments recognize those equal rights, the sphere of equal recognition was initially limited to White and male property-owning persons till 1865 (Fukuyama 2001:201; Cook & Waller 1998:54-61). In its pure essence, CLD showed its limitations with the Depression of 1893 and the Wall Street crash of 1929. The New Deal (1933-38) was a restructuring by President Roosevelt to introduce the welfare state to protect citizens from social ills, anticipating full-employment and mass consumerism as permanent solutions to capitalism (Desai 2001:109; Gillon & Matson 788-9, 968-90). Nowadays, compared to European CLDs, the US economy “has a more progressive tax system”, though a smaller welfare state, “lacking a comprehensive state-funded health-care system” despite the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act enacted by President Barack Obama in 2010, because welfare liberalism is opposed by neo-capitalism (Gruber 2011: 893–908; Fukuyama 2001:201; Fisk 2001:204-7; Bellah et al 1996:xxv-xxviii).

It is noteworthy that CLD seeks to guarantee more equality of opportunity than equality of outcome; it focuses more on freedom than on equality. This system of limited government comes in for criticism. From the Left, criticism concentrates on the social and economic inequality CLD fails to prevent, the mobility of capital and the lowering of wages

fostered by globalization, as well as the destruction of many jobs by technological innovations, and the fall of low-skilled workers' income. From the Right is the recrimination of communitarians who see CLD — through formal law, individualism and separation between the political endeavour and moral or religious communities — consuming its own cultural and social capital basis. CLD is linked to the Enlightenment project of liberating human beings from the orthodoxy and prejudice of hierarchical religion. In this perspective, even though cultural tradition and religion are considered as helpful to support social order, they are rusted through by modern individualism, which is “not only stifling social traditions inherited from the past, but also the social cohesion necessary to the functioning of any society” (Fukuyama 2001:201-2). Another criticism from the Right is drawn from Nietzsche's view considering that human beings “are born unequal with respect to talents and ambitions, and moreover are made happy by hierarchy rather than equality” (Fukuyama 2001:202). It is therefore an injustice to treat “them as if they were equal”; [hence] “the bourgeois, egalitarian culture fostered by CLD produces conformity, mediocrity and a narrowing of the horizons for ambition and greatness that was fostered by societies built on explicitly aristocratic principles” (Fukuyama 2001:202). From the Left and the Right, CLD is attacked for corroding important virtues: “Moral greatness, courage, artistic vision, and similar virtues are devaluated in a commercial society that sees material wealth as the manifestation of success” (Fukuyama 2001:202; cf. Heywood 1992:15-52).

In addition, from the CLD derives the high culture of consumerism. As Bellah puts it: “Informality and individuality are American trademarks, but also are consumerism, mass entertainment, and the ideology of the free market” (Bellah 2005:viii). Consumerism deeply affects people's spiritual life as secularisation and pluralism have spread through the whole society. “Traditional sources of religious authority, such as the Ten Commandments, are undermined; public institutions, such as state-supported schools, which once helped to transmit religious ideas and values become increasingly secularized; religion becomes privatized and understood as a matter of individual choice” (Burges 2004:232). Pluralistic values also characterize American society as in other modern societies: “people become ever more aware of the fact that they can choose a practical life orientation from a variety of religious and non-religious sources” (Burges 2004:232). Conceptualising the observation of many scholars about the ills of American secular and pluralistic society, W.C. Roof speaks about “the spiritual marketplace”, since:

People learn to cobble together a spirituality for themselves, rather than to accept traditional sources of authority. As wise consumers, people are ever ready to make adjustments in what they believe, in order to find what works best for them. The flexibility and innovation that modern societies value so highly in matters of economic production and consumption come to define religious life (Burges 2004:233).



Moreover, churches and Christian organizations have not been spared from the capitalist spirit of excessive profit, greediness and financial malpractices. The largest financial scandals and bankruptcies in US history disclosed in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, that have motivated business regulations mandating stronger ethical safeguards, concerned not only corporations (notably Enron, WorldCom and Xerox) but also the Baptist Foundation of Arizona raising and managing endowments for the work of Arizona Southern Baptist Convention (Ferrel et al. 2008:104-105, 182, 361-2; Velasquez 2006:27-28).<sup>8</sup>

Tocqueville, who coined “American exceptionalism” in the Jacksonian America pointed out three main aspects of American culture strengthening political community at large and sustaining the maintenance of free institutions: family life, religious traditions and participation in local politics (Thompson 2000:31; Nepo 2005:5; Bellah et al 1996:xliv). What remains is to examine the pervasive influence of religion in American culture.

### **2.3. Religious context: The American disestablishment of religion**

In contrast to a widespread pattern of religion-state relationships, the American society since the founding period has refrained from exhibiting favouritism either to one church as in the case of Anglicanism in England, Catholicism in Spain and Ireland, and Lutheranism in Sweden, or preferential treatment to one religion or several churches as in Europe or Asia (Wilcox & Jelen 2004:298; Thompson 2000:36). The Constitution, written in 1787, presents “almost no mention of religion” considered as coming within the individual states’ competence (Noll 2002:72). The 1789 First Amendment to the US Constitution introduced the governing framework for religion-state relations: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (Noll 2002:72; Gaustaud 2004:1944; Gillon & Matson 2002:A-10). The two short clauses of this statement referred to as “the establishment clause” and “the free exercise clause” respectively prohibited an official religion for the nation and interference with the free exercise of religious liberty (Cook & Waller 1998:58; Wald 1991:256; Wilcox & Jelen 2002:297). If the first clause can explain the prolific diversity of religious groups in the USA, the second clause has surprisingly led to an uncommonly active religious involvement in politics. These two features

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<sup>8</sup> In 2001, the Baptist Foundation of Arizona (BFA) was involved in “what would become the largest bankruptcy of a nonprofit charity” by swindling investors out of about \$570 millions. The BFA’s auditor was Arthur Andersen, the very same and fraudulent auditing company that generated Enron’s bankruptcy of about \$400 billion in 2001. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines for organizations of 1999, revised in 2004, were meant to prevent and curb the financial scandals not only in corporations but also non-profit organizations (Ferrell et al 2008:104-5, 182, 324, 361-2).



could also be understood as significant aspects of American exceptionalism in comparison with European settings.

### 2.3.1. Religious diversity

The constitutional non-sponsorship provision for religion has allowed various faiths brought by the immigrants to prosper in the American soil and has even led to the birth of new religious movements in this context (Joas 2007:24-5).<sup>9</sup> Albanese (1999:12) understands the American religious history as “the paradoxical story of the manyness of religions and the oneness of religion”; if the first category means religious pluralism, the second refers to religious unity through the “dominant cluster of organizations, ideas, and moral values” that characterizes the American culture. Other scholars do not overlook the divide between religious liberals and conservatives, and thus they perceptively single out three divergent views of religious culture in America and their corresponding ethical stands in terms of “the one, the two, the many” (Wilcox & Jelen 2004:294). These core categories deserve special attention.

#### 2.3.1.1. Religious pluralism and its implications

“The many” represents religious pluralism or the multiplicity of religions in the USA. The afore-mentioned slogan *e pluribus unum* printed on the US currency is meant to indicate one of the essential characteristics of the country’s religious life, viz., “in this one nation, many religions and even many variations of the same religion flourish” (Lippy 2010:1670). Understood as diversity, this pluralism conveys the idea of variety among religious institutions, beliefs and practices. But specifically, diversity stresses the historical domination of some groups of Christianity and the need of toleration to avoid marginalization of other religions and to acknowledge various alternatives. Unequivocally, pluralism values that variety and assumes that “no single form of religion has or should have the dominant influence” in the larger society (Lippy 2010:1670).

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding the exceptional religious vitality in America in comparison to Europe, three theories have been suggested: the Puritan legacy, the religious fervour of later immigrants, and the separation of state and church. The emphasis on the influence of the puritanical Pilgrim Fathers’ faith has been abandoned as it is incongruent with the drastic rise — practically by three times on a pro rata basis — of the membership in religious communities from 1800 to 1950. Similarly, the theory of the religiosity of the later immigrants is undermined by the level of religious activism being higher than in their countries of origin. Thus, the theory of church-state separation is held to be the most plausible as regard to the high level of religiosity of American people (Joas 2007:24-5).

From the First Amendment can be derived the claims for religious liberty for every religion operating on American soil. In practice, however, with regard to religious minorities from Asian immigration (Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, etc.), their freedom is generally supported, but tolerance for their religious displays “wears thin quickly” (Wilcox & Jelen 2002:299-300; cf. Anand 2004:282-91; Feldman 2004:293-307; Ikuenobe 2004:309-32). In the complex religious diversity of the USA, Christianity, Judaism and Islam are the predominant religions.<sup>10</sup> In this environment, the religious identity of an individual practitioner, caught by the commonalities and the variances of these religions, is often rendered diffuse. However, it is noteworthy to examine the significant features of the American religious landscape.

Along with religious pluralism, denominationalism has taken centre stage in the development of religious diversity and the subsequent change of religious and moral identity. In the history of the USA, denominationalism was a relevant category in the sociology of religion in that individual local congregations and their affiliates, to a large extent, could be well defined according to the specific beliefs and practices of their particular denomination (e.g., Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, or Episcopal) (Wilson 1988:17-30; Corbett 1994:31). In short, the denominationalism was relevant to the study of religious and moral identity of the adherents. In the modern era, a noticeable trend has been observed, according to Noll (2002:282) who notes in his study of North American Christianity that some congregations espouse the beliefs and practices of other surrounding churches.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, a denomination’s beliefs and practices are no longer sufficient. However, it becomes necessary to include the congregations’ geographic locations, their situations in the North or the South, in the rural or urban areas, as well as their demographic factors such as the age, race, education and income of the majority of their constituencies; all these parameters are nowadays influencing more or less the adherents’ way of life (Corbett 1994:31). Equally important, if not more so for the development of the relation between

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<sup>10</sup> About 52 per cent of the population are Protestants, 25 per cent are Roman Catholics and less than 2 per cent are Jews — according to a study released by the University of Chicago in 2004; other religions including Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism among others represent about 7 per cent; and about 14 per cent of people reported no religious affiliations (Neusner 2009:1-2). Through “institutional isomorphism,” Ammerman (2005:3) has succeeded in identifying seven streams of tradition among some three to four hundred thousand of congregations found in the country. With the percentage representing the number of congregations within each category (and not the number of its adherents), these seven broad traditions include conservative Protestant (52 per cent); mainline Protestant (25 per cent); African-American Protestant (8 per cent); Catholic and Orthodox (6 per cent); other religions (4 per cent); sectarian groups (3 per cent) and Jews (1 per cent) (Ammerman 2005:4-11).

<sup>11</sup> This interference may be observed even among denominations, since “some denominations or associations are closer in beliefs and practices to groups that do not share their historical origins than those that do” (Noll (2002:282). Moreover, some congregations identify themselves as non-denominational churches, and there is some religious movement crossing the borders of several denominations like evangelicalism and Pentecostalism or Charismatic revival.

denominations and identities, has been the modern reference of denomination to “diversity, toleration, and ecumenism.” Speaking of “Presbyterian” for example could mean that Presbyterianism is “not the only true church”; this can more or less erode the denominational loyalty and explains some cases of membership “switch from one mainline denomination to another” (Lewis 2010:1313; Kee et al 1998:507; Wuthnow 1988:80-99). More acutely, Balmer and Winner (2002:196) observe that “by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it had become increasingly difficult to distinguish a Presbyterian from a Methodist or a Congregationalist, thereby undermining even more any vestigial loyalties that Americans had to one denomination or another.” The corresponding laity attitude in Roman Catholicism is what Kane (2010:1993) labels “cafeteria Catholicism,” where individuals operate a pragmatic and selective choice among teaching and dogmas “to reflect their own consciences.” Historical denominationalism is assaulted by cultural forces enhancing religious diversity and pluralism within religious traditions and including individualism and the respect of congregational autonomy prized in American culture (Wald 1991:299).

Another factor of equal importance, if not the most important, of religious diversity and pluralism is the voluntary tradition. Voluntary organizations — such as “the societies, the colleges, and the revivals” — of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have led to the voluntary principle, “the guiding character of religion in America” (Gaustaud 2004:1945-6). Historically, however, the creation of voluntary associations finds its roots back in the major change in the character of Christianity introduced by the emergence of religious pluralism within Protestantism and by the rise of pietism or evangelicalism (Noll 2002:51).<sup>12</sup>

This shift occurred in the colonial era when Puritans in New England and Anglicans in the South failed in their efforts at maintaining established churches, and political leaders (like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison) “favoured disestablishing the churches more from a general concern for liberty than for religious liberty” (Noll 2002:50). At the same time, the revivalist movement, the Great Awakening (c. 1735-1755) with George Whitefield (1715-1770) as its leading figure, as Noll (2002:52) well puts it, “marked the passing of Puritanism and the rise of evangelicalism as the dominant Protestant expression in America” by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> It is also of note that “the essence of pietism or evangelicalism was a movement away from formal, outward, and established religion to personal, inward, and

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<sup>12</sup> The author notes that the same movement was known as “pietism” in the Continent (Europe) and as “evangelicalism” in Britain and North America.

<sup>13</sup> By 1740, when Whitefield performed his second visit in America, this revivalist movement was already a widespread phenomenon through the ministry of travelling preachers and particularly some distinguished ministers like Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) (Balmer & Winner 2002:221-2).

heartfelt religion” and even more, “in this new form, loyalty to a particular church was less important than a vibrant religion of the heart” (Noll 2002:51, 52-3).

Described by many observers such as Tocqueville and Max Weber, the emphasis on voluntary association is a “distinctive American trait [...] linked to the uniquely American system of ‘voluntary religion’” (Thompson 2000:14). At the corporative level, voluntarism is expressed by the profusion of organizations, societies, groups and associations whose number has skyrocketed since the War World II: schools, colleges and universities; mass media programmes; facilities for renewal, for the disabled and the aged; civil rights and humanitarian associations, etc. While operating outside the church in Protestant settings, they are often linked in some way to the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church. They reflect “the standard American penchant for nearly limitless creation of special-purpose organizations” (Noll 2002: 163-4).

At the ideological level, however, voluntarism means that religious identity is “less an ascriptive trait conferred by birth than a matter of choice and discretionary involvement” (Wald 1991:250). It also means “the loosening of the ties that hold individuals to inherited religious identity” (Wald 1991:250). Finally, voluntarism may give rise to other problems regarding religious affiliation, as rightly described by Wald:

Religious affiliation is such a private matter that it has become a suspect classification in polite society. Within the Churches, too, individuals now face an unprecedented choice about how intensely they will associate with their religious communities. Affiliation with a denomination may mean only nominal attachment to the Church, perhaps merely the residue of childhood loyalties and nostalgia, or constitute thorough immersion in an encapsulating subculture (Wald 1991:250).

In practice, with voluntarism, a forward step is taken based on the First Amendment of 1789 which proscribes state and dictated religious beliefs and practices. Through this provision, any religious beliefs or practices are considered as acceptable provided that the general welfare of the people is not undermined; and freely, each citizen may choose the religion (if any) he or she would like to practice (Lippy 2010:1671-2). With voluntarism, pragmatic choice could be made within religious community, and loyalty becomes relative. Pragmatism is also one the implications of postmodernism, a cultural and philosophical force that invigorates and praises diversity and pluralism. Thus, it is helpful in a pluralist context to describe postmodernism celebrating all kinds of cultural diversity along with voluntarism and denominationalism.

Postmodernist thought emphasizes flexibility, difference, diversity and pluralism in human relations in order to promote mutual understanding, pacific coexistence and social rest. It eschews a narrow-mindset or violent fundamentalism. Its genealogy is associated with a group of French poststructuralist philosophers — among them Jean-François Lyotard

(1924-1998), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) — “labeled as postmodern theorists” since the 1970s (Best & Kellner 2003:295-6). Richard Rorty (b.1931) was the well-known thinker attracted by their theory in the USA in the 1980s.

The theory champions the emergence of multiple discourses while it completely rejects at the same time any grand theories or meta-narratives pretending to explain social phenomena, including socio-political theories (like Capitalism and Marxism) as well as the religious meta-narratives or tenets of Christianity and other world religions. Postmodernism associates the rejection of meta-narratives with the repudiation of all absolute and universal truths because of what Foucault terms “the coercive power of ideas”: “all meta-narratives and attempts at interpretation are social constructs and are ultimately bound up with power expressions” and thus, “forms of social control” (Hollinger 2002:111).

The essence of postmodernism is better captured as the disenchantment against modernity. Modernity, driven by what Jürgen Habermas rightly called “the Enlightenment Project” of liberating human beings from the orthodoxy and prejudice of hierarchical religion, reinforced optimism and confidence in reason, science and technology expected to lead to human emancipation and get rid of the blights of violence, insecurity, ignorance and poverty. By contrast, postmodernism is characterized by a sceptical attitude to the foundational assumptions of modernism and the Enlightenment perspective, that is, “autonomous rationality, historical progress and metaphysical truth” (Sim 2001:341).

Thus, postmodernism is an anti-authoritarian and anti-foundationalist theory whose ambiguous perspective is well stated by Heat White (2006:42):

Premoderns placed their trust in authority. Moderns lost their confidence in authority and placed it in human reason instead. Postmoderns kept the modern distrust of authority but lost their trust in reason and have found nothing to replace it. This is the crux of all postmodern thought.

As for its ethical implications, postmodernism basically conveys the absence of any moral order and standards for decision-making since general rules “can only be very imperfect approximations to the ideal” (White 2006:42). Consequently, it is criticized for embracing scepticism, (radical and cultural) relativism, nihilism, and constructivism found in pragmatism (White 2006:49, Hollinger 2002:112).<sup>14</sup> In popular culture, postmodernism has led to the

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<sup>14</sup> If for nihilism, basic questions cannot be resolved since there is no right answer, for constructivism they cannot be resolved because truth is made, or constructed rather than discovered. Another version of constructivism is pragmatism which considers that truth is just whatever helps to get around in life, to accomplish one’s aim, and “will differ between people or between cultures that aim to accomplish different things” (White 2006:49). Furthermore, relativism is considered as the striking consequence of the postmodern denial of absolute truths or norms, when it asserts that “truth varies from person to person (radical relativism), or from society to society (cultural relativism)” (White 2006:49; Hollinger 2002:112).

subjectivity of truth and morality. While the quest for truth has become irrelevant for some persons, others consider that “truth is merely the individual preferences and perspectives of a self that is ‘socially constructed’” (Hollinger 2002:112).

In brief, the disestablishment of religion has promoted religious liberty and diversity. In the course of an on-going immigration, the Protestant establishment of the colonial era has been shaken and moved to a Protestant, Catholic and Jewish way of life which is being challenged by the variety of new religions reclaiming the full benefit of religious liberty for their own. A framework of internal and external diversity and pluralism has taken shape as the waves of immigrants, the transformation of denominations from Europe, and the birth of new denominations and religions on American soil are transforming the religious landscape. All these factors contribute to the complexity of religious and moral identity which is rendered trickier as historical denominationalism is eroded and voluntarism and postmodernism substantially influence the popular mindset. To speak of diversity and pluralism and their implications only begins to tell the story of American exceptionalism in the religious sphere which also includes the conservative-liberal divide.

### **2.3.1.2. Conservatism and liberalism**

In addition to “the many,” meaning the multiplicity of religions, there exists the two party system, the conservative-liberal divide which represents the “two” in the aforementioned categorisation of Wilcox and Jelen (2004:294). This separation cuts across denominational lines and is visible within Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, the two largest religious groups, through divergent theological stands and ethical issues as well.

Conservative Protestants can be called evangelicals as “sometimes the word is used broadly to mean all non-modernist (or non-liberals) Protestants” (Noll 2002:153). With this connotation, evangelicals, including fundamentalists, Pentecostals, restorationist and the holiness people, represent the largest religious movement in the USA (Balmer & Winner 2002:22-24). Although defining the identity of evangelicals is a controversial matter, evangelicalism refers to “a renewal movement within historic orthodoxy with deep roots in the early Church, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Puritanism (with its emphasis on personal conversion), pietism (stressing devotional practices) and the great awakenings of the eighteenth century” (Marsden 2006:235). Within evangelicalism lies an identifiable series of core concerns and themes, namely: “(1) a focus, both devotional and theological, on the person of Jesus Christ, especially his death on the cross; (2) the identification of Scripture as the ultimate authority in matters of spirituality, doctrine and ethics; (3) an emphasis upon conversion or a ‘new birth’ (or being born-again) as life-changing religious experience; (4) a



concern for sharing the faith, especially through evangelism (and missions)” (McGrath 1996:22; cp. Marsden 2006:235; Balmer & Winner 2002:22-24).

Based on the three criteria of “personal conversion, belief on the Bible as the Word of God, and a ‘desire to lead non-believers to the point of conversion,’” a 1998 Gallup poll estimated the number of evangelicals at 39 per cent of the US population; and within this group African Americans and Roman Catholics represent respectively 58 and 21 per cent (Balmer & Winner 2002:27). Thus, evangelicals are not only affiliated with the exclusively evangelical denominations or non-denominational churches but they are also found within the mainline Protestant churches as well as in the Roman Catholic Church, where their vibrant presence has been noticed since 1967 (Balmer & Winner 2002:23-24).

Since the mid-1960s, evangelical denominations and churches have increased “in number, visibility and influence” and have exceeded those associated with mainline Protestantism in “almost any index: membership, church attendance, or giving” (Balmer & Winner 2002:29; Noll 2002:176-9). To define the sub-groups of evangelicals, holiness churches and their adherents represent the particular expression of revivalistic Protestantism that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which emphasizes the holy living, or Christian perfection, found in Methodism and preached by John Wesley in England and propagated in America by Phoebe W. Palmer (1807-1874) and the revivalists such as Charles G. Finney (1792-1875). Born in England and being at the centre stage of the revivals of Keswick in 1875, Christian perfection or perfectionism that first took the name of Victorious Life theology came to be known as the Keswick movement. Its presence is still influential in the contemporary American context. Its central teaching emphasizes victory over sin through Jesus Christ, “not just in the hereafter but in this life as well” (Balmer & Winner 2002:60-1). The importance of spiritual discipline is generally characteristic of evangelicals as they stress “daily Bible reading, prayer, attendance at worship services — as means of attaining “victory” over sin and leading godly lives” (Balmer & Winner 2002:61).

Pentecostalism originated in the USA in 1906 through the ministry of William J. Seymour (1870-1922), a black holiness preacher. Beginning as a movement of personal piety it has come to stress the immediacy of the Holy Spirit’s action in Christian life, particularly through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. This movement “has become the fastest growing, most diverse form of Christianity in the world (Noll 2002:149-151).

In the 1920s fundamentalists were evangelicals and part of a broad coalition of conservatives from major Protestant “denominations and revivalists (prominently including pre-millennial dispensationalists)” who were “militantly opposed to modernism in the churches and to certain modern cultural mores” (Marsden 2006:234). Fundamentalism was a term

coined in 1920 after the publication, between 1909 and 1915, of *The Fundamentals*, in which what the adherents considered as “five Christian ‘fundamentals’ were expounded: (1) inerrancy of Scripture, (2) the virgin birth of Christ, (3) the substitutionary atonement, (4) the resurrection of Christ, and (5) the second coming of Christ” (Spickard et al 1994:390).

On the other side, modernists or liberals constitute the large membership of mainline Protestantism, also referred to as “mainstream Protestantism” or “old-line Protestantism” (Balmer & Winner 2002:253). “Mainline Protestant denominations include American Baptist Churches in the USA, Christian Church (Disciples of Church), Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church” (Lewis 2010:1309; Wilcox & Jelen 2004:297; Wald 1991:248).

However, it remains difficult to define this entity because some conservative Protestants maintain their presence within these denominations. Also, most of the mainline denominations have sister denominations that consider themselves as evangelical. Several have merged from earlier denominations, and some have related but independent sister denominations (e.g. the African Methodist Episcopal Church). Although each of these mainline denominations has its own individual history and bears its individual ethnic, social class, regional, institutional and theological distinctiveness, these denominations share some significant common characteristics. Their core features are well-summarised by Lewis (2010:1312-3):

- (1) middle-and upper-class socioeconomic status;
- (2) white, European ancestry;
- (3) a dedication to education for both lay and clergy;
- (4) a commitment to ecumenical cooperation with other groups alongside a relatively low level of denominational commitment;
- (5) a tradition of involvement with social issues, from the civil rights movement to anti-wars efforts to the women’s movements;
- (6) a sense of custodial responsibility for society;
- (7) centralized denominational structures; and
- (8) liberal or neo-orthodox theological tendencies.

Mainline Protestantism had represented the informal Protestant establishment from the second Great Awakening in 1790 until the 1950s, closely identifying with American society and providing social elites in the country: “the presidents and senators, the journalists and colleges presidents, and the captains of industry and wealthy landowners” (Kee et al 1998:506). Mainline Protestantism experienced accelerated declines in membership, giving and attendance in the 1960s as a result of an insidious trend begun in the 1930s. Although the reasons varied from one congregation to another, some factors contributing to the phenomenon have been singled out. First, with the demographic and geographic shifts after World War II, the urban core of congregants in the mainline churches moved to the suburbs where they continued to worship in separate congregations or even organized in evangelical church buildings. Also, the impact of bureaucratisation and the influence of liberal theology

cannot be overlooked. At that time, denominations, like other institutions (education, government, etc.), were led like corporations, meaning that the church leadership adopted insular attitudes, distancing themselves from local congregations. In the 1960s liberal theology, taught in the seminaries and colleges of these mostly northern denominations, motivated church leaders to embrace a new Social Gospel and to speak prophetically about “civil rights, economic justice, women’s equality, or the dangers of nuclear war.” At the same time most of the conformist middle-class and white laity was complaining about its need for “less socialism and more old-time gospel” (Kee et al 1998:506-7; Balmer & Winner 2002:32-33; Noll 2002:176). A further factor, noticeable by the 1980s, was the hazy identity and eroding denominational consciousness in terms of history, traditions, church polity that resulted directly from mainline Protestantism’s heavy investment in the ecumenical movement, thus creating a “kind of Pan-Protestantism” that explains the congregants’ easy mobility (Balmer & Winner 2002:33). By the 1980s, with the collapse of communism and the end of Cold War, the need for a united front seemed unnecessary though more attractive for Protestants longing and seeking more identity and definition in ethnicity and theology. Finally, and by contrast to mainline Protestantism, the rising of new conservatism or neo-evangelicalism not only provided this kind of definition, it focused on traditional beliefs (especially “the supernatural power of God and the reliability of the Bible”), and, more importantly, offered “an unambiguous morality in an uncertain age” that appealed to the lower middle-class and to many Protestants (Noll 2002:176; Balmer & Winner 2002:33, 195; Kee et al 1998:508-9).

Despite their own theological and denominational distinctiveness, churches within Mainline Protestantism are shaped, to some extent, by the legacies of liberal or modernist theology or its counter-theological mode — neo-orthodoxy (Lewis 2010:1313-4). Modernist or liberal theology originated with the assault of (social) Darwinism and German higher criticism on the Bible authority in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It stresses the restatement or re-interpretation of traditional doctrines, especially the supernatural power of God (authenticity of miracles) and the reliability of the Bible (biblical inspiration) and highly regards the openness to new insights offered by modern science and religious, philosophical and social advancement (McGrath 1996:120-121). In addition, liberal theology is attracted by an approach to religion based on universal resources, such as human culture, common experience and the use of an inclusive language, but it suspects particularism (e.g. special or divine revelation). Theological liberalism emphasizes “bearing witness’ against evil in the world” rather than promoting evangelism or mission (in the sense of seeking conversion) that

is viewed as “theological racism” or “Christian imperialism” (Balmer & Winner 2002:24-5; McGrath 1996:120-121).

The theological issues of essential difference between evangelical and liberal Protestants include biblical inspiration, original sin, and eternal damnation. Moreover, liberal Protestantism implicitly adheres to the idea of humanity’s progression to “a fuller understanding of the mind of God” and the realisation of his kingdom (Balmer & Winner 2002:24-5).<sup>15</sup>

Theological liberalism affirms “the centrality of ethics in religion,” and particularly social ethics as it underpinned the Social Gospel of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Lewis 2010:1313-4). Thus, it contrasts with evangelical theology which tends to be suspicious of the larger culture. As Balmer and Winner (2002:24-5) put it well: “in its extreme forms, liberal Protestantism falls into H. Richard Niebuhr’s “Christ of Culture” category, whereas evangelicals gravitate towards his “Christ against Culture” scheme.” However, some tenets of neo-orthodoxy, the theological movement initiated in reaction to extreme forms of liberalism, continue to be perceptible in mainstream Protestantism. In particular, many of the churches’ “elites” within this stream value the Bible (though interpreted through scholarly methods), “the church and the doctrinal tradition of Reformation Protestantism (even if adapted to a new day)” (Lewis 2010:1314).

The Roman Catholic Church, comprising nowadays more than 65 million (nearly the one-quarter of the population), represented only one per cent of the population (25,000 members) and was served by 23 priests at independence in 1776. To become the largest Christian group and feel at home in a dominant Protestant culture, the Roman Catholic Church has undergone many changes. Internally, the church has striven to amalgamate a variety of ethnic Catholic traditions from the Old World to create a new national church. Externally, due to the demands of the American “democratic, individualistic, and liberal culture,” the Church has modified some of its traditional “positions on authority, ecclesiastical procedures, and the maintenance of church order” (Noll 2002:121). As described in the next sub-section, the dialectic relations between conservatives and liberals have been the leading force underlying all these adjustments.

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<sup>15</sup> Balmer and Wimmer (2002:16, 70) trace back the beginnings of liberal Protestantism in America at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup>, probably in 1699 with the formation of the Battle Street Church in Boston. There, liberals rejected Puritan theology, particularly its emphasis on the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement. Charles Chauncy (1705-87), pastor of the First Congregation Church in this city “was one of the first theological liberals in America.” He particularly criticized the emphasis on personal conversion preached by the revivalists George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards during the Great Awakening.

The Second Council of the Vatican opened by Pope John XXIII on October 11, 1962 and closed in 1965 has been the most important watershed event in the contemporary history of Roman Catholicism. The final decrees of this council have brought about many changes in Roman Catholic tradition, namely the revision of leadership structures, canon law and liturgy as well as noticeable alterations in social and moral teachings. Of note, before Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church implicitly accepted the two-tiered division between the clergy expected to seek perfection by living out the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience and the laity made of ordinary Christians living in the world and obeying the Ten Commandments (Curran 1999:5). Vatican II theology emphatically called to holiness and perfection not only monks, priests and sisters but also all the laity. However, there is still a tension between this call and the acceptance of the sinners in the church confessing inclusiveness in its membership (Curran 1999:4-5). Also, Vatican II replaced the emphasis on the one-side papacy of the pre-Vatican period by its insistence on the collegiality of the bishops with the popes. The scriptural truth that all Christians through baptism share “the threefold offices of Jesus as priest, teacher and ruler” was recognized (Curran 1999:14). With the new understanding of the church as the whole people of God, the pre-Vatican distinction between the teaching church (*ecclesia docens*) and the learning church (*ecclesia discens*) — the hierarchical magisterium (the pope and the bishops) and everyone else — could not, in principle, be maintained (Curran 1999:14; 1987:22-3). However, some Catholic theologians and people among the laity are still very critical about the authority of Scripture, the place of self-determination and individual conscience in Catholic morality, and self-determination; they still question “the roles of inspiration, guidance and shared leadership in place of [what they view as the] authoritarian, triumphalist, and patriarchal approach that still characterizes papal and episcopal theological leadership” (Allsopp 2005:2).

Along with “the hierarchical structure and organization of the church,” the emphasis on mediation is the most important characteristic of the Roman Catholic theology (Curran 1999:10).<sup>16</sup> The stress on “the methodological significance of mediation” is manifested “in all aspects of that theology” and seems to be a point of disagreement between “Protestant ethicists of all types and Catholic ethicists be they liberal or conservative” (Curran 1987:34; cf. Gustafson 1981, 1984). Perhaps, the following statement is one of the most concise and thorough explanations of mediation:

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<sup>16</sup> The subsequent elaboration heavily draws on the thorough analysis of these tenets found in two books authored by Charles E. Curran respectively in 1999 and 1987: *The Catholic moral tradition today: A synthesis*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press; and *Toward an American Catholic moral theology*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.



The revelation of God is mediated in and through scripture *and* tradition. The word and work of God are mediated in and through Jesus, *and* in and through the human instrumentality of the church. The moral call to follow Jesus is mediated in and through the human *and* the human experience (Curran 1987:34; emphasis added).

Therefore, there is a “Catholic *and*” that particularly distinguishes Roman Catholic theology with Protestantism and which appears in pairs like “Scripture and tradition, faith and reason, grace and works, Jesus and the church, Mary and the saints” (Curran 1999: 11).<sup>17</sup>

Pre-Vatican II Catholic theology spoke of Scripture and traditions as two separated sources of revelation. In contrast, the post-conciliar theology sees tradition “as the process of transmission of Scripture, belief, worship and moral life” (Curran 1999:ix). It is also “a living, evolving, [...] developing and not stagnant and unchanging” tradition in that “the church does not merely repeat the words of Scripture but appropriates them in the light of on-going circumstances of time and space” (Curran 1999:x).

The Catholic insistence on mediation closely links Jesus to the church. Through incarnation, “Jesus, the divine, became the human; so too in the church, the divine works in and through the human.[...] The church is a visible community with visible structures that mediate God’s loving presence in our world” (Curran 1999:10). It is not to be primarily understood as “an invisible reality involving relationship between God and the saved” (Curran 1999:2-3). As accurately explained by Curran, the mediation of the church undergirds the central Catholic concept of the church as a non-voluntary society and the means of salvation:

Most Americans tend to think of the church as voluntary society in which like-minded individuals come together to sustain, nurture, and develop their spiritual lives. But this understanding is not the Catholic understanding and betrays individualistic presuppositions. We are not saved as individuals who then come together to deepen our spiritual lives within the community of the church. The saving love of God comes to us in and through the church (Curran 1999:3).

As matter of fact, Curran echoes the traditional emphases on “the church as means of salvation” along with “the church as hierarchical institution” that the most important ecclesiological document of Vatican II, the “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” has not completely suppressed; rather the two tenets are now respectively supplanted by the conception of “the church as a mystery or sacrament” and “the church as the whole people of God” (Piggin 1993:439).

“Sacramentality” and “analogical imagination” are both synonymous with mediation, the belief that “the divine is mediated in and through the human and natural,” justifying the performance of the church’s mission and function through sacraments (Curran 1999:10). In Roman Catholic tradition, sacrament is “supervised and/or performed only by” priests and is

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<sup>17</sup> This is in particular, Karl Barth’s critique against Roman Catholic theology (Curran 1999:11; cf. von Balthasar 1971:40-1).



“understood as a necessary means of conveying saving grace,” whereas the Protestant teaching generally presents a sacrament as a church’s ceremony or the rite being “a sign of God’s grace and as one means by which those who are already justified receive God’s continuous grace in their lives” (Grudem 2000:1253).<sup>18</sup> Because of mediation, Roman Catholicism teaches transubstantiation: In and through the celebratory meal of the eucharist, Jesus is actually present to the church as the bread and the wine become His body and blood (Curran 1999:11; Grudem 2000:1255).<sup>19</sup>

Since the divine is mediated through the human and natural things, Roman Catholicism emphasizes the significance of human works or deeds as response to the Lord’s grace while Protestants generally in the Reformation tradition speaks of *sola gratia* (grace only). To illustrate, an offence towards God requires through the Catholic sacrament of penance, “contrition and absolution” as human counterpart to “God’s mercy and forgiveness” (Curran 1999:12).

Coupled with the essential doctrine of catholicity or universality, the tenet of mediation finds its ramification in the Catholic social teaching. The church and the Christians as disciples of Christ mediate the mission and work of their risen Lord Jesus Christ “in time and space” through the internal life of the church and within the wider society as well (Curran 1999:x, 12). Mediation and catholicity are the significant grounds of Roman Catholic Church’s emphasis on the moral life of the church and the common good of the broader human society. They are foundational to the Catholic social teachings and papal encyclicals urging Catholics to work together with all people of good will to achieve social justice.

In the Catholic tradition, the belief that the divine is mediated through the human has further implications with regard to faith and reason. First, there is no conflict between faith and reason. So is affirmed natural theology or theodicy, “an understanding of God based totally on human reason” since “reason can prove the existence of God by going from the natural and the created world to the divine” (Curran 1999:11). Second, both revealed and human sources contribute in the search for the moral truth. Thus, there is an inclusive, “both-and” methodology repudiating an “either-or” approach as far as sources of moral wisdom and knowledge are concerned (Curran 1999:x). Inclusiveness and universality in Catholic moral tradition extend the moral quest to the dialogue with all other people, the broader human experience, all other religions and disciplines including philosophy and human sciences.

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<sup>18</sup> The two Protestant sacraments are baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In the Roman Catholic Church, they are seven, namely Baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, extreme unction (or “last rite”), holy orders (ordination to priesthood or diaconate) and matrimony (Grudem 2000:951, 1253).

<sup>19</sup> The use of natural things like water in Baptism and oil in ordination and extreme unction illustrate the mediation of the divine through natural and created things (Curran 1999:11).

Illustrative is the prevalent influence of Thomist tradition in Catholic moral theology drawn from Aristotelian ethics (Curran 1999:x). Third, mediation justifies “[t]he basic goodness of the natural world and human reason and experience. Whatever is created is good and can even tell us something about God” (Curran 1999:12). Hence the pervasive influence of natural law on pre-Vatican II moral theology: the wrongness and rightness of moral action was essentially based on natural law. Having identified “the extrinsic, minimalistic, and legalistic character of natural law ethic,”<sup>20</sup> Vatican II called for more acknowledgment of “the supernatural aspect of Christian existence”; thus, it added “the scripture, faith, grace, and revelation” to the material content of a purely natural law morality based on reason and human nature” (Curran 1987:54).

### 2.3.1.3. American civil religion

“The one” of “the one and many” of the American religion stresses the existence of a unified system, a civil religion and its Judeo-Christian ethos, despite the differences on doctrines and forms of worship in the religious territory. In the 1950s, Will Herberg (1960:38-9) and others spoke of the “American Way of Life” as the on-going marked Christian hegemony in American culture under the influence of its three main faiths, namely Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism. According to them, the “American Way of Life” is a set of values, including “a positive evaluation of religion itself, a faith in the democratic system, a belief in progress and a sense of national mission” (Thompson 2000:20). While Herberg was making the point that the religious system was no longer monolithic but was becoming pluralistic, the lasting influence of Protestant individualism, millennialism and moralism, along with remnants of Puritanism, cannot be overlooked (Thompson 2000:15-16; Albanese 1999:419-29).<sup>21</sup>

These features are part and parcel of a kind of common, popular religion still pervasive in the American culture labelled “American civil religion” (Sutton 2010:1694; Davis 2004a:39). It had served as a powerful ideology during the Cold War against atheist communism, when many Americans believed that like ancient Israel, the USA has to bring God’s message of salvation (political, economic, and religious) worldwide. For this purpose, the phrase “under God” was added in 1954 to the Pledge of Allegiance — to get “One Nation

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<sup>20</sup> These features reflect a reductionist view of moral theology. In pre-Vatican period, central to moral theology was “the specific aim of training confessors as judges for the sacrament of penance” (Curran 1987:54).

<sup>21</sup> In her more elaborated treatment of the oneness of religion in America, Albanese (1999:395-501) distinguishes civil religion with public Protestantism and cultural religion. Other scholars (Corbett 1994:32-34; Davis 2004a:33-44), however, integrated all the features of her three components in one category, the American civil religion.

under God” — and in 1956, “In God we trust,” inscribed on money, was elevated by Congress to become the national motto (Sutton 2010:1694; Davis 2004a:44).

Yet the idea of civil religion harkens far back in American history as Albanese explains (1999:460) in the following statement:

Its foundations were laid by the New England Puritans and, later, by the patriots of the American Revolution, who linked Puritan millennial themes to Enlightenment religion and the experience and remembrance of their own deeds in the war. By the time of George Washington’s first inauguration, the creeds, codes, and cultus of the civil religion were firmly in place, and through them, the ordinary history of the country was linked to extraordinary religion.

Robert Bellah, following Tocqueville, was the one to bring this concept to the attention of the scholarly circles and ultimately to a popular audience in the contemporary era. In his essay, Bellah mentions that in the USA:

There actually exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well-institutionalised civil religion in America [...] This public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion (1967:1, 4; cf. Thompson 2000:15; Corbett 1994:32).

As matter of fact, American civil religion “is not exclusively Christian,” but is a “religious nationalism as institutionalised in a loose religious system” that, surely, meets the basic criteria of a religion *per se* included in Bellah’s statement (Corbett 1994:33; Albanese 1999:460). Indeed, a religion is an integrated system or a system of symbols encompassing a creed (or set of beliefs), a code (expressed through a lifestyle), a cultus (or a set of ritual activities) (Albanese 1999:11; Corbett 1994:7).<sup>22</sup> In accordance with this definition civil religion includes, amongst others, the following beliefs:

(1) The great majority of Americans believe that God exists; (2) The US was founded under God’s guidance, which continues to be important in the life of the nation; (3) The US has a special role to play in God’s plan for this world, although people disagree about exactly what that role is; (4) The US has a moral obligation to help lead the rest of the world into living by these same principles; (5) Individualism is important and self-determination is a God-given right (Corbett 1994:32).

Held by the majority of the US population, these beliefs are reflected in the Declaration of Independence (1776), the US Constitution of 1787 and regularly in the presidential inaugural addresses. These beliefs also appear in George Washington’s declaration of November 26 as a national day of prayer and public thanksgiving. Also these beliefs are echoed in several

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<sup>22</sup> The working definitions of religion provided by the two authors are quite similar. For Albanese, religion is “a system of symbols (creed, code, cultus) by means of which people (a community) orient themselves in the world with reference to both ordinary and extraordinary powers, meanings, and values. According to Corbett “religion is an integrated system of beliefs, lifestyle, ritual activities, and institutions by which individuals give meaning definition to (or finding in) their lives by orienting themselves to what they take to be holy, sacred, or of the highest value.”

songs used in public celebrations, and they motivate the calls for a national day of prayer (Corbett 1994:33).<sup>23</sup>

### **2.3.2. Religious and moral liberal-conservative divide**

As mentioned earlier, the divide between liberal and conservatives in many churches is noticeable through the opposed or controversial ethical stands taken by their members. However, whatever their religious affiliation, American people are strikingly influenced by the ethic of their civil religion.

#### **2.3.2.1. Conservative Protestantism**

Along with conservative Catholics and Orthodox Jews, conservative Protestants constitute the cultural conservative coalition. Unlike liberals or modernists, this coalition does not promote an individualist moral ethic. Rather, traditional morality is their hobby-horse. They distinguish themselves by their pro-life attitude, their homophobia and their defence of traditional values. To achieve their ends, cultural conservatives mobilise leaders and members of churches and other sympathisers into Republican politics. Culture wars between modernists or liberals and conservatives have resulted in fits of violence like “the firebombing of abortion clinics and the murder of abortion providers” (Wilcox & Jelen 2004:297; Wolfe 2000:197-294).

Sometimes, however, the coalition scatters: one has difficulty keeping up with the distinctions between conservatives and liberals. What Catholics and African Americans stand up for in moral and political controversies is not always congruent with these general differences. That is why it becomes defensible to speak of “the many,” not only as a theological category, but also as an ethical category as well. Although Catholic religious elites support very conservative positions on social issues such as traditional family values, abortion, homosexuality, they may uphold liberal policies on poverty and socio-economic issues. As far as African Americans are concerned, their largely evangelical background predisposes them to support conservative views; yet they support progressive or liberal positions on racial policies and social justice issues (Wilcox & Jelen 2004:296-7; Marty 1998:754; Cross 1997:1665). However, fundamentalists, conservative members of mainline Protestant denominations, as well as Mormons, are not prone to support relief programmes

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<sup>23</sup> For example, the following songs: “The Star Spangled Banner,” “America the Beautiful” and “God Bless America.” Regarding a national day of prayer, President Harry Truman signed it into a law; during the Persian Gulf War, President George Bush chose February 3, 1991 for this purpose.

for the poor, “seeing the welfare state as fostering irresponsible behaviour” (Kee et al 1998:499).

### 2.3.2.2. Liberal Protestantism

Progressive elements of Mainline Protestant churches and Roman Catholicism and Judaism as well as secular citizens constitute the group of cultural modernists or liberals opposing cultural conservatives. They consist of social movements and individuals supporting feminism, abortion, homosexuality, gender equality and protection of civil rights. Their political action was noticeable at the time of the Vietnam War, and they are still involved in social services to alleviate poverty, to fight racism and discrimination, and to help the needy like refugees, immigrants, women, the sick, etc. (Wilcox & Jelen 2004:297; Balmer & Wilmer 2002:71; Wolfe 2000:197-294). Similar to American Protestantism, amid the Roman Catholic Church in the USA, is the presence of two factions: on the one hand there are traditional Catholics, and on the other hand there are liberals or progressive Catholics

### 2.3.2.3. Roman Catholicism

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Roman Catholicism has been significantly influenced by the American culture of religious freedom. Indeed, the great revolution experienced since Vatican II (1962-5) was anticipated by the American and Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray (1904-67). Murray and his allies were instrumental in the elaboration and the publication of Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (1963) proclaiming the rights and duties of the human person, including socio-economic, political and civil rights in the framework of natural law. In the same way, they influenced the promulgation of another social encyclical, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965), which “engaged the Enlightenment constitutional tradition of rights and liberties that affirmed the right of religious freedom” (Appleby 2004:9; cf. Cross 1997:1665).

The political, economic, and social forces of American culture have significantly contributed to the changes that the Church in the USA has undergone since Vatican II. These decisive changes in “leadership, liturgy, and cultural cohesion” have resulted in “a heightened polarization between traditional and progressive factions” (Kane 2010:1988-9). In the process, without neglecting the effects of economic and cultural gaps, as well as a clergy shortage and gender roles, the aforementioned papal condemnation of artificial birth control in 1968 and the clergy sexual abuse scandals in 2002 have been watershed events. In both situations, the laity lost confidence in the leadership, and many disaffected people left the



church. Of the two events, the abuse of children and adolescents by priests has been more damaging in terms of the loss of credibility towards bishops, including the Pope himself, because of orchestrated cover-ups, and even monetary payouts, since the estimates of lawsuit settlements against priests amounted to \$4 billion (Kane 2010: 1992; Killen 2010:1994).<sup>24</sup>

Liberals' demands have consisted in lay leadership, greater institutional transparency, and financial accountability. Young Catholics have been assimilated to this faction. The decrease in their attendance and attachment to dogmas has been compensated for by their acceptance of the social teaching of the church and of opportunities to volunteer in its sponsored activities. For liberals, Vatican II's reforms have not been fully implemented as Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have been too conservative in their policies and pronouncements, even allowing the Tridentine liturgy and Latin Mass of Pre-Vatican II. They expect the magisterium to consider the historical character of all religion and to promote Catholic social teachings. For conservatives, the church and some bishops are going too far with the reforms. The return to Pre-Vatican II liturgical practices is the main concern of these Restorationists who, in addition, concentrate on anti-abortion and anti-homosexuality politics since being relieved from the communist threat, their main focus before 1989 (Kane 2010:1991; Killen 2010:1995).

As noted earlier, Vatican II's Declaration of Religious Freedom has been received with appreciation by many Catholics dissenting from some traditional positions (Deedy 1994:24). In response, theologians and priests as well as institutions promoting liberal positions were targeted by the hierarchy in the 1980s.<sup>25</sup> To curb the theology of liberation in the whole Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II launched the "New Evangelization" programme in 1984 (Kane 2010:1990). In 1990, he issued *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* ("From the Heart of the Church") an apostolic constitution notifying Catholic schools, colleges and universities "to maintain and profess their 'Catholic' identity". While conservative Catholics acclaimed this warning as an efficient means of counteracting the dissent, liberals interpreted the document as an

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<sup>24</sup> The authors note that, in fact, the church hierarchy had covered up numerous cases of clergy sexual abuse of children and adolescents which it dealt with since the 1960s. Reports from Germany have implicated the Pope Benedict XVI himself in those kinds of cover-ups while serving as archbishop of Munich in Germany. In 2002, Boston priest John Geoghan was convicted for the sexual abuse of a ten-year-old boy. His trial attracted national coverage and attention. Afterwards, thousands of adults have claimed being also abused by priests. In the USA, the church has paid \$2 billion to abuse victims by 2010 and, as a result, several dioceses have filed for bankruptcy.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Leonardo Boff of Brazil, proponent of the liberation theology movement in South America, was silenced and removed from his teaching position in 1984 and 1989. Similarly, in the USA, Charles E. Curran, moral theologian and professor at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., upholding personal conscience and individualist view on sexual morality and birth control, was tried for decades and eventually banned from teaching in Catholic institutions (Allsopp 2005:27-9).



authoritarian way of increasing bishops' takeover of the schools and reducing insightful reflections (Kane 2010:1990-1). Pope John Paul II's efforts have been pursued under the papacy of Benedict XVI. In 2009, the Leadership Conference of Women's Religious, representing the majority of US women's religious communities, underwent investigations on account of its failure to promote "the Church's teachings on male-only priesthood, homosexuality, and primacy of the Roman Catholic Church as the means to salvation" (Killen 2010:1094).

#### **2.3.2.4. The influence of American civil religion**

The particular lifestyle encouraged by the American civil religion is centred on "the duty of good citizenship" that Corbett (1994:32) well summarised as:

- (1) People should be informed about the political process and vote. This is upheld as an ideal, even though voter turnout is rarely over 50 per cent and is sometimes much lower;
- (2) Military service is glorified, especially in wartime;
- (3) Obedience to the laws of the land rates far more highly than does civil disobedience and passive resistance to laws perceived to be unjust, at least in most people's mind;
- (4) Home and family are elevated as ideals, in spite of the prevalence of single people and broken families in the culture;
- (5) Self-sufficiency is encouraged, and being on welfare or being homeless still carries with it a suggestion of moral failure in the minds of many people.

What could be considered as ritual practices include public celebrations, especially the events held according to the American ritual calendar on July Fourth, the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln, Memorial Day, Veterans' Day, and Thanksgiving Day. In fact, American civil religion has got its "holy days" and "national 'saints'" (like the founding fathers, Lincoln, Martin Luther and so forth); and even places for "pilgrimage" (including "Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and national cemeteries") to stimulate "Americans to keep connection with creed and code" (Albanese 1999:460, 465; Corbett 1994:33). The "church" of civil religion or the primary context where its beliefs and practices are learned is the public school (Corbett 1994:33).

It is worth noting that while people practice their separate religions they can hardly avoid the influence of the American civil religion which remains "a powerful unifying force that helps to balance the extent of religious pluralism"(Corbett 1994:32-3). Its utopian and moralistic character supports individualistic, egalitarian and populist values as well as the exceptional religious commitment to various faiths. At the same time, this national religion, along with other faiths, is a source of national integration and of divisive aspects of American life between the orthodox, liberals, conservatives, fundamentals and evangelicals on ethical issues (Thompson 2000:15-16). In the American pluralist context, civil religion promoted by the Constitutional establishment "does enjoy a type of 'permissive establishment'" (Corbett

1994:34). However, the relation between religion and state becomes more complex when it comes to the role of religion in the public sphere.

### 2.3.3. Religion in the public sphere

In the 1830s, Tocqueville was amazed by the difference between France and USA with regard to political-religious relations. “In France, he stated, I had always seen *the spirit of religion* and *the spirit of freedom* marching in opposite directions. But in America I found they were intimately united and they reigned in common over the same country” (Tocqueville 1981:185; emphasis added). Indeed, Tocqueville saw the existing harmony, the absence of tension between politics and religion reigning in the public sphere, as the legacy of American Revolution, and contrasting with the state of affairs in France (Noll 2002:70-1). Besides, religious mobilization in politics observed in USA is “unique in its intensity and its diversity” (Jelen & Wilcox 2004:290). The decentralized political system provides multiple opportunities for religiously motivated citizens and even religions leaders to be involved in politics.<sup>26</sup> However, the relation between politics and religion has been complex as shown in the following elaboration with representative examples of the interplay between religion and politics and moral education in public schools.

#### 2.3.3.1. The interplay between religion and politics

In the public square, the interplay between religion and politics is very complex and difficult to be understood through a single concept. Nonetheless, this complexity is perhaps most visible in three aspects of the American experiment: freedom of religion, church-state separation and religion in legislation and public office.

The separation of church and state was provided for in the US Constitution of 1787. Since religion and government were understood as separate institutions and functions, neither affiliation to religion nor a lack thereof were considered as constitutionally required conditions for participation in public life; only the affirmation to support the Constitution was a legitimate requirement. The aforementioned clauses — “the establishment clause” and “the

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<sup>26</sup> Several unique features of American political life make it easier for churches, social movements and interest groups to mobilize: (1) “the porous, undisciplined nature of American parties”; (2) the freedom of any member of the local legislature or national state to vote according to his/her own positions on issues; (3) the structure of political parties as non-membership organizations; (4) the dependence of parties upon groups, churches and social movements, since only two large parties serve as coalition of interests; (5) “the separation of powers at the national and local levels”; and (6) the ability of local government to make policies as does the national state (Wilcox & Jelen 2004:300-2).

free exercise clause” — of the First Amendment of 1789 were meant to clarify this separation (Corbett 1994:12-3).

Well understood, the Founders’ argument on religious freedom was on the one hand to foster toleration between religions and to protect the free exercise (or even the lack) of religion for every citizen; on the other hand, they avoided the entanglement of religion with governmental initiatives and activities. However, in the contemporary era, some interpretations of Founders’ ideas tend more or less to be inconsistent with their project. People have come to ascertain from the constitution disestablishment the primacy of the principle of individual rights over the basic truth claims of religion, even those recognized as “fundamental principles common to all religions” (Spalding 2004:189). In addition, as stated above, they have broadened the definition of religion to include all forms of beliefs and disbeliefs (Buddhism, secular humanism, ethical culture, atheism and the like), a view resulting in the upholding of relativism and the rejection of religious and moral precepts.

Perhaps, the disestablishment of religion as provided for by the Constitution should have meant the mere separation of the church and the state. However, it curiously opened a lot of scope for manoeuvre in favour of religion in the public sphere. Davis has accurately provided “the separation-integration-accommodation triad” to describe the whole American religious and political system (Davis 2004a:33, 44). Firstly, “the ‘high wall’ of separation has many holes” (Wilcox & Jelen 2002:298). The separation church-state needs to be apprehended as an institutional partition since several references to the Judeo-Christian religion characterize political life and practices. The two institutions are constitutionally required not to be interconnected in order to achieve mutual independence and autonomy in their functioning. In this respect, court decisions limit religious activity in public schools.

Secondly, in addition to the institutional separation of church and state, the integration of religion and politics characterizes the American way of life and encourages the participation of religious institutions and leaders in the political process. The U.S. history witnesses this significant participation because the role of churches prevailed in the political debate about the Revolutionary war (1775-1783). Churches and other religious groups played the same leading role in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with regard to major causes such as slavery, temperance and even non-sectarian education. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their involvement was more noticeable on economic and social justice issues as well as abortion, civil rights, war, peace, and world hunger. Nowadays, “virtually all the major religious groups in America and many religious coalitions have public offices in Washington, D.C. to lead their lobbying efforts” (Davis 2004a:36-7; cf. Wilcox & Jelen 2004:302-9; Wald 1991: 270).

Thirdly, the very active role of more than one hundred religious lobbies influencing law-making and public policies according to their particular faiths and worldviews forcefully refutes the assumption of complete separation and at the same time reinforces the view of integration of body religion in body politics. As a result, the establishment clause is relaxed. Yet, the same (establishment) clause “is also equally relaxed in accommodating various expressions of civil religion” (Davis 2004a:39). In fact, “the separation of church and state does not deny the political realm a religious dimension” (Bellah 1967:5; Davis 2004a:44; cf. Wald 1991:257-60). As Sutton (2010:1690) puts it well, “Americans have long cherished the idea that a strict wall of separation divides church and state. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as in previous centuries, this was more myth than reality.”

However, this complex notion of separation between religion and politics continues to fuel very contradictory views on the role and place of religion in legislation and public office. All the related debate can be summed up into two broad issues. First is the issue of public discourse resulting in law or policy made in a context of religious pluralism. The second issue concerns the moral and religious commitments of the elected officials who along with those of the citizenry shape policy and public office (Talbot 2004:ix-x; Dionne & Drogosz 2004:1-3).<sup>27</sup> The issue of faith in religious discourse in public office is well summarized by the following questions raised by Jean Bethke Elshtain (2004:94):

How should those with religious convictions speak when they go public? Does the believer enter the civic arena using a full-blown faith-based and confessional vocabulary? Or should the believer be compelled to translate every religiously derived conviction into some ostensibly neutral vocabulary of civic discussion?

At the root of a preferential or radical affirmation of an inclusive language is the understanding of the nation as not a religious but as a liberal and secular state according to the establishment clause. Since the early 1970s, the widespread support of John Rawls’ liberal political theory has influenced the political discourse. Many scholars and other citizens uphold the idea that “dialogue in public discourse within a liberal democracy must be intelligible to other participants. Because religious language is unintelligible to many citizens, it should be translated into secular language accessible to everyone” (Davis 2004a:38). As the debate polarizes liberals against conservative Christians, Michael Cromartie (2004:77) clearly asserts that the later “would be more effective if they developed a public language, a public philosophy, and a public posture that communicates a concern for the common good of all and not just of fellow believers” – based on “common grace or natural law.”

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<sup>27</sup> These issues had been at the core of the debates on religion and American politics like the one initiated by The Pew Forum Dialogues on Religion and Public Life from 2002-2004 between a large spectrum of contributors — scholars as well as political and religious leaders (Talbot 2004:ix-x; Dionne & Drogosz 2004:1-3; cf. Jelen & Wilcox 2004:287; Davis 2004a:38).

In contrast, communitarian thinkers, like Stephen Carter, oppose this Rawlsian view and assert that “religious arguments and even religion-based legislation should be countenanced in a liberal democratic framework” (Davis 2004a:38). Elshtain pointedly remarks that even within the religious ranks, historically there has been neither a univocal position nor a similar set of arguments in support of controversial legal or ethical policies. For Christianity, this has been the case of stands against or for slavery and Jim Crow laws. Thus claiming that if a specifically religious language is used in civic life, the faithful, Christians, Jews, Muslims or others, would “enjoy some sort of epistemological privilege” over non-believers seems to be “beyond the challenge” (Elshtain 2004:94).

Yet Christians holding a public office are still challenged by their moral and religious commitments and their implications in political decisions. In this regard through the 2002 Pew Forum it appears that some political leaders are roughly either universalist or particularist, while some based their stand on natural law, others affirm “the unity of private and public in the individual, not in the public order” (Skillen 2004:184).<sup>28</sup> Obviously, the salience of religion in political life indicates that the US “is at the very least a secular state” where “religion has become a private matter for the individual, compartmentalized in the form of conscience, rather than a vital force in public arenas” (Wald 1991:243).

### **2.3.3.2. Religion and moral education in the public schools**

According to McClellan (1999:70), “throughout the 1960s and 1970s a variety of forces challenged the place of moral education” in elementary and secondary schools, and he continues, “schools either rapidly adopt a careful neutrality on moral questions or became entirely indifferent to them.” This attitude drastically contrasted with the emphasis that earlier generations before the World War II put on social, civic and moral education. The eclipse of moral education of the day was not the result of a frontal attack but the outcome of a process of decline that began in the 1940s and 1950s when Americans started demanding of schools a particular emphasis on “high-level academic and cognitive skills” (McClellan 1999:73-4).

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<sup>28</sup> This is the case of the selected contributors to the dialogue: Mario Cuomo, a liberal Catholic and Mark Souder, an Evangelical Protestant and a conservative. The former refused to abide to the Catholic dogmas “regarding divorce, birth control, abortion, stem cell research, and even the existence of God” (Cuomo 2004:13). The latter, in contrast, maintains that he cannot separate his life “into a private and a public sphere” and thus, insists: “to ask me to check my Christian beliefs at the public door, he continues, is to ask me to expel the Holy Spirit from my life when I serve as a congressman, and that I will not do” (Souder 2004:20, 21). Mario Cuomo is also a former professor of law, a Democrat who served three terms as governor of New York; and Mark Souder is an experienced Congressman from Indiana.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the country needed high-level scientific and technical skills to meet the developments in physics, electronics and medicine. With the Cold War, several anti-communist strategies included a demand of time to secure capitalism, democracy as well as religion. Another growing phenomenon consisted of drawing a “sharp distinction between private and public realms and to establish different behavioural norms for each sphere,” as McClellan (1999:74) still points out. “Americans of the post-war era increasingly thought of religion and morals as personal and private and assigned responsibility for them to home and church rather than to the school.” These were, among others, the driving causes of this eclipse of moral education, a phenomenon aggravated by “a number of social and cultural upheavals,” namely “the efforts to end racial discrimination,” the waging of the unpopular Vietnam War, “a deepening cultural pluralism,” and “a growing willingness to expand the range of acceptable personal conduct” (McClellan 1999:75).

For many educators of the day, retreating from moral education seemed the appropriate option to avoid deepening controversial social relations engendered by the increasing awareness of class, ethnic and racial divisions; it was going against the tide of the general mood valuing difference, tolerance, and cultural relativism. By contrast, since the mid-1960s, other educators have sought ways for a revival of moral education in the schools. For this purpose, some scholars have succeeded in suggesting a variety of new approaches. Values clarification, cognitive developmentalism and a feminist approach emphasizing an ethic of caring were developed in line with the diversity of cultures and lifestyles, individual freedom and personal autonomy. At the same time, some individuals and groups resorted to character education favouring the cultivation of virtues for good conduct, a predominant approach until the 1930s (McClellan 1999:75, 79, 89).

The pressures of both the social tensions of the 1960s and 1970s and the “civil libertarian critique of schools” — that was depicting the school as “an authoritarian institution that smothered creativity and enforced a dull conformity” since the 1940s — motivated the legal efforts to not only broaden the rights of children but also to remove religion from the schools (McClellan 1999:76-7). In response, the Supreme Court imposed strict separation of church and state in the context of public schools by ruling as unconstitutional all teacher-led religious activities through *Engels v. Vitale* (1962) and devotional Bible-reading as well as other religious activities through *Schempp* case (1963), drawing at the same time a sharp line between instruction and indoctrination in public schools (Kee et al 1998:496-7).

The full-scale ebb of moral education observed in elementary and secondary education would be also experienced in colleges and universities by the 1960s. Here the specialized training and social relevance, and the same social and political forces observed



for public schools as well as some specific developments in tertiary education, precipitated a decline that became discernible at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (McClellan 1999:99-100). According to Kiss and Euben (2010:6), these specific developments include:

(1) the creation of research university; (2) the rise of the ideal of “value-free” inquiry in the social sciences; (3) the secularization of intellectual life; (4) the decline of normative ethics and the corresponding the rise of analytical philosophy; (5) the intellectual movements such as logical positivism, behaviourism, and postmodernism; (6) an emphasis on vocational and technical training [in institutions where the majority of students are enrolled]; (7) the culture of consumerism; and (8) the limit of interaction between the faculty and the students.

In the 1950s, noticeable efforts for redress consisted of ethical courses proposed by progressives which led to a growing interest in philosophy (especially existentialism) and religion through the inquiry on normative questions.; other initiatives came from the advocates of a resort to the humanities to reinstate moral and civic education in colleges and universities in the 1940s and 1950s (McClellan 1999:99-100). However, all these endeavours were far from the contexts of colonial colleges and the American education throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century where Aristotelian and classical ethics and “Christian and civic republican conceptions of duty and virtue” and “a concern for character formation and citizenship” underlay liberal education and the entirety of American higher education (Kiss & Euben 2010:6).

Regarding the eclipse of moral education in the 1960s and 1970s, McClellan (1999:101) writes, “The very events that brought disorder to the campus — the civil rights movement, the war in Vietnam, concerns about the environment — also gave birth to a new vigour in moral discourse.” In others words, the initial source for the revival of moral education was ironically the events exacerbating its decline. In the academic world, this revival would be expressed by “the rise of ‘practical or ‘applied’ ethics” being largely a response to “movements that powerfully posed and reframed questions about justice and the good society and about norms of personal conduct between women and men, whites and blacks, gay and straight people”(Kiss & Euben 2010:8). For Kiss and Euben (2010:8-9) a second source at the root of the awareness of a critical need for moral education in higher education was “a wave of scandals stretching from Tuskegee and Watergate to the Lewinsky affair and Enron, as well as by broader social trends, from rising rates of crime, drug use, cheating, and divorce, to rampant materialism and civic apathy.” They note that “these clusters of events” directed attention to “ethical standards and commitment in personal, professional, and public life” as well as to the “public goods and private virtues and the social and educational conditions that sustain them” (Kiss & Euben 2010:8-9). This motivated the inquiries in the field of moral development by several scholars like John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Lawrence

Kohlberg, Bernard Williams, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Carol Gilligan (McClellan 1999:101; Kiss & Euben 2010:9).

In her overview of the history of moral education in American colleges and universities, Julie A. Reuben (2010:28) has accurately summarized all the changes observed:

Depending on one's perspective, American higher education has either regressed from a clearly defined, religiously based, moral education to a relativistic, unmoored, amoral education; or it has progressed from an authoritarian, church-controlled, narrow education to an open, inclusive, inquiry-based education.

In response to the rise of secularization and to maintain their own religious identity and pursue their perceived moral mission in higher education, several religious groups went further to create their own liberal arts colleges and universities in addition to seminaries. However, since the 1970s, some religious groups have sought to take vigorous actions as the moral decline in the larger society came to challenge their institutions. (Reuben 2010:51).

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has explored the socio-cultural and religious context through one of the most relevant sociological theories found in the literature: "American exceptionalism" encompassing the essential concepts of the American Dream, the American Creed and the disestablishment of religion. The metanarrative of the American Dream has led to the creation of CLD culture, the first world economy and the socio-political integration of women and non-White Protestant groups. However the melting pot envisioned is competing with multiculturalism. The contradiction of this metanarrative is visible through rampant internal criminality and violence, militarism and hegemonic wars abroad. The American Creed, governing the country's political and economic life, promotes liberal values (liberty, equality, and individualism), democracy and capitalism. At the social and religious levels, it induces, through CLD culture, pluralism, secularism, privatization of religion and consumerism and moral relativism. The disestablishment of religion has generated the proliferation of religions, the civil religion and the divide between conservatives and liberals. This divide fuels the controversy on hot moral issues concerning sexuality, marriage, and family values as well as religious and moral education in public schools, and the place and role of religion in public debate.

## Chapter 3: FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON STANLEY HAUERWAS'S PROPOSAL

### *Introduction*

As the previous chapter has highlighted some significant socio-historical and cultural features of the American context, the central aim of the present and the two subsequent chapters is to analyze Stanley Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation and demonstrate its acquaintance with this context. Needless to say, his proposal, embedded in an overall ethical project developed over a period of almost four decades by means of an exceptionally prolific authorship, can only be briefly sketched in a work of this size. However, offering a broad outline of the important theological, philosophical, psychological and practical issues involved can help to accurately capture the gist of his proposal. In this regard, the present chapter begins the analysis of Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation and revolves around Hauerwas's social, theological and philosophical background to explore who and what have influenced his proposal. The subsequent sections are also meant to demonstrate that Hauerwas's proposal essentially consists in a critical engagement and appropriation of various theological and philosophical insights from classical and contemporary thinkers.

### **3.1. Stanley Hauerwas: The man and his thought**

In the effort to understand his proposal attention should be given not only to religious experiences, theological teaching and philosophical influences that shaped Hauerwas's academic career, but also to his personal characteristics. The sections below offer some insights on Hauerwas's life story and his theological and philosophical background.

#### **3.1.1. Biographical sketch**

The powerful formative influences that played a major part in Hauerwas's ethical project in general and his proposal on moral formation in particular are to be located in his education and career. Nonetheless, other influences, not less crucial, harken back to his childhood and are worth mentioning. The first section will highlight his journey from central Texas to North Carolina in the United States to indicate significant events in his family environment and his academic achievements that partially explain his theological and ethical stance. The second section will focus on the influence from teachers as well as classical and modern scholars.

### 3.1.1.1. From Pleasant Grove to Duke

Stanley Martin Hauerwas is a United Methodist theologian, ethicist, and professor of law. For more than two decades, he had been Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke University Divinity School with a joint appointment at the Duke University School of Law, in Durham, North Carolina, USA. On 30 June 30 2013, he retired from the faculty of the Duke University. Currently, he is “an emeritus professor [with] a continuing appointment in the Divinity School at Duke as a Senior Research Fellow” [GOW].

Before being established at Duke, Hauerwas taught at the University of Notre Dame, from 1970 to 1984. He moved to this Roman Catholic university after lecturing for two years at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, a Lutheran institution. At the same time he was also working as a senior research fellow at the Kennedy Center for Bioethics. Teaching in various denominational contexts has led Hauerwas to develop a kind of “ecumenical” or eclectic theological ethics.

Hauerwas holds a D.D. from the University of Edinburgh, UK; and he earned a Ph.D. in 1968 from the University of Yale, USA, where since the mid-60s, he attended the divinity and graduate schools. He did his undergraduate programme at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas (LGV:111; HC:2010:7-8, 47-72).

He is well-known as one of the most America’s influential pacifists who gained celebrity through the debates on the morality of war throughout the country since September 11, 2001. During the same year, Hauerwas’s academic career and public profile reached a climax through some noteworthy events. He delivered the prestigious Gifford Lectures at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, becoming the first American theologian in four decades to do so. This elevated him to the rank of one of the most pre-eminent religious thinkers of the twentieth century. The collection of these lectures was made available to the scholarly readership through his book *With the Grain of the Universe*. Along with this book stands *The Hauerwas Reader*, witnessing three decades of his theological and philosophical thought, and published by Duke Press in 2001. On the cover of this latter book, the Duke theologian is introduced as “one of the most widely read and oft-cited theologians writing today.” In 2001, Hauerwas received from Duke University and the Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church the Duke’s Scholar/Teacher of the Year Award. *Times Magazine*, through a newly created category, declared him the “America’s Best Theologian of 2001 in America” in its issue of September 10, 2001 (HC:261; Logan 2006:522-3). Moreover, the recent inclusion of five essays on the work of Hauerwas in a 2012 issue of *Journal of*

*Religious Ethics* constitutes further academic recognition of Hauerwas as a prominent ethicist.<sup>1</sup>

Born on July 24, 1940 in Pleasant Grove, in central Texas, Hauerwas grew up within a working-class and Evangelical Methodist family. In his autobiography written after 25 years of his teaching at Duke, Hauerwas reveals that he continues to think of his life as “a long way from Pleasant Grove,” because, he adds: “The kind of Christian I am, the kind of academic I am, the kind of person, has everything to do with this distance. That distance, moreover, creates the space that make the story I have to tell possible” (*HC:17*).

Indeed, some of the most prominent formative experiences of his life are related to his working-class family and a Christian background. He is the son and grandson of Methodist bricklayers. Coffee Hauerwas, his father, was “the general superintendent of the building project” of Pleasant Mound Methodist Church, the congregation to which the family was affiliated (*HC:5-6*). There he first learned, outside of formal school settings, at least two important tenets found in his writings on community and virtues: a community is a group of people having a claim on each of its members and formation as a craft through apprenticeship to a master — the second being an Aristotelian theme which he will rediscover through the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Methodism through its Protestant ethic of work and the community of the craft have helped Hauerwas become an exceptional hard worker, books having replaced bricks (*HC:27-37*). This family background has also affected his academic writing. He prefers to produce short essays in a process he acknowledges himself as “laying a brick at a time” because of their “deliberately *unfinished* character” (*STT:8-9*; Cavanaugh 2001:18; Cartwright 2001:626). Yet Hauerwas has also inherited the licentious language of bricklayers and Texans. He is known for his use of profane language and swearing during public occasions, academic conferences, classes and even church groups (Cavanaugh 2001:29-30; *HC:173*).<sup>2</sup>

Hauerwas’s parents, Coffee and Johanna, were a couple who married late and were initially childless. Like Hannah in the Bible, his desperate mother prayed for a child and promised to dedicate him to the Lord. Thus Hauerwas is a *Hannah’s Child*, as he has entitled his memoir written for his 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He believes this story - often told to him since he

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<sup>1</sup> Charles C. Pinches is the editor of this set of essays and the author of one of them. Three other essays are authored by some distinguished ethicists, namely Jennifer A. Herdt, William Werpehowski, Gilbert Meilaender, Michael S. Northcott, and David Novak. The last essay consists of Stanley Hauerwas’s response to the all the previous essays. See, *Journal of Religious Ethics* (2012) 40, 2:193–306.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Hauerwas told *Newsweek* magazine: “God is killing the church, and we goddamn well deserve it.” Interpreted by many as blatant blasphemy, Hauerwas’s defense was: “At least I mention God’s name twice” (Cavanaugh 2001:30). Elsewhere, he declared: “I’m a pacifist because I’m a violent son of a bitch” (McCarthy 2003b).



was six - has shaped his life and set the path of his Christian faith. While he has not become a minister as prayed by his mother, he has become a lay preacher, a trainer of ministers, and a radical theologian advocating a Christianity of devotion and conviction with innovative insights to transform the world (*HC:23*, 73-121, 233-260). In addition to his family background, marital life has noticeably impacted Hauerwas's moral vision on the ethics of sexuality and marriage and suffering. Married in 1962 to Anne who would later develop a bipolar illness, Hauerwas experienced the ambiguity, difficulty and pain of living with a spouse suffering from a gradual and terrible mental decline. Although this troubled marriage ended in a divorce after twenty-four years, Hauerwas considers the friendship he has developed with their child Adam through this trial and sorrows as a blessing (*HC:179-87*, 199-201). Regarding this painful marriage that began with a romantic experience, Hauerwas declares: "Only God knows what I thought I was doing. Of course, I thought I was in love. I know I was at least in lust" (*HC:54*). This echoes his deep conviction that marriage is "a heroic institution" and an "adventure" that needs Christian virtues to be sustained (*CC:186-93*). Moreover, the lessons learned from this troubled marriage furnished the argument of *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering* (1990) against theodicies — a book recognized by himself as autobiographical (*HC:207*).<sup>3</sup> In 1989, Hauerwas got married to an ordained minister of the United Methodist Church holding a Ph.D. in American Church History and working as the director of admissions at Duke at the time they began to date. Paula Gilbert would become his dearly beloved second wife. With Paula, Hauerwas has delightfully enjoyed "going a lot to the church," participating in the life of the local church with liturgy, worship, community, and prayer so determinative for his community ethics (*HC:213*, 222-3).

### 3.1.1.2. Academic work

Hauerwas has authored or edited about fifty books as well as over three hundred and fifty scholarly articles. What has been noticed by David W. Gill (2000:30) at the dawn of the century continues to be true: Hauerwas is still publishing "faster than most of us can read!" He is not only a distinguished teacher and author but also a well-known preacher, seminar speaker and socio-cultural critic speaking to various public forums.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This book was reprinted in 1993 under the title *God, medicine, and suffering*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) because the publisher "thought [the] original original title was hurting the sales of the book" (*HR:353* n.9).

<sup>4</sup> Numerous discussions about Hauerwas and interviews with him appeared not only in academic but also in popular publications. In this thesis, a comprehensive bibliography on Hauerwas's solo-, co-authored and edited academic works is provided as addendum. This bibliography also demonstrates how Hauerwas's articles had become essays in his own books or chapters in books edited by other scholars.



Hauerwas's academic books are mostly presented as selection of essays. His preferred genre of academic publication is a short essay writing model, rightly described by Quirk (2002) as a "craftsman-like character of his piecework prose" different from the "standard-issue scholarly book." Thus short essays, including not only relevant theological literature but also philosophical and social critical insights as well as pieces of literature, stand as chapters in Hauerwas's books. This demonstrates his remarkable proficiency in these corresponding fields, in addition to theology, from which he finds relevant insights to thoroughly substantiate his assumptions. To this craftsman-like mode of his writings corresponds "the craft-like nature of morality" he promotes through his proposal on moral formation (AC:93-111; CC:115).

As a prominent leading theologian and ethicist, Hauerwas has especially contributed to the recovery of virtue ethics and the revival of ecclesial ethic through Christian narrative and community in response to the post-modern condition. Thus his outstanding contribution embraces the fields of virtue ethics, narrative ethics, ecclesiology and medical ethics. Particularly, critical moral issues of public interest, such as abortion, euthanasia, suicide, and the condition of the disabled as well as violence of war and militarism have been at the core of his writings. Anticipating crucial ethical debates — on communitarianism and virtues, the Americans with Disability Act of 1990, genetic manipulation in American society and Christianity — has been one of Hauerwas's noticeable achievements, since he addressed these issues in his writings before their becoming widespread talk among scholars and the public (Berkman 2001:3; Elshtain 2001).

Throughout four decades of theological and philosophical conversation, several academic theologians from various denominational backgrounds have been so interested in Hauerwas's work that they have eventually devoted dissertations, books and articles to his ideas to such an extent that they have created and promoted, what one may call "a Hauerwas industry." He is a singular theologian who in the last decades, because of his stands, theories or lines of reasoning has seen his name being, pejoratively or complimentary, turned to the adjective "Hauerwasian" or merely to "the Hauerwasian school" (Biggar 2011:13). Because of his prolific, varied and challenging contribution to Christian ethics, that has brought him a magnificent reputation in North America, Europe, Australia, Middle East and Japan, Hauerwas is perhaps the most prominent North American theologian and ethicist alive (Berkman 2001:3).

### 3.1.1.3. Theological and ethical stances

Hauerwas is ecclesologically an eclectic theologian and ethicist critically exploring the possibilities and limits of various Christian traditions (*PK:xxvi*). His education at Yale, oriented towards an analytical and critical assessment of theological positions, has prepared him to belong nowhere. Being without positions derived, amongst other relevant influential figures at Yale, from Hauerwas's acquaintance with Paul Holmer, his professor of philosophy. "One of the most valuable things I gained from Mr. Holmer, declares Hauerwas, was an understanding of intellectual work as investigation;" and he adds: "Positions too easily tempt us to think that we Christians need a theory" (*HC:53, 60*). Thus, introducing himself he says: I am part philosopher, part political theorist, part theologian, part ethicist, but I have no standing in any of the 'parts'" (*WGU:9*).

Hauerwas is very critical of academic theologians divorced from a denominational affiliation seeing themselves as "Bultmannians, Barthians, process theologians, feminists or liberationists rather than as Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans or, perhaps, even Christians" (*TTF: 213-6*). While his particular family background is "evangelical Methodist" and "biographically Protestant," he speaks of himself as follows: "I am an evangelical Catholic. Which is but a way to say that I am a Methodist" (*PK:xxvi; STT:77*). He perceives classical Methodism, not as a Protestant tradition, but rather a Catholic tradition since John Wesley, his founding Father, "held to the Eastern fathers in a more determinative way than did any of the Western churches — Protestant or Catholic" (*TTF: 213-6*). And thus, Methodism has helped him, as it should do for its believers, "to being members of Christ's whole church" (*PK:xxvi; IGC:10*). Yet, he holds that, in his theology, he remains critical, even of his own Methodist tradition, in order to direct all the Christians to "the one Lord who reigns over all people" and better serve the (whole) church catholic encompassing Catholic and Protestant, and even Orthodox as well (*PK:xxvi*). If Yale influence on Hauerwas spawned a sense of belonging nowhere, Methodism as a Catholic tradition with its free-church polity taught Hauerwas to serve the whole Church of Jesus (*TTF:213-6; IGC:66*).

For Hauerwas, the influence of the Yale methodological approach of making theology a de-traditioned practice, has helped his theology to be useful to many Christian traditions. This he sees himself as a contribution to Christian unity albeit his problematic status of being "ecclesiastically homeless" (*HC:254-255; IGC:66-7*). But his falling in love with the theology of Karl Barth and the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein have prevented him from belonging nowhere and embracing the foundationalist epistemologies of Enlightenment (*TTF:213-6*). They have led him to appreciate particularism and express a deep commitment to the church. This has allowed himself taking part in a span of Christian communities: Pleasant Mound

Methodist, Hamden Plains Methodist, the Lutheran church at Augustana, (Roman Catholic) Sacred Heart, Broadway Christian Parish (Methodist), Aldersgate United Methodist, and the Church of the Holy Family (Episcopalian) (TTF:213-6; *HC*:254, 278-9). Moreover, with his high commitment to radical pacifism and anti-Constantinianism, he also regards himself as an Anabaptist, particularly as a “high church Mennonite” (CMC; *IGC*:66).

Hauerwas is categorized as a post-liberal theologian because of his commitment to narrative theology. The centrality of the narrative is one of the hallmarks of his work; he constantly speaks of narrative as “the necessary grammar of Christian convictions” in that Christian claims are inextricably linked to what God has done in the history of Israel and Jesus Christ and the ongoing story of God's people through time (TET:408-412; *PK*:28-9). However, as he sees himself as a theologian without position, he dislikes both the qualification of being a narrative theologian and even the idea of narrative theology per se. He declares:

I hate the idea I am a “narrative theologian.” I hate all qualifiers to theology other than “Christian.” Any qualifier other than “Christian” suggest that someone is trying to hijack Christian theology for their peculiar set of interests or that they are trying to provide a theory about theology that is more determinative than first-order theological claims. [...] I also dislike the description “narrative theology” because it can suggest that theology is more concerned with narrative than with God (*PF*:136).

Nonetheless identifying Hauerwas as a narrative and post-liberal theologian explains why he is very critical to both theological and political liberalism as he strongly champions a traditioned, storied and community-based ethics (*CC*:72-86; *PK*:17-24, 28-30, 101-2; 117-8). Alister E. McGrath (2007:93) is the one who pointedly introduces Hauerwas as a post-liberal theologian:

Stanley Hauerwas is one of a number of writers to explore post-liberal approaches to ethics. Rejecting the Enlightenment idea of a universal set of moral values, Hauerwas argues that Christian ethics is concerned with the identification of the moral vision of a historical community (the church), and with bringing that vision to actualization in the lives of its members.

He considers himself only partially in sympathy with feminist theology which he has evaluated as “so often liberal Protestant theology in a different key” and its views on justice as mostly motivated by egalitarian and distributive perspectives “so characteristic of liberal political theology” (*CAV*:234-5). Hauerwas claims, against his background of white southerner from lower middle class raised in the practices of segregation, a theological and philosophical kinship with Martin Luther King, Jr. He reads King’s speeches and writings and interprets his activism as an embodiment of a narrative, a “history of discrimination in the name of race,” an issue of memory, not of justice related to political liberalism (*RML*:136, 147). Surprisingly, while firmly setting a great store to

traditional family values, Hauerwas does not hold a strong position against homosexuality (CC:167-229). He refuses to consider homosexuality as “the” issue of Christian ethics requiring a “position” since the utmost issues for sexuality and marriage are that “Christians no longer practice Christian marriage” as a “lifelong monogamous fidelity” and the lack of “an adequate account of marriage” (STT:105, 107).

Hauerwas admits of being a conservative theologian devoted to a radical Barthian-like orthodoxy (HC:37). He remains, however, an open-minded thinker, very critical to Roman Catholic and Protestant theological traditions — even to evangelical or conservative and liberal trends among his own Methodist tradition because of what he considers as their accommodation to American CLD (TTF: 213-6; CC:73-4).

As he continues to reclaim “the language of Christian orthodoxy in the post-modern conversation,” Hauerwas is far from being a proponent of public theology regarded as an accommodated reaction to political liberalism (Berkman 2001:3). However at the core of his writing, teaching and public interventions have been “his calls for alternatives to the violence of war and militarism, capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide” involving personal and public morality (McCarthy 2003a). Against all forms of violence including the American patriotism and identity shaped by waging wars all over the world, Hauerwas vehemently put forward a radical pacifism derived from John Howard Yoder’s Christology by claiming: “I am not a pacifist because of a theory, I am a pacifist because John Howard Yoder convinced me that non-violence and Christianity are inseparable” (HC:60). His condemnation of capital punishment as essentially a means for retaliation and revenge and not for moral correction or transformation is but a correlative position to his pacifism (PC: 57-72).

In brief, this biographical sketch directing attention to Hauerwas’s family background and academic career consistently points to the craft of bricklaying as well as family and marital life as powerful and inspirational influences on his ethical project in general and his proposal on moral formation in particular. Yet more critical to the understanding of Hauerwas’s ethical project is its diachronic account.

### **3.1.2. Theological and philosophical pilgrimage**

The well-documented intellectual journey of Stanley Hauerwas characterized by a forty-year prolific authorship can be described in terms of the development of his corpus through its themes and the various accounts that have influenced his work as a whole. To concentrate on the essentials requires at least attending to the major themes and the part of the corpus dealing with moral formation before introducing the scholars who have influenced Hauerwas in this particular domain.

### 3.1.2.1. Themes in Hauerwas's intellectual pilgrimage

Hauerwas's interest in moral formation is part and parcel of his theological project driven by his particular conception of theology. He thinks of "theology as a practical discipline" meant to mainly, if not mostly, shape the Christian life. One would not be mistaken by ascertaining that moral formation has been at the core of Hauerwas's work since the beginning of his career, as pointed out in his following statement:

I did not become an ethicist because my primary interest was social change or particular moral "issues." Rather, I became an ethicist because I was (and am) interested in the intellectual issues associated with the truthfulness of Christian discourse. [...] It has not been my interest as an ethicist to ferret out the "ethical core" of theological affirmations, but rather to show how the grammar of certain theological affirmations (stories) involves some extremely interesting claims and notions about how our practical life should be formed under the conditions of finitude (TET:408-412).

In his *A Cross-shattered Church*, mature Hauerwas (2009:145) outlines his theological and ethical project through five themes:

I have understood my task to be little more than an attempt to assemble reminders about how Christian convictions work when the work they do is in good order. I am identified with (1) the recovery of the virtues for understanding the Christian life, (2) an emphasis on narrative for the intelligibility of an action description, (3) a correlative emphasis on the significance of the church as a community necessary for the formation of people of virtue, (4) criticism of the accommodation of the church to liberal political arrangements, and (5) an emphasis on the significance of nonviolence a hallmark of the Christian way of being in the world. Yet I think none of these emphases, though they are interdependent and interrelated, amount to a position.

First of all, it should be pointed out that the third theme best reflects the great concern for moral formation in the community of the church. However, Hauerwas warns his readers that the five-fold emphasis of his project is to be taken as whole. Thus his proposal on moral formation can only be fully understood in connection to the concepts of virtues, narrative, liberal outlook and non-violence. Besides the discovery of those themes have been the outcome of a long and laborious development. Hauerwas's work, as he acknowledges himself "has been a problem" or even "confusing", for some of his critics saw that his "position is not easily characterized or located in relation to other theologians, past and present," and that he has "not worked self-consciously as a Protestant or Catholic" theologian (*PK*:xix; *HC*:60). Thus, throughout his academic career he has found himself forced to respond to the suggestion of clarifying the development of his theological and ethical project in several essays.<sup>5</sup> Through these publications, it appears that Hauerwas's intellectual development is

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<sup>5</sup> "The Ethicist as Theologian" (1975), "The Testament of Friends: How My Mind Changed" (1990) and the introduction to the second edition of his *Character and Christian life* (1985) and its excerpt published as "A Retrospective Assessment of an 'Ethics of Character': The Development of Hauerwas's Theological Project" (2001) (*HR*:75-89), as well as his "Introduction: Positioning: In the Church and University But Not Either" (1994) (*DFF*:5-25) are indeed the valuable attempts towards this

well encapsulated in the following statement: “I began seeking to recover the importance of virtue and the virtues and ended up with the church” (TTF:213-6; cf. *HR*:89). Hauerwas was among the pioneering ethicists who took seriously the return to virtues ethics for Christian moral life in the 1970s. One of the early debates of the time revolved around the conceptual definition of virtues and the difference between the unity or plurality of virtues or between “a person of virtue” and individual virtues (*CCL*:251-2; *CC*: 111-3). The focus on the centrality of virtue was the result of what was, and still is, his particular conception of theology, “theology as a practical discipline” (TET: 408-412; TTF:213-6).

His primary concern about Christian ethics was the demonstration of the truthfulness of Christian convictions in the lives of Christians; in other words, his utmost interest in the beginning was “exploring how Christian convictions require moral display for understanding what we might mean to claim them as true” (TTF:213-6; cf. *PK*:xx; *HC*:69). Thus, he first perceived, as it appears in his publications of the 1970s “that the virtues can help display those convictions;” and afterwards, from the 1980s and onwards, his attention was drawn to the centrality of the church or “the faithful church as integral for demonstrating the truthfulness of Christian convictions” (TTF:213-6). By 1985, ten years after the publication of *Character and the Christian Life*, “the church as Christ’s body” became “a conceptual cornerstone” of Hauerwas’s ethical project (*HR*:89). However, before reaching this last step of “the methodological significance of the church,” Hauerwas went through acknowledging the centrality of vision and narrative (*PK*: xvii; *STT*:94; *HR*:79).<sup>6</sup>

According to Samuel Wells, a thorough reader and analyst of Hauerwas, the story of Hauerwas’s theological ethics is made of four parts, moving from quandary to character, from character to narrative, from narrative to community and from community to church. He has accurately summarized Hauerwas’s ethical project as follows:

The journey from character to community (via narrative) is part of a longer journey from quandary to the Church (via character, narrative and community). This latter journey sums up Hauerwas’s whole project. His overall concern is to shift the focus of ethical reflection from the individual in a crisis to the Church in its faithfulness. The purpose of theological ethics, for him, is not to make quandaries easier, but to build up the Church. Narrative is at the centre of both the smaller journey, character to community and the larger journey, individual to Church. It is the stage at which Hauerwas’s ethics become truly theological. Narrative starts as a helpful way of displaying the character of an individual: and ends by revealing the character of God (Wells 1998:61).

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purpose. Most importantly in this endeavour is his book, *Hannah’s Child: A Theologian’s Memoir* (2010).

<sup>6</sup> He formally recognizes this move in *CCL*:xiii-xxxiii and *HR*:75-89. This assessment is related to his *Toward an Ethics of Character* (1972) reprinted in *VV*:48-67.



In his analysis Wells does justice to the diachronic order of Hauerwas's theological development and the context within which he began his career in the late 1960s. Indeed quandary ethics was the reigning paradigm of the time in philosophical ethics and in theological ethics. The social conditions of the time were stressing freedom and autonomy within a context previously dominated by the Kantian ethical discourse of duty, principles and rules. People were turning to freedom and responsibility while ethical reflection was concentrating on the best ways to help individuals cope with problems and situations requiring ethical decisions. In this context, Joseph Fletcher's "situation-ethics" and Paul Lehmann's "contextualism" stood as powerful attempts to help Christians, who, like all their fellows, needed to know what to do while facing immediate ethical situations (VV:48-49; CCL:5-6).

Hauerwas thought of character and virtue as valuable alternatives and correctives to the debate occasioned by Joseph Fletcher's *Situation Ethics* and attempted to reclaim and develop their significance for Christian moral life in theological ethics, in particular in the context of Protestant theological ethics (TET:408-412). He noticed that Catholic moral theology, through traditional Roman Catholic practice of penance, had preserved a vivid stress on character and virtue. By contrast, Protestant Christianity, especially with Lutheran themes of conscience and body as well as the Reformed language of command-obedience, had shown little interest in these categories. Situationalism and contextualism of the late twentieth century are but the outcomes of their evolution. This has led to a concentration on "decisions and judgments on specific acts," freedom and the responsibility of the individual and the neglect of the identity of the moral agent over time or his/her moral growth (CCL:6-7, 229-230).

Hauerwas viewed an ethic of character as a vibrant substitute to quandary, decisionist or occasionalist ethics and situation ethics, their corollary. Not only they tend to prevent "the development of an ethic concerned with the nature and moral formation of the self", but also they are not congruent to the integrity of Christian convictions (CCL:2, 229-230). They are grounded on a "moral upshot" of our belief such as 'love' or 'justice'" whereas through the notion of character, vision and virtue one can grasp how the whole range of Christian convictions are "meant to inform our lives" (PK:xxii).

Moreover, he went on arguing that "Christian ethics is best understood as an ethics of character since the Christian moral life is fundamentally an orientation of the self" (CCL:vii). In this perspective, moral formation linked to character, vision and virtue, without shirking the issue of Christian beliefs, was rephrased in terms of "how the self acquires unity and duration in relation to the Christian conviction that Christ is the bringer of God's kingdom" (CCL:2). This analysis and explanation of moral formation in a Christian perspective, especially

Protestant context, brought him to deal with the relation between “the metaphors of character and virtue” and the theological theme of sanctification and its cognates — justification, works and growth (CCL:229).

At the beginning, Hauerwas thought to ground his account of character on philosophical action theory in order to avoid “dualistic and behaviouristic understanding of the self” conceiving people “as “merely the passive victims of instinctual drives, immediate upbringing, larger environmental circumstances, and other contingencies beyond [their individual] control” (STT:94; Outka 1980:111). Hauerwas, seeking an adequate account of character, supplemented the language of agency with the one of character and virtue. Thus, he asserted in *Character and the Christian Life*, the third revised edition of his 1968 doctoral dissertation published in 1975,<sup>7</sup> “that character is the qualification of our agency befitting our nature as creatures capable of self-determination” (CCL:11; STT:94). In *Vision and Virtue*, he maintained that to some extent character can be influenced by physiological or environmental factors, choices, knowledge, wills, destiny, suffering but “the main presupposition and condition must remain the self-agency” (VV:56). In the search for an adequate account of character, the philosophical analysis of action drew Hauerwas “into the issues such as the nature of agency, the primacy of agent’s perspective, intentionality, and causality” (CCL:xix; HR:79-80).

Repeatedly, since his retrospective assessment of *Character and Christian Life*, The Duke theologian has continued to clearly admit his own-perceived wrongness, the one of early Hauerwas:

Yet I think there is a fundamental problem with the attempt to defend a concept of agency in terms of an analysis of action in and of itself. Such an analysis presupposes that “action” or “an action” is a coherent and conceptually primitive notion, but this is simply wrong (CCL:xx; HR:80, cf. STT: 94-6; PF:140-1).<sup>8</sup>

Empowered by MacIntyre’s “concept of an intelligible action,” in the mid-1980s Hauerwas revised his definition of character as “the qualification of our self-agency” by saying that “character is not so much the qualification but the form of our agency,” because he noticed that the former formulation “still suggest a kind of dualism insofar as a ‘self’ seems to stand behind our character” (CCL:xx; HR:80-1).

After the theme of character (and virtues), Hauerwas was led to the one of vision (Outka 1980:114). The concern for the significance of vision was present at the early stage of Hauerwas’s intellectual journey. In *Character and Christian Life*, where he began to lay the

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<sup>7</sup> Bondi 1984:216.

<sup>8</sup> Later, he presents a more personalized statement: “I had mistakenly accepted the presumption of those who worked in action theory that a concept of agency could be derived from the notion of action *qua* action. Such analysis presupposes that ‘action’ or ‘an action’ is a coherent and conceptually primitive notion, but that was simply wrong” (STT:95; cf. MacIntyre 1984:209).

grounds of the formation of character, he notes that “The Christian life is not solely a matter of doing but of seeing and hearing. But we must be trained to see and hear by the basic metaphors and symbols of our language” (CCL:233). Subsequently, he expanded his account on moral vision in *Vision and Virtue*, in particular through the essay entitled “The Significance of Vision: Towards an Aesthetic Ethic” (VV:3-47). In this book, Hauerwas maintained that “the moral life is [...] not just the life of decision but the life of vision — that is, it involves how we see the world. [...] The moral life is a struggle and training in how to see”, and he goes on stressing that “the moral life is more a matter of attention than it is of will” (VV:20, 41).

Hauerwas was drawn to another theme, the one of narrative after working — through his *Character and Christian Life* — on the issues related to action theory (CCL:xx; HR:81). Yet this move from the “self as agent” to “the self as story” is witnessed in his first article bearing the title of “story” in the inaugural issue of *Journal of Religious Ethics* in 1973 and subsequently published as an essay in his *Vision and Virtue* of 1974: “The Self as Story: A Reconsideration of the Relation of Religion and Morality from the Agent’s Perspective” (VV:68-89; PF:136). In his own words, he was somehow “forced, to see the importance of narrative for developing the significance of character” as “the very analysis [he] had developed in this book begged for a treatment of how narrative may help us understand moral continuity and discontinuity” (CCL:xx; HR:81). In the 1970s, narrative or stories became central for the depiction of character and moral life and began to have fuller exposition in *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, a book co-authored with Richard Bondi and David B. Burrell. In this book Hauerwas forcefully asserts that “Stories are indispensable if we are to know ourselves; they are not replaceable by some other kind of account” (TT:77). In an essay co-authored with Bondi, “From System to Story”, he contends that “narrative is a constructive alternative to the standard account of morality,” that is the rationalist and universal mode of ethics (in particular Kantianism and utilitarianism); and he argues that “the moral life must be grounded in the ‘nature’ of man. However, that ‘nature’ is not ‘rationality’ itself, but the necessity of having a narrative to give our life coherence” (TT:27; WN:177). In *Vision and Virtue*, Hauerwas linked the concepts of character, virtues and vision to the one of narrative in support of his rejection of quandary or decisionist ethics by writing:

Moral behavior involves more than simply the decisions and choices persons make about specific problems; it also includes the kind of persons they are (their character and virtues), the kind of beliefs they hold, and the way they organize their resources and energies to form a coherent life plan. The moral life is not simply a matter of decision governed by publicly defensible principles and rules; we can only act in the world we see, a seeing partially determined by the kind of beings we have become through the stories we have learned and embodied in our life plan (VV:69).

Progress in his understanding of character, virtue, vision, narrative helped Hauerwas to discover that his account of self-agency provided in *Character and Christian Life* and *Vision and Virtue*, was still abstract, quite disconnected from the social self he endeavoured to articulate, and still flavoured with the kind of solipsism or individualism characterizing the autonomous self (of Kantianism) that he had intended to avoid (PF:147; CCL:33; HR:82). Consequently, he needed a correlative account of community to stress “that significant depictions of morality presuppose and require the existence of societies who know their moral life relies on the vitality of persons of character and virtue” and even “there can be no theory of virtue, for any such is necessarily relative to the history of a particular community” (CC:120-1). Thus, in *A Community of Character* and *The Peaceable Kingdom*, the category community would come to the foreground along with the one of tradition as he spells out in a footnote: “Contemporary philosophical ethics bases the ability to claim our action as our own on the ‘autonomy’ of the self. My rebuttal, which follows, requires that the self be formed by a tradition (and its correlative virtues) that is sufficient to interpret our behavior truthfully” (CC:262 n10; cf. Herdt 2012:210). Henceforth virtue, vision, narrative and tradition as well as practices will be considered in the context of the church, the Christian community. The concept of communal practices restricted to the sacraments or the “marks of the church” will be enlarged in the books co-authored with William Willimon such as *Resident Aliens* and *Where Residents Aliens Live* in terms of discipleship (PK:106-10; RA:49-111; WRA:67-112).

The final stage is the move from community to the church. To recall, Hauerwas’s early work, *Character and Christian Life* of 1975 lacks the “emphasis on the importance of vision and the centrality of narrative, together with the stress on the methodological significance of the church” which would begin to gain prominence only in the subsequent works (HR:79). So, while looking to emphasize “the relational character of the self,” he failed to sufficiently demonstrate “the centrality of a particular community called the church for the development of the kind of character required of Christians” (HR:88). To these affirmations included in this retrospective assessment of his theological project wrote in 1985 and adapted in 2001, Hauerwas adds:

This specifically ecclesiological agenda is now the focus of my constructive work as a theologian. Ten years later, I realize that the church as Christ’s body is a conceptual cornerstone of my constructive project. As the bricklayer says, “Man, I wish I had started with that one (HR:89).<sup>9</sup>

As contended, Hauerwas has pursued this ecclesiological agenda in a way that he has developed and embraced, as Jennifer A. Herdt (2012:215-6) deservedly points out, the

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<sup>9</sup> In *The Hauerwas reader*, Michael G. Cartwright and John Berkman notes that they wrote the closing sentences of this paragraph which were approved by Stanley Hauerwas (HR:82).

“liturgical turn” where “the categories of narrative theology — ‘story,’ ‘narrative,’ ‘scripture,’ etc. — recede, while ‘practices,’ ‘liturgy,’ ‘sacraments,’ and ‘performance’” as well as ‘witness’ gain prominence. Those categories are at the core of Hauerwas’s focus on communal formation, including liturgical formation, particularly exemplified in some of the books published at the dawn of the new millennium, namely *With the grain of the universe* (2001/2002), *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, edited by Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (2004), and *Performing the Faith* (2004).

To sum up, all the above-mentioned themes developed in Hauerwas’s theological project as a whole converge towards three metaethical foundational categories, namely virtue ethics, community ethics and ecclesial ethics. As it will be analyzed later on, though distinctive these categories overlap and cannot be considered as mutually exclusive yet as a coherent hub. While virtue ethics may include the themes of virtue, character and vision, community ethics assuredly comprise community but also narrative and tradition. And ecclesial ethics focus on the practices of the church community, performances, worship and witness. Considering Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation, this account on major themes found in this outline of Hauerwas’s theological project needs to be supplemented by a review of his academic production specifically related to this subject.

### 3.1.2.2. Corpus on moral formation

As observed by Charles Pinches (2012:193), any study on Hauerwas’s academic production must result from a careful selection of material because of its voluminous corpus. In this regard, the diachronic account of Hauerwas’s ethical project seems to be an accurate unifying thread in the huge Hauerwas’s corpus. In Hauerwas’s books and essays, the three above-mentioned ethical categories and the various themes included provide some analytical and epistemological perspectives not only on his overall project but also for moral formation as well. In the course of the development of these foundational ethical categories, Hauerwas has applied these meta-ethical themes to some specific spheres of moral formation.

The centrality of virtue, as a character trait, is embodied in Hauerwas’s *Character and Christian Life*, his first book and the third revised edition of his 1968 doctoral dissertation published in 1975 (Bondi 1984:216). This perspective is also pursued in *Vision and Virtue*, a collection of essay published in 1974, before the first book, though both books were submitted in the same year to the publishers (HC:120). The notions of narrative and the community of the church beginning to emerge in *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (1977) are more perceptible in *A Community of Character* (1981) and *The Peaceable Kingdom* (1983). All these books or collection of essays — to be more specific — are seminal to the



understanding of virtue and character, vision and narrative, and the community of the church as foundational notions to Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation. These insights underlay "Character, Narrative, and Growth in the Christian Life," an essay of 1980. Hauerwas distinguishes his account of moral formation from other theories on moral and spiritual development, especially those of Lawrence Kohlberg and James Fowler relying on Kantian deontological ethics (CC:129-52; HR:221-54).

In the 1990s, new insights gained with the introduction of the notions of narrative and community related to the distinctiveness of Christian life resulted in the affirmation of "virtues Christianly understood" elaborated in *Christian Among the Virtues* (1997), co-authored with Charles Pinches. In addition, fresh perspectives on moral agency and sanctification derived from these notions and led to the publication of *Sanctify Them in the Truth* (1998).

Moreover, a thorough inquiry of Hauerwas resources illuminated by his own diachronic details reveals that in the course of its academic production he has applied his set of foundational concepts primarily designed for the community of the church to other major spheres of moral formation, namely the family, the school, public sphere and suffering. This dense corpus is exploited in the next chapter (Chapter 5).<sup>10</sup> However, it is worth mentioning, at this stage, the influences of significant scholars and traditions to Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation.

### 3.2. Theological and philosophical influences

Without acting modest, Hauerwas recognises that his academic production is not plainly original but rather results from his indebtedness to classical and modern thinkers from whom he has learned and drawn on (PK: xix). Extensive footnotes in his essays witness his critical engagement with a various array of theologians, philosophers and social scientists. For him, originality means "often what we think is our peculiar insight is but our forgetting where we read it" (HR:78-9). In *Hannah's Child*, Hauerwas traces the determinative influences on his theological project with reference to his academic locations. Throughout his postgraduate studies at Yale, he read Alasdair MacIntyre, Karl Barth as well as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Iris Murdoch (HC:68-9, 85; TTF:213-6). In the same time, under the tutelage

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<sup>10</sup> As an indication, some significant essays on moral formation in the church are included in *Christian Existence Today* (1988) and *After Christendom* (1991) and *In Good Company* (1995); other key essays dealing with the family are comprised in *A Community of Character* (1981); the whole book on *The State of the University* (2007) and some essays in *Christian Existence Today* (1988) are devoted to moral formation in the university and the seminary; critical issues on moral formation in public sphere and social ethics are attended to in *Resident Aliens* (1989), *Where Resident Aliens Live* (1996) and *A Better Hope* (2000). The comprehensive list of the essays pertaining to each of the identified spheres of moral formation can be found throughout Addendum no.1.



of James Gustafson, he began to explore the Aristotelian and Thomist themes of character and virtue in dialogue with the Calvinist-Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification and the works of the Niebuhrs (*HR*:76, 79; cf. *CCL*:181). At Notre Dame, he was pre-eminently influenced by John Howard Yoder and Alasdair MacIntyre as well as Hans Frei, George Lindbeck and James McClendon. After being established at Duke, Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation gained significant insights from the works of John Milbank and Charles Taylor. In addition, Hauerwas's proposal bears the deep marks of some Methodist, Catholic and Anabaptist practices. The instrumental scholars in Hauerwas's proposal can be accurately grouped in five categories: classical virtue ethicists, sanctificationist theologians, ecclesio-centric theologians, contemporary philosophers and post-liberal theologians.

### **3.2.1. Classical virtue ethics thinkers: Aristotle and Aquinas**

Since the beginning of his pioneering work for the recovery of virtue in theological ethics Hauerwas has discovered the relevance of Aristotle's (384-323 BCE) account — and the one of Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) who merged Aristotle's ethics with Christian theology — for the moral formation of the self. They have also greatly contributed to his construction of the important concepts of his proposal on moral formation, such as the agent's perspective, having character or being a person of virtues, and moral life as journey. In his early work, Hauerwas expressed his appraisal of their theories of character as follows: "Their thought, in spite of obvious difficulties and ambiguities, continues to be the most adequate systematic account of the nature of character in the history of ethics" (*CCL*:35). In particular, Hauerwas valued their analysis of the interrelation of the determinants of character, including thought, desire, reason, choice and practical reason related to human being's agency, as "the best framework" taking into account "the basic concerns with which any theory of character must deal with" (*CCL*:35, 47, 67).

#### **3.2.1.1. Aristotle**

Aristotle's and Aquinas's analysis of human action and virtue helped Hauerwas to stress a notion which was only considered very useful in moral psychology: the concept of "the formation of agent from the agent's perspective" as opposed to the idea of "the spectator's point of view as the moral point of view" (*CCL*:33). While the former describes "how the agent becomes good or bad through his activity," the latter is a way of establishing a moral judgment divorced from any consideration of how the agent himself stands before his decision. For Hauerwas, moral philosophers overlooked the importance of character and

virtue because of their concentration on the spectator's point of view. The concept of agent's perspective was crucial to Hauerwas's early understanding of the idea of character providing "the means to discuss with rigor and discipline the moral formation of the subjective" (CCL:29) as character determines the practical choice and decisions. Both Aristotle and Aquinas not only led Hauerwas to perceive "character as the agent's point of view" but also as "the qualification of the self" (CCL:29-33, 68-82). At stake was the notion of acquiring character or being trained in the virtues deriving from the human capacity for agency or the ability of acting in a determinative manner embodied in "Aristotle's distinction between movement (*kinesis*) and activity (*energia*)" — activity including movement but being at the same time a complete phenomenon in itself (CCL:40-1). In the words of Aristotle: "the soul of the listener must have been conditioned by habits to the right kind of likes and dislikes, just as land must be cultivated before it is able to foster seed" (Aristotle 1962:1179b25-26). Thus, character is not related to a mere listening to or holding correct views or even knowing what is right but the human being or the "self acquires character only through activity by a long and gradual growth" over a lifetime (CCL:68; CAV:x).

Similarly Aquinas stressed that the human being as agent "must be qualified in some lasting sense through his activity" (CCL:68; cf. Aquinas 1952: I-ii, 49, 4). Hauerwas noticed that Aristotle did not deny the significance of rules and universal principles for the moral life; however, he thought of *phronesis*, the practical reason to be possessed by a person of character and related to moral wisdom, perception, and intuitive reason determining his deliberation, choice and decision in particular situations as person of trained insight and informed perception (CCL:60, 61; cf. Aristotle 1962:1143b11-14, 1142a11-20).

### 3.2.1.2. Thomas Aquinas

In addition to Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas's account of virtues as habits bears the influences of Plato, the Stoics and Augustine (CC:122-3). Aquinas has provided Hauerwas with valuable insights to buttress his argumentation on the distinctiveness of Christian ethics and Christian virtues on the basis of the relation between doctrine and ethics underlying the integration of Christian convictions in ethics, and on the grounds of the epistemological nature of the church for moral life; all these insights resulting in a particularist moral formation. For Hauerwas, Aquinas is not, as often interpreted, a "natural law ethicist," whose account is to be used in modern theological ethics to assert "an abstract relation between nature (natural law) and grace (revealed law)" (PK:xxii;CAV:44). For Aquinas "grace and nature cohere" since he argues, as would do Luther, that "the last nine commandments in the Decalogue depend upon, and in that sense are an elaboration of, the first" (Aquinas 1952:45). If for

Aristotle, *eudaimonia*, mostly translated as happiness, is the *telos* of human life, for Aquinas friendship with God through Jesus Christ of Nazareth remains the true destiny of human beings (CAV:ix). The understanding of natural law cannot be separated from the church because nature or human nature is largely unintelligible without knowing its *telos* in the incarnate Christ and “the prolongation of whose earthly life finds embodiment in the church” (STT:45). The Decalogue expressed the kind of life expected from those living under “God’s ‘grace-full’ dominion or lordship most pre-eminently” in Jesus (STT:45). Contrary to the widely accepted perspective of reading Aquinas’s major works, namely *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae* as treatises on “natural theology”, Hauerwas asserts that these books reveal Aquinas’s view related to “the primacy of the virtues for the Christian moral life” and, univocally, do not separate ethics from doctrine or Christian theology” (HR:40-41; STT:26-7). Furthermore, Aquinas has offered a precious tool for “Christianly considering virtues” as to distinguish Christian virtues from pagan virtues; with Aquinas’s language of *caritas* as “the very form of all the virtues” (CAV:63-4). Hauerwas and Charles Pinches have endeavoured to show that there is an essential “difference between Christians and ‘all people of good will’ by examining the Christian virtues of hope, obedience, courage, and patience” (Aquinas 1952: II-II, 23,8; CAV:xv, 113-178). Perhaps most importantly, Aquinas, following Augustine speaks of infusion, the mode of acquisition of theological virtues; these virtues “of faith, hope and charity must be infused in us if the ‘natural virtues’ are to be properly formed and directed” (CC:123; cf. Aquinas 1952:I-II, 69, 4). However, contrary to the widely held view, for Hauerwas, Aquinas plainly excludes “a *sudden* acquisition of the virtues” when the medieval theologian states that “faith generates hope, and hope charity,” and thus rejects an “infusion [coming] all at once” (CAV:68-69, emphasis original; cf. Aquinas 1952:I-II. 65, 4). Hence, Aquinas thinks of a “special act of God which brings us into relation with God, not only forming but utterly transforming our character” (CAV:69).

While being very appreciative of Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s accounts of virtue ethics, Hauerwas observes that they present some insufficiencies on the grounds of their circularity, the unity of virtues involved and the lack of perspective on the individuation of the virtues (HR:237-8, 241-2; CC:138; 141-2). Hauerwas’s suggested solution to these problems is the formation of character by the narrative of Israel and Jesus of Nazareth within the Christian community (HR:234 ; CC:136; CAV:192).

### **3.2.2. Sanctificationist theologians: Calvin and Wesley**

As mentioned above, John Calvin and John Wesley through their accounts of justification and sanctification have noticeably influenced Hauerwas’s theological

understanding of the moral life. In 2003, during an interview at Calvin College, Hauerwas declared: “Calvin has always been influential in my work because he was a sanctificationist” (ICC). In his *Institutes*, John Calvin (1509-64) deals with sanctification before justification by faith and emphasizes that “actual holiness of life is not separated from free imputation of righteousness” (*STT*:28; cf. Calvin 1960:III,1). In this particular aspect, Calvin provided an alternative to Lutheran Reformation. Later, this was developed in Calvinism as “Calvinists stressed the importance of sanctification of the Christian and the Christian community,” that is, the growth in holiness in the daily life (*STT*:28). The same emphasis characterized the Church of England and became particularly strong in the revivals led by John Wesley (1509-64), the greatest figure of Methodism and in other traditions of Pietism.

In addition, Hauerwas sees that Calvin linked creation to redemption as opposed to Calvinists in America — Reformed and Presbyterians Protestants — who under the influence of Richard H. Niebuhr’s social ethics in *Christ and Culture* has stressed Christian responsibility as “socially significant transformers of American culture” (*WRA*:56-7).

In *Character and Christian Life*, Hauerwas extensively analyzes Calvin’s and Wesley’s understandings of sanctification as a process and uses the nature of growth involved for Christian life to articulate the formation of character through the acquisition of virtues (*CCL*:10, 215-27). Calvin condemned Anabaptist understanding of full regeneration in our life and thought of sanctification as “a process that occurs in our life but attains perfection only after our death” (*CCL*:216; cf. Calvin 1960:3, 3, 14 & 3, 3, 9 ). However, Wesley to whom “the ideas of growth and perfection” were the core theological concern took a step further by “stressing the need for attainment of perfection in this life” (*CCL*:217-8). Both Calvin and Wesley as well as Jonathan Edwards understood Christian life not in “a moralistic sense” or “a static once-for-all possession” but affirmed the necessity for the Christian “to be formed in Christ” and the resulting growth and progress embodied in this process of sanctification they taught is well understood as the formation of character (*CCL*:218-20). Methodism of the eighteenth century established by Wesley as an attempt to foster a “disciplined community,” “a people of holiness who long for union with one another” is for Hauerwas the paradigmatic view of the moral formation in the context of the church (*WRA*:101-6). As observed by Stout and recognized by Hauerwas himself, “the Methodist stress on sanctification [...] developed through a recovery of the virtues” has always stood at the core of his project (*PF*:223). In fact, although considering other traditions, Hauerwas still claims that Wesley and Methodist theological ethics through its call to sanctification, holiness and perfection resisting a “strong distinction between theology and ethics” underlies the rationale and major insights of his understanding of moral formation (*WWW*:255-69).

### 3.2.3. Ecclesio-centric theologians: Barth, Bonhoeffer and Yoder

Jana Marguerite Bennett (2012:152), a former Hauerwas student witnesses: “There are those who poke fun at what they perceive to be a Hauerwas pantheon: Barth, Yoder, and Aquinas, while Alasdair MacIntyre and Aristotle take on the role of demi-gods.” Indeed in addition to Alasdair MacIntyre, Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder are the twentieth-century thinkers who have the most influenced Hauerwas’s church-centred and practical understanding of the task of theology and its correlative role in moral formation. Yet in Hauerwas’s own words, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s influence is not less significant to the ones of Barth and Yoder because Bonhoeffer is the one who prepared the way for his endorsement of Yoder’s ecclesiology and social ethics (*PF*:35).

#### 3.2.3.1. Karl Barth

Hauerwas who went to Yale to inquire about the truthfulness of Christianity “fell in love with and in particular the theology of Karl Barth,” the Swiss German and Reformed theologian (1886-1968) (TSB). Barth’s influence on the Hauerwas’s project is tantamount. Early, from Barth, Hauerwas learned that theology is a “discipline of the church” instead of being a mere academic inquiry, and it should remain a practical discipline concerned with the “‘verifiability’ of theological claims” — hence, his interest in Christian ethics (*PK*:xx). Following Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, he came to see that theology and ethics, life and doctrine, are ontologically and practically interrelated and united. If they could be divided it must be only provisionally and for analytical reasons. The “and” between doctrine *and* ethics, and “the division between life and doctrine” that make Christian ethics a separated discipline are all problematic modern inventions and need to be omitted (*STT*:20 emphasis original; *HR*:37-38).

In a particular way, Barth, has contributed to Hauerwas’s anti-foundationalism encapsulated in the title of his essay “The Church’s One Foundation Is Jesus Christ Her Lord or In A World without Foundations All We Have Is The Church” and based on 1 Corinthians 3:11 (*IGC*:33-49; *PK*:67). Thus, Hauerwas stresses the priority of theology over philosophy and the witness of believers exemplifying truthful Christian life (*IGC*:48-9). Barth, as “the primary ‘background theologian for all postliberal theologians,” is also instrumental for Hauerwas’s interest in the significance of narrative for the Christian life as he affirmed that Scripture displays the narrative of the story of God and Jesus (Michener 2013:11). Hauerwas began to learn on narrative while he was working on the thought of H. Richard Niebuhr at Yale (*WWW*:189-90). Yet he claims that it “was under the tutelage of Hans Frei, and the continuing reading of Barth” that he noticed that “the early church thought that narrative was



the appropriate mode of expression for what they took to be the significance of Jesus” (*PK*:xx-xxi). In fairness, Hauerwas has also significantly learned about “narrative as the necessary grammar of Christian convictions” from John Howard Yoder, in addition to those post-liberal theologians (*HC*:158).

Although educated through liberal theology, the heir of Enlightenment project, and its prominent figures like Friedrich Schleiermacher, Adolph von Harnack and Albrecht Ritschl, Barth came to reject liberal Protestantism, to advocate a Confessing Church, and to contribute to the writing of the Barmen Declaration opposing the accommodation of German Protestantism as well as Hitler and the Nazi regime (*WGU*:147-59; *WRA*:20-1; *RA*:23-5, 43-4). Hauerwas stresses, in contradistinction to the church’s accommodation, “a contrasting model” or “a political alternative” to the world or the American political and social order (*RA*:11-2, 78; *PK*:100; *CC*:12). In the same vein, Hauerwas has “learned from Barth to avoid the apologetical mode” and to concentrate on Jesus and the church “in a world that Christians do not control” and repudiate the “theology of translation” championed by liberal theologians like Bultmann and Paul Tillich (*HC*:235; *RA*:20-2).

Equally central to Hauerwas’s project is Barth’s understanding of the relation between the church and the world as epitomized in the following statement: “The only advantage of the Church against the world is that the Church knows the real situation of the world. Christians know what non-Christians do not;” and its implications: “It belongs to the Church to witness to the Dominion of Christ clearly, explicitly, and consciously” (Barth 1959:145; cf. *WRA*:46). From this particular insight Hauerwas that understands as the epistemological pre-eminence of the church over the world and a correlative strong separation between the two realms, he derives his particular conception of Christian social ethics encapsulated through his famous and often repeated epigram: “the church does not have a social ethic but rather is a social ethic” (*CET*:110; cf. *TT*: 143; *CC*:11; *PK*:99; *IGC*:22; *HR*:111).

Hauerwas, since the beginning, has proudly labelled himself an “unrepentant Barthian” in that he has firmly repudiated the individualistic propensity of philosophical and theological liberalism leading to autonomy, the voluntary mode of association and a decisionist ethic (*TFCS*:125; Kallenberg 2001:148). Similarly, Hauerwas calls himself an “unreconstructed Barthian” to justify his rejection of pietism and charismatic experiences since he considered liberalism and pietism as the two sides of the same coin because of their individualistic distortions (*STT*:108; *HTC*:65-6; *PF*:37n18). Barth was very insightful in helping Hauerwas ground his account of character as the qualification and orientation of the self in theological terms. From Barth’s understanding of faith and conversion, the early Hauerwas deduced an “ethics of continuity” allowing an Aristotelian account of agency — “the continuity



of the self called character” and devoid of Enlightenment autonomy (CCL:169; Kallenberg 2001:71).

Barth is “the hero” of Hauerwas’s book *With the Grain of the Universe* — the transcription of his 2001 Gifford Lectures (WGU:206). Lord Gifford who initiated these lectures conceived of natural theology as “an entirely ‘rational’ effort beholden to any particular religious tradition” (Quirk 2002). Instead of thinking of natural theology as the part of theology that does not depend on revelation and tradition, Hauerwas’s core argument in this book is that “natural theology divorced from a full doctrine of God cannot help but distort the character of God and, accordingly, of the world in which we find ourselves” (WGU:15). For Hauerwas, “Barth is the great ‘natural theologian’ of the Gifford Lectures” because he rightly apprehended this relation as opposed to the two other Gifford Lecturers of the yore — William James and Reinhold Niebuhr — who appear to understand Christianity as a disguised religious psychology, humanism or anthropology that does not substantively take into account the central Christian convictions about God such as the Trinitarian doctrine (WGU:9-10, 65-140, 205-6). Barth is also “the most successful natural theologian” in modernity because of the particular link between church and witness that emerges in Barth’s theology. Where James and Niebuhr “offer accounts of religion and Christianity respectively, that make the existence of the church accidental to Christianity,” Barth emphasizes “witness” to explain how Christians must live in the world (WGU:39).

Barth has provided Hauerwas with valuable insights regarding the relation between the truthfulness of Christian convictions through the lives of the faithful, the ethic of character, the narrative of Jesus as God’s self-revelation and a correlative ecclesiology all of these being central to Hauerwas’s account of moral formation. In Hauerwas’s view, however, Barth’s ecclesiology is not sufficiently Catholic and Anabaptist like the one Hauerwas advocates: Barth does not emphasize the significance of ecclesial practices and discipleship (WGU:39; WRA:20-23). Moreover, Hauerwas takes Barth’s ecclesiology a step further by turning to Aristotelian themes of character and virtues and he even called himself “a kind of Aristotelianizing Barth” since Barth has not “developed a more fulsome account of practical reason” (Reimer 2002a:70; cf. WGU:203 n.68).

### 3.2.3.2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Along with Barth and Yoder, Hauerwas shares the same passion for the church with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran theologian (1906-45). Bonhoeffer was a pastor in the Confessing Church that rejected the large official German Church’s support of the Nazi regime. He was arrested and eventually “hanged because of his participation in a plot to

assassinate Adolf Hitler” (Wells & Quash 2010:363). Bonhoeffer could but attract Hauerwas’s admiration as he eventually joined Barth in what Hauerwas prizes as central tenets for theology and moral formation: their common passion for the church community life and their opposition to theological and political liberalism and to an understanding of religion including pietism, personal faith, personal decision for Jesus, free decision of the individual (PF:37). Like Barth, Bonhoeffer was one of the key writers of the *Barmen Declaration* of 1934, but even before its issue, Bonhoeffer with Martin Niemöller drafted the *Bethel Confession* which challenged the anti-semitism of the German Church. Through Bonhoeffer’s condemnation of the national German church’s government, Hauerwas finds an ally for his conviction regarding salvation within the church. Thus, with appreciation, he endorses Bonhoeffer position that “The question of church membership is the question of salvation. The boundaries of the church are the boundaries of salvation. Whoever knowingly cuts himself off from the Confessing Church in Germany cuts himself off from salvation” (Bonhoeffer 1990:173; cf. PF:41).

In his “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s political theology,” a paper of 2002, Hauerwas speaks of Bonhoeffer as “one of my most important teachers” in the seminary and states that writing about him for the very first time “is my way of trying to acknowledge a debt long overdue” (PF:35). He also anticipates the fact that those accustomed with his work would notice that his account of Bonhoeffer’s theology “sounds far too much like” some Hauerwasian positions since, he explains, “it is only because I first learned what I think from reading Bonhoeffer (and Barth)” (PF:35). Bonhoeffer’s *Discipleship* (or *The Cost of Discipleship*) that he read as a seminary student opened the way that led to the utter influence of Yoder’s *The Politics of Jesus* on him some years later.<sup>11</sup> In his own words, two significant reasons prevented him to not write on Bonhoeffer earlier. He avoided being associated either with the theological movement of the “death of God” of the 1960s who misinterpreted Bonhoeffer’s *Letters and Papers from Prison* or “with Joseph Fletcher’s reading of Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* as a form of ‘situation ethics’” (Reimer 2002b:6; PF:35; cf. Fletcher 1966:28, 33).

Indeed, Hauerwas shares with Bonhoeffer the passion for discipleship and the church as Christian community. In his *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer strikingly “contrasts the ‘costly grace of discipleship’ with ‘cheap grace’” (Wells & Quash 2010:363). This echoes the Hauerwasian stress on the themes such as the virtue of obedience, martyrdom, faithfulness to the Christian narratives, witness and so forth found in his account of moral formation. Hauerwas points out that both books, Bonhoeffer’s *The Cost of Discipleship* (1941) and Yoder’s *The Politics of Jesus* (1972), convinced him that sound Christology is linked to discipleship in the church

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<sup>11</sup> Bonhoeffer, D 2001. *Discipleship*. Minneapolis: Fortress. This book was originally published in English in 1941 as *The costly discipleship*. New York: Macmillan.

community while quoting at the same time the following Bonhoeffer's statement in *Sanctorum Communio*: "the church of Jesus Christ that is actualized by the Holy Spirit is really the church here and now" (PF:35 cf. Bonhoeffer 1998:208). From 1935, while directing the Confessing Church's seminary at Finkenwald, Germany, Bonhoeffer not only completed the writing of *Discipleship* but also wrote another book, *Life Together* considered by Hauerwas as Bonhoeffer's "extraordinary account of Christian community" (PF:41). Fascinating for Hauerwas is the account of a community life of accountability and service to one another encouraged by Bonhoeffer among the seminarians and including mutual confession of sins and learning "to serve the truth alone in the study of the Bible and its interpretation in their sermons and teaching." (PF:41; quoting Bethge 2000:477).

For Hauerwas, American Protestantism's superficiality and its emphasis on fairness at the expense of truthfulness, rather than "Protestantism without Reformation" is the most important observation made by Bonhoeffer during his one-year sojourn at Union Theological Seminary in New York (PF:39). Therefore, he is deeply appreciative of "Bonhoeffer's claim that 'telling the truth is something which must be learnt'" (PF:64; cf. Bonhoeffer 1962: 327). In democratic regimes, truth and politics "do not mix" and "compromise is the primary end of the political process;" and thus lying and deception characterize the American politics (PF:56). Consequently, truth-telling is the Christian remedial virtue. Hence Hauerwas's central argument in *Performing the Faith*: "the church gives no gift to the worlds in which it finds itself more politically important than the formation of a people constituted by the virtues necessary to endure the struggle to hear and speak truthfully to one another" (PF:15).

Although Bonhoeffer being a Lutheran expected to believe in the two-kingdom theology, Hauerwas considers him as a noticeable ally to Yoder in his rejection of the church's friendship with the world and his advocacy of sanctification which "is only possible within the visible church community" (PF:44; cf. Bonhoeffer 1962:52).<sup>12</sup> Like Yoder, Bonhoeffer is for Hauerwas, the proponent of theological politics rejecting the church's Constantinianism, and its correlative invisibility which unfortunately fosters the principle of "inner-worldliness" and "a minimal ethic" or an "ethic for everyone" – all the very themes of Hauerwas's account of moral formation and social ethic (Bonhoeffer 1965:324; PF:43; cf. Yoder 2001:135-49). Interestingly for Hauerwas, Bonhoeffer offers a valuable corrective found in his *Discipleship* and more importantly in his *Life Together*, "which captures his vision

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<sup>12</sup> Of note, the first Hauerwas's essays on Bonhoeffer — "Dietrich Bonhoeffer's political theology" and "Bonhoeffer on Truth and Politics" consist in lectures given at "Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo and at Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre on March 14-15, 2002. The overall theme of the series was 'Bonhoeffer, Yoder, and political ethics'" (Reimer 2002a: 5). Subsequently, both essays were incorporated in Hauerwas's book of 2004: *Performing Faith: Bonhoeffer and the practice of nonviolence*, pages 33-54 and 55-72.

of the church as serving, worshipping, and witnessing community” (Wells & Quash 2010:363; cf. *PF*:41). Furthermore, for Hauerwas, Bonhoeffer, like Yoder, is a pacifist because of his acquaintances with the Huguenot and pacifist Jean Lasserre when he came at Union. He also saw Bonhoeffer’s commitment to non-violence through the following declaration on the occasion of his 1932 address to the Youth Peace Conference in Czechoslovakia: “There can only be a community of peace when it does not rest on lies and injustice. There is a community of peace for Christians only because one will forgive the other for his sins” (*PF*:40; quoted in Bethge 205).<sup>13</sup>

### 3.2.3.3. John Howard Yoder

The late Mennonite theologian and ethicist, John Howard Yoder (1927-1997) has been a teacher, a guide and mentor as well as a dialogue partner and a close friend to Hauerwas since 1970 (*RJHY*:15-16). After Yoder’s professorship at the Associate Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, they became colleagues from 1973 to 1984 at Notre Dame where Yoder stayed until the end of his life. In addition to numerous essays where he heavily draws on Yoder, Hauerwas has written some essays with the titles explicitly referring to Yoder and recognizing his appropriation of Yoder theological insights (e.g., *VV*:197-221; *WW*:391-408; *TSU*:147-64; *ABH*:129-136; *DFP*:21-5; *WPJ*:982-7). Hauerwas acknowledges that *Resident Aliens* of 1989 co-authored with Will Willimon, consists of “a rather modest statement of a position that has been articulated by people like John Howard Yoder for years” (*IGC*:51). Yoder’s influence on Hauerwas has been outstanding and ranges from pacifism — the well-known Yoder’s stance — to marriage and sexuality through the political character of the church, the critique of Constantinianism, the relation between the church and the world and its correlative social ethic. In other words, Yoder’s particular insights on ecclesiology, Christology and eschatology have heavily influenced Hauerwas’s understanding of the Christian life.

Both Yoder and Hauerwas share the conviction that premarital intercourse is an expression of dishonesty and that Christian marriage is about lifelong fidelity and an institution for resolving conflict that “should be structured toward that end” (Yoder 1999; *HC*:243). In their relationship, formative for Hauerwas were Yoder’s *The Original Revolution*,

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<sup>13</sup> For some critics, Bonhoeffer cannot be designated as a pacifist. In addition to his involvement in the conspiracy to kill Hitler, Ballor directs attention to Bonhoeffer’s following statement in *Sanctorum Communio* (1998): “Where a people, submitting in conscience to God’s will, goes to war in order to fulfill its historical purpose and mission in the world — though entering fully into the ambiguity of human sinful action—it knows it has been called upon by God, that history is to be made; here war is no longer murder” (quoted in Ballor 2005:123).

a collection of essays of 1971 containing “Peace without Eschatology” and the title essay “The Original Revolution.” Through them Hauerwas was struck by Yoder’s Christological and eschatological pacifism, which is far from being a position, “a recommendation or an ideal” for Christian life but rather stresses that “non-violence is constitutive of God’s refusal to redeem coercively. The crucifixion is ‘the politics of Jesus’” (*HC*:118). Yoder has helped Hauerwas to awake “from a dogmatic slumber, induced by Reinhold Niebuhr, that pacifism was just a theory” (*DFF*:117). Yoder’s pacifism is at the heart of Christian worship of a crucified messiah, and thus a practice of messianic community and not a moral issue that derives from an individualist and decisionist ethic. Yoder’s pacifism grounded on eschatology is a matter of moral formation connected “to the human community experiencing in its life a foretaste of God’s kingdom” (Yoder 1992:124; cf. *HR*:44). Following Yoder, Hauerwas has written *The Peaceable Kingdom* to emphasize “the centrality of non-violence as the hallmark of the Christian moral life” and to assert that peaceableness is the central virtue of the Christian community (*PK*:xvi, 135-51; cf. *PF*:26-7; *WAD*:x-34; Thompson 2003:3-16).

According to Yoder, the structure of Constantinianism lies on the following “basic axiom”: “the true meaning of history, the true locus of salvation, is in the cosmos and not in the church. What God is really doing is being done primarily through the framework of society as a whole and not in the Christian community” (Yoder 1971:154; cf. *MA*:62). The Roman Emperor, Constantine, by his Edict of Milan of 313 legalized Christianity. Thus, Constantinianism is an allusion to this monarch who turned Christianity, a marginal sect of the day to a state religion after being himself converted to Christian faith. This situation is paradigmatic of other kinds of Constantinian shift observed in the church history and manifested through “the general continuity of Christianity with the wider world” (Huebner 2006:58). In his essay “Christ, the Hope of the World,” Yoder describes four stages in the development of Constantinianism through its ecclesiological and political rearrangements leading to an increasingly growing secularization (*TSU*:172-3; cf. Yoder 2003:64, 141-5). Hauerwas finds in Yoder’s account of Constantinianism, substantive arguments grounding his own account on moral formation in connection with the absorption of the church’s identity in the society at large through secularization and pluralism and the resulting lost of church’s identity and its endorsement of a universal ethics. Consequently, Hauerwas agrees with Yoder’s contention that the alternative to Constantinianism is not anti-Constantinianism but localism, “the concreteness [of the church as] the visible community created by the renewed message” (Yoder 1994:253; cf. *TSU*:104).

Indeed, Hauerwas’s project and the one of Yoder converge in their “emphasis on the church, and in particular the visible church” (*TSU*:38). In his *Priestly Kingdom*, Yoder argues that the Constantinian shift in the Roman Empire resulted in the invisibility of the church



(Yoder 2001:135-49). For Yoder, the visibility of the church derives from the above-mentioned eschatological character of the Gospel. In contrast to what numerous conservative and liberal Christians believe, Hauerwas, following Yoder, maintains that “the salvation wrought in Christ is not ‘spiritual,’ but rather the creation of a new community that constitutes an alternative to the world” (*TSU*:38). Thus, both resist the relegation of religious convictions to the private sphere of life championed in CLD America as well as the reduction of Christian faith to mere beliefs requiring only individual adhesion and compromising the significance of communal practices in the life of the church (*HC*:160; *TSU*:38-9; Yoder 1998:11).

Both Yoder’s and Hauerwas strikingly assert a tension between the church and world. Yoder’s double claim is that “the church precedes the world epistemologically” and “axiologically”; first, “we know more fully from Jesus Christ and in the context of the confessed faith than we know in other ways” like in nature and science; second, “the lordship of Christ is the centre which must guide critical value choices, so that we may be called to subordinate or even to reject those values which contradict Jesus (Yoder 2001:11; cf. *AC*:37; *WGU*:220). Yoder’s statement emphasizes the necessity of the truthfulness of Christian convictions in a liberal world where the church is called to be a political alternative. The tension church-world contributes to Hauerwas’s affirmation that “outside the church there is no salvation” (*AC*:16, 19, 35-39). As for Hauerwas, “salvation is a political alternative that the world cannot know apart from the existence of a concrete people called church” because salvation makes Christians part of a story, the whole set of Christian convictions, exemplified in the lives of its community members (*AC*:35; cf. *STT*:192). In addition, the Yoderian world-church tension has deeply influenced Hauerwas’s understanding of social ethics since his early work. For example, in his “Reforming Social Ethics: Ten Theses” of 1981, Hauerwas explains one of his theses through this claim: “The fact that the first of the church is to be itself is not a rejection of the world or a withdrawal ethic, but a reminder that Christians must serve the world in their own terms; otherwise the world would have no means to know itself as the world” (*CC*:10; *HR*:113).

Correlative to this view of social ethics is Hauerwas’s understanding of natural theology developed in his *With The Grain of the Universe*, a book being his Gifford Lectures and whose title is a direct quotation from Yoder to demonstrate Hauerwas indebtedness to the Mennonite theologian (*WGU*:17, 218; cf. Yoder 1988:58). For Hauerwas, Karl Barth, the hero of his above-mentioned book, well repudiates an understanding of natural theology which is divorced from revelation and Christian witness; but he does not provide real characters whose life exemplifies the relation between Christian convictions and natural theology. To correct this insufficiency, Hauerwas in the book’s final section presents Yoder along with Pope John Paul II and Dorothy Day as the ones who have shown the necessity of



translating the truthfulness of Christian faith through life and practices. In particular, “no one has helped us see better than Yoder why questions of the truthfulness of Christian convictions are inseparable from the witness that the church is, as well as why that witness must be non-violent” (*WGU*:219).

Hauerwas’s views of the church as a political alternative implying discipleship, non-Constantinian social ethic and witness is echoed in the following Yoderian statement which suggests anti-foundationalism and the relationship between worship and ethics as additional areas of convergence:

Jesus did not bring to faithful Israel any corrected ritual or any new theories about the being of God. He brought them a new peoplehood and a new way of living together. The very existence of such a group is itself a deep social change. Its very presence was such a threat that He had to be crucified. But such a group is not only by its existence a novelty on the social scene; if it lives faithfully, it is also the most powerful tool of social change (Yoder 1998:11; cf. *TSU*:38-9).

Hauerwas’s non-foundational stance, above-described in relation to Barth, is to be extended to Yoder. Because of his “commitment to a community which is in turn committed to canonical accountability,” Yoder also rejects foundationalism or methodologism (Yoder 1994:87; cf. Cartwright 2001:663). Similarly, according to Hauerwas, neither theology nor ethics can be done from scratch point because “There is simply no place to start thinking prior to being engaged in a tradition” (WPJ). Yoder’s and Hauerwas’s agreement on non-foundationalism is extended to Biblical interpretation understood to be done not by individual Christians but rather by the church as interpretive community, hence the necessity of Bible reading related to discipleship (*UTS*:9, 47-49).

Although convergent in their perspectives on the tension church-world, a dissimilarity of emphasis can be noticed in their ecclesiology. According to Hauerwas, Yoder as an Anabaptist theologian reminds people that the church’s responsibility is to serve the world. However, partly because of his mainstream Protestant background, Hauerwas is more critical of the accommodation of the religious traditions in America. Thus, Hauerwas agreeing with Michael Cartwright’s imaginative description states: “Yoder thinks of the church as being ‘for the nations’ whereas I tend to think of the church as being ‘against the nations’” (*RYDU*:41).

Besides, both Hauerwas and Yoder have worked on the relationship between worship and ethics. Yoder deals with this topic in two noticeable ways. First, affirming the unity of worship and ethics, he defined worship as “the communal cultivation of an alternative construction of society and history” (Yoder 2001:43). Later on Yoder distanced his conception of the interlock between worship and ethics from a character formation trend before describing five communal practices — “each of them concerns *both* the internal activities of the gathered Christian congregation *and* the way in which the church interacts with the world

(Yoder 1994:360,361-73; emphasis original). Hauerwas, however, following a MacIntyrean understanding of practices links worship or liturgy and ethics in a way that they contribute to moral growth as they are also related to sanctification and holiness (*PK*:99, 107-9; *CC*:11; *HR*:111; *IGC*:22).

### **3.2.4. Contemporary philosophers: Wittgenstein, Murdoch, MacIntyre and Taylor**

Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation also bears the marks of several contemporary philosophers. The significant thinkers among them are the British novelist and philosopher Dame Jean Iris Murdoch (1919-99) and the Canadian philosopher with a Roman Catholic background, Charles Margrave Taylor (b. 1931). And above all these thinkers are Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889-1951), the baptized Catholic, Austrian-born and key British and prominent global philosopher of the early twentieth century who taught at Cambridge, and Alasdair MacIntyre (b. 1929), the Scottish-born Catholic philosopher who has taught in several British and American universities.

#### **3.2.4.1. Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein**

Hauerwas was introduced to Wittgenstein through seminars at Yale (*HC*:60; Kallenberg 2001:1). However, Hauerwas acknowledges that his imprint on him is "of an entirely differently order than that of other contemporary thinkers" and he introduces himself as "a Wittgensteinian realist" (Kallenberg 2001:6; Quirk 2002). According to Brad J. Kallenberg who has illuminated at length, in his *Ethics as Grammar*, the convergence between Hauerwas and Wittgenstein, "Hauerwas is able to do ethics precisely because he has been enabled to think *through* Wittgenstein *by means of* the particular language of Christianity" (Kallenberg 2001:6,8; emphasis original). In a personal correspondence with Kallenberg (2001:1; 257), Hauerwas noted that "God gave us that troubled soul Ludwig Wittgenstein to think through all the dualisms of modernity so that we really could have 'another side.'" Indeed Wittgenstein is acknowledged among modern theologians for his valuable "attempts to overcome the manifold dualisms of traditional Western thought" through aporias or linguistic puzzles (Ashford 2007:358).

Hauerwas has extensively learned and adopted Wittgensteinian methodological, epistemological and aesthetic as well as political and grammatical insights to build his own understanding of Christian theology and ethics (Kallenberg 2001:8-9; Ashford (2007:361-3). Wittgenstein has written unsystematically without following a structured theory. Contrary to

the traditional conception, he refuses to conceive “philosophy as the setting forth of grand theories”; he stresses that “We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place;” and he even adds that, “Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything” (Wittgenstein 1997:109, 126; cf. Ashford 2007:359; emphasis original). Likewise, Hauerwas rejects system-building and positions in ethics, yet puts forwards ecclesial identity by declaring: “reading Wittgenstein [...] helped me to see that positions far too easily get in the way of thought” (HC:60); and he said it more plainly: “[Wittgenstein] slowly cured me of the notion that philosophy was primarily a matter of positions, ideas, and/or theories” (PK: xxi; cf. Ashford 2007:361-2). For example pacifism for Hauerwas is not a position but flows from Christological insights learned from John Howard Yoder (HC:60).

In addition to non-foundationalism, Hauerwas has adopted Wittgenstein’s socio-linguistic holism making Christian language the hallmark of his theology that he considered as an unfinished work. For this reason he writes essays, rather than books, in a Wittgenstenian style which he considers as a powerful exercise of moral formation, when he declares: “Without presuming that my work has anything like the power of Wittgenstein’s, it remains my intention that the essays, like his aphorisms, should make the reader think at least as hard, if not harder, than the author has about the issues raised” (CC:6). As explains Ashford (2007:362), for Hauerwas, “If the reader will think harder about the issues raised, from within the Christian language, then she will become more virtuous.” Similarly, in his essays, he uses epigrams, like Wittgenstein, to enhance the moral vision of his audience. His assumptions are presented in a way “that the unsaid remains unsaid,” inviting the reader to embark in serious reflection to grasp the meaning for the moral life (FFB). This is exemplified in his dictum like “The church does not *have* a social ethic, but *is* a social ethic” (PK:99; cf. HC:158; WRA:46; emphasis original). All this recall the Wittgenstein’s dictum on moral vision “*Don’t think; look!*” (Cartwright 2001:634). In a sense, with Wittgenstein’s help, Christian life is for Hauerwas all about learning to see and to speak the Christian language (WWW:3-296; STT:61-74; TSU: 108-21).

Also, following Wittgenstein, Hauerwas’s uprooting mind-body dualisms, affirms the continuity between language and experience and rejects the separation of private experience “from bodily and linguistic factors” (Ashford 2007:362). Thus, Wittgenstein helped him to “see that ‘mind’ did not relate to body as a cause to effect, for ‘mind’ was not a singular thing or function” (PK:xxi). Hauerwas goes on explaining that “Wittgenstein ended forever any attempt on my part to try to anchor theology in some general account of ‘human experience,’ for his writings taught me that the object of the theologians’ work was best located in terms of the grammar of the language used by believers” (PK:xxi). With the determinative influence of

Wittgenstein, the task of theology for Hauerwas came “to be descriptive rather than speculative, therapeutic rather than theoretical” (Ashford 2007:362).

Moreover, central to Wittgenstein’s later philosophy are the notions of “language-game” and “form of life” (Grayling 2001:81-83). Through “language-games,” Wittgenstein names different linguistic activities performed when people use a language: “to describe, report, inform, affirm, deny, speculate, give orders, ask questions, tell stories, playact, sing, guess riddles, make jokes, solve problems, translate, request, thank, greet, curse, pray, warn, reminisce, express emotions, etc.” (Grayling 2001:83, cf. Wittgenstein 2001:10, 11, 62, 84).<sup>14</sup> This concept also refers “to the way children learn their native language” (Ashford 2007:360; cf. Wittgenstein 2001:22-3). The logic of these linguistic activities or the grammar of the language guide this language-games which is a way of stressing Wittgenstein’s conviction that words used within a given language cannot be separated from “their social, behavioural, and linguistic contexts” — and these contexts are necessary to understand not only the language but other dimensions of life (Grayling 2001:80-1; Ashford 2007:360). Hence the related and oft-repeated notion of “form of life,” understood as “the underlying consensus of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour, assumption, practices, traditions, and natural propensities which humans, as social beings, share with one another, and which is therefore presupposed in the language they use” (Grayling 2001:97; cf. Wittgenstein 2001:7, 10, 75).<sup>15</sup> In other words, “language is woven into that pattern of human activity and character, and meaning is conferred on its expressions by the shared outlook and nature of its users” (Grayling 2001:97). Thus, Wittgenstein holds that “knowledge is rooted in a person’s form of life. A shared form of life is the context within which he knows what he knows” (Ashford 2007:360).

Hauerwas’s appropriation of Wittgenstein’s “language-game” and “form of life” seems plain when one considers Hauerwas’s emphasis on the similarity between learning to be moral and learning to speak a language. Following Wittgenstein, Hauerwas holds that moral life is not first of all about abiding to rules, but it is “a problem of being initiated into a community of language” or “learning to speak Christian” (*WRA*:97; *TSU*:108-21; cf. Kallenberg 2001:231). Thus, throughout the development of his own project, he has come “to (re)discover the significance of the church as the primary set of language games” (*WW*:3). To this insight, Hauerwas adds the significance of the believing community praxis or form of life [including confession, reconciliation, peacemaking, and worship,] that is, everyday Christian practices. These practices are for Hauerwas the starting point of theology and

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<sup>14</sup> In the original text, these pages respectively referred to the epigrams no. 23, 27, 180 and 288 as well as 654.

<sup>15</sup> Here, the pages refer to the epigrams no. 19, 23 and 241.

ethics (*WRA*:51, 57); hence, Hauerwas's conception of "ethics as grammar," as well phrased and depicted by Brad Kallenberg (2001:231). Thus, Hauerwas's view of the church as the locus of moral formation derived from Wittgenstein's influence, since he "conceives Christians' primary moral task as learning what it means to inhabit the particular form of life that constitutes the believing community called "church" (Kallenberg (2001:8). And from this derives also Hauerwas's understanding of the political character of the church (*HR*:533).

### 3.2.4.2. Dame Jean Iris Murdoch

Murdoch was instrumental to Hauerwas's understanding of the significance of vision in the moral life in his early writings. Hauerwas's publications of the 1970s, bear the marks of Murdoch's programmatic ideas like "I can only choose within the world I can see, in the moral sense of 'see' which implies that clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort" (Murdoch 1970:37; cf. *WW*:155). In *Vision and Virtue* (1974) and *Character and the Christian life* (1975), Hauerwas turns to Murdoch for resources to ground his ethics of character posited in contra-distinction to principle or rules-based ethics and the situation ethics of Joseph Fletcher, which proposals are similar in limiting moral behaviour to moral judgments, decisions or choices (*VV*:30-47; *CCL*:30). Murdoch offered to Hauerwas the insights of moral life contrasting with this understanding associated with "behaviorism in the philosophy of mind combined with the ethicist fascination with class words and the principle universalizability" (*VV*:157; *CCL*:30). Thanks to Murdoch, Hauerwas enlarged and related his idea of character to a concept of moral life meaning a way of seeing the world and construing Christian ethics more "in the aesthetic mode of seeing and beholding than in terms of action and decision" (*VV*:37). For both Hauerwas and Murdoch, "The moral life is thus as much a matter of vision as it is a matter of doing" (*VV*:66; Murdoch 1966:195-201; 1964:343-80). Again, Hauerwas found in Murdoch valuable insights on the relation between language and ethics in a Wittgensteinian mood. Modern philosophy was using "Wittgenstein's famous argument against the idea of an 'inner object,' 'private ostensible definition,' or private language as decisive grounds for discounting this kind of 'internal vision'" (*VV*:35). But Hauerwas points out that Murdoch explains that moral life is not only a matter of choice but also of vision. This "vision is no more private and accessible than our use of language," since, he goes on, "We learn our language in public context, but after so doing we may well give it a special meaning in terms of the uniqueness of our biographical development" (*VV*:36; cf. Murdoch 1951:25-35).

However, Hauerwas who has paved the way for a larger reading of Murdoch's works in the context of the United States, has qualified or revised his dependence to the British



philosopher who has help him to assert “the role of language in the formation of moral sensibility, the priority of vision over the act of moral choice and the decision, and the dependence of moral vision on particular contexts” in Christian moral formation based on narrative ethics (Antonaccio 2012:158). Under Murdoch’s influence, Hauerwas held that “being a Christian involves more than just making certain decisions; it is a way of learning to ‘see’ the world under the mode of the divine” (VV:45-6). Murdoch was valuable for Hauerwas to oppose theological ethicists who in his view, were uncritically following moral philosophy in its primacy of action and decision instead of grounding their reflection in “basic affirmations about God, Christ, and sanctification” (VV:45). However, very lately, in 1996, through his essay, “Murdochian Muddles” he revealed that his basic assumptions were decisively opposite to the metaphysical stances of Murdoch as the British philosopher was an atheist and her dialogue with Christian scholars reminds him of his opponents — Paul Tillich and other liberal theologians — when she speaks of God in terms of the Good (WW:155-70; VV:38). Yet the mature Hauerwas does not totally discards Murdoch as the moral psychology reflected by her novels invites Christians to be trained and to rightly attend the world they are living in. However, the kind of training needed by Christians, “the ‘inner character’ [of their lives through] habituation made possible by a community’s practices” is distinctive and quite different because of their ‘creatureliness’ (WW:166-7).

### 3.2.4.3. Alasdair MacIntyre

MacIntyre joined Notre Dame’s faculty in 1985 — one year after Hauerwas had left for Duke. Both were colleagues at Duke as MacIntyre taught in this Methodist institution from 1995 to 1997. Yet their ongoing conversation, which became vivid in the 1980s, hearkens back to the end of the 1960s, beginning with Hauerwas’s doctoral dissertation revised and published as *Character and Christian Life* in 1974. “MacIntyre’s occasional essays on explanation in history and the social sciences were very important for helping set the general perspective [of] this book” (HR:77n.2; cf. HC:160-1; cf. CCL:75n.119).

In his essay, “The Virtues of Alasdair MacIntyre,” Hauerwas deservedly praises the rich contribution of MacIntyre in ethics — metaethics, history of ethics and virtue ethics — as well as the philosophy of social sciences especially in analytical and political philosophy (WWW:202-13). Hauerwas has extensively drawn upon MacIntyre to the extent that his pervasive influence includes “the recovery of the virtues and corresponding criticism of modern moral philosophy” [and far more importantly] the philosophy of action” (WWW:203; HC:161).



Hauerwas numbers the publication of MacIntyre's *After Virtue* among the three determinative causes of the renewed interest in character and virtue in American and Western context, the two other fountainheads being the disenchantment generated by the Kantian paradigm in ethics or the failure of the Enlightenment project and the large public interest in character and virtue. Indeed, the book describes historical and social factors of the recovery of virtue ethics, in particular the moral disagreements and the dedication to emotivism that have left no better alternatives but the choice between Nietzsche's nihilism and Aristotelian understanding of virtues. For MacIntyre (1984:217), this latter "moral tradition is the best example we possess of a tradition whose adherents are rationally entitled to a high measure of confidence in its epistemological and moral resources." Our world is like the one of the Roman Empire subverted by barbarism, and it awaits another St. Benedict to promote small communities of virtue (MacIntyre 1984:263).

For Hauerwas, the most striking insight learned from MacIntyre is his appropriation of the Wittgensteinian "concept of an intelligibility of action," which Hauerwas considers as "the central contention in *After Virtue*" and which MacIntyre presents as "a more fundamental concept than that of an action as such" (MacIntyre 1984:209; *WWW*:203, 206). Hauerwas explains the significance of this key contention to the entire MacIntyre's work as follows:

This may seem a small philosophical point, but much revolves around it: his understandings of the centrality of practical reason, the significance of the body for agency, why the teleological character of our lives must be displayed through narrative, the character of rationality, the nature of the virtues, why training in a craft is paradigmatic of learning to think as well as live, his understanding of why the Enlightenment project had to fail, his particular way of being a historicist, and why the plain person is the necessary subject of philosophy (*WWW*:206).

Hauerwas has heavily drawn on or critically engaged with all these insights for his constructive proposal on moral formation. First, MacIntyre was instrumental for his move from the psychology of action to an emphasis on narrative for the intelligibility of an action description. He first endeavoured "to defend a concept of agency in terms of an analysis of action in and of itself" but eventually discovered, with MacIntyre's help that he was wrong because "[s]uch an analysis presupposes that 'action' or 'an action' is a coherent and conceptually primitive notion" and neglect the MacIntyrean's "central importance of the concept of intelligibility" (*HR*:80; cf. MacIntyre 1984:209). Thus, thanks to MacIntyre, he revised his definition of character as "the qualification of our self-agency" in terms of character as "the form of our agency" (*HR*:80-1). In other words, he learned from MacIntyre that "character is the source of our agency, that is, our ability to act with integrity" (*STT*:94). This leads Hauerwas to emphasize "the importance of narrative for developing the

significance of character” and the importance of narrative “for understanding our own actions” (HR:81).

Second, Hauerwas highly regards the contribution of *After Virtue* to his epistemological framework in Christian ethics and moral formation. This book “changed the world in” which he was working and helped him to accurately spell out the metaethical concepts of moral formation as described in his methodological book, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (HC:160-1). The “mutually supporting web of concepts” of an Aristotelian ethic of virtue — namely a living tradition; the telos of humanity; a particular vision of community; narrative, practices; and virtues — developed in *After Virtue* has prevented Hauerwas’s theology to be “an esoteric discipline available only to those inside” (Kallenberg 1997:28; HC:161; Wilson 1998:39-48; cf. MacIntyre 1984:181-225). With MacIntyre, Hauerwas shares the conviction that “a community is the bearer, interpreter, concrete expression of its traditions” (Kallenberg 1997:64; MacIntyre 1984:206, PK:45). However, Hauerwas has striven for an accurate theological content of the MacIntyrean “conceptual tools” (HC:161). The communal dimension of Hauerwas’s ethics is a more determinate account which identifies the Christian community as this particular community, in so far as he considers the Christian community as the “radical alternative both to the now extinct Aristotelian city-state and the society of modern liberalism” (Kallenberg 1997:64).

Third, Hauerwas has repeatedly given credit to MacIntyre (1984:23) who has pointed out that “all philosophical theories, including every ethic, presume a sociology” when some thinkers like Ernst Troeltsch and H. Richard Niebuhr bring distorting sociology (CAV:195; WRA:68). This insight helps to focus on the relation between Christian ethics and ecclesiology or moral formation and gathering to worship (JGC:157).

Fourth, MacIntyre’s and Hauerwas’s insights largely converge in their critique of liberal distortions. Both share the conviction that most forms of conservatism are similar to liberalism in that the free market advocated by the former result in the same kind of individualism “antithetical to the tradition of the virtues” as the one fuelled by liberalism; and both do not support the social practices leading to a genuine common good (WWW:210). In addition, Hauerwas draws on MacIntyre’s rejection of liberalism to suggest some patterns of moral formation in the school. In his *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, MacIntyre (1988:309, 345) maintains that there are at the same time a plurality of traditions and rationalities as a rational enquiry is related to history and it is always not separated from a specific tradition. Therefore, it is only through the misleading lens of Enlightenment that liberalism can purportedly be recognized as neutral whereas it is embodied in a tradition and must even be understood as a particular tradition (cf. CAV:59). This MacIntyrean “account of traditioned, determined rationality” has nourished Hauerwas’s arguments to denounce the incoherence of the

university's curriculum manifested by the fragmentation of institutional identity along with the dismissal of theology as a particular discipline of study "to secure cooperation between individuals in liberal societies" (*TSU*:18, 20, 61).

MacIntyre's insights on learning a language by the young ones have allowed Hauerwas to repudiate at the same time James Gustafson's charge of fideism against him and Donald Davidson's arguments on the translatability of linguistic conceptual frameworks between rival groups. Hauerwas rejects the doctrine of translatability to oppose the liberal demand of translating "Christian speech into terms that are assumed to be generally available" for the sake of political communication and to advocate a multicultural educational system opposing liberal and imperialistic education promoted in America (*WW*:2-3; *AC*:133-5; cf. Kallenberg 2001:119-22). Another critical insight of MacIntyre for Hauerwas is his account of patriotism. In his "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" MacIntyre analyzes the tension between liberal cosmopolitanism — the dominant account of morality in America — and patriotism. And he observes that, in this perspective, acting morally is "[assuming as far as possible] a position abstracted from all social particularity and partiality" (*TSU*:142; cf. MacIntyre 1995:209-28). In the same vein, Hauerwas observes that patriotism fostered in American education undermines Christian narrative of peace to be championed by the church since patriotism and liberal universalism taught in the school through loyalty to the country fuels violence and American wars out of self-interest (*TSU*:144-5).

However, Hauerwas has not uncritically drawn on MacIntyre's insights. In their co-authored book, *Christian Among the Virtues*, both Charles Pinches and Hauerwas engage MacIntyre and two other Aristotelian thinkers: Martha Nussman and John Casey. They warn the reader that it would not be surprising if they note that their "differences with [MacIntyre] are more difficult to delineate" because "MacIntyre has taught [them] the most" (*CAV*:xiv). Although Hauerwas acknowledges his considerable indebtedness to MacIntyre, especially for the interrelation of practices, tradition and the virtues, he affirms that this contribution has been more philosophical. Hauerwas had expected MacIntyre who has moved from an Aristotelian to a more Thomist position not to be all secular in his "metaphysical position, his account of natural law, as well as his understanding of practical reason" (*WWW*:210; cf. MacIntyre 1988:183-208). Indeed, Hauerwas who builds on Aquinas for his account of virtues distinctively Christian distances himself from MacIntyre who, drawing from the same source, asserts "a strong distinction between philosophy and theology," or "nature and grace" and comes to an account of practical reason devoid of revelation (*WWW*:210-1). What follows is MacIntyre's account of the "non-tradition-determined character of practices" that Hauerwas cannot endorse (*WW*:186 n4).

#### 3.2.4.4. Charles Margrave Taylor

Taylor shares with MacIntyre and other communitarians — including Hauerwas — the critique of the liberal theory of self promoted by philosophers such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and John Rawls, which neglects the significance of the social contexts and institutions in shaping people’s life choices, identity and morality. Hauerwas with Coles converge with Taylor’s thesis of the significance of the ordinary life in modernity developed in his two seminal books: *Sources of the Self* (1989) and *A Secular Age* (2007) (DFF:169) Their overall appreciation towards Taylor’s contribution is perhaps best expressed through the following statement with pages referring to *A Secular Age*:

We admire Taylor’s unapologetic acknowledgment of his Christian convictions (637). We think it is a good thing that Christians now live in a world in which it is no longer impossible not to believe in God (3). We are also convinced that many aspects of modernity are the result of a corrupted Christianity (740). We share Taylor’s judgment that when the Christian faith is identified with a civilizational order Christians lose sight of the full transformation to which Christians should be committed (743) (WWW:171).

Concerning social ethics, Hauerwas has found compelling Taylor’s understanding of American civil religion as the primary reason for the difference between the New and the Old World, also labelled “the America exceptionalism.” According to Taylor, American common civil religion brings about the understanding that various faiths contribute to a national consensus expressed by the motto “*E pluribus unum*.” Common loyalty to America seems to be the sacred ideal supplanting even hot disagreements about gay marriage or abortion. In contrast to Europe, religious identity hardly result in divisions and a more diverse religious difference is subordinated to the “one nation under God” as various faiths are expected to “be in harmony with what it means to be an American” (WAD:4; cf. Taylor 2007:528). Observing secularist and liberal believers campaigning for a more secular America reveals the vivid religious character of American public life although “the original Protestant American civil religion has been broadened to include ‘all faiths’ or ‘no faith’” WAD:6; cf. Taylor 2007:528).

Taylor has identified the unproblematic character of war as another feature of American national identity and the American difference. While in Europe the tragic memory of the First and Second World Wars has induced a general reticence to national identity and all kind of wars, for America you could “be unreservedly confident in your righteousness when you are the hegemonic power” (Taylor 2007:528; WAD:4). For Hauerwas, Taylor’s link between civil religion (the assumption of being a religious nation), national identity and war is worth of being articulated. This has been endeavoured through *The War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity* (WAD) wherein

Hauerwas argues that “the American experience of war [is] constitutive of the substance of [the American] civil religion” (*WAD*:4-5).

Hauerwas has drawn on Taylor’s story of modernity about the significance of modern life to challenge the liberal ethics of compassion and its correlative assumption of eliminating suffering, especially in the case of retarded children. In his essay entitled “Killing Compassion,” Hauerwas draws on Taylor to claim that in the modern society, even Christians are tempted or driven to prevent the birth of retarded children or accept euthanasia out of compassion (*DFP*:164-74). In his *Sources of the Self*, Taylor speaks of “the ordinary life” to point to “those aspects of human life concerned with production and reproduction, that is, labour, the making of the things needed for life, and our life as sexual beings, including marriage and the family” (Taylor 1989:211; *DFP*:169). Hauerwas considers that Taylor has extraordinarily helped “us see why any Christian account of love necessarily suffers a loss of a Christological centre, not because of science, but because of the moral presumptions commensurate to the valuation of everyday life (*DFP*:173). According to Taylor, the Protestant Reformation has been a critical factor in the secularization of modern life, through its severe critique of the essential Catholic tenets such as mediation, salvation, tradition and sacramental life; all that has led to longing for an existence free of suffering. This analysis of modernity has reinforced Hauerwas’s loathing for the formulation of some central tenets of Protestant Reformation in favour of Roman Catholicism. For modern egalitarian and “compassionate societies” driven by a liberal understanding of compassion cannot bring about the cultivation of Christian virtues. Christian moral life derives from the valuation of the extraordinary that “comes in the form of the extraordinary people as well as extraordinary events” (*DFP*:173).

As a matter of divergence, Taylor concludes his analysis of the end of Christendom by acknowledging the presence of the “dominant immanentist orders” that seems to long for a more transcendental recognition (Taylor 2007:734-5). However, for Hauerwas and Coles, what is needed nowadays is the “existence of a people” — the church — that is, “people who are able to discern possibilities in the immanent frame that could not be seen if such a people did not exist” (*WWW*:157).

### **3.2.5. Postliberal theologians: Frei, Lindbeck, McClendon and Milbank**

Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation has been influenced by postliberal or narrative theology to which he is, at the same time, one of its major contributors (Michener 2013:72-77). The movement is characterized as non-foundationalist, intratextual,

communitarian (socially-centred and respecting plurality and diversity), historicist and ecumenically focused as it rejects “both the traditional Enlightenment appeal to a ‘universal rationality’ and the liberal assumption of an immediate religious experience common to all humanity” (McGrath 1994:109; Michener 2013:4). The postliberal school proposes a third way between liberal and evangelical theologies: on the one hand, it endorses liberal theology’s rejection of biblical infallibility and legitimate biblical higher criticism; and on the other hand, it adheres to the evangelical tenets of “the primacy of biblical revelation, the unity of the biblical canon, and the saving uniqueness of Jesus Christ” (Dorrien 2001:16-21). The movement is also known as the Yale school theology because of the academic location of its two founding fathers: The Lutheran, then Anglican, theologian Hans Wilhelm Frei (1922–1988), and the Lutheran George Lindbeck (b. 1923). Hauerwas was student of both at Yale where Frei taught from 1957 until his death and Lindbeck from 1952 to his retirement in 1993 (*IGC*:22; *PK*:xxi). Apart from the contributions of Frei and Lindbeck, Hauerwas has drawn on the works of James Wm. McClendon, Jr. (1924-2000) and Alasdair John Milbank (b. 1952) belonging to the group of post-liberal theologians non-trained at Yale. The Baptist McClendon is perhaps the one in this group who has the most influenced Hauerwas’s account on moral formation (*HR*:150; *CET*:54). Milbank is a key figure of an increasingly visible neo-Augustinian strand called “Radical Orthodoxy” related to post-liberalism (Michener 2013:94). He has particularly influenced Hauerwas’s account of virtue ethics and brought some valuable insights in his understanding of narrative. Moreover, the post-liberal movement has been deeply influenced not only by Karl Barth in contradiction to H. Richard Niebuhr but also by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas; its intellectual background includes the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the moral philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre, the philosophy of science of Thomas Kuhn and the cultural anthropology of Clifford Geertz (Michener 2013:19-47; *WWW*:189-190; Dorrien 2001:16-21).

### **3.2.5.1. Hans Wilhelm Frei**

Frei’s most influential book, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* is a call for the recovery of a narrative reading of the Bible or more specifically for considering the Scriptures as a kind of realistic narrative, the most preferential pre-modern mode of Bible interpretation (Frei 1974; 1975; 1986:36-77; cf. *HR*:150-1; *CET*:62). Thus, he rejects both conservatives’ literal interpretation and liberals’ historical-critical interpretation who treat biblical stories as either historical raw material or timeless truths and moral lessons (Dorrien 2001:16-21). According to Frei (and similarly for Barth) biblical accounts — including gospel narratives — are “only ‘history-like’” and this bring up the issue of their truthfulness and historical or ontological



reference (*HR*:158; ). Their truthfulness does not rely on their historicity but rather on the truthful narration of Jesus' identity (Dorrien 2001:16-21). In his *Festschrift* contribution on Frei, "The Church as God's New Language," Hauerwas suggests that the church is to be seen as "the subject of the narrative as well as the agent of the narrative" to emphasize that Biblical "narrative does not refer but rather people do" (*HR*:158; cf. Frei 1986:157). He goes on explaining that the non-foundationalism presupposed by Frei's perspective about Christian narrative is "an attempt to draw our attention to *where the story is told*, namely, in the church, *how the story is told*, namely in faithfulness to Scripture; and *who tells the story*, namely the whole church through the office of the preacher (*HR*:160, emphasis original). Hence, the preacher's teaching derives its authority from its conformity to the church's liturgy and interpretation of the Christian narrative.

### 3.2.5.2. George Lindbeck

Frei and Lindbeck who, according to Hauerwas, "were among the first to direct our attention to the narrative character of existence" have also learned both from Wittgenstein "that we are spoken before we speak" (*PF*:137; *FC*:230; cf. Lindbeck 1984:24). In his *magnum opus*, *The Nature of Doctrine* of 1984, Lindbeck not only draws on Wittgenstein's theory of language but also on the cultural anthropology of Clifford Geertz and by so doing reinforces and amplifies Frei's arguments on contemporary theology. As a result, Lindbeck provides a threefold typology of theories on religion, namely "cognitive-propositional," "experiential-expressive" and "cultural-linguistic" theories (Lindbeck 1984:30-42). While the first is the widespread perspective of Anglo-American analytic philosophy, the second is most characteristic of liberal theories. Lindbeck advocates, in a Wittgensteinian way, a cultural-linguistic type which undermines the significance of doctrine as conceived of in both liberal and conservative theologies; but rather stresses that "religious faith is understood to resemble a language correlative to a way of life" or "doctrine functions within a religion as grammar functions within a language" (*TSU*:118; Ashford 2007:369). Explicitly following Lindbeck, Hauerwas emphasizes the primacy of narrative making doctrine the second category in Christian faith while he still considers doctrines as the necessary skills for the rationality of Christian faith and formation (*PK*:24-9; *GC*:220 n19).

Likewise, Lindbeck's repudiation of alien Christian apologetical strategies and his attachment to the significance of intra-textuality and catechesis as well his emphasis on the centrality of Christian community have been inspirational to Hauerwas. Following Lindbeck, he stresses, in a post-Christian age, the significance of catechetical teaching in the church, which he compares with the task of learning the language of a craft, rather than adopting

apologetical strategies such as the translatability discarded by MacIntyre (*TSU*:118-9; cf. Lindbeck 1984: 16-18, 113-24; MacIntyre 1988:373, 378, 382). Besides, along with Yoder and MacIntyre, Hauerwas mentions Lindbeck as one who has been very influential to his articulation of the relation between the church and the liberal world as well as the resulting social ethic strongly rejecting the church's accommodation and subservience to American CLD ethos — a task that Hauerwas has particularly performed throughout two books: *Against the Nations* of 1985 and *Resident Aliens* of 1989 (*AN*:1-9; *IGC*:51).

### 3.2.5.3. James Wm. McClendon, Jr.

McClendon's commitment to non (or anti)-foundationalism has deeply influenced Hauerwas who clearly testifies that "James McClendon has been teaching us how to do theology in a world without foundations before anyone knew what anti-foundationalism was (*TWF*:143; *IGC*:33; cf. Murphy 1994:9). Accurately depicted by the metaphor of "knowledge as a building" in that "upper stories are built upon lower stories, but the whole thing comes tumbling down if it has no solid foundations," foundationalism is an epistemology theory repudiated by postliberal theologians in favour of church practices (Murphy 1994:9). While "even in science attaining objectivity is more an image than an actual activity," foundationalism, asserts Hauerwas, is "the attempt to make theology attain quasi-scientific "objectivity" [...] by providing it with a firm foundation (intended or not), [this] could not help but provide a domesticated theology (*WW*:177).

McClendon and Smith's pioneering work has had the virtue of opening the gate for a debate which would be joined later by Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach and MacIntyre's theory of tradition-constituted rationality and the justifications of traditions" (Murphy 1994:17). Thus, postliberal theologians through an antifoundationalist approach reject the conservative doctrine of the inerrancy or infallibility of the Scripture, viewed as a way of satisfying the demand for an unquestionable foundation," the liberal historical-critical approach to the Scripture as well the recourse to religious experience (conversion, miracles, prayers etc.) as foundation for Christian life and enquiry (Murphy 1994:15).

Yoder and McClendon have been of great help in Hauerwas's articulation of the relation between ecclesial practices and sanctification (*STT*:9). In particular, McClendon has championed the "baptist tradition or vision" — with a de-capitalized "b" to stress the difference with Baptist tradition — which encompasses his convictions and the related way of life outlined in his *Ethics* in five following elements: Biblical narrative, mission, liberty, discipleship, and community (McClendon 1986:35). This way of life is neither Catholic nor Protestant but rather derives from the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Radical Reformation and refers to all

radical Christians considering the so-called Anabaptists as their spiritual forebears, whether they are in their direct denominational line or not (Murphy 1994:18). This vision is in line with Hauerwas's project since he names himself an "anabaptist" after McClendon and urges for discipleship, a radical participation in the Christian adventure within the life of a local community and its practices (*PF*:170; *HR*:522).

In his *Biography as Theology*, McClendon claims that "Christian beliefs are not so many 'propositions' to be catalogued [...] but are living convictions which gave shape to actual lives and actual communities" and goes on stating that "we open ourselves to the possibility that the only relevant critical examination may be one which begins by attending to lived lives. Theology must be at least biography" (McClendon 1974:37-38). This vibrant contribution to narrative ethics as a story-formed morality is a striking call for Protestant communities to revisit the significance of saints for discipleship and community ethics; and for Catholics to qualify their understanding of saints by not emphasizing only universal saints but paying enough "attention to the flexible possibilities of local saints" (McClendon 2000; cf. *TT*:80). Hauerwas shares the same strong interest in the role of local saints for discipleship (e.g., *RA*:98-103; *WRA*: 17, 20).

Hauerwas highly regards the unsystematic character of McClendon's three-volume book, *Systematic Theology*, consisting of *Ethics*, *Doctrine* and *Witness*. In contrast to modern theology, *Doctrine* follows *Ethics* meaning that doctrine is not a prolegomena for ethics. This insight is congruent with Hauerwas's Barthian claim that "doctrine is ethics," that is, Christian life exemplifies doctrine and theology is not viewed as speculative endeavour but rather a practical one (*STT*: 23; *WW*:180). This book is a masterpiece in narrative theology; in *Doctrine*, McClendon in line with Barth refuses to "explain things"; rather he forces readers to attend to the story of God. Indeed, both do not use a main category — such as covenant, love, kingdom, eschatology — to order all the Christian thought (*WW*:177, 183; *WGU*:146).

Moreover, McClendon's *Doctrine* is structured eschatologically in that the doctrine of God and creation appears later (in the Chapter 7) and are prefaced by the doctrine of atonement (Chapter 5); the Trinity is presented as a practice of the church, the worship of the God of Jesus Christ (McClendon 1994:293-4; *WW*:180). McClendon clearly asserts that "in a figure, creation and salvation are not parent and child; neither has birthed the other. Rather they are sisters, mutually interacting and supporting each other along with a third sibling, eschatology" (McClendon 1994:147-8; cf. *WW*:182). Thus, for Hauerwas, McClendon is a precious ally along with Barth and Aquinas helping him to hold his central claims of the separation of church and world, the distinctiveness of Christian ethics (*WW*:176-7).

Both McClendon and Hauerwas share the Yoderian themes of Constantinianism, non-violence and the fight against principalities and powers and their application in the relation

between the church or Christian community and the world (McClendon 1986:42; *TSU*:172-3;*HR*:312-3). The hermeneutics of McClendon's baptist vision through the mottoes "This is that" and "Then is now" means that the present Christian community *is* the apostolic church and make the eschatological end of time described in the Scripture here and now (McClendon, 1986:30; *WW*:179, 181). As a result, the teaching of the church must be structured eschatologically: doctrines are interrelated, doctrines are connected to Christian practices; for example the doctrine of Trinity is displayed through church worship (*WW*:179-80; cf. McClendon, 1994:293-294). Therefore, Christian doctrines belong to secondary theology, the justification of primary theology which consists in "the church trying to think out its own convictions, and this gets expressed in sermons, prayers, hymns — the sources of its ongoing common life" (Myers 2000; Murphy 1994:25). Hauerwas endorses this understanding of theology and considers stories and sermons as the appropriate media to describe Christian convictions and teach Christians ethics.

Equally important, McClendon and Hauerwas have both drawn on MacIntyre's critical analysis of the moral life in modernity and his web of concepts for virtue ethics developed in *After Virtue* (MacIntyre 1984:181-225). Also both stress the significance of the relation between Christianity and Judaism, the subsequent historical Christian prejudice against Jews and the resulting necessity of remembering and forgiveness as ethical tasks (McClendon 1986:219-29; *HR*:634-5).

#### **3.2.5.4. Alasdair John Milbank<sup>16</sup>**

In the chapter, "Difference of Virtue, Virtue of Difference" in his extended study and seminal book, *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank gives Alasdair MacIntyre credit for the recovery of an ethics of virtue, and in particular, for his own identification as an "Augustinian Christian" by stressing that "one must subscribe to some *particular* tradition, some *particular* code of virtue" (Milbank 1990:327; emphasis original). However, MacIntyre who recognizes that "the virtues and opinions that tradition-based communities espouse are rhetorically mediated" neglects this starting point and ground his virtue theory on dialectics, a universal method of reasoning to be seen as a kind of Christian apologetics (Milbank 1990:328; cf. *CAV*:61-2;). In fact, MacIntyrean arguments "against nihilism and a philosophy of difference [what he calls genealogy] are made in the name of virtue, dialectics and the notion of *tradition* in general (Milbank 1990:327, emphasis original; cf. MacIntyre 1988:55-6). As a result, MacIntyre fails to notice the essential difference between a distinctively Christian account of the virtues and the related antique understandings, especially those of Plato and Aristotle,

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<sup>16</sup> In fairness, Hauerwas and Milbank have also influenced each other.

which are grounded on heroism, conflict and the defence of the *polis* by violence. In other words, MacIntyre fails to notice the discontinuity between the polis and the church community, between Greek virtues and Christian virtues, between, on the one hand, the Greek *arete* with its fundamentally heroic image and its unique *telos* of conflict and, on the other hand the Christian *caritas* promoted by Aquinas offering a *telos* of friendship and mutuality (Milbank 1990:328-64; CAV:62-66). In *Christ Among the Virtues*, Hauerwas and Pinches draw heavily on Milbank through extended quotes from *Theology and Social Theology* to distance themselves from this particular aspect of MacIntyrean account of virtues and its Aristotelian *telos* (CAV:61-9). Being provided with Milbankian arguments, they have been able to describe distinctively Christian virtues of hope, obedience, courage and patience rooted in ecclesiology and eschatology as examples of virtues Christianly considered (CAV:113-178).

Within the same Milbank book, Hauerwas has found insights helping him to enlarge his previous conception of narrative restricted to the canonical narrative: the narrative of the history of Israel and the life of Jesus Christ (PK:28-29). According to Milbank, narrative is “a more basic category than either explanation or understanding: unlike either of these it does not assume punctiliar facts of discrete meanings” (Milbank 1990:267). Separated from universal laws and universal truth of spirit, narrative finds its explanation through textuality: “If reading texts means that we renarrate them or repeat them, and if, as we have seen, textuality is the condition of all culture, then narration — of events, structures, institutions, tendencies as well as of lives — is the final mode of comprehension of human society (Milbank 1990:267, 359; cf. WW:191). In his essay, “Creation, Contingency, and Truthful Non-violence: A Milbankian Reflection” (WW:188-98), Hauerwas asserts that Milbank powerfully stresses the “unavoidability of narrative as the form of truth” and the “understanding of creation as the ongoing non-violent work of the God we know as Trinity” (WW:188). At the same time, he undermines modern scientific assumptions leading to nihilism and based on efficient causation or “explanation and understanding” as “the only or primary modes of rationality” (PF:144; Milbank 1990:264). In contrast, narrative allows the understanding of a comprehensive reality: ourselves and all that is; and thus “can do the work of argument” since “narration is the ‘science’ of the particular” (PF:144; WGU:206; cf. Milbank 1990:264-7).

Hauerwas’s thought converges with John Milbank’s on several ecclesiological and social ethical themes. In his *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank strongly critiques secular social theories which he contends being “concealed theologies or anti-theologies” rather than being objective or scientific (Milbank 1990:3). Thus, the secular outlook they promote offer an understanding of sociology, psychology, political science and economics distorting the moral



life to the detriment of Christian beliefs and way of life. In response to secular ideologies, Milbank stresses the significance of the church as alternative *civitas* or community and distinctive Christian way of life which is also a core theme in Hauerwas's project (Milbank 1990:55-72, 380-438; *WWW*:24 n41; *TSU*:165; 166; 169-70). Both are suspicious of pluralism in Western modern contexts as Hauerwas agrees with Milbank's contention that pluralism is "a rhetoric to avoid difference" (*TSU*:64). Similarly, both are in agreement for the inclusion of theology in the college or university curriculum as a necessary component of moral formation (*TSU*: 22-3).

Despite their affinity in those areas, a significant divergence between Milbank and Hauerwas emerges in connection with pacifism and non-violence. For Milbank, "Christianity recognizes no original violence" since there was, "in the beginning," God's act of "original peace" that God is still busy carrying on because "creation is [...] not a finished product in space, but is continuously generated *ex nihilo* in time" (Milbank 1990:5, 425; *PF*:143). Hauerwas gives Milbank credit for this conception which implies, as labelled by Milbank, the "sociality of harmonious difference" and which views violence as "a secondary willed intrusion upon this possible infinite order;" all this opposed to the *mythos* shaping modernity and assuming that "in the beginning there was chaos and violence" (Milbank 1990:5; *PF*:143).

However, Milbank does not consider radical pacifism, irreducible non-violence and even peace as a virtue (Milbank 1990:418; cf. *PF*:175-82). Moreover, in his "Violence: Double Passivity," a response to Hauerwas's criticisms, Milbank stresses that standing by while people commit violence is an even more patent and greater violence (Milbank 2003:201-6). In his "Explaining Christian Non-violence: Notes for a Conversation with John Milbank and John Howard Yoder," Hauerwas, the American apostle of non-violence urged the British theologian — who speaks of "the ontological priority of peace over violence; a presumption, moreover, anchored not in universal reason, but in a narrative, a practice, and a dogmatic faith" — to espouse pacifism and non-violence (*PF*:176). In fairness, Hauerwas has not only been influenced by postliberalism, but stands himself as one of the key figures to the movement through his community ethics (Michener 2013:72-77; Werpehowski 2012:243-4; Fodor 2005:243).

### **3.2.6. Christian traditions: Methodism, Catholicism and Anabaptism**

Through family background and friendships in his various professional locations, three most significant traditions — Methodist, Roman Catholic and Anabaptist — have influenced Hauerwas's project (*IGC*:67). Methodist tradition lies in John Wesley's theological vision well-expressed throughout his *Christian Library*, the selection of material published from 1749



through 1755 and described by himself as “Extracts from the Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity.” These books manifest his view of an essential relation between theology and ethics or “beliefs” and life in that “theology is first and foremost to be preached, sung and lived” and must serve essential Christian practices or “the interest of transformed living” (*WWW*:255). This relation implies the essential connection between happiness and holiness or being sanctified; both should be directed to a common end, the embodiment of holiness “in the time between the times” (*WWW*:257). In addition, Wesley’s “practical divinity” exhibits Christian common resources for ethical life consisting of “Scripture, sacraments, the moral theological tradition, conciliar doctrinal commitments, as well as the communion of saints, ancient and contemporary” (*WWW*:257). In Methodist tradition, the relation between happiness and holiness or the understanding of a good life is often identified as “the religion of the heart” which must be understood in the light of the Sermon on the Mount according to Wesley who states that “the sum of all true religion is laid down in eight particulars” or the beatitudes (*WWW*:258). His account of the beatitudes is in resonance with “the great catholic tradition of the virtues as crucial for the formation of holy people” (*WWW*:259). At the origin, Wesley founded the Methodist societies, “small ecumenical communities within the church” fostering virtuous, happy and holy life and sustained by “three general rules: do good, avoid harm, and attend upon the ordinance of God” (*WWW*:259; cf. *WRA*:103-5). This demonstrates that “the religion of the heart” cannot be understood as “a private, interior disposition about which no one can discern or make judgments” as some Methodists mistakenly think today; rather Methodist tradition fosters the embodiment of sanctification and perfection through life of accountability for people “to be saved from sin” (*WWW*:266). Thus, pursuing the religion of the heart or the life of beatitude justify the significance of a communal form of life, an “inherent sanctifying righteousness” and the emulation of saints (*WWW*:262).

In his *In Good Company* one-third of the book is devoted to Catholic moral theology and is illustratively entitled “In Catholic Company” (*IGC*:81-149), Hauerwas declares: “You do not spend fourteen years with the Catholics at Notre Dame without being marked by that experience” (*IGC*:11). Indeed, at the University of Notre Dame he discovered Catholic piety, sacramental life leading him to understanding in a Wittgensteinian way that “‘Catholic’ [is] a set of practices” (*IGC*:11). In other words, there he learned the significance of practices for community and moral formation. He acknowledged that prayers to Mary produce Catholics and that the word “Catholic” means “not a set of ‘believes about God,’ but a world of practices called ‘church’” (*IGC*:83). Also there he realized “that church, that is, practices as basic as prayer or having children, are intrinsic to what we mean by God” (*IGC*:83). Undoubtedly, his fondness for some basic Catholic teachings has influenced several bold convictions underlying Hauerwas’s particularist ethics which he sees as being an afterthought in most of

the Protestant traditions. As will be explained further, Hauerwas's ethics advocate hierarchical order in the Christian community (e.g., the role of Episcopal office), the mediation of the church viewing the Christian as "as passenger in the ecclesial ship on its journey to God" and thus he rejects voluntarism and affirms that salvation, far from being a mere personal commitment of believers is being part of a holy people (*TSU*:145); *DFP*:171; *STT*:244). The significance of the ecclesial community as an "alternative polis" in moral formation goes along with the admiration of monasticism and especially the exaltation of the imitation of saints (*RA*:46; *HR*:73).

In a sermon on Reformation Sunday, he declares "Reformation Is Sin" because it has made Protestants think of Catholics as the Pharisees promoting "a form of legalistic religion, thereby destroying the free grace of the Gospel" (*STT*:241-44). "Protestantism in America has become "an end in itself" and an "anathema" and thus fuels disunity (*STT*:241, 244). Here and elsewhere Hauerwas condemns or better challenges or reformulates the way the foundational tenets of the Reformation such as all the *solī* — *sola gratia*, *sola fides*, *sola scriptura* — and justification by faith are commonly understood (e.g., *PK*:91-5; *UTS*: 29-38; 47-62). Correlative to this valuation of the ecclesial community is the rejection of moralistic liberalism, individualistic pietism and the distortion of Protestant conservatism because of their individualistic features (*TSU*:132; *PK*:95).

After recognizing his profound indebtedness to Roman Catholicism, Hauerwas states that it is no "easy to ignore the Anabaptists when you have been as deeply influenced as I have by John Howard Yoder and James McClendon (*IGC*:11). To their credit, Catholics and Anabaptists "have managed to keep some practices in place that provide resources for resistance against the loss of Christian presence in modernity" (*IGC*:67). Catholics still firmly maintain their "claims on Christian continuity and unity across the century," on good order and authority between churches and on some moral issues found embarrassing in liberal cultures (*IGC*:67). Likewise, Anabaptists demonstrate their strong commitment to discipleship, still have a memory of community discipline along with the oddness of [their] pacifism" (*IGC*:67). Both Anabaptists and Catholics have a very appealing understanding of salvation viewed as the inclusion "by baptism and through God's grace" within "the cosmic transformation of creation" and as the engraftment "into a counter-history made possible by a counter-community called to be a witness to God's kingdom" (*IGC*:75). In brief, Hauerwas highly values Methodist, Catholics and Anabaptist practices. Nonetheless, as discussed further (in Chapter 7), he has also found some distorted developments within these Christian traditions. For example he rejects "Methodism," the temptation of assuming that method of procedural aspects matter the most, the Catholic assumption to ground social ethics on natural law as

well as the Anabaptist neglect of the significance of worship and the tension between discipleship and voluntary church membership in this tradition (*WWW:267; IGC:70-76; 94-6*).

## **Conclusion**

All things considered, the family and religious background of Hauerwas, his education and academic career have significantly marked his theological project. As a result the family's craft of bricklaying and Methodist, Catholic and Anabaptist practices as well as post-liberal theology and some helpful interactions with other scholars added to the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics have been the basic ingredients he has moulded to lay out his proposal on moral formation. These influences have led to the development of an account of moral formation emphasizing the cultivation of virtues Christianly understood in communal and liturgical contexts and through discipleship and the imitation of local saints. In the process, Hauerwas has heavily drawn on the Methodist stress on sanctification and perfection, Roman Catholic sacramentalism and Anabaptist social critique and discipleship as well as a recovery of Aristotelian virtue ethics through Aquinas and MacIntyre. At philosophical level, Hauerwas's endorsement of MacIntyrean concepts of virtue ethics and critique of the Enlightenment project and its correlative modern ethics have been enriched with insights from Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and anti-foundationalism, Murdoch's aesthetic ethics and Taylor's critique of modern secularism. At theological level, Hauerwas's proposal bears the profound imprints of Barth's essential relationship between ecclesiology and ethics, his stress on church's witness and anti-liberalism and his rejection of the apologetical mode of theology, Bonhoeffer's passion for church community life as well as Yoder's understanding of the confessing church and Christological and eschatological pacifism. In addition, Hauerwas's proposal consists in the reaffirmation of scriptural narrative gained from postliberal theology coupled with its non-foundationalist, intratextual, communitarian, historicist and ecumenical stances. Besides, the analysis of Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation is to be pursued by displaying how he has integrated the mentioned various insights into his metaethical and theological framework.

## Chapter 4: THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORK OF STANLEY HAUERWAS'S PROPOSAL

### ***Introduction***

The present chapter pursues the analysis of Hauerwas's proposal — initiated in Chapter Three — by defining its ethical and theological framework. To recall, throughout the development of his project Hauerwas has adopted the Aristotelian and MacIntyrean philosophical paradigm for an ethics of virtue and moral formation. But, at the same time he has distanced himself from this perspective by suggesting a more theological understanding of this hub of concepts and offering in addition several specifically theological concepts to build his own theological and ethical project. This has been possible by his constructive use of the contributions from other philosophers and theologians. This chapter is intended to uncover the outcome of this process through an elaboration of the core metaethical categories and foundational theological themes included in Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation.

### **4.1. Metaethical foundational categories**

Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation encompasses the six interrelated concepts of the Aristotelian and MacIntyrean ethical paradigm, namely, tradition, *telos*, community, narrative, practices, and virtues/character; the whole forms what is generally termed as an ethics of virtue. Yet the alternative notions of community ethics and narrative ethics could also be applied to this set of concepts if one intended to respectively emphasize the role of community and narrative within this paradigm. To do justice to Hauerwas's identification of the church as the community of virtue where the Aristotelian and MacIntyrean themes endowed with their theological connotations must be lived out, the notion of ecclesial ethics drawing attention to the practices of the church community cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the various concepts and the ethical dimensions associated with them are described through the categories of virtue ethics, narrative ethics and community — each emphasizing the correspondent and specific concepts involved.

#### **4.1.1. Virtue ethics**

Although an ethics of virtue basically includes the categories of virtues and character, it seems helpful to add their cognate concepts: self-agency, habits and *telos* as they appear in the development of Hauerwas's ethical project. In early Hauerwas, in the 1970s, a

particular emphasis was first put on character and self-agency before moving to virtue. A more explicit treatment on *telos* appeared not later than in the 1990s in *Christians Among the Virtues*. Recently, Hauerwas has admitted that in his early work on character and the virtues, namely in *Vision and Virtue* of 1974 and *Character and Christian Life* of 1975, “[he] did not develop an account of habit that is surely necessary for an adequate account of the virtues” (HM:2).

#### 4.1.1.1. Character and self-agency

Hauerwas proposes the ethical category of character to correct the ethical perspectives that do not take seriously the identity of moral agents over time and even less their moral growth (CCL:8). This is particularly the case in Protestant tradition reducing moral life to confrontation with divine command as found in Lutheran themes emphasizing justification through faith and Barthian command ethics. Deriving from both perspectives, situation ethics clearly reflects this distorted orientation as it asserts that “the command comes void of content, demanding only that we do the loving thing in the concrete situation” (CCL:5). All this is congruent to occasionalism and decisionism reducing the self to an existential chooser and the moral life to decision-making strategies. The ethics of character promoted by Hauerwas since the beginning of his project shifts the ethical reflection from the question, “What should I do?” to “What should I be?” or “What kind of person should I be?” (CCL:7-9; CC:271). In this regard, Hauerwas emphasises that “the idea of character provides the means to discuss with rigor and discipline the moral formation of the subjective” (CCL:29).

In his early work, he defined character as the qualification and the orientation of the self. “Character, he stated, is the qualification or determination of our self-agency, formed by our having certain intentions (and beliefs) rather than others” (CCL:115). By directing attention to self-agency, Hauerwas was particularly standing counter to the social psychological perspective viewing character as “what happens to us” in that character is formed through “personality” or “the interaction of our biological heritage, environmental, social psychological process and agreed personal attributes” (CCL:104; cf. VV:56). Although significant, these factors are insufficient for a relevant account of character as “men are in essence self-determining beings” (CCL:18). However, “character is not just the sum of all that we do as agents, but rather is the particular direction our agency acquires by choosing to act in some ways rather than other” (CCL:117).

With his early account of character related to “the self as agent,” Hauerwas linked the notion of character not only to the concept of action but also to the Aristotelian and Thomist themes of choice, intentions, embodiment, etc. Thus, he placed agency, the capacity to act



resulting in a chosen determination, at the core of the idea character (CCL:18). While choice is seen as the centre of action, character is presented as “the determination of choice as well as its continuing result” (CCL:112-3). Intentionality or consciousness is another basic notion for character, since it helps to “shape ourselves and our actions” (VV:66). Intentionality must be distinguished for purpose; action is basically intentional because it “can only ultimately be described and understood by reference to the intention of the agent. This account of character relies on the primacy of the agent’s perspective; only the agent, and not an external observer, can supply the correct description of an action, whereas its purpose can be characterized from the observer’s point of view” (VV:57; CCL:29-33). Moreover, to avoid causation, Hauerwas asserts an internal relation between character and action for the following reason: “To be a man is to have the power of efficient causation” (CCL:26).<sup>1</sup> This internal relation he calls embodiment implies that “volitions, motives, intentions, reasons do not cause or move men to act, but men acting *embody* them (CCL:21, emphasis added; cf. Kallenberg 2001:72).

More significantly for moral formation in Hauerwas’s early treatment of the idea of character is the notion of acquiring character which he situated at the very centre of what it means to have character (CCL:115). At least, character must be acquired and cultivated because it is a concept implying a moral goodness that is not automatic and primarily related to “a prediction of persons and not acts” (VV:49). Moreover, character language provides some important descriptive and evaluative expressions such as “a person’s character,” and “having a character” which denote that character and virtues are to be acquired through the agent’s effort.<sup>2</sup> Hauerwas explains:

When we think of a person’s character, a distinguishing trait such as honesty or kindness is usually what we have in mind; but when we speak of a man as “having character,” we are more apt to be thinking of something like integrity, incorruptibility, or consistency. The former denotes more the common meaning of “virtues,” while the latter indicates a more inclusive and unitary concept. Both usages denote the distinctive, and both require effort on the part of the agent. They only differ in level of generality, but having character also denotes a more basic moral determination of the self (VV:54-5; cf. CCL:14-16).

Equally important, acquiring character and having character denotes that “there is a kind of permanence to character, but it is not necessary unchanging or inflexible” (CCL:115). Thus, an ethics of character, in contrast to a decisionist or situation ethic, well describes “the

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<sup>1</sup> He goes on explaining: “The self does not cause its activities or have its experiences; it simply is its activities as well as its experiences. I *am* rather than *have* both my activities and my non-voluntary traits and processes” (CCL:26; emphasis original).

<sup>2</sup> To be more accurate, Hauerwas describes two additional expressions: “having a character trait,” and “being a type or kind of character”. While the former, he explains, “is used to describe distinctive styles of life that are characteristic of a portion of a person’s dispositions or activities, the latter is quite similar to the former and “concentrates on one distinctive mark of the person.” (CCL:14).



persistence of the self that allows a man to acquire a moral history which informs his action in the present and directs him in a particular ways toward the future” (CCL:17). Besides, the significance of the agent’s particular society, environment and psychological traits are qualified in a way that they become part of his character “but only as they are received and interpreted in the descriptions [embodied in his own] intentional action” (CCL:115). Yet, character is essentially grounded on action and intentionality as Hauerwas goes on explaining:

Our character is dependent on the fact that we are disposed to have a range of reasons for our actions rather than others, for it is by having reasons and forming our actions accordingly that our character is at once formed and revealed (CCL:115).

In a deconstructive way, Hauerwas has revised his understanding of character since he moved from the concept of “the self as agent” and turned to the concept of “the self as story.” With the help of MacIntyre’s concept of the intelligibility of action an account of agency is not necessary for the understanding of people’s ability to acquire character. Similarly, a thorough reading of Aristotle and Aquinas on the voluntary and involuntary acts does not direct attention primarily to agency but to the significance of habituation. Thus, character stands “as the source of our agency, that is, our ability to act with integrity” (STT:95). Furthermore, agency is also a secondary category because of the centrality of narratives that constitute people’s lives. MacIntyre’s account of intelligibility helps to discard the modern conception of external observer’s point of view and to reconsider the agent’s perspective previously prized by Hauerwas because the ability to understand our action or what somebody “is doing requires that we be able to place that episode in the context of a narrative” (STT:96,101; cf. CCL:104-6; VV:68-92). However to know more about character formation entails to elaborate on other foundational categories of Hauerwas’s paradigm thereof.

#### **4.1.1.2. Virtue, habit and *telos***

Thus, it is useful to speak of virtue along with habit pointing to the process of acquiring the virtues. In addition, the distinctiveness of Christian *telos* illuminating the understanding of the virtues in a Christian perspective is worthy of notice. Character (*ethos*) is not “the simple sum” but “a particular ‘mix’ or connection between the various virtues characteristic of any one person’s life patterns” (CCL:75-6). In a sense, individual moral virtues receive their direction and unity from the person of character, a person’s complete being (CCL:78). Moreover, for Hauerwas, a distinction should be made not only between character and virtue but also between the mere fact of exhibiting virtues and being a “person of virtue or character” (CCL:16 n27; CC:112). As a matter of fact, a person can exhibit virtues or qualities

such as humility, honesty, kindness and courage, but being a “person of virtue or character” implies “a self formed in a more fundamental and substantive manner than the individual virtues seem to denote” (CC:112). As regard to people living in a given community, not only a kind of style, class or distinctive way of life is associated to a person of character but also “a more profound formation of the self” (CC:113). Although an ethic of virtue relies on the claim that an agent’s being is prior to doing, there is neither mutual exclusion nor inherent contradiction between the language of virtue and the one of duty. Indeed, “the recognition and performance of duty is made possible because we are virtuous, and a person of virtue is dutiful because not to be so is to be less than virtuous” (CC:114).

As a matter of fact, a person of virtue or character like everyone else confronts instances of making moral choice or decisions. However, “from the perspective of an ethic of virtue, decision are morally secondary” or “morality is not primarily concerned with quandaries and hard decisions” and persons of virtue understand situations they face “as function of the kind of people [they] are” (CC:114; cf. VV:11-29).<sup>3</sup> Thus the virtues are not to be related to modern decisionism and its corresponding view of interrupting normal life based on solving dilemmas or a “trip-like view of the moral life”; in contrast, the virtues refer to a journey-like conception of morality that entails temporality, a temporality which “is neither transitoriness nor terminality” (CAV:17). Being “states of character by which one is formed to know what is the good and to do it,” the virtues, in an Aristotelian way are also “the dispositions one acquires on the journey that is the moral life, thus making the trips *unnecessary*” (CAV:19; emphasis original). This conception of the virtues supposes a training helping people not only to solve the situations they are caught in but also to develop a character efficiently helping to being prepared “to avoid or understand such situations in the future” (CC:115). As Aristotle contends in his Book One of *Nicomachean Ethics*, virtues are to be learned and developed over time and through practices, including the one of deliberation, throughout the journey of moral life (CAV:17-26).<sup>4</sup>

As regard to moral growth, the significance of habituation cannot be overlooked as “[t]he virtues are rooted in the self through habits” or can be thought of as “certain kinds of habits” (CC:261 n5; CCL:69). For Aristotle and Aquinas, the term “habit” does not “connote an automatic, rather mechanic response to accustomed cues” as it is widely accepted in

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<sup>3</sup> In this regard, Hauerwas presents an extended critique of philosophical decisionism and situationism, its theological version, as he opens his *Vision and Virtue* with the essay, “Situation Ethics” (VV:11-29).

<sup>4</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches suggest Aristotle’s view account of a life span can be better captured through the metaphor of journey. And they explain this metaphor as follows: Whatever it is, a journey is not frivolous or transitory; it is not a “trip.” It is on the other hand, essentially temporal, for it not only implies movement from place — which takes time — but also *development* over time of the one who journeys (CAV:18).

modern usage (*CCL*:69). Aristotle speaks of characteristics or *hexis*, skilled or complex habits which form the virtues through corresponding activities (*PF*:157; *CCL*:70; Aristotle 1962:1105b-30; 1104b20-28; 1966: 1022b1-13). Put differently, according to Aristotle and Aquinas, the virtues are acquired through a kind of habituation which could be best understood as the development of individual virtues or “skills for actions” (*PF*:157; *CCL*:78-9).

For this reason, moral formation through the inculcation of appropriate habits from the early childhood is all the more important as stressed by Aristotle and quoted by Hauerwas:

We must see to it that our activities are of a certain kind, since any variation in them will be reflected in our characteristics. Hence it is no small matter whether one habit or another is inculcated in us from early childhood; on the contrary, it makes a considerable difference, or rather, all the difference (Aristotle 1962:1103b20-25); *PF*:157; *CAV*:24).

The habits necessary for virtues acquisition are intended to confer at the same time “aptness to act” and “the right use of that aptness” (*CCL*:78-9). In addition, as stressed by Aquinas, the acquisition of virtues entails also the habituation of the passions, feelings and desires as well as an appropriate kind of imitation and lasting practice. Referring to the example provided by Aquinas for justice, Hauerwas states:

The habits we acquire necessary to make us not only do what justice requires but to become just in the doing are complex responses learned over time. Therefore to become just means acting as the just act; but you cannot become just by slavishly imitating what the just do. Rather, you must feel what the just feel when they act justly (*PF*:156; cf. Aquinas 1952:I-II, 56, 3; *HR*:291; *CAV*:151-2).

In the same vein, Aristotle puts the matter in a very illustrative way: “[M]en become builders by building houses, and harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, we become just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage” (Aristotle 1962:1103a30-1103b1; cf. *PF*:156). Hence, people are in some way responsible for their character since in an Aristotelian and Thomist perspective: “The virtues [...] can only be acquired through our actions if what we do is not different from what we are. The virtues can be learned through doing, but the ‘doing’ cannot be a product separate from the agent” (*PF*:156; *CAV*:25; cf. Aristotle 1962:1114a29; 1114b22).

Accordingly, like the arts, the cultivation of virtues requires the presence of masters and apprenticeship or training; however unlike the arts where the emphasis may be put only on the quality, the goodness and beauty of the product, a virtuous life takes into account both the sort of person and the acts performed in a way that the agent and the virtuous acts cannot be separated (Aristotle 1962:1105a22, 1105a26-35; cf. *PF*:157; *CAV*:22-3; *CCL*:39-

40). However, the distinctiveness of Christian moral life requires a critical approach to the Greek account of the virtues (CAV:x-xii).

Correlative to the Aristotelian notion of the virtues, in his Book One of *Nicomachean Ethics*, is *eudaimonia*, happiness, the *telos* of human life which is not to be confused with “pleasure, honour or wealth,” that is, the goods that people can easily lose (CAV:17; HM:2). Instead, happiness is the “highest good attainable by action,” it “cannot consist in a list of goods but must be a good in and of itself which is the cause of all these goods” (CAV:5; cf. Aristotle 1095a20-30). For Aristotle, “the virtues are not so much the means to happiness, as they are its form” (CAV:17). Since moral life is “the journey to the destination of happiness,” the virtues, intrinsic to this end, represent “Aristotle’s means of describing and navigating [this] journey” (CAV:19). However, Christian *telos* is to be viewed as radically different from Aristotle’s happiness according to Aquinas who synthesized Aristotle’s ethics and Christian faith. For “the Christian Aquinas,” the ultimate end for human beings is not “a natural life well ordered by reason” as commonly interpreted by scholars, it is “rather *caritas*, or “a certain friendship with God” (CAV:104; Aquinas 1952:I-II, 65, 5). It is not only Aquinas who has described “charity as a sort of friendship with God, who is our last end”. The language of friendship with God originated in early Christianity as witnessed by John the evangelist (CAV:105; cf. RA:64; Jn 15:14-5).

In addition, the very notion of friendship in Christian perspective is significantly different from the one conveyed by the Aristotelian tradition. Aristotle recognized the significance of friendship in the process of acquiring virtues as he rightly saw that there is no need to be virtuous before seeking out the company of other virtuous people. Hauerwas and Pinches assert that Aristotle conceived of friendship itself as “an activity by which we acquire the kind of steadfastness necessary for our being true friends” (CAV:38). Following Milbank, they find, however, a limit in Aristotle’s view of the relation between friendship and a virtuous life when it comes to his understanding of “magnanimous man, his highest embodiment of virtue” (CAV:20-1, 64-5; Milbank 1990:352). Magnanimity, the notion of better giving than receiving, is essential to the virtuous life of the magnanimous man who, if struck by adversity or misfortune and becoming unable of giving to others, would decide to isolate himself from his friends and do not let them share his pain (CAV:41-2; cf. Aristotle 1169b10-13; 1159a26). Hence, “friendship at its height is to be enjoyed in time of mutual good fortune and prosperity” (CAV:42). However, Jesus who befriended Christians invites them to share his sufferings and suffer for other people for his sake (CAV:44).

Again following Milbank, Hauerwas and Pinches emphasize that Aquinas’s *caritas* diverges from the virtues of the magnanimous man; for example, charity can be exercised

even in hard times by somebody seeing himself as a recipient from God, and thus “charity begins and ends in gratitude” (Milbank 1990:360). The dissimilarity between Greek virtues and “Christianly considered virtues” could be established from the Milbankian discrimination between *arete* and *caritas* implying for Hauerwas and Pinches a different political relation and participation between the *polis* and the church. The virtuous life in the ancient Greece was always ordered to heroism, conquering and war, that is, to a *telos* involving “the practices and perfection of the virtues of conflict,” whereas Christian charity consists in community and mutuality as “the Christian church bring to the world the possibility of true peace” (CAV:65-6; Milbank 1990:363-4).

Greek accounts of virtues, especially the one of Aristotle, bear valuable insights for the Christian understanding of moral life as they help to clarify the complexities of the notion of virtues and related concepts. Also, Aristotle has connected friendship and happiness stressing that the “journey toward happiness, which is the moral life, cannot be understood as that of a lonely hero” (CAV:32; cf. Aristotle 1962:1155a1-10). For him, virtues deriving from the activity of happiness and necessary for happiness require learning and practices and they are learnt not alone but in communities of friends (CAV:33; cf. Aristotle 1962:1169b28-1170a3). However, the Aristotelian *telos* is different from the Christian *telos* in community: Aquinas’s friendship for example, is “something unthinkable from Aristotle’s point of view” since it is a friendship accepting the vulnerability of our temporal or bodily status (CAV:xi). Christian narrative speaks off a “perfect friendship in Jesus” implying the distinct love in “the community Jesus foresaw as the continuation of his own life (Jn 13:34-35; CAV:34-5). Hence, for Hauerwas, “Greek accounts of virtues are there to be *used* by Christians, but not *built upon* (CAV:68; emphasis original).

Moreover, as “the virtues derive their intelligibility from communal practices” and are therefore “political,” the peculiarity of Christian virtues should be stressed (CAV:xi). It follows, for Hauerwas and Pinches, that for the Christian moral life, the virtues are to be “Christianly considered” and thought of as fundamentally different from the virtues associated with “quite different practices, communities and narratives” (CAV:x). Accordingly, while conversation between the pagan and modern liberal accounts of virtues can be considered as relevant for Christian ethics they must be recognized as alien to a Christian account of virtues. For example, charity, as viewed by Aquinas as the form of all the virtues, becomes an even more Christian specific virtue as it is to be associated to a kind of patience deriving from Christian convictions and shaped by Christian hope (CAV:xv). Thus, the task of the next section, and indeed of much of the chapter, is to begin elucidating the Hauerwasian cultivation of these Christianly considered virtues.



### 4.1.1.3. Vision and description

In this perspective, the significance of vision and description for the moral formation cannot be overlooked. Vision and description underlie an essential and appropriate view of “ethics as aesthetics” that cannot be divorced from a thorough account of character and virtue for a particularist Christian moral formation (TDS:65-6; PK:29; cf. Kallenberg 2001:49-82). In his very early work, *Character and Christian Life*, Hauerwas bound up the notion of *character* with the one of *description* and defined our character as “that aspect of our self by which we deliberately determine our action in the light of our chosen patterns of descriptions” (CCL:113). Character, thus, determines our agency or cause our actions through motives, beliefs, intentions and choices related to “the range of descriptions available to us” (CCL:112-3). The descriptions used by the agent are intrinsic to action, as explains Hauerwas: “For what the action is, or even that it is an action, can only be determined by the fact that I was acting under one description rather than another” (CCL:96). The deliberated use of particular descriptions justifies the agent’s responsibility in the formation of his or her own character because:

Society provides possible descriptions for our actions, but only in a small number of cases does it force the description upon us. The agent is able to form a whole life pattern using certain descriptions rather than others; as agent we become who we are because we act in some ways rather than others. [...] Because we can determine our action by our control over its description, the description we use from in fact what we are as men. In this sense we are profoundly what we do, for once action is understood in its essential connection with our agency it is apparent that by acting we form not merely the act but ourselves in that process (CCL:106; Kallenberg 2001:73).

Progressively, Hauerwas, under the determinative influence of Irish Murdoch, linked the notion of description to moral vision, a particular way of attending to the world, “for one can only describe what one sees” (Kallenberg 2001:73). In his *Vision and Virtue*, Hauerwas understood that moral description is to be supplemented by an accurate moral vision for a conscientious acquisition and development of character based on a thorough understanding of the moral life, as he states,

One of the constant themes running through moral philosophy has been that the unexamined life is not worth living. This theme is very much at the heart of the moral significance of character, for it is through consciousness (intentionality) that we shape ourselves and our actions. And what else does consciousness means but the effort to see and understand our actions in terms of their most significant moral descriptions? For the idea that the moral life is the examined life is but a way of saying that we can choose to determine ourselves in terms of certain kinds of descriptions rather than others. Thus, to live morally we must not only adhere to public and generalized rules but also *see and interpret the nature of the world in a moral way. The moral life is thus as much a matter of vision as it is matter of doing* (VV:66; emphasis added; cf. Murdoch 1966; 1964: 343-80; McClendon 1971:415-31).



In the context of the 1960s and early 1970s, the significance of moral vision was even to be stressed in moral philosophy because a host of thinkers reduced the moral life to action, choice and decision. In contrast, from a Murdochian perspective, the moral life involves “more than thinking clearly and making rational choices. It is a way of seeing the world” (VV:36; Murdoch 1967:2; 1971:78). As situation ethics in Christian ethics was following the same pattern, Hauerwas turned to moral vision as a way of directing attention to moral notions rather to decisions, as he states: “The moral life is not first a life of choice — decision is not king — but is rather woven from the notion we use to see and form the situations we confront. Moral life involves learning to see the world through an imaginative ordering of our basic symbols and notions (VV:2).

Obviously, Hauerwas intended to locate moral vision in a distinctively Christian perspective. “Christian moral life, like any moral life, is not solely the life of decision” but requires also “a life of vision,” this vision is to be specifically Christian: “a vision that is determined by the religious and moral notions that constitute it” (VV:29). This peculiarity is all the more important because being a Christian “is learning to see the world in a certain way and become as we see” or “it is learning ‘to see’ the world under the mode of the divine” (VV:29, 46). For the shape of this vision, Hauerwas turned first to Christian doctrines, for example the nature of God informing and justifying Christian behaviour as “[a] Christian does not simply “believe” certain propositions about God; he learns to attend to reality through them” (VV:46). Afterwards, he contended that this kind of vision found its full expression through the concept of narrative, because of his conception of the narrative grammar of Christian convictions (PF:140; cf. PK:24-34).

In this respect, “Christian ethics is not first of all an ethics concerned with doing, but its first task is to help us rightly see the world. Christian ethics is not just a narrative, but rather involves a very definitive narrative with a definitive content” (TDTS:65-6). Back to Hauerwas’s theory of self-agency, narrative taking preeminence to action, is the category that helps resolve the matters of autonomous self and “Why choose one description rather than another?” (Kallenberg 2001:74). In addition to one’s own history and autobiography, Christian narratives guide the choice between description offered by our social environment and Christian community by sustaining the moral vision (CCL:106; VV:29). Thus, this moral vision needs training.

Through the Murdochian perspective of “ethics as aesthetics,” “the primary task of Christian ethics involves an attempt to help us see” (TDTS:65-6; PK:29). The reason why moral vision is so essential to the enterprise of Christian ethics is given through an oft-repeated Hauerwas’s statement: “we can only act within a world we can see and we can only

see the world rightly by being trained to see” (TDTS:65-6; *PK*:29; *WRA*:59; *HR*:611). Moral vision worthy of the name is to be associated with training because, “The moral life is a struggle and training in how to see” (*VV*:20). Moreover, “we do not come to see just by looking, but by disciplined skills developed through initiation into a narrative” (TDTS:65-6). Elsewhere, the attention is shifted to the community bearing this narrative as these skills must be developed “through initiation into that community that attempts to live faithful to the story of God” (*PK*:29).

Thus, the training of moral vision entails Christian discipleship in the community of the church where initiation into Christian narrative is intended to take place. This discipleship or initiation in the church includes also learning a Christian language. As Hauerwas puts it:

The first task of the church [...] becomes more intelligible once we understand that morally you can only act in the world that you can see, and you can only see *by learning to say*. In other words, our understanding of what it means to be Christian is to submit ourselves to the discipline of how to speak a foreign language. The church’s language is not a natural language, but it is a language that requires the self to be part of that language [...] [L]anguages are language in use. Language is a set of practices rather than a collection of words (*WRA*:59 emphasis added; cf. Kallenberg 2001:220).

Elsewhere, through the joint application of Murdochian and Wittgensteinian insights, Hauerwas insists that our vision must be trained not only by stories but also by a Christian language, as he explains:

Our vision must be trained and disciplined in order to free it from our neurotic self-concern and the assumption that conventionality defines the real. Ethics is that modest discipline which uses careful language, distinctions, and stories to break our intellectual bewitchment that would have us call lamps the sun and adultery love (*VV*:102; cf. *DFF*:7; Kallenberg 2001: 228 n38).

Thus, through this training to “see by learning to say,” Christians acquire distinctive descriptions to name issues of moral controversy in their societies while unchained “from the illusion of autonomy and individualism” (*HR*:610-1; Kallenberg 2001:74). For example, such trained Christians will adopt the language of ‘abortion’ and ‘suicide’ which are more accurate and determinative as well as congruent to the narrative of their community as opposed to the descriptions of “termination of pregnancy” or “life termination” (*HR*:611). The language of promiscuity “required a display of the church commitment to singleness and marriage” whereas “sexuality is a description produced by the practices of modernity that separate something called the individual from any thick communal practices” (*ABH*:48). As such, “narrative governs the language in which we frame our description” (Kallenberg 2001:74). This is why, explains Hauerwas:

Pro- and anti-abortion advocates do not communicate on the notion “abortion” since each group holds a different story about the purpose of the notion. At least so far as “abortion” is concerned, they live in conceptually different worlds (TT:22).

Christians hold that abortion is horrific, “abortive,” because of their particular “stories of creation and redemption embodied in Jewish and Christian discourse” (Kallenberg 2001:75).

In addition, the discipleship required for training to see illuminates the irreducible role of the saints in the Christian community since they enhance the Christian moral vision. As Hauerwas stresses:

The saints enrich rather than constrict our ethics. Epistemologically, there is no substitute for “saints” — palpable, personal examples of the Christian faith — because, as Jesus knew that day he set a child in the midst of his disciples, we cannot know the Kingdom unless our eyes are opened to see it (RA:103).

Moreover, the task of engendering the right and specific vision by the church is also conducted through worship and liturgy. For Hauerwas, “That explains why, in the church, a great deal of time and energy are spent in the act of worship. In worship we are busy looking in the right direction” (RA:39; cf. Richard 1992:110). Yet this aim of moral formation through vision and description cannot be properly achieved without resorting to narrative and tradition.

#### 4.1.2. Narrative ethics

For Hauerwas, character and virtues are related to a concept of social self, which requires a narrative construal and includes a sense of tradition and history (Thompson 2003:5). In addition to virtue ethics, Hauerwas’s view of moral formation is based on narrative ethics as he strongly holds that Christian ethics is narrative and tradition dependent. This understanding of Christian ethics appears, for example, in the following statement:

Christian ethics, like any ethics, are “tradition dependent.” That is, they make sense, not because the principles they espouse make sense in the abstract, as perfectly rational behaviour, which ought to sound reasonable to any intelligent person. Christian ethics only make sense from the point of view of what we believe has happened in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Practically speaking, what the church asks of people is difficult *to do* by oneself. It is tough for ordinary people like us to do extraordinary acts as Jesus commands (RA:71-2; emphasis original).

It remains to elucidate why and how narrative and tradition are essential categories in the church’s moral formation.

##### 4.1.2.1. Narrative

Before describing the significance of narrative in moral formation, it seems relevant to stress the centrality and truthfulness of Christian narrative. These notions underlie

Hauerwas's conviction "that narrative is a perennial category for understanding better how the grammar of religious convictions is displayed and how the self is formed by those convictions" (*TT*:8). Of course, for Hauerwas, narrative is to be recognized as a significant category in biblical theology because "the Bible is best understood as a complex story with many subplots that resist any overly simple telling" in addition to the fact that "much of the content of the Bible is in the form of stories" (*PF*:138). To refute the contra-argument of some Bible material being "not primarily narrative in form," Hauerwas argues that "those forms of literature in the Bible — e.g., the Psalms, the wisdom literature, and the more discursive books of the NT — are unintelligible apart from the story of God's call and care of Israel and the life, death, and resurrection of Christ" (*PF*:139).

In addition, Hauerwas presents some pivotal justifications regarding the centrality of narrative for the understanding of Christian life. Following MacIntyre, he contends that: "action-description and understanding rely on determination of historical or narrative context" and "narrative is the characteristic form of our self-understanding as accountable historical beings" (Werpehowski 2002:77-8; cf. *HR*:226-8; *PK*:28; cf. MacIntyre 1984:216). To those philosophical justifications, Hauerwas supplements a theological rationale: "narrative formally displays our existence and that of the world as creatures — as *contingent* beings" and "God has revealed himself narratively in the history of Israel and the life of Jesus" (*PK*:28-9; emphasis original). Therefore, as noted by Werpehowski, narrative categories are implicated "in the intelligibility of action, the historical nature of Christian life, and the identity of God" (Werpehowski 2002:77-8). Narrative is a determinative theological and ethical category for any true knowledge of God, the world and the self (*CC*:94-5; *TDS*:63). Besides, "stories are indispensable if we are to know ourselves; they are not replaceable by some other kind of account" (*TT*:77).

It is not doctrine but narrative which is "the primary grammar of Christian belief" (*PK*:25). Hauerwas affirms that:

the narrative mode [of Christian convictions] is neither incidental nor accidental to Christian belief. There is no more fundamental way to talk of God than in a story. The fact that we come to know God through the recounting of the story of Israel and the life of Jesus is decisive for our truthful understanding of the kind of God we worship as well as the world in which we exist (*PK*:25; cf. *TT*:73-4).

Among other reasons, narrative is decisive for Christian life because "it is God's choice to be a Lord whose kingdom is furthered by our concrete obedience through which we acquire a history [or story] befitting our nature as God's creatures" (*PK*:27). For example, Christian affirmations on creation, redemption or the Trinity overlook "the fact that such 'doctrines' are themselves a story, or perhaps better, the outline of the story" (*PK*:25-6). Even the creeds are

not as significant as the stories: they “are often attempts to discriminate between various accounts of the story” and “do not determine the story, as if it is a single story, but rather they mark the stories that should rightly command our attention in our attempt to be faithful to God” (*PK:25-6*, 155 n15). Elsewhere, Hauerwas clearly states that doctrine’s significance in moral life is subordinate to the one of narrative in the Christian life, when he says:

By emphasizing the narrative character of our knowledge of God I mean to remind us that we do not know what it means to call God creator or redeemer apart from the story of his activity with Israel and Jesus. The language of creation and redemption, nature and grace, is a secondary theological language, that is sometimes mistaken for the story itself. “Creation” and “redemption” should be taken for what they are, namely ways of helping us tell and hear the story rightly (*PK:62-3*).

Affirming our historical character as a justification for the narrative-dependence of Christian life is a way for Hauerwas to assert the necessarily communal character of narrative. Being historical beings implies we are part of a community shaped by a tradition and from which we derives our identity. In this perspective, Hauerwas stresses that:

Community joins us with others to further the growth of a tradition whose manifold storylines are meant to help individuals identify and navigate the path to the good. The self is subordinate to the community rather than vice versa, for we discover the self [e.g., the Christian self] through a community’s narrated tradition (*PK:28*).

Of the varieties of appeals to the category of narrative, Hauerwas has in particular retained the explanation of human action, the depiction of the identity of the agent (human or divine), the historical development of traditions, a strategy of Bible reading as well as the proposition of “an alternative to foundationalist and/or scientific epistemologies” (*WN:2*; cf. *TT:15-99*). He conceives of narrative as a valuable kind of rationality that takes into account the historical, social and practical nature of moral reason (*TT:9*). Based on the experience of Augustine’s conversion in *Confessions*, Hauerwas and Burrell in their “From System to Story” suggest some non-exhaustive criteria for a truthful story (*TT:15-39*; *WN:158-90*). For them, any truthful story has to display: “(1) power to release us from destructive alternatives; (2) ways of seeing through current distortions, (3) room to keep us from having to resort to violence; (4) a sense for the tragic: how meaning transcends power” (*TT:35*; *WN:185*).

In a world perceived as the one of scarce resources, survival is a way of securing relative goods by the means of violence. However, “a truthful narrative is one that gives us the means to accept the tragic” as a refusal of considering survival as “a worthy moral end;” rather, it embraces tragedy as “a necessary characteristic of our lives” (*TT:12*). In principle, Christian narrative, to be more specific the stories of Israel and the live, death and resurrection of Jesus as a recapitulation of the life of Israel, is the faithful narrative (*PK:77-8*). Strictly speaking, this remains a claim, because Christians claim that by conforming their “lives in a faithful manner to the stories of God we acquire the moral and intellectual skills, as



a community and as individuals, to face the world as it is, not as we wish it to be” (CC:96). But Christians do not lack resources to verify this claim since “the very story people holds directs us to observe the lives of those who live it as a crucial indication of the truth of their convictions” (CC:96). The saints formed by the stories of God provide Christians with the proof that this narrative is a truthful one. “For at least, part of what it means to claim that convictions of Christians are true is that they must produce truthful lives” (TT:80).

Concerning moral formation, Hauerwas is very appreciative of MacIntyre’s account of an intelligible action or historical character of an action considering human actions in general in terms of narrative. In this perspective, actions are “enacted narratives” and the narrative of one’s “live is but part of an interlocking set of narratives embedded in the story of those communities from which [people derive their] identity” (PF:140; cf. MacIntyre 1984:218, 221). Hence, actions are more adequately understood through narrative that displays their continuity in terms of character. For Hauerwas, narrative unfolds character viewed as a “cumulative source of human actions” including deeds, dreams and even their opposite, suffering and passions (TT:29). Stories help to probe, analyze and explain the connection and patterns between actions and passions necessary for developing character (TT:29).

In the particular case of Christian community, believers are called to learn, appropriate and absorb, practice and conform their lives with God’s stories or the stories of Israel and Jesus. For the formation of truthful lives, Christians also need to test and continue to be tested by these stories. To be sure Christians in their various contexts are entangled in many histories at familial, ethnical, racial, regional or national levels “each of which is constituted by many interrelated and confusing story lines” (CC:96).<sup>5</sup> Thus, God’s stories provide means for discrimination; they are helpful for recognizing and critically appropriating other stories. Character in this moral task, stands as a way of acquiring the necessary skills enabling Christians “to negotiate the many kinds and levels of narrative” found in their environment (CC:96). Put differently, “descriptively the self is best understood as a narrative, and normatively we require a narrative that will provide the skills appropriate to conflicting loyalties and roles we necessarily confront in our existence” (HR:245; CC:144).

Central to this need of discriminating stories is the threat of the subtle self-deception differing from conscious self-lying. For “self-deception, explain Hauerwas and David Burrell, results from an excellent policy of refusing to spell out our engagements in order to preserve the particular identity we have achieved. The extent of our self-deception correlates with the type of story we hold about who and what we are” (HR:206-7; TT:88). Albert Speer, German

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<sup>5</sup> Here, as an American, Hauerwas speaks of the histories “of our families, of Texas, America, European civilization, and so on” (CC:96).



architect, Hitler's minister of armament and author of *Inside the Third Reich* entitled to design gigantic monuments for the envisioned Nazi global hegemony poignantly manifested this self-deception. He derived his identity mainly from "the story of being Hitler's apolitical architect" as he wrote himself in his book: "My new political interest played a subsidiary part in my thinking. I was above all an architect" (HR:211; Speer 1970:51). Speer lacked an empowering story enabling him to discriminate within his roles the self-deceptive attitudes and behaviour that insidiously blind people. Adherence to slavery, the Western Christendom's complicity in Auschwitz, and even the story of "America as a land of Freedom" are all deceptive narratives preventing Christians for the true and faithful worship of God (HR:219; PF:147-8).

Also, narrative contributes to the cultivation of the skills necessary for rightly seeing our life; in this sense it ensures the unity of the self and qualifies our moral vision. Substantive narratives "provide skills of discernment and distancing" enabling one to constantly challenge his or her past achievements, "to step back from" oneself and understand what she or he is doing (HR:245; CC:144). For Hauerwas, The ability to step back cannot come by trying to discover a moral perspective abstracted from all endeavours but rather comes through having a narrative that gives me critical purchase on my own projects (HR:245; CC:144-5; Kallenberg 2001:77-8).

Unlike theory and foundational explanations, narrative is not meant to merely help know the world, but it qualifies people's moral vision: it determines the mode of description by helping people deal with the world by changing it through changing themselves (TT:73; Kallenberg 2001:75). This is what Hauerwas contends through Augustine's *Confessions* wherein the church father presents his biography to account for his own conversion. Indeed, narrative mode and not an explanatory one led to the quest of God and his conversion to Catholic Christianity. The theories of Manicheism and Neoplatonism by themselves were themselves insufficient to rightly account for this experience. However, narrative as a way of unifying all the stages of his past and present life (including his rebellious and depraved youth) and a career of professional orator before embracing Neoplatonism and Manicheism adequately account for the contingencies of his life (TT:31-4; Kallenberg 2001:75-6). Yet further insights on the interplay between narrative and moral formation are to be accounted for through tradition and community ethics.

#### **4.1.2.2. Tradition**

Hauerwas's tenacious anti-foundationalism is another way of stress the significance of tradition as Christian ethics in his understanding could never be divorced from Christian convictions. Moreover, he thinks it is "academically misleading to think that theology could be

done apart from a tradition,” because, “We must constantly relearn that truth does not come through trying to assume a universal or neutral point of view, but through the struggle to live truthfully in relation to a particular tradition” (*TT:x*). With Will Willimon, he defines tradition as “a complex, lively argument about what happened in Jesus that has been carried on, across the generations, by a concrete body of people called church” (*RA:72*). And he adds that “Fidelity to this tradition, this story, is the most invigorating challenge of the adventure begun in our baptism and the toughest job of Christian ethics” (*RA:72*).

Partly, this challenge in America derives from the pervasive influence of liberalism in the society at large and of Kantian and post-Kantian ethics in ethical reflection. Under the influence of Hobbes and Locke, liberalism in America, especially the one associated with “the political philosophy of Rawls and Nozick, the political science of Dahl, and the economics of neo-capitalism,” holds an “anti-traditional stance” (*CC: 289 n8*). Unlike other nations, America has been a particular experiment of liberalism where people share the assumption that “they are not creatures of history” and they have built their “government on the basis of principles rather than the arbitrary elements of a tradition” (*CC:78*). The Enlightenment and related modern ethics have failed to notice the significance of the relation between ethics and tradition. In Hauerwas’s perspective,

It is important to recognize that all ethics, even non-Christian ethics, arise out of a tradition. That depicts the way the world works, what is real, what is worth having, worth believing. Tradition is a function and a product of community. So all ethics, even non-Christian ethics, make sense only when embodied in sets of social practices that constitute a community. Such communities support a sense of right and wrong (*RA:79*).

Indeed, “the Enlightenment devised its own tradition of scientific investigation, individualism, and rights with attendant institutions built upon its values” (*RA:99-100*). Kantian ethics arose out of the new community “engendered by the European Enlightenment, a community that sought to rally people around a modern invention called reason” (*RA:99*). It is an “incipiently demonic” ethic since it claims to be “‘rational’ and universally valid for all thinking people” but it fails to convincingly explain people’s disagreements with its moral prescriptions (*RA:101*).

However, Christian ethics is not “about rationality, humanity, or goodness in the abstract or the general” and it is grounded on a truthful and very specific tradition, the one “of Jesus of Nazareth and the church formed in faithfulness to his way” (*RA:101-2*). Christians should not expect that this “tradition will make sense to anyone or enable the world to run smoothly” as “it just happens to be *true*” (*RA:101*; emphasis original). Hauerwas seems to apprehend “tradition” as a unique feature related to the universal church, since “the church is able to exist and grow only through tradition which, — as the memory sustained over time by

ritual and habit — sets the context and boundaries for the discussion required by the Christian stories” (CC:92; cf. RA:72, 101).

To prove the significance of story, tradition and community, Hauerwas refers to *Watership Down*, a Richard Adam’s novel of the 1970s narrating the exodus of rabbits from their old warren (CC:12-35; HR:171-98). Threatened with destruction, the group of rabbits was forced to undertake an adventure in search of a secure home. They needed to develop courage and hope to succeed in their hazardous undertaking. Although these rabbits bear separate reasons for leaving Sandford, they shared in common the stories of their prince El-ahrairah and became a good community “only as they acquire a history through the adventures they share as interpreted through the traditions of El-ahrairah” (CC:13; HR:173).

“Our selves are shaped, our thoughts arise out of tradition” in that “the individual virtues are specific skills required to live faithful to a tradition’s understanding of the moral project in which its adherents participate” (RA:100; CC:115). In this sense, tradition also shapes people’s moral vision (VV:67). Being a person of virtue involves acquiring those rational, emotional and linguistic “skills that give us the strength to make our decisions and our lives our own” (CC:115). Narrative forms our awareness as historical beings to sustain moral growth in a living tradition characterizing a community. Indeed, “community joins us with others to further the growth of a tradition whose manifold storylines are meant to help individuals identify and navigate the path to the good [...], for we discover the self through a community narrated tradition” (PK:28).

Thus, a Christian community forms its believers “to be inheritors and exemplification of [a given] tradition (CC:14; HR:174). Not all the traditions are true or true at the same level, Southerners in America were deceived by the arrogant and “demonic quality of tradition based on lie” (RA:100-1). “The truthfulness of a tradition is tested in its ability to form people who are ready to put the tradition into question by a rival tradition” because “living traditions presuppose rival interpretations” and are thereby constituted by “ongoing arguments” (CC:14; HR:27, 174). For Hauerwas, “the nature of Christian ethics is determined by the fact that Christian convictions take the form of a story, or perhaps better, a set of stories that constitutes a tradition, which in turn creates and forms a community (PK:24).” It is helpful, therefore, to attend to community ethics.

### 4.1.3. Community ethics

Hauerwas, who holds that moral formation is all about virtuous life formed through initiation into Christian stories, equally stresses that

No one can become virtuous merely by doing what virtuous people do. We can only be virtuous by doing what virtuous people do in that manner that they do it. Therefore one can only learn how to be virtuous, to be like Jesus, by learning from others how that is done. To be like Jesus requires that I become part of a community that practices virtues, not that I copy his life point by point (*PK:76*).

Thus, community endowed with practices exhibiting virtues is the locus *par excellence* of moral formation. In a Christian perspective, this community is the local church (*PK:107*). Hence, moral formation also entails an ecclesial ethics with its correlative emphasis on community and practices.

#### 4.1.3.1. Community

Particular virtues and stories are necessary for Christian moral life. Christians are expected to exhibit “Christianly considered virtues” and live out canonical stories that form their lives; those stories do not consist in “narrative *qua* narrative” but, as accurately put by Kallenberg, in “narrative-as-embodied-in-a-particular-community” (*CAV:x*; *PF:135-41*; Kallenberg 2001:114). Just as Christian ethics — like other kinds of ethics — is community dependent, so is the moral formation expected from Christians. Through the themes of narrative and community, Hauerwas emphasizes the distinctiveness of Christian ethics. His strong conviction is that there is no universal ethics, no set of universal prescriptions of modes of life valid for all peoples, places and times because “no ethic can be freed from its narrative, and thus communal, context” (*PK:28*; cf. *CAV: 45, 47, 95*). He contends that “our moralities are historical; they require a qualifier” (*PK:29*.) Ethics as a discipline “always requires an adjective or qualifier — such as, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, existentialist, pragmatic, utilitarian, humanist, medieval, modern — in order to denote [its] social and historical character” (*PK:1*; cf. *RA:102*).

Christian ethics is community-based because it “is dependent on community’s wisdom about how certain actions are prohibited or joined for the development of a particular kind of people” (*PK:54*). In other words, Christian ethics accurately understood is narrative, rather than being akin to situational, deontological or utilitarian ethics since it is not based on rules, decisions and acts but on virtues or the kind of person we are and the community from which we derive our identity. As such Christian ethics is strikingly different from modern ethical approaches like Kantian ethic which are merely rationalist and individualistic (*CC:118-21*).

In his “The Narrative Turn: Thirty Years Later” (2004) Hauerwas spells out his conviction about “the narrative character of Christian convictions” developed in *The Peaceable Kingdom* (1983) that he stresses in terms of its “unavoidability” (*PF:140*). At the same time, he describes his suspicion about the recent uses of narrative, either in an

apologetic mode by liberal theologians for the sake of a generalized anthropology, or in a pluralistic perspective by postmodern theorists (*PF*:135-41). In this respect, he reaffirms his attachment to MacIntyre's view of "human actions being enacted narratives" since they form the narrative of one's life which is "but part of narratives embedded in the story of those communities" from which people derive their identity (*PF*:140; cf. MacIntyre 1984:218, 221).

Hauerwas has reputedly warned his readership that he does not promote either the type of community fostered in CLD societies and being a therapeutic solution to loneliness or some communitarian views of "community merely for the sake of community" (*RA*:77-8; *IGC*:25-6; *CAV*:16). Rather, like MacIntyre, he champions "practice-based forms of Aristotelian community" and in this perspective the church is the "the 'Body of Christ'" and not merely a community (*IGC*:25). Hauerwas urges for plain Christian participation in the community of the church because of the truthfulness of this community and its narrative. With Willimon, Hauerwas puts it this way:

The Christian claim is not that we as individuals should be based in a community because life is better lived together rather alone. The Christian claim is that life is better lived in the church because the church, according to our story, just happened to be *true*. The church is the only community formed around the truth which is Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Only on the basis of his story, which reveals to us who we are and what has happened in the world, is true community possible (*RA*:77; emphasis original).

Besides, the primary goal of Christian community is not togetherness through friendship, work, leisure, recreation and hobby or family relations but moral formation. Hauerwas and Willimon points out that:

Christian community, life in the colony, is not primary about togetherness. It is about the way of Jesus Christ with those whom he calls to himself. It is about disciplining our wants and needs in congruence with a true story, which gives us the resources to lead truthful lives. In living out the story together, togetherness happens, but only as a by-product of the main project of trying to be faithful to Jesus (*RA*:78).

Thus, the church or Christian community is where the Christian stories are lived out. Back to Richard Adam's *Watership Down*, "the rabbits' willingly strived to be a community formed by the stories that gave them the skill and confidence to make use of luck" (*TT*:6). Likewise the church, which has at its disposal the marvellous richness of the stories of Israel and Jesus and those of the saints, is compelled "to be a community of discourse and interpretation that endeavours to tell these stories and form its life in accordance with them" (*CC*:92). These stories are meant to provide Christians with skills to negotiate the dangers and tragedies of Christian life — which remains a journey, a very adventure (*CC*:15).

The concept of community first elucidates the notion of "having character" stressed in early Hauerwas in that it clarifies the necessity "to put the agent in the context of the communities from which he draws his moral norms, values, and direction. For Christians [this

consists in] being a people constituted in a church” (*CCL*:17; cf. 231-2). Second it illuminates the nature of the social self since “the self that gives rise to agency is fundamentally a social self not separable from its social and cultural environment” (*CCL*:33; *TT*:2; cf. Thomson 2003:5). Here is the consequence of the nature of the social self in relation to the formation of character and the significance of the ethics of community:

Our character can be formed only because we are fundamentally social beings [...]. The kind of character we have is therefore relative to the kind of community from which we inherit our primary symbols and practices. The variety of the descriptions in any social setting is one of the reasons character can be and is remarkably different. However, an intentional community can provide a range of symbols that create boundaries for an ethics of character by suggesting the fundamental symbols that should give each man character its primary orientation (*CCL*:231; *TT*:9; cf. Werpehowski 2002:75-6).

Unlike Kantian and post-Kantian democratic ethics, proper Christian ethics like Aristotelian ethics is “aristocratic” and “elitist” (*RA*:98-9). For Aristotle and Aquinas, the hard task of becoming good requires “observing, imitating and copying” the habits of aristocrats, “those who are better at morality than other people,” by acquiring not only knowledge but also the “same feelings, emotions, desires” these virtuous persons have when they act (*RA*:98-9; *PF*:157; *HR*:291, *CAV*:151-2; cf. Aristotle 1109a25-30; cf. Aquinas in *PF*:157). In the context of the Christian community those examples are the critically needed saints (*RA*:103). In this perspective, Christian ethics arise out of the formation of the peculiar community engendered by listening to scripture like the Sermon on the Mount and by attaching ourselves to a master like Jesus (*RA*:99; cf. Richard 1992:106-7). However, learning from others to become virtuous is not only adequately done through imitation and observation of saints but also through communal practices.

#### 4.1.3.2. Practice

With Willimon, Hauerwas describes the instrumental role of practices for the church renewal and correlative discipleship and moral formation as follows:

The church is still visible, if we take the trouble to look for it in the right places. We still have practices in place, in your church, and ours, which can be resources for faithful renewal. But it is crucial that they be understood as practices such as preaching, baptism, eucharist — in short, *worship* (*WRA*:18; emphasis original).

Both hold that, “Little, habitual, seemingly insignificant practices like going to church, not having sex with people to whom we are not married, not telling a racist joke, and telling the truth take a new significance in the present struggle” (*WRA*:92).

Hauerwas endorses the technical definition of practices for virtue ethics quoted *in extenso* in *Where Resident Aliens Live*, presented by MacIntyre and viewing practice as:



Any complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the results that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended (MacIntyre 1984:187; cf. *WRA*:78).

In other words, practices form the virtues and *vice versa* as practices give rise to institutions sustaining the virtues (MacIntyre 1984:194-5; Wilson 1998:43). In the context of church, practices include the sacraments in their larger understanding such as baptism, eucharist, and confession. Practices “name the ongoing habits” forming Christian community, they embody, extend, sustain and give proper content to virtues (*PF*:156). Worship, for example, teaches Christians the basis and peculiarity of their hope. The goal of practices is a “deeper participation in the grace of God” and thus they include the means of grace (Wilson 1998:44). There are not just worship, sanctification, prayer and fasting but also sexual fidelity, marital life-long commitment as well admonition, truth-telling, obedience, suffering, etc. Practices also encompass various demonstrations of faith through inter-personal deeds like caring for the sick, hospitality to strangers, generosity to the poor, suffering and faithfulness to the Gospel as well as social activities like peacemaking, non-violence, non-resistance to suffering and death generated by evil powers. Of course, in a Hauerwasian and particularist sense, all these practices are intended to be countercultural (*WRA*:124; *CAV*:69).

Christian practices become all the more important in connection with Hauerwas’s claims about the relation between doctrines (or theology) and ethics on the one hand, and theology and practices on the other hand. For through the writings of Church Fathers and historical theologians like Tertullian, Augustine and Aquinas it appears that “doctrine is ethics” or “Christian ethics is a mode of theology” and should be “at the heart of theological enterprise” (*STT*:22-27; *HR*:38-42; *PK*:xvii).<sup>6</sup> The NT conveys the same view as he demonstrates that “Christian convictions are by nature meant to form and illuminate lives” (*STT*:23; *HR*:37; *PK*:xvii). Christian ethics should not be conceived as an afterthought of theology, “what you do *after* you have the theoretical issues straight in theology (*IGC*:155; cf. *PK*:50-9).

Concerning the relation between theology and practices, Hauerwas claims that:

Christian theology begins in ecclesiology, in church practices, not in something called “Systematic Theology.” Theology begins in 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” (*WRA*:57).

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<sup>6</sup> Here, Hauerwas mentions Tertullian’s *On Patience*, Augustine’s *On the Morals of Catholic Church* and *City of God* and Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*.

Put differently, theology as an activity of the church “gains its intelligibility through the practices of the church” (*HR:49; STT:35*). Hauerwas draws these convictions from Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* and McClendon’s *Ethics*, since their treatment of church practices shape their understanding of Christian doctrines (*STT:34-5*). Also drawn on the Wittgensteinian “explication of the form of life of the actual community,” this relation between “moral reasoning and Christian praxis” complements the role of saints in the church community for moral formation (Kallenberg 2001:230).

In 1990, to stress the ecclesiological role of practice, Hauerwas wrote:

I am impressed that churches baptize, preach, serve the eucharist, call some to serve the church and send some to serve in the world. If my work has any centre it has been to help Christians across God’s church discover the moral significance of these extraordinary yet everyday practices (TTF).

In this respect, through his “The Liturgical Shape of the Christian Life: Teaching Christian Ethics as Worship,” Hauerwas describes how his university course is, in an original way, structured around liturgy (*IGC:153-67*). Behind it lies “the presumption that there is literally nothing more important for the Christian people to do than to praise God” (*IGC:154*). He says, “From the beginning to the end of the course I make it clear that I have no interest in teaching students about theology and/or ethics. Rather, I hope to transform my own and their lives that we all might live the life of praise more faithfully (*IGC:163*).

Moreover, church practices lost their relevance in the context of a dominant Protestant liberalism which led to the distinction between “theology and “ethics.” Indeed, this distinction is a modern invention of Protestant liberalism promoting an ethics grounded on anthropological generalisations and being but a “distinctively Kant’s ethics dressed in religious language” (*HR:45*). Its counterpart, political liberalism has separated “ethics” from “politics,” a distinction reinforcing the primacy of quandary or decision ethics and compromising “the formation of virtuous people” (*IGC:155*). Proper Christian ethics, by contrast, should maintain the relation between “ethics” and “politics” because “Any account of the virtues involves a politics, for the virtues derive their intelligibility from communal practices” and “for Christians, their politics bear the name of “church” (*CAV:xi*).

Drawing on Aristotle and Aquinas, Hauerwas holds that “practices are meant to shape the Christian community” through “virtues and description of behaviour carried by communal habits” (*PF:153, 159*). In “Suffering Beauty: The Liturgical Formation of Christ,” Hauerwas repeats and emphasizes that liturgy cannot be separated from ethics and claims that “the politics that creates the ‘and’ between liturgy and ethics reproduces the politics of modernity that privatizes what makes the church the church, namely the worship of God” (*PF:153; cf. IGC:155-61*). Separating liturgy from ethics reduces liturgy to a moral motivational purpose

for the achievement of justice in the society (*PF*:153). Well-understood, “liturgy is how the church worships God,” and how from this practice Christians “become a people capable of being an alternative to the world” (*FFB*). Worship and liturgy are morality, they induce the enactment of virtues and “the narrative necessary for the virtues to be individuated” (*PF*:156; *IGC*:157).<sup>7</sup>

Like Wittgenstein, MacIntyre and Lindbeck, Hauerwas emphasizes the critical significance of language as a communal practice for moral formation. “Language is a set of practices rather than a collection of words” which is necessary for being a person of virtue because this status “involves linguistic skills” (*WRA*:59; *CC*:115). Thus moral formation does not only consist by being taught some rules or principles, “learning to be moral is much like learning to speak a language” (*RA*:97; cf. *WW*:2-3). Moreover, being a Christian “is to submit ourselves to the discipline of learning how to speak a foreign language. The church’s language is not a natural language, but it requires the self to be part of that language” (*WRA*:59). For Hauerwas, being Christian entails “learning to speak Christian” and form Christian habits; Christian life involves an education in the language and the virtues or skills of the craft like bricklaying or carving stone (*WWW*:ix; *STT*:108-21).<sup>8</sup> This process, which determines Hauerwas’s pattern of Christian ethics, takes place as follows:

You learn to speak by being initiated into a community of language, by observing your elders, by imitating them. The rules of grammar come later, if at all, as a way of enabling you to nourish and sustain the art of speaking well. Ethics, as an academic discipline, is simply the task of assembling reminders that enable us to remember how to speak and to live the language of the gospel. Ethics can never take the place of community any more than rules of grammar can replace the act of speaking the language. Ethics is always a secondary enterprise and is parasitic to the way people live together in a community (*RA*:97; cf. Kallenberg 2001:231).

#### 4.1.3.3. Performance

Hauerwas claims that one of the most accurate ways of defining Christian faith is to describe Christian consciousness as performance. The widely-held descriptions using either subjective terms or objective features insufficiently “do justice to the divine source as well as to the richness, density, and historical scope of Christian life” (*PF*:76). The subjective account viewing the Christian faith as an “array of experiences, dispositions, attitudes and beliefs” confines Christianity in the private sphere of life (*PF*:76). In the same way, the objective account construing the Christian faith as a “set of doctrines, a peculiar body of teaching and

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<sup>7</sup> A fuller explanation about worship and liturgical moral formation is presented in the section dealing with the moral formation in the church.

<sup>8</sup> Following Yoder, Hauerwas in his *Working with Words: On Learning to speak Christian* holds that “to speak Christian” requires that the words used by Christians, “the relation between these words, and the character of the speaker who uses these words, [all] must be continually tested for the faithfulness to the Gospel” (*WWW*:ix).

instruction” or “a divine ‘deposit’ — with the church or the Bible acting as its repository” — generates “images and impressions that are at once static and lifeless” (*PF:76*). These two accounts fail to notice that “Christian existence is first and foremost an activity — a performance if you will” (*PF:76*). Moreover, Christians worship the Creator, the Trinitarian God who is “pure act, an eternally performing God” and “who has invited us to join in the performance that is God’s life” (*PF:77*). Quoting John Webster, Hauerwas notes that “it may be that the Christian faith is ‘primarily an account of divine action’ and ‘only secondarily an account of the believing subject’” (*PF:77* n.3).

Therefore, one of the most fruitful ways of describing the character of Christian theology and life is to have recourse to the analogy of performance or compare Christian faith with performance studies, the recent field which “concerns not only instrumental and vocal music but also drama, ballet, opera, dance and certain narrative forms of poetry” (*PF:78*). In this perspective, Hauerwas asserts that

performance suggests itself as a potentially illuminating and instructive category for Christian reflection and self-understanding, both ethically and politically but also aesthetically and rhetorically, because it is a category richly suggestive of analogical relations between various facets of religious life (*PF:78*).

This view is inspired by George Lindbeck’s claim holding that “intelligibility [in religion and theology] comes from skill, not theory, and credibility comes from good performance, not adherence to independently formulated criteria” (Lindbeck 1984:130-1; cf. *PF:78-9*). Besides Hauerwas claims that this analogy, albeit very fruitful, is to be qualified because Christian faith cannot be associated with fine arts in a way that underwrite the compartmentalization of human life into separate realms (*PF:81*).

In their “Performing Faith: The Peaceable Rhetoric of God’s Church,” James Fodor and Hauerwas critically engage John Milbank and Samuel Wells in their accounts of peaceable coexistence in the church respectively related to the analogy of musical performance and the one of theatrical improvisation. On the one hand, Milbank has connected peaceable difference with doctrines of “Trinity, creation, Christ and the life of the church” (*PF:94-5*). God as Trinity entails “an ontological priority to peace rather than conflict” or the transmission of “differences non-violently by sustaining those differences in a continuous internal harmony” (*PF:87*). Milbank speaks of “a true melodic progression” made possible by God’s “openness, in love, to all the differences” (Milbank 1991:229; *PF:87*). By its very nature, God’s creation *ex nihilo* is peaceable and “reveals a God who is open to all the differences” (*PF:87*; cf. Milbank 1991:230). Jesus’ life, death and resurrection reveals “the full brilliance and splendour of God’s all inclusive peace” and his “refusal to accept the loss of any difference” (*PF:88*; cf. Milbank 1992:348). As a result, the church has to exhibit a

peaceful character “infinitely patient of difference” and motivated by charity” (PF:88-9; Milbank 1990:289, 410). Using an analogical between music and Christian life, Milbank states that the church “is open to difference — to a series of infinitely new additions, insights, progressions toward God; it also strives to make all these differential additions a harmony, ‘in the body of Christ’” (Milbank 1991:227-8; cf. PF:89-90).

On the other hand, Wells’s analogy of improvisation in the theatrical drama for Christian existence is based on his notions of “overacceptance” and “reincorporation.” Theatrical overaccepting or improvising refers to the practice of an actor managing “to fit the remarks of the previous actor into a context enormously larger than his or her counterpart could have supposed” (PF:92). Thus, “performing the Christian faith chiefly entails “working out how to accept (or ‘overaccept’) things that present themselves as ‘givens’ but which are not” (PF:92).<sup>9</sup> Both overacceptance and reincorporation “form part a single, peaceable dynamic” (PF:94). Each event occurring in Christian life, especially the one bringing about crisis, is to be received as a gift and incorporated and placed within the larger Christian and God’s providential story “in such a way that it peaceably and harmoniously becomes part of the continuing story” (PF:94). The immersion of events in Christian narrative helps Christians “learn the skills of patience, courage, peaceableness and constancy: this takes moral effort” (PF:91).

According to Hauerwas, “Wells’s theological appropriation of improvisation constitutes a response “to Milbank’s problematic set up through his reflection on peaceable difference” (PF:94-5). However, their accounts of peaceful performance and harmonic reincorporation and overacceptance, albeit “wonderfully insightful and instructive,” fail to recognize the timeful and patient character of faithful Christian performance (PF:106-7). Christian performance requires an ethics structured around an eschatological vision rather than a teleological orientation insofar as it is God’s sovereign responsibility to ensure “that the story comes out right” — a responsibility that is not entrusted to the church (PF:96-7).

The world teaches Christian to embrace this teleological vision or normative measurements of time, Christians need to “attune themselves to a time that is God’s time” (PF:97). Worship or the “liturgical time” is “the context in which this attunement properly occurs” (PF:97). It schools, orients Christians and “sets them firmly within God’s eschatological horizon” (PF:97-8). Worship as performance finds its rationale in the necessity of Christian witness; for “the regular, continual pattern of gathering for worship may be viewed as the church rehearsal. Worship thus becomes a preparation beforehand for whatever

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<sup>9</sup> In the previous reference and here Hauerwas quotes *verbatim* Samuel Wells’s manuscript of *Transforming fate into destiny*; these phrases, however, are not found in the published book.



witness the church might be called upon to give” (PF:98). In brief, “worship is where Christians most learn about the movements of God’s time” (PF:98). It is noteworthy that despite some similarities between Christian performance or worship and the performance arts (theatre, drama, music), “there is nonetheless a deep disanalogy between the two” (PF:98). Like the later, Christian performance profoundly reorients, converts the time and transforms it; however, Christian performance is “a true performance [that] engages and transfigures, rather than evades, time” (PF:98-9).

Equally important is the link between the analogy of performance and the cultivation of the virtues in Christian life. “Christians are saved in and for time, not from time means that they are committed to cultivate the virtues that characterize good performers, accomplished improvisers, persuasively peaceable rhetoricians” (PF:99-100). In this perspective, they have to be disciplined in obedience which is perhaps the key virtue of a good and faithful performer. This skill can be acquired only in communities fostering an “ecology of hope” called by Nicholas Nash “the schools of stillness, of attentiveness, of courtesy, respect and reverence; academies of contemplativity” (PF:100). As Christian performance has a patient obedient character, it also needs attentive listening that “is primary acquired in liturgy” (PF:100). “Christians must be instructed in patience as well as in action, for patience forms a part of all true action” (PF:100). Christians also need to acquire “the *ekstasis* of faithful performance” or “the ability to let go of oneself, to dispossess oneself in the very execution of the act” (PF:101). It is “a skill that is learned in community and fellowship with others over the course of an entire life” through “profound engagements with memory” or “the work of remembrance” and creativity while learning the Christian stories (PF:101).

Community is thus the locus of moral formation. Within the church or Christian community Christian faith is enacted, Christian practices shape moral lives and form people of virtue living out the narrative and the tradition of their specific Christian community. Therefore community is put in tandem with virtue ethics and narrative ethics, all providing the metaethical tools for moral formation. A direct consequence of selecting these metaethical concepts is Hauerwas’s reformulation of some theological themes to fit his proposal on moral formation.

## 4.2. Core theological themes

Of course, Hauerwas’s particularist model of character formation has not been developed without a critical engagement with relevant traditions offering alternative perspectives. At the end, his proposal offers some particular theological accents as he has reshaped or refined the corresponding alternative theological themes. In brief, his proposal



exhibits the pre-eminence of narrative, practices and discipleship over doctrines, creeds and beliefs as he states:

Claims such as “God is creator” are simply shorthand ways of reminding us that we believe we are participants in a much more elaborate story, of which God is the author. Doctrines, therefore, are not the upshot of the stories; they are tools (sometimes even misleading tools), meant to help us tell the story better. Because the Christian story is an enacted story, liturgy is probably a much more important resource than are doctrines or creeds for helping us to hear, tell, and live the story of God (*PK*:26; cf. *WRA*:107-8, 109-10).

Therefore it is worth highlighting the significant themes related to theology of Scripture and revelation as well to Christology, Eschatology, Soteriology and Ecclesiology which eventually justify and shape Hauerwas’s view of moral formation.

### **4.2.1. Scriptural and natural theology accents**

Two major features in connection with Scripture and natural theology emerge from Hauerwas’s account of moral formation. On the one hand, the doctrines of Scripture and revelation have been reshaped to emphasize the narrative of God, the significance of the church and its witness to the word. On the other hand, the particular and communal character of Christian ethics is affirmed through the rejection of natural law and creation ethics.

#### **4.2.1.1. The moral status of Scripture**

For Hauerwas, speaking of the moral status of the Scripture should begin by the acknowledgment of its narrative nature. All the parts of the Bible, even those “which are not stories” constitute “a sacred narrative” which “renders the character of God and in so doing renders us the kind of person appropriate to that character” (Connors & McCormick 101; *CC*:66-7). In the liturgical worship, Scripture and the biblical narrative which are expressed through songs, prayers, sermons and sacraments empower Christians, form, reform and renew their character and their identity as God’s people (*ITB*:142; Siker 1997:106-7).

Central is the notion of Bible as a narrative story shaping communal and individual character. Failure to acknowledge this notion regarding the ethical use of Scripture has led to some distortions of Christian ethics and moral formation. Firstly, the emphasis on decisionist ethics has resulted in a view of the Scripture that concentrates on deontological aspects of the biblical ethics in connection with the Decalogue, Wisdom books, the command of love, the Sermon on the Mount, etc. This view separates and abstracts Christian “ethics from the religious (and narrative) contexts that make them intelligible” (*CC*:57). Secondly, as a correlative to the understanding of the nature and status of Scripture that emphasizes

decisions, the task of Christian ethics is restricted. Because it concentrates only on decision-making, its role on “how actions mould the character of individuals and community” is eclipsed and commandments become more important than narratives; Christian ethics becomes “equivalent to advice” and the “issues of [the interpretative role of the] community need not arise.” (CC:57). Third and finally, the alternative view to Scripture as narrative is the widely-held understanding of the Bible as “a sort of revealed morality” among both conservative and liberal Christians (CC:57). While conservative Christians direct attention to what “looks like moral advice” and should command obedience “— e.g., that women should keep quiet in church (1 Cor 14:34-6),” liberal Christians insist on “more general admonitions — e.g., that we should be loving (1 Cor 13)” (CC:57). For both, Scripture contains a revealed morality offering moral guidance.

The Bible does not contain “a revealed morality to be applied directly by the individual agent” (CC:58). In our times, this distorted way of understanding the revealed or inspired status of the Bible has led to controversial interpretations of individual commands. For example, many consider the *Haustafeln* or household codes (Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 5:21-6:9; 1 Pt 2:13-3:7) as morally irrelevant or even perverse. On the contrary, some texts like “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gl 3:28) are becoming “more appealing” (CC:58). The distortion comes from lifting biblical texts and commands out of “their theological and community context and [turning them] into general admonitions meant to apply to any community” (CC:71). However, the importance of Scripture lies on its capacity to generate a tradition, essential to the stories of the Christian community. Through the mediation of Scripture is formed a tradition, a shared history necessary for a community’s identity and the continual guidance of its members (CC:66).

The Bible’s authority is not to be firstly related to individual believers but to the Christian community and its traditions. “The Bible as authority is the testimony of the church that this book provides the resources necessary for the church to be a community sufficiently truthful” (CC:63-4). In Scripture, Christians “find [...] the traditions through which their community most nearly comes to knowing and being faithful to the truth” but “the Scripture is not an authority because it sets a standard of orthodoxy” (CC:63). Consequently, “the scripture must not be separated from Church centred practices” because its accurate reading entails the discipleship in the church, a spiritual and moral transformation (UTS:9, 15). What is at stake is not an individualistic *sola scriptura* but reading in liturgical community (HC:49-50; HR:639-43).

To stress the authority of Scripture in moral formation, it is noteworthy that Scripture is hardly self-interpreting; its diversity requires historical-critical research and skills to be

properly interpreted and mostly believers' willingness to be morally formed in a manner appropriate to its claims, that is, to be a community, a church capable of allowing [Scripture to be read among them] with authority" (*PK:70*). Scripture makes Christians "a people of a book," a community living through memory — "a memory to be passed on from a generation to another" (*PK:70*). This memory is "a moral exercise" insofar as it includes the capacity and the requirement of remembering failures and sins and practising forgiveness; without forgiveness, Christians cannot be able to witness how God's story has formed their lives. Therefore, "to acknowledge the authority is also to learn to acknowledge our sins and accept forgiveness" (*PK:70*). Moreover, in the church community, "the authority of Scripture is mediated through the lives of the saints," those who "are most nearly representing what we are about" (*PK:70-1*).

#### **4.2.1.2. Beliefs and lives or doctrine and discipleship**

"The necessity of the church's materiality as precondition" for moral formation has resulted from Hauerwas's "early concerns about the truth of Christian convictions" — the truth which has become "epistemological" rather than being "political" (*HC:159-60*). In other words, the challenge for Christians is not about their "beliefs" rather about how they live as Jesus' disciples and make a difference in the world; for example their willingness to share their possessions should be a part of their discipleship (*STT:22*; cf. *TSU:38*). Christian convictions cannot be adequately presented in terms of mere beliefs because "the most important knowledge [they] involve requires a transformation of the self;" thus the truthfulness of Christian beliefs "must be demonstrated through lives" because "there is a sense in which Christian convictions are self-referential, but the reference is not to propositions but to lives" (*CET:10-11*).<sup>10</sup> In Hauerwas's words, the rationalistic separation of theology (what we believe) from ethics (how we behave) encountered in Christianity (e.g., in some Evangelical and Reformed contexts) cannot help but distort and compromise the significance of moral formation. "Belief as the indicator of what makes one a Christian tends to separate the work of the language of the faith from its works" (*SA:14*). As commented by Barnhart, this is the separation of orthodoxy from behaviour, of faith from discipleship as "the ongoing process of being trained and transformed by community into a greater Christlikeness" through communal practices (*SA:23*; cf. *WRA:18-20*). This separation creates "a dualistic world in which what we believe is different from how we behave" (*SA:23*). In addition, in a Wittgensteinian way,

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<sup>10</sup> Here, Hauerwas responds to the charge James Gustafson defining him as being "sectarian, fideistic, tribalist" (*CET:1-19*). Fuller explanation on this matter shall be given through the section dealing with social ethics in the next chapter.

“Christian discourse is not a set of beliefs [...] rather it is a [...] set of skills that requires the transformation of the self to rightly see the world” (*DFP*:7; Kallenberg 2001:228).

#### 4.2.1.3. Revelation and witness

Moral formation is the unrelenting task of the church because of the nature of God’s revelation and the necessity of witness to the world. The basic argument of Hauerwas’s *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology*, is that natural theology cannot be separated from revelation and witness, “natural theology is the attempt to witness to the nongodforsakenness of the world even under the condition of sins” (*WGU*:15, 20; cf. *PK*:66, 69).<sup>11</sup> Through the title of this Gifford Lectures, Hauerwas contends that the church as the foretaste of eschatological community works, through Christian witness, “with the grain of the universe.” In a Barthian way, Christians are called to bear witness to the Trinitarian God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ (*WGU*:207). Through the witness of Christians, the Holy Spirit bears witnesses to the unbeliever (*WGU*:210). Following Bruce Marshall, Hauerwas insists that “Christianity is unintelligible without witnesses, that is, without people whose practices exhibit their committed assent to a particular way of structuring the whole” (*WGU*:214). In contrast to modernist foundationalism, Christians do not need to establish the plausibility of their convictions “by appeal to metaphysical and/or ethical principles extrinsic to the word of God” (Steele 2003; cf. *PK*:67). Against postmodern particularism, “the truth that makes Christians distinct is not a truth that is peculiar to them. It is not *their* truth but *the* truth for everyone” (*WGU*:200; emphasis original; cf. Steele 2003).

#### 4.2.1.4. The rejection of natural law and creation ethics

Methodologically, Hauerwas’s qualified ethic and particularist character formation are based on the rejection of natural law or the doctrine of creation *per se* as starting point (*PK*:64). In order to justify Christian ethical claims as universally relevant, some contemporary ethicists, in particular in the Thomist tradition, turn to human ethics, an updated form of natural law discourse as they consider that to be Christian is simply to be fully human. Some Protestant ethicists ground their approach in “creation ethics” which “starts with God and his revelation and, looking at the world as his creation, work toward moral imperatives that are both divine commands and also good sense” (Barclay 1996:42). For Hauerwas, as stated earlier, an accurate reading of Aquinas’s *Summa* does not provide a defence of natural

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<sup>11</sup> Hauerwas notes “I owe the phrase “nongodforsakenness of the world” to Joe Mangina” (*WGU*:20-1 n20).

theology (*HR:41*; cf. *PK:53*). Also, divine command theory fails to recognise that a fuller account of moral reasoning must be community and narrative dependent (*PK:16, 61*; *HR:72-73*). Both conceptions create a "distorted moral psychology" (*PK:63*) through their compatibility with the standard morality account and the perspective of observer standpoint and thus undermine the relevant theories of virtue ethics as well as the narrative character of Christian theological convictions and its role in forming Christian communal morality (*PK:57-8, 63*; cf. *TT:57-8*). From Hauerwas's standpoint, "there is no actual universal morality", but on the contrary, "we live in a fragmented world of many moralities" (*PK:63*). Therefore, the content of Christian ethics cannot be understood by looking at humans *per se* (*PK:61*). Christians are called to live faithfully to their narrative, to be a part of a community providing skills "necessary for becoming not just or good, but holy" (*HR:73*; cf. *PK:68*). Natural law tempts to coerce and to justify violence, in particular through the language of universal rights it fuels. Moreover, Christian ethical reflection must begin with a narrative, not with creation because "nature-grace, creation-redemption are secondary theological concepts only intelligible in relation to the story of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus" (*PK:61, 63*).

#### 4.2.2. Christological and eschatological accents

In addition, Hauerwas's understanding of moral formation encompasses two major theological themes, namely the imitation of God and the peaceable kingdom. Christians are called to be like Jesus and "to join him in the journey through which [they] are trained to be a people capable of claiming citizenship in God's kingdom of non-violent love" (*PK:76*).

##### 4.2.2.1. Jesus and the imitation of God

"The centrality of the theme of imitation" begins with Israel's "vocation of an *imitator Dei*" since Jesus did not bring a new law or revelation about God's nature (*PK:76-7*). In the words of Willimon endorsed by Hauerwas, Jesus "demanded discipleship — learning the moves, walking the walk, following him down the narrow path that he trod" and he adds that Jesus "asked for imitation. He wanted followers, not admirers" (*PTS:48*).<sup>12</sup> For Hauerwas, through the Hebrew Scriptures, "the very thing that makes Israel Israel, is to walk the way of the Lord, that is to imitate God through the means of the prophet (Torah), the King (Sonship),

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<sup>12</sup> The book *Preaching to strangers: Evangelism in today's world* (*PTS*) includes William Willimon's ten sermons followed each by a comment from Hauerwas.



and the priest (Knowledge)” and practically through obedience to the Lord’s commands as well as the fear and love of his name (e.g., Dt 8:6; 10:12; 11:22) (*PK:77*).

Early Christians came to understand and believe that their vocation is the continuation of the one of Israel. Learning to imitate Jesus is learning to imitate God. The temptation narratives (echoing the Israel’s life in the wilderness as well all the significant events of Jesus’ life were seen as “the recapitulation of the life of Israel and thus presented the very life of God in the world” (*PK:78-80*). However, Hauerwas warns that the imitation of God through Jesus must not be understood through “individualistic presuppositions that are antithetical to the social nature of the Christian life” or its “inextricable historical character” (*PK:76; PTS:51*). But rather behind the notion of imitation are “Christological presuppositions in that “Jesus is not eternal possibility always available to all persons if they just make use of their experience. Jesus is only available through people whose lives have been touched by Christ” (*PTS:51*). Therefore, to imitate God through Christ requires that one becomes part of a community practicing virtues and where he or she is exposed to the virtuous lives of saints (*PK:76; RA:103-3; 171*).

#### **4.2.2.2. Jesus and the Kingdom of peace**

The aim of imitating Jesus is to integrate Christians in the God’s kingdom. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God in its present and future dimensions which constituted “a claim about *how* God rules” and this rule was established through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (*PK:83* emphasis original; *HR:129*). The establishment of God’s kingdom entails that Christians “must learn to see the world as Israel learned to understand it — that is, eschatologically” by considering it “in terms of a story, with a beginning, a continuing drama and an end” (*PK:82-3*). In the Gospels, Jesus “proclaims and embodies a way of life that God made possible here and now” and demonstrates that “the kingdom *is* present insofar as his life reveals the effective power of God to create transformed people living peaceably in a violent world” (*PK:83*). Thus, peaceableness is the central virtue of the Christian community, the hallmark of the Christian life and character (*PK:89, 142; Thompson 2000: 3-16*). Christians should commit themselves to this Christological and eschatological pacifism. This genuine Christian pacifism is “determined by the reality of Christ’s cross” and not by the hope of freeing the world from war, “because as followers of Jesus [Christians] cannot be anything other than peaceful in a world inextricably at war” (*HR:431; cf. AN:161; PF:236*). As a result, Christians have to learn to live “in peace by the power of forgiveness,” being a forgiven people, at peace with their histories and seeking not to be in control although not denying their past or false stories (*PK:89*).



Thus, Christians should learn to locate their “life within the kingdom of forgiveness found in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection;” this process allow acquiring the virtues of humility and courage necessary to make their lives their own (*HR:136*). Equally, this process entails not denying but rather remembering the history of their sins, recognize their victim as their hope for being holy and faithful to God by breaking the hold of their most determined oppressor: themselves (*HR:136*). In brief, through resurrection, Christians have the confidence and the power to be a community of forgiveness and the presumption to believe that God have made them “agents in the history of the kingdom” — to be more specific or “forgiven agents of God’s new creation” (*HR:136-7*). Because of God’s kingdom of peace Christians must manifest love, be hospitable, welcoming the stranger in their midst. Also, they have to value friendship; Jesus kingdom requires commitment to friends as “we can only know where we walk as we walk with friends” (*HR:137; PK:91; cf. CAV:26, 33; TTF*). Jesus’ life as portrayed by Gospel “embodies a way of life that God has made possible here and now” for Christians and that cannot be considered as “impossible ethical ideals” (*HR:129*).

Perhaps more importantly, Jesus’ life reveals the nature of God’s kingdom through his calling of disciples to follow him and undertake “a journey, and adventure” (*HR:133*). Following Jesus is “a radical break with security and possessions, with the customs and habits of everyday life for no other purpose than to share in his ministry of preaching the repentance needed to become part of the kingdom (Mk 3:13)” (*HR:133*). Discipleship is “an extended training in being dispossessed” since possessions constitute “the source of our violence,” injustice and coercion; through discipleship, even “our most precious possession” which is the self we have created or chosen are no longer held as valuable (*HR:133*). Jesus’ life unfolds “an ethic of the eschatological, messianic community” as taught in the Sermon on the Mount (*RA:90; HR:132*). Christians live “in a new age that make possible a new way of life” and therefore, “the removal of eschatology from ethics” is one the significant factor of a “suffocating moralism” (*HR:132; RA:90*).

### 4.2.3. Soteriological accents

Within the framework of Hauerwas’s particularist character formation, the soteriological doctrines are set into the pattern of the Christian moral life. Not just salvation, sin and redemption but also conversion, justification and sanctification are endowed with new insights challenging both conservative and liberal understandings of these theological themes.

### 4.2.3.1. Salvation and the mediation of the church

Thus, it is inaccurate to apprehend salvation in individualistic terms “without an understanding that salvation is the reign of God” and to undermine “the need for the church to mediate salvation” (HR:533). Salvation does not mean “what God does to us in Jesus — as a purely personal decision, or a matter of finally getting our heads straight on basic beliefs, or of having some inner feelings of righteousness about ourselves and God, or of having our social attitudes readjusted” (RA:52). Salvation as the reign of God “is a political alternative to the way the world is constituted” (HR:533). Elsewhere, Hauerwas contends more strikingly that “Israel and the church are not characters in a larger story called ‘world’, but rather ‘world’ is a character in God’s story as known through the story that is the church. Without the church there is no world to have a story” (STT:192). The world cannot know this political alternative and even recognize her need of salvation “apart from the existence of a concrete people called the church” (AC:35). Salvation is mediated by the church because it “[makes] us part of a story that could not be known apart from exemplification in the lives of people in a concrete community” (AC:37). It finds its full significance in discipleship, the journey of the Christian life because

[Salvation] is not so much a new beginning but rather a beginning in the middle, so to speak. Faith begins, not in discovery, but in remembrance. The story began without us, as a story of the peculiar way God is redeeming the world, a story that invites us to come forth and be saved by sharing in the work of a new people whom God has created in Israel and Jesus. Such movement saves us by (1) placing us within an adventure that is nothing less than God’s purpose for the whole world, and (2) communally training us to fashion our lives in accordance with what is true rather than what is false (RA:52).

Moreover, salvation cannot be centred on the individual because it is not “first and foremost about my life having ‘meaning’ or insuring ‘my’ eternal destiny. Rather, *salvation is being engrafted into practices that save us from those powers that would rule our lives making it impossible for us to truly worship God*” (IGC:8, emphasis added; cf. Kallenberg 2001:142). In brief, “the church’s politics is our salvation” (IGC:8). In other words, through his communal ethics, Hauerwas is not only challenging the liberal theology of the Mainline Protestantism but the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. With Willimon, he poignantly says:

For we believe the association of the Reformation with presumptions of justification by faith through grace as a centre of the Gospel was a profound mistake. That emphasis, perhaps unwittingly, underwrote essentially individualistic accounts of salvation that combined with liberal political theory to produce an outrageously accommodated church. Part of our attack on Protestant liberalism is really an attack upon Reformation presumptions insofar as those are based on the idea that the church is somehow incidental to the salvation we have been offered in Christ (IGC:62).

#### 4.2.3.2. Sin as a non-universal category

Hauerwas refutes Protestant revival and liberal accounts of sin which he sees as moralistic and individualistic. In a sense, the understanding of sin conveyed by the preaching in the revival tents emphasizes the belief that “sin is the problem, not our sins” (*STT*:62). This distinction between the original sin and actual sins — like “drinking, sexual immorality, cheating and lying” — distorts the understanding of “political” salvation and the growth in holiness (*STT*:62). Some liberal theologians reject the classical doctrine of sin as reflected by Augustine’s account and which stresses the universal transmission of the original sin according to the Pauline statement: “by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners” (*Rm* 5:19). Their two central convictions are: “(1) the essential goodness of the human, and (2) the presumption of human freedom of autonomy” (*STT*:64). The well-known position of Reinhold Niebuhr based on Augustine’s account, as assessed by Robert Williams, finally contradicts itself since “on the one side, sin is not regarded as belonging to essential nature and therefore not something for which we can be responsible. On the other side, sin is inherited corruption and, thus, inevitable” (*STT*:64).

For Hauerwas, an adequate account of sin cannot be based on human condition or universality of sin. Anthropological or abstract accounts of sin constitute “the gnostic temptation.” These accounts ignore or undermine the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ and even the narrative of Israel and Jesus “necessary to name sin and redemption” and ultimately “divorce salvation and ethics” (*STT*:67). They also reproduce the structure of the allegedly orthodox doctrines of sin and atonement (like “satisfaction theories of atonement”) which “underwrite pretentious, universalistic accounts of salvation” ignoring the necessity of “the actual existence of reconciled people” (*STT*:68). The person of Jesus cannot be separated from his work, and theology from worship; thus Eucharist, for example, points not only to “a sacrifice that God demands but also to “God’s sacrifice for the sake of the world in which [Christians] are graciously included” (*IGC*:162).

An accurate account of sin should be grounded not on “a generalized anthropology” but on the church and its practices to secure “the politics necessary for the naming of sins” (*STT*:67-8). Hauerwas offers an alternative account shaped by his emphasis on the mediation of salvation by a concrete community and his reading of Paul’s instruction on “the practices necessary for the common life of the church” (*STT*:62, 71). These practices — including truth speaking opposed to lying and refraining from negative habits such as anger, destructive speech, quarrelling, etc. — are meant to demonstrate a life of *agapē* in the Christian community (*Eph* 4:25-5:2; *STT*:71). They render intelligible the significance of “the ancient and current practice of confession, penance and reconciliation” (*STT*:68).

Hauerwas repeatedly challenges liberal and conservative accounts asserting that “sin is a universal category available to everyone” (*AC*:109; cf. *PK*:31). Indeed, sin “may involve inhumanity and immorality” (*PK*:31). However, “sin is not natural but rather we must be taught by the church to be a sinner” (*WRA*:77). He insists that “we must be trained to be a sinner” through the Christian story shaping our moral vision and by learning to speak a Christian language (*AC*:108; *PK*:30-34, 46-9). Sin is acknowledged through Christian experience because “sin names the discovery, when confronted by the gospel, that my life has not been lived as a gift from God” (*WRA*:77); and we are sinful “because we deceive ourselves about the nature of reality and so would crucify the very one who calls us to God’s kingdom” (*PK*:31). Thus, “the ability to name, recognize, and remember the connection between our sins” or “to confess our sin, after all, is a theological and moral accomplishment” (*AC*:108; *STT*:71; cf. *WRA*:77 ). In a world of sin, growing in grace is growing in Christian virtue (*CAV*:128).

#### **4.2.3.3. Redemption as discipleship**

Subsequent to the invitation of seeing oneself as sinner is the call to be disciple. Christians are called to undertake the journey of discipleship in order to become righteous, by taking up the way of life made possible by God’s redemptive action through Jesus’ crucifixion (*PK*:33). Redemption is the process of making people part of God’s story and kingdom through discipleship in the church community of faith. As Hauerwas explains:

To be redeemed [...] is nothing less than to learn to place ourselves in God’s story, to be part of God’s people. To locate ourselves within that story and people does not mean we must have some 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 who has heard God’s call (*PK*:33).

While it does not exclude “an intense personal experience,” this understanding of redemption resists all considerations of such experiences as substitutes for discipleship (*PK*:33).

#### **4.2.3.4. Conversion as a process**

Moreover, Hauerwas’s challenge is directed towards both individualist accounts of salvation and conversion. He objects to “the assumption that conversion has primarily to do with an individual’s self-understanding rather than his or her being put in the context of a different community with a different set of practices” (*WW*:194). Conversion is one of the essential features of Christian moral growth as opposed to modern theories of moral development. “The Christian moral, he claims, is finally not one of ‘development’ but of

conversion” (CC:130; HR:226). “Acquiring practices is another way to say conversion,” because conversion takes place in church community where Christians are invited to “acquire habits and practices commensurate with being church” so that they may “be able to discern better the world in which [they] live” (WRA:80). Conversion is the process “recognized retrospectively” because “what is crucial for Christian formation is to have people engaged in activities through which they learn the habits that shape them before they can name what the shaping is about” (WRA:82; Kallenberg 2001:221). One of the essential features of conversion is its endless character deriving from the particularity of Christian narrative which not only requires conversion but also “never treats the formation of the self as completed” (CC:131; HR:226; cf. PK:95; HR:141). For this reason, Hauerwas declares:

I resist the notion that conversion is a sudden change at a particular point in one’s life. Now, people clearly have had overwhelming religious experiences of which I stand in awe. But conversion is the name for the lifelong process of discovering that one’s life has been constituted by a good God in ways one could never imagine (HR:534).

To substantiate his claim he adds the example of Saint Theresa of Avila who “was just born knowing God and knowing that God knew her” (HR:534).

#### **4.2.3.5. Justification by faith and sanctification**

Being aware that his ethics of character comes up against traditional understandings of the doctrine of justification by faith and sanctification, Hauerwas since the beginning of his project has extensively considered the relation between the two concepts (CCL:179-228; VV:66-7; PK:91-5; CAV:114-7). Meanwhile, he has also established his conviction that sanctification is the transformation of character.

Although based on the ethics of character or the acquisition of moral goodness through effort and activity, Christian moral formation cannot be understood as “an ethics of achievement” contradicting the doctrine of justification by faith and turning the Gospel of grace, the good news of salvation into a moral ideal (CCL:129-30; PK:91-2). Indeed Christian ethics “is first and foremost the ethics of the indicative” in that “God has acted to save man apart from and in spite of man’s unwillingness to turn to God” (CCL:130). However, soteriologically, “all attempts to analyze the nature of Christian life must somehow try to do justice to the dialectical tension between the objective affirmation of God’s deed and man’s subjective involvement in that deed” (CCL:130; emphasis added). In other words, God’s work of salvation “demands a real response from man’s side” and thus, “the indicative is not complete without the imperative” (CCL:130). The exemplification of this essential relation between the indicatives of faith providing the rationale for the imperatives is found in the Pauline writings wherein his admonitions or ethical exhortations in Romans 12 “follow from

and /or are integral to the claims of justifications in Romans 3” (Rom. 3:21-6; 12:9-19; *PK:92*). In addition, faith is neither “a mystical transformation of the individual,” nor “a belief in certain propositions” (*PK:93*). Faith is to be conceived as “a combination of belief and trust, as simply fidelity to Jesus, the initiator of God’s kingdom of peace”; this initiation into Jesus’ life takes place through baptism (Rom. 5:1-5; 6:5-11; *PK:93*).

However, being “in Christ” is being part of the Christian community pledged to be faithful to Jesus’ life; therefore, justification by faith is not individualistic, it entails discipleship as Christian life “is fundamentally a social life” (*PK:93*). Justification cannot be divorced from sanctification, they “are but two modalities of describing our relation to Christ” (*CCL:182-3, 186-7*). Indeed, “justification is only another way of talking about sanctification, since it requires transformation by initiation into the new community made possible by Jesus’ death and resurrection” (*PK:94*). Besides, early Hauerwas saw the connection between the sanctification and the formation of character through the themes related to Christian life, namely Calvin’s analogy of warfare and his stress on “cross-bearing, self-denial, and mortification” as well as “the possibility of growth and vivification,” Wesley’s “language of progress and perfection” and Jonathan Edwards’s “sincerity” including “truth, freedom, integrity and purity” (*CCL:195-7*). While maintaining a vital relationship between justification and sanctification, they affirmed that “sanctification involves a real difference of our actual behaviour” but their accounts do not elaborate “the connection between this change and its theological warrant [...] in terms of our concrete behaviour” (*CCL:195-6*). For Hauerwas, “the theme of the change of the ‘person’ in sanctification suggested by these theologians “is made more intelligible when sanctification is understood as the actual formation of our character” (*CCL:202*). Thus, sanctification is the “formation of the Christian’s character that is the result of his intention to see the world as redeemed in Jesus Christ” (*VV:66-7; cf. CCL:195-203*).

#### **4.2.4. Ecclesiological and practical accents**

Hauerwas’s strongly-held view of inseparability between ecclesiology and ethics informs his understanding of moral formation as discipleship and a correlative advocacy of a non-Constantinian and confessing church. For him, the church is “the basis for Christian ethics” since “Christian ethics, is not whether we shall be conservative or liberal, left or right, but whether we shall be faithful to the church’s peculiar vision of what it means to live and act as disciples” (*RA:69*).



#### 4.2.4.1. Inseparability of ecclesiology and ethics

For more than a century, apologetics has been at the core of church's theology. This apologetical mode has become predominant since the adoption of Friedrich Schleiermacher project of making the Christian faith credible to the larger society. By so doing Schleiermacher (1768-1834) crystallized the theological concern of shifting Christianity from a pre-modern pre-scientific world view to a modern view because of the sixteenth-century Copernican Revolution. In the same vein liberal and modern theologians, and most of all Paul Tillich (1886-1965), have committed themselves to the theology of translation.<sup>13</sup> This theology has "distorted the gospel and transformed it into something it never claimed to be — ideas abstracted from Jesus, rather than Jesus with his people" (RA:19-21). Their endeavour is but the continuation of "the Constantinian enterprise of making the faith credible to the power-that-be so that Christians might now have a share in those powers" (RA:22). Through this Constantinian assumption, modern and liberal theologians have transformed the gospel rather than letting the gospel transform people and Christianity has been reduced to an intellectual problem. Following Barth who vehemently opposed liberal theologians accommodated to National Socialism, Hauerwas and Willimon state:

Christianity is more than a matter of new understanding. Christianity is an invitation to be part of an alien people who make a difference because they see something that cannot be seen without Christ. Right living is more the challenge than right thinking. The challenge is not the intellectual one but political one — the creation of a new people who have aligned themselves with the seismic shift that has occurred in the world since Christ (RA:24).

#### 4.2.4.2. Non-Constantinian and confessing church

Thus, it is the church as "colony" of resident aliens which undoubtedly is the appropriate locus of moral formation (RA:29, 74). Basically, neither liberal, public or social activist churches nor their conservative, private or conversionist counterparts meet the requirements of the church community in view.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, both are committed to social strategies characterizing those who are in power and "assume wrongly that the American church's primary social task is to underwrite the American democracy" (RA:22, 32). Thus they remain "basically accommodationist (that is, Constantinian) in their social ethic" (RA:32; HR:473-9; IGC:98-9). The appropriate context for moral formation correspond to Yoder's

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<sup>13</sup> With Willimon, Hauerwas designates Paul Tillich as "the most supremely apologetical theologian" because of his translation of Christian concepts like God and Faith into modern and existentialist concepts, respectively, Ultimate Reality and Ultimate Concern (RA:20).

<sup>14</sup> These Martin Marty's and Yoder's typologies shall be elaborated along with Reinhold Nieburh's typology regarding the church involvement in its surrounding culture in the next chapter, in particular in the section dealing with social ethics.

description of the confessing church fostering true worship and practices and characterized as follows:

[The confessing church] depicts conversion as a long process of being baptismally engrafted into a new people, an alternative *polis*, a countercultural social structure called church. It seeks to influence the world by being the church, that is, by being something the world is not and can never be, lacking the gift of faith and vision, which is ours in Christ. The confessing church seeks the *visible* church, a place, clearly visible to the world, in which people are faithful to their promises, love their enemies, tell the truth, honour the poor, suffer for the righteousness, and thereby testify to the amazing community-creating power of God (RA:46).

#### 4.2.4.3. The church as an alternative *polis*

This understanding of a confessing church is convergent with Aristotelian ethics because “Aristotle argued that the primary purpose of the *polis* is the creation of people who are better than they would be without the aid of the *polis*” (RA:32). Therefore, moral formation derives from “the main political task of the church” which “is the formation of people who see clearly the cost of discipleship and are willing to pay the price” (RA:48). As a result, theological themes such as revelation, salvation, sin, and conversion but also justification and sanctification are reshaped and made congruent with the emphasis on discipleship in the church community. Moreover, Christian doctrines constitute a second theological category because of the primacy of Christian narrative as moral formation consists in “being adopted [by a people] to be part of a journey called discipleship” (WRA:25); and the convictions of this people “take the form of a story, or perhaps better, a set of stories that constitute a tradition” (PK:24).

Since the early 1960s a tremendous cultural shift has taken place in the Western world: “the demise of the Constantinian world view” induced by “the decline of the old synthesis between the church and the world” (RA:18). Until then, Christendom as the predominant culture in many places, especially in America, catalysed cultural structures that brought church, home and state to form “a national consortium that worked together to instil ‘Christian values’” (RA:16). The Christian story is no more the widespread narrative to which the world adheres. Christians, and better the faith community should be reminded of Tertullian’s maxim that “Christians are not naturally *born* [but rather they] are intentionally *made* by an adventuresome church” (RA:18-9; emphasis original).

With the demise of Christendom, the church is called to be an “alternative *polis*” because of the particularity of the Christian community and the kind of life expected within this specific community (RA:46). In particular, it is a “social alternative” in that it brings to the world the possibility of true peace, of community and mutuality which is not a peace devoid of conflict and gained through heroic conquering (RA:18, 27, 30; CAV:65; cf. Milbank 1990:363).

In the same vein, Hauerwas and Willimon have suggested the notion of the church as “a colony of resident aliens” because “Christian ethics arise, in great part, out of something Christians claim to have seen that the world has not seen, namely *the creation of a people, a family, a colony* that is a living witness that Jesus Christ is Lord” (RA:72; emphasis mine). Following Barth, Hauerwas stresses that “witness is intrinsic for any understanding of what it means to hold that Christian convictions are true to the way things are” (WGU:39).

Correlatively, he stresses that “the first task of the church is not to make the world more just but to make the world the world” (WRA:46; cf. PK:99; HC:158); hence the modern American church is called to be a “colony of heaven,” a community of “resident aliens,” “a contrasting model” or “a political alternative” to the world or the American political and social order (RA:11-2, 50-1, 78; 91-2; PK:100; CC:12). In this perspective, the church must foster the *ethics of revolution* characterized by the cultivation of the virtues needed by a people on the journey of Christian life (RA:62; emphasis original). Thus, in this community of sojourners, self-indulgence is not to be tolerated; rather Christians should value honesty and confrontation and demand discipline of themselves “as means of directing others to what is true and good” (RA:62-3).

#### 4.2.4.4. Local and visible church as a community of virtues

The church, for Hauerwas, is catholic, “a people who are universally connected across the nations” (WRA:47).<sup>15</sup> The catholicity of the Church should foster parochial loyalty and discourage idolatrous loyalty to country or people; it also constitutes one of the reasons Christians should be pacifists and renounce killing their brothers and sisters from and in other countries (TSU:144-5). It is noteworthy that the church viewed by Hauerwas as locus of moral formation is the visible and local church, not an ideal or “mystically existing universal church,” but rather “the concrete church with parking lots and potluck dinners” (PK:107; cf. IGC:57). He is aware that the church is an institution bearing some usual social, material or economic burdens. Yet this very community is called to be in the same time a holy and sacramental people (1 Cor 11.17-26). Christian community exhibit the sacraments and other practices which are the “marks” of the church, the “means crucial to shaping” us Christians to tell and hear the story of Jesus; consequently being committed in baptism, Eucharist, preaching, telling and hearing “the story of a crucified saviour,” and challenging its members to be faithful to that story is a predominant role of the church (PK:102-3, 106-109).

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<sup>15</sup> Thus, to his fellow American Christians he could say: “the Christians in Zimbabwe [or in Uganda] are much more our brothers and sisters than our non-Christians brothers and sisters who happen to be American” (WRA:48; TSU:145).

In the church, Christians learn to be virtuous people through worship and other practices. “Worship as a series of Christian practices” is essential and determinative to moral formation as morality is intrinsic to worship and other Christian practices (*BCCE:9; WRA:18*). Hauerwas points out that:

[To] learn to pray requires that we learn to pray with other Christians. It means we must learn the disciplines necessary to worship God. Worship, at least for Christians, is the activity to which all our skills are ordered. That is why there can be no separation of Christian morality from Christian worship. As Christians, our worship is our morality, for it is in worship that we find ourselves engrafted into the story of God. It is in worship that we acquire the skills to acknowledge who we are — sinners (*AC:108*).

The significance of worship for morality cannot be overstated. For example, Christians are required to worship on Sunday not at home but rather within the church. Leaving their homes and cities and going to worship in the church is a way of learning that they owe their primary loyalty to God and not to the family because “the family can be as destructive as it is sustaining” (*WRA:41-2*). Similarly, being gathered to worship God is also a way of proclaiming that “the unity of the church is more determinative than the unity that the nation supplies” (*WRA:42*).

To be acquired, virtues need the existence of communities. The church is “a school for virtue” *par excellence* (*CC:83, 86*). Of course, it “bears all the marks of natural communities” since it is a “graced community” (*PK:103*). As asserts by James Gustafson, all human communities require virtues in order to be sustained; in contrast to Gustafson, however, the traditional Christian theological virtues of faith, hope and love cannot be seen in these natural communities, because Christians have their Christianly understood virtues, their own understanding and specific ways of displaying them since these features derive from the tradition “that moulds their communities” (*CAV:xv, 113-178; PK:103*). In Hauerwas’s perspective, therefore, ecclesiology and theology are intrinsically linked through the formation of the kind of people, a people of virtue required to sustain the church across the time. While forming people of virtue, the local and visible church is expected to be a confessing church and an alternative *polis* to the ambient social and political order.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation consists in a particularist character formation metaethically grounded on virtue ethics, narrative ethics and community ethics and appealing to discipleship within the context of Christian community’s practices and life. This proposal emphasizes the cultivation of the virtues Christianly understood because of the distinctiveness of the Christian narratives implying a distinctive ethics and ecclesiology in

the context of the CLD American society. With their *telos* as the communion with God, Christian virtues are developed through habituation and the imitation of the saints in the Christian community. Central to moral formation is the call for discipleship and the demand of being faithful to the Christian story. Thus, moral formation relies on the wisdom of Christian communities, the recognition of the narrative dependency of Christian life that make Christians pilgrims on the adventure, the journey of discipleship. At the theological level, the knowledge of God is viewed as embedded in the Christian story and conceived of as at once natural, revelatory and moral and thus demands discipleship and Christian witness in the world; hence, the rejection of natural law and creation ethics. Moral formation requires that the study of Scripture be viewed a practice of discipleship in the Christian community which strongly repudiates the separation between doctrines and the Christian life. Also the imitation of God and the inauguration of God's Kingdom constitute significant insights for Christian moral formation having peaceableness as one of his distinctive and central virtue. Moreover, moral formation presupposes the understanding of sanctification as a particularist character formation because sin is not a universal category. Moral formation contradicts all view of justification by faith or atonement undermining this process of conversion in the Christian community. In the same vein, salvation is mediated by the church and consists in the engraftment into the story of God and the practices of Christian community and should not be apprehended in individualist terms. And thus, redemption is but the name of discipleship in the Christian community fostering a particular way of life. Above all, this understanding of moral formation lies on an essential view of the church as a local and visible community fostering virtues. Thus, it strongly rejects the separation of ecclesiology and ethics and compromising acquaintances with the world. As a result, it champions a non-Constantinian and confessing view of the church expected to be an alternative *polis*, a community of resident aliens. Besides, Hauerwas's proposal is not restricted to moral life within the Christian community; rather, it suggests vibrant insights on how the church can orientate and strengthen moral formation in the family, the school and the public life as well in the sphere of suffering. Thus, for a more extensive exploration of Hauerwas's proposal, it would be appropriate, in the next chapter, to turn to those practical aspects.

## **Chapter 5: PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF HAUERWAS'S PROPOSAL**

### ***Introduction***

To recall, after the introductory chapter, the second chapter has displayed the American capitalist, democratic, liberal and pluralist context posited as the background against which Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation has been developed. The third chapter has described Hauerwas's social, religious and academic background that, along with some noticeable and mentioned contributions of classical and contemporary scholars, have deeply influenced his proposal. In fact, the third chapter is to be considered as the first stage towards a comprehensive analysis of Hauerwas's proposal pursued in the fourth chapter. This latter chapter has highlighted the core ethical and theological themes helping to understand Hauerwas proposal as an account of particularist character formation. Proceeding with this analysis, the current chapter (Chapter Five) describes the practical aspects of the proposal through the various spheres of moral formation it embraces. In this regard, the present chapter provides an overview of Hauerwas's understanding of moral formation in the church, the family, the school, the public sphere and suffering. It is noteworthy that the chapter includes relevant aspects of the CLD American context for all the spheres of moral formation described to demonstrate that Hauerwas is also grounded on his relentless social critique of this context.

### **5.1. Moral formation in the church**

Perhaps the most appropriate way of understanding Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation is to consider this paradigm as an intended corrective to the deleterious impact of capitalist, liberal and democratic (CLD) culture in the larger American society and the church as well. Rather than being committed to curb this situation the Church in America, in Hauerwas's view, wallows in accommodation. Consequently, the church needs a thorough discipleship and a vigorous discipline to remain faithful to the Christian narratives and produce virtuous Christians. All these aspects need — if not an extensive but at least — an accurate elaboration.



### 5.1.1. The Church in America

Although America bears a republican and Biblical heritage, the CLD tradition is the most prevalent public philosophy (*AN:18; PF:148*). As a result, the church in America is surrounded and even invaded by this predominant culture. Besides being a philosophical system which cannot produce people of virtue, this culture also actually undermines this kind of endeavour. With its ahistorical myth and the centrality of individual freedom it fosters, CLD culture lacks resources or reason to help people live virtuously. Therefore, in this context, the church is called to be “a school for virtue” (*CC:83-6*).

Unfortunately, the Church in America has become an “accommodationist church” which is now unable to challenge the prevailing practical atheism and to call to worship since in its life and practices “the God of Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Mary, and Jesus” does not matter (*RA:50, 94-5*). For example, worship is reduced to “confirming people’s self-esteem,” and preaching becomes “making Christ a worthy subject for poetic reflection” and pastoral care consist in “enabling people to adjust to their anxieties brought on by their materialism” (*RA:94*). Looking like public’s life bureaucracy, church administration focuses on building huge congregations rather than upbringing people’s life (*RA:94*). Unlike the CLD culture fostering a distorted moral life, the church should be “a school for virtue,” “a disciplined and disciplining community” where people are trained to be Jesus’ disciples (*CC:83; AC:93*). Crucial for this spiritual and ethical formation are the place of the saints and the responsibility of ministers.

### 5.1.2. Discipleship in the church

The church is “a school for virtue,” a “contrast model” to CLD society, a “community formed on trust rather than distrust” which foster internal obedience without resorting to violence (*CC:83-5*). While the liberal society tends to apprehend all claims to authority as authoritarian in the name of democratic freedom, the church must recognize the necessity of authority and obedience. The church is an international institution established under the authority of the word and the bishop entitled with the responsibility of reminding Christians to live in unity with other Christians across time and space. In any society, it must resist the propensity to personal authority making the individual his or her own tyrant. The church must train Christians to be virtuous and to be aware that “prior to one’s having choice, a person [must] be trained “to want the right things rightly” (*HR:523*). In a sense, the church can be considered as democratic to the extent that it allows the diversity of gifts, discussion and listening to others to flourish within the Christian community as a way of fostering obedience.

However, basically, the church is a “radically non-democratic” institution based on the core conviction that not “everyone’s opinion count equally” and not everyone, but some of its members, the saints, have more completely appropriated the truth which “can only be known through struggle” (CC:85). The authority of the church is conferred to those saints who are worth of being imitated. Emphasizing the significance of local saints for the community upbuilding, Hauerwas notes:

In his teaching and preaching, Jesus was forever calling our attention to the seemingly trivial, the small, and the insignificant — like lost children, lost coins, lost sheep, a mustard seed. The Kingdom involves the ability to see God within those people and experiences the world regards as little and of no account, ordinary. Recognizing the importance of saints helps us see the worth of so many of the seemingly ordinary and unimportant things that happen daily in the church. It also helps us to structure our congregational life in such a way as to provide for the saints the greatest opportunity to be influential (RA:103).

Speaking of the church as a school for virtue promoting the ministry of local saints is a way of emphasizing the significance of discipleship for moral formation. The church should be the environment where each congregant learns to be a disciple because being a Christian is first and foremost being a disciple. Hauerwas stresses that point in relation to the all-important role of the church community for this endeavour when he says:

Christianity is not beliefs about God plus behavior. We are Christians not because of what we believe, but because we have been called to be disciples of Jesus. To become a disciple is not a matter of a new or changed self-understanding, but rather to become part of a different community with a different set of practices (AC:107).

Learning to be a disciple of Jesus is acquiring practices and disciplines such as learning to pray, to speak Christian language, to be a sinner and a creature and in a word learning to worship God. Today Christians try to introduce their faith to newcomers or God-seekers by explaining Christian doctrines (such as God as trinity); but learning how to pray, to speak Christian language through prayer or being invited to join in the Lord’s Prayer may be the best place for them to begin the Christian journey (AC:107-8). Prayer is powerful practice requiring intensive training and leads to humility: “we do not believe in God, explains Hauerwas, become humble and then learn to pray, but in learning to pray we humbly discover we cannot do other than believe in God” (AC:108).

Learning to pray to God is a critical practice for Christians because it is also the way to learn, to discover and speak the Christian language. More importantly, “the primary language of the church is the language of prayer — because in prayer the practice and language are inseparable” (WRA:42). In the Christian life, beginners and junior Christians are called to imitate the prayers of those who prayed before them to become “skilled speakers of that language called Christian” because through prayers Christians discover and acquire the skills necessary to survive and resist the perverted and malicious world (WRA:42).

With Willimon, Hauerwas depicts marine basic training of their recruits consisting of putting them in a group and moving them “through a perilous ordeal” in order to teach them “skills to analyze what is wrong with their former lives” (*WRA:73-6*). He finds that historic practices of discipleship as an initiation beginning with baptism which in itself is a set of practices including learning the language of faith is “the closest Christian analogy” to this Marine training (*WRA:75-6*).

Through discipleship, Christians learn to be sinners. To recall a Hauerwasian statement, to be a sinner requires training as “to confess our sin, after all, is a theological and moral accomplishment” (*AC:108*; cf. *IGC:159*; *STT:71*). The church must teach its members to be sinners (*WRA:77*). The rationale of learning to be a sinner lies in the interrelatedness between sin and confession: (1) “we cannot learn to confess our sins unless we are forgiven” and (2) “We cannot learn that we are sinners unless we are forced to confess our sins to other people in the church” (*AC:109, 110*). First, people are prone to be forgivers and maintain a power relation to those they have forgiven. From the gospel, Christians learn to be “out of control” and accept the forgiveness granted to them by Jesus; hence believers first acknowledge they have been forgiven prior to knowing they are sinners (*AC:109*). Second, in the church, Christians learn to be sinners through confession and reconciliation; this occurs not through a general confession but, in particular, a confession to whom one may well has wronged with the quest of reconciliation in view (*AC:100*).

Christians must learn to be sinners and creatures. Rather than being abstract, the notions of being sinners and creatures are rooted in the Christian community life and its specific narratives. The letter of James links being sinners to the practices of confession, prayer of the elders of the church, and forgiveness resulting in the healing of the sick (*Ja 5:14-16*). For Christians, creaturehood cannot only be related to the acknowledgment of the finite character of human nature but it “draws on a determinative narrative of God as creator that requires more significant knowledge of our humanity than simply that we are finite” (*AC:109-10*).

Moreover, the church should be “an informed worshiping community” because worship or liturgy informs and shapes the Christian life. Worship — in particular through the various stages of a comprehensive service — is a series of practices providing the necessary background to understand the Christian life. The requirement of gathering for worship “in itself is a ‘morality’” (*IGC:157*). Based on Jesus’ great commission (*Mt 28:16-28*), it expresses Christian identity, the purpose of Christian life and the calling of Christians “from the world, their families, to be constituted into a community capable of praising God” (*BCCE:10*; *IGC:157*). Gathering is a crucial element of being the church; it is “an eschatological act as it is the foretaste of the unity of the communion of saints. Such unity is possible only for a

people who worship the true God” (*IGC:157*). Greeting one another in the name of the Trinity is the way of directing attention to the identity of the God Christians worship. Christians learn to rightly name their God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through initiation into the practices of their traditions. Thus, they recognize that genuine Christian ethics is distinctive and does not have an anthropological starting point (*IGC:158*). The Body of Christ discerns the truth of the gospel by reciting the Creeds. This recital contributes to the empowerment of the church so that its members can “anticipate, experience and participate in liberation” (*BCCE:10*). The practice of confessing the sins coming after the recital of the Creeds and associated with the practices of reconciliation and forgiveness is a part of training received through worship; all these practices foster virtuous life and the upbuilding of the Christian community (*IGC:159*). The preaching of the Scripture, the central moment of the worship, the time when the written Word is performed and enacted, in itself “an ethic to the extent preacher and congregation alike are trained to stand under the Word” (*IGC:159*). During this time, congregation learns the significance of authority and the preacher endowed with the church’s authority is reminded of the necessity of “ministerial morality” (*IGC:159-60*).

Baptism included in some worship services is a series of practices shaping “what it means for the church to regard itself as living as one Body” (*BCCE:10*). In baptism, Christians “are baptized into his death” and through this set of practices they learn that their lives are not their own — a notion diametrically opposed to the presupposition of liberal individual autonomy (*IGC:160*). It offers Christians’ understanding of the body that render suicide, abortion and cloning as “descriptions of practices incompatible with a community constituted through baptism” (*IGC:160; BCCE:10*). Also, it illuminates Christian understanding of medicine and the development of medical ethics. Furthermore, baptism constitutes Christian true family and in this context the ethics of marriage, singleness and sexuality, as we will elaborate further, are ordered to Christian discipleship (*IGC:161; cf. CC:156; RA:65-6; WRA:85-6*).

Similarly, Eucharist which as seen by Irenaeus sum up the previous stages of worship and leads to thanksgivings shape the understanding of several ethical issues. It justifies Christian objection to capital punishment not through cruel or inhumane aspect of taking life but because “human sacrifice has been ended for all times through Christ’s cross” (*IGC:161*). It is a communal activity, “a politics” reminding Christians that they do not belong to “this world” (*IGC:161*). For Hauerwas, “blessing and breaking the bread is the heart of the Christian response to what seem to be the most powerful forces in the world – such as war and capitalism” (*BCCE:11*). Eucharist provides the rationale to distinguish war for murder and it supposes peace between people, “not the absence of violence or the violence that appears as order, but rather it is the peace that comes from being made friends with God and with on

another” (*IGC:162*). Eating together encourages offerings and sharing which are antithetical to capitalist ownership; the unity it fosters “is not equivalent to liberal egalitarianism, insofar as the latter only reproduces capitalist practices” (*IGC:162*). At the end of the worship, Christians are sent forth with God’s blessing to go to serve the world and thus through worship and its practices Christians acquire skills for virtuous life and service (*IGC:162-3; BCCE:11*).

The time of Confirmation preparation (or baptism preparation for Anabaptist churches) is an appropriate period to help the young members of the church not only master church history, Biblical interpretation or essential doctrines but also to be resolutely strengthened on the journey of discipleship. Discipleship, rather than knowing something about Jesus, must be the goal of this special time. Many Christians “know something *about* Jesus, about their church but what they still desperately need is to be people who follow Jesus, those who are the church and who “closely resemble, in their life-style, beliefs and values, disciples of Jesus” (*RA:105*). Hauerwas with Willimon describe how Confirmation should consist in an “experiential, personal, engaging” education putting young Christians in proximity with exemplary older Christians or the local saints of the congregation to emulate them to take up the Christian way of life (*RA:103-8*). Definitely, “the church needs to see that one of its greatest resources is its ability to bring generations of disciples together” (*RA:107*).

### 5.1.3. Discipline in the church

To illustrate the intrinsic relation between discipleship and discipline, Hauerwas uses the analogy of the craft. If discipleship is understood as a craft, like the one of laying brick, the necessity of training, initiation, submission to a master and discipline in moral formation becomes intelligible (*AC:101-2*). Hauerwas explains that:

To help us get a better picture of what it means for the church to be a disciplined community, we ought to learn how to lay a brick. This discipline will help us think about what it means to be saved, what it means to be a Christian. To learn to lay brick, it is not sufficient for you to be told how to do it; you must learn to mix the mortar, build scaffolds, joint, and so on. Moreover, it is not enough to be told how to hold a trowel, how to spread mortar, or how to frog the mortar. In order to lay brick you must hour after hour, day after day, lay brick (*AC:101*).

In other words, “the craftlike nature of morality” requires, as through learning to lay brick, the acquisition of “myriad skills” and “a language that forms, and is formed by those skills” (*AC:101*). Important is the language of the craft: it “embodies the history of the craft of bricklaying”; it denotes that the apprentices do not learn “a craft *de novo* but rather [they are] being initiated into a history” (*AC:101-2*). In the process, they need the more experienced to teach them tackle the challenges encountered and correct their mistakes. Thus,

apprenticeship in the craft requires initiation, training and the authority of teachers. The significance of the authority of the teachers cannot be overlooked because:

A craft is never static. Thus masters are granted authority insofar as they exemplify in their work the best standards so far. What makes a master a master is that he or she shows how to go further, using what can be learned from tradition afforded by the past and the future, so that the telos of the craft becomes apparent in new and unexpected ways. Therefore, it is the ability to teach others how to learn this type of knowing these skills through which the power of the master within the community of the craft is legitimated as a rational authority (AC:106).

In the church, the local saints and ministers are endowed with this kind of legitimated authority. They help to discriminate and hierarchize the various histories influencing one's life when one is being initiated into the tradition of the church (AC:107 n16; cf. MacIntyre 1990:182).

For Hauerwas, the American churches emphasize care rather than discipline as he points out:

The church seems caught in an irresolvable tension today. Insofar as we are able to maintain any presence in modern society we do so by being *communities of care*. Any attempt to be a *disciplined and disciplining community* seems *antithetical to being a community of care*. As a result the care the church gives, while often quite impressive and compassionate, lacks the rationale to build the church as a community capable of standing against the powers we confront (AC:93; emphasis added).

Because of its capitulation to the influence of the surrounding buyer and consumer culture, "the called church has become the voluntary church, whose primary characteristic is that the congregation is friendly" (AC:93). Although this kind of friendliness contributes to the numeric growth of the church, it renders "discipline impossible to maintain" and undermines the church witness; more importantly, this friendliness prevents the opening of one's life for moral transformation (AC:93-4).

To be "a disciplined and disciplining community," a community spurning voluntarism, the church has to first identify itself as "a community capable of holding one another to account" (WRA:66, 109). In this community, "members have claims on one another's lives" and no one could say to others: "it's none of your business," and each member should be able to declare his or her income in public (HR:531). In a disciplined community, because Christians have the obligation to love each other; thus, to a member having an affair, another member should say: "What you're doing to your spouse is unfaithful. I'm calling you from the life of adultery." (HR:532). The CLD culture privatizing faith compromises and hinders "the public character of the church" as it teaches people "to relate to one another as strangers," but in the church Christians must hold one another accountable (RA:109).



According to Matthew 18, a text crucial for good governance in the church, judgment and confrontation are not a taboo in a disciplined community. Pastors and bishops are not beyond rebuke, if they lost perspective, misuse their power in office or are driven by personal ambition (HR:532). As a matter of fact, this status of affairs will hurt and generate conflicts but can eventually bring peace. Nonetheless, “Christians need to speak the truth about what is right and wrong and good and evil in our society.” (HR:532). Indeed, “to be disciplined means to make our lives vulnerable to friends” as “discipline means having certain alternatives simply excluded from our lives, by being put in habits that render the alternatives impractical” (WRA:111-2). As resident aliens, Christians crucially need to be disciplined and sustained in the fight against the world. Indeed, “discipline is the acquisition of habits through which we would not do anything other than what we are delightfully doing” [and] “through Christian discipline we acquire power we would not have had” (WRA:112). Discipline in the church also entails “the continuing, hard, patient labour of forgiveness and reconciliation” (PF:105). Thus, Christians are called to perform their faith like those “learning to appreciate and understand and play musical instruments” to “[acquire] the obedience of listening and following” (PF:105).

Hauerwas finds in the Methodism of 18<sup>th</sup>-century England strongly committed in evangelism and the spiritual and moral formation into “classes” of twelve people as a striking example of being a disciplined community. In this Society from mostly underclass background, theology language was joined to Christian practices, everyone was called to contribute a penny a week for the building of houses of gathering and aid to the poor. Members of a Society made themselves vulnerable to others in order to move on to perfection. They could be actually excluded for misconduct. In brief, theology of sanctification and perfection was grounded in soteriology; the condition of affiliation was “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins” (WRA:103-5).

#### **5.1.4. The authority and challenge of ministers**

To be “a disciplined and disciplining community” fostering the adventure of discipleship to each of its members the church should be “a community capable of being obedient to authority” (AC:93; WRA:62). The analogy of the craft for moral life implies the acceptance of the teacher’s authority. It is only through obedience that apprentices can “become effective and creative participants” in “a community of craft, which embodies the intellectual and moral habits” they must acquire and cultivate (AC:105). In the church, authority and obedience represent “a form of service to one another” (WRA:64). They “are part of the practices necessary” for the survival of the church which is “a *colony* within an *alien* society” (RA:114-5, emphasis original). A community severed from these practices

becomes a club within generally Christian culture” (*RA*:115). More importantly, these practices derives from the nature of the God Christians worship: “Our God is no willful tyrant but rather the one who unflinching discern our desires rightly” (*WRA*:64-5).

The church has chosen pastors who — through sermons, pastoral care and administration — can “practice ethics by lifting up specific, historical examples, saints for the rest of us to emulate” (*RA*:109). They are not the sole leaders of the church since among the baptized the church has also chosen other leaders like bishops, priests, prophets, and preachers. All of them are called “to help the congregation nurture within itself those virtues needed for the life and the work of the colony” (*RA*:113-4). As their particular vocation is “upbuilding the congregation,” they are bestowed with authority (*RA*:114). Unfortunately, “in America all claims to authority cannot help appearing authoritarian” (*WRA*:62; cf. *STT*:199). Influenced by liberalism people, through democratic freedom implying personal authority, disregard and flee all kinds of moral authorities and thus become their own tyrants (*RA*:33; *WRA*:62-3). Within the church, the colony of heaven, Christians know they have to live “under authority — under the word, under the authority of the bishop charged with reminding us how to live in unity with Christians across time and place” (*WRA*:63; cf. *RA*:114-5).

Pastors or the clergy are “servant[s] of the servants of God” (*RA*:113). Their particular authority and power derive from their ordination:

Servanthood is power insofar as it is obedience to the One who is the way, the truth, and the life. Clergy must not assume that their disempowerment by the culture means that they have no power. A Christian pastor has been given the authority to serve the eucharist and to preach the Word for the church — to point to the very presence of God among us. That is power (*RA*:167; cf. *IGC*:159-60; *CET*:135-6).

The clergy are to use this power to build up the church. Their challenge in a culture that recognizes only the political power and dis-empowers ministers is to be persons capable of exercising “the awesome power of Word and sacraments as bestowed by God and God’s church” (*RA*:167-8). This exercise requires vitality, authority and boldness as did Peter in the case of Ananias and Sapphira demonstrating that the church is given the power to bind and to loose, to convict and forgive (*Ac* 5:1-11; *Mt* 18:18; *RA*:168). Correlative to the clergy’s authority are the way of preaching “as though they have enemies” in CLD culture, the misunderstanding of pastoral ministry as a helping profession as well the imperative of ministerial ethics that shall be further attended to (*STT*:191-200; *CET*:133-67).<sup>1</sup> After exploring Hauerwas’s perspectives on Christian moral formation in the church community, it is worth pursuing with his particular account of moral formation regarding the task of the church in the wider society.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see 5.4.4 on moral formation in the seminary.

## 5.2. Moral formation in the public sphere

In his *The Peaceable Kingdom*, while attempting to clarify his account of Christian social ethics, Hauerwas states: “I am in fact challenging the very idea that Christian social ethics is primarily an attempt to make the world more peaceable or just. Put starkly, *the first social ethical task of the church is to be the church* — the servant community” (PK:99; emphasis added). This often-repeated and very controversial statement contradicts the tradition of Christian social ethics developed in America emphasizing the church’s responsibility towards the larger society. To this widely-held construal Hauerwas proposes the concept of “the church as an alternative political community” and a related account of moral formation where at some extent moral formation in the church becomes Christian social ethic. Succinctly, the present section spells out this understanding of moral formation and proceeds by describing the practical aspects of his view. Yet it begins with an overview of the church-state relation in the American context through the freedom of religion. Afterwards, the section presents Hauerwas’s view on Christian social ethics in America justifying his corrective proposal on social ethics.

### 5.2.1. The freedom of religion in the America society

According to Hauerwas, the Constitutional freedom of religion is one of the most problematic issues illuminating the oddity of the relation between the church and the state in America. The freedom of religion guaranteed by the First Amendment “is a temptation, albeit a subtle one” (AC:71). It “has tempted Christians [Protestants and Catholics] to think that democracy is fundamentally neutral and, perhaps, even friendly toward the church” (AC:75). It makes some Christians think even that America is a Christian country and thus worthy to be supported. However, this freedom has been largely detrimental to the church as Hauerwas points out in the following relevant statement:

[The freedom of religion] is subtle because we believe that our [primary religious duty to the state] is to support the ethos necessary to maintaining the [legal] mechanism. As a result, we lose the critical skills formed by the gospel to know when we have voluntarily qualified our loyalty to God in the name of the state. We confuse freedom of religion with freedom of the church, accepting the assumption that the latter is but a specification of the former. We thus become tolerant allowing our convictions to be relegated to the realm of private (AC:71; cf. RA:33-4).

In other words, the freedom of religion has resulted in the loss of religious identity and peculiarities, in a Constantinian way, because of the subtle demands of a unified state religion. America as an omnipotent state, like historic empires, stands as a new universal religion demanding subservience to all religions including Christianity (RA:42). Christians

have to sacrifice their convictions on the altar of a false pluralism. According to Hauerwas, America is not a pluralist culture, but at least a highly fragmented one offering a very little possibility of genuine disagreement because nobody questions or argues against the system but only tolerates. Words like pluralism and tolerance are those of the powerful seeking to determine people's life (*HR:525*). In truth, America spurns tolerance through the prevalent claim "that all intolerance must be rejected except for the intolerance that says we must be equally tolerant of all claims (*WRA:97*). The freedom of religion, without solving the question of church-state relation, has only disestablished religion to let the secular humanism prevail in the cultural realm (*AC:73*). Accordingly, the church has been "subverted to support society by making the gospel a civil religion in which the church, ironically, can only be politically irrelevant" (*AC:72*). To this state of affairs, however, Christian social ethics in America has not given a pertinent and accurate response.

### **5.2.2. Christian social ethics in America**

In the USA, Christian social ethics faces many challenges which include the secular character of the American polity. Indeed, American polity and politics "[give] no special status to any recognizable religious group and [requires] that public policies be justified on grounds that are not explicitly religious" (*CC:72*). Many Christians and churches acquiesce to this arrangement since they find no major hindrance that their conviction about the social significance of the Gospel may be expressed and justified in secular terms. Most contemporary Christian social ethics is grounded on "the axiom that Christians should engage in politics to secure a more nearly just society" (*CC:73*). Broadly speaking, the history of Christian ethics in America narrated by Hauerwas is the one of an increasingly detachment from the church so as to be in service of America. By moving from Christian ethics to religious ethics and from seminary to graduate schools, Christian ethics has become an abstract discipline that has lost its distinctively Christian identity and relevant voice (*ABH:67*). Hauerwas maintains that

The subject of Christian ethics in America has always been America. Christian ethicists no longer think, as Walter Rauschenbusch did, that their task is to Christianize the social order, but they continue to share Rauschenbusch's presumption that America is the appropriate subject for ethical reflection and action (*ABH:23-4*).

And they especially do so by attempting to provide ethical analysis for "policy options" (*ABH:107*). Today's social ethics follows "the lead of social gospel [and] presumes that the task of Christians is to transform our basic social and economic structures in order to aid individuals in need" (*CC:73*).

Hauerwas directs a vitriolic attack to Christian and social ethicists like Walter Rauschenbusch and the Niebuhr brothers (Reinhold and H. Richard) who advocate the necessity of political involvement as “the mechanism to deal with, and perhaps even transform, structures of injustice” (CC:73). This social strategy denotes a deficit of perspicacity and leads to dire detrimental consequences for the church as contends Hauerwas:

Christian enthusiasm for the political involvement offered by our secular polity has made us forget the church’s more profound political task. In the interest of securing more equitable forms of justice possible in our society, Christians have failed to challenge the moral presuppositions of our polity and society. Nowhere is the effect of this seen more powerfully than in the Christian acquiescence to the liberal assumption that a just polity is possible without the people being just (CC:73).

Thus, most Christians have endorsed the liberal democratic “assumption that politics is about the distribution of desires, irrespective of the content of those desires, and any consideration of the development of people as a political issue seems an inexcusable intrusion into our personal liberty” (CC:73). Equally important, they “have almost forgotten that the church is also a polity that at one time had the confidence to encourage in its members virtues sufficient to sustain their role as citizens” (CC:73-4). While striving for a “nearly just” society, they have also forgotten that “genuine justice depends on more profound moral convictions than [American] secular polity can politically acknowledge” (CC:74). The first and foremost social task of the church is not political involvement; but instead it is by embracing its universal and perennial task of moral formation that the church best serves the larger society.

### **5.2.3. Moral formation in the church as a social ethic**

More specifically, Hauerwas has made three often-repeated and interrelated claims concerning the way the church should perform its social ethic. Firstly, “The church does not *have* a social ethic, but rather *is* a social ethics” (IGC:22, 26; emphasis original); secondly, “The first task of the church is not to make the world just, but to make the world the world” (IGC:21); and finally, “The first task of the church is to be the church” (CC:84, 85, 109).<sup>2</sup> These programmatic and very controversial statements rebut the tradition of Christian social ethics developed in America and emphasize the church’s responsibility towards the larger society. At least, spelling out these statements, even briefly, is undoubtedly a substantial way to get the gist of Hauerwas’s social ethic.

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<sup>2</sup> For the first statement, see also *HR*:114; *CET*:101,104 110, *CC*:11; *PK*:99; *TT*:143. The second statement is also found in several books (*WRA*:46, 59; *HC*:158; *CC*:74). Similarly, some books deal with the last statement (*HR*:112; *PK*:102; *TT*:11).



### 5.2.3.1. Being the church as the first social task of the church

The church is a social ethic because, as asserted by MacIntyre, “every ethics implies a sociology” and Christian ethics, as a qualified ethics, is “always a social ethic” (*WRA*: 68; *PK*:96). The self is fundamentally a social self in that, explains Hauerwas, “We are not ‘I’s’ who decide to identify with ‘we’s’; we are first of all ‘we’s’ who discover our ‘I’s’ through learning to recognize the others as similar and different from ourselves” (*PK*:96-7). The use of the epigram stresses the significance of the Christian story and controverts the primacy of policies and principles for social actions in the traditional Christian social ethic; it is a reminder that “the church is the place where the story of God is enacted, told and heard” (*CET*:101). For “That story requires the formation of a corresponding community which has learned to live in a way that makes it possible for them to hear that story” (*CET*:101). It also mean that the church is not a community *qua* community or involuntary association but “a body polity” constituted by the disciplines helping to resist the modern nation-states and their economic habits (*IGC*:26).

Also, the church as social ethic is where the truth about the world and people is told as the Christian story transforms the selves to face the truth and help them to recognize that they are “sinners, yet saved” through the disciplines of confession and forgiveness. In the world, by contrast, the truth is not spoken for fear such truth might destroy the arranged and fragile order and justice; and thus relations are built “on distortions and denial” (*CET*:103). Unlike the world, the church is constituted of a people on the journey of discipleship people, urged to living consistently with the conviction that their God is the lord of history and called to resist resorting “to violence in order to secure their survival” (*CC*:10). Therefore, “the first task of the church is to make the world the world”, to help the world recognize its true essential nature (*CET*:103). In this perspective, Hauerwas has called for a reform of Christian social ethics in ten theses. The sixth reads as follows: “Christians social ethics can only be done from the perspective of those who do not seek to control national or world history but who are content to live ‘out of control’” (*PK*:106).

Because of this antithetical relation between the church and the world the epigram that the church is, rather than have, a social ethics entails that the primary social task of the church is to be itself. In this world, the church should be “a people who have been formed by a story that provides them with the skills for negotiating the danger of this existence, trusting in God’s promise of redemption” (*CC*:10). Again, in this fifth thesis, Hauerwas notes that calling the church to be itself is “a reminder that Christian must serve the world on their own terms” whereas Christians in America in their attempt to control their society “have too readily accepted liberalism as a social strategy appropriate to the Christian story” (*CC*:11).



The church being itself as a social strategy is “not a rejection of the world or a withdrawal ethic,” says Hauerwas, since “the church does have a social responsibility toward wider society;” however, fulfilling this task “on its own terms” is a crucial point (*TT:11*). Although the church’s faithfulness to the Christian story can be understood as disloyalty to the world, the church must know that faithfulness rather than effectiveness is the guiding principle of its social strategy (*CC:106; RA:46-7*). The church’s first social task is not “to supply theories of governmental legitimacy or even suggest strategy for social betterment” but rather to “exhibit in our common life the kind of community possible when trust, and not fear, rules our lives” (*CC:85*). Put differently, the church must stand “as a political alternative to every nation, witnessing the social life possible for those that have been formed by the story of Christ” (*CC:12*).

### **5.2.3.2. The church as a paradigmatic community**

Because God has not abandoned the world, “at times the church can learn from society more just ways of forming life”, however, it is the church that, in a consistent way, should be a contrast model, “a paradigmatic community in the hope of providing some indication of what the world can be but it is not” (*TT:142*). The church serves best the wider society by being a community of virtue, a community of truthfulness and care “that keeps alive the language of faith [forming people in truthful manner] through the liturgical, preaching and the teaching office of the community” (*TT:11*). By so doing it helps the larger society to discover “what it means to be ‘the world’” (*TT:11*). Worship and its elements are not only “means crucial to shaping and preparing [Christians] to tell and hear” the story of Jesus but also “the most effective form of resistance to the powers who would dominate [their] lives” (*PK:107-8*).

In the same vein, the church primary social strategy also consists in being a community of peace. A community that strive “to develop the resources to stand within the world witnessing [faithfully] to the peaceable kingdom and thus rightly understood the world” (*PK:99, 102*). By refusing to resort to violence, the kind of polity that is the church embraces servanthood and demonstrates its commitment to the politics of the Gospel and “the Kingdom that reveals the insufficiencies of all politics [like the one of the USA] based on coercion and falsehood” (*PK:102*).

Moral formation as social ethic requires the development of leadership in the church. In the church leadership should be based on trust and truth: “the willingness of Christians to risk speaking the truth and hearing the truth” from the leader as well as the recognition of the “diversity of gifts in the community” (*CC:11*). As a result, leaders can acknowledge their

mistake without fearing removal. By contrast, in the society based on fear of the truth, leadership lies on the ability of those in charge to provide security. Further, as a vibrant community, the church as a contrast model should foster the commitment to community, encourage kindness, trust, friendship, mutual dependence, and the formation of families (CC:11).

Equally important for the church's social ethic is the economic life of the church involving moral formation in the community about the use of possessions, the choice of economic professions because "not all professions and roles of a society [should] be open to the Christian's participation" (TT:143). In a society fostering greed, proper Business Ethics should not be about quandary ethics but instead on the declaration of income in the light of Ananias and Saphira's account of the NT of Acts 5 (WRA:84-5).

The social ethic of the church cannot overlook the critical issue of the church government. "How the church govern herself, says Hauerwas, is crucial to what kind of social ethics she is" (TT:143). The church should require and expect its leaders to tell the truth. The community should be determinative enough to let "authority rather than the politics of fear" govern the church and disavow the use of uncritical power and force and condemn subtle coercion (TT:143).

A further example of the church acting as a social ethic is the care of the stranger as "part of what marks Christian convictions as true is how they teach us to see the stranger and the neighbour" (TT:143). Understanding this calling, traditional Christians initiated the creation of hospitals. Today Christians cannot consider this kind of care as mere philanthropy which is an inefficient way of dealing with systematic poverty or ill health but as a way of faithfully helping those unable to defend themselves (TT:143).

In sum, the first social task of the church "is not to make the world better or more just, but to recognize what the world is and why it is that it understands the political task as it does" as Hauerwas explains. The church's primary task "is provide the space and time necessary for developing skills of interpretation and discrimination sufficient to help us recognize the possibilities and limits of our society" (CC:74). Christian social ethics should be prominently about moral formation in the church, the development of skills of discernment and discrimination between the church, the truer polity and the world. Therefore, "the church and Christians must be *uninvolved in the politics of our society* and *involved in the polity that is the church*" (CC:74; emphasis added). Yet discipline in the church associated to the practices of discipleship entails the church's responsibility to strongly contribute to the transformation of the Christian family into an effective sphere of moral formation.

### 5.3. Moral formation in the family

Hauerwas's prolific and voluminous production encompasses abundant elaborations on issues about the ethics of family, marriage and sexuality of which it is obviously not possible to provide here a complete account. Rather, suffice it to develop his central claim of seeing moral formation in the family as a dimension of discipleship and character formation within the Christian community and to highlight his views on the church as the first family, as well as singleness, parenting and marriage as particular vocations in the Christian life. Moreover, Hauerwas's account does not overlook the burning issues of abortion, premarital and extramarital sex as well as homosexuality in the context of CLD culture and their implications on moral formation.

#### 5.3.1. Morality, the family and the church in America

Since decades, American society has undergone a family crisis with high rates of divorces, wife and child beating and delinquency as well as rising sexual immorality and the demands of women's liberation. Within a context of the cherished moral value of the family, many complain about the pervasiveness of a hedonistic self-fulfilment ethic at the expense of an ethic of duty and responsibility that sustains traditional values of marriage and family. To many, calling to a return of these values could not only save the family but also the society at large because "the family is among the first and the most important casualties" of today's "breakdown of morality" (CC:155).

Also, in the past decades, the philosophy of CLD has seriously assaulted the institutions of family and marriage. Autonomy as social ideal has loosened the family ties. Workers' mobility in capitalist economy has shaken out the stability of family life. With capitalism, "all the better that human relationships are ephemeral, because lasting commitments prove to be inefficient in ever-expanding markets" (ABH:50-1). Political liberalism fostering an individualistic ethos of democracy cannot help but weaken both family and marital relations. Moreover, it emphasizes the language of rights underlying the plight of women liberation and moral education by increasing child rights awareness without a commensurate ethic of duty and responsibility. All these parameters explain the current moral irrationality of the family in the American society (CC:81, 158-61, 170-2).

The current family crisis results from two significant developments in the past few centuries. First is the "economic marginalization of the family" which Adam Smith discerned through his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* of 1759. He thus suggested free exchange and cooperative forms of behaviour or sympathy as new economic capitalist arrangements in a context of the weakening of extended family and family ties (HR:507-9). Second is "the

romantic idealization of the family” that has taken place while the family is losing its previous social, economic and political significance and that has led to an ironic effect: the family has become “the one place that supplies [people] with relationships that [they] have not chosen” (HR:510). Both developments have resulted in the intense psychological and moral importance of the family — a burden which unfortunately the family is unable to bear; hence “the spawning of whole industries of counsellors of the family, (e.g., social workers, psychologists, and educators)” (HR:510). Therefore, non-Christians and Christians alike are trapped in the family crisis that Hauerwas describes as follows:

[...] in spite of the celebration of the family by most Americans, the family that we celebrate is in such profound trouble. [...] the very celebration of the family — the fact that Americans so desperately cling to the family as our anchor in the storms of life — is but an indication of the trouble in which the family in America finds itself. The more we are forced to make the family the end-all and be-all of our existence, the more the family becomes a problem not only for American society generally, but more particularly a problem for Christians (HR:506).

According to Hauerwas, Christians should not confuse the “moral value” of the family with “the more profound issues” of its nature and moral status (CC:155; TFS:148). The family should not be idealized as being everything since the locus of Christian morality is not the family but the church. Family can only “be a viable moral enterprise” if it is linked to “a community beyond itself,” and this community is the church formed by a truthful narrative that is appropriate to sustain the persons called to marry and have children (CC:174). Moreover, “the first family of every Christian is not what we call the ‘biological’ family, but the church” and Christians cannot attribute to the family a primary loyalty as the church, through its determinative narrative, has made “the family a secondary loyalty next to loyalty to the church” (TFS:151; cf. CC:168). Thus, “the first enemy of the family is Christianity itself (HR:505-6; cf. CC:174). Hauerwas strongly qualify the role of the family in moral formation as he assumes that “family is not a natural necessity” for Christians; therefore “in order to begin to understand the place of the family for Christians, we cannot begin with the family”- but with the church (TFS:148). In his “The Family as a School for Character” of 1985, he points out his convictions related to this status of affairs through two significant reasons:

First, it may be true that marriage and the family are, like suffering, a test of character, but I do not believe these are the setting where character should be formed. [...] the family, in and of itself, is [not] the institution that should provide the context for our most decisive moral development. [...] The second reason I think it a mistake to assume a direct correlation between the development of character with the family, and it is related to the first point, is that such an association can too easily turn the family into an idolatrous institution (TFS:148).

The family becomes an idol when people declare for example that “family that prays together, stay together,” that is, “the church is supported because people care about the

family” or “the church is good because it produces a good family” (TFS:148). Yet “[to] give the family such significance is idolatrous as it means God is worshipped as a means to help sustain what we really care about — the family” (TFS:148).

Moreover, it is not in the family but rather within the church community as the primary setting for moral formation where virtues like patience and the sense of the tragic as well as hope contrasting with happiness of hedonistic self-fulfilment ethic can be efficiently and adequately learned (CC:155, 166, 172). In fact, the lack of moral and linguistic skills destroy the moral formation endeavour in the family. Well understood, family, singleness, marriage and parenthood are vocations and features of Christian discipleship within the church (CC:156; IGC:161; RA:65-6; WRA:85-6). They are vocations necessary for people who have a mission of contributing to a people (CC:156, 165, 172). In a nutshell, “the family is or should be a school for character” (TFS:152). But “to be a viable moral enterprise, family requires a community beyond itself, which is the church” (CC:174).

### 5.3.2. Singleness and marriage

For Hauerwas, a genuine Christian ethic of marriage is only intelligible through the Christian perspective on singleness. If singleness is understood as “a paradigm way of life” for Christians, marriage is no more a necessity nor obligation but rather a vocation (CC:174; MA:171-2; HR:512-3). In addition both singleness and marriage find their rationale in Christian discipleship. Thus moral formation for single and married persons or prospective couples requires the commitment and the support of the Christian community.

In this perspective Hauerwas has made some eccentric statements: “one last threat to the family is Christianity itself” or “the first enemy of the family is Christianity itself” (CC:174; HR:506). Those claims are meant to highlight the prominent significance of singleness in his ethic of family, marriage and sexuality. Singleness, rather than family or marriage, “is the first way of life for Christians” (HR:512). Accurate understanding of family in the early church should not begin with family but singleness. “For the first way of being Christian for the early church was not in the family, but by being single” (TFS:149). The innovatory understanding of family in the narratives of NT appears through the scarcity of texts on family and the “positive anti-family ring” of certain passages (TFS:148). For example, when Jesus speaks on marriage and divorce, the disciples infer the value of singleness implied in his discourse (Mt 19:10-12). And “who are my mother and brother but those that do the will of God” is a strange declaration on the primary relation for Christians to be taken seriously on Mother’s Day celebration (Mk 3:31-5). In addition, Pauline teaching on marriage and singleness cannot be overlooked (1 Cor 7:1-40). It “is undeniable” that in the early church, “singleness was



regarded as good as marriage, if not preferred to it, for those who joined this new community” (TFS:149).

Singleness, that was not simply adopted in early church as a pragmatic necessity in a context of persecution, underlines “profounder theological convictions” since the “church, we believe, is an eschatological community that lives through witness and conversion” and that is not reproduced through biology; this is “the most decisive difference between Christianity and Judaism” (TFS:149; *HR*:512, 516). Rather than sex, the single give up are heirs, grandchildren [...] and they do so because they have part of a community that is more determinative than the biological family” (*HR*:512). The eschatological dimension of singleness is far-reaching:

Singleness is the one practice of the Church that most profoundly shows that it has accepted and wishes to participate in the hope that God secured through Christ’s cross, resurrection, and ascension. Singleness embodies the Christian hope that God’s kingdom has come, is present, and is still to come. Accordingly, we cannot help but witness this good news to others. These “others” may indeed be our own children, but are more likely to be children who have come from families who have never heard the name of Christ (*HR*:512).

Thus, the widely-held Protestant negative attitude to singleness underlines “the perversion on ‘the familization of the church’” that lead to the statement: “if Christianity is about anything today we think it must surely be about supporting the family” (*UTS*:119). Only few traditions — like the Free church tradition — emphasize singleness (TFS:150). The single suffer loneliness as though they are living an unfulfilled existence (*MA*:172). However, in the Christian community, “the true family,” the single should not be regarded as excluded from parenting because “every adult, whether single or married,” through baptism, are called to the vocation of parenting (*MA*:172; *HR*:612-3).

In the American context praising autonomous ideal and self-fulfilment ethic, marriage is suffering from power struggle and gender stereotypes. Yet Christian narratives offer edifying practices necessary for moral formation regarding marriage. First, marriage is a calling. Perhaps the most basic practices around which revolves others is that “marriage is not a necessity” or a way of avoiding loneliness but “a calling for the up-building of the body of Christ” (*MA*:171). This practice taught by Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 19 indicates that Christians “cannot think about marriage abstracted from the kind of community that the church must be in which people can be called to marriage without being a stumbling block to the little ones” (*MA*:169). At the same occasion, Jesus refers to the creation narrative to indicate that “marriage is part of God’s gift to all people” but its *telos* is to be found “through God’s gifts to Israel” called to be “for the world a light to the nations” (Mt 19; *MA*:169). This *telos* is not fruitfulness, a desire made possible for all people but which “can become demonic



if our children are not received into a community that has learned we live by gift” (MA:169). Rather, it is the right practice of “the gift of one another in the marriage” (MA:170). Becoming one flesh through sexual intercourse and having children are great gifts from God. Understanding that male and female are created as a gift is very significant to curb some modern perversions on marriage. In this perspective, neither one partner, especially the “female” can be viewed as “a perpetual loser” nor marriage conceived of in terms of “manipulative power relations” (MA:171). In addition, Paul’s recommendation in Ephesians 5:21-33 speaks of the wife’s submission to Christ and the husband’s love as Christ loved the church. This double command “should be a challenge to gender stereotypes that assume we know what it means to be male or female separate from Christ” (MA:171). This recommendation is embedded in a text which is not “about women’s submission in marriage [but which] urges *mutual* submission in a strange new social arrangement called the church” (RA:152; emphasis original). Back to Matthew 19, the “‘except for unchastity’ clause” should not be used to open the door to Pharisaic questions and serve as pretext to reject Jesus’ prohibition of divorce and remarriage because marriage cannot be separated “from its purpose given in creation for the up-building of God’s people” (MA:170).

Second, marriage is the practice of lifelong commitment. This principle denotes that “character is so crucial for sustaining the Christian understanding of marriage and the family” (TFS:152). However, character necessary for sustaining singleness and marriage do not primarily derive from the family but rather from the church. As Hauerwas states:

*the character necessary to sustain the life of marriage or singleness is not formed by the family but by the church. I do not deny the obvious power of the family for making us who we are; but note that the kind of character necessary to sustain the kind of family Christians care about involves more substantive convictions than the family itself can provide. Put simply, if we have not first learned what it means to be faithful to self and other in the church, then we have precious little chance of learning it through marriage and the family. Marriage and family may help reinforce, or even awaken us to what we have learned in the church; but it cannot be the source of the fidelity necessary for either marriage or family (TFS:152; emphasis original).*

Not only fidelity but also other virtues crucial to marriage like constancy and love, with the particular insights taught by the Christian narrative, are learned first of all within the church. Christian marriage is all about “life-long fidelity” that “makes love in marriage a possibility” (TFS:153). This kind of fidelity entails constancy to keep Christian vows of marriage (RA:64). While the general assumption underlying most of pastoral practice today considers romantic love as the primary condition for Christian marriage, being “in love,” a loving and caring relation or the couple’s extent of emotional attachment could not be a viable foundation for marriage. Rather, it is “a fidelity that comes by being formed by a community whose life is sustained by God who has proved faithful to us through the call of his people Israel, and the

establishment of the new age in Jesus Christ” (TFS:153). Consequently, character formation in the church community is crucial as “[only] a people so formed are capable of the kind of promise we make in marriage — that is of life-long fidelity” (TFS:153). Without this kind of training, the declaration of love is empty, a partner or spouse lacks “a self, a character sufficient to this claim” because fidelity necessarily precedes love” (TFS:153). The lack of this formation makes divorce a simple matter of decision, rather than the one of being, a way out contemplated in case of problems. However, people accurately formed in the church can “honestly face the reality of the “other” in a way that his/her differences can act to expand the limits of [their own] life so that [they] might claim that [they] genuinely love another” (TFS:153).

Third, “the church is a more determinative community than a marriage” or “baptism makes marriage possible” (*HR:514*, 514n11). For Hauerwas, the success or failure of marriage as a life-long commitment does not depend on marrying the right person since spouses change in the course of marriage. He has, therefore, coined an aphorism, the “Hauerwas’s Law” meaning, “You always marry the wrong person” that he thought of being reversible, “You always marry the right person” (*HR:513*). Far from being about a “cynical view of marriage,” this is but the rendition of the church’s recognition that “we no more know the person we marry than we know ourselves” (*HR:513*). Spouses do change over the course of the marriage because of several incidents like illness, job’s problems, death in the extended or nuclear family. In fact, the bride and bridegroom end up realizing that they did not know what they were promising through their vows. However, the church should be more interested in the question of their being “the kind of person who can be held to a promise when you did not know what you were promising” (*HR:514*). Through baptism, Christians become member a new community responsible for their moral formation and being the witness of their marriage vows. Thus the church is “a more determinative community than marriage” which needs this foundation and connection rather than a mere romantic love (*HR:514*).

Finally, Christian response to self-fulfilment ethic, power struggle ethic and hedonistic ethic reducing marriage to the quest of happiness is the understanding of marriage “as a heroic task” (*HR:499*; *CC:191*). Hence marriage’s success requires the development of the virtues and character necessary for this “heroic role,” — a development correlative of a narrative that helps us understand the struggle in which we are involved” (*HR:500*; *CC:191*). These virtues, greater than a romantic love, consists of goodwill, courage, fidelity, endurance, and determination in addition to time and energy to love one’s spouse as well as “patience and the sense of the tragic” (*CC:172*, 192). Hauerwas has clarified the crucial importance of the church’s support in this process as follows:

I do not pretend that any of us ever have a character sufficient for marriage when we enter a marriage, but I am contending that at least some beginning has to have been made if we are to have the ability to grow into the kind of person capable of being called to undertake the church's understanding of the vocation of marriage. Indeed that is why marriage is only possible if it is sustained by a community more significant than the marriage itself. We are sustained not only by convictions about what marriage is about, but by concrete human relations that give us the support we need to face the demands of sharing a history with another human being for a life time (TFS:154).

The church should make it clear that Christian marriage is different from idealistic or romantic accounts. The early church blessed arranged marriages demonstrating that it “had no illusions about love creating or legitimating marriage”; thus “convictions schooled by the church” helped the youth to have “the character to be married faithfully and lovingly” and therefore, “character preceded marriage; it was not created by marriage” (TFS:154). Besides, just as singleness and marriage are “a vocation, so is parenting” (TFS:151).

### **5.3.3. Parenting, contraception and abortion**

In a prominently liberal society praising the autonomous, self-sufficient and free person as moral ideal, accepting, having and raising children bring about many challenges around the issues of parenting, contraception and abortion. For Hauerwas, Christians should not continue to “[fail] their social order by accepting too easily [its] terms of argument” (CC:223). Rather, the appropriate corrective is first of all the discovery or recovery of moral linguistic skills captured through the claims such as “the church is the true family and community” and “parenting is an office of the whole Christian community” (TFS:151-3; HR:515; CC:173-4).

Under the influence of the liberal moral ideal, the family is no more seen as the bearer of national, familial or religious tradition; children are no more being raised or initiated by the family. This primary function of the family has turned to “fulfilling the emotional needs of parents and children” (HR:510-1; CC:169). Thus, “the family has progressed from institution to companionship” since emotional satisfaction has taken the central stage of family life (CC:163-4). As regard to children’s rearing, parents have become utterly incompetent because liberal moral convictions underwrite friendship with kids and parents’ consideration of their children as equals. This arrangement, therefore, induces permissiveness (CC:160-1). Also, liberal policies fostering the population’s homogenization and Americanization have undermined moral formation in the family. Under these circumstances, the family is only thought of as an indispensable unit for emotional needs satisfaction but which unfortunately “requires continued help from experts if it is to be healthy” (CC:162). This view emerges in Kenneth Keniston’s Carnegie Council on the family, *All Our Children* of 1977 — a report

which asserts “a prevailing myth” of “the self-sufficient family” in America and emphasizes the large participation of educators, doctors, counsellors, and social workers in the child’s education (CC:163).

Similarly, political liberalism has prevented Christians to develop a moral vision congruent with the understanding of the church as family. Christians and non-Christians alike discuss the issue of contraception and abortion through the common questions of the beginning of human life, the sacredness of life or citizenship rights (HR:613-5). The categories of rights, choice, and wanted children manifest the liberal privatization of individual lives of the American ethos that underlies egalitarian public policies (HR:603, 609, CC:160). Of note is the Supreme Court ruling on *Planned Parenthood v. Danforth* holding that husbands have no rights if their wives wish an abortion, since “abortion is a purely personal right of the woman and the status of marriage can place no limitation on personal rights” (quoted in CC:160).

However, the American moral crisis of family life requires for Christians the recognition of “the family as history and hope” in addition to learning to care for those [they] find themselves joined by accident of birth” (CC:165). On the one hand, being “part of a family is to understand what it means to be ‘stuck with’ a history and a people” (CC:165). In this respect, central is the place of storytelling in the family life. Storytelling cannot be viewed as mere entertainment but rather “a moral affirmation of what it means to be part of a family” (CC:165). Storytelling directs to the extreme significance of family as the means to become historic being, “the only means [...] to bind time” and protect against the influence of seductive ideologies like liberalism and postmodernism (CC:165). On the other hand, having children is “one of the most morally substantive things any of us ever has the opportunity to do” (CC:165). Hauerwas thinks that the family through parenthood and parenting demonstrates hope because:

A child represents our willingness to go in the face of difficulties, suffering, and the ambiguities of modern life and is thus our claim that we have something worthwhile to pass on. The refusal to have children can be an act of ultimate despair that masks the deepest kind of self-hate and disgust (CC:165).

The afore-mentioned Carnegie report strikingly devaluates the family because it does not recognize its moral status, for example, through the significance of intergenerational roles. The elderly or grand-parents should share the wisdom with their children who have become adult parents; hence the significance of extended families (CC:166, 173). Parents should welcome children and “initiate them into what [they] think is true and good about human existence” (CC:166). Thus, the elderly “making it on their own” attitude towards adult parents and parents’ “making up their own mind” attitude towards children are very

detrimental. Indeed, parents must be available and not “afraid to share their values and convictions with their children” (CC:166). Rather they must reclaim their children from the societal experts and direct their children’s attention to helpful, most compelling moral paradigms and guides for what children “can and should be” (CC:166).

Put emphatically, “the refusal to ask our children to believe as we believe, to live as we live, to act as we act is a betrayal that derives from moral cowardice” (CC:166). For example, a parent convinced of the validity and merits of an ethic of non-resistance through study and training should form his children in the same way rather than presents this ethic as “one option among others” (CC:173). In parenting, care and intimacy are not sufficient since parents should also initiate their “children into moral beliefs and institutions which they value” (CC:173). Unavoidably, the moral formation provided by parents endowed with “the courage of their convictions” could be “perceived as a masked authoritarianism” but parents have to use their rightful authority devoid of coercion, laziness, and tolerance and demonstrate that “truth needs no power beyond itself” (CC:173-4).

Parenting is an office of the community in a sense that “being a parent is not a wilful act” (CC:173). Rather parenting is a responsibility entrusted to parents to seek the well-being of the children. It is a moral role giving a status in the community to be understood by both parents and children. Otherwise, parent-child relationship “appears to be a power struggle of contrary wills” (CC:173). Parenting as “an office of the whole community” underwrites the claim that within the church “biology does not makes parent. Baptism does” (TFS:151; HR:612). Because of baptism, all Christian adults married or single are parents and have got a parental responsibility for the community. Christians must not imitate pagan parenting and “train people to think that they have a special relationship to biological children” — this kind of possessiveness leads to the demonic assumption that Christians like pagans can be involved in war and kill some other’s children in the name of their biological children (TFS:152; UTS:118, 123). In the church, biological parents have been relieved from the sole, exclusive and total responsibility for children’s care. For that reason, “Christians assume that they are called to care for those children because that is part and parcel of their vocation by entering the institution of marriage” (TFS:152). Indeed, “just as marriage is a vocation, so is parenting” (TFS:151). Consequently, the church rightly resists state authority if it attempts to educate children in a manner antithetical to parental desires. Parents bring their children to the church and take the responsibility to raise them according to the Christian faith because “the church expect parents to represent Christ for our children” (HR:515). Equally important, “parents do not own their children” because “children of our bodies are gifts of God, not our possession” (HR:515).

In the same token, parenting as an office of the whole community is one of the practices justifying the church's general "no" to abortion. This is not a legalistic stand ignoring the tragic context of some births but it "is in fact a 'yes' about the kind of community we want and are intended to be" — namely a community of love, mutual support and hope (TFS:152). Christian community is called "to develop the moral and linguistic skills to discriminate between permissible and impermissible abortions" (CC:224). As Christians believe that "it is not biology that makes parent in the first place," Christian community holds the responsibility of "being open to children and to institutions necessary to support and raise them" (TFS:152; CC:173; cf. RA:70, 81). However, they cannot only create "abortion-prevention ministries". Above all, Christians should be the kind of people who can be ready to open their homes to "a pregnant woman considering abortion" and to "a mother and her child" (HR:621).

This perspective is a way of beginning to address the issue of abortion as church since abortion, in the Christian perspective, is not about the law or rights but about "what kind of people we are to be as the church and as Christians" or about how we can be people of virtue (HR:608). Here, "the question of what I ought to *do* is actually about what I am or ought to be"; since, Hauerwas explains, "'Should I or should not have an abortion?' is not a question about an 'act' but about what kind of person I am going to be" (PK:117; emphasis original). While the body has become a "piece of property" in CLD, Christians should abandon the rights rhetoric of this culture — "rights to my body, right to life, pro-choice, pro-life, and son" — because Christian prohibition of abortion is primarily not a respect for life, but about God, the Lord of life (HR:609-10; CC:226). Through their narratives, Christians "are trained to be the kind of people who are ready to receive and welcome children into the world" and abortion prohibition is "but the negative side of their positive commitment to welcome new life into their community" (CC:227). Through their tradition, Christians since the early church have welcomed unwanted children and their particular vision and way of life require them to be insistent on the term "abortion" as "a way to remind them that what happens in the removal of the foetus from the mother in order to destroy it strikes at the heart of their community" (CC:224; cf. HR:612).

#### **5.3.4. Premarital and extramarital sexuality and homosexuality**

Moral formation about sexual activity or issues such as premarital and marital sexuality and homosexuality should be structured around the practice of lifelong monogamous fidelity that makes Christian reflection about sex intelligible. Christians do not have a sexual ethic based on some natural law or some general account of human sexuality. Rather, marriage is the practice that governs how they think about sex. Christians know



nothing called premarital sex because they “believe that all sex is marital” (HR:514). Although sex outside marriage could be considered as sex *per se*, it lacks the “unitive and procreative” purposes coming only from the complex relation of Christian publicly acknowledged marriage (HR:514). Of note, it is not every intercourse, as held in Roman Catholic tradition about contraception, but rather marriage as institution which must be open to procreation (HR:514n12).

The deep influence of media and liberal political tradition on the sexual conduct of the society at large has not spared the church. While the media spread realism and romanticism, liberalism fosters a minimalist ethic of consensual sexuality. In their “From Conduct to Character — A Guide to Sexual Adventure,” with Verhey, Hauerwas claims that Christian sexual ethics has inadequately addressed these challenges as states in the following list of complaints:

- (1) Sexual ethic relies too much on negative prohibitions.
- (2) Sexual ethics, in its efforts to justify its prohibitions, celebrates our sexuality without insufficient reservations.
- (3) Sexual ethics is too romantic; it focuses too much on the quality of the relationship as an index for the level of sexual involvement.
- (4) When sexual ethics tries to be realistic, it fails to say anything about what the good sexual life should be like.
- (5) Sexual ethics has been too influenced by the liberal political tradition which makes sexual morality a private and personal matter and, as long as the sex is between consenting adults, nobody else’s business.
- (6) Sexual ethics has been too influenced by the utilitarian moral tradition which balances pleasure and pain and finally renders sex a technique to get happiness and human fulfilment (FCC:176-8).

For an accurate moral formation about sexual issues, negative prohibitions on premarital and extramarital sex are insufficient. The church needs moral and linguistic skills to train young people, sustain married people and form their character. First of all, is “a vision of sexuality as a mystery” v. “a vision of sex as a technology of pleasure.” In a sex-saturated society, the latter vision conveys the understanding of sex “as skill, as performance, as dexterity, as a bowl of buttons” (FCC:178). However, “sex is a mystery” in that its meaning goes “beyond the quality of its performance,” the sex being “a part of a covenant” (FCC:178-9). The Biblical narratives witness this mystery of two persons becoming one flesh, a relationship involving people as “whole persons, as embodied spirits or in-spirited bodies with [their] capacities to make and keep covenant” (Gn 2:24; 1 Cor 6:15-20; FCC:181). Second, Christians find their human fulfilment in Christ rather than in sexuality and, accordingly, they delight in the sex as an adventure joining sobriety to the mystery and they are kept from the celebration of sex itself or romantic love leading to extravagant and idolatrous expectations (FCC:180). In this respect, the church should call attention to the practice and vocation of singleness — taught in 1 Corinthians 7 — that help understand this fulfilment. Third, the church is to teach faithful sexuality in marriage v. sexuality as a matter of privacy or choice (WRA:36-7; HR:483, 490, 500, 532). The church must challenge the liberal political ethos’

claim of sex as matter of private morality. For that reason, sexual ethics cannot be separated from political ethics in that “sexual practices should be determined by how they contribute to the good end of the Christian community” (CC:176-7). Moreover, Christians delight in the mystery of sex as witness the Song of Solomon, but at the same time they are called to sobriety as witness Proverbs 7. Indeed, “the sexual act celebrates the mystery of the one whole and exclusive relationship covenanted of two persons committed not only to each other but to the cause of the one who creates and keep covenant and renew all things — including them” (FCC:179). Where romanticism emphasizes “the depth or intensity” of sexual relation, the Christian perspective speaks of the sexual adventure that is all about continuity and fidelity (FCC:179). And “the quest for continuity” rules out the extramarital quest for new romantic intensity or the premarital quest for moments of excitement (FCC:179-80). Finally, moral formation about sexual activity crucially needs a shift in its focus from “conduct to character,” from rules to virtues to help people who own “an identity of pleasure seekers or romantic hero” to possess “an identity of covenant-maker and covenant-keeper” (FCC:181; CC:195). Against premarital and extramarital sex, Christians need the virtue of chastity, a form of fidelity to one’s sexual identity where singleness is honoured and the heroic quest of marriage is for continuity. Of note, rules and prohibitions are insufficient since people who never violate them can still remain lustful and unchaste (FCC:181).

In his “Resisting Capitalism: On Marriage and Homosexuality,” Hauerwas argues that the capitalism which has led to the understanding of the family as “individual emotional units devoid of any tradition and thus without duration” and has induced the reconstruction of sexual identities making “people willing consumers” has fuelled the controversial debate over homosexuality (ABH:17, 50). The church cannot rely on the authority of science let alone its inconclusiveness “about whether homosexuality [is or is not] “innate” (ABH:47). On the one hand, the conservative attitude of turning to some scriptural passages which quite obviously condemn “something like same-sex relations” is not helpful; on the other hand, the attempts “to historicize those passages in an interest of liberalization is a mistake” (ABH:49). Inclusivity that “has something to do with being accepting and loving” is also a mistake, because it is, “of course, a necessary strategy for survival in what is religiously a buyers’ market” (FFB).

The controversy over homosexuality in the church has its root-cause in the liberalization of divorce and remarriage as well as the correlative romantic conception of love at the expense of the church’s strong affirmation of the practice of marriage as life-long monogamous fidelity. The destruction of this practice has made unintelligible the prohibition against same-sex relations often viewed as “exemplifications of a loving relation” (ABH:48).

Against this background, reflection on homosexuality requires, in the light of Wittgenstein and Foucault’s insights, the recovering of church practices for appropriate

description. While the church's tradition directs to the prohibition of promiscuity as communal practice, modernity provides an individualistic understanding of sexuality (*ABH:47-8*). This is also a way of re-thinking marriage as a calling as well as singleness as the first way of living as Christians helping to recover a strong sense of single celibacy as part of Christian life (*FFB*). Framing the debate by the practice of singleness and marriage is a way of doing justice to Scripture by interpreting obscure passages "in the light of the less obscure" (*ABH:49-50*). In others words, reflection about homosexuality in the church should begin with divorce and remarriage through questions such as:

- (1) Is marriage no longer a marriage simply because the people in the marriage no longer love one another?
- (2) Can divorced people remarry after they have found someone else to love?
- (3) How should people be examined to discern whether they are capable of making the promises we still ask people when the church witnesses their marriage?
- (4) Should people who have been divorced bear a greater burden of proof if they wish to be married? (*ABH:48-9*).

These questions are helpful "to discover skills of discrimination and discernment" about homosexuality because a yes or a no against this issue seems too simplistic (*ABH:49*). Perhaps through this discovery the church could accept some same-sex relations provide they contribute to the upbuilding of the community of the believers (*ABH:49; STT:120*). However, the church should welcome and help homosexuals experiencing "the sexual wilderness" of American culture (*FFB*).

In a nutshell, moral formation in the family is but a dimension of Christian discipleship. The biological family is neither the first family for Christians nor the subject of their primary loyalty. Those are, however, the features of the church justifying its status as the community which should offer the determinative character formation necessary to sustain family life. Therefore, family, singleness and parenting should be understood as vocations, not a necessity, and features of Christian discipleship within the church. At least, three significant Christian practices should underlay moral formation regarding family: lifelong monogamous fidelity, parenting as an office of the church community and the primacy of singleness. The first challenges romantic understanding of marriage; the second seeks the commitment of all Christian adults in the children and youth moral formation in the church; and the third reminds Christians that according to their Messiah, "those who have received the gift of celibacy constitute the very character of the kingdom of heaven. To be called to be eunuch for the kingdom of heaven is, perhaps, the most decisive mark of this community of the new age" (*MA:171*). Yet, according to Hauerwas, it is not only the family but also the school that needs the church in order to be a vibrant and appropriate sphere of moral formation.

## 5.4. Moral formation in the school

Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation, conceived as a community-traditioned account of character formation, embraces the school as well. In this sphere, his concern for the recovery of moral formation is directed to all the levels of education — elementary, secondary and tertiary education. Yet, Hauerwas's academic journey in both secular universities (Southwestern and Yale) and religious institutions (Augustana, Notre Dame and theological faculty of Duke) has helped him to gain insightful knowledge and experience on moral life in the tertiary education. In his own words, he focuses on higher education not only because he “[knows] it best, but more importantly because what happens in universities has a direct effect on secondary education” (*TSU*:46). Thus, the present section essentially describes Hauerwas's salient and radical perspectives on moral formation proceeding from his ethical assessment of the American higher education with a particular attention to church-sponsored universities and seminaries. Nonetheless, Hauerwas's great concern for the Christian contribution in the public school is not overlooked.

### 5.4.1. Christian participation in the public school

According to Hauerwas, the public education sponsored by the CLD ideologies of America is “not ‘public education.’ It is nationalistic education;” and Americanization is its purpose along with the indoctrination of patriotism and loyalty to the USA (*WRA*:49; cf. *AC*:144). Those ideologies blind American citizens to discern the falsity of wars, which truly name killing, justified by the allegedly highest ideals of democracy, tolerance, freedom and prosperity hiding their country's desire for security and propensity to militarism (*TSU*:124). The naïve youth is convinced that serving in American armed forces is a demonstration of parochial loyalties to families and local communities, while those loyalties are actually being used, like in Iraqi war, in the interests of an American empire “that needs and wants its oil” (*TSU*:144). Of course, patriotism and its related “morality of particularist ties and solidarities” is in tension with the liberal account requiring “a morality of universal, impersonal, and impartial principles” (MacIntyre 1995:228). This conflation cannot help but lead to incoherence and confusion (*TSU*:143). The problematic loyalty fostered in schools “make it impossible for Christians to be American patriots” since America is not “a true universal society,” the Christian word “for universal is catholic” and the church connects Christians “across time and space” gathering “real people united by a common story” (*TSU*:144-5).

The overall orientation of the curriculum presupposes that education can overcome the difficulties of communication between different linguistic communities. This view, however, overlooks MacIntyre's insightful claims about language translation. Although some

sayings can be translated, there is a “difference between language as such and language in use” noticeable through practices and habits as well as the art of poetic expression (SC:215-6; AC:133-4; cf. MacIntyre 1988:372-3). For mastering the “language in use” of a given linguistic community requires that one be engrafted into the cultural practices and habits of this community. In the same vein, the modern assumption of levelling all cultural differences by speaking the same language fails to consider what Hauerwas calls the “Tonto” principle.<sup>3</sup>

The American schools (“whether they are public or private, secular or church-related”) teach not only in courses related to history but throughout the whole curriculum the “hegemonic and violent narrative” inscribing in their learners that “Columbus discovered America” (SC:218; AC:136). This powerful “story of unity” is “the most determinative moral training [Americans] provide in schools” — a story which, unfortunately reinforces teachers and students into corrupt traditions (WW:188; SC:218, 222; AC:136, 141). Although being a false story, this narrative is considered as objective, rational and true since it privileges the European historical background, the role of sciences and philosophy. However, this narrative has been challenged by Afro-Americans, Native Americans and women. All those marginalized people rightly demand, especially in higher education, a lesser Eurocentric and non-patriarchal curriculum as well as the addition of more works by women and people from minority groups (SC:226; AC:144-5).

The American school underwriting the liberal nation state has marginalized or excluded religion and theology from its curriculum in the name of objectivity and neutrality. In truth, secularizing the school actually proceeds from fictional neutrality because as argued by Lesslie Newbigin, the “very omission of religion from the curriculum [...] speaks loudly about what a society believes and wants its children to believe” (SC:224; AC:142-3). Secularization and pluralism, as variation of inclusivism, strategies to suppress conflicts and “rhetoric to avoid difference” have resulted in disastrous consequences: they have created “people who think that all substantive convictions are a matter of opinion” (TSU:64-5; SC:224; AC:143). The secularization of the university demonstrates that “the modern university and the modern state are by design mutually supportive projects” (TSU:125). However, as William Cavanaugh argues in his *Theopolitical Imagination*, the very legitimating story of the state as the appropriate or even unavoidable means to end the European wars “is not true” because “the state as we know it began before the rise of so-called religious wars” (TSU:125-6).

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<sup>3</sup> The principle refers to the story of the Lone Ranger and Tonto, his devoted Indian sidekick encircled by twenty thousand Sioux. The troubled Ranger asked Tonto: “What do you think we ought to do?”; and Tonto responded: “What do you mean by ‘we,’ white man?” (SC:214; AC:133). Thus, speaking a foreign language does not forcefully mean that one has acquired the cultural identity related to this given language.



Building separate religious schools in a CLD society, states Hauerwas, is not the ideal solution if those religious schools still teach subjects “from anyone’s point of view” as do public schools (SC:233; AC:151). In this context, however, witnessing to the Christian story at secular or religious schools is the critical strategy that Hauerwas strongly recommends to Christians. They must take seriously their story for determining the subjects, the contents as well the teaching methodologies. Christian teachers should consider themselves as missionaries to the school (RA:26-7). “The destructive practices” that characterize the American educational landscape “are all the more powerful because they so often promise to serve good ends” — in the NT those practices are called “powers” as notes James McClendon (SC:231-2; AC:149-50). For that reason, the appropriate education to offer as Christians, says Hauerwas, is “[introducing their] children and one other to the gospel, in the manner that helps [them] to name those powers”. And he goes on stressing that “the only way to do that is by telling a counter-story to that called the United States and/or its presumptions that underwrite the necessity of [...] the nation-state system” (SC:232; AC:150). Unavoidably, fulfilling such a mission will lead Christians to conflict in state and school; and thus they need moral courage and support from their church community. Yet the distorted perspectives and strategies on moral education in the university constitute another issue of great concern.

#### **5.4.2. The ethical pathos of the university**

In his essay, “The Pathos of the University,” Hauerwas explicitly points out the idea of the university without moral purpose and the issue of money as constitutive of the pathologies of the modern university (TSU:76-91). However, through his extensive writings on moral formation in the university, the issues related to the curriculums and ethics courses also well supplement his understanding of those pathologies.

##### **5.4.2.1. The incoherence of the university curricula**

In his *The State of University*, Hauerwas has structured his essays dealing with what he sees as the incoherence of the American university around two recurrent and fundamental questions: “What is the university for?” and “Who does it serve?” (TSU:76, 87, 97; cf. STT:205). To these question, according to Hauerwas, “one can and should give several responses [...] but it is by no means clear how those responses can be consistent with one another” (TSU:21 n.20). The American university reflects its quest for an ideal type that has eventually come to oddly combine the English, German and French university traditions in



their respective emphasis on character formation, research and the formation of top civil servants (*TSU*:6, 16-7).

Some scholars like Richard Levin, former President of Yale champion the university's commitment to Enlightenment values of liberal education rather than professional education or vocational training. In his address to the incoming class of 1993 entitled "The Capacity for Independent Thought," Levin emphasizes the reading of great works of western literature and philosophy to produce people capable of promoting democracy through the development of "the freedom to think critically, and independently, to cultivate one's mind to its fullest potential, to liberate oneself from prejudice, superstition, and dogma" (quoted in *TSU*:14). However, institutions of higher education have become "a serviceable university" with the utilitarian justification of the introduction of many disciplines in the curriculum; at the same time, universities pursue research endeavours requiring training in sciences and far-going (*TSU*:16-7). For Hauerwas, "the specialization, what some describes as fragmentation of the knowledges that constitute the curriculums of the modern university is crucial for the formation of people to be faithful servants of the status quo and in particular, the modern state" (*TSU*:6).

Through the ideologies of liberalism and secularism, the university serves the state against religion. Universities underwrite, as pointed out by Mahmood, the idea of "the state as the agent of liberation" that should bring under its regulatory apparatus "all the aspects of human life such as those associated with the family, education, worship, welfare, commercial transactions, birth and death" (*TSU*:199). Governments in modernity substantially fund scientific research, says Hauerwas, "to legitimate themselves by promising to save us from illness and death" (*TSU*:199). To be sure, "the American university, whether the university is Christian or not, serves the state" (*TSU*:125). After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, most of the graduates from these universities would undoubtedly had answered "no," if they should have been asked the question: "What alternative did the USA have than going to war against terrorism?" (*TSU*:125). "Even though many people associated with universities in America are critics of the war in Iraq, explains Hauerwas, that war was conceived, prosecuted, and continue to be justified by those whose understanding of the world was shaped by the university" (*TSU*:9, 137-46).

One of the significant characteristics of the modern university, insists Hauerwas, is its "penchant for abstraction" as he joins Wendell Berry who states: "Abstraction is the enemy *wherever* it is found" (*TSU*:94; emphasis original). Berry critiques the abstract speech in modern university since it fails to meet the criteria of real language or discourse: "1) precise designation of an object, 2) accountability on behalf of the speaker, and 3) conventionality—the ability of the speaker's community to recognize the first two criteria" (Clyburn 2007:61-3;

cf. *TSU:95*). In contrast, the abstraction of speech evades truthfulness in the name of objectivity and “serves the political purpose of securing the power of those who use it without being held accountable” (*TSU:96*). Hauerwas endorses Berry’s view that the modern university contribute to the corruption of the language and does so by legitimating and reproducing “the disintegration of minds through increasing specialization” (*TSU:97*).

This specialization of the disciplines is driven by capitalist interests. The university needs money for scientific research and its expected growth. Following Berry, Hauerwas argues that “the incoherence of university curriculums reflects the university’s commitment to legitimate the abstraction effected by money” (*TSU:98*). The modern university is captive of capitalist and industrial society through the dominance of science and technology while the humanities pursue also the same utilitarian ends through multiplication of disciplines. With “the abstractions of science” and the ones of industry, the modern university does not serve local communities as opposed to Berry’s claims that “real education is determined by community needs, not by public interests” (quoted in *TSU:99*).<sup>4</sup> The fragmentation or compartmentalization of the university curriculum induces the narrowness of mind and, what is worse, the lives of graduates in research universities, in particular, become compartmentalized (*TSU:48-9*). As asserted by MacIntyre, this transformation takes place “in at least two ways: (i) it is assumed that an individual passes through various spheres each with its own norms so the self is but a collection of different roles which (ii) makes it impossible for the individual to even view his or her life as whole” (*TSU:56*). According to Hauerwas, the curriculum fragmentation is “the institutional expression of the compartmentalized character of modern society necessary to legitimate the form of life thought necessary to sustain democratic societies” (*TSU:56*).

A significant part of the solution is the inclusion of theology — dismissed in the name of privatization of religion and avoidance of controversy — in the curriculum of both secular and church-sponsored universities. Deservedly, John Henry Newman contends that “university teaching without theology is simply unphilosophical,” that is, theology as true knowledge cannot be excluded by the university having truth as the object of knowledge (*TSU:26-7*). To this matter, MacIntyre adds that “universities need both the enlargement of vision and the correction of error that can be provided only from a theological standpoint” (*TSU:49-50*). For Hauerwas, “Theology can help us recognize the traditions that shape us, so

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<sup>4</sup> Crucial and insightful for Hauerwas is Berry’s distinction between “public” and “community”. “Berry understands the term ‘public’ to mean simply people abstracted from any personal responsibility or belonging. Thus a public building is one that belongs to everyone, but no one in particular. A community in contrast ‘has to do first of all with belonging; it is a group of people who belong to one another and to their place’” (*TSU:99-100*).

that we learn to think of them as arguments that make serious claims on us, rather than just another set of options we might want to choose, or not choose” (McLemee: s a).

#### 5.4.2.2. The standard course in ethics

Hauerwas disagrees with his former colleague at Duke, Stanley Fish, claiming that the university should stick to “its educational mission, that is, the integrity of scholarship, the evil of plagiarism, and the value of liberal education” and it cannot burden itself with moral causes (*TSU:78*). Thus, the university should demonstrate its fidelity to the search of “the truth as end in itself” and “cannot be in the business of forming character or fashioning citizens (*TSU:80*). This view, according to Hauerwas, overlooks the power of money (e.g. parents seeking a higher paying job for their children or faculty and administration personnel expecting better salaries). In the American university, “money is but the name for people the university is meant to serve” (*TSU:87*). Ironically, Hauerwas refutes “the often-made claims that the university today is at best amoral” as he states:

I find that most higher education does good job of initiating, or at least reinforcing in our students the dominant morality of our culture. It does this not by explicitly teaching courses in “ethics” but by the very way colleges and universities structure their curricula. Of course, I believe the morality thereby embodied to be corrupt and corrupting, but it is nonetheless a morality (*CET:241-2*).

Indeed, altogether, the overall curricula and individual courses in addition to courses in ethics reflect the Socratic function as the moral ideal for colleges and universities as they seek to help the students to “make up their own mind” (*CET:242; TSU:229; HATC:76*). In most of the cases, the structure of the curriculum keeps to the pattern of the basic form of morality expected in a capitalist society. As a result, the modern university or college is transformed into a “gigantic cafeteria” (*CET:242*).<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the university or college curriculum is approached “as though it were a market for an elite group of consumers — [the] students” (*HATC:76*). The same structure is discernible in individual courses. Courses are meant to present various alternatives or options to students so that they may make up their own minds in the process. In class, teachers are not expected to initiate students into practices making them virtuous or at least more truthful; rather they must make clear that their positions or stands are matters of “their own opinion”

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<sup>5</sup> Which Hauerwas illustratively depicts as follows: “The student comes to it as a cipher to be filled up by pushing trays along the lines, taking a salad of math or computer science, some potatoes of philosophy (just to be sure they are introduced somewhere along the way to some ‘big ideas’), little corn of literature (to ensure they will be recognized as ‘educated’ people), and finally some meat: a major in business, physics, or history (the traditional pre-law major) which puts one on the appropriate career track” (*CET:242*).

(*CET:242*). Fundamentally, the students are reduced to the status of consumers of idea and become prone to “capitalist manipulation” (*HATC:76*).

In his “How Christian Universities Contribute to the Corruption of Youth,” Hauerwas contends that helping the students to make up their own mind is considered by some scholars as congruent with the task of the university and a valuable moral activity. It makes the university be open to democratic ethos of American society and accomplish a valuable moral task as the students are introduced to “critical inquiry and questioning” and to the ideal of the examined life (*CET:243*). However, this recourse to Socratic method, bears some fundamental distortions — “the Socratic method itself is suspect for moral development” (*CET:244*).

The dialectic method of Socrates, as well argued by Martha Nussbaum, only “emphasized argument rather than character,” and Socrates failed “to make the difference between “his ironic aloofness and the immoralism of those” undermining conventional morality because of his method (*CET:244-5*). In fact, Socrates’ inquiry method implies the insufficiency of teaching and the irrelevance of habituation since he failed to see that his method requires an account of virtues as given lately by Aristotle (*CET:244-5*). Yet the situation of modern university is even worse. “For if Socrates’ method subtly led to the corruption of the youth of Athens, states Hauerwas, the contemporary university’s degraded form of Socrates’ method does so in a more direct and almost inevitable manner” (*CET:246-7*). Its “chaotic curriculum filled with equally chaotic discourse” only “reinforces the disdain for reasoned discourse” and there is “no community capable of directing [students] to the good in the first place and the students lack the virtues necessary for sustaining the life of the mind” (*CET:247*).

All the specific courses in ethics assume, through various ways, the same structure of helping students to make up their own mind and thus deserve to be called “the standard course in ethics” (*TSU:128*). One cannot, at the first place, blame lecturers in ethics as regard to the distortions of such a course. “They lack the authority to teach ethics in a manner that any serious teaching of ethics should be about, that is, to change lives” (*TSU:128*). This course begins with metaethics before embracing the normative alternatives in terms of teleological or deontological approaches and ends on in the exploration of ethical issues pertaining to each professional domain in view. Although not acknowledged, through such a course, claims Hauerwas, students come to “assume that ethics names that part of life in which you have to make up your mind” as it is basically concerned with choices (*TSU:128-9*). In other words, the standard course in ethics “legitimizes that assumption by giving students names to describe the choices they are going to make anyway” (*TSU:129*).

To these choices are related the concept of values as rationale for the choices to be made. Being about personal preferences, explains Hauerwas, “values” concerns aspects of life opposed to “objective” facts; yet following MacIntyre, he strongly discards the terms “values” and “facts” as they only find their rationale in specific traditions and times (HATC:75). Moreover, the concept of “value” denotes an autonomous and individualist rationality; it “underwrites the presumption that when it comes to what we care about, it is finally up to us to decide what we value” (TSU:129).

Moreover, the standard course in ethics has an ahistorical or abstract character as they are not grounded in the practices of a given community because the modern university wallows in universalisms attempting to serve the public or “anyone anywhere” (TSU:129). By doing so it fails to put into scrutiny, or even it hides from teachers and students, the moral debate people ought to have in America. Following MacIntyre, Hauerwas claims that “in trying to serve anyone anywhere, it turns out that the universities turn out people educated to be willing agents of the modern state” (TSU:129). In his essay, “Christians and the So-Called State (We Are In),” Hauerwas claims that “abstraction can lead to war. If the universities of America had been training graduates to exercise the word care, which should be a characteristic of an educated person, at least some doubt might have been raised in response to the claim after September 11, 2001 that “We are at war” (TSU:9, 144-6)

Of course, the strategy of helping students making up their own minds whether in ethics courses or other courses relies on the basic assumption of the modern and decisionist standard account morality. Most ethics courses, in Hauerwas’s view, revolve around the question “What would you do in these circumstances” and expect “the most fictitious entity of modernity, the individual” to make wise decisions (HATC:76). In contrast, he emphatically claims that “*moral life is about the formation of virtuous people by tradition-formed communities*” (HATC:76; emphasis original). Therefore, the standard course in ethics “malforms the heart” of students (TSU:127). Yet, although the ethical pathologies of modern universities affect both secular universities and Christian institutions as well, the latter of course are expected to make a difference and to be recognizable as Christian colleges and universities.

### **5.4.3. Moral formation in the church-related university**

Hauerwas’s account of moral formation in the church-sponsored colleges and universities is offered against the background of his vision of the identity and mission of these institutions in contradiction to secular universities. Thus, it is useful to first spell out his understanding of what the Christian university should be about.

### 5.4.3.1. The features of a Christian university

Critical to Hauerwas is the issue of the identity of Christian university. In his first of the three Gifford Lectures, Hauerwas argues that “the failure of Christians to maintain universities that are recognizably Christian” is “one of the most important reasons” justifying “the inability of Christians to articulate what make them Christians” (*WGU*:231-2). For him, the university is a site of Christian identity’s affirmation, “where Christians might rediscover the difference that being Christians makes for the claims about the world” (*WGU*:232). Although he lays no claim to offering an adequate answer to the question, “What is the Christian university?” he nonetheless provides some significant features of what he thinks may be a genuine Christian university.

First, a Christian university should be aware of its need for the church and undertake the task of forming Jesus Christ’s disciples. Where Berry stresses the necessity of “an ethic of responsible speech that grounds one’s words in one’s immediate community,” Hauerwas thinks of the church as the appropriate community able to fulfill Berry’s ethical expectations (Clyburn 2007:61-3). The university needs the church, “a people shaped by fundamental practices necessary for truthful speech” to “resist the mystifications legitimated by the abstractions of [the American] social order” (*TSU*:104). To be capable of forming students, the Christian university should actually relate to the church as community in which the mystery is materially enacted and which demythologizes “the false [academic] idealism” (*TSU*:104).

Second, a Christian university should be recognizable through the orientation of its curriculum and the contents of the courses shaped by the Christian faith. Christian universities’ accommodation to the liberal democratic social order is discernible through their stress on value education, the standard ethics course and the concern for the student life emphasizing the faith relegation to spiritual realm. More importantly, “it has simply become unthinkable, says Hauerwas, that Christian convictions might have something to do with the actual content of the curriculum and pedagogical practices” (*WGU*:232; cf. *TSU*:47-8). The focus on the “whole student” should not be the sole locus for any expression of Christianity, the content of the courses must also be a matter of great concern. The curriculum cannot convey, as identified by Douglas Sloan, the dichotomy between “the truths of science” and “the truths of faith,” the former “thought to be objective and impersonal” whereas the latter “are called subjective, grounded as they are in feelings, convention, or ‘common human experience’” (*TSU*:48). The very content of the courses should be shaped by Christian practices making these courses quite different from those taught in a secular university. For example, economics should be informed by the Christian practice of usury prohibition and



reflects a Christian challenge to mathematical models and rational-choices theories which entail distorted anthropological assumptions. International relations cannot be grounded on a balance of power model or justification of force on the sole just war grounds. Biology and botany should have creation rather than nature as fundamental notion and question the mechanistic assumption about the origin of life. Medicine, genomics and other related sciences should not be grounded on the fear of suffering and death (*TSU:52-3; GWG*).

Third, the Christian university is bound to be mistrustful of an “allegedly pluralist culture” (*CET:240*). The plurality of religious groups and the disestablishment of religion do not insure pluralistic social policy in America. At the beginning, the church-related schools had a quite exclusive responsibility in education including their own religious identities and orientation while they were inducting people in the life of the new nation (*CET:240-1*). The church cannot endorse the kind of pluralism fostered by the CLD America and compromising the loyalty to God. Thus, the Christian university’s role should be that of too “much reinforcing the particularist identity necessary for a [actual] pluralist society, rather than educating people to live in an open society” (*CET:241*). The faithfulness to its original mission requires the Christian university to insure the integrity of religious groups rather than serve the nation’s strategy of assimilation. It cannot “suppress the memory of those who have suffered — women, African Americans, Native Americans, Jews and the poor” (*IGC:166*). While the American university “has become the primary agent for the creation of a world free of sacrifice,” the Christian university should produce “people who may have to sacrifice their ambitions/and or pleasures, to become servants to others” (*WW:189; IGC: 165*). And since the liberal environment that fosters total autonomy invades Christian universities, Hauerwas urges his colleagues to follow his example as he states: “I tell my students that I do not want them to learn “to make up their own minds” (*DFP:5; cf. TSU:54; STT:220*).

Fourth, the Christian university should serve the church and the local community. The church represents the kind of “educated people” set forward by Alasdair MacIntyre and which, in Hauerwas’s view, is as an alternative to the pathos of the university deriving from Stanley Fish’s account of a university without moral purpose.<sup>6</sup> In spite of its shortcomings, the church having at its disposal its tradition and canonical texts illuminating the reading of other texts meets the MacIntyrean criteria of an educated public. The church and its sponsored university cannot help but overcome the secular academy’s intimidation and “produce knowledges and the interconnections of those knowledges that can appropriately form

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<sup>6</sup> MacIntyre speaks of an educated public with historical reference to eighteenth-century Scotland, “a public with shared standard of justification, with a shared view of the past of the society, with a shared ability to participate in a public debate” who induced tremendous university reforms of this country (*STU:89-90*).

students” (*TSU:90-1*). Through secularization, the University of Harvard has actually shortened its motto from “Veritas: Christo et Ecclesia” to “Veritas.” Thus, Hauerwas urges the (Baptist) Baylor University to stand by the words of its motto: “Pro Ecclesia, Pro Texana” which puts first the church, the community “whose practices of forgiveness makes possible the truthful telling of the [bloody] story of Texas” where the school is based (*TSU:135*). In a world dominated by global markets and where universities embrace “modern abstractions” and “false universalisms,” it becomes all the more important for Christian universities to take into account the particularities of their surrounding communities and related them to the fundamental practices, narratives and traditions of their church (*TSU:8, 134-5*).

Finally, says Hauerwas, “I have no grand idea or definition of what a Christian university is, but rather for me a university is Christian if it receives its financial and moral support from the church” because, to be realist, “whoever pays the bill determines the character, for better or worse, of an institution.” (*CET:223*). Since many would “prefer to support the university on their own terms” and jeopardize the identity of the Christian university, the church has to provide money to prevent the university “[selling] out to its society’s needs” (*CET:234*). All this considered, the issue of having a genuinely Christian university lies on the church’s ability to sustain this kind of institution. Hauerwas insists that “the question is not whether a university might be open to a knowledge shaped by the practice of the church, but rather whether a church exists to produce a knowledge that is formed by the gospel” (*TSU:8, WGU:233*). Thus, follows the question: “*do we have a church that is distinctive enough that it can set priorities and purposes for its universities?*” (*CET:223, emphasis original*). Yet above all, a Christian university should at least be vigorously committed to character formation.

#### **5.4.3.2. The place of virtue and character formation**

Hauerwas shares Luigi Guissani’s conviction that education as a Christian enterprise or a task of the church should not be restricted to the classroom. Yet Christians are challenged in a secularized world “to create an alternative culture and alternative structures” which emphasize the necessity and significance of the church in educational matters (*TSU:51*).<sup>7</sup> This entails, first of all, that Christians resist the Constantinian relegation of the church into the spiritual realm as Guissani rightly emphasizes that “faith is ‘the highest form of rationality’” (quoted in *TSU:50*). His view corroborates the earlier stated plea of MacIntyre for

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<sup>7</sup> In fact, Hauerwas joins Guissani’s concern of “reclaiming education as a Christian activity” based on his critique of secular educational practices in secondary schools as Hauerwas draws on this work to build his criticism of contemporary universities (*TSU:45*).

the inclusion of theology in the Christian school's curriculum (*TSU:50*). Hauerwas finds Giussani's insights convergent with his own core claim that "faith to be the Christian faith must be embodied in the practices of a community that will find itself in tension with the world" and requires discipleship (*TSU:51*).

Because the apprenticeship in learning a craft from the master accurately illustrates Christian discipleship, Hauerwas suggests the craft of carving stone as an embodied example of moral formation in Christian universities. Christian faith is an education in the language of the craft; thus Christian university is a setting to learn to "speak" Christian. Educators, he contends, should not consider "thinking as something that goes on in our 'minds'"; rather, "learning to think as well as learning a language constitutive of thinking, is rightly understood as work done with our hands" (*TSU:108*). Moral formation requires effort on the part of the practitioners as the labor of "teaching and learning a language, particularly the language of prayer, is as physical as learning to carve stone" (*TSU:109*). However, effort does not supersede the importance of Christian practices and tradition since "if it is not shaped by the practices of the church, [Christian education] may reflect a quite different understanding of the world than that determined by the Gospel." (*TSU:117-8*). Divorced from Christian tradition, moral formation is reduced to mere information and "is thereby open to ideological distortions" (*TSU:114, 116*). The language of the craft is learned by telling the stories constitutive of the trade. Those "stories, moreover, name as well as constitute the virtues required to be a carver of stone" (*TSU:112-3*). Stories build one's identity. Christian education "is about forming people in the habits of speech that make possible the virtues constitutive of the Christian tradition" (*TSU:114*). The story or tradition of Christianity, like the ones of stone carving is not self-validating, it "gains its purpose and intelligibility from other stories and traditions" (*TSU:115*).

The hierarchical character of this craft-like moral formation cannot be overlooked as the living tradition is passed on from masters to apprentices. "The key to learning from a master, says Hauerwas, is learning when it is appropriate to depart from what one has learned from the master" (*TSU:115*). Here comes the significance of the moral authority that lies not on "the administration, or the faculty, or the students but that band of scholars who are true to the university's purpose" (*CET:233*). Their role is critical to sustain the ethics of honour and the demand of truth so characteristic of a Christian university — "Just as the church's authority rests on the witness of the saints" (*CET:233*).

Hauerwas claims that "honour is intrinsic to the university," and "Honour codes are necessary" because "good communities and institutions need to find ways to remind themselves of" their mission and "to give initiates a sense of those forms of life that make the community what it is" (*HATC:76, 84*). However, accurate codes derive their moral intelligibility

from some practices and cannot be divorced from them. For that reason, in his paper presented at the Jesuit-sponsored Georgetown University, Hauerwas makes some contentions about cheating, “a more serious crime than murder for those engaged in the activities of learning” and an essential practice (or set of practises) “that makes a Christian university morally coherent” (HATC:76-7).

In a Christian university, the demand of honour and truth requires moral commitment from both students and professors which is “more to do with such virtues as integrity, honesty, justice, humility, humour and kindness” (CET:230-1). Moreover, Christian university should be able to produce people like Gregory of Nazianzus, the 4<sup>th</sup> –century bishop and theologian, who was able, to see and describe the poor as beautiful” [...] because he was schooled by Christ as witness his orations (TSU:198). Unlike the secular university outlook, the Christian university’s research of new knowledge, should not be justified on the grounds of producing knowledge giving the “power to eradicate poverty/and or eliminate disease” but rather forming people of vision and virtue who welcome the poor and the afflicted (TSU:10). Besides, Hauerwas’s account on moral formation in school also touches the seminary.

#### **5.4.4. Moral formation in the seminary**

Like the secular universities, most seminaries in America are accommodated to CLD culture. Overlooking the post-Christendom dispensation in which the church currently evolves, their curriculum is extrovert and “structured to produce people who can help the church continue to ‘serve the world’ by putting a vaguely Christian tint upon the world’s way of salvation” (RA:115). Through their institutional conformity to the status quo, they imitate the secular university and aim at producing pastors who should be open-minded and “fully conversant in all aspects of modern American culture” but ill-prepared for a faithful ministry in the church (RA:115-6). Thus, seminary curriculum is a “mix of a little this and a little that, psychology here, organizational management there, a little Bible, a little ethics” (RA:115).

In the USA, seminaries are no more church-centred (CET:113). Like the clergy, seminaries and their faculties do not “depend on the *congregation* for direction” but “appear to be the church’s most vocal internal critics” (RA:115; emphasis original). Many students demonstrate laziness and lack of mastery in disciplines relevant for pastoral ministry because they can choose their courses among an array of disciplines or simply decline some optional courses. This allowed personal preference, unthinkable in medical schools with a rigid and compulsory curriculum, is tolerated because “few people believe an incompetent minister can damage their salvation” and “what people want today is not salvation, but health” (HR:611; RA:168).

Nowadays, pastoral ministry falls in the category of “helping professions” almost without arousing clergy and seminarians’ indignation. The general climate in the church is the dereliction of the worship of the true God in favour of sentimentality. “Most professing Christians, says Hauerwas, think the church is sustained by the services it provides or the amount of fellowship and good feeling in the congregation. This form of sentimentality has become the most detrimental corruption of the church and the ministry” (MHP; cf. RA:120). As a result, the character of the church as a disciplined and disciplining community capable of producing virtuous people is largely undermined because:

Sentimentality is that attitude of being always ready to understand but not to judge. Without God, without the one whose death on the cross challenges all our good feelings, who stands beyond and over against our human anxieties, all we have left is sentiment, a saccharine residue of theism in demise. Sentimentality is the way our unbelief is lived out (MHP; cf. RA:120).

Thus, the parish clergy is expected to be pleasant and nice and refrain from speaking the truth of the Gospel (RA:167). Moreover, the pastoral ministry, reduced to a helping profession, destroys the very life of ministers themselves. Indeed, “the presumption that all sincerely felt needs are legitimate needs” leading to a sustainable ministry is “trivialized into the service of needs” through which ministers sadly discover one day that “they have sacrificed family, self-esteem, health and happiness for a bunch of selfish people who have eaten them alive” (MHP). Ministers who “like to be liked and need to be needed” end in depression, self-hatred and loneliness realizing that the church as therapeutic centre is unable to meet the limitless needs of parishioners (MHP, RA:124-7). This kind of loneliness is at the root of many cases of ministers’ promiscuity or adultery (RA:123; WRA:118).

The development of self-ego, self-esteem, assertiveness or learning to say “no” are not the appropriate solution to pastoral depression. Rather, “appropriate, realistic, interesting expectations for the clergy are derived from the purpose of the church” (MHP). As “a colony of resident aliens,” the primary purpose of the church is not that of being a helping institution commanding the clergy’s “conspiracy of cordiality” but rather to orient people toward God (RA:138-40). Training in seminaries should prepare not for a successful ministry comforting people in their materialism, greed and the quest of security but rather for a faithful ministry directing people to worship God, live out the “Christian story and calling back to God” (RA:130-3, 142-3). This entails telling the truth that can sometimes leads to conflict (RA:141).

Although sometimes modelled after the professions of law and medicine in terms of “questions of confidentiality, relations between peers, and other such issues,” the professionalization of the ministry cannot be sustained (CET:138). As suggested by Campbell, this professionalization lacks “rigorous theological rationale” and tends to make “learning take precedence over call” when people judge one’s adequacy for the ministry”



(*CET:138*). Theological schools cannot adopt a secular model of professional ethics in the moral formation of their students. For example, this kind of adoption justifies the pre-eminence of Clinical Pastoral Education requiring the distinction between the pastor's professional role and his own feelings and convictions or between his function as counsellor and his role as minister. While performing their ministry as counsellors, ministers should bear in mind that their "moral judgments might not [always] be therapeutic" and they should not work as experts responding to the desires of consumers (*CET:138*). Professional model of ministry cannot help but be mistakenly linked to a kind of code of ethics for experts as MacIntyre (1984:75-6) emphasizes. In contrast, ministers need a determinative moral formation because their role of directing people to God requires a specific ministerial ethics (*CET:138*). Adequate ethic for the clergy is an ethic of character and virtues; and for Hauerwas, "no virtue is more necessary to the ministry today than constancy" because ordination as a "sign of God's faithfulness to the church" [demands] "of those in ministry to be constant in all that they are and do" (*CET:143*). Constancy expresses faithfulness to the calling at the risk of being popular, "altruistic, infinitely understanding, self-effacing" or a "winning personality" as expected in today's church fed by sentimentality (*CET:134, 143*). In brief, the seminary must form people of character because:

A minister must live and act believing that God is present in the church, through word and sacrament, creating a new people capable of witnessing to God's kingdom. The minister must be filled with hope that God will act through word and sacrament to renew the church, but he or she must be patient, knowing that how God works is God's business. From the crucible of patience and hope comes the fidelity to task that makes the ministry not a burden but a joy. So finally we must ask of those in ministry whether they are capable of joy, for if they are not, they lack a character sufficient to their calling. A person incapable of joy will lack the humour necessary for the self-knowledge that character requires (*CET:143*).

In short, Hauerwas advocates a moral formation producing virtuous people as against moral education based on the standard account of ethics in both secular and Christian schools and the concern for the "whole student" in well-intended church-related schools. In particular, church-sponsored institutions (including seminaries) should focus on initiating people into the Christian "tradition as well as into the conflicts that we know as modernity" (*HATC:83*). What has yet to be said is how Christians could be formed to acquire the necessary resources and skills to live faithfully in a world of suffering.

## **5.5. Moral formation, suffering and health care**

Hauerwas's account of moral formation about suffering and health care follows the same pattern of the precedent accounts — regarding the internal Christian community life, the public sphere, the family and the school — in that it represents to a larger extent a



corrective to the practices of the American liberal society. In his writings, he has endeavoured to articulate a Christian understanding of suffering, pain and illness and suggested how Christians should be equipped to dwell faithfully in the liberal society, a world of agony and suffering. Correlatively, he has suggested challenging insights for a Christian practice of medicine. For this reason, assumptions on suffering, the Christian understanding of suffering and significant insights on the related character formation are the three main thrusts of the subsequent brief account of Hauerwas's view on suffering.

### **5.5.1. Assumptions on suffering in the American liberal society**

The American proposition is at the core of societal and political ills in the USA including the general understanding of suffering. By emphasizing that everyone has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness the American proposition conveys the “sinful presumption that man is born to be happy, when he clearly has to die” (CC:86). Life being about rights and happiness is the assumption of the liberal society which champions individualistic and atomistic morality and self-interest (CC:84). Put differently, the American proposition enhances the ethics of individualism and the libertarian ethics culminating in the “abandonment” of the other and the failure of community construing the background justifying the rights to commit suicide and euthanasia. In a sense, by accepting these rights American society has “unwittingly affirmed that [it] no longer wishes to provide the condition for the miracle of trust and community” (HR:592).

In response to a 1984 film sponsored by the National Association of the Retarded Citizens calling for the prevention of retardation, Hauerwas wrote his essay, “Should Suffering Be Eliminated? What the Retarded Have to Teach Us,” in the same year. He chose retardation as an accurate example to demonstrate how in a liberal culture, people advocates its prevention “because it seems that all suffering should be prevented” (HR:557). Ten years later, a second response to this 1984 video was “Killing Compassion,” an essay wherein Hauerwas contends that compassion has become a cardinal virtue in the American culture. Far from being compassion out of mercy and the willingness to take care, this utilitarian compassion serves to justify the resolute determination to rid the society of unnecessary suffering. In this regard, the call to prevent retardation, that may amount to eliminate an unborn child, is similar to the advocacy of the elimination of an unwanted child through abortion, the putting to death of an old person through euthanasia, and even the termination of one's life through suicide. “Ironically, states Hauerwas, in the name of responding to suffering, compassion literally becomes a killer” (DFF:164-5; HR:562).

Modern medicine has become the appropriate mean to spare the retarded children a lifetime of suffering, to eliminate those who suffer in the name of humanity or broadly speaking, it has been entrusted the role of saving people from suffering (*HR:558*). For some critics, as modern medicine is built on “the utopian presumption that illness can be cured or tamed by skill and science”, it “represents [...] another god that has failed” (*HR:350*). For Hauerwas, it is rather “a failed substitute for God when God was failed by” people in modern or liberal culture “that forced upon medicine the impossible role of bandaging the wounds of societies that are built upon the premise that God does not matter” (*HR:352*). In liberal societies wherein the “central problem [is] how to secure cooperation among self-interested individuals who have nothing in common other than their desire to survive,” modern medicine is a powerful instrument of relative cohesion” (*HR:352-3*). People “share no common understanding of death,” but the “only thing people have in common is their fear of death” reinforced by the liberal prevalent “presumption that we must finally each die alone” (*HR:353*). Moreover, one of the assumptions of liberalism is that “there is nothing quite important enough in our lives to risk dying for” (*HR:353*). Thus, “medicine has become the theodical project of modernity, part of whose task is to save liberalism” and stands as an “insurance policy [giving to people a sense that [they will not] have to come to terms with the reality of [their] death (*HR:353, 353 n.9*).

### **5.5.2. Christian understanding of suffering and illness**

Hauerwas’s account of character formation regarding suffering is embodied in his theological analysis of some biomedical issues of great magnitude, namely theodicy, the care for of the retarded children, suicide and euthanasia as well as the relation between medicine and theology. When he tackles the issue of theodicy, Hauerwas admits that he remains “sceptical of all attempts to provide some general account or explanation of evil or suffering” (*HR:567*). However, in his *God, Medicine and Suffering*, he suggests that the question “Why does evil exist?” be asked while considering people as historical beings “in relation to friends and community, instead of attending to the problem of ‘free will’ defence or human sin” (*GMS:1-2*). In Hauerwas’s perspective, the discourse of theodicy attendant to modern atheism and correlative to the problem of suffering is indicative of “the creation of a god that it was presumed could be known separate from a community at worship (*GMS:41*). The lack of a life story is the significant explanation of the inability of responding positively to illness and suffering, especially to the agony of childhood suffering. Yet Christian convictions through a “life located in God’s narrative” is able to guide individuals, friends, parents and community who care deeply about someone who is ill” (*GMS:67*).

According to the story of God, Christians can be empowered with the “skills of discrimination” in order to prevent unnecessary suffering — though very difficult it is — or to be “able to distinguish suffering that is evil from that which is explicable given [their] projects” (*HR:567; GMS:78-9*). Knowing that they suffer because of being “inherently creatures of need,” Christians could not be prone to rectifying all their suffering according to “some general notions of God’s nature as all-powerful and good” (*HR:567; GMS:78-79*). Their community-specific narratives and convictions speak of a particular God who cannot abandon his people; hence issues about “suffering can be raised only in the context of God who creates to redeem” (*GMS:78-9*). That is, “there is no problem of suffering in general” (*GMS:79*). Moreover, Israel constituting “the community over time” did not think to deal with a God who seems to be “blameless”; they “did think it is legitimate to complain” and developed “an entire genre for lament [...] (cf. Ps 13)” (*GMS:79*). Early Christians were exhorted to rejoice in their suffering including injustice, persecution, and other misfortunes (*Rom 5*). For them, suffering was not a “metaphysical problem”, but “rather a practical challenge requiring a communal response” (*GMS:84*). Thus, in Christian community, one’s suffering can be considered as part of his or her service to God” (*GMS: 86*).

The care for the retarded children should not be a cumbersome burden. A society who views life in terms of purposes and accomplishments is doomed to miss its “actual need for suffering, even apparently purposeless or actively destructive suffering” (*HR:564*). For that reason, Hauerwas refuses that the issue of retarded children be submitted to their possibility to “serve a human good,” since the issue should be that of considering “the kind of people, the kind of parents and community, that can receive, even welcome them into our midst in a manner to allow them to flourish” (*HR:564*). Indeed, retarded children suffer retardation but what is more important is that “they do suffer from being retarded” because “there is a limit to their understanding of their disadvantage and thus the extent of their suffering” (*HR:567-8*). Hauerwas assumes that their rejection is indicative of a distorted understanding of the notion of identity in that people “believe that our identity derives from our independence, our self-possession” (*HR:565*). In contrast, “we exist only to the extent that we sustain, or ‘suffer’ the existence of others, and the others include not just others like us, but mountains, trees, animals and so on” (*HR:565*).

Therefore, retarded children are “essential members of [a given] community” (*HR:574*), because like prophets they remind others “of insecurity hidden in [their] false sense of self-possession” (*HR:566, 574-5*). They also direct awareness to “our true nature as creatures destined to need God and thus one another” (*HR:575*). In addition, parents and all the church community should not meet with irretrievable difficulties to accept and care for “their retarded as well as their more nearly normal children as God’s will” (*HR:574*). This is

possible providing that “they have learned to accept that life is under God’s direction” (*HR:574*). Moreover, the God Christians worship in their communities is not a god of self-sufficient power, but the God “who needs a people, who needs a son” (*HR:575*).

As far as suicide and euthanasia are concerned, Christian community affirms that life is a gift from God and worth living. This conviction is sustained by its trust and hope in God. “Our unwillingness to kill ourselves even under pain, states Hauerwas, is our affirmation that the trust that has sustained us in health is also the trust that has sustained us in illness and distress; that our existence is a gift ultimately bounded by hope that gives us a way to go on” (*HR:590*). He goes on to say, it is an affirmation “that the full, present memory of our Christian story is a source of strength and consolation for ourselves and our community (*HR:590*). Indeed, it is this “story that should underlie the Christian understanding of suicide and euthanasia” rather than the one of the society at large (*HR:581-2*). Moreover, Christians do not derive their meaning and reasons on these issues from the universal or “natural desire to live” justifying people’s love or fear of death, “for the very meaning of ‘to live’ depends on particularistic commitments of a people’s form of life (*HR:582*).

The rise of suicide and the increase in demands for euthanasia appear where individuals and communities lack the skills of being physically present and caring for those in pain or those dying (*HR:584, 591*). The kind of memory that shapes and guides Christian community and even nurture its hope for the future cannot allow suicide and euthanasia (*HR:584*). These two moral issues represent the outcomes of inappropriate attitudes towards life. Christian community has been trained to know some valuable reasons of living, for Christians are a people that know first of all that “life is a gift” from the Creator and that life allows them to benefit from space and time necessary for being in service of God and loving the neighbour (*HR:585*). Christians are not called to an independent existence made of fear for each other. The members of Christian community are those who believe that “the miracle of trust” enlivening and strengthening their natural social existence is possible (*HR:587*). They are also formed to know that life or survival is not an end in itself (*HR:585-6*). For them, “life is not an absolute” but what matters is the will of God to their lives and their dying (*HR:587*). Insofar as “life is not sacred” for Christians, they do not have an “interest in holding onto it the last minute,” thus “dying is not a tragedy” while “dying for the wrong thing” is (*HR:587*). In the Christian community, both suicide and euthanasia could be eradicated if Christian affirm the necessity “of goodness and care of community” and continue to observe this requirement of their “common story” (*HR:590-1*). These moral issues reflect the “erosion of communities” generated by “the dissolution of the order, coherence and a power of a story” which enhances “the pledge of other regardingness” (*HR:590-1*). Also, they “can both be signs of pathogenic

abandonment and they undermine [the] notions of living bravely in the face of suffering, as individuals and as communities” (*HR:591*).

Concerning the relation between medicine and theology, Hauerwas asserts that modern medicine lacks a holistic vision of human being and does not consider health and care as important aspects of salvation. Only the church and theology have efficient resources to remedy the situation (*HR:545*). Drawing on Darrel Amundsen and Garry Ferngren, Hauerwas notes that from the Hebrew Scriptures (as from human history) Christians learn that faith (or religion) and medicine are so closely related that one can very hardly separate them. Disease and illness or suffering in general was thought of as the manifestation of God’s disfavour. In this perspective, faithfulness to God, acknowledgement and repentance of sins were essential to the healing of the individuals or the community as whole (Ex 15:26; Ps 32.3-5; 38:3, 21-22). Hence the critical significance of prayer for healing (*HR:542-3*). In the NT, as reminds us Amundsen and Ferngren, “no suffering is meaningless. The ultimate purpose and meaning behind Christian suffering [...] is spiritual maturity. And the ultimate goal in spiritual maturity is a close dependence upon Christ based upon a childlike trust in God” (quoted in *HR:543*).

In the modern world, a noticeable tension has occurred in the way of understanding the relation between theology and medicine because of the distinction between theology as “the medicine of the soul” and secular medicine as “the medicine of the body” (*HR:543-4*). However, through Christian and Jewish understanding of salvation, “health can never be thought of as an autonomous sphere” (*HR:544-5*). Moreover, two alternatives to the autonomy of medicine from Christian religious convictions have emerged but these views of medicine are still antithetical to Christian convictions. First is the “mechanical view of medicine” — “limiting the scope of medicine to the mechanism of our body” but rightly discarded by Paul Ramsey insisting that “the moral commitment of the physician is not to treat diseases, or population, or the human race, but the immediate patient before him or her” (*HR:545*). Thus, “the care offered by physicians cannot be abstracted from the moral commitment to care based on our view that every aspect of our existence is dependent upon God (*HR:545*). Second is the “sacralizing view of medicine” seeking to maintain a close relation with Christian convictions by “resacralizing medical care,” demanding a “holistic vision of man” for medicine and considering medical care as “one aspect of salvation” (*HR:545*). However, in a Christian perspective, “any account of salvation includes questions of our health, but that does not mean that medicine can or ever should become the agency of salvation” (*HR:545-6*).



### 5.5.3. Suffering, health care and character formation

Christians and in particular those in health professions and entrusted with the task of caring for those in pain (physicians, nurses, ministers and chaplains) are called to be present to them. Pain deriving from suffering is extremely alienating. It divides the ill with family and friend and increases the loneliness of the ill. Equally, persons close to the ill risk being in the same situation. The most important need of both categories — the ill and those close to them — is that of having persons present at their side. To illustrate his contention, Hauerwas uses his own experience with Bob, a very close friend of his during their teenage years. Bob lost his mother by suicide and was comforted only by Hauerwas's presence. From the Bible, Hauerwas refers to Job's friends and comforters who sat on the ground with [him] doing nothing more than being willing to be present in the face of his suffering (Job 2:11-13) (HR:550-1, 539-541). In the same way, Christians "are supposed to be a people who have learned how to be faithful to one another by [their] willingness to be present" (HR:553). This training requires the saints, role models, examples among them of persons who have made the "*Suffering presence*" — a title of one of Hauerwas's own book — their habits. "The church claims to be such a community, a people called out by God who is always present to us, both in our sin and in our faithfulness" (HR:553).

Since modern medicine clings to "a mechanical understanding and care of the body" aiming at best to neglect or at worse to forget the traditional role of caring by focusing only on cure (HR:539), Hauerwas reaches this insightful conclusion:

Only a people trained in remembering, and remembering as a communal act, their sins and pains can offer a paradigm for sustaining across time a painful memory so that it acts to heal rather than to divide [...] Thus medicine needs the church not to supply a foundation for its commitments, but rather as a resource of habits and practices necessary to sustain the care of those in pain over the long haul (HR:553).

Moreover, Christian physicians, should not "look on their skills as their property;" they do not "own their craft—they are their craft" (WWW:159). They should consider their job as an engagement to "a practice that constitutes the common good of a community" (WWW:159).

In this essay, "Finite Care in a World of Infinite Need," Hauerwas contends that the development of medical ethics in America is not only about the increasing breakthrough in bio-technology; rather it is far more likely about the widespread idea of the primacy of cure over care. That is, on the one hand, "there are no longer any perceived limits — including the limit of death"; on the other hand, "to care for the ill when you cannot cure their illness is no longer the aim of medicine. Patients now demand to be cured" (WWW:154-5). But health professionals should remember that hospitals have their origin in the initiative of the monks



“who thought that even amidst the injustices of the world you could take time with the dying. They cared for the dying when they could not cure” (*WWW:162*).

Despite the development of health care industry, its material and financial resources are still scarce compared with the unlimited needs for medical care. Thus, Hauerwas suggests “a Christian practice of medicine” including the possibility of universal health care: “The attempt to get more resources to serve the poor is to be welcomed” (*WWW:162*). “But more important, he adds, is the possibility that Christians may have to learn to deny themselves forms of extraordinary care that medicine seems determined to develop” (*WWW:162*). In other words, Christians may refuse sophisticated procedures (e.g., life-saving treatments, transplantation, etc.) since they have to recover “the practice of dying” (Cramer 2012:357). Today people “want to die quickly in their sleep, painlessly, and without being ‘a burden’” and without knowing they are dying. In the middle ages, by contrast, “Christians feared a sudden death” because they did not want “dying without having the time to be reconciled with their enemies, who were often the family, the church and God. Today we fear death. They feared God” (*WWW:154*).

Moreover, “Christians are called to be a patient people, in health and in sickness” because “impatience is a crucial sin that carries us into other sins” (*HR:349*). With Pinches, Hauerwas claims that one cannot only be patient while he is sick if he learns to practice patience while he is healthy. God has provided for necessary resources to learn patience, namely the finitude and fragility of our bodies destined to die, the presence of others in our lives, the need for time and space for the acquisition of habits related to living activities like “growing food, building shelters, spinning cloth, writing poems, playing baseball, and having children” (*HR:364-5; CAV:176-7*). Christians should keep alive the descriptions of suicide and patients being themselves “patient patients” in a world where patients are being called “clients” as they learn God’s patience through Christian narratives (*HR:349, 366*).

Indeed Christian narrative provides guidance for understanding and responding to suffering. Initiation through this narrative supports loyalty to the God revealed by Jesus who never abandons nor forsakes (*GMS:67; PK:62; Richard 1992:105*). Discipleship engenders the hopeful virtues pointed out in Pauline narratives and which come as a gift through justification. The Bible reads: “We rejoice in our suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope” (Rm 5.1-5). Through discipleship helped by worship and the lives of the saints in the Christian community, Christians can participate in Christ’s sufferings and “learn the endurance of Christ which in turn can produce in [them] the character of Christ” (*CAV:122, 124-5*). Moreover, the church as colony of heaven is called to put on the whole armour of God described in Ephesians 6:10-

20; this requires of Christians to be willing to suffer and sacrifice their loved ones for the truth of the Gospel (RA:146-50).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, suffering should not be set on eliminating every kind of suffering as suffering as a means of discipleship contributes to Christian character formation. Not only in suffering but also within the church, the family and the school, discipleship, that is the initiation into the Church community of virtue through the performance of Christian narrative and the imitation of the saints is the hallmark of Christian moral formation. The church can be a strong and viable community of virtue as it strive to live truthfully and faithfully to Christian narrative, form a disciplined and disciplining community under the authority of ministers and distinctive to a voluntary association. The family and the school critically need the church in order to become its supplementary spheres of moral formation. The family can be a school for virtue if marriage derives its intelligibility through singleness and is similarly understood as vocation, if the youth are determinatively formed to acquire the necessary virtues to live out the marriage as a lifelong commitment and if parenting is considered as a calling the office of the whole church. The family can also form people of virtue if it endeavours itself to serve the church rather than the liberal state and benefit from Christian witness. Besides, this witness or the manifestation of Christian convictions by believers formed in the church as community of virtue is the primary social task of the church as the foretaste of the Kingdom of God in the world. Put differently, the church's critical and essential service to the world, and in particular to the modern CLD society in the American context, is the production of people of virtue as the modern nation-state fails to produce this kind of persons. Yet, since the discussion has so far revolves around the analysis of Hauerwas's account of moral formation, it is now the time to turn to the African context being the setting in view of the constructive proposal that this work as a whole is aiming to suggest.

## Chapter 6: SKETCH OF THE AFRICAN SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

### *Introduction*

The three previous chapters have attempted to analyse Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation. The present chapter displays some salient features of the African socio-historical and cultural context. Thus, it pursues a quite analogous aim as the second chapter that described the American socio-historical and cultural context through the concept of "American exceptionalism." Partly, the subsequent sections are designed to help illuminate the convergence and dissimilarity between the American context and a typical religiously and culturally pluralist African context. They are also meant to constitute the backdrop against which the next two chapters will be devised. Indeed, Chapter Seven will provide an assessment of Hauerwas's proposal viewed as a considered response to some critical moral issues found in the American context. And Chapter Eight will present a constructive proposal for moral formation in the African church.

To that end, the present chapter turns first to a dialectical analysis of the contemporary African socio-cultural landscape through two predominant and antithetical concepts — "African renaissance" and "Afro-pessimism" — used by scholars, policymakers and the media to describe the current situation and the prospects for the future of the continent. Resorting to this dialectic seems very helpful to create a balanced frame of reference necessary for examining the need for moral formation in the African church and the society at large. While "Afro-pessimism" expresses the widely-shared state of mind pointing to a gloomy future for the continent, "African renaissance" draws attention to hope and the possibilities of renewal and transformation of the continent. As a result, this analysis allows pointing out the crucial socio-economic and political issues bedevilling the continent and the perspectives for redress.

However, the two concepts cannot be fully understood without their moral components, the ethical factors that have contributed to their occurrence and emergence or the influential theories that shape the moral life in Africa. Thus, the chapter supplements to the dialectic analysis of Afro-pessimism and African renaissance some relevant aspects of African traditional morality and communality as well as the moral impact of modernity and globalization on the continent. In the same vein, the final section consists in an assessment of the moral life of the African church because its nature and function should obviously

determine the segment of the Body of Christ to be a vital moral source of inspiration and driver of transformation of the continent.

It is noteworthy that the present description only focuses on sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). It does not take into account the North African context characterized by a unique historical background, a predominantly Arab culture and political and socio-economic acquaintances with the Middle East (Patterson 2011:5; Kinoti 1994:v). As the dialectic of Afro-pessimism and African renaissance — or despair and hope — can prove to objectively capture the current situation of the African continent, the first section proceeds by a brief description of Afro-pessimism and its elements.

### **6.1. The reality of “Afro-pessimism”**

The concept of Afro-pessimism broadly “refers to a sense of pessimism about the continent’s ability to overcome pressing challenges related to poverty, health, development or governance” (Nathias 2012:54). It is not only perceived by scholars, media and the public but also by leaders in Africa and in the West. On 23 October 2001, at the initial meeting of the Implementation Committee of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), gathering several African Heads of States in Abuja, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria “called on African leaders to abandon ‘Afro-pessimism’ and embark on a new optimism based on a ‘Marshall Plan’ for Africa” (Venter et al 2005:350). In fact, the debate between Afro-pessimists and Afro-optimists became vivid through the publication of Robert Kaplan’s essay “The Coming Anarchy” in early 1994. The failure of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank’s structural adjustment programmes, the extension of international “aid fatigue” and the subsequent marginalization of the continent after the Cold War exacerbated the feeling that the continent is falling apart with no chance of recovery (Olukoshi 1999:452). Since the 1990s, the topic has become popular and discussed in several fields such as “African fiction and literature, sociology, anthropology, and media studies with some mention in African history and political science” (Schorr 2011:25-6).

To illustrate the debate between “the Afro-optimist school” and “the Afro-pessimist school”, Gordon and Wolpe (1998:49) begin their “The Other Africa: An end to Afro-pessimism” with the following statement: “A quiet renaissance is slowly transforming the African continent” and they point out several achievements in SSA to advocate for US aid in the continent’s favour (cf. Schorr 2011:27). Thereafter, Rieff (1998/9:21) through his “In Defence of Afro-pessimism” attempts to counter their arguments by asserting that “there is more reason to be an Afro-pessimist than to believe in the promise of an African renaissance.” Afro-pessimists and Afro-optimists seem sometimes “equally unrealistic” in their debate as it

appears in the media and academic literature (Schorr 2011:27-8; Nathias 2012:54-62; Wasserman & de Beer 2009:384-90). While the Afro-pessimists only put the emphasis on the horrible sufferings, the Afro-optimists concentrate on “a burgeoning African Renaissance” (Schorr 2011:27). Moreover, the Afro-optimist school blames only the international system and clears Africa from its own responsibility regarding the collapse of the continent and thus joins the ‘dependency and underdevelopment’ school of African studies (Schorr 2011:27-8). From the above it appears that an objective description and understanding of the Afro-pessimism needs a dialectical analysis between Afro-pessimism and African renaissance. In addition, as notes Nathias (2012:60) along with others scholars (Venter & Neuland 2005:318-9; Hughes 2003), while there is no a strong definition for Afro-pessimism, the discourse around this issue, in particular in the Western media, lacks “strong empirical evidence” and remains “essentialist, racist, selective” and encompasses “ethnocentric ranking and prediction” of a dark future for Africa. Therefore, both discourse on Afro-pessimism and African renaissance require “strong empirical evidence” (Nathias 2012:54).

“Afro-pessimism” as defined by Schorr (2011:23), is “briefly, the perception that ‘Africa’ has always been and will continue to be a scary, backward and poverty-ridden place.” Obviously, some elements of Afro-pessimism depicted in Western media like the homogeneity of African continent, the colonial mythos of the “Dark continent,” and the view of Africa as “National Geographic” reduced to luxuriant fauna and flora and neglecting the richness of human capital are to be seriously questioned. It should be stressed that countries in SSA present a heterogeneous political landscape; and talking about their common socio-economic problems and features is *reductio ad absurdum*. Notwithstanding their historical and cultural diversity, however, SSA countries have some common socio-economic and political problems requiring at least a concise elaboration (Houngnikpo & Kyambalesa 2001:xvi). In this perspective, some critical socio-economic and political issues such as the plight of illness and diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, starvation as well as the persistence of poverty and violent tribal conflicts cannot be overlooked. Another matter of great concern should be the extent of pseudo-democracy through the relenting presence of Big Men, political instability and corruption (Cf. Schorr 2011:28-38; Ojacor 2011:88). Above all, the dire instability, corruption and poor governance in the majority of SSA countries point to the reality of fragile states.



### 6.1.1. The prevalence of fragile states and pseudo-democracy

Only a handful of SSA countries have quite stable regimes. Most of them are fragile states.<sup>1</sup> Pseudo-democracy is the designation of the region's predominant political regimes. In almost all of these countries bad governance and endemic and rampant corruption prevail.<sup>2</sup>

#### 6.1.1.1. Fragile states, bad governance and rampant corruption

The group of fragile states includes countries which have not experienced violent ethnic and civil wars in the last decades like Benin, Botswana, Mauritius, Senegal and South Africa. However, nearly half of SSA African countries are included in various lists of “fragile” or “frail” states. These countries include all the countries in the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia) involved in arm trade, the massacre in Darfur and other recurrent atrocities. All the countries of the western coast, from Comoros to Angola, with the exception of Benin and perhaps Cameroon (which is still experiencing an elusive democracy) are “fragile” states. Of the SSA countries some, like Central African Republic, D.R. Congo, Somalia and Zimbabwe, can be practically considered as “failed states” (Bigman 2011:131, 214-5).<sup>3</sup>

One of the essential features of the African fragile and failed states is the poor quality of their governance system. Cheru (2002:35) offers a helpful definition of governance through the following statement:

["Governance"] which implies responsible, accountable, transparent, legitimate, effective democratic government — is of recent origin in political science discourse. More appropriately, it has become used much more frequently in discussing how governments are to perform in undertaking public changes, innovations and processes that should bring about social, economic and political progress in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> In “fragile” or “weak states,” according to the World Bank (WB) (2007) and OECD (2007-08) the government's policies and institutions are often unable to deliver even the most basic public services to their citizens, including health, education and security. Thus, failed states are unable to provide physical and economic security in protecting life and property; they cannot defend the country against external and internal criminal or terrorist groups. Also, a failed state can endanger its neighbouring countries by providing refuge and training camps to rebels or illegal armed groups (Bigman 2011:215, 217).

<sup>2</sup> Although sometimes used interchangeably, the term “good governance” does differ from “democracy” since it “means creating well-functioning and accountable institutions — political, judicial and administrative — which citizens regard as legitimate and in which they participate in respect of all decisions that affect their daily lives and by which they are empowered” (Fombad 2005:11).

<sup>3</sup> The combined list based on The World Bank's IDA and OECD-DAC (2007-8) and provided by David Bigman (2011:216) include 19 SSA countries: Somalia; Liberia; Togo; Sudan; Zimbabwe; Chad; D.R. Congo; Côte d'Ivoire; Central African Republic; Angola; Eritrea; Guinea-Bissau; Congo; Burundi; Guinea; Sierra Leone; Ethiopia; Uganda; Nigeria.

Equally, good governance in African countries has been the concern of both the United Nations (UN) and The African Union (AU). The UN Report on Africa (1998) stated that “Good governance is now more than ever the condition for the success of both peace and development. It is no coincidence that Africa’s renaissance has come at a time when new and more democratic forms of government have begun to emerge.” Indeed, “the concept of good governance was subsequently incorporated to reflect a core value of the NEPAD strategy” endorsed by the AU in March 2002 (Venter et al 2005:297).<sup>4</sup> In its policy document, The NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development) initiative explicitly recognizes democratization and good governance as the “key missing ingredient for sustainable development” in Africa (Busia 2008:41).<sup>5</sup> In July 2002, the AU adopted the APRM (The African Peer Review Mechanism) as a supplement to the NEPAD plan of action. The APRM focuses on the following aspects of governance: (1) political and governance issues; (2) economic governance and management; (3) corporate governance; and (4) socioeconomic management” (Venter et al 2005:372). However, one of the core features of African politics is an on-going governance crisis in failed, fragile or dysfunctional states.

Improving governance is the key to the development of Africa. As stated in the UN Africa Commission report (2009), this cannot be possible “unless there are improvements in capacity, accountability, and reducing corruption, [...] other reforms will have only limited impacts” (cf. Bigman 2011:240). However, corruption is still endemic and rampant in the majority of SSA countries, especially in countries experiencing noticeable political instability. The Transparency International 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index listed eight SSA countries among the bottom 20 most corrupt countries worldwide. National experts and businessmen in 31 of 47 countries surveyed perceived corruption as a widespread and common practice.

Most of SSA countries lack a due regard for the rule of law and display the subservience of the judiciary to the executive. A correlative lack of adequate legal frameworks and weak legal enforcement make it difficult to establish control on the budget or the government accounts. Loyalty to the leading corrupt elites is the great concern in public institutions working without an effective audit system. In this kind of environment, officials are more preoccupied to look for their own piece of the pie and are involved in corruption or bribery taking the forms of “grease the wheels” practice or “payments under the table” (Bigman 2011:228, 238). As a result, corruption, weak rule of law and poor governance as

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<sup>4</sup> The NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development) initiative is the eventual conversion of the MAP (Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme) endorsed at the Extraordinary OAU Summit in March 2002 in Sirte where the AU was established to replace the OAU (Venter et al 2005:297)

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the articles 79 to 82 of the NEPAD policy (2001) “deal with good governance as democratic and political governance” (Venter et al 2005:297).

well as pseudo-democratic processes lead to poverty as the SSA region is seen by investors as a very risky region (Bigman 2011:241).

### **6.1.1.2. The predominance of pseudo-democracy**

During the post-independence era, from 1960s to 1980s, Africa became the scene of “corrupt, inefficient, repressive and dictatorial systems of governance” (Fombad 2005:16). Mostly, “undemocratic, over-centralized and authoritarian governments” tolerating no opposition parties characterized politics in Africa, “apart from Botswana, Gambia and Mauritius” (Ndulo 2003:332-3; cf. Leon 2010:2; Fombad 2005:10). The independence-heroes, such as Kenyatta in Kenya, Nkrumah in Ghana and Nyerere in Tanzania stood against multi-partyism and advocated the so-called “African democracy” based on consensus and not competition (Uwizeyimana 2012:140). After the mid-1960, several presidents like Banda of Malawi, Biya of Cameroon and Mobutu of former Zaire asserted “that democracy and multi-partyism would only breed violence, ethnic parochialism and national disintegration” (Fombad 2005:10).

During the late 1980s and through the 1990s, many drastic changes occurred in the African political landscape. In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison by the apartheid regime and became the first democratically elected President of South Africa in 1994. Over the continent, citizens exasperated by privation of basic liberties, leadership corruption, social injustice and inequality forced their dictatorial and repressive regimes to open the doors for democratic transition and a multiparty system of governance and competitive elections. This internally growing protest was catalysed by the end of the Cold War, the intensified efforts of globalization imposed by the Western powers and more importantly the adoption of the tenets of liberal democracy required by the UNDP and IFIs — the IMF and the WB — as the precondition for granting international aid and loans (Uwizeyimana 2012:148-9; Ndulo 2003:337-8). For many observers, these changes induced were considered as the dawn of an era of hope and optimism for democratic participation, peaceful coexistence and economic development in African countries (Prempeh 2008:93; Fombad 2005:9). In recent years, however, “the rate of positive progress has declined” (Herbst 2008:61; Puddington et al 2013:5, 9).

For some scholars like Lynch and Crawford (2011:275), there had been in Africa, from 1990 to 2010, several areas of advance and reversal in the democratization processes.<sup>6</sup> They

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<sup>6</sup> Those seven areas can be highlighted as follows: increasingly illegitimate, but on-going military intervention; regular elections and occasional transfers of power, but realities of democratic rollback and hybrid regimes; democratic institutionalization, but on-going presidentialism and endemic

conclude that “steps forward remain greater than reversals and that typically, though not universally, SSA countries are more democratic today than in the late 1980s” (Lynch & Crawford 2011:275).

Their conclusion has been qualified by other scholars. Deservedly, Joseph (2011:324) asserts that “The third wave of democracy did sweep across much of sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s, but has now subsided, except for ripples and eddies.” Some recent military coups have reminded of the patterns of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, when “more than two-thirds of African leaders left power violently — usually, as a result of a coup or assassination” (Diamond 2008:5). The re-election of the Zimbabwean Mugabe in August 2013 through contested and likely rigged and flawed elections poignantly represents the tradition of “undemocratic attitude of African ‘die-in-office’ political leaders” and “Big men” (Adekunle 2012:97-8). Coups d’état are still an on-going phenomenon as recently witnessed in Mali and Guinea Bissau (2012) as well as in Central African Republic (2013). In addition, SSA displays the sad record of eleven current Presidents who took power through coups as well as nine Heads of State who have stayed for twenty to thirty five years in power.<sup>7</sup>

Further, the 2013 Freedom House’s survey, which includes basic political rights and civil liberties, has identified eleven countries as “free,” eighteen as “partly free,” and twenty as “not free” amongst forty nine SSA countries; this pattern reveals a trend of decline noted since the last decade (Puddington et al 2013:5, 9). Yet “The Mo Ibrahim Index is even harsher and shows a decline of five percent in political participation since 2007 while only one country — Mauritius — qualifies as a full democracy” (Murhula 2012:2; cf. *The Economist* 2012:6-8). In brief, most of the regimes in SSA countries still need significant democratic changes to become a real democracy. As Fombad (2005:13) has put it well: “The present reality is that the continent is still infested with all kinds of governments, ranging from pseudo-democratic, oligarchic, authoritarian, totalitarian, paternalistic and monarchical regimes, all dressed up in various paraphernalia of democracy.”

In other words, democratization in Africa suffers from some constraints towards good governance mainly in terms of constitutional imbalance characterized by power centralization

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corruption; the institutionalization of political parties, but widespread ethnic voting and the rise of an exclusionary (and often violent) politics of belonging; increasingly dense civil societies, but local realities of incivility, violence and insecurity; new political freedoms and economic growth, but extensive political controls and uneven development; and the donor community’s mixed commitment to, and at times perverse impact on, democracy promotion.

<sup>7</sup> The following five countries have experienced both realities of coups and long presidency: Burkina Faso, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea, as well as Gambia and Uganda. The additional countries led by Presidents who took powers through coups are Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, and Mali, as well as Mauritania and Sudan. The following additional countries are led by Presidents with at least a twenty years stay in power: Angola, Cameroon, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

and the dominance of the executive over the judiciary and the legislative. The trend of post-colonial constitutional changes (1960s-1980s) conferring excessive power to the Head of State is still an on-going reality until nowadays (Mbah 2012:121; cf. Ndulo 2008:81). With the prominence of executive power at the expense of the judiciary it becomes hard to build democracy on participation and the rule of law, freedom and even transparency. Consequently, African politics is mainly characterized by widespread patronage, clientelism and corruption, or in a word, by “the imperial presidency”, “neo-patrimonialism”, or “the big-man leadership” (Prempeh 2008:94; Leon 2010:11-2).

### **6.1.2. The dramatic poverty, inequality and underdevelopment**

Poverty, inequality and underdevelopment in Africa stand as an outcome of the combination of internal and external problems emerging at the socio-economic and political level. Statistics are also very alarming; and the prospects for development remain gloomy.

#### **6.1.2.1. The extent of poverty, inequality and underdevelopment**

Perhaps, none has more thoroughly and concisely described the African plight of poverty than Sam Mpasu, former minister of education of Malawi, in his following statement:

The incomparable paradoxes of Africa include a continent which is richly endowed with human and mineral resources and yet is the poorest continent in the world; a continent which has tracts of arable land large enough to feed continents, yet which cannot feed itself; a continent which is blessed with lakes and large rivers and yet suffers from droughts and where her people die of thirst; and, the strangest paradox of all — the poorest continent on earth which has some of the world’s wealthiest leaders (quoted by Leon 2010:2).

It is noteworthy that the extent of poverty in the 48 SSA countries is heterogeneous as noted the World Bank in its *Challenges of African Growth* of 2007 (Ndulu et al 2007:13; cf. Leon 2010:2). Apart from the inequality between countries over natural resources, rapidly growing population, food import, and global fuel prices, other kinds of significant kinds of socio-economic inequalities are the following:

[1] Inequality between rural and urban populations; [2] inequality between poor urban slum dwellers and the elites, or even the middle classes, in the urban areas that have accumulated, legally or illegally, the riches created by the process of globalization; and [3] inequality between tribes in rural areas (Bigman 2011:210).

The rising inequality between countries induces the massive immigration from poor and unstable countries to the more developed — a phenomenon that sometimes results in xenophobia in the hosting countries. Within the countries, the persistent or rising gap between the haves and have-nots triggers off security risk or civil unrest. In South Africa, with



the legacy of apartheid, the persistent socio-inequality between the majority of white people and the new black elite on the one hand and the majority of the population on the other hand constitute one of the major factors of violence and public insecurity (Du Toit 2000:17-9).

At the first glance, poverty appears as a lack of basic needs like food, healthcare, clothing, shelter and security. However, this lack implies a more essential kind of deprivation because, as accurately defined by the United Nations (U.N.) (1998), poverty is “Fundamentally a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity resulting in a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society.”

The African continent, especially SSA, is the poorest part of the world (WB 2000:1; cf. Ayittey 2005:4). According to a recent UNDP Human Development Report, SSA is the last region in terms of the overall Human Development Index (HDI) including “three basic dimensions of human development — a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living”; it is also the poorest region as regards other indices of Human development, namely, life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, and Gross national income (GNI) per capita (UNDP 2013:144-7). However, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the income levels of SSA countries stood at roughly one-third of those of European countries. At the independence “in 1960s many of African countries were richer than their Asian counterparts, and their strong natural resource bases augured well for future trade, growth and development” (WB 2000:18). In the new millennium, the extreme poverty, in terms of the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day, is still alarming (UNDP 2013:160-1).<sup>8</sup> According to the World Bank (2013:2), SSA “is the only region in the world for which the number of poor individuals has risen steadily and dramatically between 1981 and 2010 [...]. There were more than twice as many extremely poor people living in SSA in 2010 (414 million) than there were three decades ago (205 million).”

### **6.1.2.2. Internal and external causes of poverty**

Historical grounds or past and recent socio-economic situations may accurately explain both the alarming extent and depth of poverty in Africa. All these causes may be broken down into internal and external causes. At the internal level, the abject poverty and underdevelopment of SSA results from several factors. The first is the geographical handicap.

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed in the UNDP report (2013:160-1), 36 of 47 SSA countries (South Sudan and Somalia non-included) appear among the 46 countries with low human development and one can identify 16 of these 36 countries as meeting all the criteria of “least developed countries” in terms of HDI and its components. The estimates based on surveys for 2002-2006 and 2007-2011 show that in 21 of 33 SSA countries surveyed more than 40 per cent of their population was living below the international poverty line \$1.25 (PPP) per day and in 19 of 34 countries more than 50 per cent was living below the national poverty line.



At the independence, Africa inherited arbitrary borders shaped by colonial powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to exploit its rich resources for their own interests rather than the development of the continent (Ndulo 2003:319). For example, “about 40 per cent of population lives in landlocked countries,” with usually high costs for human transportation and freight, scarce accessible roads and thus less attractive to industries (Bigman 2011:122, 124).

Second, the history of SSA is marked by an exceptional record of infectious diseases such as chigger, sleeping sicknesses, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, bilharzias, onchocerciasis and malaria. More common than anywhere else, these diseases cost more than 1 per cent of SSA countries’ GDP (World Bank in Barnett & Whiteside 2002:127). Third, in post-colonial time, instability, rebellion, and violence have been the rule; all these associated with inequality of income — perhaps the highest in the world, despite the low average income (World Bank in Barnett & Whiteside 2002:92). Violent and armed conflicts are preventing the SSA from attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Wordofa 2010:975-101; cf. (Hillier, D et al. 2007:5-6).<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, as the last but not the least factor of poverty to be mentioned is the state failure. A large majority of SSA countries have been identified as fragile or failed states because of their fragile economic and political conditions and/or civil conflicts (Bigman 2011:123). The fragility or failure of state manifests through autocracy, inequality, poor economic management, deplorable political governance and poverty characteristic of rampant neo-patrimonialism found in Africa (Lewis 2008:67). Patrimonial practices go hand in hand with deeply-rooted corruption of political leaders in SSA states. Following Bayert and colleagues, Clempson (2012) well explains that “the failure of democratic transitions and the failure to politically liberalize one-party states have led to batch after batch of kleptocratic elites running poverty stricken countries and boosting their income in the form of bribery, rents and thievery.”

Internal forces driving to poverty are strengthened by external causes which, for some, go back to centuries ago: slavery, colonialism and apartheid resulting in lasting trauma and the damage of self-esteem (Bigman 2011:6). Also, the work ethic in the post-independent era was distorted as many believed that this was the time of relief and of the enjoyment of state welfare without the necessity for hard-working. While people in Europe, like Rudyard Kipling in his famous poem, consider that colonization has been “The White Man’s Burden” by conveying civilization to “a degenerate race, incapable of development and civilized

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<sup>9</sup> According to the compiled data provided by the IANSA, Oxfam, and Saferworld’s report, “compared to peaceful countries, African countries in conflict have, on average: 50 per cent more infant deaths; 15 per cent more undernourished people; life expectancy reduced by five years; 20 per cent more adult illiteracy; 12.4 per cent less food per person” (Hillier, D et al. 2007:5-6). For more details, see Wordofa 2010:975-101.

behaviour” (Nwauwa 2004), several scholars deservedly observes that it was rather the so-called “The Scramble for Africa” (Clempton 2012).

Besides, many post-colonial nationalist leaders reacted against capitalism by turning to socialism and others were unable to initiate adequate market economy ways to Africa’s prosperity (Ayittey 2005:28-29). The decades of colonization were followed by western neo-colonialism and imperialism. Economic production was in foreign hands and most of the profit generated flowed overseas through colonial banks still operating. All the former French colonies in Central and West Africa having a unique centralized reserve bank with the CFA franc as basic monetary unit and controlled by France stands as a very illustrative case (Ayittey 2005:27).

The neo-liberal turn in African brought by the IFIs — in particular, IMF, WB and WTO — and their policies on self-reliance, liberalization trade, pricing goods, patent protection, promotion of market driven monoculture, and privatization of social services have worsened the economic political histories of failed states in SSA in the 1980s known as the “lost decade” (Clempton 2012; Kennedy 2012:228).<sup>10</sup> However, some other issues of great concern hindering African development are related to healthcare and the marginalization of women and children.

### **6.1.3. The scourge of violent and armed conflicts**

As stated earlier, the countries in SSA are fragile mainly because of the overwhelming mass violent conflicts they have experienced. Of the numerous peripheral zones which have gone through conflict situations since the end of the Cold War, “Africa, and in particular SSA, is one of the most destabilized regions” (Nkundabagenzi 1999:280). The plight of these mass violent conflicts, including wars, civil wars, civil strife, hostility and political instability is extremely disastrous when their typologies, causes, consequences and difficulties to resolve are considered.<sup>11</sup>

Several typologies have been used to describe violent and armed conflicts that have occurred in Africa since the independencies in the 1960s. The SSA region has been the battleground of several types of mass violence including anti-regime wars or political ideological conflicts, ethno-nationalist or ethno-tribalist conflicts, inter-ethnic conflicts, gang

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<sup>10</sup> Their typical strategy consists in macro-economic reforms that force austerity and cut social expenditures like healthcare and education (Clempton 2012); The IMF and WB’s stabilization and structural adjustment programme introduced in the early 1990s resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs and a huge out-migration of skilled people in many countries such as D.R. Congo, Ghana, Senegal, and Zimbabwe (Ayittey 2005:27; O’Manique 2004:6; Barnett & Whiteside 2002:156).

<sup>11</sup> In the last decade, thirty-eight per cent of the world’s armed conflicts have been fought in Africa (Hillier, D et al. 2007:5).

wars and genocide (cf. Scherrer 1999:58-63; 70-83). There had also been religious violence and “wars between states, armed rebellion against states (ranging from small-scale low intensity conflicts to large-scale civil war), armed secessionist rebellion (also of various scales), and coup d’état” (Bujra 2002:3).

Regarding armed conflicts, more attention is given to direct death and injuries. Yet the often overlooked and greater part of the human costs is the indirect deaths due to “the loss of health and livelihoods caused by the disruption of economy and society” (Hillier, D et al. 2007:5). For example, according to The International Rescue Committee, the Congo wars from 1998 to 2004 resulted in 3.8 million deaths and thousands of rape and other atrocities (Turner 2007:2-3). Based on their study on the civil wars in Uganda between 1960 and 2010, De Luca and Verpoorten (2012:5-6), show that armed conflicts have affected the social capital in terms of trust and associational membership. The resulting mistrust hinders development and economic prosperity since it disrupts people in trade-unions, farmer organizations, professional organizations, and community development organizations.

Armed conflicts in Africa make available firearms used for crime like armed robbery, firearms homicide, “livestock rustling, banditry, and insecurity involving pastoralists” as mentioned by Hillier and colleagues (2007:6) respectively in the case of Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya. Thus, they supply arms and ammunition increasing the impact and lethality of crime, domestic violence and societal violence. Also one of the most shocking impacts of armed conflicts is their financial and economic cost. Written by Hillier and colleagues, the report of IANSA, Oxfam International and Saferworld states that armed conflicts — in twenty-two SSA countries and Algeria between 1990 and 2005 — cost around 300 billion dollars U.S. to Africa’s development.<sup>12</sup>

It is helpful to apprehend violent and armed conflicts in SSA as complex phenomena. For a thorough understanding of armed conflicts in SSA, it is necessary to consider at least the multiplicity of their causes, the variety of their actors, and the various aspects (historical, social, economic and politic) influencing their origins (Euka 2011:24-5; Mateos 2010:25-9, 47). From this perspective, it is analytically possible to identify at least five significant root-

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to Algeria, the 22 SSA countries in view are Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, D. R. Congo, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan and Uganda (Hillier et al 2007:3). This likely underestimated cost amounts to an average of 18 billion per year and represents a loss of 15 per cent of GDP. This massive waste of resources could have been invested in addressing critical issues like the prevention of diseases (such as HIV/AIDS, malaria or tuberculosis) as well as the needs in education, sanitation and clean water. It represents “one and half times average African spending on health and education” and roughly the “equivalent to total international aid to Africa from major donors during the same period” (Hillier et al 2007:3, 9).

causes of armed conflicts in SSA: the past policy legacies, the politicization of ethnicity, the state fragility, political economy of violence and the resulting network of actors. Concerning the past policy legacies, the colonial system is firstly incriminated because of the outcomes of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 resulting in the creation of “artificial states” and subsequent claims over the borders after the independencies (Bujra 2002:5).

Needless to say, African soil in the Cold war era was the battleground for the competition between the superpowers: The USA and its allies (France and UK) against the former Soviet Union and its allies (China and Cuba). They were openly or covertly supporting, overthrowing or opposing governments and political parties and even initiating rebel movements.<sup>13</sup>

It is noteworthy that colonialism set patterns for the negative use of ethnicity in the contemporary states of SSA, if a cautious interpretation of the following observation of Scherrer is considered:

*Ethnicity* as term is used to describe a variety of forms of mobilization which ultimately relate to the autonomous existence of specifically ethnic forms of socialization. No clear-cut distinction can, however, be made between struggles by social classes and struggles by ethnic groups. To talk about [ethnicity and] the politicization of ethnicity seems tautological. Different types of actors such as states, trans-national companies, liberation movements, migrants' organisations, political parties, pressure groups, strategic groups, military leaders and populists all seek to make political capital out of 'ethnic identity'. Some actors deliberately try to influence and manipulate the ethnic-identity set-up (Scherrer 1999:57).

Accordingly, the state failure mainly due to the lack of integrity from political leaders is to be considered as the prevailing factor of intra-state conflicts in SSA. As accurately noted by Tasier Ali and Robert Matthews (1999:289): “Political leaders do have a choice, either to wave together often diverse people into a cohesive society, and thus strive for a stable social order, or to exploit ethnic and cultural differences in an attempt to hold onto power;” and thus, “[i]t is to the policies and practices of the ruling elites that we must look for the roots of civil wars.”<sup>14</sup>

It is pertinent to note that the colonial legacy, ethnic rivalry and the state weakness, although significantly involved as the root cause of armed conflicts, does not constitute the sole explanation. According to some relevant economic analyses of data in several war-torn

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<sup>13</sup> For example: In D.R. Congo, American intervention led to the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1964. From 1966 to 1989, “under the shadow of Cold War” was conducted the South African “Border War” (the Namibian war of independence) through the proxy of apartheid South Africa (Bigman 2011:196). Similar were the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique in the 1970s and the 1980s (Moe 2009:3-4).

<sup>14</sup> They have perceptively reached this conclusion based on their study of seven cases of civil wars (Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda) and two potential violent conflicts in Tanzania and Zimbabwe ((Ali & Matthews 1999:289).

countries, not only ethnic rivalry and hatred but also “income, export, governance, population density and the presence of mineral wealth” are at the root cause of civil war or genocide (Enuka 2011:22; cf. Collier et al 2003, Soya 2002). No doubt, armed conflicts in Africa have also to be attributable to external causes as there is a network or mixture of actors involved. As concluded by Oscar Mateos referring to the Sierra Leone’s civil war as case study, there have been primary, secondary and tertiary actors involved in the African armed conflicts since the 1990s. The primary actors include the direct belligerents: “governments, armed groups or guerrillas, militias, paramilitary forces, warlords, organized criminal gangs, police forces, mercenaries, violent fundamentalist groups, regional armed groups, regional troops, etc.)” (Mateos 2010:27). There are also the secondary actors, with invisible hands, but strongly interested in the continuation of the conflict. They include “business with interest in natural resources, arms industry, international governments, regional governments, private security companies, criminal networks, businessmen, as well as local and regional traders. The third actors are made up of civil society organizations, the diaspora, local and international mass media, regional and international governments, regional and international organizations, international and bilateral donors, and international humanitarian organizations. They intervene to manage the conflict but can also be supportive of one wing in the conflict for masked interest (Mateos 2010:27).

#### **6.1.4. The AIDS pandemic and the marginalization of women**

The healthcare system failure, the plight of HIV/AIDS as well as the on-going marginalization of women and children are additional challenges facing the SSA today. What follows is a succinct description of these issues emphasizing their social and moral impacts. Flint (2011:23), like Venter and Rees (2011:137), asserts that “Africa’s reputation as ‘the sick continent’ of the world is not unfounded” since the life expectancy in SSA has progressed very little in the past five decades” in contrast to other world sub-regions. Moreover, the SSA region is still suffering from some epidemic-type diseases eradicated elsewhere, in the developed regions, in the early twentieth century. These communicable diseases like “smallpox, malaria, tuberculosis, sleeping sickness, yellow fever, syphilis, and most and recently HIV/AIDS” are continuing to kill millions of people (Flint 2011:23).

##### **6.1.4.1. The plight of HIV/AIDS**

Although SSA is home to less than 10 per cent of the world’s population, it is the home of more than the two-thirds of people living with HIV/AIDS. Globally, of an estimated 35



million people living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2013, nearly 71 per cent (24.7 million) were from SSA (UNAIDS 2014:26,123). In this region, there were 2.9 million children (aged 0–14) and also 2.9 million young people (aged 15–24) living with HIV/AIDS and representing respectively 90 and 73 per cent of the global estimated prevalence (UNAIDS 2014:17, 26).

Although there are some disparities across SSA countries, higher HIV prevalence rates are concentrated in less than ten countries.<sup>15</sup> However, across the SSA region, people are sharing the heavy burden of the pandemic. Because of the epidemic, “people are dying, children are being orphaned, the elderly are left uncared for. Already disgraceful poverty is made worse” (Barnett & Whiteside 2002:7). Thus, adding the notion of “the affected” to the one of “the infected” gives an accurate picture of the epidemic’s socio-impacts (Barnett & Whiteside 2002:9).

Considering its spreading, HIV/AIDS in SSA presents some characteristics. In other regions, the virus mostly infects individuals from high risk groups like men having sex with other men, intravenous drug users and sex workers. In contrast, the epidemic in SSA is significantly a gender issue (Snyman 2009:201). Nearly 60 per cent of sufferers are female (UNADAIS 2014:26). Maybe one of the soundest overall understandings of HIV/AIDS epidemic in SSA is the one proposed by Leclerc-Madlala who argues that:

[HIV/AIDS] can be viewed as a result of pre-existing patterns of sexual culture and gender inequalities combining with on-going experiences of labour migration, urbanisation, civil strife, growing poverty and family disintegration [...] Together, these components have interlocked in such a way as to form a lethal context that has propelled the spread of HIV/AIDS [in a way which is] unequalled anywhere in the world (Leclerc-Madlala in IWGS 2006:35).

Thus, HIV/AIDS is not only “a health problem rooted in individual patterns of sexual behaviour”, but “the globalization’s pandemic shaped by broader geographical and economic forces” (O’Manique 2004:6). In other words, the pandemic is “part of the continental-wide ‘African Crisis’, characterized by high level of poverty, poor leadership, political instability, civil strife, disease, famine and environmental degradation” (Flint 2011:4).

The HIV is contracted through unprotected sexual intercourse, transfusion of unscreened blood, contaminated needles and syringes and mother-to-child transmission. Since the beginning HIV/AIDS has been mainly constructed as a heterosexual epidemic. This biomedical perspective is heightened by the predominant heterosexual mode of transmission estimated at 80-90% in SSA (Barnett & Whiteside 2002:38; Kamwendo & Kamowa 1999:165). Thus, the biomedical understanding forcefully enhanced the “ABC strategy” for prevention, which stands for “Abstaining” having sex, “Being faithful”, and using “Condoms”.

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<sup>15</sup> According to UNAIDS (2014:26), these rates are as follows: 25% South Africa, 13% Nigeria, and 6% Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

The subsequent understanding of the epidemiological factors of HIV/AIDS took into account the social and cultural factors like the inaccessibility to basic health care, gender inequality, poverty, illiteracy and the global economic environment. It led to the call for a more comprehensive strategy for prevention: The SAVE approach including “Safer sex practices”, “Available medication”, “Voluntary counselling and testing”, and Empowerment through education” (IWGS 2006:20).

Basically, the prevention of HIV/AIDS is encountering two conflicting views in SSA. The first view emphasizes the safer-sex practices as largely implemented in the Western settings and the Caribbean. However, this risk reduction strategy “has been notably less successful in SSA, prompting calls for re-examination of the safer-sex model’s suitability for the region” (Flint 2011:128). The second view is that promoted by the faith-based organizations (FBOs) — largely Christian but from the Muslim settings as well. Backed by some Western organizations such as the United States’ President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), they are championing the behavioural change and opposing the large distribution of free condoms. However, this second strategy is being exposed to the vitriol of the criticisms from liberal-minded scholars and activists (Flint 2011:128-9).<sup>16</sup>

#### **6.1.4.2. The marginalization of women**

With the plight of HIV/AIDS in SSA has emerged the issue of the traditional marginalized status of women and children being the more decisive factor of their vulnerability to the pandemic. Indeed, female physiological features (e.g. susceptibility to Sexual Transmitted Infections), the care of the ill and dying from HIV/AIDS family members, all increasing the exposure to HIV infection constitute only some secondary factors. In many societies of SSA women have less education, less economic independence, less access to health care and less power to negotiate safer sexual practices and reproductive matters (Du Toit 2009:181-4).

In addition, gender-based violence through abuse and rape are not infrequent phenomena. Moreover, several sex-related cultural beliefs and behavioural rites increase women’s risk of infection. They range from rites of initiation, rites and practices of marriage such as premarital sex, virginity testing, early or arranged marriage, polygamy, spouse inheritance to female genital mutilation (IWGS 2006:38; Kamwendo & Kamowa 1999:166-

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<sup>16</sup> This is the case of Flint (2011:129) who stresses that “The concept of behavioural change as a ‘social vaccine’ is problematic from a Western ‘rights’ perspective through which proponents endeavour not to judge individuals for their sexual or lifestyle choices. The faith-based model, which encompasses clear proscriptions against promiscuity and homosexuality in the interests of heterosexual fidelity, runs counter to liberal ideals of personal freedom and choice.”

172). Of course, men put not only women but also themselves “at increased risk of contracting HIV through the dominant construction of masculinity. Men are encouraged to admire and advocate: multiple sex partners, virility; and risky sexual practices” (IWGS 2006:35; cf. Flint 2011:142-4; Lesetedi 1999:47-56; Thwala 1999:69-80).

With the armed violence in war zones, has emerged the connection between militarism, violence, patriarchy, and sexual terrorism against women and girls. The illustrative example is the one of the Eastern region of the D.R. Congo where rape, sexual slavery and sexual brutality of unthinkable cruelty have been committed against women and girls.<sup>17</sup> “Initially, rape was used as a tool of war by all the belligerent forces in the country’s recent conflicts, as reported by Margaret Agama of the UNFPA in 2008, but now sexual violence is unfortunately not only perpetrated by armed factions but also by ordinary people occupying positions of authority, neighbours, friends and family members.” However, it is not only in war-torn countries where women and girls are suffering from domestic violence, sex abuse and sex trafficking. In several relatively peaceful countries like South Africa, sexual and gendered-based violence is a rampant phenomenon.<sup>18</sup>

Women and children in Africa are victims of the failure of health system that leads to the overall rate of 72 per cent of deaths caused by communicable diseases and complication arising from pregnancy, childbirth and perinatal conditions (WHO 2006b; cf. Flint 2011:23). Children are the most exposed to malnutrition, diarrhoeal illness and water-borne diseases due to the lack of clean water and sanitation in many places, especially in poor communities (Venter & Rees 2011:141). At the same time, women bear the burden of household chores including water-drawing from long-distant taps, sources or streams. In many settings, cultural patriarchy significantly explains the lower status of women and the related discrimination about healthcare, education, labour, and access to assets (Du Toit 2009:186).

From the above it is clear that Afro-pessimism is grounded on incontestable reality. When drawing attention to the plights of failed and fragile states, the predominance of pseudo-democracy, the scourge of armed conflicts, the endemic poverty, it is hard to be

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<sup>17</sup> The Ota Benga Alliance for Peace, Healing and Dignity (2008), reports 40 cases of rape every day in the province of South Kivu, D. R. Congo. It describes the related sexual horrors as follows: “Many survivors of sexual violence have received debilitating damage to their reproductive organs, resulting in multiple fistulas and incontinence. Women and girls have been left with broken bones, missing limbs and even burns. Some have been shot and stabbed in the vagina with bullets, bits of broken glass and corns of cob. Family men have been forced to sexually violate their daughters, sisters, and mother at gunpoint.

<sup>18</sup> In 2011/12, “The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development recorded the lodging of 217 987 protection orders, mostly by women (against their partners)” (Gould et al 2012:6). And research conducted by The Medical Report Council reveals that between 28 per cent and 37 per cent of men have raped once and between 7 and 9 per cent have committed multiple perpetrator rape (Jewkes et al 2010:23-31).

optimist about SSA ability for a redress. However, other analysts concentrate on the past of Africa and its actual potentialities to suggest the possibility of a recovery.

## **6.2. The vision of the “African Renaissance”**

The vision of the African renaissance draws attention to the “rebirth, revival and renewal, reconstruction, recovery and or reawakening” of the continent (Kamwendo 2010:271). According to Ntuli, the African Renaissance can be defined as “the rebirth of the African continent after centuries of subjugation” (Kamwendo 2010:271). The idea of African Renaissance has been revived through the considerable influence gained by South Africa after the demise of apartheid.

In his address to the 50<sup>th</sup> national conference of the African National Congress (ANC) in Mafikeng in December 1997, Mandela associated the concept of an African renaissance with the ideas of “reconstruction development goals, the spiritual and moral renewal of individuals and institutions, [...] a vision of a world of democracy, peace, prosperity and social progress (Venter et al 2005:262). Mandela’s successor, Thabo Mbeki, has popularized and revived the African Renaissance vision as a vibrant alternation to the globalization paradigm. It is, however, pertinent to note that before fading in the 1970s and 1980s, the idea of African Renaissance was articulated in the 1960s by prominent pan-Africanists leaders and intellectuals (Maserumule & Gutto 2008:73). Much can be said on the vision of African renaissance. But of concern here are its reference to the glorious past of Africa, its decline and prospects for the future of the continent.

### **6.2.1. The glorious face of the past**

In its broadest sense, the term “renaissance” as explained by Venter and colleagues (2005:59) can “refer to and include concepts such as political, socio-economic, cultural and technological renewal, as well as to the revival of civilisations through learning, art, architecture, intellectual endeavour, technological innovation, and the recognition of the dignity of man.” In this perspective, the African continent holds several examples of periods of renaissance. Indeed, before Greece — beginning with the conquest of Alexander the Great (336-323 BC) — and the Roman Empire (753 BC-146 AD), some civilisations, namely the ancient Egypt (3100-343 BC) and ancient Carthage (814 BC- 697 AD), have developed in Africa. Between circa 6000 BC to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, several renaissances or high points of civilisation occurred in SSA. This includes “post-pharaonic kingdoms and empires in West Africa (Ghana, Mali and Songhai); Central Africa (Kuba, Ndongo and Matamba); southern

Africa (Zimbabwe, Monomotapa and the Zulu Kingdom); North-Central Africa (Kanem-Bornu and other political states around Lake Chad and northern Nigeria); and in eastern Africa (Buganda, Bunyoro-Kitara and Ankole) (Venter et al 2005:40; Mboup 2008:102-3).

Discoveries suggest that Africa was the home of *Homo sapiens*: the earliest human being who used fire and was “a hunter-gatherer capable of making crude stone tools who appeared more than 200,000 years ago. The continent was also “the primary centre for cultivated plants like cotton, sorghum, watermelon, kola-nuts and coffee, and the first site of the domestication of certain plants for food (Venter et al 2005:63). Today, the mass of Africans are trapped in a cycle of abject poverty, persistent pandemics, and violent conflicts and despair since the glorious past had been superseded by a patently serious decline.

### **6.2.2. The decline of the African continent**

It is relevant to note that external interventions as well as internal factors have contributed in the on-going decline of the continent. First of all, peoples of Africa have experienced some external and collective muggings, the most damaging being the slave trade, colonialism, apartheid and post-colonialism. The iniquitous and devastating slave trade despoiled the continent from its healthy and valiant men and women. At least 28 million of Africans were brutally taken from Central and West Africa between 1650 and 1900. European traders shipped at least 12 million people to North America, South America and the West Indies between 1450 and 1850. Muslim traders brought at least 17 million of Africans to the coast of the Indian Ocean, the Middle East and North Africa. This so-called “Black Holocaust” plundered the precious workforce of Africa to enrich other continents. It seriously disrupted people’s lives between and inside the tribes through slave-raiding, forced marches and migration. The psychosocial trauma, the loss of self-esteem and human dignity resulting from the dark centuries of vile slave trade had been aggravated and perpetuated by colonialism and post-colonialism to have long-lasting effects on African people’s collective memory (Venter et al 2005:40).

The colonial period that took place after the partitioning of Africa from 1880 to 1912 brought more misery through the destruction of African political structures, the divide-and-rule strategy, let alone the sordid human exploitation and looting of raw material exported to Western countries. In his assessment, the British explorer David Livingstone advocated three “C’s” — Commerce, Christianity and Civilization — for Africa’s advancement. Instead, a fourth “C” meaning “conquest” replaced Livingstone’s suggestion making the Maximum gun — not trade or the cross — the symbol of colonial rule and atrocities treating Africans “no better than animals” (Venter et al 2005:67). In South Africa, the apartheid regime, another version of



colonialism, forced the colonized to live in the same country with the colonizer but in a state of segregation (Ntsha 2009:289). Performed under the pretence of “The White Man’s Burden,” the colonial endeavour has come to be well-understood as the “Scramble for Africa.”

The damages of colonialism in the lives and mindset of African peoples are still far-reaching. At the socio-economic level, colonial infrastructures, such as roads, railways, harbours, were built to serve colonizers’ interests. Colonial economy has resulted in class stratification giving the possibility to a minority of Africans to manipulate economic structures. The colonial educational system has strengthened the class stratification that has emerged since the post-colonial era. Rodney (quoted in Venter et al 2005:71) describes this situation as follows:

[...] education is crucial in any type of society for the preservation of the lives of its members and the maintenance of the social structure. The most crucial aspect of pre-colonial African education was its relevance to Africans in sharp contrast with that which was later introduced (that is, under colonialism). The main purpose of the colonial school system was to train Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as whole. Colonial education was education for subordination, exploitation, and the creation of mental confusion, not the development of the underdeveloped.

Colonialism created Africa’s economic dependency and the loss of creativity and inventiveness. African governments continue to beg for international aid for their basic need. Through the educational system, colonial powers undermined local languages because of their common belief in their cultural and linguistic superiority which entails civilizing Africans. This has resulted in cultural colonization explaining the fact that “some Africans still suffer from a linguistic inferiority complex” (Kamwendo 2010:273).

In her presentation at the African Forum on Anti-Corruption (28 February 2007), the South African Minister of Public Service and Administration perceptively described the role played by colonialism in the genesis of corrupted practices in Africa. She states that:

Colonialism distorted and undermined the value systems of the colonized, often intentionally as a means of imposing its rule and values. Clearly, corruption has historical roots that were exacerbated in the period of colonialism and apartheid, and today we are dealing with the impact of this legacy. Corruption distorts and undermines the value of all societies and their peoples (Fraser-Moleketi 2007:241).<sup>19</sup>

More can be said to blame Western powers that through slavery, colonialism, apartheid, post-colonialism, and cold war and imperialism have a large share in current endemic poverty, armed conflicts, backwardness, and underdevelopment in Africa. However,

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<sup>19</sup> In the same vein, Kwame Gyekye (1997:19-20) asserts that the “more elaborated bureaucracies” and sophisticated administration of colonial and postcolonial political systems only enhanced and aggravated the political corruption existing in traditional or indigenous Africa. Both pre-colonial and indigenous Africa are not free from political corruption. For example, “election (or ‘enstoolment,’ enthronement) and deposition (or, ‘destoolment’) of the chief are occasions [for prospective candidates to distribute gifts and bribes, that is,] for political corruption” (Gyekye 1997:20).



the present state of affairs demonstrates the profound guilt of African political elites in post-colonial states. They have mismanaged and destroyed the economic system by using the surplus generated by the private sector. As well-described by Moeletsi Mbeki (2009:9), they have acted in this way in order to

- (1) bolster their standards of living to levels comparable with those of the middle and upper classes of the West;
- (2) undertake half-hearted, loss-making industrialization projects [...];
- (3) transfer vast amounts of economic surpluses generated by agriculture and extractive industries [...] to developed countries as capital flight, while simultaneously obtaining vast loans from developed countries.

Most of the African leaders have been more concerned with strengthening their autocratic or neo-patrimonialist power. By so doing they have manifested little interest in building effective systems of governance, resolving ethnic and tribal conflicts and establishing the independence of the judiciary (Bigman 2011:232-3).

### **6.2.3. Prospects for the “African Renaissance”**

The vision of African Renaissance can come true. Although pseudo-democracies through fraudulent election still constitute a widespread reality, peoples in Africa are forcefully reclaiming more openness in democratic practices. In Nigeria and Senegal, respectively in 2007 and 2012, the omnipotent Presidents Obasanjo and Wade respectively could not overcome public pressure and resistance and they failed to remain in power for a third term. African countries can be inspired by the recent successful developmental advance of East Asian countries. Through “stable political legal systems, strong institutions, community participation, and firm government control” as well as “investments on infrastructure and on the provision of public services, these countries have experienced a rapid socio-economic progress (Bigman 2011:241-2). However, African continent can only experience an effective rebirth, renewal or recovery after overcoming some major hindrances at the psychological, political, economic and cultural as well as ethical levels.

#### **6.2.3.1. Political, socio-economic and cultural prerequisites**

At the psychological and cultural level, the peoples of Africa disregard the proper management of time. Failure to consider time as an invaluable economic resource brings about a critical inefficiency in the running of institutions and gross economic loss. A “fatalistic attitude to life” — common to traditionalists, Muslims and Christians and supported by a strong belief in witchcraft, sorcery and superstition — characterizes African people (Kinoti 1994:47). This attitude seriously damage the prospects for social, economic and political

development since it attributes to supernatural powers beyond human control physical and geographic ailments such as drought, famines, illness, infertility, epidemics, and death. Fatalism is coupled with cowardice and a sheer tolerance of evil in its various man-made or natural forms such as “oppression, torture, famine, corruption, disease and humiliation” (Kinoti 1994:47). Africans must depart themselves from wallowing in fatalism, undue tolerance and self-pity and abandon a frame of mind assuming that they will never fully participate in contemporary human skills, modern technology or the world economy except as consumers or providers of raw materials. The peoples of Africa, as declared President Mbeki (2003) have to gain the conviction that they are “the instruments of their own destiny” (quoted in Venter 2005:78).

In his declaration at the summit of the OAU in 1994, Nelson Mandela stressed what is critically lacking in African political leadership: the sincerity of the political will. He also lamented the absence of proper political decisions’ implementation when he stated:

One epoch with its historic task has to come to an end. Surely, another must commence with its own challenges. Africa cries out for a new birth, Carthage awaits the restoration of its glory ... we know it is a matter of fact that we have it in ourselves as Africans to change all this. We must, in action, assert our will to do so. We must, in action, say there is no obstacle big enough to stop us from bringing ... African Renaissance (quoted in Maserumule & Gutto 2008:73).

There are still reasons for scepticism despite the creation of the AU in 2002, in the place of the OAU, with “the ambitious agenda for promoting democracy and good governance” by the very African “leaders who individually and collectively have in many respects been responsible for wrecking their countries’ economies and suppressing the people for so many years” (Fombad 2005:9-10). The AU and regional political institutions all over Africa have to reject “quiet diplomacy” towards state terrorism and cease to be the forums subtly validating triggered and flawed elections (Mbeki 2009:116-20).

A matter of great concern is the establishment of accurate development policies in the context where African rulers, at a large extent and in most of African countries, do not have an effective political policy control. In fact, the non-African players controlling political policies range from foreign multinational corporations (e.g. extractive industries) to IFIs, through foreign state (e.g. former colonial powers) and non-state players like donors and/or creditors (Mbeki 2009:144-5). For that reason, President Mbeki (2003) views as an ultimate objective of the African Renaissance the change of perceptions about Africa in the global economy having the following prerequisites:

[...] prescriptions, donations, aid and assistance, previously accepted unquestioningly and without much thought, from friends and international agencies, with grateful and required deference, must surely give way to Africa’s investment of its own meagre resources

purposefully identified for their potential human development with the aim of overcoming the challenges facing the people of the African continent (quoted in Venter et al 2005: 78).

Accurate development policies must drive other socio-economic strategies. SSA countries have to strive for the training and retaining of skilled people, accumulation and investment in social capital (healthcare, education, public housing, and social peace) and seek competitiveness in the world markets (Mbeki 2009:145).

Since African countries still have to overcome the challenge of ethnic and religious conflicts, sound cultural politics leading to the promotion of national identity are of critical importance. Obviously, languages define cultural identity and common identity at local, national or transnational levels. Yet they offer limited possibilities unless they could be spoken by several tribal or large ethnic groups. Other means of creating a common identity have to be sought. This could include the belief in a common origin or destiny as well as sharing some significant historical events (Venter et al 2005: 78).

In fact, an efficient conflict resolution for a sustainable peace cannot overlook the accurate understanding of the causes-route of violent and armed conflicts in SSA. It must address the internal factors involved like “poor governance, ethnic rivalry, mismanagement of land and natural resources, declining economic conditions, and widespread poverty and famine [forming] a daunting bulwark against stability” (Moe 2009:vi). However, conflict resolution can hardly or ever succeed if all the efforts are only focused on local actors and neglect the involvement of regional, international and transnational actors. Hence, the whole process needs a thorough holistic and multidisciplinary inquiry for their complete identification (Bowd & Chikwanha 2010:246). As recently experienced, armed conflicts are at the same time centralized, regionalized and globalized; they are backed by a political economy of war for the profit on those seeking to control natural resources, or are involved in arm dealing and manipulation of humanitarian aid (Mateos 2010:27-8).<sup>20</sup>

Concerning poverty reduction, technocrats of international financial institutions advocated several strategies for SSA to claim the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These major changes include: (1) “improving governance and resolving conflict” — considered as “the most basic requirement for faster development”; (2) “investing in people is also essential for accelerated poverty reduction”; (3) “increasing competitiveness and diversifying economies”; and (4)

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<sup>20</sup> In their report, IANSA, Oxfam, and Saferworld, stated that “at least 95 per cent of Africa’s most commonly used conflict weapons come from outside the continent” (Hillier, D et al. 2007:3, 26). “According to the Global Facilitation Network Security Sector Reform, nations such as France, Russia, UK, China and USA, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, together account for 88 percent of the world’s conventional arms exports” (Bahati 2009; cf. Enuka 2011:25). Those arms are sold either illegally to rebel groups or legally to irresponsible governments violating massively human rights.

“reducing aid dependence and strengthening partnership” (WB 2000:1-5). All these achievements require greater political involvement of the population, national integration, better economic management, high investment, substantial access to health and education, reduction of gender inequalities, and political commitment to fight HIV/AIDS (WB 2000:3; UNDP 2013:6). Besides, the significance of education cannot be overstated. As Nelson Mandela points out in his book *The Long Walk to Freedom* (1995:194): “Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president.”

This raises the issue of social justice, equality of opportunities and the empowerment of women and girls suffering from inequality in educational access. In addition, many thinkers within and outside the continent emphasize responsibility, commitment, creativity and political vision of Africans themselves for a sustainable development taking into account the very precarious situations of peasants (Ali & Matthew 1999: 288-93; Kinoti 1994:35-8; Éla 1988:88-90). In this perspective, George Ayittey perceptively proposes a two-fold strategy: “First, African problems must be solved by Africans” [...]. Second, Africa must be developed by Africans, using their own “African model” (Ayittey 2005:3, 27).

### **6.2.3.2. The moral prerequisites of "the African Renaissance"**

To be sure, the vision of African Renaissance will turn to idle words if the issue of systemic corruption compromising the holistic development of the continent is not properly addressed. Particular attention is to be given to political corruption which is “an act of corruption perpetrated against the state or its agencies by a person holding an official position in pursuit of his or her own private or personal profit” (Gyekye 1997:2). In many countries, political corruption affects all the sectors of public life. It explains the collusion of the elite with the ruling party resulting in the takeover of the state. As explained by Geraldine Frazer-Moleketi (2007:242): “Under the conditions of democracy the state needs to take the lead in combatting, preventing, managing and eliminating corruption.” Corruption under all its forms should be considered as a governance challenge and a key prerequisite to development. For as Frazer-Moleketi (2007:242) continues: “The political cost of corruption is that it threatens democracy, weakens the developmental state and undermines responsibility, accountability and legitimacy.”

Unfortunately, most of the analyses of the causes of political corruption confine themselves to the political, social, economic and legal circumstances of the phenomenon (cf. Codjoe 2002:70-6); Gyimah-Boadi 2002:52-60). In this regard, weak leadership, patronage,

and nepotism, as well as poverty and impunity are mostly incriminated. In the same vein, the strategies to curb political corruption include the improvement of governance, the socio-economic conditions of public officials (e.g., increase of salaries), and of legal institutions (e.g., powers of law enforcement officers). To combat corruption, international organizations like UN and OECD recommend the political will at the highest levels, committed leadership at all levels, in addition to good governance, accountability and transparency coupled with the involvement of civil society and the media (Codjoe 2002:85).

However, those attempts and remedies are far from eradicating, if not minimizing, the critically challenging problem of political corruption. Because, as accurately asserted by Kwame Gyekye (1997:22), “political corruption is essentially or fundamentally a *moral* problem; it is a moral pollution of officialdom as of the wider society” (emphasis original). The phenomenon reflects “the decline of societal morals and the low status (or lack) of moral integrity, virtue and character of the public official” (Gyekye 1997:22). In other words, a thorough analysis of political corruption must include its moral circumstances because it is fundamentally the expression of “greed, avarice, and inordinate desire for ostentatious living [that] have been allowed to run berserk, blunting the moral vision of people inside and outside the government” (Gyekye 1997:23).

Furthermore, the vision of the African Renaissance can only become true with poverty- eradication whose causes-root are essentially moral. Indeed Africa is ensnared by what Collier has labelled the four poverty traps encompassing bad governance, corrupt and autocratic leader, political, ethnic and religious conflicts and land locked countries (Bigman 2011:12-4). One can notice that the first three traps designate moral issues. It is also true that Western balkanization and imperialism — some aspects of global ethics — have a large share in African poverty and underdevelopment (Kennedy 2012:206-10). However, the foremost culprits to blame for this plight are the corrupted leadership, hence the persistence of a moral problem of great magnitude: the widespread presence of a greedy, corrupt and patrimonial leadership and her ineffective, unstable and disrupted regimes that are failing to invest in health, education, infrastructure, and job creation (Bigman 2011:226; cf. Mills 2010:3-4).

Broadly speaking, the rebirth of Africa requires a holistic development which also includes a moral component as a prominent if not the most important factor. Unfortunately, several scholars and international experts think about the solutions to the worrying political and socio-economic situation of SSA only in terms of human development (cf. UNDP 2013:144-7; WB 2000:103). This human development aims at the improvement in the quality of life so that every human being has his or her basic needs met adequately. Those basic



needs are spelled out in terms of basic rights (health, education, shelter, food, clothing, water and sanitation). Yet this concept of development seems to overlook the psycho-cultural aspects of a holistic development including the sense of honour and dignity, the respect of self-esteem and the “potentiality [of people] given full scope for realization” (Kinoti 1994:54-5; Van der Walt 1999:76). George Kinoti aptly underlines the moral prerequisites of a holistic development, and thus of the African Renaissance as follows:

*Such development is only possible if it has a strong moral basis. Moral failure is at the heart of the prevailing socio-economic crisis in Africa. Selfishness on the part of the rich Western nation and the ruling African elites is largely responsible for the crisis. Tribalism, corruption, dishonesty, laziness and embezzlement are widespread in African countries. They too contribute very significantly to the social and economic problems facing us. And they are serious obstacles to development (Kinoti 1994:55, emphasis added).*

Put differently, the prerequisite of holistic development and the African Renaissance is not merely investing in people’s social and economic life but it is also and foremost to attend to their moral and ethical life. Yusufu Turaki accurately gets in this point when he says:

Where, when, how, and who will bring hope to Africa? This is the question that lingers perpetually in the minds of the majority of Africans. For, the State cannot be trusted, nor a fellow African, either. A stranger is a prime suspect, while a friend is a camouflaged enemy, capable of acts of betrayal. All these can change if African leaders, ethnic groups, races and tribes have (1) a father’s heart, (2) a servant’s heart, and (3) a shepherd’s heart towards all Africans (Turaki 1997:163).

Indeed, only virtuous people can bring hope to Africa. Hence, moral and ethical formation is the necessary and *sine qua non* starting point to solve the African socio-economic and political crisis. Turaki seems to make this point when he asks, “Can Africa survive?” And he answers:

Yes, she can, if only she can transcend or transform her present political, economic, social, ethnic, racial, tribal, cultural and religious predicament *morally and ethically*. Africa and Africans need to take a hard look at themselves *morally and ethically* (Turaki 1997:163; emphasis added).

According to Kinoti (1994:36), “the most important single cause of Africa’s social and economic problems is certainly bad government”; or, better stated, it is the bad governance resulting from a poor and corrupt political leadership. Thus, “[b]oth public and non-public persons would need to steel their moral wills to avoid involving themselves in acts of political corruption [and other moral ills]” (Gyekye 1997:46). As explains Gyekye (1997:46): “Ultimately, it is moral education, understood as character-education (or character-building), that will [...] provide the really effective and enduring therapy to this resilient *moral* problem of political corruption.” No doubt, Africa desperately needs, as Kinoti (1994:31) stresses, “a different kind of leader, namely men and women of integrity, ability, and education who have a genuine concern for and a commitment to the wellbeing of all their fellow citizens.” And he

acutely adds: “Such leaders do not arise spontaneously. They must be created through careful character formation and training of young people” (Kinoti 1994:31). Yet for the African renewal, what Gyekye and Kinoti recommend for political corruption and political leadership, namely character formation, should be extended to all the other domains of national social and economic life: education, business, corporations, entertainment, families, etc.

To sum up, this section on the concept of African Renaissance has presented some possibilities and prerequisites for the redress concerning the socio-economic and political situation of Africa captured by the concept of Afro-pessimism elaborated in the first section in order to complete a dialectic analysis of the two concepts. While the concept of Afro-pessimism has attempted to demonstrate to what extent the way to the common good is gloomy, the concept of the African Renaissance has explored the possibility of a better life for all in SSA. While the former concept points to the realistic aspect of the African current situation, the latter refers to an idealistic perspective of the future of Africa. The necessity of a moral prerequisite in terms of moral formation as regard to the advent of African Renaissance has been affirmed, yet it remains to show to what extent the predominant ethical theories prevailing in SSA could contribute to its realization.

### **6.3. Traditional morality, modernity and globalization in Africa**

As noted by Louise Kretzschmar & André van Niekerk (2009:60-1), several ethical theories are influencing the decision-making of African peoples in their understanding of what is good in their lives. These ethical theories or voices are “coming from African ethics, the ethics of Ancient Greece, and the religious ethical influences of the Middle East (Judaism, Islam and Christianity).” Of concern here is African ethics which, through African religion or traditional concepts, more or less influences virtually every native African irrespective of his or her religious affiliation (Mbiti 1969:xi; Magesa 1998:17). However, Christianity in SSA is not only competing with African religion and the above-mentioned major world religions but also with modernity. In post-colonial Africa, no one could ignore the impact of modernity. Modernity is “the motivation that drives science, technology and commerce” in our globalized world as Nürnberger (2007:162) asserts; for, as he perceptively continues: “Whether we are African traditionalists or traditionalist Christians, modernity has become the air that we have to breathe.” It is useful that the all-important description of the interface between African ethics and modernity be supplemented by a contemporary contextual critique evaluating the current status of what has become the African morality in modern Africa (Richardson 2009:53).

### 6.3.1. Traditional communality and morality

Drawing from Steyne's study of animism, Turaki has identified four categories of philosophical foundations in traditional African worldview, viz., holism/organism, spiritualism, dynamism/power-consciousness and communalism. And they are respectively governed by the law of harmony, the law of the spirit, the law of power and the law of kinship (Turaki 1999:96, 121). Similarly Neville Richardson (2009:44) recognizes these four categories through his first four key features of African morality, namely holism, ancestors, vitalism, and communality. However, he relevantly adds *ubuntu*, as a fifth feature one cannot overlook, especially in the context of Southern Africa. All these features distinguish African morality from Western morality. It is helpful to succinctly consider each feature in turn.

Traditional African thinking perceives reality as a whole rather than in a dualistic way. As such, it opposes the dualism of modern Western minds that tends to look at things not in their totality but rather in their separateness. This dualist mode of thought refers to pairs of opposites like "above and below, human and divine, physical and spiritual, sacred and profane, before and after, inner and outer, thesis and antithesis" and so on (Richardson 2009:44). Holism captures the need for harmonious relationships between people in the community, the symbiotic relationship between human beings and their environment. It refers to the need of traditional rituals helping to detect and correct any disruption in order to restore the balance and harmony since "the social ethics of Africa is deeply concerned with the common good" (Richardson 2009:44). The holism of African traditional thought embraces the holistic vision of salvation and well-being and the non-compartmentalization of one's life; and it does not distinguish morality "from the whole life of the community" or "the rest of African social life" (Richardson 2009:45; Kunhiyop 2008:8).

In African religion, the supernatural realm includes the Supreme God, the deities, and ancestral spirits. In Africa, the existence of God is given as witness to the special names of God found in all the tribal or ethnic languages. God is known as the Supreme Being, the creator, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, all-wise and immortal. His moral attributes include love, goodness, mercy, holiness, justice and governance (Mbiti 1969:29-38; 1991:549). Numerous and beyond description, the deities are the non-human spirits which constantly influence people's lives. Although powerful, the deities are subordinated to God and less powerful than Him. They can be either benevolent or malevolent and thus can induce people to perform good deeds or wonders, make them to be healthy or assist them to be wealthy. Yet deities can prompt people to do evil, to kill or cause pain and sickness. The ancestors or "the departed fathers," also called "the living dead" by John Mbiti, constitute "an important category of spirits" since "although they have died they are still very active and

interested in the affairs of their descendants” (Kunhiyop 2008:19, cf. Mbiti 1969:83). Besides the deities and the ancestors, there are human spirits or ghosts. They include the departed “who have passed out of the memory of the living;” those who passed away without children or without proper initiation, and those “who, upon death did not receive a proper burial” (Magesa 1998:56).

In African religion, as Laurenti Magesa (1998:74) notes, “God acting through the ancestors, but never completely absent from the scene, is the ultimate point of departure and arrival in human ethical life”. Belief in God underlies and reinforces the morality of the individual and the whole society. Mbiti (1991:17) puts it well as he states:

It is believed in many African societies that their morals were given to them by God from the very beginning. This provides an unchallenged authority for the morals. It is also believed or thought that some of the departed and the spirits keep watch over people to make sure that they observe the moral laws and are punished when they break them deliberately or knowingly. This additional belief strengthens the authority of the morals.

Dynamism, power-consciousness or vitalism of African thought refers to the appreciation and appropriation “of the life force of the person and community” (Kretschmar & Van Niekerk 2009:61). As noted by Klaus Nürnberger (2007:22-3), the dynamic power in view is “located in material objects, natural processes, people, communities, roaming spirits, rituals, witches and their familiars and so on”. He goes on explaining that “[socially], the most positive flow of dynamistic power is the life force of the extended family, the clan, the chiefdom and the kingdom.” In this perspective, enhancing life becomes an all-the more important moral responsibility. However, this can only be done through participation, solidarity, communion and communication because “one’s life force depends on the life forces of other persons and beings” (Magesa 1998:55). Enhancing life requires solidarity and communion with elements of creation, the spirits, the ancestors and ultimately with God. This explains the significance of traditional rituals for the maximization of the life force and the correlative role and authority of the ancestors on the well-being of their descendants (Richardson 2009:46-7). Magesa quoting Kuukure (1998:51-2) points out this ethical implication as he states:

More than any other force, the ancestors are protectors of the society as well as its most feared direct critic and source of punishment. Above all, they are the direct watchdogs of the moral behaviour of the individual, the family, the clan and the entire society with which they are associated. No serious misbehaviour or anti-life attitude among their descendants, in thought, word and deed, escapes their gaze. The ancestors are in a real sense “authority figures, who maintain the norms of social action and cause trouble when these are not obeyed”.

Together with holism, vitalism and spiritualism, communalism is a central aspect of moral thought in African cultures. Communalism is “the doctrine or theory that the community

(or, group) is the focus of the activities of the individual members of the society” (Gyekye 1996:36). This concept emphasizes “the normative idea that the community has some kind, degree, or level of moral or logical priority over the individual” (Ikuenobe 2006:1-2). As notes Gyekye (1996:17), “African life is traditionally communal. Social solidarity, harmony, and cooperation, are therefore values that are of great importance to the African people, and African religion provides a constant support for this social dimension.” African morality is embedded in the variety of oral tradition providing at the same time the means of religious activities, socialization and moral teaching. They include myths and legends, stories, songs, proverbs, riddles and wise sayings as well as a rich liturgy encompassing invocation, prayers, rituals and sacrifices addressed to the gods, spirits and ancestors (Kunyiop 2008:10-5).

In contrast to the almost instinctive Western view of person as an individual, in African view, people are essentially conceived of as “persons-in-community” and “life is life in community; there is no other possible life” (Richardson 2009:48; Nürnberger 2007:23). From the community, people derive their identity and nurture their morality as explained by Mbiti (1969:108-9):

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on a corporate group [...] Only in terms of other peoples does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. [...] Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and what happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.”

Although African ethics can proceed from deontological, teleological or utilitarian approaches like in Western thinking, the usual grounds of its orientation remain communal. Ethical reasoning in African ethics can be deontological in that “ethical principles and rules of conduct have been preserved over the ages in various customs, [taboos] and traditions” (Kunyiop 2008:9). However, what “really matters is one’s place in the communal whole and whether one’s actions are bad or good according to their effect in the life of one’s community” (Richardson 2009:49). When the teleological approach is used in African ethics, the concern pre-eminently lies with the positive consequences of moral actions on the family, the clan or the group rather than the individual’s interests. The ethical reasoning can take the utilitarian route and envisions “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” Yet, in contrast to Western thinking, ‘the greatest number’ should not be anonymous but rather it must have in view, according to African thinking, “those with whom the person has communal belonging” (Richardson 2009:50).



Correlative to communalism is the concept of *ubuntu*. The philosophy of *ubuntu* has been well emphasized in moral discourse in Southern Africa. The term is difficult to translate as Desmond Tutu (1999:31-2) points out:

*Ubuntu* is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, 'Yu, u nobuntu'; Hey, so-and-so has *ubuntu*.' Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life.

This statement was written in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the post-apartheid era. For Desmond Tutu, it was the spirit of *ubuntu* that allowed forgiveness and reconciliation rather than bloodshed to be the outcome of decades of oppression and racial segregation in South Africa. He goes on explaining that *ubuntu* contrasts with René Descartes' maxim: "I think therefore I am" because it means "rather: 'I am human because I belong, I participate, I share'" (Tutu 1999:31-2).

Coming from the isiZulu and isiXhosa languages of South Africa, the word *ubuntu* and its related philosophy can be understood through the following statement: "*Ubuntu* can be defined as a comprehensive ancient African worldview based on the values of intense humaneness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in a spirit of family" (Broodryk 2002:13). It also means "humanity towards others" as rendered by the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person through other persons) (Fraser-Moleketi 2007:243). From the Kiswahili of Tanzania comes a vision analogous with *ubuntu*, the philosophy of *ujamaa*, the spirit of family or "the values that relate to neighbourliness, and *utu*, possessing the values of a human being, of humanity and cooperation" (Fraser-Moleketi 2007:242-3).

As evaluated by Richardson (2009:53-6) as well as Kretzschmar and Van Niekerk (2009:61-2), African ethics offers valuable insights through its holism, vitalism, communalism as well as its *telos* of common good and its vision of *ubuntu*. Those aspects constitute an accurate critique of secularism, individualism, and dualism found in several forms of Western moral thinking. In her proposal about anti-corruption strategies in Africa, the former Minister of Public Administration Fraser-Moleketi (2007:243) lifted up *ubuntu* as the essence of a value system that underpins our commitment to anti-corruption because it is also "the spirit that is necessary for the creation of a socially cohesive and inclusive Africa." However, it is useful to reflect whether African ethics is a perennial solution to all the moral challenges facing Africa today.

### 6.3.2. The limitation of African ethics in a modern and globalized era

Since the colonial times, African continent has been invaded by modernity. Nürnberger (2007:11) has defined this Western mindset as follows:

The emphasis in modernity is on human mastery. Emancipation, autonomy, power and control are the driving forces. All authority is rejected — whether the authority of the church, the Bible, cultural traditions, the state, the family, the parents or the ancestors. Individuals are entitled to live their own lives (individualism), see for themselves (empiricism), think for themselves (rationalism), employ their own means (pragmatism), pursue their own interests (economic liberalism) and satisfy their own desires (hedonism).

All these tenets of modernity reject and defy the central features of African ethics. With urbanization began the erosion of traditional African values in the colonial times. This phenomenon has been aggravated by secularization, consumerism, globalization and postmodernity. In urban areas emerge some critical issues about the African traditional communal ethics as pointed out by Kretzschmar and Van Niekerk (2009:62):

[...] what is the community, who is a member of a community and who exercises moral authority within this community? Previously, the local community played an important role in defining and maintaining moral behaviour, but where there is no stable community (as often the case in many cities, informal settlements and refugee camps) the elders are not respected, women and children are abused, the ancestors are forgotten and young people run wild.

It is also in urban settlements that the moral tradition of the African view of universe has significantly declined. People's lives are hardly demonstrating the major aspects of African ethics including "the sacrality of life, respect for the spiritual and mystical nature of creation and, especially, of the human person; the sense of the family, communion, solidarity and participation; and an emphasis on fecundity and sharing in life, friendship, healing, and hospitality" (Magesa 1998:55).

African ethics has been romanticized to reach distorted political ends. The manipulation of *ubuntu* in the context of South Africa provides a case in point. As noted by Richardson (2009:55), the *ubuntu* concept has been used

both to gloss over the massive injustices of the past and also to mask the newly emerging inequalities of the present. The system of patronage is operative, as in all hierarchical societies, but is now accompanied by growing materialistic elitism. Favours for family and friends (nepotism) can only weaken productivity and service delivery. Every episode of corruption and crime has the effect of undermining the fabric of society.

Some scholars are prone to link the unsuccessful democratization process in Africa to the side-effects or limitations of African ethics. Accurately, Murhula (2012:6) raises this critical concern:

A question worthy asking at this point is to learn what makes Africa exceptional and resistant to good governance. In other words, what is the democratic future of Africa? Do cultural reasons explain Africa's regression into authoritarianism and the failure of

democratic consolidation? By valuing community rights over individual rights and by showing unlimited respect to authority are African cultures maintaining a hierarchical order over against the idea of equality and accountability, thus showing cultural incompatibility with the very idea of democracy?

Rightly, Bujo (2001:132-6) acknowledges the limits of the African tradition as a result of some of its practices that “make no real contribution to individual or group development” like female circumcision, polygamy, sorcery, retaliatory actions, forced marriage, abuse of hospitality, etc. For that reason, from a feminist perspective, African ethics is blamed about patriarchy that with the downturn of social control in the modern time underlies violence against women and children, the street-kids phenomenon and the spread of HIV/AIDS (Richardson 2009:55-6).

In fairness, it should be stressed that the traditional African communal system underlying African ethics does recognize individualistic values. Yet African ethics is a social not an individualistic ethic since it repudiates ethical egoism or self-interest. Gyekye (1996:47, 58-9) through his study of Akan culture of Ghana, concludes that “just as communal values are expressed in a large body of maxims so too are individualistic values.” The claims of community mean paying attention to communal values including caring for others, sharing, mutual aid, interdependence, reciprocal obligation, solidarity, and social harmony. At the same time, the claims on individuality in terms of individual initiative, the sense of responsibility for himself or herself are also given due recognition (Gyekye 1996:35, 51). Yet the challenge is always how to balance “one’s own needs, interests, and goals” and the needs and welfare of other members of the community in one’s thought and action” (Gyekye 1996: 51).

The most determinative limitation of ethics and morality from African traditional worldviews lies in the fact that they are not of universal application in their essence, since they are governed by kinship values and customs. Curiously, in Bujo’s words, African community ethic has a “universal perspective, since hospitality, daily friendship, and dialogue with the members of other ethnic groups are vital laws from which no one is expelled [sic]” (Bujo 2001:5-6). This kind of apologetic idealization is found also with the proponents of *ubuntu* philosophy which overlooks the cosmic and kinship aspects of African traditional worldview. Many understand “the promotion of humanness, social harmony and communal sharing” that foster *ubuntu* to be directed to people of any ethnic or racial group (Kretzschmar & Van Niekerk 2009:61; Broodryk 2002:13). However, the following remark from Turaki is illuminating:

Kinship morality and ethics in the traditional society relate to the universal moral order in that sense that the gods and the divinities do superintend and control the morality and ethics of the human beings. Human moral pursuits must be in harmony with the moral and

ontological order. However, the understanding, interpretation and application of the moral order and ethical codes are communal and kinship in nature. For this reason, they are limited and not universal (Turaki 1999:135).

In other words, ethics and morality cannot be located outside of an ancestry, the blood-community or kinship community where affinity, loyalty, obligations and moral practices are applied. Therefore, they “cannot be external, objective and transcendent” but they “are localized, parochial and private” (Turaki 1997:66). The tribalistic character of African morality has far-reaching implications and consequences. Moral and ethical codes, the notions of right and wrong, responsibility, accountability and shame are all located within the ethnic group (Van der Walt 2003:57-60). Even ethical relativism abounds since the world outside the kinship community “and strangers are excluded. They can be subjected to differential treatment. In all matters, the moral kinship community takes precedence over the outsiders and strangers” (Turaki 1999:127). Since traditional morality is not the viable solution to the challenge of African moral crisis, what about the morality fostered by the African church?

## **6.4. The African church**

Speaking of a typical African local church is an undertaking exposed to distorted or fallacious generalizations. Local churches in Africa and elsewhere are characterized by the variety of their origins, denominational affiliations or theological orientations. However, an acute observer could notice some commonalities pertaining to local churches in SSA enabling the description of a typical local church — hereafter the African church — in this sub-continent. Anticipating the assessment of Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation the subsequent sub-sections offer a succinct SWOT analysis of the African church presented in terms of its momentum (strength and opportunity), its weaknesses and challenges (threat). They aim at presenting a balanced picture of the African church and at the same time they spell out some salient moral issues justifying the need for moral formation within the church.

### **6.4.1. The momentum of the African church**

Of course, the African churches are first of all characterized by their specific denominational affiliations. The major categories found in this variety of affiliations merit a careful consideration. Besides, due attention should be paid to the fast numerical growth and social involvement of the majority of churches in SSA.

### 6.4.1.1. The variety of African churches

Notwithstanding the variety and complexity of the pluralist landscape of Christianity in Africa, Barret and colleagues (2001) have suggested a typology encompassing six major categories (cf. Patterson 2011:17-24). The first is the Orthodox churches, mostly situated in the Horn of Africa with large constituencies in Eritrea and Ethiopia and affiliated to the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Other Orthodox churches were brought by North Africans, African Americans, and Greeks to central and northern Africa. The second is the Roman Catholic Church being the largest religious group in the continent as a whole and in several countries like Uganda, Kenya, Angola, Mozambique and Nigeria. The Old Mission Protestants or the mainline Protestant denominations such as Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists constitute the third category. Like the Roman Catholic Church they were established by the European colonists. The fourth category is the New Mission Protestants including older Pentecostal churches and the Wesleyan holiness and Calvinist-leaning, conservative churches. The Assemblies of God, the Church of Christ and the Apostolic Faith Mission are the major examples of the established Older Pentecostal Churches.

The Roman Catholic Church maintains a formal hierarchy at the Diocese level and under the Catholic Bishops Conference at the national level and all culminating in the authority of the Roman Curia. Most mainline churches keep ties with their original missions or mother churches directly and/or through international confessional bodies such as the World Lutheran Federation, the Anglican Communion, the World Baptist Alliance or the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The All African Conference of Churches (AACC) and the Association of Evangelicals (AEA), both based in Nairobi, Kenya and respectively affiliated to the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) are the two main bodies gathering Mainline Protestants and Pentecostal Churches in Africa. At the country level, this divide between ecumenical and conservative churches is reflected by the presence of two corresponding national groups, e.g., the South African Council of Churches and the Association of Evangelicals in South Africa.

The fifth category, the Old Independents, is a vast array of churches “characterized by a variety of theological views, teachings, ways of worshipping, and historical background” (Hayes 1998:159; cf. Clarke 2006:4; Patterson 2011:21). They were generated either through secession from western mission churches or through independent ministries of dynamic prophets. They include the Church of the Lord (*Aladura*) in Nigeria, the Kimbanguist Church in D.R. Congo and the numerous Zionist churches found in southern Africa (Patterson 2011:21). Usually classified as African Initiated Churches (AICs), they have also been termed



African Indigenous Churches, African Instituted Churches, African Independent or even Native Separatist Churches, etc. (Hayes 1998:159). The sixth and last category is The New Independents and encompasses neo-Pentecostals and charismatics concentrating their activities in urban areas.

#### **6.4.1.2. A fast-growing church**

Christianity is by far the largest religion in the SSA: An estimated 57 per cent of people in this part of Africa “are Christians, 29 per cent are Muslims and 13 per cent practice African traditional religions” (Pew Forum 2010; cf. Patterson 2011:5). Statistics demonstrate that the centre of Christianity is moving from Western Europe and North America to the South since churches in developed countries are experiencing declines or only slight increases in membership. In the SSA, “the percentage of Christian believers is expected to increase in thirty-seven countries, to decline in other ten, and to remain the same in one [by 2025]. The average growth rate is 2.2 per cent” (Patterson 2011:14-5).

Several factors can explain the predicted explosive growth of Christianity in Africa. First, the numeric growth of the Church in Africa will follow the pattern or trend of the continent’s demographic evolution. Several SSA countries (such as Benin, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia) will keep this pattern because of their high fertility rates. By 2025, several countries (such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda) with currently large Christian constituencies are expected to “be among the top twenty-five most populous countries in the world (Patterson 2011:16; cf. Jenkins 2007:99). Some observers assert that as “economic downturns, political uncertainty, colonial repression, and disease,” of the past drove people in the church and religious movements, the socio-economic and political crisis experienced in failed states will remain conducive to religiosity in the quest for peace and security (Patterson 2011:16; Jenkins 2007:60, 90). Moreover, in the midst of a multiform crisis, churches and religious movements bring an alternative vision of hope through their activities and the biblical and eschatological message (Patterson 2011:16). Yet it cannot be overlooked that from the background of their traditional religions, Africans bear a deep sense of the sacred acknowledged by Pope John Paul II (1995: 42):

Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world. The reality of sin in its individual and social forms is very much present in the consciousness of these peoples as is also the need for rites of purification and expiation.

### 6.4.1.3. A church involved in social service<sup>21</sup>

The African Church, especially Catholic Church and Mainline Protestant churches in many countries are strongly involved in health care services, educational system and welfare works considered as their mission to the world (Nwaigbo 2011:578-9; Molt 2007:106). They operate paramount social services in cities and even in very remote rural areas lacking governmental facilities. In SSA, religious groups' contribution to health care is estimated between 40 per cent and 70 per cent (WHO 2007; cf. Patterson 2011:25). The various activities of the Church in Africa in health sector "have included immunization, natural family planning, milk and nutrition schemes for rural children, hospital visits and helping those people living with HIV/AIDS" (Nwaigbo 2011:579). Since the colonial era, the Church in Africa has built hospitals, urban and rural centres, provided drugs and trained the relevant and competent personnel within their nursing schools to lay the foundations of healthy countries (Ike 2007:119). In the same vein, in some SSA countries, like D. R. Congo, Ghana, Kenya and Zambia, since the colonial rule, the religious groups have provided the largest and strongest share in education from nursery, primary, secondary to tertiary levels as well as leadership training programmes for men and women. Other aspects of Christian groups' involvement include providing free education for orphans and disadvantaged children, "giving scholarship to bright students as well as running adult literacy classes for rural people" (Nwaigbo 2011:578). Indeed, the church is a leading force in the promotion of education for all. Similarly, the Church in Africa vibrantly participates in community development, especially through small scale socio-economic programmes in rural areas ranging from fund-raising and donations, training and supply in agricultural seeds and equipment (Nwaigbo 2011:579). Yet besides its strengths, the African church presents some weaknesses.

### 6.4.2. The weaknesses of the African church

In spite of their differences in theological orientation and actual practices, an acute observer could notice some common weaknesses shared by many local churches in SSA. Anticipating the assessment of Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation, the missionary,

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<sup>21</sup> The Grand Rapids Report of 1982 elaborated by evangelical Christians offers an interesting distinction between "social service" and "social action." The former includes: "(1) Relieving human need; (2) philanthropic activity; (3) seeking to minister to individuals and families; and (4) the works of mercy" (Stott 1999:14-5). However, "social action or socio-political action" is seeking "liberation from poverty and oppression" or (1) the removal of the causes of human need; (2) political and economic activity; (3) a seeking to transform the structures of society; and (4) the quest for justice (Stott 1999:15).

ethnic, syncretic, apolitical features of the African church as well as the character of its leadership require some attention.

### 6.4.2.1. A missionary fashioned church

The SSA region has been a missionary field *par excellence* since the 15<sup>th</sup>-century and more extensively in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. Western Catholics and Protestant pioneers reached African coasts and entered the hinterland and built missionary stations which have bud into churches and denominations with a membership affiliation amounting to thousands or even millions (Turaki 1999:10). The missionary venture has brought individual and community transformation enriching millions of Africans as church members or even citizens in the wider society. In fairness, the patience, perseverance and dedication of the missionaries should be acknowledged. Their spirit of sacrifice motivated many of them to continue to live in the same yard with their buried spouses who died of tropical diseases. With high esteem and gratefulness, Christians in Africa should exclaim and shout out: “Where would the African church be today, indeed where would modern Africa be today, without their pioneering work in almost all dimensions of life!” (Nürnberg 2007:53-4).

However, Stuart Fowler, from Australia, after a fifteen year missionary work in some African countries, has accurately suggested that two biases should be avoided in the evaluation of the missionary venture in Africa:

[On the one hand,] an account that speaks only of the positive contribution of missionaries may gain applause from supporters of the missionary enterprise but will lack credibility for many knowledgeable Africans. On the other hand, any substantial criticism of the missionary enterprise runs the risk of being seen as attack on that enterprise (Fowler 1995:24).

In this respect, since the 1950s African theologians and scholars have undertaken a critical assessment of the missionary venture. Central to this debate have been the issue of the presentation and transmission of the Gospel by the Western missionaries as well as its reception among Africans. The former have been incriminated of operating “under the belief that there is a discontinuity between Christianity and the African pre-Christian [cultural and] religious heritage” (Turaki 1999:10). Even though they used partially the vernacular to transmit the Gospel, their message was made of “a mixture of Biblical values, cultural Christianity and the general cultural and social values of Western societies” (Turaki 1999:11-2). Without being a vacuum, African recipients received this message through a religious and cultural dialogue with their own cultural and religious background (Turaki 1999:11-2).

Initiated from the 1950s, the quest for an African Christian theology and identity through research, writing and documentation constitutes a stirring attempt to redress the

above-mentioned negative side of Western missionary work. This theological and cultural agenda has been a synchronic venture through scholarly publications of Africans in the Diaspora and Blacks in the West Indies and North America to correct Western notions and conceptions about Africa. As pointed out by Turaki, Irele and others, this work is based on the following affirmations: “(1) Africans have an enduring history; (2) Africans have dignity, worth, honour and identity; (3) Africans have a civilized culture, religions, traditions and societies; (4) An African can be a scholar, a scientist, an administrator, a politician and a theologian (Turaki 1999:15; cf. Mudimbe 1988:35-43).

African theology has developed far beyond the simple criticism of missionary work and its approach characterized by paternalism and the denigration and negation of African culture and way of life. It has proposed some corrective solutions which include the consideration of “African traditional religions, cultures and philosophy as prolegomena to understanding and interpreting Christianity and the Holy Scriptures” (Turaki 1999:17). Other propositions dealt with the indigenization, Africanization or contextualization of Christianity, targeting especially the fields of worship, liturgy, clerical origin or theological and social issues (Turaki 1999:18). A more drastic proposition concerned itself with the direct contribution of African churches to the world, and hence authentic self-expression. In 1971, the Kenyan Presbyterian pastor John Gatu initiated the “moratorium debate” as he suggested the suspension of missionary funding and personnel sending for five years in order to curb “missionary imperialism” and generate self-reliance and creative administrative models for African churches (Mugambi 2004:153, 157-8).

As described by Jesse Mugambi (2004:154-5), in the 1970s and 1980s, two theological discourses, namely “the liberation-inculturation discourse” and “the conversion-salvation discourse” were in vogue in the African continent. Predominant in the ecumenical and Roman Catholic circles, the former discourse echoed Latin America’s liberation theology, and found its more vocal articulation in the struggle against apartheid. The liberation theme was emphasized against the background of the political struggle of these decades championed by the OAU in view of Africa’s complete decolonization. Along with the struggle against colonialism and racism, African women, in the same period, posited the dismantlement of violence and maltreatment at home and workplace as a necessary precondition for African liberation. The conversion-salvation discourse was central to Evangelical and Pentecostal churches linked to the Lausanne Movement and gave priority to conversion and salvation over the contribution of the church to socio-political and economic change. In African ecumenical thought, the liberation theme was superseded in the 1990s by the one of reconstruction; the advent of theology of reconstruction was largely a reaction to the

structural economic and political reforms imposed on the continent by bilateral and multilateral institutions worsening the pauperisation of Africa and boosting the prosperity of Western countries (Mugambi 2004:159-60).

The most radical reaction to the missionary legacy and a way of affirming African identity has been the establishment of the AICs. These churches refer to various theological backgrounds and traditions (Methodist, congregational, Anglican, orthodox, etc.), but “they are defined in contrast to the ‘mission’ churches, or the ‘historical’ churches, or the ‘white-led’ churches or the ‘mainline’ churches” (Hayes 1998:159). They have flourished since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in South Africa where they consist of nearly 8000 denominations, but they have also widely gained ground all over SSA. Being deeply rooted in African culture, some of these churches are marginally Christian, other very syncretistic; most of them seem less concerned with abstract doctrines but significantly stress healing practices, deliverance from evil spirits and communal solidarity (Hayes 1998:164-76).

In other words, the quest for an African Christian theology and identity has resulted from the neglect of African realities through the prominence of dogma and the eagerness to meet the needs of African people. The Word of God in missionary fields and the resulting churches has been “a fixed set of propositions to be thrown to people, irrespective of their situation and disposition” instead of being “God’s redemptive response to current human needs” (Nürnberg 2007:151). Consequently, church members have been unable, afraid or demotivated to bring needs, agonies, diseases, fears, threats, conflicts, enmities, and suspicions to the community. As “the gospel of God’s redemptive love in Christ” has not been a powerful reality in mainline churches people have been prone “to seek the help of diviners, prophets or the AICs” (Nürnberg 2007:145).

#### **6.4.2.2. An ethnic and syncretic church**

As a result of the very influential traditional worldviews the African church bears the ethnic colour or feature of the society at large. The communalistic perspective and the kinship system of traditional African societies are key elements in the “understanding of African concepts of community, religious beliefs, behaviours, practices, morality, ethics and its manifestation of ethnicity and tribalism” (Turaki 1999: 103; 1997: 52-53, 66; Van der Walt 2001:32-3; 1997:29-44).

The ethnic character of many denominations in Africa is the outcome of the missionary committees’ arrangements. The vast regions to be evangelized were apportioned to accommodate several mission agencies. Bible translation and the use of a specific indigenous language, the development of rural missionary stations in the pioneering



missionary work reinforced “ethnic conscious and identity along religious lines” (De Gruchy 1995:170). In urban areas, “ethnic groups have tended to settle in particular areas of the city” and have established local churches affiliated to the very same denominations based in their villages of origin (Kunyiop 2008:109).

Communalism or the African concept of community is still vivid in the church members’ way of life. Communalism is nurtured by the kinship system, “the basic organising principle of the traditional African community” and is defined by Turaki (1999:102) as follows:

[Kinship or lineage] refers to family relationships rooted in a progenitor or an ancestor. The relationship is defined in terms of the physical and blood linkage to the progenitor or the ancestor. The community takes its roots or beginnings from this human origin (physical and blood source) and a network of relationships are built around this ancestral nucleus.

Again to quote Turaki on the foundational role of kinship for a community as regard to ethics and morality:

Kinship system forms the basic social unit and general social organization and the community revolves around it. It regulates and orders the life of a community/society on a kinship basis. The most powerful principle of social organization is the concept of “brotherhood” derived from “blood relationship”, which is characterized by kinship affinity, loyalties and obligations of relatives. This regulates social behaviour and attitudes and orders social interactions in society among relatives and persons. Religious and social norms and codes of behaviour, attitudes and practices guide social interactions of kinsfolk and also are to relate to outsiders and strangers (Turaki 1999:104; cf. Turaki 1997:52-3).

In the church, ethnicity is more or less obvious when these resources have to be allocated and clergy or members must be given important positions of leadership (Gifford 1998:343). From his magisterial work on the public role of the church in Africa through the case studies of Ghana, Uganda and Cameroon, Richard Gifford draws the following conclusion:

[...] there seems little significant difference between the exercise of leadership in the churches and in national life generally; indeed, in some places it may sometimes be more autocratic and self-seeking. It is probably unrealistic to expect the churches to value legal or procedural niceties more highly than they are valued in the surrounding culture (Gifford 1998:343).

In addition, ethnicity remains one of the very challenges facing the African church. As previously stated, the Rwanda genocide was mainly an ethnic conflict. This mass murder of more than half a million people from April to June 1994, that shocked the entire world, took place in a country of more than 80 per cent of the population being Christian. “This means that Christians killed one another, and some were slaughtered in church buildings where they took refuge” (Mbiti 1998:155). Moreover, “church buildings became the primary killing grounds” (Longman 2010:i). As a matter of fact, “Christianity was an integral part of the ‘genocidal culture’” as Gifford (1998:54) explains:

Catholic missionaries [...] had singled out the Tutsi as 'natural overlords', and had solidified the till then rather fluid categories of Tutsi and Hutu. Priest-anthropologists had played their part in providing the mythical understanding of the Tutsi as invaders, foreigners, Ethiopians — even Semites — which had buttressed Tutsi over-lordship till the 1950s, and then after the rebellions in 1959 and through the period of independence had fuelled the Hutu repression of the Tutsi. In Rwanda, everyone was 'wading in mythology', and the church was crucial in both creating the myths and preserving them.

Protestant churches played a similar role in the genesis of the civil war of 1994 in Liberia. Also, the extravert African church bears many resources born of contention between church members, as pointed out by Gifford (1998:54):

For all the talk within African church circles of localization, inculturation, Africanization or indigenization, external links have become more important than ever. Through these links the churches have become a major, if not the greatest single, source of development assistance, money, employment and opportunity in Africa. These links — bringing ideas, status, powers, structures and resources — operate for different churches in different ways, at different levels.

Thus, the ethnic character of the African church is a serious indication that "the moral perspectives of African Religion are essentially alive throughout the continent" (Magesa 1998:17). Mbiti, a pioneer of African religion warned about taking seriously some statistics asserting the future extinction of African religion as the faith of those called "convert" or "born-again" Christians may remain essentially syncretic. He accurately asserts that changes, if there are any, after embracing Islam or Christianity,

[...] are generally on the surface, affecting the material side of life, and only beginning to reach the deeper levels of thinking pattern, language content, mental images, emotions, beliefs and response in situations of need. Traditional concepts still form the essential background of many African peoples (Mbiti 1969:xi; cf. Nürnberger 2007:40; Magesa 1998:17).

In the same vein, Éla (1988:33) rightly asserts that "Christianity remains outside the intimate life of the African;" and well offers one the fundamental reasons of this state of affairs: "Because the Christianity of the [missionaries] supplies no answers to the difficulties of daily life, Christians continue to follow the traditions of their villages or districts. This ambivalence is the source of many tensions that mark people." But the Christianity of Roman Catholic Church and Mainline Protestantism is so evaluated because the God or gods of traditional religion are utilitarian ones. What Wiredu (1998:307) affirms for the Akan of West Africa well applies for the rest of the SSA: "the Akans are known to be sharply contemptuous of 'gods' who fail to deliver; continued respect is conditional on a high percentage of scoring by the Akan reckoning". In other words, for many African Christians (or even Muslims), "religion must have immediate relevance in coping with the various problems of life on earth" (Gyekye 1996:16-7). From this traditional belief results a utilitarian, pragmatist and anthropocentric conception of morality: "what is good in general is what promotes human

interests” (Wiredu 1998:307; Bujo 1990: 50; van der Walt 2003:57). The traditional concepts vivid in the heart of many Africans include the veneration of ancestors being “the first instance of appeal,” the mediators between the living and the distant God in African religion (Nürnberg 2007:40-1). Consequently, as Nürnberg (2007:40) points out, many African Christians live in “two worlds” — the one of “the living dead’ and the other of “the living God” as church members, and even “prominent African theologians, confess and affirm their African heritage, including ancestor veneration, and strive to incorporate it into their spirituality and their theological system.”

### **6.4.2.3. An apolitical and escapist church**

As far as the church public role is concerned, speaking of an “apolitical church” seems to be an appropriate way of including all the major trends in SSA. It is not only because churches or denominations are officially registered as apolitical associations but also because many of them claim to be apolitical (Gifford 1998:53-4). Such rhetoric is used at best to express a lack of concern or a feeling of powerlessness in face of social injustice, and at worse to justify or dissimulate tacit support to those in power.

As a matter of fact, some churches rooted in the eschatological premillennialist beliefs are strictly private and limit their activities to worship, biblical teaching, evangelism and pastoral care. There and elsewhere politics may be considered as a “taboo-topic” or be regarded essentially as dirty-hand work”. Other churches uncritically submit to state authorities or adopt a “lethargic, passive and careless” attitude by saying “God is at work, we can do nothing” (Nürnberg 2007:146-7). A notable example is the attitude of the AICs to the apartheid system. Despite its large constituency and resources, the Zion Christian Church in South Africa demonstrated their often-lamented submission when “they invited President P W Botha to address the pilgrims’ crowds at ‘Morijah,’ their headquarters” (Nürnberg 2007:174). Still other churches are more or less involved in social service including confessional education, health care, and diaconal activities for the poor. Yet few seem to be responsibly involved in social and political action, like lobbying, to help building the nation, establishing the rule of law and managing with integrity the common patrimony for a better life for all the citizenry (cf. John Paul II 1995:81-2). The development of Black Theology and anti-apartheid activities in South African (Black and White) churches and other voices from liberal and feminist theologians in the continent are to be considered as marginal trends (Maimela 1998:111-9; Keane 1998:121-40; Mbiti 1998:141-55). Because of restrictions imposed on missionaries in the colonial era, most of African churches have been ill-prepared to face their responsibilities of fighting socio-political structures of oppression, as Kinoti pointedly says:

The Christian tradition that the church in Africa has inherited teaches that the Christian's duty with regard to the state consists of praying for the authorities, obeying them (even revering them) without asking any questions, and paying taxes (Kinoti 1994:82; cf. Gifford 1998:54; Éla 1988:8-10).

Rwanda's genocide ending the Habyarimana regime (1973-94) is a very illustrating case of the African church compromising with dictatorial governments and failing to be the voice of the voiceless. Gifford explains this situation:

[The] church turned a blind eye to the injustice of the system, in return for the prestige and influence that went with unchallenged control of education, health and development generally. Pastoral letters deliberately remained vague and non-specific, falling far short of denouncing those responsible for evils, even when they were widely known. Injustice was present even within the church. [...] In the genocide itself, there is evidence that individual churchmen and women took part. Other mainline churches also compromised in the structure of oppression (Gifford 1998:54).<sup>22</sup>

In addition to this case highlighting the participation of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in the Rwandan genocide is also the striking involvement of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, their leaders, as well as their members in the injustices leading to the civil war and implosion of Liberia in 1990. To quote again Gifford:

Liberia claimed to be built on Christianity. It prided itself on its Christian roots; indeed its early Presidents gave one of their main reasons for the freed slaves returning to Africa as 'to convert the heathen', a motif repeated right up to the 1950s. Political rhetoric was saturated with Christian references and allusions. Political leaders were prominent in their churches — indeed, only with such Christian affiliation could they become political leaders. Evangelical and Pentecostal churches *claimed to be apolitical*, but also offered nothing but support for any regime which promoted evangelisation (Gifford 1998:53-4; emphasis added).

The cause-root of the lack of a vigorous socio-political involvement or critical solidarity with the government is to be related to "the development of an escapist Christianity" through the dualism of body-soul and the sacred realm-secular world introduced by Western missions (van der Walt 2001:18-21; Kunhiyop 2008:68). For example, Evangelical missionaries insisted on "pietism (a limitation of the gospel to one's soul or inner life), individualism [and] personal holiness" only — the kingdom of God was spiritualized, only heavenly or transcendently understood, hence the reluctance to politics and public life (van der Walt 2001:18).

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<sup>22</sup> Regarding the injustice within the church leadership and its political compromising, Gifford (1998:54) notes: "the Catholic bishops were predominantly Hutu, dominating a mainly Tutsi clergy. Church leaders were also personally linked to the regime; the Catholic Archbishop of Kigali was a member of the ruling party's central committee for fifteen years, and confessor to the President's wife."

#### **6.4.2.4. A church longing for spiritual and servant leadership**

African cultural tradition and the missionary legacy have fostered authoritarianism in the African church. Nürnberger (2007:127-8) elucidates this combination of factors as follows:

The Western authoritarian approach had a direct impact on the church in the mission field. When missionaries first went to Africa, authoritarianism was firmly entrenched in the Western state, the church and the mission societies. The missionaries and their converts had to toe the line. In their local spheres of responsibilities missionaries became 'chiefs'. When it gained its independence, the African church organised itself in a hierarchical fashion. Pastors stepped into the role of clan heads, deans into the role of sub-chiefs, and bishops into the role of chiefs or kings.

This authoritarian tendency clearly correlates with the Catholic hierarchical model. However, this model has also gained attraction among African Protestants within a context highly influenced by African religion. For, as Nürnberger (2007:128) explains "Respect for Christian missionary traditions took the place of African ancestral traditions. Inherited doctrines and ethical norms defined what was acceptable in the Christian community."

Thus, spiritual and servant leadership could hardly be viewed as the predominant model of leadership in the African church. In contrast, in many countries a leadership system characterized by a patronage controlling spiritual power and the resources of the church parallels the state's neo-patrimonial system. The state has succeeded in co-opting church leaders who become unable to challenge the status quo through critical and prophetic witness, yet in turn establish clientelism, dictatorship and corruption as mode of governance in local churches, denomination or dioceses. This has been an on-going phenomenon in the D.R. Congo since President Mobutu's rule controlled many church leaders of Protestant denominations, the Roman Catholic Church and the AICs and their respective churches. The churches, in particular Baptist denominations, in Liberia experienced the same reality under William Tolbert's presidency (De Gruchy 1995:172-3).

In his grass root study of some Protestant and Catholic local churches in Rwanda Longman (2010:200) has linked authoritarianism and ethnic divide as follows:

The attack on authoritarianism that emerged in Rwanda in the 1990s targeted not simply the state but the churches as well, seeking to democratize church structures and redistribute power – not only control over resources but spiritual power also. Just as state leaders who felt their positions threatened by the pressures for democratization turned to ethnic arguments to regain popular support and bolster their positions, some church personnel were also drawn to reactionary politics to bolster their own positions.

Within the African church, authoritarianism and the patron-client system go hand in hand with injustice. This state of affairs contributed to the 1994 Rwandan genocide (1998:54).

Besides their compromising in patrimonial and ethno-politics inside and outside the church, many church leaders have also to be blamed for their propensity to womanizing



behaviour and financial exploitation of church members. Together with the need of a spiritual and servant leadership, the negative side of the missionary legacy, the influence of African religion through parochial communality and syncretism, the ambiguous political role are weakening the life and witness of many African churches. Yet the African church has still other challenges to overcome.

### 6.4.3. The challenges of the African church

In a world which is becoming a 'global village' by the means of media and international communications, churches in Africa are being challenged and undergoing several changes at the theological, practical and ethical levels. Of these challenges, the impact of modernity, the challenge of Islam and African religion, as well the spreading of HIV/AIDS and Faith Gospel or Prosperity Theology need to be outlined.

The impact of modernity is noticeable in SSA. Pope John Paul II in his exhortation given at Yaoundé, in Cameroon, in September 1995 pointed out this reality when he said:

During my visit to Malawi I made the same point: *"I put before you today a challenge — a challenge to reject a way of living which does not correspond to the best of your traditions, and your Christian faith. Many people in Africa look beyond Africa for the so-called 'freedom of the modern way of life'. Today I urge you to look inside yourselves. Look to riches of your own traditions, look to the faith which we are celebrating in this assembly. Here you will find genuine freedom — here you will find Christ who will lead you to the truth"* (John Paul II 1995:36-7).

Moreover, atheism and secularism are gaining ground especially among the educated people. Practical atheism reinforced by secularism or life compartmentalization is making them stand as nominal Christians (Van der Walt 2001:21-2; 1999:3). Nominal Christianity is reinforced, because of the backdrop of the conception of the utilitarian God of the African traditional religion since religious faith is not primarily embraced "for the upliftment or the union of the human soul with God" but rather stands as "a means for utilitarian and practical" advantage (Gyekye 1996:16).

Similarly, Afro-centrism is nurturing a hermeneutic of suspicion against Christianity. By so doing, it is propagating a "back to African religious practices" message presenting Christianity as a tool of Western imperialism and domination mediated by Christian missions. Jean-Marc Éla was surely correct when he wrote in the 1980s what is still an on-going reality:

The claim that Africa is "incurably religious" must be demystified. Our societies are no longer sheltered against secularization, atheism, or religious indifference. We need only read African literature to realize the attitude of the new generations toward Christian missions. The disaffection of a large part of the intelligentsia is a serious challenge to the African church. Faced with the invasion of the sects into university campuses and intellectual circles, we can no longer entertain comfortable illusions of security. Why

should we orient theological research around rites and beliefs alone, while modernity causes the masses to be aware of another set of problems? (Éla 1988:171).

With this negative impact of modernity — through media and urbanization — freedom or right discourse and promiscuity, marriage commitments are broken; infidelity or extra-marital affairs, and divorce are becoming more and more frequent phenomena in the church (Botha 2006:17-8; Covenant Keepers 1999: Lesson 5 & 6). In addition, church members are prone to self-interest and greed; materialism and consumerism, and even corruption are also perverting the church. The Congress on Christian ethics held in Nigeria in November 1997 observed that:

Many Christians now focus on money and what it can buy, sometimes using it as the measure of God's blessings in their lives. Many feel that, since they need these materials and, since it is not easy to obtain them by any means other than the corrupt methods — which everybody else seems to employ — there is nothing wrong with compromising their beliefs to obtain them (Covenant Keepers 1999: Lesson 7).

From outside too the church is facing the challenge of Islam. The Islamic religion became to be firmly established in SSA between about 1200 and 1500 by *jihad*, which included persuasion, trade, or violence (Isichei 2004:49). Peaceful coexistence and toleration are sometimes difficult to be preserved between Islamic and Christian communities. It is only easier when the Islamic community is small and insignificant. But when they reach a big enough constituency, Islamic communities present a political threat, since they are used to look for the control of the government and to strive for the entrenchment of *sharia* in the national Constitution. In Nigeria, the civil war (Biafran War) of 1967-1970, while having regional and ethnic alignments, was also interpreted as a conflict between Muslims and Christians. In 1987, Christian-Muslim violence in the centre of the same country resulted in 11 cases of death and many injuries, destruction of a church and a mosque as well as many properties. Thereafter, other clashes ended with “much greater loss of life” (Isichei 2004: 119). Islam is rapidly spreading in SSA partly due to the financial and material advantages it has been offering not only to poor populations but also to governments through the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and other organisations (Isichei 2004: 119). Against this backdrop, Christianity as majority religion in SSA is challenged in its having “majority status without domination” as churches have to ensure “that the civil and religious rights of minority religions are protected” (McCain 1999:11).

Along with the larger society, the African church is affected by HIV/AIDS and it cannot help but be seriously concerned about this pandemic. As noted earlier, over two-thirds of the world's thirty-three million people infected with HIV are living in this region (UNAIDS 2014:26,123). The church mission is to care about all these infected without neglecting the

even greater number of those affected by the pandemic. Of course, churches are being involved with a narrow or a broad focus on AIDS actions. These actions are “often categorized into prevention, care, support, treatment, stigma reduction and advocacy” (Patterson 2011:40-2). However, combining data from Barret and colleagues (2001) on religious affiliations and from UNAIDS (2006 & 2008), Patterson has drawn the conclusion that “the mean HIV rate for Christian majority countries [9.5 per cent] is much higher than it is for Muslim majority countries [1.39 per cent] (Patterson 2011:9). In addition, “the correlation between Christian majority and HIV prevalence is most evident in high-level epidemic countries. Of the nine countries with generalized high-level epidemics, eight are majority Christian. The other, Mozambique, has an ethno-religious majority and sizeable Christian minority” (Patterson 2011:9).<sup>23</sup> Plausible explanations offered by the findings of some limited studies include the following observations: (1) Muslim populations generally practice more circumcision than their Christian counterparts do; (2) Muslims often practice early marriage and their women are less likely to have premarital sex than Christian women; (3) prohibition about sexual behaviour does have a greater impact among Muslims than in Christian communities; (4) Muslim leaders seem to control sexual behaviour better than their Christians counterparts (Patterson 2011:13). However it may be that the higher HIV rates in majority Christian countries question not only the church approach to addressing AIDS but also and basically its ethical approach to family, marriage and sexuality.

Perhaps none has more thoroughly described the religiosity defying all secularism characterizing African religion and culture than Mbiti. He states that African peoples “eat, dress, live, think, work, dance and breathe religiously. Indeed, every activity of these people is founded on religion, be it name giving, food, dance, celebration to mention but a few” (Mbiti 1969:68). Although beneficial to some extent for evangelization and the wholeness of Christian faith and morality, this religiosity has been detrimental for a qualitative spiritual growth in the church. African religiosity has not always been coupled with spiritual wisdom, the fear of God, and virtuous life. An American missionary in West Africa has accurately described the African Church as being “a mile wide and an inch deep;” thus, one of the challenges that face the African church is “growth without mediocrity” or “a renewed emphasis on Christian formation” (McCain 1999:8; Kretzschmar 2004b:104).

The Faith Gospel or Prosperity Theology is a form of Pentecostal movement coming essentially from America. It has found in Africa a rich soil prepared by the influence of

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<sup>23</sup> These eight majority Christian countries with higher HIV rate are found in southern Africa. They include Botswana; Lesotho; Malawi; Namibia; South Africa; Swaziland; Zambia; and Zimbabwe. Their estimate Christian population rates range from 59.9 to 92.3 per cent and their HIV rate from 11.9 to 26.1. For more information, see Addenda, Table no.3.

traditional religions focused on material realities like “peace, health, children and money” (Crowther in Gifford 1998:335). Contrary to AICs concentrated in rural areas and more concerned with healing, Prosperity churches have originated in cities where people as wage-earners (or would-be wage earners) need more “employment, promotion, cash, accommodation, transport, etc.” (Gifford 1998:336). Because of their resources, techniques and dynamism, Prosperity churches have spread in urban areas. They set upon the world of witches, spirits or demons, sorcery and curses which constitute the natural and primary categories of the interpretation of spiritual life in traditional Africa. The visible collapse of African states, leading to unemployment, obsolete medical care system and poverty, is also a noticeable factor contributing to their vitality and rapid spreading. However, according to the Faith Gospel, they teach “one only needs belief, or belief and giving money, or belief and the special gifts of the pastor and God will do everything”; and also “suffering has no place within the Faith Gospel, according to which the Christian should be healthy, rich and successful” (Gifford 1998:328, 336-7, 339-40). With this kind of teaching, these churches represent a real threat to economic development. Their message does not encourage hard-working and the vocational perspective of work as Methodist theology did in the 18<sup>th</sup> -century England, by fostering “asceticism, abstemiousness, deferral of gratification, all of which led to investment” (Gifford 1998:339-40). Indeed, as observed by Feston, “Prosperity Theology represents an advanced stage of the decline of the Protestant ethic” (Gifford 1998:339-40). The same spirit of stress on miracles, physical and emotional expressions is gaining in many mainline churches. As a whole, the Church in Africa faces the challenge of “enthusiasm without fanaticism” (McCain 1999:9).

In conclusion, the church in Africa is not a “transplanted church” like the one of America established by settlers from Western countries. Rather, as the outcome of Western missionary work, the church in Africa amalgamates identified traditions. In other words, broadly speaking, the African church is pluralist per se. In the heart of many African Christians, as described above, traditional worldviews, Western worldviews and Biblical or Christian worldviews are fighting for allegiance (Turaki 1999:75; Van der Walt 1999:14; Mbiti 1998:141-2; Éla 1988:33). African theology and AICs and even the persistent recourse of Christians to traditional religions give prominence to this religious reality. The African church evolves in an impoverished context where neo-patrimonial and ethno-politics take precedence over good governance and the concern about common good. On the outside too, the African church has to negotiate its relationships within a pluralist society with the rapid propagation of Islam and the flourishing of many cults. However, the African church has the

opportunity of promoting holistic Christianity, assisting the needy, advocating for justice and human rights and preserving the environment (McCain 1999:12-6).

In the global village, another challenge is brought to the church by liberalism with its moral values on politics, consumerism, autonomous life, sexuality, etc. However, it is hard to assert that the atomistic-liberalistic worldview of liberal Western societies has come to be as influential in the church and the larger society as in America. In Africa, especially in rural areas, “traditional values, practices, and institutions are still substantially maintained” (Gyekye 1996:xiv; Kretzschmar & Van Niekerk 2009:62-3). Regarding traditional African values, they are essentially communal, since:

African society places a great deal of emphasis on communal values. The communal structure of African society has created a sense of community that characterizes social relations among individual members of the African society. This sense of community is an enduring feature of the African social life on which many writers on Africa have constantly remarked (Gyekye 1996:35).

In final analysis, several African theologians and ethicists have endorsed the acute observation of the late Hannah Kinoti in her article entitled “African Morality: Past and Present” (1999). She describes the moral confusion prevailing in African countries as follows: “Today Africa is at a crossroads and the path has forked. In terms of everyday conduct for individuals and communities, there is uncertainty, disillusionment and even despair” (Kinoti 1999:73; cf. Kunhiyop 2009:61; Kretzschmar 2004b:86; Van der Walt 2003:53-4).<sup>24</sup> Hence, the African church is challenged to provide a sound and vigorous moral formation which Africa desperately needs.

### ***Concluding remarks***

This chapter has endeavoured to sketch some of the critical cultural socio-economic and political issues of the African context and to describe the nature and role of the church in that context. According to the theory of Afro-pessimism, SSA countries are suffering from many plights like poverty, wars, ethnic conflicts, HIV/AIDS, etc. Political leadership is not committed to public morality but it is characterised by its corrupted mentality, poor governance which has transformed several countries in fragile and criminal states. International financial institutions and trans-nationals are not effectively helping but pillaging natural resources, exploiting peasants or imposing the burden of external debt that worsen

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<sup>24</sup> While describing the critical situation of African morality, Kinoti tells the following very illustrative story: “The hyena in the folk tale was following the general direction of the aroma of barbecuing meat. He knew when he got there he would be given a share of the meat. When his path forked into two he was not sure which one would lead him to the meat. In his uncertainty he put his legs astride the two paths and tried to walk along both. He ended up splitting in the middle.” (1999:73).



the economic situation. Economic progress, democratic liberties and the guarantee of human rights and social justice for all are still functioning as vain mottos and are waiting to be realized in most of SSA countries. Success stories in all these matters can be found somewhere, but they seldom last.

However, through the theory of the African Renaissance, it has been shown that there are prospects for redress based on the African historical and cultural heritage from its glorious past. The SSA region has an abundance of human and natural resources requiring responsible, accountable, honest and visionary leaders for a better life for all.

The separation between the state and the church in Africa seems to be not very tight, since the church in Africa is amazingly involved in social service and its moral function and activity are appreciated. However, it seems not to be prepared for relevant political action and a prophetic role regarding social justice for all the citizenry. The African church does not confront a vivid liberalism and individualism like those prevailing in the American context. Yet African church confronts the shortcomings of communalism and spiritualism of the African religion strongly influencing church members. After this succinct review of the critical cultural socio-economic and political issues in the African context and the features of the church in that context, the next problem to deal with is the assessment of the relevancy of Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation in the context of SSA.

## Chapter 7: ASSESSMENT OF HAUERWAS'S PROPOSAL ON MORAL FORMATION

### *Introduction*

So far, several aspects of Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation have been attended to, namely, its religious and socio-cultural backgrounds (Chapter Two and Chapter Three) and its theological framework and practical aspects (Chapter Four and Chapter Five). The last chapter (Chapter Six) has attempted to describe the African religious and socio-cultural backgrounds to which a constructive proposal on moral formation for the African church should refer. This constructive proposal will be presented in the next chapter (Chapter Eight).

The aim of the present chapter (Chapter Seven) is to offer an assessment of Hauerwas's proposal within the local church — a proposal basically related to an American context — by considering its relevance for an African context. The chapter first points out some critical differences between the two contexts. In the comprehensive — albeit succinct — Christian ethical assessment that follows, subsequent sections are structured along the lines of the major theological and ethical categories identified in Hauerwas's proposal. To recall, this proposal of a particularist character formation is based on his view on ecclesial ethics, which includes aspects of virtue ethics, narrative ethics, community ethics and social ethics. The assessment also tackles Hauerwas's insights on moral formation in the family, the school and health care. In addition, the last section of the assessment gives due attention to the major theological assumptions underpinning Hauerwas's proposal. Yet it is necessary to first of all spell out the rationale of such an assessment.

### **7.1. Africa vs. America: A brief socio-cultural contextual comparison**

Why is it necessary to assess Hauerwas's proposal? As noted earlier, the rationale behind this assessment lies first of all in the fact that Hauerwas's proposal pre-eminently addresses the American socio-cultural context described in Chapter Two. From Chapter Six emerge some significant features of the African socio-cultural context which are strikingly divergent with the American context and which need to be now highlighted. These features are related to the socio-political and economic environment, the ethical culture and the church affiliation and social involvement in both contexts.

Broadly speaking, peoples in Africa and America are confronted with similar moral challenges such as the relative increase of social crimes (gangsterism, alcoholism, and drug addiction), family and sexual immorality (sexual aberrations, rape and gang-rape, incest, prostitution, cohabitation, abortions, child and spouse abuse, divorce, etc.) as well as socio-economic crimes (fraud, racism, economic exploitation, etc.). Yet some vices strikingly affect more specifically the African continent. They include failed states, political assassinations, manipulation and rigging of votes, massive violations of fundamental human rights, ritual killings, ethnic and religious violence, trial marriages, etc. (Kunhiyop 2009:60-1). However, the church's task of moral formation is as urgent and critical in Africa as in America.

The American ethical culture is significantly different from the one of Africa. Under the pervasive influence of a capitalist and liberal democratic mindset, people's behaviour and way of life bear profoundly the marks of libertarian individualism, secularism, consumerism, hedonism and materialism. This culture predominantly underwrites an understanding of the moral self in terms of Western liberal, rational, autonomous, solipsistic, atomistic, and individualist views. The most influential ethical theories governing the moral life are deontological and utilitarian ethics with an emphasis on decision-making based on autonomous and individualist choice. In Africa, pseudo-democracy and neo-patrimonialism and excessive power endowed to the Head of the State are widespread phenomena, if not the sole modes of political life. A capitalist and neo-liberal economic system is urged by IFIs and Western organizations and donors. But locally, the popular pressure reflects a particular interest in welfare economy mixed with market economy. Unlike the ethical culture of America, the traditional communalism is acknowledged as a more deep-rooted and influential mindset than libertarian individualism as the majority of the population is still living in rural areas. The impact of modernism and globalization underlying an understanding of the individualist and autonomous self is more perceptible in urban areas. Largely, even in the lives of many Western-educated Africans, lies a holistic, normative, communal and fully integrated understanding of the self. Hence, the predominant mode of African ethics built on holism, vitalism, spiritualism, is communalistic, tribalistic, humanistic and pragmatic. Even persons who fail to live it out can still advocate it, albeit sometimes in demagogic ways, in terms of an understanding of *Ubuntu*, extended to the wider society.

One can arguably say that the church in America is largely a transplanted church from Western and Eastern Europe bearing the marks of their mother churches. There are some denominations, which originated from the American soil and extend the spectrum of religious pluralism. Voluntarism is a distinctive and predominant sociological mode of Christian affiliation to the church. Two major worldviews — the Judeo-Christian and its variety as well

as the secularist (secular naturalistic humanism) — prevail as the most influential outlooks in contemporary American Christian life (Sweetman 2006:29-35).

However, the African experiment is one of missionary churches and African Initiated Churches (AICs) which have come to apply hermeneutics of suspicion towards the theological teaching of the Western churches. In contemporary Africa, major theological discourses have included the themes of conversion-salvation, inculturation, liberation and reconstruction. Noticeable is the recent mushrooming phenomenon of Prosperity Gospel and Apocalyptic Christianity. Deep in the hearts of many African Christians still lie the competing worldviews of African traditional religion, Christianity and Western modern cultures. As a result, the official theology of a given church can be very different from some actual beliefs, leaning to syncretism, cherished by its members.

Although churches in America and Africa are strongly involved in social service, a striking difference emerges between them as regard to social action or political activism. In America, freedom and disestablishment of religion have induced an exceptional social and political activism. In Africa, it is useful to view the vigorous anti-colonialist and anti-apartheid political mobilization of the 1970s to 1990s in Southern Africa as a relatively localized and non-permanent phenomenon. Usually, churches only speak up sporadically and prophetically at critical times like civil wars, national elections, natural ecological disasters and epidemics (e.g., through pastoral letters of Roman Catholic bishops; joint ecumenical messages to the nation, denominational declarations, etc.). The prevalent dualistic sacred-profane view strongly maintains African churches in escapism, pietism, ecclesiasticism, and secularism; hence, political demobilization (Van der Walt 2001:102-3).

Moreover, SSA states would have had a long way to go before reaching a CLD regime like the one of the USA. The dividing line between the private and public spheres is not very evident. There is room for more constructive cooperation between the state and the church. Besides religious language in a society where Christians constitute the majority of the population is not a stumbling block for public discourse due to the great deal of work of inculturation that African theologians and agencies for Bible translation have already done (Turaki 1999:17-25). Furthermore, the African traditional worldview is not characterized by political secularism, as the American one.<sup>1</sup> It is bearing in mind these features and differences between the American and African contexts that a thorough assessment will be undertaken. It is also noteworthy that Hauerwas's proposal has been strongly criticized in North America and Europe. This critical debate should also inform the assessment of his insights on moral

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<sup>1</sup> It must be acknowledged, however, that the access to public discourse for Christians is not easy where most of people are Muslims.

formation grounded in ecclesial practices. After all this clarification about the rationale of the current assessment, it is now helpful to turn to its core: the assessment of Hauerwas's ecclesial ethic.

## **7.2. Hauerwas's ecclesial ethic**

As previously stated, four significant and broad ethical categories can be singled out through the Hauerwasian concept of ecclesial ethics, namely virtue ethics, narrative ethics, community ethics and social ethics. This section deals with the three first categories since the treatment of the last category (social ethics) will be included in the section concerning Hauerwas's theology of moral formation.

### **7.2.1. The primacy of virtue ethics**

Hauerwas's contribution to Christian ethics, along with the one of MacIntyre in moral philosophy, has been very instrumental in the recovery of virtue or character formation in America. "It would be hard to imagine the revival of virtue ethics apart from [their works which] genuinely pioneered the field" (Cloutier & Mattison III 2014:232). Several factors that have militated for a return to virtue ethics in America demonstrate that it is a relevant approach to Christian ethics and moral formation in any other context. As conceptualized and advocated by Hauerwas, virtue ethics presents some promising aspects as regard to its biblical backgrounds and its corrective insights towards African traditional ethics and the legacy of missionary teachings. Yet it bears some limitations when it comes to moral deliberation and the universality of ethics in Africa and elsewhere.

#### **7.2.1.1. The revival of virtue ethics**

Embracing character and virtue has been for Hauerwas and other ethicists a reaction to the rise of ethical theories prevalent in the Western world since the eighteenth century. These "standard accounts" of ethical reflection, as termed by Hauerwas, have usually concentrated on "on rules, principles, goods, and step-by-step decision-making for resolving moral quandaries" (Kotva 1996:5; cf. *TT*:27). Rather than focusing on developing rules, principles, and exact methods for determining the moral status of specific acts, virtue ethics draws attention to "'background' issues such as character traits, personal commitments, community traditions, and the conditions necessary for human excellence and flourishing" (Kotva 1996:5).



Hauerwas “is the primary proponent of virtue ethics as a viable approach to Christian ethics” (Bilynskyj 1996:258). Since the beginning of his theological project, Hauerwas has maintained that moral life does not primarily consist in making good decisions and that ethics must take into account not just the character of a performed act but predominantly the actor's own character (VV:74). Therefore, he posited the priority of being over doing in that “Christian ethics is concerned more with what we are than what we do”; and provides a useful qualification: “This not to suggest that our actions, decisions and choices are unimportant, but rather the church” should help Christians acquire the continuity they need to act in conformity with their character (PK:33-34).

Since the beginning, Hauerwas warned that “the language of character does not exclude the language of command but only places it in a large framework of moral experience” (CCL:3). “The idea of character, as Hauerwas explains, provides the means to discuss with rigor and discipline the moral formation of the subjective” (CCL:29). Using the concept of character is to do “justice to the significance of the continuing determination of the self necessary for moral growth; for our actions are also acts of self-determination whereby we not only reaffirm what we have been, but what we will be in the future” (CCL:8). Kotva (1996:30) puts it clearly when he says: “In simplest terms, “being” precedes “doing” but “doing shapes “being”. That is, who we have become, including our states of character, precedes and informs our choices and actions. But our choices and actions help shape who we are and thus our future choices and actions.” Hauerwas sees no conflict between duty and virtue, because a person of virtue is dutiful (CC:114). Rightly, he has recognized that quandaries, decisions or choices confront a person of virtues or character, but “training in virtues” makes him or her better equipped to deal with “such situations in the future” (CC:115).

The revival of virtue and character ethics is biblically justified as it is convergent with the Scripture’s emphasis on the innate dimension of the moral life through the language of moral virtue, moral vice or sin in general (Hollinger 2002:56). Very close to the concept of character as the internal disposition of the moral agent is the word “heart” occurring hundreds of times in English Bible versions. It appears in the OT *shema*, the Hebrew prophets (Ez 11:19-21) as well as in Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels (Mt 5:21-30, Mk 7:21-22; Lk 6:45; etc.) (Hollinger 2002:56-7). Many listings of virtues can be found in the Bible such as the virtues of everyday life in the book of Proverbs, the Beatitudes (Mt 5), the fruit of the Spirit (Gl 5:22) and the explicit exhortation to cultivate virtues (2 Pt 1:5-7), to mention only a few. They demonstrate that moral life consists in being and doing. They reflect the concern of virtue ethics drawing attention to the role of intentions, dispositions, motivations and visions in the moral life (Hollinger 2002:57; Reuschling 2008:61).

In his relentless quest to provide distinctive and valuable insights on virtue ethics in a Christian perspective, Hauerwas has critically drawn on Aristotle and Aquinas. Against the American proposition of the pursuit of happiness perceived as an individualistic or hedonist unalienable right, Hauerwas has perceptively followed Aquinas and the Johannine narrative in identifying a specific *telos* of human life different from the Aristotelian *eudaimonia*: friendship with God. Whatever their locations, Christians in the Western countries or in Africa, need a distinctive *telos* of human flourishing, like friendship with God or, as suggests Spohn, the Reign of God, whose pursuit through habits, practices and on-going conversion and improved character leads to good moral decisions (Spohn 1999:13, 28).

In addition to the moral crisis in America — described in Chapter 2<sup>2</sup> — and the incompleteness of modern theories, especially the Kantian mode and the utilitarian approach and consequentialism, “the rise of historical consciousness” has significantly contributed to the revival of virtue ethics (Kotva 1996:6; Gill 2000:98-99). This rise of historical consciousness partly explains the occurrence of other theories like situation ethics, proportionalism, and liberation theology which like virtue ethics oppose the understanding of “ethics as the deductive application of objective, unchanging moral rules” or universal principles or norms (Kotva 1996:9). In this perspective, Hauerwas strongly advocates the temporal acquisition of virtues as enduring character traits “necessary to transverse the dangers and opportunities of our existence” which is “timeful” or has a historical nature (OBT:14, 16; cf. Kotva 1996:9-10).

Therefore, the Aristotelian ethic championed by Hauerwas is very appealing in an African context not only for its emphasis on virtues as skills of perception, reflection, articulation, and action, but also on community and relationships for their cultivation and development. Hauerwas has relentlessly taken seriously the church as a community of virtue. The stress on virtue ethics is a necessary corrective in moral formation in an African context for at least two significant reasons. First is the deontological prominence related to the observance of customs and taboos in African ethics focusing more “on doing one’s duty by being obedient to the demands posed by gods and the spirits of the ancestors” (Kunhiyop 2008:17; cf. Mbiti 1991:174). Second is the overemphasis on divine command as the legacy of missionary moral teaching based on a list or catalogue of “do’s” and “don’ts” insisting on the negative dimension of morality (sins) and seldom mentioning its positive dimension (virtues). A particular attention is given to sexual sins corresponding to the sixth commandment (“You shall not commit adultery”) of the Decalogue and thus almost reducing

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<sup>2</sup> For more details on the American moral crisis see the following subsections: 2.1.2. Shadows on the American Dream; and 2.3.2. Religion in the public life.

immorality to sins related to sexual matters. As a result, traditional Africans embracing Christianity encounter a morality seen as more legalistic than traditional African morality grounded in their community's narratives and envisioning abundant life (Bujo 1990:40-41; Van der Walt 2003a:64). Unlike Aristotle who, with his emphasis on the *polis* maintains a vision of a community of equal individuals sharing the same race, gender and social class, Hauerwas strongly recommends a church "as the moral-forming community for the people of God that cuts across the barriers that divides us" (Reuschling 2008:62; cf. *PK*:100). This understanding of the church community is very appealing in an African context because of the persistent, insidious, latent or open conflicts engendered by all kinds of divisions and requiring the cultivation of relevant virtues like acceptance, self-esteem, humility, and sacrifice as well as unconditional and fraternal love. Also, Hauerwas rejects the strategy of the inclusive church in a buyer's market context and the one of community *qua* community accommodating everyone and not centred on genuine Christian narratives and moral formation (*RA*:77-8). No doubt among African church leaders, especially in urban areas, exist the tempting vision of establishing mega-churches without a corresponding emphasis on discipleship and moral formation; because of the influence of individualism, this emphasis may also lack in many urban churches characterized by impersonal, anonymous relationships between the members. All things considered, Christian moral formation in an African context cannot overlook the significance of virtue ethics.

### **7.2.1.2. Virtue, action, principle and decision-making**

Despite the above-mentioned promising aspects, some limitations can be detected in Hauerwasian virtue ethic; those limitations are related to the relation between virtue or character to action, principle and decision-making. First, Hauerwas not only asserts the priority of being over doing (or character over acts) in ethics but seems to overemphasize the significance of character. Yet the place of actions in Christian morality is not to be downplayed. What matters is not only what people *claim* in their hearts or *intend* but also what they actually *do* (Connors & McCormick 1998:35; emphasis original). Moral actions, "our choices to do and not to do things" significantly matter, because of their "expressive, formative and effective" roles: they "express and form our developing character and impact upon the world around us" (Connors & McCormick 1998:35-6). Equally important, Christian faith requires that virtues be translated into actions since Christians have to respond to two important facets of God's call for the Christian life. Becoming new creation through their union with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit requires them "to strive to become fully human persons by developing and growing in virtue;" at the same time, they are also called to "reach

out and *love* [their] neighbours — including strangers, enemies and particularly those in need — and to do in concrete human action what is effective and helpful (Connors & McCormick 1998:37). In this sense, the Johannic parenthesis urges the community “to not love with word or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 Jn 3:18). Oliver O’Donovan (1994:207) highlights this significance of actions by posing the epistemological priority of act over character. For him, virtue ethicists, like Hauerwas, following the Thomist view of dispositions generating character through habituation rightly assert, in contrast to behaviourist tendencies, that character is more irreducible and is not to be atomized. However, in biblical categories, the heart which reflects one’s character and where virtues reside is “hidden from man’s eyes until deeds and words declare it” (O’Donovan 1994:207).<sup>3</sup> According to Jesus’ teaching, trees are recognized by their fruits, likewise character is recognized through actions and deeds (Mt 7:17-20).

Second, with his priority of being over doing, Hauerwas also overemphasizes the significance of virtues to the detriment of rules, principles and norms.<sup>4</sup> Hauerwas attacks deontological and consequentialist theories because their “concentration on obligations and rules as morally primary ignores the fact that action descriptions gain their intelligibility from the role they play in a community’s history and therefore for individuals in that community” (PK:21). For him, “what we *are* is then ultimately what we *do*”; all seems to be about virtue and character (Higginson 1988:124). However, people of virtue still need rules, principles and norms; their community’s traditions would not be enough in some specific situations to determine which actions should be either prescribed or prohibited, either absolutely forbidden or allowed of some exceptions. Christians might confront situations which necessitate even a choice between virtues. For example, Christians in positions in the government would continue to face the dilemmas of preserving peace and defending powerless and destitute people or seeking justice. Yet Hauerwas’s peaceableness, which presupposes the total rejection of warlike spirit, undermines the concern for justice. Well-understood, however, his “exaltation of peace’ [...], as the all-important virtue, points in strongly deontological direction, viz. an absolute prohibition of violence” (Higginson 1988:126-7).

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<sup>3</sup> O’Donovan perceives that Neo-Aristotelians are “impressed by the way in which two apparently similar deeds may assume quite different stories when viewed in the context of their agents’ differing life-stories” (O’Donovan 1994:207).

<sup>4</sup> To illustrate, he tells the story of his friend tempted by the desire to have an extramarital affair when he was travelling back home by aeroplane. His decision to resist the fantasy flowed from his character rather than by being reminded of the command prohibiting adultery (PK:129-130; cf. Richardson 1994:90). Denis Hollinger (2002:58) following Stanley Grenz (1997:40-1) presents a quite similar narrative about Stephen and rightly comments that what is at stake is more the problem of adultery as immoral and sinful act. The issue of character or inner dispositions only make sense if Stephen’s obedience to the command prohibiting adultery in previous experiences is taken into account.

Third, Hauerwas's concern for restoring the role of the agent seems to undermine the significance of decision-making and acts in ethical analysis. Indeed, convictions, narratives and vision as well as character including virtues, motivation and intention should be included in moral analysis rather than being overlooked as it is the case in standard accounts (e.g., deontological and consequential theories). However, he seems to go too far as he contends that "it is character [...] that provides the context necessary to pose the terms of a decision, or to determine whether a decision should be made at all" (*TT*:20). As Dennis Hollinger (2002:58) correctly asserts, Hauerwas refuses to give to being and doing a possibility of "[living] together as mutual foci of ethical analysis" since he gives "to decision-making another status." He underestimates its role in the moral life when he claims that looking to the past, people can often notice "in matters of significance even involving the 'hardest choices' there was no 'decision' to be made. Rather the decision makes itself if we know who we are and what is required for us" (*PK*:129; cf. Hollinger 2002:58).

## **7.2.2. The centrality of narrative ethics**

Conceiving Christian ethics as an ethics of character, virtue and vision nurtured in the gathered church has led Hauerwas to frame his proposal on moral formation in narrative ethics. With the purpose of exploring the relevance of this proposal in an African context, the promising aspects of Hauerwas's narrative ethic are discussed below in connection with discipleship in church. Then follows its inadequate aspects related to the neglect of the universal dimension of the Christian moral life.

### **7.2.2.1. Narratives and discipleship in the church**

Hauerwas's very insightful contribution in moral formation is the connection of narrative ethics with discipleship and the life of the church as the Christian community. He has drawn attention to the fact that the church is a story-formed community. The stories that are repeatedly told and reinforced in the church form the character traits of its members. For that reason, the church needs to be true and faithful to its central narrative which is the story of Hebrew people culminating in the story of Jesus. The appropriation of the Christian story as the hallmark of discipleship encompasses a challenging double exhortation for the church and Christians in Africa. The church "is called to make God's story more and more *its* story" by practicing the virtues taught and exemplified by Jesus' life; Christians are called to be like



Jesus”, that is, to become part of the church community, and cultivate those virtues by “growing into’ the story of Jesus” (Higginson 1988:124; emphasis original; *PK*:28, 94).

The relevance of Hauerwas’s methodology of storytelling cannot be overstated. “[S]tory-telling is a critical important aspect of a community’s process of moral formation. Our narratives — the stories we live by — help us understand both our identity and our allegiances” writes David Cunningham. He accurately adds that “[b]y telling and retelling these stories, a community testifies to its own endurance through time; it thereby helps its members understand their place within its structure, and it helps outsiders and newcomers to find their way into its common life (Cunningham 2008:65-6).<sup>5</sup> In Africa, story-telling has always been the usual mode of moral education. Traditional African culture and religion require memory and remembrance. “The memory of ancestors is kept alive though telling and retelling their biographies to their descendants and, above all seeing that the living follow their teaching and instruction” (Kunhiyop 2008:20). Thus stressing the significance of Biblical stories, the history of the church, the stories within people’s own lives and their acquaintances within their socio-cultural environment that Hauerwas advocates could not be perceived as a foreign mode of moral formation in Africa. On the contrary, pastors and church leaders could willingly and even enthusiastically adopt these stories as powerful tools and mediums for moral formation. All over Africa, experienced preachers know that their audiences are more captivated by stories than the mere systematic exposition in their sermons and teachings (Kunhiyop 2009:68). Through narrative ethics, the biographies of church’s martyrs and local saints, the lives of women and men of virtues like the famous Fathers of independence and other heroes of social and political movements as well as the glorious face of African history, can vividly enlarge people’s moral imagination and contribute to virtuous life.

Equally relevant for the African church is Hauerwas’s concept of critical appropriation of tradition in moral formation. Following MacIntyre, Hauerwas has qualified the traditions to be used for moral formation as “living traditions [which] presuppose rival interpretations” (*CC*:14; *HR*:27, 174). Inheriting, exemplifying and passing on traditions for moral formation in the Christian community must not be done uncritically. The Christian community must not hesitate to resort to rival traditions in order to put its own tradition into question. The background of the strict and respectful observance of ancestral tradition in African cultures is an actual pitfall: easily, the church goes astray into traditionalism. Thoughtfully, Hauerwas recommends not only that the church must tell, retell and enact the Christian narrative in a

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<sup>5</sup> Cunningham has drawn this conclusion, after commenting, like Hauerwas, on the significance of storytelling for the church as a story-formed community by reference to Adam’s novel *Watership Down* depicting the tale of rabbit warrens (*CC*:12-35; *HR*:171-98).



new way, but stresses at the same time the necessity for the church to constantly test its interpretations of this narrative in the light of rival traditions for its truthfulness. Rightly, he says that “some traditions lapse into complete incoherence and can be recovered only by revolutionary reconstitution” (CC:14). Thus, Hauerwas implicitly and rightly recognizes the danger of what Lewis Mudge and other participants in WCC consultations have termed “church *malformation*” (Best & Robra 1997:61-3; Mudge 1998:91-3; emphasis original). This category should remind the church catholic of dehumanizing stories of slavery, Nazism and apartheid and conceptualizes the on-going demonic practices of racism, tribalism, violence against minorities and warfare between nation-states that many churches baptize and consider as Christian practices.

Also very insightful for African church is the call to Christians to organize the church community according to the Christian narrative. He thus affirms that the whole way of life of the church community, including its governance, contributes to the moral formation of its members. In a sense, he attends to the insidious effects of hidden curricula in the church community that can also lead to malformation (*PK:28; TT:142-3*).

In his account of narrative ethics, Hauerwas recognizes the struggle between competing stories in the Christian life. Through the title of his essay, “A Tale of Two Stories: On Being a Christian and a Texan” (*CET:25-45*), he acknowledges the two powerful stories constituting his own life. Elsewhere, he adds the omitted story of America in mentioning that a denial of its tenacious influence “would be self-deceptive” (*ABH:24*). The plurality of narratives cannot help but induce competing worldviews which lead to the issue of ultimate loyalty to God. Based on his own experience, he explains: “Of course the issue is not my love of America but rather how such a love should be shaped and governed by the love of God” (*ABH:24*). Attending to the plurality of narrative is a crucial necessity for the African church as Christians in Africa, as previously stated in Chapter Six, are more or less shaped by several narratives and worldviews, in particular the stories of their families, tribes and countries as well as traditional African, western, modern and Christian worldviews.

Along with the centrality of stories, Hauerwas deservedly stresses the significance of memory and remembering in moral formation. Memory, far from being a pathological force, should rather be a creative force reminding Christians “not of past events but of the character that produced them” and challenging them to renounce evil experiences and events and to live truthfully and faithfully in the present (*HR:583-4*). Memory and remembering generate moral skills necessary to curb self-deception. Remembering is a moral and social task for Christians to avoid “a politics of *amnesia*” which leads Christian to collectively repeat the cruelty of historical events such as the Holocaust or Christian wars or individually to embrace

suicide or euthanasia (Cartwright 2001:634, emphasis original). Hauerwas offers an accurate way to deal with the past-orientation of African cultures. He suggests that “[t]he kind of memory that truly shapes and guides community is the kind that keeps past events in mind in a way that draws guidance from them for the future”; and perceptively adds that “Memory must not concentrate on events but rather on character, or it can become perverted into a pathological force. In a common-sense way we call this situation ‘living in the past’” (HR:583).

### 7.2.2.2. The incompleteness of Hauerwas’s narrative ethic

With a pluralist African context in view, three major limitations of Hauerwas’s narrative ethics can be pointed out, namely his irreducible affirmation of the distinctiveness of Christian ethics, the acceptance of moral principles but not universal moral theories and the relativist tendency of his ethical account.

Repeatedly, Hauerwas argues that ethics is always qualified by the story or narrative of the particular community to whom it refers. There is nothing like an unqualified ethic applied to everyone and abstracted from the community to whom the individual belongs. Thus, “ethics always requires an adjective or qualifier — such as Jewish, Christian, [...], humanist, medieval, modern — in order to denote the social and historical character of ethics as a discipline” (PK:1; see also PK:28, 96-97). To these arguments for an explicitly communal ethic, Hauerwas adds heteronomy, discipleship, and the *telos* of Christian ethics to strongly contend the church as methodological necessity for Christian ethics. Christians learn to live as God’s creatures under the Lordship of Jesus and they are called to become “not just good, but holy” (HR:73; PK:68). Ethics, in general, cannot be done in abstraction from any concrete or particular community. “There is no such a thing as a universal or unqualified ethics” because any ethic with universal pretension could only be a “minimalistic ethic for everyone” (HR:72; PK:16, 97; cf. Bilynskyj 1996:261).

At the first glance<sup>6</sup>, Hauerwas’s particularist or qualified understanding of Christian ethics cannot adequately help the church community in Africa to be a place for moral deliberation on many important issues pertaining to the wider society and requiring cooperation between Christian and non-Christians.<sup>7</sup> By emphasizing the irreducibility of

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<sup>6</sup> Some deeper theological assumptions underlying this contention on the distinctiveness of Christian ethics will be assessed later under the heading of Hauerwas’s theology of moral formation.

<sup>7</sup> These issues include the ones of “poverty, inequality, land reform, affirmative action, racial conflict, xenophobia, violence and corruption in [African societies] as well as the moral issues of climate change, ecological degradation, economic globalization, religious extremism, regional conflicts and overpopulation in the global society, to mention but a few” (De Villiers 2012:764).

Christian narratives and the distinctiveness of Christian ethics, Hauerwas seems to reduce the scope of moral deliberation as follows:

[T]he church [is] the locus for Christian ethical reflection. It is from the church that Christian ethics draws its substance and it is to the church that Christian ethical reflection is addressed. Christian ethics is not written for everyone, but for those people who have been formed by the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus (*PK:97*).

In other words, in the light of Birch and Rasmussen's (1989:120-40) thorough analysis of moral formation, the church in Hauerwas's view can learn about moral issues (including important issues in public life) and formulate normative perspectives drawn from its own narratives or Christian faith. However, these perspectives could not be directed to wider society at the same time; they could not be subjects for public theology, external prophetic pronouncements or cooperation between Christians and non-Christians. In the same token, Hauerwas's community ethic reduces also the scope of the formative role of the church regarding moral action in the wider society. His proposal challenges the church to be an inclusive community as celebrated in the Eucharist and to be a faithful "moral agent on its own institutional turf" or "an exemplary community"; that is, to be faithfully involved in the first zone of the church's corporate witness (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:138-9).<sup>8</sup> For example, it instructs believers to be in politics as Christians but without a thorough framework for this mission (*WRA:111, 115; HR: 525-6*).

In his account of moral formation, Hauerwas accepts moral principles while he rejects universal codes or moral theories. He asserts that the narrative ethic that he puts in tandem with virtue or character ethics should not be perceived as an "alternative to an ethic of obligation" (*HR:76*). To the moral life, narrative ethics brings coherence and unity of the self to avoid "a disconnected, *ad hoc*" perception of the Christian life (*RA:53-4*). Indeed, Hauerwas's account of moral formation does not disregard moral principles, as he states: "Even though moral principles are not sufficient in themselves for our moral existence, neither are stories sufficient if they do not generate principles that are morally significant." This is more clear in his additional explanation: "Principles without stories are subject to perverse interpretations (i.e., they can be used in immoral stories), but stories without principles will have no way of concretely specifying the actions and practices consistent with the general orientation expressed by the story (*HR:170*). Moreover, Hauerwas, in this respect, acknowledges the usefulness of moral codes enhancing moral life and formation in the university community (*HATC:76*). However, he is strongly suspicious of the value of moral

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<sup>8</sup> E.g., through "wages and salaries (of church workers); rights of employees; works of charity; and working [as an institution] for economic justice;" these examples constitute the five areas of concerns cited by the US Catholic Bishops in their pastoral letter (2009:86; cf. Birch & Rasmussen 1989:138).

principles in themselves. As Fergusson (1998:55) perceptively puts it, for Hauerwas “[t]he presentation of moral principles independently of an account of the way in which they can be embodied and held together in human story leads to distortion.”

However, Hauerwas associates his narrative ethic with practices of the Christian community and a particular *telos* from which he derives the concept of “Christianly considered virtue” in that Christian virtues are specific to the Christian community and different from Greek or Aristotelian accounts as well as other ancient and modern accounts of virtues (CAV:x, xv, 68). The narrative and community-based account of virtue ethics which completely and strongly rejects the universality of ethics and virtues demonstrates a serious limitation in the light of the socio-economic situation prevailing in Africa. As Nussbaum (1988:33) explains: “For this reason, it is easy for those who are interested in supporting the rational criticisms of local traditions and in articulating an idea of ethical progress to feel that the ethics of virtue can give them little help.” Indeed, the examples of moral issues singled out by Nussbaum demonstrate that virtues so narrowly understood could be sometimes very misleading:

If the position of women, as established by local traditions in many parts of the world, is to be improved, if the traditions of slave holding and racial inequality, if religious intolerance, if aggressive and warlike conceptions of manliness, if unequal norms of material distribution are to be criticized in the name of practical reason, this criticizing (one might easily suppose) will have to be done from a Kantian or Utilitarian viewpoint, not through an Aristotelian approach (Nussbaum 1988:33; cf. Kline 2005:2).

What remains about the limitations of Hauerwas’s narrative ethic is its relativist leanings. Since they ground morality on the distinctive virtues, narratives, beliefs, practices, polity of a given community, post-liberal theologians and communitarian ethicists, like Hauerwas, face the criticism of moral relativism (Fergusson (1998:6-7)).<sup>9</sup> Yet Hauerwas’s contention of not promoting “a vicious relativism” can be admitted since he recognizes, to some extent, the virtue of principle ethics (*HR*:170). He also posits some useful criteria by which one can appreciate a good story: unity, wholeness, consistence and integrity (*TT*: 15-39; *WN*:158-90). Nonetheless, while not advocating an “unashamedly relativist position” like other communitarians, Hauerwas affirms, however, as aptly termed by Fergusson (1998:7), an “epistemological relativism;” indeed, he seems to fail to notice that truth is “not relative to a particular framework, although knowledge thereof is available only to those who inhabit the

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<sup>9</sup> James Gustafson (1985:83-94) seems to go too far with his “sectarian, fideist and tribalist” charge on Hauerwas’s theological project (*CET*:1-19). More accurately, Fergusson (1998:6-7) discerns through the statements of Hauerwas and other leading voices among these scholars — such as MacIntyre, Lindbeck, and Kallenberg as well as Nation — that they seem all, even implicitly, to acknowledge that “relativism is the mark of the time.” In his account of the rationality of traditions, MacIntyre (1988:350) strongly contends that is only internally that a tradition could be accurately evaluated in order to establish its appropriateness.

framework.”<sup>10</sup> The Hauerwasian epistemological relative position deriving from his narrative and community ethic renders problematic the assessment of moral perception outside the Christian community (Fergusson 1998:7). And it also hinders the possibilities of public theology and moral persuasion in the larger society. In Africa, these two activities, as it will be explained further, are necessary ingredients for a relevant moral formation in the church for the quest of common good. Yet, after acknowledging the relevance and spelling out the limitations of virtue ethics and narrative ethics with regard to moral formation in an African context, there is still the need to perform the same task for community ethics.

### **7.2.3. The relevance and inadequacy of community ethics**

To appreciate the relevance of Hauerwas’s community ethic in Africa one should not overlook its valuable insights through the recovery of some helpful tenets of moral formation in ancient Greek ethics and early Judeo-Christian ethics. To be sure, these features contribute to Christian life throughout the whole of Christianity. Considering moral formation in an African context in particular, a concomitant look at Hauerwas’s community ethic and African communalist and humanistic ethics shows some striking convergent aspects.

#### **7.2.3.1. The recovery of classic and early Judeo-Christian ethics**

Hauerwas’s community ethic is rooted in a profound and undeniable truth concerning the shaping of human beings through communities. Birch and Rasmussen (1989:19) emphasize this conviction appropriately:

The moral life cannot exist apart from [the corporate life already alive with communities which structure our social existence], and is only possible with a view to these communities. Whatever moral consciousness we possess does not exist prior to, apart from, or independent of social relatedness. Communities are the forms of our social relatedness and the material reality of the moral life.

The trajectory of community ethics sketched by the two ethicists is very helpful in highlighting the fact that Hauerwas’s community ethics represents, to a large extent, a recovery of ancient Greek ethics and early Judeo-Christian ethics.

In the Greco-Roman world, the paramount feature of philosophical schools was being communities for “the guidance of souls” or “soulcraft” (*psygogogia*) with correlative understandings of good philosophy. Philosophy included a set of pursuits including a way of

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, Fergusson reaches this conclusion by explaining: “[T]here is truth to be discovered and practised which is not exhausted by reference to the rules of discourse and behaviour governing the life of a community. The truth is what God wills for us and all people, although this may only be known through divine revelation in history and the patterns that this establishes in the traditions of Israel and the church” (Fergusson 1998:7).



thinking resulting in moral agency. The essential purpose of the “enterprise of cognitive metaphysical pursuits [...] was to discern, through rigorous discussion, the substance of fitting and proper conduct and to convert that into action” (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:23). The Hauerwasian critical emphasis on the association of truth with performance, beliefs with lives, or doctrines with discipleship echoes the classical understanding of good philosophy. As Birch and Rasmussen (1989:23) put it, “[g]ood philosophy revolved around life-style and ethics, which philosophy sought to embody in a life of discipline and virtue. The reference was not so much to the *study* of philosophy as to the *practice* of it (*askēsis*).”

From Socratic times to the NT era, the chief part of the soulcraft in philosophical schools was moral formation. Aristotle, from whom Hauerwas has extensively drawn in his virtue ethics, apprehended *koinonia* as the aim of the government in the *polis* (city-state). Thus, philosophy, in his view, was expected to contribute to this aim by promoting *koinonia*, the very same word used in the NT to designate community or fellowship (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:23). Not surprisingly, in the same way, Hauerwas promotes the concept of the church as polis forming virtuous people contributing to the well-being of the wider society. He has also endorsed and championed the understanding of conversion common to classical philosophical schools and NT communities. Being highly competitive, philosophical schools were characterized by a movement of attendants from one school to another. Early Christians were those who left Jewish or pagan communities (e.g., 1 Th 1:6-10; 4:1-12). Both categories were made up of people experiencing “a conversion to a particular community morality,” a kind of “resocialization into a new community,” a “changed personal identity” that required the adherence to the community’s “supporting beliefs and the instructions and training necessary to live the new ‘way’ [...] appropriate to [that] community” (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:23-4; cf. WW:194).

Obviously, early Christians shared with the attendants of philosophical schools a common social form of gathering rather than their religious identity. A stronger religious and moral legacy to early Christianity comes from Judaism. Early Christians acquired from Jewish ethics the sense of being a peoplehood, that is, “*the Jewish insistence upon the social embodiment of the faith in the one God. To be a people of God meant to give communal form to the collective experience of God, first in Israel and then in Jesus and the Spirit*” (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:26; emphasis original). The Jewish concept of being a people of God was central to the early Christians’ identity since

The communities insisted upon a *religiosocial*, or a *religiocommunal*, reality as the matrix of their members’ lives. Their basic “unit” of human reality was not the polis, as it was for the Greeks; nor the empire as it was for the Romans; nor the individual, as it is for many moderns. It was the people as a religiosocial community (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:26; emphasis original).



Not surprisingly, the Roman Empire recognized Christians as “People of the Way” or a variant of Jewish community. Early Christians endorsed the communal and Biblical images underlining Jewish ethics: “Israel, family, kingdom, covenant, a banquet, one vine with many branches, a body with many parts, a chosen race and royal priesthood, etc.” (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:26-7).

Moreover, through his proposal, Hauerwas has successfully attempted to recover some original and essential characteristics of Christian ethics lost in the course of the history of the Church. Christian ethics lost its “*particular* and *practical* character” with Constantine; with the Reformation was lost its “*communal* and *juridical* nature” developed in the medieval era; and its “*theological* and *anthropological* aspects” disappeared with the Enlightenment (Kallenberg 1997a:49, emphasis original).

In brief, the Hauerwasian view of community life is largely consistent with the practice of moral formation performed in early Christianity (Johnson 1989:27-8; cf. Kretzschmar 2004b:98). In his proposal, through community life, moral formation and spiritual formation are integrated in a way that Christian convictions about the heart’s renewal, moral incapacity or sinful nature are taken into account to help Christians live a holy and virtuous life. Endorsing this essential feature of Christian faith found in Hauerwas’s proposal is a way for African churches to follow the patterns of the early church in the domain of moral formation. In Africa, even Western-mission established churches should be challenged to embrace this dimension of Christian moral formation and spirituality. Since the Reformation, most Protestant bodies have downplayed the significance of communal practices or disciplines of prayer, worship, fasting, solitude, confession as means of training in Christian life. Although Catholics have retained these practices at a corporate level, they have been only emphasized in monasteries and religious orders and have been seemingly viewed by the large majority of the laity as legalist and ritualistic (Kretzschmar 2004b:100-1). Yet, it is instructive to elaborate on other outstanding aspects of Hauerwas’s view on moral formation: discipleship and discipline.

### **7.2.3.2. Discipleship and discipline in the church community**

Perhaps, Hauerwas’s most outstanding contribution has been linking theology and Christian ethics in order to emphatically emphasize, along with Yoder and Milbank and other theologians, the significance of the church as the Christian “locus of moral formation” *par excellence* (PK:96-7). The church is viewed as the place where the Christian learn and are shaped to become a virtuous person. Central to this process is collective discernment as

Christians also learn to see the world to know what is happening in their lives and society. “The church as place for moral reflection and formation” displaces attention from a rationalistic, autonomous and individualist morality to the community and its moral and spiritual resources (e.g.; traditions, narratives, saints, worship, fellowship, polity, etc.) for guidance, moral action or the enrichment of the Christian life (Rasmusson 2000:183-9).

At the core of the practical aspects of Hauerwas’s proposal is his challenging call for the recovery of two paramount modes of Christian moral formation: discipleship and discipline within the church community. His commendable ecclesial or discipleship ethic integrates the significant elements of virtue, narrative and community ethics in an attempt to capture how virtuous Christians could be cultivated with the help of the specific resources of the church, namely Christian convictions, traditions, practices, memory, the saints and the community life (CC:91; Trull & Carter 1993:61). With discipleship at the core of the church life, moral formation gathers momentum through the forms of life of the community as people learn to pray and speak the Christian language, to be a sinner, to see the world, and to be God’s creature. Encouraging imitation and promoting emulation is a biblical challenge to Protestants and even Catholics emphasizing only the veneration of the late saints. No generation is devoid of faith heroes and role models to whom other church members can humbly look to excel in Christian practices (1 Cor 4:16; Eph 5:1; 1 Th 1:6; 2:14). To be sure, the notion of worship and liturgy as morality, moral education through polity and every aspect of the church life thoughtfully enlarge the scope of moral formation. To avoid all the unpredictable and unfortunate outcomes of a hidden curriculum or church malformation, the church community and especially its leaders are urged to subject the church’s way of life to close scrutiny. They are also entrusted with the responsibility of explaining the moral significance and implications of everyday practices of the church community.

Also convincingly, Hauerwas puts in tandem discipleship and discipline in his understanding of the church as “a school for virtue” and “a disciplined and disciplining community” which are antithetical to a view of the church as primarily a community of care (AC:93-111; RA:117-27;160-72). As in America, care in African churches is to be subordinated to discipline in order to create an environment conducive to spiritual and moral transformation. If Christians seek only to be cared for, but refuse to receive instructions, exhortations and admonitions — presented in love and humility — the essential prospects for changing lives can only blur. Also relevant is Hauerwas’s metaphoric designation of the church as “a revolutionary community [which] values honesty and confrontation — painful though they may be” (RA:63). This kind of community can neither value bourgeois virtues like

“tolerance, open-mindedness and [moral] inclusiveness” nor be self-indulgent and irresolute for disciplining its members (*RA*:62-3).

With an African context in view, special credit needs to be given to Hauerwas’s perspective on the formation of inclusive communities to sustain Christian moral formation (*PK*:xiiv; *EBTC*). Realistically, it is not any kind of community that is conducive to Christian moral formation. Neither social togetherness to conserve and protect some privileges and ensure socio-psychological welfare nor disunity and discrimination in terms of class, race, nationality ethnicity, gender and sex are the kinds of community that can foster genuine moral formation (*RA*:77-8; *PK*:100). Rather, it is a church living out the spirit of unity, forgiveness and reconciliation, a community exerting hospitality by welcoming strangers and the unexpected, which is the viable space for true Christian moral formation. The local churches in the African continent torn apart by economic, social, ethnic and racial divides critically need this kind of inclusivity (Kunhiyop 2008:121-5).

As under the influence of globalization, individualism, autonomous life and moral pluralism are invading the African church, special attention is to be given to Hauerwas’s community ethic. In particular, the link he has established between discipleship and discipline through the concept of craft-like moral formation borrowed from MacIntyre and Lindbeck cannot be overstated. Christians cannot assume, as Hauerwas stresses, that they have, each in and of themselves, all they need to be moral, and that no “master is necessary for [them] to become moral, for being moral is a condition that does [...] require initiation or training” (*AC*: 102; cf. Clendenin 2000:9). Like in the bricklaying illustration, Christians in African churches need the authority of masters; hence, the justified vibrant call for servant leadership and the critical presence of the saints in the church community (*AC*:103).

Here, Hauerwas offers immense help for Christians in Africa to understand the authority of the church through pastors and leaders and even those without such status whom he calls the saints, namely Christians demonstrating moral excellence and spiritual maturity. Also enlightening is the implication drawn from the imperative of discipline for pastoral ministry and care. The pastors should not only be friendly and nice people avoiding conflict but willing to combine goodness to boldness and to reject sentimentality (*AC*:93; *RA*:123). Against the traditional African background praising social harmony, caring for others, sharing and mutual aid, Hauerwas’s vision of the church as a disciplining community becomes all the more important (Gyekye 1996:35). And under the influence of modernist individualism, it can only be expected that numerous church members especially in African urban areas adopt voluntarism and ostensibly proclaim their refusal to see people meddling in their private life.

For the church to be a school for virtue built on a vibrant account of discipleship and discipline, Hauerwas adds a necessary ingredient regarding the features of this community. The church is to be a community with legitimate claims on its members, a community whose members are learning to be vulnerable to each other (*WRA*:111). This insight is convergent with the important traditional African value of “reciprocal obligation” (Gyekye 1996:35). It rightly rejects an autonomous life antithetical to a fundamental truth of Christian life: life is a gift from God and not an individual possession (*HR*:223-4; 585-7; 616). This reinforces the significant virtues of friendship as moral formation requires an atmosphere of mutual upbuilding. In Africa, like in America, Christians should not consider all efforts of community discipline as bearing the odour of “judgmentalism,” moralism or legalism; they have to learn to avoid believing and saying: “What I do is my own damn business”, “I did it because it seemed right to me”, or “What right have you to judge me?” (*RA*:79).

Besides, an additional virtue of Hauerwas’s community ethics for an African context lies in its congruence to all the modes of moral formation described by Johannes Van der Ven in his work, *Formation of the moral self* (1998) which should be considered as a classic on the subject (Kretzschmar 2004b:92-5). Indeed, Hauerwas’s account encompasses all seven modes of moral formation asserted by Van der Ven, namely “discipline, socialisation, transmission, cognitive development, clarification, emotional formation, and education for character” (Van der Ven 1998:35). Yet, it is noteworthy that Hauerwas’s particularist account based on Christians’ convictions rejects a universal view of morality and emphasizes that the language of Christian moral formation is that of conversion and growth and not of the one of development; also it stresses Christianly understood virtues rather than values and as such downplays the significance of value clarification (*HR*:223-4).

### **7.2.3.3. Some aspects convergent with African ethics**

In addition to being rooted in classic and Biblical ethics with a consistent view of ecclesial discipleship and discipline, Hauerwas’s community ethic presents some convergent lines with African ethics.<sup>11</sup> Both approaches are based on the social nature of the self. In Chapter Five, it was pointed out that Hauerwas holds a conception of a “fundamentally [...] social self” maintaining that “our individuality is possible only because we are first of all social beings. After all, the ‘self’ names not a thing but a relation. I know who I am only in relation to

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<sup>11</sup> Some scholars have already been attracted by the relation between MacIntyrean virtue ethics from which Hauerwas has drawn on for its community ethics and African ethics or *Ubuntu*, see for example Bongmba (2011:169-79). More strikingly, Richardson has established several points of convergence between African theology, in particular Benezet Bujo’s African Christian morality, and Christian community in the ethics of Hauerwas (Richardson 1997:373-85; Bujo 1990).

others, and, indeed, who I am is a relation to others” (*PK:96-7*). For a scholar acquainted with African philosophy and religions, this contention echoes well with Mbiti’s (1969:109) famous statement quoted in Chapter Six: “The individual can only say: ‘I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.’”

Both African ethics and the Hauerwasian project acknowledge the centrality of the narratives and practices of the community in moral formation (Richardson 1997:382). Comparatively, the Christian story of Israel and the life of Jesus extended in the history of the Church finds its counterpart in the vast array of rituals and oral tradition components (e.g., narratives, folklore, parables, proverbs) of the African traditional culture (*PK:17-34*; Ikuenobe 2006:2). Quoting at length Vincent Donovan, a former missionary among the Masai of Kenya, Hauerwas has even illustrated the necessity of learning holiness, peaceableness and forgiveness by their example of contextualized Eucharistic celebration based on the peaceful coexistence and reconciliation of the Masai village community (*PK:109-11*). Similarly, in African ethics and Hauerwas’s account, one of the chief purposes of moral formation is shaping a communal identity. In this perspective, Hauerwas’s ethic of virtue and character, which has shifted ethical reflection from doing to being, concentrates on the question, “What should I be?” or “What kind of person should I be?” related to question, “What kind of church community should we be?” (*CCL:7-9*; *CC:271*). Although sometimes stressing more the significance of principles than virtues, African ethics point to communal identity by attempting to “address the fundamental question, ‘what ought we do?’ as opposed to ‘what ought I do?’ or ‘how ought we to behave?’ and ‘how ought I to behave in the context of how ought we to behave?’” (Ikuenobe 2006:2; emphasis original).

The moral authority of leaders and saints in the church that Hauerwas promotes corresponds to the role of elders in African cultures. Elders, the “repositories” of “communal practical ways of life” in African cultures are people who have earned this moral status through their exemplarity in words, deeds and attitudes (Ikuenobe 2006:2, 178-9). They are called to mentor, model behaviours to be imitated by the community. They are leaders expected “to pass on the traditions of the family, clans, tribe” (Magesa 1998:71). This role converges with the role entitled to church leaders and local saints in Hauerwas’s account (e.g., *PTS:46-7*).

A further matter of convergence could be found between Hauerwas’s concept of “being a Christian” or conversion as a lifetime process and the African ethno-philosophical notion of a “normative concept of personhood” as an earned status through life cycle’s stages of childhood, adulthood, “elderhood” and “ancestorhood” (*HR:534*; Menkiti 1984). Both concepts convey the notion of moral growth by acquiring practices and virtues and living out



the narratives and moral standards of one's own community (*WRA*:80; Ikuenobe 2006:137). For Hauerwas, "being Christian" is not a sudden change or a once-off experience. In African cultures, being a son/daughter, youngster, adult, father/mother, uncle/aunt or elder is not only an issue of age but also an acquired moral and social status. As such, the Hauerwasian view of being a Christian finds its counterpart in African ethics' notion of moral personhood, both emphasizing moral formation as a lifelong process. Moreover, in the African view of informal moral education, one cannot completely and solely rely on his or her "rational individualistic abilities and cognitive abilities" to attain moral personhood or be morally good (Ikuenobe 2006:226). Similarly, for Hauerwas, one cannot become holy without being engrafted in the church community life and its practices.

It is noteworthy that in African ethics and Hauerwas's account of moral formation, the whole community is viewed as a locus of moral formation. Both accounts reject the Enlightenment understanding of ethics as an abstract and universal or principled method since they promote an embodied, particularist ethics through the narratives and practices of a community. While Hauerwas links Christian ethics to an embodied, ecclesial existence or a community of virtues, African ethics as ethno-philosophical and practical in nature champions the maxim "It takes a village to raise a child" (Ikuenobe 2006:1, 138). Definitely, all these convergent aspects between African ethics and Hauerwas's proposal sketched here indicate that the latter offers valuable points of contact in an African context for promising implementation in African church communities.

#### **7.2.3.4. The inadequate aspects of Hauerwas's community ethic**

With an African pluralist context in view, it is useful to single out two limitations of Hauerwas's community ethic, namely the imbalance between community and individuality and the risk of authoritarianism and indoctrination. To begin with the place of the individual in the church community, Hauerwas's proposal gives priority to the community over the individual and thus may underscore certain negative side-effects of traditional African communalism in the church. Hauerwas's communitarian ethical project is meant to be a corrective against the individualism of the Western liberal and Enlightenment outlook. He rejects its related concept of the individual understood in an individualistic, autonomous and Kantian way (e.g., *ABH*:48). Indeed, one has to agree with Hauerwas that Western liberal individualism is antithetical to a sound biblical anthropology. Bennie Van der Walt explains:

Individualism [...] *underestimates* the associative nature of human life, violates human solidarity and the unity of human society. It atomizes and fragments society. At the same time it *overemphasizes* the individual and ascribes to him an autonomy and independence

which is at variance with Scripture, which teaches that the whole of creation is totally dependent on its Creator (Van der Walt 1994:278; emphasis original).

As noted in Chapter Six, in an African context, individualism is an imported predicament under the invasive influence of Western culture whereas communalism is the pervasive and deep-rooted value of the traditional African outlook. Communalism in African cultures leads to “an *overappreciation* of the community and the consequent *underappreciation* of the individual” (Van der Walt 1994:182; emphasis original). A sound Christian anthropology, however, includes communality and individuality as fundamental and complementary qualities of humanness. “Neither can develop normally without the other,” as Stuart Fowler quoted by Van der Walt (1994:251) rightly stresses, and pursues: “A healthy community life will nurture the individuality of its members and a healthy individuality looks for fulfilment in communal life”.

Hauerwas’s proposal, strongly turning attention to the community, does not sufficiently affirms the significance of the individual dimension in the Christian life. Biblical narratives, however, do not stress community at the expense of individuality. As van der Walt again explains:

In Scripture both the unique individuality (cf. Jn 21:20, 21) and the communal quality (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-27) of the human person are recognized as fully complementary dimensions of human experience. There is no tension or conflict between them and neither is given priority over the other. The Bible records God’s dealings with people as individuals as well as communities like families and other societal relationships as well as groups like tribes and nations. It also reveals clearly that God does not only call people to give account to Him individually but also to give an account communally (cf. Lk 10:13-14 & Rev. 2, 3) (Van der Walt 2003b:156; 1994:251).

In an African context, moral formation should also strongly nurture individuality to curb the negative side of African communalism distorting people’s lives. This includes evasion from personal responsibility, social parasitism, and the lack of spirit of openness, initiative and dynamism as well as toleration or fear of opposing the group’s wrongness and, above all, group egoism and loyalty restricted to the church, other religious groups, tribes, races or secular associations (Van der Walt 1994:182-3).<sup>12</sup>

Is Hauerwas’s community ethic fostering authoritarianism? Hauerwas has tailored his proposal to ensure that it reverses the liberal critique in the American culture praising autonomy, individualism and freedom. He is very aware that his proposal upholding the authority of the church’s tradition through the pastors, other leaders and local saints is

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<sup>12</sup> Apart from traditional tribalism, new forms of tribalism are taking place in Africa. They are, as affirms Waruta, new groups based “on class interests such as the rich, the elite, the military and so forth”; for example “the ‘Wabenzi tribe’ or the Mercedes-Benz car owners tribe (the rich), is now a reality posing a greater danger and threat to society as a whole than the earlier tribalism (Waruta 1992:134; cf. Van der Walt 2003a:59).

formulated “in America [where] all claims to authority cannot help appearing authoritarian” (*WRA*:62; cf. *STT*:199). Of course, the authoritarian tendency or at least authoritarianism as a side effect of any communitarian ethic requires some special precautions. In this respect, Hauerwas has recommended the accountability of leaders, and non-univocal discipline in the church. Pastors, bishops and elders are not beyond the rebuke of church members including women and the youth (*HR*:532; *RA*:106-9, 118-22). However, this precaution seems not to be sufficient. The feminist theologian Gloria Albrecht has criticized Hauerwas’s communitarian ethic of being patriarchal, oppressive and authoritarian (Albrecht 1997:225).<sup>13</sup> Thus, A communitarian ethic could “[end up] proposing an ethics that tends, by default, to reinforce unjust arrangement” (Stout 2003:66). On this basis, Jeffrey Stout suggests that Hauerwas takes seriously the need to integrate within the church’s communal life a more democratic tradition that can help reverse the authoritarian tendency in the church.

In Africa, as noted in Chapter Six, women seem to be only half-citizens and often suffer the distortions of patriarchy and discrimination in society. Actual authoritarian practices are not uncommon in the churches because of the missionary tradition and, over and above that, the background of traditional religion (Longman 2010:200; Nürnberger 2007:127-8). Scholars like Kwasi Wiredu, Didier Kaphagawani and Kwame Appiah assert that “an essential and negative aspect of African communalism” is its “epistemic, political and moral authoritarianism” (Ikuenobe 2006:176-7, 215).<sup>14</sup> At root, for them, are the “authoritarian dictates of tradition” and “the gerontocratic tyranny” of elders viewed “as the repositories of knowledge” (Ikuenobe 2006:175). According to Wiredu, “That is how it has always been done. I do not want any argument” is the answer likely received, in many African cultures; by those attempting to “question the authority or adequacy of established beliefs, principles, and the procedures for doing things” (Wiredu 1980:4; Ikuenobe 2006:177). As a result, this pervasive authoritarianism prevents peoples to “[rely] on their own reasoning and judgment based on the evidence” and “impedes [their] ability to be educated or their ability to learn, develop, and acquire the rational abilities that that are necessary to engage in autonomous or independent critical reasoning and rigorous inquiry” (Ikuenobe 2006:215; cf. Wiredu 1980:15-6; Kaphagawani 1988; Appiah 1992:117). The African church is called to be inclusive while it is influenced by a background of a traditional, particularist, communal and hierarchical society. In this context, the church needs a cautious and humble exercise of authority open to

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<sup>13</sup> *In extenso*, she declares: “That Hauerwas can lavish praise upon the practices of an exclusively male, hierarchically authoritarian tradition as a good example of Christian community, reveals important deficiencies in his epistemology and his proposed ecclesiology” (Albrecht 1997:225).

<sup>14</sup> In the words of Wiredu (1980:3 quoted in Ikuenobe 2006:176) describing a Ghanaian context, “[t]he very atmosphere we breathe in many areas of life in our society seems to be suffused with an authoritarian odour.”

the virtue of respectful and responsible freedom of expression. Otherwise, dictatorship stifling creative initiatives, fear, hypocrisy and duplicity would pollute the community life and distort moral formation. It is useful, after the assessment of Hauerwas's ecclesial ethic, to turn to the theological grounds of his proposal on moral formation.

### 7.3. Theology of moral formation

Hauerwas's proposal is based on an ecclesiocentric view of moral formation which repudiates the "heroic, radically individual and subjective" presuppositions of modern ethics (RA:7-9). In an effort to affirm the inseparability of theology and Christian ethics, Hauerwas has also grounded his proposal on some core theological themes related to Christology, eschatology, soteriology and moral anthropology as well as scriptural and natural theology.<sup>15</sup> His particular understanding of these themes has brought about a large array of criticisms. In the light of these constructive criticisms, the following sub-sections provide an assessment of the core Hauerwasian theological themes of moral formation by means of the concepts of the church as a colony, a polis,<sup>16</sup> the mediator of salvation, as well as the harbinger of the peaceable kingdom and as a social ethic. At the same time, they highlight both the related promising aspects and shortcomings of Hauerwas's proposal in an African context.

#### 7.3.1. The church as a colony

Hauerwas understands the church as a colony whose moral formation consists in discipleship through Christian biblical and historic narratives, worship and sacraments, the church polity, the authority of ministers and the ministry of local saints, and the whole life of the church ordained according to Christian narratives. He advocates a particularist character formation which fosters communal identity and repudiates universal moral theories. Consequently, his proposal could at least raise three significant questions in an African pluralist context: Is only a communal moral identity adequate or could it also be plural and personal? Could Christians in Africa receive a sound moral formation outside the church community? Is a particularist character formation which repudiates universal moral theories adequate for the church in Africa?

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<sup>15</sup> For more details, see Section 4.2. on the core theological themes of Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation.

<sup>16</sup> With Hauerwas's understanding of the church as a political community, there is not a sharp difference between his concepts of the "church as a colony" and the "church as a polis." Both have implications for ethics, community, politics, and ministry. For the sake of clarity, "colony" refers here to strictly moral formation within the church and *polis* to the relationship between the church and the wider society, the world or culture.

In Hauerwas's proposal, in reaction to the ambient cultural individualism, the emphasis is placed on communal or particularist Christian identity. Lewis Mudge criticizes "Hauerwas and his school" for seemingly considering the church as "a total cultural environment," and thus undermining the impact of the "multiplicity of cultural environments" people live in in the modern world. He adds, unavoidably, "[p]luralism enters our personhood. We are literally multiple selves, formed in different, and perhaps divergent, ways by our lives in the church, in our families, in our secular occupations, and perhaps in political, recreational, or other activities as well." And he concludes: "Ecclesiology" maps only part of the setting for faithful life (1998:77).

Reacting to Mudge's criticism of total environment Arne Rasmusson argues that this cannot be applied to Hauerwas.<sup>17</sup> He argues that the church's distinctiveness and relative independence towards its own culture or wider society advocated by Hauerwas rightly stress the place of the church as "the primary identity-forming unity". If the church fails to be so, other forces like the family, work and peer-groups will take its place; "when the ecclesial identity and formation are weak," "the social location" or "the social strata to which people belong are more determinative than the church" (Rasmusson (2000:191). Rasmusson is nonetheless appreciative of the point made by Mudge through his critique and qualifies Hauerwas's claim. He adds that "Christian identity and practices are formed in constant piecemeal engagements with others. Christians adapt, reuse, transform, criticize and rearrange elements taken from 'outside'. They also 'invent' or 'discover' their own elements" (Rasmusson 2000:190). Christian identity has to include also a personal dimension, the sense of the "I" in connection with a complex set of relationships: the family, the workplace, the wider society, as well as the values and beliefs somebody comes to hold as he or she moves through life (Wells 1998:142).

Emphasizing moral formation through Christian narrative and the church community's life, Hauerwas does not clearly point out that Christians can receive sound moral formation through secular narratives. Yet he discerns that Christians are "enmeshed in many histories — of our families, of Texas, America, European civilization, and so on — each of which is constituted by many interrelated and confusing story lines" (CC:96). In this perspective, he adds that the task of moral formation consists in helping Christians in acquiring the moral skills (virtue and character) necessary to negotiate these many kinds and levels of narrative

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<sup>17</sup> He asserts that for Hauerwas the Christian narrative is not totalitarian. Hauerwas does not advocate a "withdrawal from the world" nor consider "the church as a separate space" and his theological work is a blend of insights from all sorts of sources, similar to Milbank's radical orthodoxy, which "mingles exegesis, cultural reflection and philosophy in a complex but coherently executed collage" (Rasmusson 2000:190; Milbank et al 1999:2).



in a truthful manner” (CC:96). He singles out some activities such as learning to lay brick, to play a sport, to cook or quilt as “the most formative situations” left in American society because they “require the acknowledgement of authority based on a history of accomplishment” (Clendenin 2006; AC:101-2). Craft-like moral formation, the kind of nurturing and growth for the Christian moral life that Hauerwas champions, is more of methodological or analogical significance. Because of his particularism, he does not adequately appreciate that “good character gets built through encounter with the world, not just in Christian enclaves,” but also outside the church, in neighbourhood and workplace for example (Gill 2000:60-1). Hauerwas cherishes witness to the world but, as Gill (2000:61) adds, in the spheres or communities outside the church, Christians “need to listen and ask questions, not just talk and ‘witness’.” Yet how did Martin Luther King, one of Hauerwas’s heroes, learned the philosophy and method of non-violence? According to Hauerwas himself, it was through the lens of Christian redemption and the faith of the African-American churches, but he also learned from the Hindu Mahatma Gandhi “*satyagraha*, the belief that truth and suffering have the power to transform one’s opponent” (WAD:88). This indicates that from outside the Christian community Christians could benefit from some elements of sound moral formation. In Africa, Christians can learn a great deal from traditional wisdom through proverbs, tales, maxims, etc.

Concerning the relation between Christian moral formation and universal ethical theories, communitarian proponents like Hauerwas claim that

Christian moral formation is not to be seen as the pursuit of universal moral principles which are knowable by people in all times and places. It is not the promotion of an ethical viewpoint which can be set out apart from and independently of the particular assumptions which sustain the existence of the church (Fergusson (1998:1).

In other words, Hauerwas asserts the distinctiveness of Christian ethics which he relates to the particularity of Christian convictions and the need for conversion required by Christian narratives; hence the rejection of universal moral theories. Yet it is instructive to assess these claims in the light of Wayne Meeks’s moral socioecology of the early Christians.<sup>18</sup> The Hauerwasian view of ethics as not separated from Christian convictions is congruent with the NT narratives which do not reflect “a worked out meta-ethical theory,” but present “a thorough integration of the languages of theology, doxology, exhortations, and witness” (Fergusson 1998:10). The Hauerwasian emphasis on the priority of being over doing and the call for a

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<sup>18</sup> Concomitant to the development of communitarian approaches in the 1980s were studies on the significance of communities in the NT, including the outstanding contribution of Wayne Meeks on the moral socioecology of the early Christians. The following exposition heavily relies on Fergusson’s treatment of Meeks’s material found in his three following publications: *The first urban Christians* (1983); *The moral world of the first Christians* (1986); and *The origins of Christian morality* (1993).

communal identity are not antithetical to NT teachings. Early Christians were involved in habitual activities for the mutual development of their character. Practices of hospitality and gathering funds fostered their identity, their sense of belonging and their “morality of wealth and poverty” (Meeks 1993:108; Fergusson 1998:12-3). The Christian call for communal identity echoes the one found in Jewish Diaspora and substantiates Hauerwas’s strong emphasis on the continuity between Jewish narrative and Christian faith (*PK*:28-9). Therefore, the African church embracing the Hauerwasian tenets of an ethic linked to Christian convictions, the priority of being over doing, and communal identity for Christian moral formation is but a way of being faithful to the teaching and the model of early Christianity.

What should not be overlooked, however, is the additional “borrowing and appropriation of ethical materials” from pagan cultures by early Christians; hence some significant similarities can be found between the ethical requirements of the NT and “the conventions of Greco-Roman moral exhortation” (Fergusson 1998:8, 13). One of the striking illustrations, which Meeks points out, is 1 Thessalonians written in the conventional format of a Hellenistic letter and its listed virtues and vices, like those included in other portions of the NT, “can be [‘widely’] found in pagan literature” (Fergusson 1998:13; Meeks 1993:68).<sup>19</sup> Of note is that sexual immorality and idolatry are particularly stressed in NT writings. Equally are “the standards of sexual purity, marital fidelity, brotherly love, leading a quiet life, minding one’s own business” presented by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4 and considered as stimuli of respect and trust to those outside the Christian community (Fergusson 1998:13). As Fergusson points out, “Implicit in this claim, which was later to be developed by the second-century apologists, is the idea that the heathen can recognize the high moral standards set by the followers of Christ” (Fergusson 1998:13). How could a church leader have a good reputation with non-Christians, in the NT era, if the latter are completely devoid of some similar moral standards and practices (1 Tm 3:7)?

If the African church is to perform a moral formation inspired by the moral life of early Christians, the pursuit of communal identity should be the key. Like in early Christianity, the particularity of the Christian faith should be reflected in the rationale of the moral life in terms of its perception, motivation, and seriousness. However, at the same time, moral formation is also the pursuit of moral standards and practices which are “universal,” being not dissimilar to those acknowledged elsewhere (Fergusson 1998:14). Although methodologically arguable, the Hauerwasian repudiation of all the universal categories, in particular the Kantian mode,

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<sup>19</sup> As Fergusson (1998:13) adds, “Meeks presents an aggregate of vices found in eighteen different lists in the NT” (Meeks 1993:68).

utilitarianism, natural law theory and creation ethics, reduces the scope of moral formation and undermines the critical need of cooperation between Christians and non-Christians for nation-state building, justice, peace and prosperity. As Turaki (1997:162) affirmed, “African states failed generally on the grounds of morality and ethics – lack of a moral State and a moral society, and a moral man whose morality and ethics are governed by universal principles.” Needless to say, all those universal theories need a careful assessment in the light of Christian convictions. But they cannot be subject to a wholesale rejection.<sup>20</sup>

### 7.3.2. The church as the mediator of salvation

Integrated with Hauerwas’s account of moral formation are the soteriological accents and the status of the Scriptures which, surprisingly for a Protestant theologian are more akin to Roman Catholic theology (Fergusson 1998:68). This appears in particular in Hauerwas’s contentions on the ideal church, the mediation of the church and the moral status of Scripture. The following critical remarks concern both the American and the African church.

As Fergusson (1998:53) notices, the prominent Hauerwasian “image of the church [is a] pilgrim people sanctified by God as sacramental sign before the world.” This image is antithetical to the one favoured in Lutheranism, a community *simul iustus et peccator* — simultaneously just and sinner. Rightly, Hauerwas’s ecclesial ethic speaks of virtues and the significance of motives and intentions over against mere decisions and he views the church as *ekklesia*, in the sense of a community set apart the world. Yet it seems that insufficient attention is given to the church as a community of the gathered ones including not only the saints, those who are mastering the Christian life, but also those who are in the way, who, though nurtured by the Word and the sacraments, are struggling as they substantially reflect the Pauline movement of Christian experience found in Romans 5 and 6 (Bond 2007:37).

In this perspective, several scholars like Fergusson (1998:66) have leveled the critique of “a fantasy community” to single out the fact that the ideal church which Hauerwas depicts exists nowhere and his view is more “prescriptive rather than descriptive”.<sup>21</sup> In

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<sup>20</sup> For example the Kantian mode appeals to autonomy by rejecting all the forms of authority — dogma, narrative, tradition and community — other than human authority and is inadequate to the general orientation of moral formation in the church. Yet it is not devoid of any sense of relevance for the Christian community. As Gascoigne (2001:165) points out: “The power of Kant’s categorical imperative is to identify the fundamental characteristics of a society made up of free and human rational beings. Yet the actual goals that human beings set themselves, and the value that they place on each other, can be fundamentally affected by visions of life that are grounded in historical religious traditions.”

<sup>21</sup> Unconvincingly, Hauerwas has identified as the church of resident aliens some churches and ministries like Catholic sacramental piety in Episcopal and Lutheran sacramentalism, mainstream United Methodism in their sanctification emphasis, as well as the campus ministry in its importance of

fairness, Hauerwas has been very critical of the actual church's way of life, in particular when he speaks of the church's Constantinian attitude expressed in terms of either subservience to the state or tendency to control the state (WTRS:92).<sup>22</sup> Yet at times, when it comes to church-world relation, Hauerwas seems to overemphasize the virtuous character of the church and downplay the difference between its "is" and "ought" (e.g. in his concept of the church as "the true polity for the world") (Stout 2004:156). As Curran (1999:47) observes, Hauerwas at times does not seem to recognize sufficiently the continuing sinfulness and imperfection of the church; in a sense he tends, like pre-Vatican II Catholic theology, towards a "triumphalistic understanding of the church."

Rightly Hauerwas strongly affirms the role of the Christian community in salvation and conversion. Speaking of conversion as a process, he rightly rejects a conservative view of a once-for-all experience which leaves no room for a substantial moral and spiritual formation through a strong affirmation of sanctification. In contrast to the modern view fostering radical individualism and an understanding of the "autonomous, self-sufficient and encumbered self," he offers a biblically sound meaning of conversion as incorporation into the Christian community in "the process of identity formation" (Grenz 1994:554-5). At the same time, he rightly posits a corrective to a conservative Protestant understanding of individualist conversion that renders the necessity of the church incidental in Christian moral formation. Yet his treatment of conversion is one-sided, it overlooks the Gospel view of a personal conversion as an individual and obedient "response to Jesus' command to 'repent and believe the gospel'" (Grenz 1994:554-5; cf. *PK*:33). Should not the church at the same time foster the individual aspect of conversion and conversion as a process of immersion into the community of faith and sanctification?

To Hauerwas's credit is also the affirmation of an empirical experience of salvation, the connection of orthodoxy to orthopraxis and not the mere adherence of theology as system of beliefs. Living out the Christian faith is the expression of true salvation as illustrated by the story of the Mennonite who was asked: "Brother, are you saved?" And after thinking a while, the man took a paper and write down the names of people to be consulted, those who can testify about his salvation (*CET*:24). As Richardson (1997:382) affirms, "In African tradition likewise, it is one's community that confers status, judges character and determines social

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the group and the centrality of equipping the saints (*WRA*:21-3), let alone Yoder and the Mennonites with their Anabaptist view of church (*WRA*:21).

<sup>22</sup> In this respect, Hauerwas sees most of the churches in America as not Christian enough (Hunter 2010:164-5). Gray (2008:414) is more incisive about Hauerwas: for him, Hauerwas thinks that, in the contemporary era, "[m]ost churches (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, the vast majority of Protestant denominations) are Constantinian churches rather than more pure Christian communities."

roles.” One can agree with Hauerwas’s affirmation of ecclesial or “political salvation” as the offer of a participation into the life of the church community, if only the phase “outside the church there is no salvation” is taken outside the context of Reformation. Yet his treatment of salvation seems incomplete. In addition the empirical “proof” of a transformed life, a comprehensive account of salvation should be convergent with the “old evangelical response to the question ‘Are you saved?’” and its corresponding answer: “I have been saved, I am saved; and I will be saved old” (Grenz 1994:564-5). This encompasses the experience of personal conversion, the lifelong process of sanctification effected by the Spirit and to whom the believer collaborates, as well as the anticipated view of Christian glorification.

Hauerwas soundly speaks about the distinctiveness of Christian ethics requiring not only goodness but holiness and conversion through Christian narrative and tradition. He considers also the positive role of sacraments (*HR:40, 73: PK:63, 106-109*). He has adopted narrative as key category to contradict the liberal assumption denying supernatural experience like Jesus’ resurrection. However, he does not sufficiently develop the relation of his account to “the central Christian contention of the priority of God’s grace” (*HR:88*). Instead, he rejects the Reformation’s central tenet of justification by faith. In so doing, he does not sufficiently take into account the traditional reproaches against virtue ethics, especially in its Thomasian version such as selfishness, perfection as capacity for meritorious action versus *sola gratia*, the dependence on God, etc. (Herms 1982:486-487). His rejection of the doctrine of justification through faith misses a crucial point: the individual’s radical transformation not through his or her own deeds but through conversion, God’s regeneration and transformation and the endowment of the fruit of the Spirit leading to “a new obedience, a new lifestyle and a new ethic” (McGrath 1991:12-3).

Concerning the moral status of Scripture, Hauerwas performs a good job through his constant emphasis on the Bible as the church’s communal Scripture and a book to be read in communion by church’s members. This reminds Christians that the most part of the Bible’s writings is “directed to the community of faith” (Siker 1997:123). Scripture as a “rich narrative” opens up a larger vision and context for morality that shapes and reshapes Christians’ “very imagination, [...] remapping the inner terrain of [their] intentions, affections, attitudes and loyalties” and thus shapes and nurtures their personal and communal character (Connors & McCormick 1998:101). Also, rightly Hauerwas emphasizes the role of Scripture in the shaping of Christian identity since by returning to Scripture the community can check its actual, “present identity against its formative identity” (Siker 1997:122). For, as Hauerwas contends, the church “is nothing less than that community where we as individuals continue to test and are tested by the particular way those stories live through us” and the “church is the bridge



where Scripture and people meet” (*PK:98; RA:129; cf. Siker 1997:122-3*). Valuable are Hauerwas’s insights related to Scripture as narrative shaping character, identity and loyalty in the African church. The predominant moral education merely considers the Bible as a proof-text book or rule book teaching “moral lessons about the permissibility or impermissibility of certain behaviours” (Connors & McCormick 1998:101; Van der Walt 2003a:64-5).

However, Hauerwas’s overemphasis on narrative seems to overshadow “other modes of understanding and communication” in Christian ethics and moral formation; it precludes the significance of “propositional understandings of reality” and other forms of biblical and ethical resources — apart from narrative or stories — such as commands, proverbs, songs, prayers, etc. (Hollinger 2002:59). Perceptively, William Spohn (1984:4) points out that there is an “irreducible plurality of literary forms in the Bible” and therefore “we [should] enjoy an irreducible plurality of the theological uses of scripture in ethics.” Russell Connors and Patrick McCormick (1998:99) correctly apply this insight when they assert: “This means that it is always a mistake to try to reduce the Bible to a book with only one kind of moral authority, with only one way of forming moral character.”

Hauerwas arguably rejects the individualist understanding of the Reformation *credo sola scriptura*, with its tendency of displacing the community which leads to “the objectification of Scripture apart from the community” (Siker 1997:123). However, from a Protestant point of view, this *credo* cannot be repudiated if its historical background of a triumphalist and authoritarian church equating the authority of Scripture and the one of tradition is taken into account. Hauerwas’s ecclesio-centrism undermines the authority of Scripture. His claim about the Scripture constantly reminding the church of its identity could be understood to acknowledge that Scripture do exercise a critical authority over the church. However, this claim is over-empowered by his view of “the authority of Scripture as a function of the church itself” and the church being the interpretive community *par excellence*. By so doing, as Jeffrey Siker explains, Hauerwas problematically tends to replace *sola scriptura* by *sola ecclesia*. In the process, “there is a danger of Scripture’s voice being muffled by the *sola ecclesia* position toward which Hauerwas leans, for if history gives any lessons, it teaches that the church can readily deceive itself even in the name of Scripture” (Siker 1997:123). Indeed in the very name of Scripture, churches and Christians in Africa have been led astray into apartheid and ethnic discrimination and violence, into blind subservience to dictatorial political regimes and into the toleration of dehumanizing poverty and social injustice. With the church authorizing Scripture, unlike early Christians (e.g., Ac 17:11), church members have been robbed of the privilege of evaluating the church’s sermons and moral teachings. More importantly, this Hauerwasian hermeneutical perspective undermines the benefits of the

Lutheran and Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of the baptized allowing the principle of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* — a continual reform of the church, the church having been reformed, should always be open to further reformation (Bond 2007:36).

### **7.3.3. The church as the harbinger of the peaceable kingdom**

No doubt the church is the “foretaste of the peaceable kingdom” and could not help but teach Christians to see the world eschatologically” (*PK*:100, 145; *HR*:129). Jesus’ resurrection entails “the establishment of a kingdom of forgiveness and peace” offering to Christians “the possibility of achieving what were heretofore thought to be impossible ethical ideals,” e.g. living Christian ideals like the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (*HR*:129-30, 133). Thus being a Christian amount to being part of “a transformed people capable of living peacefully in a violent world” (*HR*:129). All these ideas included in Hauerwas’s emphasis on a realized eschatology bears profound implications encapsulated in his radical pacifist stand. However, should the church in Africa teach Christians to embrace pacifism and non-violence everywhere and under any circumstance?

For the sake of clarity, it is useful to assess Hauerwas’s stand on pacifism and non-violence through its three significant dimensions: (1) nation-state’s violence; (2) violence towards the Christian community or the individual Christian; (3) violence towards the neighbour (including the loved ones or non-Christians). Concerning nation-state’s violence, the radical pacifist advocacy may be understandable for one considering the context of the USA — and its longstanding history of violence — within which Hauerwas is writing. In the African context, however, the experience of intra-state wars as well as ethnic or religious violence, and even genocide seem to legitimate the theory of just war. And the pacifist stand encounters the strong critique of Ramsey’s ethic of love. Ramsey makes the following point: “If pacifism as an analysis of the right Christian conduct is wrong, it is wrong because it has mistaken the principles of right political conduct and of justifiable war in which Christian love should take form, today as in the past” (Ramsey 1961:9; cf. Polet 2009:120). It is noteworthy that several of Hauerwas’s heroes are not pacifists. This category includes Thomas Aquinas, Pope John Paul II, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Hauerwas’s condemnation of the use of violence and coercion by the political power seems hyperbolic since in general “the nation-state is not inherently violent” (Cunningham 2008:276). Needless to say, many violations of rights could be observed in governmental action. Yet the justification of its use of coercion is only legitimate on the basis of the restriction of individual rights or liberty to secure, protect and enforce the rights of others (Hollar 1994:17).

Regarding Christian involvement in the police forces, Hauerwas remains pessimist. In his view, “a police action within a society cannot be condemned. Rather, the only question is whether there are safeguards to prevent it from becoming something more” (*HR:439*). Despite this pitfall, he does not prevent Christians to join the police forces and from within foster the recruitment of people committed to just, non-cynical policing and less violent performance of duties (*PF:27*). However, as in his view the essence of Christianity is non-violence, Hauerwas is confronted with the Biblical evidence of the legitimation of the state’s power. Following Yoder, the state’s responsibility only “coincides with the biblical view of the police function of the state” (*HR:439*; cf. Rm 12-13). To be sure, this function, “guided by fair judicial processes, subject to recognized legislative regulation,” is only congruent with “the absolute minimum of violence” [and not a] “general authorization to use the sword” (Yoder 2002b:36-7; cf. Gray 2008:420).

However, some scholars object to this understanding of “the sword” in Romans 12-13, instrumental to Yoder’s and Hauerwas’s argument, that distinguishes between “police power (potentially acceptable) and military power (never acceptable)” (Gray 2008:420-1). Oliver O’Donovan convincingly argues:

[...] Yoder thinks the text refers not to the death penalty or to war, but to the “police function.” This is to impose an anachronism upon a text which knew of no civil order that was not maintained by soldiers. [...] Yoder, it must be said, is not beyond dismissing as bad exegesis views that were never meant as exegesis, and in turn claiming Paul’s silence as exegetical support for his own alternative views (O’Donovan 1996:152).

Hauerwas’s Christological and eschatological non-violence can make sense for the Christian community unless he strongly asserts not a mere “Christian non-resistance” but rather an active non-violent resistance “[as] a form of discipleship” (*HR:437*). In fact, he has recently done so by disliking the title of *A Faith Not Worth Fighting For* — in his foreword of this 2012 collection of essays — as he thinks “that there is a way to fight non-violently” (*FORE:x*). Being very appreciative of Martin Luther King’s non-violent commitment in Civil Rights struggle also witnesses to this Hauerwasian inclinations (*WAD:84, 87-94*). Fighting non-violently seems to be the accurate interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>23</sup> Christian active non-violent resistance is the relevant approach for the African churches confronted with religious violence by Islamist groups in countries like Nigeria and Kenya; it also seems appropriate to Christians combatting ethnic or racial violence. The church can never contemplate violence as a longstanding solution in conflicts (Kunhiyop 2008:124). However,

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<sup>23</sup> In particular the recommendations dealing with violence like “Turn the other cheek,” “Give your undergarment as well,” and “Going the second mile” (Mt 5:38-42; Lk 6:29-30; See Wink 2001; Kunhiyop 2008:124). Unfortunately, these expression have been classically interpreted through the dichotomy of “fight or flight” as so to urge Christians to “collude in [their] own despoiling” instead of encouraging them to “counteract their oppressors” (Wink 2001).

are radical pacifism and non-violence as conceived by Hauerwas and other neo-Anabaptists viable options, especially in the case of violence towards the neighbour or the loved ones?

Even in the name of forgiveness and Christian prohibition of retaliation, the love of “the violent” enemy cannot supersede the love of the neighbour or the loved ones (e.g., family members and others). Hence, violence in some cases of self-defence and the protection of the weak and the loved ones could be justified. Why should they be abandoned to the cruelties and atrocities of the perpetrators? In this perspective, Hauerwas does not seem to draw the full implication of his own statement: Christians “can never acquiesce in the injustice, for not to do so would only leave the neighbour to his or her devices. Those who are violent, who are also our neighbours, must be resisted, but resisted in our terms, because not to resist is to abandon them to sin and injustice” (*PK*:106). Sometimes, “forgiveness-as-compassion is compatible with the use of violent force” (Biggar 2011:6).

However, very appealing is the way the mature Hauerwas, responding to criticisms, has nuanced his understanding of pacifism by asserting that “Christian non-violence is not so much a position but rather a declaration that requires ongoing reflection” (*FORE*:ix). Concerning “the use of violence in support of the neighbour,” Hauerwas is acutely aware that “there is no ‘safe harbour’ for pacifists and just warriors” (*PF*:26). Quite legitimate is his foremost justification of nonviolence: the creative search of non-violent solutions. Thus, Christians should be habituated to find “alternative[s] to violence” even those that could be widely qualified as “unrealistic” (*PF*:26-7).

#### **7.3.4. The church as a *polis***

The Hauerwasian concept of “the church as polis” moves the attention from an understanding of politics as “organiz[ing] people for particular ends” to the one of “form[ing] them to be inheritors and exemplifications of a tradition” (*HR*:174). This concept implies two significant aspects. Firstly, “the new *polis* called the church” by Hauerwas, “introduces the possibility of moral formation and meaning in people’s lives” (*RA*:30; Snarr 2007:55). Secondly, however, this formation, Hauerwas claims, should not be essentially about “seek[ing] power, security, or equality, or even dignity, but a sense of worth gained from participation and contribution to a common adventure” or discipleship (*HR*:172). With an African pluralist context in view, the promising dimension of the first aspect is to be highlighted and the inadequacy of the second aspect is to be stressed. This latter aspect of the Hauerwasian concept of “the church as a polis” reflects his over-determination of the doctrine of the church to the neglect of some significant tenets of Christology, soteriology, pneumatology and natural theology. This undoubtedly constitutes one of the major

shortcomings of his proposal as a whole and in particular his account of social ethics which will be elaborated on the next sub-section.

#### **7.3.4.1. The church as a *polis*: Promising aspects**

Hauerwas and “other theologians in radical orthodoxy and in the neo-Anabaptist communities” speak of the church as “a *polis* or *altera civitas*” to direct attention to the alternative formation that the church should offer — a formation different from the one offered by modern liberal individualism, capitalist consumerism and social voluntarism (Hunter 2010:282-3). In an African context becoming increasingly pluralist, their view should be extended to the difference between genuine Christian formation and the tenets of particularist racial, ethnic, or tribalist communities, the narratives of Afro-pessimism, and other moral perversions. Nothing can replace the church as a *polis*, neither the family nor the school and other spheres of moral formation. Not one of these spheres can be compared with the church in terms of resources of “formation into a vision of moral flourishing” in a “stable social and cultural environment” that “embodies continuity, historical memory, rituals marking seasons of life, intergenerational interdependence, and most important of all, common worship” (Hunter 2010:283). Indeed, “[t]he church is God’s gift to his people, [...] a strategic gift in our time, encompassing “powerful ideals, truths, and narratives, patterns of behaviour and relationship, [and] social organization” (Hunter 2010:282).

#### **7.3.4.2. The church as a *polis*: Theological limitations**

Unlike the first and outstanding aspect of the church as polis offering an alternative formation to secular formations, its second aspect that undermines the significance of the traditional socio-political engagement is inadequate for the African pluralist context. This renders Hauerwas’s social ethic very problematic and raises the issue of whether church moral formation could not, as usually understood, aim at equipping Christians to be part of the public search for common good. What follows incriminates Hauerwasian ecclesiocentrism and its correlative rejection of natural theology as key elements constitutive of this problematic social ethic.

First, it is greatly to Hauerwas’s credit that he has integrated ethics with dogmatics but some missing aspects in his Christology and soteriology have distorted his social ethic. This limitation is pointed out by David Fergusson (1998:68-72) in his criticisms of the Hauerwasian post-liberal accountancies. Indeed, Hauerwas’s account of the Christian life underplays the significance of Jesus Christ’s office as the Redeemer, and the eschatological Sovereign over



all of creation. It generally emphasizes the role of Jesus as “the prototype of Christian existence, the founder of the church, and the one in whom God reveals how we are to live” (Fergusson 1998:68). Central to Jesus’ work — according to Hauerwas — is the establishment of the church as a community. The continuing significance of this work “must be defined in terms of an act of recollection” or memory, the remembrance of the church’s constitution through “the sacramental re-enactment of [the] Christian story” (Fergusson 1998:69). As Fergusson (1998:68) contends:

In outlining the significance of Christ for the Christian life, Hauerwas frequently implies that Jesus is to be understood as the exemplar, the initiator of a new social order, the Kingdom of God. The traditional language of the incarnation and atonement is muted by contrast with his insistence upon the importance of the life of Jesus as this is narrated in the Synoptic Gospel.

This reduced scope of the NT narratives overlooks the significance of the work of Jesus for the Christian life in relation to Jesus’ resurrection, ascension and the power of the Holy Spirit poured into the church. If construed from this perspective, the work of Christ understood “as ‘a once for all’ achievement which is accomplished *extra nos*,” could only but enlarge the vision of “the “post-Easter community” for social ethics (Fergusson 1998:69).

In other words, Hauerwas’s account does not fully consider the implications of Jesus’s incarnation. He rightly understands the Eucharist as a sacrament of worship, praise, thanksgiving, and memory for virtue cultivation culminating in the closing blessing prayer of sending Christians as witnesses to the world (*BCCE*:11). Yet Eucharist also includes praise and thanksgiving for “what God has done in creation and redemption” through incarnation and consists in “a commemoration of what God has brought about in the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ” (Fergusson 1998:69-70). Of particular note is the following evaluative remark of Fergusson:

Missing from Hauerwas’s account in this context are sufficient mention of Christ’s overcoming of sin, evil, and death; our union with him by the bond of the Spirit; of the character of the community as the Body of Christ; of the eschatological expectation that his lordship will finally be exercised over all creation (Fergusson 1998:70).

Second, along with Fergusson several critics have noticed the absence, or at least the inadequate treatment, of pneumatology in the work of Hauerwas (Koopman 2002:34-5; Rasmusson 1994:179; Hütter 1991:240; Zinger 1989:12).<sup>24</sup> In 1986, Nigel Biggar challenged not only Hauerwas’s pneumatology but also the lack of a strong doctrine of the Trinitarian God in his project. Hauerwas himself recognized the accuracy of this criticism as follows:

Even if I have shown the difference that Christian convictions may or should make for how our lives are shaped, such a project does not in itself entail that the god in view be the

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<sup>24</sup> For more details, see Koopman 2002:34-9.

God we worship as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That failure, however, may not be peculiar to me alone but may be the fate of theology in modernity (*STT*:37-38; cf. *DFF*:210).

Yet, since then Hauerwas has made no substantive move to improve this state of affairs (Koopman 2002:34).<sup>25</sup> Hauerwas could avoid the charges of sectarianism and withdrawal ethics leveled against him should he include an adequate pneumatology within his account in order to produce a social “ethic that offers a way to churches to be simultaneously true to their identity and to be [fully] involved in social and public matters” (Koopman 2002:39). Unfortunately, his account fails to stress that “[t]he agency of the church derives from the activity of Jesus and continues through the Holy Spirit to be dependent on it” (Fergusson 1998:70).

Third, prior to the issue of the church’s socio-political involvement in the wider society is Hauerwas’s understanding of the doctrine of revelation which determines his conception of public ethics, ethical consensus and ethical pluralism. If Christianity could be considered as resource for public ethics, it is essentially in terms of witness because access to Christian revelation implies the transformation of the self within the Christian community (*CET*:10-1). As such, the church “does not serve the world by attempting to communicate a Christian ethical perspective to it, but rather by demonstrating the distinctiveness of the Christian form of communal life” (Gascoigne 2001:176; cf. *CC*:72-87). Underlying is the understanding of the Christian revelation, the narrative character of Scripture, which is only “intelligible to those who are a part of a highly distinctive faith community, living a life transformed by this narrative” (Gascoigne 2001:176).

In his critique of Hauerwas’s and other post-liberal theologians’ doctrine of revelation, Fergusson (1998:7) perceptively describes their position as being “ontological realist but epistemologically relative” since for them truth is “not relative to a particular framework, [but] knowledge thereof is available only to those who inhabit the framework.” As a corrective, he resorts to Barthian theological principles of “a simultaneous commitment to ontological realism and epistemological contextualism” (Ferguson 1998:167). These principles help to see that, the church’s commitment to moral dialogue and common good is possible despite a lack of common theory with those outside the church. Moreover, Christians should admit the possibility of “moral perception outwith the Christian community,” because “the world created and redeemed by God in Jesus Christ [is] the arena for the action of the Holy Spirit” and this world is “moving towards an eschatological identity already revealed” (Fergusson 1998:7,

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<sup>25</sup> In his article, “The role of pneumatology in the ethics of Stanley Hauerwas,” Nico Koopman, following Strauss, draws from Barth, one of Hauerwas’s heroes, to demonstrate that, unlike Hauerwas, Barth acknowledges “the role of the Holy Spirit in the social ethical task of the church” in its broad sense (Koopman 2002:38; cf. Barth 2004:870-1, 888-9).

166). However, the doctrine of revelation fostered by cultural linguistic theory does not give a proper “account of the connection between mode of signification and the thing signified,” God being, to some extent, “within God’s own self, who God is for us in the stories of Israel and Jesus” (Fergusson 1998:38). The cultural linguistic theory relates truth to performance including religious language, in a way that undermines “the realist claim that the truth is not our own making,” whereas truth is “constituted by the ways things are independently of and prior to correct performance” (Fergusson 1998:70). The Hauerwasian account could have provided a sound perspective of public ethics and moral communication in pluralist societies if it had followed “Barth’s threefold stratification of the Word God,” namely, “the witness of the church, the words of Scripture, and Jesus, the Word of God revealed” (Fergusson 1998:71). The distinction between the Word of God *extra nos* and the church’s testimony commensurate to a sound doctrine of revelation is “capable of accommodating claims about natural law, the orders of creation and natural rights” (Fergusson 1998:78; cf. Gascoigne 2001:182-5).

Fourth and finally, concerning natural law theory, it has been only too strategic for Hauerwas to dismiss natural law theory by an alternative reading of the Thomist account. Responding to Hauerwas and other opponents to natural law theory, Charles (2002:137) posits the twofold significance of natural law. First, “it forms the basis for moral formation and cultivating the virtuous life when it encourages us to ask *How ought one to live?* What standards of behaviour are acceptable and unacceptable?” Second, “natural law serves as a bridge between Christian and non-Christian morality [in particular] in civil society where Christians and non-believers conform to the same moral standards.” Furthermore, natural could be grounded in the work of Christ and related to common grace which is reflected in the Apostle Paul’s Aeropagus speech and his mention of law of nature written in the hearts of pagan unbelievers (Ac 17:22-31; Rm 2:14-15). These Pauline writings prolong a view of natural law presupposed in the Ten Commandments, the Biblical wisdom literature and which “may be thought of in terms of general revelation” (Charles 2002:124).

In brief, the shortcoming of Hauerwas’s account is the over-emphasis of the particularity of Christian ethics to the neglect of its universality. This renders quite problematic his social ethic. However, his concern about the neglect of this particularity leading to a minimalist ethic for Christians is not to be overlooked. Also legitimate is his rejection about “the traditional notion of natural law viewed “as a body of philosophical insights that are independent of tradition,” [rather than] an affirmation of the possibility of genuine and substantive communication between traditions” (Gascoigne 2001:178).

### 7.3.5. The church as a social ethic

According to Hauerwas, the “most important social task of Christians is to be nothing less than a community capable of forming people with virtues sufficient to witness to God’s truth in the world” (CC:1, 3). In other words, the first social task of the church consists of developing people of virtue, of being an example to the world rather trying to directly change the world or the structures of the society (Curran 1999:47). Before considering its promising and inadequate aspects for an African context, this very controversial Hauerwasian statement begs at least some clarification regarding its corresponding scope of social ethics and the cultural, religious and theological backgrounds informing some related criticisms.

#### 7.3.5.1. A reaction to Christian social ethics in America

Undoubtedly, Hauerwas’s social ethic is a direct response to the American CLD culture (CC:83). His vehement critique against the pervasive American political theory includes at least five significant complaints. First, this culture has produced un-storied, de-traditioned and individualistic people making it difficult for them to be formed as people of virtue through mutual cooperation and community life (AN:18; PF:148). Second, they are also initiated to be autonomous, consumerist and libertarian (PWHE: 45-9; DFF:166-7). Third, they can only fight for their individual rights and self-interest. All this prevents people to sincerely work for true social justice (CC:78, 81; RA:50). Fourth, the CLD society has privatized religion and morality; and it reclaims a neutral moral discourse in the public sphere. This strategy has eventually led to the distortion of morality and the domestication and marginalization of the Christian faith and the church. Finally, embedded in CLD culture is a system “based on coercion and falsehood” (PK:102); it fuels violence and war both at home and abroad (ATN:126; WAD:xi, xvi).

Hauerwas’s social ethic is intended to challenge the way prominent American Protestant ethicists in the 1970s, like Reinhold Niebuhr with his realism, H. Richard Niebuhr with his ethical responsibility, James Gustafson with his ethical theocentrism and Paul Ramsey with his agapism and before them Walter Rauschenbusch with his social gospel, to name just a few, were conceiving Christian social ethics. For them, “social ethics’ should be primarily concerned with policies and strategies to insure just distribution of resources, or the theories of justice presupposed by such policies” (CC:3). Similarly, through the social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, Catholic ethicists, like their Protestant counterparts, are still viewing making the world better or more just as the primary task of Christian social ethics (PK:99). However, though important, those are not, for Hauerwas, the essential

questions of a sound Christian ethics: Christians' decisive contribution or their "most creative social strategy [...] is the church" (RA:82-3).

### 7.3.5.2. The promising aspects of Hauerwas's social ethic

The positive aspect of Hauerwas's social ethic for an African context is his particularly strong emphasis on character formation of church members and on their role as faithful witness in the larger society.<sup>26</sup> The church in Africa ought not to follow the trend discerned by Hauerwas in America where the church has despaired of being the church; and it has become "unable" to provide a viable moral formation to its membership through "preaching, baptism, and witness to form a visible community of faith" (RA:80). Hauerwas is urging the church to give priority to moral formation within its community rather than being concentrated on socio-political activism. The church envisioning social change should not overlook the fact that this renewal should begin in its midst, it must put its own house in order; in deed and words, in its polity and the whole way of life, the church should demonstrate the truthfulness of its narratives and doctrines. Also convincingly, Hauerwas directs attention to the fact that moral formation for social transformation is "a long and exacting task" rather than "a quick fix," as transforming the socio-political landscape requires moral formation in the church, school and family and other spheres and not just good laws and policies (Birch & Rassmussen 1989:121-2).

Accurately, Hauerwas, along with other Anabaptist theologians, have perceived the danger of the church's accommodation to the state. The Constantinian assumption can only at best turn the church into a follower of state agenda and at worse to a subservient servant obeying the dictates of the state. Rather, by serving the state on its own terms and according to its own identity and traditions the church can contribute to the welfare of the wider society and at the same time remains faithful to its core beliefs (Hunter 2010:283). One should not lose sight that Hauerwas does not conceive of church-world relationship in terms of "either *complete* involvement in culture or *complete* withdrawal" (CET:11). He does assign to the

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<sup>26</sup> Three striking examples illustrate this position. First, along with Willimon, Hauerwas congratulates Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority because of its initiative of establishing "Save A Baby Homes" rather than lobbying the American Congress for a pro-life position on abortion (RA:69-72). Second, Hauerwas disapprovingly criticizes the United Methodist Bishops' pastoral letter *Defense of Creation* on nuclear war (1988) addressing the wider society, rather than their primary audience — the United Methodists — and teach them about Christological pacifism or just war theory in a Christian perspective. Moreover, they should discuss the issue of United Methodists working in defence industries and their admission to the Lord's Table (HR:428-9; RA:160). The third notable example is the public declaration of income as condition to membership for the believers of fundamentalist Southern Baptist Church in the light of the practice of the early church (e.g. The case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, in connection with money, materialism, self-deceit, and lying, and over all, greed, acquisitiveness, covetousness and lack of integrity) (WRA:84-5; RA:131).



church the duty of providing “the interpretative categories to help Christians better understand the positive and negative aspects of their societies and guide their subsequent selective participation” (*CET*:11). The highly constructive aspect of his “paramount concern” is that sound Christian “moral and political agency comes from skills of discernment tied to Christian moral formation” and “Christians need the believing community to help continually cultivate [those] skills” (Snarr 2007:59-60). Obviously, this insight could greatly help the church in Africa prone to wallow in subservience to the state rather than adopting a relationship of critical solidarity (De Gruchy 1995:222-3).

Constructively, Hauerwas’s approach directs attention to the fact that the church can serve the wider society by not necessarily using the state’s political and juridical apparatus (Cunningham 2008: 257-8). This contradicts the politico-social activism and exaggerated hope placed in politics by the Christian Right and the Christian Left in America (Hunter 2010:169). This also applies in Africa on account of the widespread tendency of statism. In fact, the post-colonial Africa has been marked by the chaos caused by the nationalization of Christian mission-established educational and health care institutions and even of some private enterprises. Through statism, far too much has been and is still expected from the governments considered as an omnipresent direct controller and a providential provider in every situation and need (Van der Walt 1994:272).

### **7.3.5.3. The inadequate aspects of Hauerwas’s social ethic**

All things considered, Hauerwas’s social ethic is first of all a contextual social ethic directed to the situation of the American church which he sees as being accommodationist or Constantinian towards its surrounding CLD culture. For an African pluralist context, however, this particular understanding of social ethics presents several salient inadequacies. And while space is lacking in this section to adequately list and describe each of these limitations, a few of the most notable will be succinctly addressed.

To begin, for Hauerwas, the church should provide political services, “the most important of which is the development of people of virtue” (Kotva 1994:36; cf. *CC*:3). Thus, Christians’ first socio-political responsibility is to be the church and embody the Christian story “in a manner that witnesses to the necessity that all men face the limits of this world with joy, good humour, and enthusiasm” (*TT*:6). In fairness, Hauerwas speaks off it as the primary social task of the church, meaning that this is not “the church’s only task. The church’s participation in struggles for justice and freedom and dignity and respect and peace are taken for granted, rather than excluded” (Wells 2013:10). However, as Neville Richardson (1997:383) asserts, participating in those struggles and attending to the gross social plights in

the name of Christian love to the neighbour by using the state political apparatus should not be considered as a secondary social ethical task in Africa. Christian love should be directed to the oppressed and the oppressor within and outside the church. In Africa's failed and pseudo-democratic states, one powerful way of helping both of them is the establishment of a juridical, social, economic and political order of social justice. This could help at the same time the oppressed, destitute and voiceless to not resort to violence and the oppressor to renounce any kind of violence. This strategy is discernible in Martin Luther King, one of Hauerwas's heroes, in his struggle for civil rights. He preached and taught non-violence in the church but he also used "courts and legislatures to enact various forms of legal protection against racial discrimination" as well as several forms of popular demonstrations such as protest marches, sit-ins, and boycotts (Cunningham 2008:288-9).

It is also fair to acknowledge that Hauerwas is not completely opposed to Christian cooperation with non-Christians for the pursuit of common good but rather his two straight concerns in social ethics are the purity of the church and the integrity of Christian convictions resulting in a radical church-world separation (*PK*:101; *WTRS*:92-3; Shen Ma 2014). As well-apprehended by Hunter, Hauerwas and many neo-Anabaptists advocate a "Purity from' paradigm" for social ethics. For them, the "most significant challenge of our time is the violence and coercion built into the polity of liberal democracy and consumerism of global capitalism. Their solution, then, is the peace-living *koinonia* of the church-based community" (Hunter 2010:199). As a matter of fact, the connection between politics and violence is undeniable as a nation-state is characterized by the monopoly of the legitimate use of power. It is also true that the church's political involvement run the risk of affecting the character-formation of members. For example a church could lose its reputation if its supported and elected political party fails to deliver according to its promises. From Marx Weber's categories, Hauerwas opts for the "ethic of absolute conviction" which, in contrast to an "ethic of responsibility", overlooks the fact that the church must all the time consider the effect of its actions and inactions (Polet 2009:121-2). An ethic of responsibility drives those who know that they have "no right to presuppose goodness and perfection in human beings," and that sometimes "achieving good may require doing evil" (Weber 1994:362; Polet 2009:122-3). Overemphasizing the purity of the church and making Christian embodiment the prominent social task to the neglect of direct political participation underscores, in Africa, the traditional or missionary teaching of political apathy which urges Christians to stay away from politics considered as an essentially dirty and sinful work. In other words, Hauerwas's social ethic could be taken as a call for African churches and Christian living in almost totalitarian political

regimes to leave the management of all the state resources and even their fate in the hands of unbelievers, nominal Christians and corrupted leaders (Kinoti 1994:83).

“The purity from the world” paradigm is based on the Yoderian understanding of the confessing church which “finds its main political task to lie, not in the personal transformation of individual hearts [‘the conversionist church’] or the modification of society [‘the activist church’], but rather in the congregation’s determination to worship Christ in all things” (RA:45). Thus, of foremost significance is faithfulness to Christian convictions over against efficiency in Christian social and political involvement (RA:46-7; WTRS:93). For Christians, according to Hauerwas, does not share the same conception of love, justice with non-Christians (AC:46, 59-60).<sup>27</sup> However, what Hauerwas seems to not fully recognize is “that without basic conditions of justice, which Christians share with non-Christians, the making of a virtuous Christian community is [almost] impossible” in pluralist contexts (Shen Ma 2014c). A sound Christian ethic, as Birch and Rasmussen (1989:96-7) assert, requires not only a “conceptual adequacy” and “personal moral character” but also “social requisites” in terms of “the earthen vessels of systems, institutions, and policies;” and “without the social requisites, decisions cannot even be made, or character formed, in the first place.” How could Christians in public service and the private sector observe work ethic and resist bribery and other forms of corruption in a situation of irregular payment or even non-payment of fair, or at least living, wages? In this context, how could Christians and the church as institution resist resorting to bribery or traffic of influence when dealing with public administration or the legal system? How could Christians who want to become a member of parliament resist resorting to tribalism, lies, bribery or tricks in a political environment where morality and fair play are almost totally excluded? This is the reality in many African countries.

In addition, Hauerwas repudiates the Reformation’s tenet of work outside the church as a vocation or calling. Similarly, for him Pope John Paul II’s, in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, should not have interpreted the biblical fact of Jesus Christ being a carpenter as a way of dignifying common human work. In Hauerwas’s words, this is “ludicrous” and “nothing less than an embarrassment for one who ought to know better” (WACC:50; cf. Hunter 2010:250). Along with other neo-Anabaptists, Hauerwas does not “offer a constructive theology of work or art or commerce” because their perspective “underwrites the old pietistic

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<sup>27</sup> Hauerwas contends that “the current emphasis on justice and rights as the primary norms guiding the social witness of Christians is in fact a mistake” (AC:46). Even Christian love should not motivate “Christians to join with non-Christians in the search for justice in an imperfect world” (AC:59-60), since Christians “do not share a general sense, if not conception, of justice” in the American society that allow them to work together for common goals” (AC:60). To express a “universal desire for justice as the source for ideals” for better political communities is a Rawlsian assumption that springs from Enlightenment and liberalist presuppositions and reinforce the power and violence of nation-state (AC:60).

dualism that separates the world of the sacred (church life) from the world of the profane (the world of work)” (Hunter 2010:251). Hence, this perspective is inadequate for Christianity in the SSA being one of the poorest and most underdeveloped regions in the world.

In the last analysis, Hauerwas’s social ethic neglects direct Christian political involvement (e.g., through lobbying and policy formation) which is of crucial necessity in Africa in order to uproot and transform the social structures of injustice. It calls Christians to be prepared to face poverty, to accept the weakness of the cross and even martyrdom by following the example of Jesus in order to further God’s kingdom (*PK*:105). Thus, it is inadequate for African churches evolving in a context of rampant, intolerable injustice and dehumanizing poverty.<sup>28</sup> For him, “what charity requires is not the removing of all injustice in the world, but rather meeting the need of the neighbour where we find him” (*TT*:138; cf. Siker 1997:106). In Africa, urging Christians and the church to live “out of control,”<sup>29</sup> to be “patient in the face of injustice” and accept to “be poor and powerless” by following the example of Jesus Christ on the cross is far from being an appropriate Christian social strategy (*PK*:104-5). Stressing charity to the poor and the oppressed rather than action towards social structures and collective sins, overlooks the side-effects of charity such as loss of self-esteem, dependence, disempowerment and paternalism and domination from the donor.

## 7.4. Extended moral formation

Since Hauerwas’s has extended his proposal of ecclesial moral formation to the family, the school and health care, his contribution to moral formation within these institutions deserves an evaluation. Undoubtedly, one of the accurate ways to assess the relevancy of this contribution is to first highlight its significance in the CLD culture before taking into account the pluralist African context.

### 7.4.1. Moral formation in the family

Hauerwas has set forward invaluable insights for moral formation within the family in Africa. Rightly, he has condemned the language of rights without responsibilities for spouses and children correlative to a society praising non-interference and where people live as

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<sup>28</sup> For Nigel De La Tore, the church Hauerwas writes of is not “the church on his margins” or the communities of colour, but rather the church of Euroamerican people, “the normative U.S. church which is White and middle-class” and which has nothing to do with “world hunger and neighborhood poverty”; “the dispossessed” need more than the Hauerwasian liturgy as an effective social action (De La Tore 2011:222-3; cf. Gustafson 1985:87).

<sup>29</sup> This is for Hauerwas, seeking justice, but through radical pacifism and not compromising faithfulness to God’s kingdom to assure efficacy in social actions (*PK*:105).

strangers. Through Christian narrative, the family is not a natural necessity but a school for virtue. The increasing vulnerability of the family in liberal society and urban Africa demonstrates the need for the church, a community beyond the family, to nurture, orient and strengthen parents and children through its narratives and practices (CC:174). With the “autonomous, self-sufficient, free person” as moral ideal and the moral breakdown due to “a hedonistic self-fulfilment ethic,” which has taken the place of past commitments to duty and responsibility” in America, the family has become “morally irrational” (CC:155, 171). More significantly, in this context, and the African context as well, the institutions of family, singleness, marriage and parenthood, should they be perceived as vocations and features of discipleship, could actually be regarded as viable enterprises (CC:156; IGC:161; RA:65-6; WRA:85-6).

Also insightful is Hauerwas’s view on parenthood, seen not as a wilful act but as “an office of the whole Christian community,” a task of “every adult” in the church (CC:173-4). For at least two reasons, this concept is promising for an African context. First, the burden for the success or the reverse — failure — in child rearing and education is not put solely on the biologic parent. This converges with the African traditional view of parenting as communal “social responsibility of morally educating, socializing, and acculturating children into the relevant moral principles, beliefs, values” and institutions undergirded in the maxim “It takes a community or village to raise a child” (Ikuenobe 2006:73-4, 138). Second, barren couples enlightened by this powerful concept can become differently fertile by taking care of children who are not their biological kids. Even more, they can become open to a legally plenary adoption, a form of adoption almost unknown in traditional African societies prizing only biological filiation. Undoubtedly, adoption is a valuable alternative to the increasing masses of AIDS orphans and street kids as well as to the mere condemnation of abortion in Africa today. Besides, Hauerwas perceptively urges parents to make use of rightful authority, not authoritarianism, and even to have the courage to pass on their convictions to their children.

Regarding marriage which is also, like family and sexuality, under the attack of liberalism and globalization through the all-powerful media in Africa, Hauerwas has prescribed the practice of lifelong monogamous fidelity to curb realism and romanticism (MA:171; CC:177). He has spelled out this lifelong commitment through its heuristic correlatives, namely the primacy of singleness, the understanding of marriage as a heroic enterprise, “Hauerwas’s law,” the virtues of patience, hope and the sense of the tragic opposed to the happiness of hedonistic self-fulfilment ethic (CC:155, 166; 172; HR:513). All



these tenets are powerful and thoughtful tools for moral formation of the youth as well as for pre- and marital counselling within the church in Africa.<sup>30</sup>

Concerning pre- and marital sexuality, it is hard to deny the significance of the moral “linguistic skills” suggested by Hauerwas, such as the mystery of sexuality, chastity, faithful sexuality in marriage and the identity of covenant-maker and keeper, opposed to idolatrous sexual expectations and human fulfilment in sexuality rather than in Jesus Christ. These skills express highly laudable efforts to shift attention from conduct to character, rules to virtues in moral formation. Furthermore, the treatment of abortion and homosexuality reflects Hauerwas’s particular emphasis, as post-liberal theologian, on the narrative, practices and identity of the church community. Moral reflection on abortion is related to the existential question of “What kind of people ought we to be?” and moral inquiry on homosexuality to the practice of lifelong monogamous fidelity. All these tenets are thoughtful insights for the church and Christians in Africa committed to live faithfully to their traditions in a world of fragmented morality. However, concerning the public debates on sexual issues in a pluralist society, narrative and virtue ethics would not be sufficient. Christians need to incorporate universal ethical approaches in their contribution to public morality.

It is noteworthy that some specific and important issues regarding family, marriage and sexuality have not received the attention they deserve in an African context. These issues are polygamy, domestic violence, female circumcision, the plight of widows and orphans, rape, incest, prostitution and sex trafficking. To a significant extent, they are related to the defence of women rights and demonstrate the limits of a virtue and community virtue ethic fostering only traditional values in an African context still marked by patriarchy, violence and abuse against women and child.

Hauerwas’s emphasis on having children is more adapted to Western settings where the language of “unwanted” and “wanted” children prevails. In Africa, it is only applicable to some acculturated persons. In a traditional African context, large families are prized and childless couples suffer from the agony of infertility.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, being open to children cannot overlook the fact that childless marriage is valid and can be fruitful in a Christian perspective.

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<sup>30</sup> See subsection 5.3.2. on singleness and marriage for details about all these tenets.

<sup>31</sup> Of note is that Hauerwas, more concerned with the increasing reluctance to procreation in America, does not sufficiently attend to other issues of the ethics of reproductive technology apart from abortion and contraception.

## 7.4.2. Moral formation in the school and the seminary

Hauerwas's account as a corrective to the demise of moral formation in the school and the seminary in America is outstanding. It contains thoughtful and challenging insights which could be fruitfully implemented in African settings. Hauerwas's account first serves to raise the awareness that the schools in America, whether public or private, secular or church-sponsored, are nationalistic, fostering hegemonic patriotism and violence. As such, the American educational system is fundamentally antithetical to Christian narratives. Perhaps Christians in America have overlooked this point because they barely reflect critically on the following questions: "What is the school for?" and "Who does it serve?" This kind of reflection could surely be beneficial to Christians in Africa who are unaware that the school must also serve the best interests of the Christian cause. To be sure, in settings where the schools, even the church-related ones, are becoming increasingly secularized, pluralist and inclusivist, religion and theology are being excluded from the curriculum; thus, the prospects for a viable and vigorous moral formation can only be compromised.

As well-discerned by Hauerwas, the church-related schools should not primarily serve the state cause but also the church's cause and the actual orientation of the curriculum is to reflect its basic convictions. The features of a Christian school or university set forth by Hauerwas are undoubtedly of great relevance for Africa. Forming Jesus Christ's disciples is one of the essential tasks of a Christian-related school or university. Thus, the Christian faith should shape the overall orientation of its curriculum and the content of the courses. Not only in CLD culture but also in every culture, church-sponsored schools must all the times work in critical solidarity with the state which is historically known to use the schools for ideological ends (*CET:240*).

Several Hauerwasian insights regarding Christian participation in public schools are valuable for an African context. Despite his commitment to ecclesial ethics and vitriolic critique against teaching practices in public schools, namely secularization, assimilation and indoctrination in idolatrous patriotism, Hauerwas has not in final analysis recommended to Christians to withdraw from public schools. It is hard to deny the relevance of his call for Christians to be witnesses and missionaries to public schools in any context. He has helpfully directed the attention to what Christians can reclaim from public schools in Africa. First, in the name of true toleration and objectivity public schools have to integrate religion and theology in their curricula and acknowledge the multiculturalism prevailing in the country. Second, they have to be sensitive to local realities in striving to meet community-based needs. In addition, Christians can never completely leave or demand to the public school what is the primary

responsibility of the church and the family, namely the moral formation of their children and youth.

Applying the hierarchical craft-like moral formation in schools through teachers as masters and students as apprentices to whom the living tradition is passed on is a strategy based on a sound educational philosophy. Such a process requires high profile and virtuous teachers whose role Hauerwas has soundly paralleled to the one of the saints in the church community. To emphasize the demand of honour and truth and its correlative moral commitment, he has pointedly suggested that the faculty be hired on the basis of their moral profile and, even more, moral character, as selection criteria should take precedence over academic credentials (*CET*:230-3). For Christian teachers and students in Africa, the demand of honour and truth explains that turning someone in for cheating is the most compassionate act to do in the school as much as "excommunication is the most gracious act the church ever performs" (*HOU*:31). Also, invaluable insights can be drawn from the call to fill in the chasm between the seminary and the church, to have well-equipped ministers formed to have "a character sufficient to their calling" (*CET*:143). Only virtuous, humble ministers in Africa, with a sense of authority, can be able to exercise care and discipline for the church to be at the same time a caring and disciplined community.

Championing an historical and communitarian ethic, Hauerwas is opposed to the strategy of helping students making up their own minds found in ethics and other courses, since the overall curricula reflects the Socratic method. Hauerwas's claim is convergent with the ideal of liberal arts' moral education which "is grounded in the classical canon" of literature and "binds students to the past, to tradition" (Nord 2008:31). His claim rejects the liberal-free ideal which "values free, critical inquiry and tolerance; [and is thus] sceptical" (Nord 2008:32).<sup>32</sup> As such, refusing to encourage students to make up their own minds can hardly avoid the liberalist attack of being a kind of indoctrination. From a communitarian point of view, the liberal-free ideal could not be considered as being morally neutral and preventing moral relativism. In fact, any dogmatism, whether religious or secular, cannot avoid the risk of indoctrination. The point in Hauerwas's account is that students need guidance and virtues to form their own concept of morality and make responsible choices. As asserted by Polycarp Ikuenobe (2006:226) for an African context, "some moderate forms of indoctrination," different from brainwashing are legitimate in moral formation to help internalize moral principles and values." However, similar to the spheres of family and school, moral formation related to the

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<sup>32</sup> As regard to the categories of "the liberal arts ideal" and "the liberal-free ideal" of moral education, Warren Nord draws on Bruce Kimball's book, *Orators and philosophers: A history of the idea of liberal education* (1986).

domains of suffering and healthcare also reflects the strengths and limitations of Hauerwas's ethical project.

### **7.4.3. Moral formation, suffering and healthcare**

Through his careful assessment of the American health care system, Hauerwas has brought forth a provocative account of moral formation beginning with the Christian understanding of suffering. Not only in America, but also in Africa, a sound understanding of suffering and relevant character formation can help Christians to deal with their sorrows, trials, illnesses, and despairs. In these both domains, Hauerwas has provided a compelling and commendable contribution. As affirmed by Hauerwas, Christians cannot totally rely on medicine to solve the mysterious issue of suffering. They should rather turn to their own narratives for a theodical understanding of suffering. The excessive expectation put on the technological advancement of medicine has diverted the attention of Christians and “threatens to make medicine the institution of secular salvation” and “an alternative church” (*APE*:180). Christians need resources from within their communities for a proper understanding of suffering. Discipleship through Christian practices in the church, as suggested by Hauerwas, is a very relevant way of helping Christians in Africa to acquire and develop hopeful virtues and put on God's armour. No doubt, it is also a powerful corrective to Prosperity Gospel and the African traditional belief of abundant life that sway Christian attitudes regarding suffering in Africa.

“Suffering presence” or being present in suffering, near and available to those in pain is an appropriate way of comforting them and a practice promoted in Jewish and Christian narratives (e.g., Job 2:11-3; Rm 12:15; Gl 6:2). In an African world increasing individualism, especially in urban areas, is replacing traditional communalism and enhancing indifference, the lack of concerns about others' needs. Though connecting people, information technology is fostering impersonal relationships. Christians should be reminded that the mourner, the sick, the poor and the deprived need more than money, a call or electronic messages but a compassionate presence, not only something from ourselves, but ourselves (Ja 1:27). However, Christians, especially in West Africa, should be encouraged to take leave of the extreme traditional practice of a long period of mourning which leave the grieving family impoverished after costly and pompous burial ceremonies.

Christians from Africa nowadays critically need the recovery of the practice of “suffering presence” emphasized by Hauerwas. It opposes “killing compassion,” a way of getting rid of the sick and the disabled, especially the terminally ill and the mentally handicapped in the name of a false compassion about their suffering. On the contrary, it

expresses genuine patience towards these social categories, whether relatives, the neighbour or fellow Christians. “Suffering presence” demonstrates that the Christian community does not have a share in the larger society’s utilitarian idea that the value of a human being is commensurate to her material or visible contribution to society.

Also, Hauerwas’s way of relating the fundamental causes of euthanasia and suicide in the erosion of community and the ignorance of the practice of life as a gift from the gracious Lord, constitutes valuable resources for the church confronted with the rise of suicide and the demands for euthanasia. Suicide is becoming a noticeable social phenomenon in urban African areas among the youth and young adults for various reasons such as social rejection, disappointment in love, failure in studies, unsuccessful professional life, etc. Also, in Africa, “[t]here is a long tradition of voluntary passive euthanasia” and “involuntary, active euthanasia” (Kunhiyop 2008:347).<sup>33</sup> Here, the relevance of Hauerwas’s call for Christians to keep alive their moral description of suicide, euthanasia, abortion, etc., rather than resorting “to killing compassion,” cannot be overstated.

Hauerwas has challenged the church to be a community committed to caring for those who are suffering according to Jesus’ healing and holistic ministry and the NT narratives (Lk 4:18; Ac 3:1-11; Rv 3:14-19). Morality grounded in vision, descriptions, virtues and narratives of a living community explains why for Hauerwas caring for the sick should be a noticeable enterprise of the church. As Richardson (1991:467-8) notes, Hauerwas has perceptively pointed out that “the way in which a particular community [e.g., the church] provides for the care of the sick in its midst is perhaps *the* key indicator of the moral character of that community”. His challenge is convergent with the communal caring highly valued in African ethics. In a context of endemic poverty, insufficiency of health care facilities and resources, the challenge of several endemic diseases and especially HIV/AIDS demonstrates the relevance of this understanding of the church’s task. Hauerwas’s view of the church’s medical work underwrites what has been the philosophy of missionary work in various places in Africa and what is still needed for the church to effectively contribute to health care in Africa today. The key factor is neither “vast financial and other material resources, say on the level of a national health scheme,” nor a vast array of highly trained health care professionals, but rather “*Christian communal commitment*” (Richardson 1991:470).

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<sup>33</sup> In the former category [voluntary passive euthanasia], a very elderly person may refuse medical treatment (e.g., modern healthcare). In the latter category [involuntary, active euthanasia], deformed or disabled babies and twin babies, all “[r]egarded as evil spirits,” can be abandoned, left in the forest or on the river bank; and because of poverty or lovers’ refusal to start a family, unwanted children are being abandoned in suburbs and remote areas (Kunhiyop 2008:347-9).



By challenging the church to be a community caring for the sick and the disabled, Hauerwas has legitimately called the church to be a role model to the health care system: “medical ethics needs such a church” (Richardson 1991:476). As he says: “given the particular demands put on those who care for the ill, *something very much like a church* is necessary to sustain that care (SP:75; cf. Richardson 1991:469; emphasis added). In a capitalist world, rights of patients, legal provisions, even professional codes of ethics are not sufficient for a sound medical practice or health care in general. As Hauerwas pointedly observes, “the temptation to construe medical care in terms of capitalist notions of property becomes almost irresistible, corrupting physician and patient alike” (SP:5; cf. Richardson 1991:466). He has thoughtfully grounded medical ethics in ecclesial ethics or “the kind of community necessary to sustain the care of the ill” and has correlatively rejected foundational approaches grounding medical ethics in consequences (Fletcher’s *agape*) or Biblical themes (Ramsey’s covenant fidelity) (Richardson 1991:468-9). Although not the sole relevant perspective, his approach has a huge potential of enlarging the moral imagination of health care professionals in Africa.

Hauerwas advocates the recovery of the Christian practice of dying since Christians believe in the afterlife, the life in their Lord and Father’s eternal felicity. Physical death, the common fate of human beings in a sinful world, is not their final destiny. For Hauerwas, these convictions should imply the readiness to face physical death and the refusal of costly high-tech medicine (e.g. the case of organ transplantations) resulting in the unavailability of health personnel and facilities for those suffering from less serious medical conditions and the poor. The recovery of the Christian practice of dying is surely one the aspects for which Hauerwas, as he has recently recognized himself, has been criticized of “assuming a far too idealized account of medicine” (APE:179). However, in an African context, generally lacking high-tech medical facilities, this practice of dying is very relevant for many Christians desperately worrying for their lives to the extent that they can virtually do anything — like resorting to ancestral cults, sorcery, divination, or other occult practices — to avoid death. The decision for the refusal of high-tech care in order to avail health care resources to other patients should be left to an individual discernment, without any kind of constraint as taught through the Christian doctrine of liberality (2 Cor 8, 9).

## **Conclusion**

In the light of the assessment of Hauerwas’s proposal on church moral formation, it appears that its particularist character formation based on ecclesial ethics, though generated in the American context, presents several outstanding insights for African churches’ context.

It can serve an appeal to the African churches to ordain their worship, liturgy, polity and entire way of life to spiritual and moral formation of their members. Its stress on virtuous life and Christian identity formation and anti-Constantinianism (or non-conformism) is a critical and necessary component of church moral formation in Africa for Christians to make a difference in their various domains of life and activities and for the church to maintain a critical solidarity with the government. Hauerwas's proposal is directed to the individualist and autonomous, consumerist and hedonist, rationalistic and nihilistic morality of the modern and post-modern world. As such, it is a valuable resource for African churches in their efforts to teach and equip believers to depart from the insidious influence of the Western mindset. Particularly, the proposal's community and narrative orientation is congruent with African culture; hence it offers valuable points of contact for the cultivation of virtues and character and identity formation in African churches. However, Hauerwas proposal overemphasizes virtue and character ethics at the expense of moral decision-making and action. It is meant to promote Christian moral life in the Western individualist and libertarian culture and in churches strikingly involved in political activism. In contrast, what is more challenging to African churches is cultural communalism and political apathy. In these respects, the Hauerwasian proposal is not a final solution for African churches. Its particularism distorts the universal dimension of Christian ethics, stresses the purity of the church and restricts cooperation between Christians and non-Christians for the common good and social justice. The next chapter essentially consists in an attempt to offer a corrective to those inadequacies.

## **Chapter 8:**

# **MORAL FORMATION IN AN AFRICAN CHURCH: TOWARDS A CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL**

### ***Introduction***

The preceding chapter (Chapter Seven) assessing Hauerwas's proposal on moral formation constitutes the second stage of the present work — the first being the extensive analysis of this proposal endeavoured from Chapter Three to Chapter Five. Against the backdrop of some significant aspects of American culture (described in Chapter Two), Hauerwas's proposal appears, to a large extent, as a contextually determined response to the American CLD moral ethos. Despite many outstanding and widely applicable insights on moral formation, some theological and ethical limitations have been noticed in the Hauerwasian proposal with regard to the American context and, even more, to an African pluralist context as described in Chapter Six.

As indicated in the first and introductory chapter, the primary aim of the study as a whole is to postulate a biblically sound, theologically and ethically coherent and contextually relevant proposal on moral formation for local churches in an African pluralist context. To fulfil this aim, the present chapter offers a theological and ethical framework and some practical insights towards a constructive proposal. Although its theology is largely shaped by Reformed and Evangelical theology, much of what it presents can also be affirmed by churches from other strands and traditions of Christianity. This proposal incorporates the promising Hauerwasian insights and at the same time attempts to refine, revise and reformulate some Hauerwasian stances considered as inadequate.

While Hauerwas's proposal essentially relates to a particularist character formation based on an ecclesial ethic, the suggested constructive proposal turns to both character and conscience formation as a more viable and contextually relevant approach to moral formation for African churches. The constructive proposal is "Christian" and not "particularist" since it is not only based on distinctive aspects of Christian ethics but also on universal aspects. It adds to the formation of "character" that of "conscience" for two essential reasons: Firstly, to extend the scope of moral formation to not only include the ethics of being that undergirds Hauerwas's proposal, but also the ethics of doing; and secondly, to balance Hauerwas's advocacy of communitarian ethics by emphasizing the necessity of curbing authoritarianism and promoting personal responsibility in a context more deeply influenced by African communalism than Western individualism. Rather than totally endorsing the Hauerwasian "ecclesial ethics," the constructive proposal resorts to "Trinitarian ethics". This offers a

corrective to Hauerwas's ecclesiocentrism and his view of Christian social and political involvement. Apart from the Trinitarian ethics, the proposal suggests an integrative Christian worldview to extend the early Hauerwas's emphasis on moral vision. This understanding of worldview reformulates Hauerwas's view on the relation between "narrative" and "doctrine" but retains his stress on the role of practices and rituals. It helps to integrate relevant non-Christian material into Christian ethics; it also stresses the necessity of church formation for contributing to the *shalom* of all in the wider society which goes beyond the Hauerwas's emphasis on Christian embodiment.

The first section of this chapter displays the necessity of both character and conscience formation in African churches, in an effort to distinguish the constructive proposal with that of Hauerwas. The second and third sections describe the theological and ethical framework of this proposal through its two key foundations — a Trinitarian ethic and an integrative Christian worldview — supplemented with their rationale. The fourth and last section, dealing with the practical and contextual aspects of the proposal, displays the threefold ethical dimension (communal, individual and social) of moral formation in African churches.

## **8.1. Moral formation as character and conscience formation**

To recall, the Hauerwasian proposal gives priority regarding moral formation to community, virtues, identity and Christian embodiment over the individual, moral principles and actions and a comprehensive social involvement respectively. Undergirding the proposal is the right conception that morality is not individualistically formed and it is not only about behaviour but also heart, mind and character (Covaleskie 2013:39). The proposal signifies a movement away from the quest for a universal morality in terms of an ethic of doing (deontological and teleological approaches) to a Christian community-based ethic of being. But the community-based ethic of virtue which this proposal upholds over-emphasizes the significance of character/virtue ethic, narrative ethic, community ethic and the church as a social ethic. This fourfold over-emphasis seems to downplay the significance of moral principles, decision-making and a faithful and comprehensive Christian socio-political involvement and above all the presence of a transcendent reality to the Christian community. As a corrective, the present alternative proposal turns to character and conscience formation, grounded in Trinitarian ethics and an integrative Christian worldview. This section begins by spelling out the dualistic tendencies which are the outcomes of the fourfold over-emphasis found in Hauerwas's proposal, it then elaborates on the significance of conscience and finally argues the relevance of both conscience and character formation in an African context.

### 8.1.1. Particularist character formation and dualistic tendencies

As mentioned in Chapter Fourth, one of the determinative shifts in the Hauerwasian theological ethical project was its move from the concept of “the self as agent” to the one of “the self as story” to secure the understanding of character as the “core, unique, self-chosen and integral moral identity of a person” (Connors & McCormick 1998:18; cf. VV:49). Christians are historical beings and part of a community shaped by its tradition and narratives from which they derive their identity (*PK*:28). Church moral formation, in this perspective, basically consists in a particularist or communitarian character formation. Christians are called to embody the story of Israel and Jesus as carried by their community and practise Christian virtues through the “habits that form and are formed in worship, governance and morality” which foster their community (*PK*:98). In brief, the Hauerwasian proposal of moral formation stresses the significance of the ethics of being, the Christian virtues, the particular narratives of a given Christian community, active membership in this community and correlative communal identity.

The Hauerwasian proposal utterly opposes the individualistic anthropology which it discerns behind both deontological and consequentialist ethical theories considering rules or principles as primary ethical categories (*PK*:19-24). “In Hauerwas’s view,” according to Richard Higginson (1988:124-5), “what we *are* [character and identity] is then ultimately determinative of what we *do*. [...] Problematic moral decisions fade into the background before God’s fundamental concern with what we are as people, with our motivation, our integrity and our faithfulness.” In the final analysis, Hauerwas’s proposal on moral formation seems, or at least tends, to be constructed on an overarching dualist view of ethics in general and Christian ethics in particular through the appearance of the following pairs: being and doing; virtues and principles; identity and action; heteronomy and autonomy; character and decision-making; communitarianism and individualism; particularism and universalism. Indeed, the Hauerwasian proposal has been essentially set forth to compensate for the primacy of individualism, solipsism, autonomous choice and decision-making and universal ethical theories in the American and Western mind-set. By so doing, however, it overemphasizes the significance of the first term of each of the above-mentioned pairs at the expense of the second.

### 8.1.2. The significance of conscience in moral formation

Along with “character,” “conscience” is a major concept in moral formation. Since much has already been said about character through the presentation of Hauerwas’s proposal, it is useful to concentrate here on the significance of conscience. Biblical insights



on conscience and some metaethical developments regarding the term in Catholic moral theology and Protestant ethics seem to be very useful in grasping its meaning. To apprehend the significance of conscience in moral formation, it is important to first explain the role of conscience in Christian ethical life.

### **8.1.2.1. The role of conscience in the Christian ethical life**

Discourse on the Christian ethical life should not concentrate only on character because “moral agency includes both moral character (being good) and moral decision making and action (doing good)”; and a “basic unity” exists between both of them (Kretzschmar 2004a:152; cf. Birch and Rasmussen (1989:39-40)).<sup>1</sup> In other words, moral agency is about the ethics of being, which concentrates on the good person and good society, and moral virtue, and the ethics of doing which concerns are right choices and actions as well as moral values and obligations (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:39). The experience of moral agency is universal in that everybody can choose, reflect upon his past deeds before making decisions on prospective actions; everybody may demonstrate a sense of responsibility, accountability, deliberation, and discernment. All these manifestations are linked to the idea of conscience.

As Birch and Rasmussen (1989:39) indicate, moral agency, “does not separate ‘being’ and ‘doing’ or character from decision-making and actions.” Analytically, however, the reference to “character” or the kind of persons the moral agents are can be differentiated from “the concrete choices and deeds in particular circumstances on specific moral issues and problems” (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:41). Traditionally, “conscience” is the ethical concept used in connection with the latter concern which can be translated into the following moral query: “How do we know what is the truly right thing to do in a particular situation?” Or “*How* do we discern exactly what our response to the God-given call to be fully human [or Christian] and loving ought to be in the concrete, confusing and often messy situations of our lives?” (Connors & McCormick 1998:115; emphasis original). Traditionally, conscience is a key concept with regard to moral discernment, deliberation, decision-making and action. Thus, “character” is a concept typical of an ethics of being (virtue ethics); “conscience” is a concept

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<sup>1</sup> Moral agency is a technical term in ethics. As stated by Birch and Rasmussen (1989:40) following Charles Strain, moral agency “is a tag for describing human experience, and especially human action, from a moral point of view. It means we are those kinds of creatures, who are able to perceive various courses of actions, weigh them with a view to various considerations, choose among the actions on the basis of the considerations, and act on the choices. It also means we can be held accountable for our choices and actions.”

belonging to decision-making in the context of an ethics of doing. As Motlhabi (2001:124) points out:

[C]onscience, even more than character and virtues, is normally considered to be directly involved in moral decision making and to be generally responsible for our actions. In morality, conscience can be regarded as the combustion chamber of all our internalized values, norms, attitudes and other learnt ways of moral behaviour. It represents the assimilation of all these and their shaping into a moral tool that is ever-ready to direct moral action practically and to provide a shield against immorality and evil.

The ethics of being promoted by Hauerwas gives more attention to virtues, traditions and narratives of the Christian community and to the “background” elements of moral life such as “motives, dispositions, attitudes, intentions and perceptions” (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:40). It rightly holds that the ideals, purposes and identity of the community should supersede the role of universal rules, principles or norms. But, in final analysis, it does not evacuate “the place and status of rules and moral quandaries,” as explained earlier (Higginson 1988:125-6; Hollinger 2002:58).<sup>2</sup> Surely, a virtuous person or community would encounter some situations where it would be necessary to weigh up virtues or values. For example, the demands of peaceableness or non-violence, forgiveness and reparation ought to be considered over against the need for justice, protection of the weak, reparation, compensation and deterrence; the propensity to charity and generosity should be contemplated over against the promotion of responsibility, self-reliance, and work ethics; and the practice of goodness, kindness and compassion should not overlook the role of severity, boldness, and correction; etc. In general, being virtuous does not imply being ready to act in accordance with one’s virtue and then acting spontaneously in a morally right way when the situation demands action. “Conscience” as separate capacity for moral deliberation, decision and decision-making, is needed to ensure acting in the morally right way. As Etienne de Villiers affirms:

[Practically,] readiness to act in accordance with the virtues one has is often not enough to ensure morally right actions. In many situations in which one has to decide on the morally right action thorough analysis of the situation is necessary, different (moral) values are at stake, which have to be weighed up and foreseeable consequences of the different options for action must be taken into account.<sup>3</sup>

### 8.1.2.2. Conscience as a biblical concept

The idea of conscience is not foreign to the Scripture. The NT explicitly speaks of *syneidesis*, “conscience.” The OT has no specific word for conscience, but akin to the concept is the word *lêb*, “the true heart,” found in the Hebrew Bible as it appears in classical

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<sup>2</sup> See subsection 7.2.1.2 regarding the assessment of Hauerwas’s proposal about “virtue, action, principle and decision-making.”

<sup>3</sup> Personal conversation on 22 March 2016.

Bible translations.<sup>4</sup> The insight on conscience through the discussion on “heart” in the OT shows that God’s will or law has been transcribed into human hearts (Ez 11:14-21; Jr 31:31-34). The human heart is “the place [where] we hold up a mirror to ourselves, the locus of our deepest moral judgments about our deeds and lives” (e.g., Job 27:6; Connors & McCormick 1998:117). The story of Adam and Eve displays some aspects of conscience. It describes well “the process of self-justification or blame-shifting that commonly occurs when people find their heart judging them sinful,” and they express the “retrospective judgement of conscience” (Gn 3:7-11; Fisher 2008:3). Also, the people of Israel through their recurrent remorse demonstrates this latter kind of conscience (e.g., Ps 7:10; 26:2; Jr 12:20; 17:10; 20:12). Central to Jesus’ teaching is the need for a pure heart (or clear conscience) exercising judgment and seeking the will God and acting accordingly (Mt 5:8; 6:19-23; 7:21-27; 15:10-20; cf. 1 Jn 3:18-23; etc.) (Fisher 2008:3; Connors & McCormick 1998:118).

Explicitly, the apostle Paul uses the Greek word *syneidesis*, “conscience” and several times he uses it interchangeably with the word *kardia*, “heart” (e.g., Rm 2:14-15). As Anthony Fisher explains, “[f]or Paul, conscience is *not* some special faculty different from the rest of human thinking and choosing, nor is it some secret wisdom given only to a few. Rather it is the human capacity to know and choose the good, the mind thinking morally and the will acting responsibly.” He adds that conscience “is universal knowledge of God’s law (e.g. 2 Cor 4:2; Rm 1, 2); [it] is also experienced as an inner tribunal guiding, accusing or approving outer behaviour, in prospect or retrospect (e.g. Ac 24:16; 2 Cor 1:12-14; Rm 2:14-15; 9:1; 2 Tm 1:3; Heb 13:18) (Fisher 2008:3; emphasis original). Moreover, the judgments of human *syneidesis* may be erroneous because conscience can be weak or even evil (Connors & McCormick 1998:118). Those judgments “like other acts of the human mind, can be accurate (1 Tm 1:5) but can also be mistaken, for the mind and will can be weak or corrupt; conscience may falsely accuse us or remain silent when it ought to speak (e.g. 1 Cor 8; 10:23-30; Tt 1:15; Heb 10:22)” (Fisher 2008:3). The frailty of conscience may lead to deception and distortion of the word of God (2 Cor 4:2), and finally to an inoperative conscience (1 Tm 1:19; 4:2; cf. Mt 6:22-23).

### 8.1.2.3. Basic dimensions of moral conscience

The concept of conscience has been more developed in Catholic moral theology than in Protestant ethics (Reuschling 2008:145). Following Timothy O’Connell, several Christian

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<sup>4</sup> The Septuagint translates the Hebrew *lêb*, “heart” in the Book of Job with the Greek word *syneidesis* (e.g., Job 27:6). Similarly, in one place (Ec 7:22), the Vulgate translates the same Hebrew word by the Latin word “*conscientia*” (Fisher 2008:3).

ethicists working within the Catholic tradition have identified three dimensions of conscience, which are not strictly sequential as they can be overlapping; they are namely, “conscience as capacity,” or “antecedent conscience,” “conscience as process, or actual conscience” and “conscience as judgment,” or “command conscience” (O’Connell 1978: 83-97; 1990:103-18; Gula 1989:123-51; Connors & McCormick 1998:122-30).<sup>5</sup>

The first dimension of conscience is the capacity or “our fundamental ability to discern good and evil” (Gula 2004:52-3). According to the official teachings of the Catholic Church, this capacity is linked to the universal ability to discern the good grounded in the tradition of “the first principles of the natural law’: basic principles of practical reason accessible to all people of good will and right reason” (Fisher 2008:5).<sup>6</sup> The Protestant tradition attached to the doctrine of total depravity can only resist such a view. However, some Protestant ethicists — like Reuschling (2008:150) — embrace an understanding of antecedent conscience as a capacity people develop through the course of their lives and the choices they make. This capacity is shaped along with their moral character and results in their “ability to recognize moral values, make moral judgments and struggle after the good” (Connors & McCormick 1998:123). This dimension is called “antecedent conscience” as it refers to “that enduring habit, shape or state of moral selves before we confront a particular choice or problem. It is the condition of our moral appetite to be good, to do what is right and to build justice” (Connors & McCormick 1998:122).

The second dimension refers to conscience as a process of “moral reasoning” or “moral science” or “the process of discovery that commits us to investigate and evaluate sources of moral wisdom” (Gula 1989:132; Reuschling 2008:149). And the third dimension, “conscience as judgment,” is “the concrete, practical (and hopefully wise) moral judgment to act,” about “our specific moral obligation” or “about what we must do here and now” (Connors & McCormick 1998:124, 132). The significance of conscience as process and judgment cannot be overlooked. As Charles Curran (1999:172) points out:

Conscience is generally understood as a judgment about the morality of an act to be done or to be omitted or already done or omitted by the person. All human beings have to deal with this issue of decision making which from the perspective of moral theology concerns the morality of our actions.

Thus, with these three dimensions in view, Gula apprehends conscience as “the whole person’s commitment to value and the judgments one makes in light of that

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<sup>5</sup> According to Fisher (2008:5), the threefold dimension of conscience is largely convergent with the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church (e.g., the “summary of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on conscience [found in] the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.”

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Vatican II, *Dignitatis humanæ* §3.

commitment of who one ought to be and what one ought to do and not to do” (Gula 2004:53; cf. Reuschling 2008:149).

The concept of conscience is useful in Christian ethics; it entails the recognition that Christians, as other rational human beings, are involved in complex moral reflection and deliberation that requires the assistance and development of their conscience. In contrast to Catholic moral theology, Protestant ethics does not do justice to this understanding of the role of conscience. With reference to Martin Luther’s historical opposition to some tenets of the Roman Catholic Church, conscience is largely understood in Protestant churches as “standing [against popular opinion or] against authority and standing for one’s own personal convictions about matters of right and wrong as lone voice crying in the wilderness” (Reuschling 2008:146). Also, John Calvin’s doctrine of total depravity renders suspicious a positive appreciation of conscience. What more attracts attention is the “negative consequent conscience” found in Pauline writings and occurring after the performance of ethical actions; this “fits the classical Protestant notion of salvation coming to the sinner who is conscious of sin and in need of a saving God” (Curran 2004:6; cf. Reuschling 2008:146-7).

The emphasis on conscience, as personal dimension of morality raises the issue of its relationship with external forms of authority, including church authority. This has been a matter of controversy in Catholic moral theology; especially around several issues on sexual ethics such as birth control, extra-marital sex and homosexuality.<sup>7</sup> To a large extent, the contemporary theological debate on the significance of conscience is not foreign to the controversial insights emerging from social sciences since the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment liberalism and existentialism emphasized the concept of free subject, freed from revelation, tradition, and God, nature and community and even from reason itself to be an actually free agent. In the same vein, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) advocated a view of autonomous conscience (Fisher 2008:2).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Although the Second Council of Vatican in 1962 acknowledged the dignity and liberty of human conscience, the publication of Pope Paul VI’s 1968 encyclical on birth control, “Of Human Life” (*Humanae Vitae*) led to a polarization over the meaning and roles of conscience on the one hand and the authority of the Church through its magisterium on the other. The encyclical banned all forms of artificial birth control (Spickard et al 1994:422; cf. Wilson 1988:20). Stressing devotion to Virgin Mary, the Pope John Paul II maintained this traditional position, speaking of the “value of virginity even within marriage” (Kane 2010:1991). In addition to contraception, the controversy was extended to other issues of sexual ethics like fornication, extra-marital sex and homosexuality. A divide emerged between traditionalist moral theologians (advocating obedience to the magisterium) and revisionist theologians (inviting Catholics to follow their conscience) (Fisher 2008:10; Ciorra & Keating 1998:6).

<sup>8</sup> According to Fisher (2008:2), “Freud’s view of conscience as a psychic policeman, the inner remnant of childhood authority figures, and Nietzsche’s view of conscience as a social policeman, the construct of a controlling community, both continued to posit a kind of internal war between conscience as an alien legal voice and the freedom of the agent to disobey.”



Obviously, communitarian ethicists like Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre stressing the ties of the individual to several kinds of communities like culture, nation, church, family, workplace, etc. can only reject the understanding of conscience built on a view of the human person as a master of her own destiny, freed from all social constraints (Fisher 2008:2). In particular, Hauerwas repudiates Sidney Callahan's (1991) view of conscience as "a personal, self-conscious activity, integrating reason, emotion, and will in self-committed decision about right and wrong, good and evil." For Hauerwas, Callahan's notion of conscience is based on modernity's understanding of the self, "the assumption we must be self-creating, self-controlling, and self-directed"; whereas "[c]onscience, reason, and emotion are not primary terms of the moral life" (IGCO:2). Indeed, understanding conscience in an individualistic way is very misleading. Although conscience is part and parcel of the human mind and will, it points to a communal understanding of morality. "The very word *conscientia*," as Fisher (2008:14) explains, "means, literally, *to think with*, and the *with* might refer to some moral community or tradition of fellow seekers after truth." In the same vein, Birch & Rasmussen (1989:18) point out that

While we often depict conscience as the individual's "still small voice" within, the etymological meaning betrays its true source. *Com + scire* means "knowing in relation" or "knowing together." Conscience is an expression of character, which is formed only in community.

In the final analysis, the communitarian rejection of an autonomous, individualist conscience is legitimate, since, conscience as the voice of God in Christian tradition is also, to a large extent, the voice of the community of moral authority. "A well-formed Christian conscience," as Fisher (2008:12) states, "will seek to be both more objective about morality and truer to the Christian tradition than any morality based on sincerity or balancing acts can deliver."<sup>9</sup> However, communities of moral authority, including the church, can promote authoritarianism, legalism, moralism, dogmatism through indoctrination. Authoritarianism reduces morality to matters of obedience and authority; hence promoting an impoverished moral formation (Ciorra & Keating 1998:6-7). Legalism and dogmatism only emphasize the obedience to the letter of the law and not to its spirit; and thus foster hypocrisy (Mt 23:1-35). Moralism stresses the external appearance at the expense of the internal essence of morality, the goodness of the heart (Jr 31:31-34; Mt 15:8-9). All these practices often lead to "a shallow, self-righteousness and judgmental" morality (Kretzschmar 2009:19). Also, sound moral formation ought to avoid indoctrination. It should weigh up the necessities of shaping a communal moral identity and that of leaving room for individual freedom and responsibility. In

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<sup>9</sup> Of note, Fisher refers here to *Veritatis Splendor* §§60-64.

other words, moral formation should attend to conscience formation. People's personal identity includes both their character, strongly influenced by the communities where they bear a membership, and their conscience, which is more unique to the individual. As Motlhabi (2001:124-5) explains:

Once conscience is formed, however, it becomes its own "master". It screens all suggestions for actions, whether they come from the individual self or from outside — even those coming from the very external laws and rules which contributed to its formation. It decides independently which is the right course of action to follow in any given situation and fills the individual with either confidence or apprehension depending on the response that it receives from the individual. It is generally accepted, therefore, that conscience is a law unto itself despite the many laws and moral rules that are prescribed by society and its various institutions.

For this reason, conscience is "to be well socialized — that is, to be well formed, informed and trained" [because] a uniformed conscience is a dangerous moral guide" (Motlhabi 2001:125).

### **8.1.3. The necessity of conscience and character formation**

A sound church moral formation in Africa should put in tandem character formation with conscience formation. At least three salient reasons can justify this assertion. The first reason concerns the insufficiency of virtue ethics promoted by character formation. To the credit of aretaic ethics is the perception and wisdom that provide the virtues to find the right and discern the morally relevant issues and even strengthen and direct the subject to do the right. However, Kotva (1996:31-2), a thoughtful virtue ethicist, acknowledges that there is a consensus between the proponents of aretaic ethics that their cherished theory "cannot provide a thorough systematic account of moral deliberation to guide us in every detail." However, this remains a legitimate need and expectation: "people have always expected ethical theory to tell them something about what they ought to do" but virtue ethics "is structurally unable to say much if anything about this issue" (Louden 1984:229; cf. Black 2000:276-8). While character formation directs attention to the particularist aspects of Christian faith, Christian identity, the community's authority (especially through Scripture, tradition and leadership), the accountability to the community, and virtuous life, conscience formation stresses the fact that Christian moral life also necessitates that Christians be formed for sound moral discernment and deliberation and responsible decision-making. Conscience formation appeals to the responsibility of the individual Christian in moral life. It acknowledges the need to integrate moral insights from other spheres with Christian faith as Christians bear a membership not only in the church but also in other communities such as tribe, family, friendships, neighbourhoods, corporations, nations; etc.

Secondly, well-understood, conscience formation is not antithetical to character or identity formation. They are not mutually exclusive each other; on the contrary they mutually enhance each other. Mature conscience displays developed moral insights, emotions and skills since Christian moral life requires knowing, loving and doing the truth. Yet, as Connors and McCormick (1998:146) affirm,

Still knowing the truth, even loving the truth, is not the same as “doing the truth.” If conscience is our capacity to discern and *respond* to the moral “tug,” then persons with a highly developed conscience will always need to be persons of virtue. They will need to be persons who can act upon their knowledge and affections, who can make and sustain commitments, who can transform their judgments and desires into decisions and, ultimately, into behaviour (Connors and McCormick 1998:146; emphasis original).

In other words, knowing and loving the truth does not necessary lead to doing the truth. Doing the truth also requires good moral character or virtues, “those moral skills and habits which enable [people with mature conscience] to choose and perform right actions” (Connors and McCormick 1998:146). To speak in an exhaustive way, Christian moral life entails knowing, loving, being and doing the truth; there is no development of conscience without development of character.

The interaction between character formation and conscience formation is a two-way direction. Christians’ consciences are shaped through the decisions and choices they make and the social environments, including the church, in which they place or find themselves. They form their character through their actions and the communities to which they belong. Their moral actions deriving from their decisions and choices, as features of their consciences, “are both *expressive* and *formative* of [their] character” as Connors and McCormick (1998:147) write and then explain in the following statement:

[F]or our deeds not only reveal something about the kind of moral persons we already are, but they also help to shape the sort of ethical persons we are becoming. Our choices are generated by character, and, in turn, lead to the on-going formation or transformation of that character (Connors and McCormick 1998:147; emphasis original).<sup>10</sup>

The third reason why moral formation in African churches should emphasize both character and conscience development is to promote a kind of moral growth which does justice to the communality and individuality of a sound Christian and biblical anthropology (Jn 21:20, 21; 1 Cor 12:12-27). At the same time, this could thoroughly tackle the challenges of communalism and individualism, which Christians are facing in Africa as they are confronting both traditional African worldviews and Western outlooks (Van der Walt 2003:70-1; 133-57).

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<sup>10</sup> In the same vein, Birch and Rasmussen assert that “Conscience formation is only one way to talk about the development of moral identity” [or character].... Mature conscience and moral vision express *formed moral identity*, and formed moral identity relies upon living communities of character that have longevity. For Christians, that community is the church” (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:120-1; emphasis original).

While both character and conscience are formed in communities and both are parts of the personal identity of an individual, the concept of character is strongly influenced by community and that of conscience is more unique to the individual and emphasizes his or her personal responsibility. While character directs more attention to virtuous life, conscience speaks more about skills of moral reasoning and decision making. Therefore, putting character and conscience in tandem helps to generate an anthropologically balanced moral formation: character is more related to the communality, whereas conscience points more to the individuality of human beings.<sup>11</sup> Sound conscience formation will help Christians to take personal responsibility in their moral life, to curb blind loyalty to the church and to induce critical awareness over against the church's internal corruption as well as distorted teachings and way of life.

Finally, Hauerwas links character formation to the indirect mode of socio-political involvement which prominently upholds corporate embodiment of Christian virtues and individual witness. Through its preaching, teaching, worship, discipline and church government and leadership, the church as a paradigmatic community affects the character of its members and prepares them to witness in the larger society by embodying Christian virtues.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, conscience formation implies that the church should go beyond this reduced view of socio-political involvement by more intentionally connecting its teaching "with the public life of [its members] by stimulating their conscience" (Cox 2003:20). In Africa, moral formation has to correct the church's tendency to socio-political escapism and secularism and promote direct faithful socio-political participation to curb structural social sins. "We need an ethics of conscience to build on the ethics of character. This more intentional way aims at awakening the conscience of the laity by bringing the laity into a lively conversation with the social teachings of the church" (Cox 2003:20). By so doing, the church will be challenged to be a helpful space of moral deliberation, discernment and action to Christians confronted with pluralist and secular values or codes of professional or business ethics and those willing to be active and faithful witnesses through Christian and non-Christian organizations of civil society. The church itself as a "corporate conscience" is to be involved in public theology and moral persuasion in the wider society and to be the voice of the voiceless through its external prophetic pronouncements (Cox 2003:21).

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<sup>11</sup> This will be elaborated in the section 8.4 dealing with contextual Christian character and conscience formation.

<sup>12</sup> For more details, see the subsection 5.2.3.2 on Hauerwas's view of the church as a paradigmatic community and its related criticism in the subsection 7.3.5.3 dealing with the inadequate aspects of Hauerwas's social ethic.

## 8.2. Moral formation and Trinitarian ethics

Resorting to Trinitarian ethics in moral formation is firstly a way of doing justice to the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity in Christian theology and ethics which have been recovered since the last four decades (Metzler 2003:27-8). It is also a way of rectifying some shortcomings of Hauerwas's proposal. In particular, because of its Christocentrism and ecclesiocentrism, this proposal only retains the particularity but rejects the universality of Christian ethics; it also does not sufficiently take into account the communal and particular ministries of each person of the Trinity in the Christian moral life in the church and the wider society.

The significance and distinctiveness of the doctrine of the Trinity in Christian faith and theology cannot be overstated. Stanley Grenz (1994:69) perceptively points out that:

[...] no dimension of the Christian confession is closer to the heart of the mystery of the God we have come to know. In fact what sets Christianity apart from the other religious traditions is the confession that the one God is Father, Son, and Spirit. As a consequence, no teaching lies at the centre of Christian theology, if not of Christian faith itself, as does the doctrine of the Trinity.

As a foundational doctrine for Christian theology, the doctrine of the Trinity ought to be the ultimate foundation for Christian ethics and moral formation. To quote again Grenz (1994:97-8), "Insofar as God is the ultimate model and standard for humankind, the essential nature of God forms the paradigm for the life of the Christian and of the Christian community." This understanding of Christian ethics as a Trinitarian ethic appeals to a kind of moral formation that is not only concerned about character (being good) but also about conscience (choosing and doing the good). As such, this view of moral formation concentrates at the same time on knowing the truth, being good, loving the truth as well as choosing and doing the good. In order to describe the relation between the doctrine of the Trinity and moral formation, the present section spells out its basic content and argues that the triune God is the ultimate foundation for moral formation. In the process, it describes the recovery of the doctrine of the Trinity, its significance for the Christian life and the great value it can add to Hauerwas's proposal.

### 8.2.1. The doctrine of the Trinity: Recovery and content

To have a good grasp of the doctrine of the Trinity one should first attend to its origin, its decline and its recovery in our contemporary era. Thus a succinct description of the history of this fundamental Christian doctrine is necessary before displaying its basic content.



### 8.2.1.1. The recovery of the doctrine of the Trinity

Early Christianity was confronted with a situation requiring disciples of Jesus Christ to “bring together three strands of beliefs: the [Jewish] heritage of monotheism, the confession of Jesus’ lordship, and the experience of the Holy Spirit” (Grenz 1994:70). This quest led to eventual acknowledgement of the deity of the Son and the Spirit along with that of the Father and to set forth the classic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity through the three Greek or Eastern Cappadocian fathers – Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus. Through this quest arose several heresies stamped out during two important historical phases. The first phase was concerned with the deity of the Son and the heresies of bitheism through Logos Christology, monarchianism (including adoptianism and modalism, which in turn encompasses patripassionism and Sabellianism) and subordinationism as well as Arianism.

The First Ecumenical Council at Nicea (A.D. 325) recognized the full deity of the “Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, [...] very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance (*homoousion*) with the Father” (Grudem 2000:244; cf. Schaff 1983:1:28-9). The second phase dealt with the deity of the Holy Spirit and eventually settled this issue during the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (A.D. 381).<sup>13</sup> Instrumental to both councils were the teachings of Athanasius against Arius’s Christology and Arian pneumatology. In addition to scriptural evidences, he saw both the deity of the Son and that of the Spirit necessitated by soteriology: the full deity of the Son for the sake of human participation in the divine nature, and the full deity of the Spirit for the Christian communion with God.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Councils in Nicea and in Constantinople settled the issue of reconciling Jewish monotheism, the teaching of Jesus and the experience of the Holy Spirit, they did not articulate the relationship among the three members of the Trinity. The Greek or Eastern Cappadocian fathers accepted this challenge and stated that God is one *ousia* (“essence”) but three *hypostaseis* (“centres of consciousness” or “independent realities”). (Grenz 1994:78). Despite the adoption of the classical formulation by both the Eastern and Western churches further controversies occurred on the ground of the difference of emphasis. Subsequently, the Eastern theologians emphasized the notion of procession and the subordination of the Son and the Spirit and also “tended to highlight the specific, individual workings of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in the divine acts of creation, [salvation and

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<sup>13</sup> To be settled the question of the full deity in connection to the incarnation (full humanity) waited until the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) where the heresies of Apollinarianism, Nestorianism and monophysitism (or Eutychianism) were rejected (Grudem 2000:554-8).

<sup>14</sup> First, “The Word was made man in order that we might be made divine;” and second, “If we are made sharers of the divine nature through our partaking of the Spirit, it would be only a madman who would say that the Spirit is of created nature and not of the nature of God” (Grenz 1994:76-7; cf. Athanasius. *De Incarnatione* 54; *Epistle as Serapionem* 1.24).

sanctification]” (Grenz 1994:79). On the contrary, thinkers from Western churches stressed the internal relation between the members of the Trinity and their joint workings in those three mentioned divine acts (Grenz 1994:79-80).

This divergence eventually led to the *Filioque* controversy and the schism of the thirteenth century. For a couple of centuries, from the medieval era through the Reformation and the Enlightenment in the nineteenth century, the interest in the Trinitarian doctrine noticeably declined. The recovery begun with George Hegel’s philosophical trinitarianism but it was Karl Barth using the doctrine as prolegomenon of his *Church Dogmatics* who was instrumental to the resurgence of this doctrine in the contemporary era. Since Barth’s groundbreaking retrieval, several leading theologians, in particular Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, have placed the doctrine at the core of Systematic theology and ethics as well as other theological disciplines (Metzler 2003:271; cf. Grenz 1994:83).<sup>15</sup> Their works have been very influential to the rise of interest in the Trinity, in particular the contemporary social Trinitarian view which claims to have endorsed the Cappadocian formula, but at the same time has re-evaluated the concept of persons. “Whereas classical theology, it is claimed, has understood ‘person’ in a substantial sense, as individual separate from communal relatedness, contemporary Trinitarian thinking concludes that ‘person’ has more to do with relationality and communion than with divine splendid isolation” (Metzler 2003:271-2). In his survey, John Gresham (1993:327) noted that strangely enough, “in the pluralistic world of contemporary theology, [many] Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, liberation, feminist, evangelical and process theologians [have agreed] on a particular Trinitarian model of God” (Gresham 1993:327; cf. Metzler 2003:27-8).

### **8.2.1.2. The basic content of the doctrine of the Trinity**

What can Christians learn through the doctrine of the Trinity? Through the classical formulation of the Cappadocian fathers, the Christian faith has been endowed with essential truths on the understanding of God, namely, the oneness and the threeness (or the tri-unity of God), the diversity in unity of God (the individuality or self-differentiation in communality), as well as the equality and subordination in the social Trinity. Concisely, the doctrine of the Trinity may be defined as follows: “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.” (Grudem 2000:226). The Christian faith has endorsed the Jewish heritage of monotheism as it opposes any form of

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<sup>15</sup> As John Pless (2004:1) affirms, “In one way or another not only systematic theology, but biblical studies, liturgics, ethics, missiology, and pastoral theology have felt the influence of contemporary trinitarian studies.”

polytheism, be it bitheism or tritheism, because the God whom Christians worship is one, Yahweh or Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

At the same time God is three. The word Trinity which is not a biblical term was coined by Tertullian who translated the Cappadocian formula into “*tres personae, una substantia* (three persons, one substance). Like Augustine, Christians, since the Cappadocian formulation are still asking the question of “three what?” This is because of the limits of human language when it comes to the description of the Trinity and the use of the term “person” in contemporary times.<sup>16</sup> Karl Barth drew attention to the inappropriateness of the expression “Three Persons” since the term “person,” in modern times, is confused with “personality”, whereas Jesus, the Revealed God cannot be of a different personality with the Father, the Revealer. He preferred the phrases “members of the Trinity” instead of “persons” since “person” “inevitably implies ‘personality,’ in the sense of three centers of consciousness individualistically conceived, which would amount to tritheism” (Metzler 2003:272-3). As the term “person,” in the contemporary era, endangers the unity of God, Christians ought to be aware in line with Barth and social trinitarian theologians that the term “person” in the Trinity means “person-in-relationship” (Grenz 1997:278). Perceptively, Karl Rahner postulated what has become to be known as Rahner’s principle or rule that “The economic Trinity **is** the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity” (Rahner 1970:72). Accordingly, God’s threeness is “eternal, ontological and economic” and thus the distinctions between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not “merely external” but also internal (Grenz 1994:86).

Affirming that the one God is triune is expressing that “God is a diversity” (Grenz 1994:86). God’s diversity is ontological as it is related to the Immanent Trinity, “the Trinity considered in itself, in its eternity and perichoretic communion among the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Boff 2000:121). At the same time, God’s diversity applies to the economic Trinity as it is functional and refers to the divine programme in human history (Grenz 1994:86-7). Thus in *opera ad intra*, God’s works performed within the divine Being or the Trinitarian circle, God’s diversity manifests itself through personal, non-jointly and incommunicable operations, in particular, “Generation is an act of the Father only; filiation belongs to the Son exclusively; and procession can only be ascribed to the Holy Spirit” (Berkhof 1958:89). And in *opera ad extra*, some of God’s actions outside the Trinitarian circle, though jointly performed by the three persons, are attributed particularly to one of the members of the Trinity (Boff

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<sup>16</sup> Augustine, for example, observed “when the question is asked: three *what?* human language labours altogether under great poverty of speech. The answer, however, is given ‘three persons’, not that it might be spoken but that it might not be left unspoken” (Augustine 1954:8; cf. Milne 1982:61-2).

2000:117). In this regard, “creation is ascribed primarily to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit (Berkhof 1958:89).

*In fine*, God is a diversity and a unity at the same time. Contemporary theologians have struggled to articulate this complex Christian tenet. Louis Berkhof (1874-1957) described the Trinity as follows: “In this one Divine Being there are three Persons or individual subsistences, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Berkhof 1958:87). In contrast, Karl Barth (1886-1968), the contemporary initiator of social Trinitarianism “connects God’s personhood or subjectivity with the divine substance or “ousia” rather than with the three “hypostases.” Hence, he emphasizes the Trinitarian relationality: “God is not alone [...] He is threefold — Father, Son and Holy Spirit, mutually related, loving one another eternally” (Metzler 2003:273).<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner (1904-1984) stresses that “‘person’ cannot be understood in an individualistic, modern sense,” rather the persons of the Trinity according to the Christian kerygma and salvation history ought to be seen “as three distinct manners of subsisting” (Metzler 2003:273; cf. Rahner 1970:109). He helps to gain clarity as “Subsistence, in his view, involves distinction, particularity, concreteness, and relationship” (Metzler 2003:273; cf. Rahner 1970:109). The biblical narratives affirm the unity of the Triune God; one can find some examples of the Father acting “through the Son and by the agency of the Holy Spirit”: e.g. in the creation of the world, the redemption of humanity, and the eschatological resurrection (Grenz 1994:87).

It is also instructive to note that there is equality and subordination in the social Trinity. According to the Cappadocian formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the three *hypostaseis* or “independent realities” share the same will, nature, and essence (that is the one *ousia*). Yet each has special properties or activities” (Grenz 1994:78). By so doing, the goal of finding a “middle ground between two dangers or heresies” was reached: Tritheism and modalistic Sabellianism (Grenz 1994:78). In addition, they corrected the heresy of subordinationism and maintained like some other previous orthodox theologians “a subordination of order or dignity within the one divine reality. They connected this order with the special function of each of the three: the Father “generates,” the Son is “generated,” and the Spirit “proceeds” (Grenz 1994:78). In other words, the Father, the Son and the Spirit are equal as “there are not differences in deity, attributes, or essential nature” between them; but “*The only distinctions between the members of the Trinity are in the ways they related to each other and to creation.* In those relationships they carry out roles that are appropriate to each person”

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<sup>17</sup> While Barth (1975:299) laid the grounds of the connection between the doctrine of the Trinity and history, it is Jürgen Moltmann (1981:19) who, nurturing his view, formulated a “social doctrine of the Trinity” which points to the social and political implications of the Trinitarian theology (Metz 2003:271, 276-7).

(Grudem 2000:250-1; emphasis original). This theological truth on the Trinity has been expressed in terms of “ontological equality [or “eternal equality in being”] but economic subordination [or “subordination in role”]” (Grudem 2000:251-2). “But this subordination does not imply inferiority [...] The subordination intended is only that which concerns the mode of subsistence and operations (Hodge 1970:460-2; cf. Grudem 2000:252).

## **8.2.2. The triune God: The ultimate foundation for moral formation**

Postulating a Trinitarian ethic as the ultimate foundation for moral formation — as character and conscience formation — within the church community actually offers at least a triple significant advantage. First it stresses the role of the triune God in the Christian life. Second it presupposes and emphasizes the conviction that the triune God is the transcendent reality beyond the church community. The third advantage is that the Trinitarian framework allows the alignment of a sound ecclesiology with some significant accents of soteriology, anthropology and eschatology relevant at the same time for moral formation and the churches in Africa.

### **8.2.2.1. The triune God and the Christian life**

Although Christian creeds, as mentioned above recognize that the three persons always work together, in communion, they also acknowledge the central individual roles of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in creation, redemption and sanctification respectively. Moral formation within the church must point to the Triune God, to the Father as the ground, the Son as the model and the Holy Spirit as the power for the Christian life respectively.

In this respect, Christian “understandings of the moral good, right, wise and just emanate from the nature and actions of God. As the creator of the universe and sovereign over all life, God’s own goodness becomes the ground or foundation of all human goodness” (Hollinger 2002:64). This claim goes beyond the Hauerwasian anti-foundationalist grounding of Christian ethics on the church community and its narratives. As Hollinger (2002:64) affirms:

Goodness is not self-derived but emanates from the fountainhead of all reality. [...] This means that Christian ethics is not rooted in principles such as love or justice, nor virtues embodied in the narratives of communities, nor in the existence of social structures deemed to be part of the created order. All these may be important elements of Christian ethics, but they do not form the foundation of moral thought, character and actions.

The claim of the Trinitarian God being the ultimate foundation of the Christian life also goes beyond the understanding of Christian ethics as creation ethics or natural law ethics. It implies “the ambiguous status of Christian morality: its religious and particular character and



its philosophical or universal character” (Vergote 1978:4-5). On the one hand, the creation of human beings into *imago Dei* implying the rational and moral resemblance to their Creator, the universality of sin through the Fall, God’s intention for universal redemption and for the creation of the eschatological community living in fellowship with Him, justify the universality of Christian ethics. Moreover, as notes Vergote (1978:5), “In affirming faith in the creator as the first point of the creed, Christianity necessarily accepts the universal rules of morality.” Hence, it resorts to reason and philosophy as tools of analysis. On the other hand, through teaching and the way of life of their community and their own commitment, Christians are enabled to live more faithfully and profoundly moral principles which are universal in their essence and Christian ethics become particularist, since “I believe” becomes a “performative expression,” a commitment, a “lived relationship” transforming people existence (Vergote 1978:5).

The doctrine of the Trinity as ground for moral life suggests that God is the lawgiver not only a lawmaker. Viewing God as a lawmaker and grounding moral injunctions on the church reduces the basis of their acceptance. This refers to the church as institution whose moral teachings pattern modern societies and tend to be legalistic and repressive. In contrast, “[l]aw-giving is part of fatherly love, because it displays [the father’s] wishes about the child’s future” and thus contributes to his moral formation (Vergote 1978:7). Christian ethics grounded on the Triune God, underlines one of the basic Christian convictions about morality: living “after the pattern exemplified by God” (Grenz 1997:261). In other words,

Christian ethics is not a blind obedience to laws, principles, or virtues but rather a response to the living, all-powerful God of the universe who is himself the foundation of those moral guidelines. The contents of our moral responses are certainly known and shaped by the biblical norms in their various forms, but ultimately they are *the reflections of God’s character, purposes, and actions in the world* (Hollinger 2002:64-5; emphasis added).

As *imago Dei*, Christians are called to mirror the character of the Triune God whose epitome is the mutual and eternal love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (e.g., Ex 34:6; 1 Jn 4:16). Out of this eternal love, the Trinitarian God created the universe and his intention is to bring his entire creation to share in this awesome love. His care for all creatures is but one of his various expressions of his eternal love (Grenz 1997:261). According to the biblical narrative, the redemptive work demonstrates the glorious Trinitarian love and grace: The Father “gave his one and only Son” (Jn 3:16); the Son gave Himself (Gl 2:20); the Father and the Son gave the Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies (Jn 3:8; 16:7-15).

Accordingly, the Trinitarian God’s character, purposes and actions offer the two fundamental motivations for the Christian life. First, the centre of Christian life is Jesus Christ. Following James Gustafson, Curran (1999:30) notes “that Jesus Christ’s role in the moral life

has been understood as Lord, sanctifier, justifier, pattern and teacher.” Jesus is the perfect *imago Dei*, the ultimate demonstration of the Trinitarian love and genuine humanness. Christian moral life emerges through a relationship, discipleship, a life of imitation of Jesus Christ. Hence, Charles Sheldon’s well justified “call to Christians to ask in each situation, “What would Jesus do?”” (Grenz 1997:268). Obviously, the various contexts where today Christians find themselves cannot allow helpful and practical answers in every situation. However, the call is still well justified if the imitation of Christ is accurately understood. To quote again Stanley Grenz:

[...] the imitation of Christ moves beyond mere deeds. It is neither possible nor desirable to try to determine how Jesus would act in every context. The life of imitation involves being motivated by the ideals, goals and purpose that moved Jesus. It entails living in acknowledgment of God’s lordship and on behalf of others, after Jesus’ own pattern of life. Its focus, as Jesus’ example indicates, must be on humble servanthood for the sake of God’s glory. Hence in each situation we desire that the character and ideals of Jesus be manifested through our lives (Grenz 1997: 268).

Second, the biblical patterns of moral teaching stress that, “The primary moral motivations of Christians are those of ‘grace and gratitude.’ As recipient of God’s grace, Christians obey God out of love and thankfulness” (Kretzschmar 2004b:97; cf. Field 1973:51). For example, the preamble to the Decalogue reads: “I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Ex 20:2). This preamble helps to understand that “the heart of [Judeo-Christian ethic] “is not following the commands or keeping universal laws but responding to God’s covenant and grace” (Hollinger 2002:65). On the same basis of the Lord’s acts of grace through covenantal relationship in Egypt, Hebrew people were demanded the virtue of generosity and justice for the poor (Dt 15:15). Similarly, in the NT, the Christian virtues of liberality and mercy are grounded on Jesus’ sacrificial love (2 Cor 8:9); and God’s love undergirds the love of the fellow Christian and the neighbour (1 Jn 4, 7, 11, 19). In several epistles, the pattern of the imperative which derives from the indicative corresponds to the one of grace and gratitude; for example the imperatives of the Christian life in the Epistle to Romans (Rm 12-16) are grounded in the teaching of the precedent chapters on human sinful condition, justification by faith and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (Hollinger 2002:65). Besides all the aspects of the Christian moral life associated to the person and work of Christ, which point to the particularist ethics for the Christian communion, it should be borne in mind that Jesus is also the foundation of the universal and creation ethics. As the perfect *imago Dei* his person and deeds reveal God’s morality for all humankind. Otherwise, Jesus’ Great Commission of making disciples of all nations would be meaningless (Mt 28:19-20). Also, the existence of a general revelation or natural law, understood through the limits of human depravity, underwrites the universal character of his

moral teachings, their being valid and acknowledgeable, to some extent, outside the Christian community. As C.S. Lewis contends,

the idea ... that Christianity brought an *entirely new ethical code* into the world is a grave error. If it had done so, then we should have to conclude that all who first preached it wholly misunderstood their own message: for all of them, its Founder, His precursor, His apostles, came demanding repentance and offering forgiveness, a demand and an offer both meaningless except on the assumption of a moral law *already known* and *already broken* (Lewis 1967:46; emphasis added; cf. Charles 2002:126).

It is instructive to stress the role of the Holy Spirit as the power for the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is the agent of transformation, which ultimately results in the conformity with Christ, the perfect *imago Dei* (Col 1:15). Here lies the particularity of Christian ethics in contradistinction with philosophical ethics: Christian ethical life flows out of a transformed life. Hence, the above-mentioned principle of grace and gratitude which reflects Donald Bloesch's statement: "Ethics in this theological perspective is no longer a submission to law but instead a response to divine grace." (Bloesch 1987:9; cf. Grenz 1997:270). In the same vein, Helmut Thielicke deservedly opines that "In philosophical ethics the ethical acts are determined by the 'task' to be performed. In evangelical ethics they are determined by the 'gift' already given" (Thielicke 1965:47; Grenz 1997:270). Also, Scripture witnesses the Christian claim that a sound and godly ethical life is the result of a transformed heart. The Psalmist petitioning for mercy says: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps 51:10); and the Pauline writings clearly state that: "Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Rm 8:2) (Grenz 1997:270). The agent of the heart's transformation and renewal is the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit who brings the Christian to "a full maturity [being] the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 5:13) (Grenz 1997:270).

Also, the Holy Spirit brings Christians into the fellowship of the church community as the Christian life is relational to reflect the divine Trinitarian relationality and communion. In the church community, Christians learn to live after the patterns of life exemplified by Jesus, the perfect embodiment of divine image. The worship of the Christian community (including baptism and the Lord's Supper), prayer (Eph 6:18), Scripture reading (2 Tim 3:16) and the way of life of the church community are means that the Holy Spirit uses to mould the Christian identity of the believers and to empower Christians to live as Jesus' disciples within and outside the church community (Grenz 1997:272).

The ministry of the Holy Spirit as teacher, guide and the power for the Christian life largely justifies the conclusion that "Christians may be regarded as able to go up and beyond what universally valid rules to which all are accountable require in a way that others may not" (Hollar 1994:7). Are not Jesus' disciples expected to demonstrate a special righteousness?

(Mt 5:20). Indeed, Christians can achieve more than non-Christians, through their specific resources — their beliefs, fellowship, and the communal life shaping their character and conscience as well as the special God’s grace and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Yet, one cannot overlook the fact that non-Christian cultures, institutions and individuals can also produce remarkable and genuine good. This could be attributed to God’s common grace through the work of the Holy Spirit in all of creation (Grudem 2000:3). This explains also “a conception of Christian communication [...] based in Christian identity while at the same time being open to the public community” for the promotion of the common good (Gascoigne 2001:178).

### **8.2.2.2. The primacy of the Triune God over against the church’s community**

On account of several limitations found in Hauerwas’s proposal (e.g., the relativistic and parochialist tendency of character/virtue ethics and the fideistic leaning of narrative ethics), Christian ethics and moral formation within the church in particular ought to rather turn to the Triune God as ultimate foundation. Therefore, as Hollinger (2002:60) rightly claims,

As Christians we must assert that there is a transcendent reality beyond the community’s self-understanding and that reality can be known and experienced through God’s self-disclosure in the written and incarnate Word. That divine revelation is itself a reflection of the ultimate foundation for ethics — The Triune God.

Anticipating the charge of excessive anti-communitarianism, Hollinger (2002:60) again perceptively sets the limits of the significance of the community as follows:

Certainly, we most adequately discern that foundation and its moral directives within the community that commit to live in accordance with transcendent reality. But the reality always transcends the community that names the names of Christ; otherwise Christ and divine revelation are nothing more than the community itself. A community and its narrative alone can never be the foundation of a Christian ethic.

Thus it is not the community, its narrative and related moral vision resulting in a particular identity and certain virtues, but rather the Triune God who is the ultimate foundation of moral formation. An additional reason for this contention is the theological truth that the church being the foretaste of the Kingdom of God is to be valued by the Christians as their primary community and locus for moral formation. However, the church is not the eschatological community envisioned by God. Hauerwas speaks of friendship with God as the *telos* of the Christian life. However, it cannot be an individual friendship with God, it is communal friendship or fellowship in the eschatological community with God. None expresses this contention better than Grenz (1997:298-9):

The foundation of the life of the believing community lies in the triune God, coupled with the biblical teaching that God's intention is that we be the *imago Dei*. [...] To live ethically means to anticipate and actualize in the brokenness of the present the fellowship we will share in the new creation, the eschatological community of God. Finally, this indicated the content of the Christian ethic. In all our relationships as Christ's people, we are to embody the comprehensive love that characterizes God's own life.

"The brokenness of the present" that Grenz evokes does not only apply to the world but also to the church and disqualifies an ecclesial ethic as foundation for moral formation. Only a triumphalist church forgetful or blind of its actual nature of *simul iustus et peccator* and *semper reformanda*, let alone the empirical evidence of the Church history, can have the nerve to consider itself as the ground of Christian ethics and moral formation. Realistically all the church families ought to follow the historic example of the Second Vatican Council which denounced the pre-conciliar triumphalism and spoke of the Roman Catholic Church as a "pilgrim church" (Curran 1999:116). The universal Christian church still needs leaders like Pope John Paul II who courageously and publicly asked "for forgiveness from Protestants, Jews and women, among others" (Ciorra & Keating 1998:6). A church constantly reminding itself of Christian involvement in tragic and horrible systems and events such as feudalism, slavery, colonialism, apartheid and genocides would better keep a low profile as far as living out the norms of Christian life are concerned. Christian moral formation better understood must have as a focal point the conviction that God "who revealed himself as the Father, and in Jesus Christ, and whose Spirit is in us in the Church, imbues us with the desire, and inspires and motivates Christian behaviour" (Böckle & Pohier 1987:ix-x). Therefore, the Christian's loyalty to the church ought not to be confused with loyalty to God. The ultimate loyalty is neither to the church nor to another community (the family, race, tribe or nation) but to the triune God. A hermeneutic of suspicion is to be applied to the church as institution, since not only the society at large, but also the church community could be a source of gross self-deception for Christians.

The Trinity is the ultimate foundation for Christian moral formation because "[f]or Christians, the most fundamental relationships, where the moral life is formed are with the Triune God and the kingdom community of the church" (Reuschling 2008:116). The differences between the Triune God and human beings in general, Christians and God's people in particular and even the differences between the Triune God and one's particular Christian community are "epistemological gifts" to Christians (Reuschling 2008:117). Being cognizant of and challenged by these differences opens the way towards moral formation; it enables Christians to see what they cannot easily see: their own "limitations and the ways they produce moral myopia." As Reuschling (2008:116-7) explains:



Our relationship with the Triune God is marked by its difference. A fundamental assertion of Christians is that the Triune God is not like us. What enables this divine relationship to be morally forming is the fact that we need a God who is not like us, whose virtue and moral goodness actually reveal our lack, and whose power makes possible our participation in the divine nature (2 Pt 1:3-11). It is in the light of God's difference from us that we understand our shortcomings and moral failure.

The same holds true for the community of the church. The last thing I need is another person "like me."

### 8.2.2.3. The Trinity and Christian character and conscience

Why should the church's character and conscience formation have the Trinity as ultimate foundation in the churches and in African churches in particular? The succinct account of the role of each member of the Trinity in the Christian life and the primacy of the social Trinity in relation to the church already point to the relevance of a Trinitarian foundation for church moral formation. The richness of this foundation commands turning the attention to some additional and significant reasons why the church's character and conscience formation should have a Trinitarian base. First, Christians' formed characters and consciences express the identity of the church or communities to whom they belong. However, good character and mature conscience should reflect God's attributes or character; that is, the conformity to Christ, as the perfect *imago Dei*. Christians, like other human beings, derive their identities from the various groups — the church and other communities or institutions (race, tribe, corporation, neighbourhood, nation, etc.) — within which they hold membership. But the Christian faith as an all-embracing outlook requires that Christians' ultimate identity be based on the nature of God and Christians' ultimate loyalty be also directed to God and neither to the church nor other communities or institutions. Robert Vosloo makes this point when he states that proponents of Christian virtue ethics should not limit themselves to the question "What should I/we be?" but should go a step further:

Something, however, that is often lacking with those in favour of a Christian ethics of virtue is a methodological consideration of a further question, namely: 'Whose are we/am I?' (or 'For whom are we/am I?'). Or put differently: The 'being' in an ethics of being is not always a 'being in God'. Thus the plea for virtuousness is not always based pneumatologically. A Christian ethics of virtue should more strongly have a trinitarian base than is often the case (Vosloo 1997:37-8).

Secondly, the Trinitarian framework for moral formation convincingly stresses that good character is the outcome of God's grace and does not result from the subject's works of righteousness. This insight is critical in the Protestant tradition. Luther believed this and thus strongly repudiated virtue ethics. By rejecting the Reformation tenet of justification by faith and grace in his account of virtue ethics and affirming that "justification is only another way of talking about sanctification" (PK:94), Hauerwas lays himself open to criticism. Nico Koopman

follows Don Zinger who asserts that, in Hauerwas's virtue ethics, "sanctification and justification are synonymous, that the role of justification by grace is underestimated in his soteriology, that the formative role of the church is overestimated and that soteriology merely implies exemplarism" (Koopman 2002:35; cf. Zinger 1989:12). As a corrective, Koopman refers Hauerwas to his own hero, Karl Barth and states that

[...] an adherence to Barth not only with regard to his Christocentrism but also with regard to his pneumatology can help Hauerwas to distinguish more clearly between justification and sanctification, to give appropriate emphasis to the grace of God, to avoid a wrong portrayal of the nature of faith and eventually to answer more adequately to the accusations of signs of works righteousness in his character ethics (Koopman 2002:37).

Rightly, Hauerwas rejects a "justification by faith" interpretation that "denies the ethical," but rather believes in "some mystical transformation of the individual," that reads only the biblical indicative of Romans 3, but rather overlooks the imperatives of Romans 12, and that finally neglects character formation (or sanctification) in the church community (Rm 5:1-5) (*PK*:93-5). However, justification and sanctification cannot be confused. Through a Trinitarian framework, by attending to God's revelation (the Scripture and explicitly the classical text on justification, e.g., Rm 3:21-26), the cross of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, one can find a sound relationship between justification and sanctification. John Stott points out a fundamental difference between justification and sanctification in the following statement based on Puritan confessions:

God declares us righteous through the death of his Son, by faith only, so that our justification is both instantaneous and complete. But God makes us righteous through the indwelling of his Spirit, by faith and works, so that our sanctification is both gradual and incomplete (Stott 2003:94).<sup>18</sup>

God's justification and gradual sanctification through the Lord's grace in cooperation with the subject's participation in the life of the community as an expression of faith and works is conducive to moral and spiritual growth including the development of character and conscience. Speaking of the importance of "works" is another way to stress the need for efforts in the development of character and even of conscience (e.g., 2 Pt 1:5-7). Dallas

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<sup>18</sup> This is only Stott's summary of what Puritans used to confess. His presentation of five elements of difference is worth being mentioned here *in extenso*: "*First*, justification is God's judicial verdict, declaring a sinner righteous. *Second*, God justifies sinners through the death of his Son, but sanctifies them through the regeneration and indwelling of his Holy Spirit. *Thirdly*, justification is simultaneous. It takes place immediately God pronounces the sinner righteous. Sanctification, however, is gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, but then it grows as the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). *Fourthly*, justification is complete. It has no degrees. We shall not be more justified on the day of our death than we were on the day of our conversion. Sanctification, however, is incomplete. Although it begins when we are converted and regenerated, it continues throughout our life on earth and will be complete when Christ appears. Only then "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). *Fifthly*, justification is by faith only without works. It is entirely the work of Christ. But sanctification is by faith and works. In addition to trusting God, we are told to watch and pray, to sanctify and purify ourselves" (Stott 2003:93; emphasis added).

Villard's allusion to Christlikeness as the aim of spiritual formation applies to moral formation as well. As he states:

This process of "conformation to Christ," as we might more appropriately call it, is constantly supported by grace and otherwise would be impossible. But it is not therefore passive. *Grace is opposed to earning not to effort.* In fact, nothing inspires and enhances effort like the experience of grace (Villard 1994:225; emphasis added; cf. Wilhoit 2008:205).

Thirdly, the Trinitarian framework as base for moral formation justifies the particularity and universality of moral formation. The universality of formation is well-articulated by James Wilhoit (2008:36) in the following statement:

We need to see that all true formation has its origin in God, who through Christ is reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:18-20). We must be very sober about the power of sin, but we need to see Christ who "sustains the universe by the mighty power of his command" (Heb 1:3), as being behind growth in virtue, in love, and in justice.

Insightfully, Wilhoit also adds some practical implications of this universality of formation. "Christians may avail themselves of avenues of change that promote the presence of Gospel virtues" without being obsessively concerned about the "direct salvific benefit" of their activities; and more importantly, they should not consider that their moral spiritual and moral development come in two separated forms: "good Christian church-based change and ordinary change" (Wilhoit 2008:35). Moral formation in the church community ought to take into account the particularity of the local churches in their doctrinal and ecclesial affiliation as well as their socio-cultural context without neglecting their large affiliation to the ecclesial communion and even the catholicity of the church. Since all true knowledge is God's, the church's moral formation should also embrace universality by integrating secular and moral theories to enlarge the moral imagination necessary for the formation of Christians' character and especially Christians' conscience (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:126).

Fourthly, moral formation based on a Trinitarian framework provides a sound anthropology, critically needed in African churches and conducive to the development of character and conscience. The unity and diversity in the being of the Trinitarian God appeal to the unity, harmony, mutual appreciation, and fellowship in the Christian community irrespective of the diversity in terms of race, tribe, class, sex and age. God's unity and diversity offers to Christians the incentive for the promotion of a wider society devoid of inequality, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. Similarly, a Trinitarian framework for moral formation offers the rationale to teach equality and mutual subordination. The reflection on equality and subordination between the persons of the Trinity even clarify that subordination well-understood does not necessarily mean inequality and thus there is still room for authority devoid of authoritarianism in human relations. Equally, the Triune God's

communality and individuality offers valuable insights to deal with the distortions of traditional African communalism and modernistic Western individualism at the same time. For example, the Trinitarian framework in the church's moral formation is an appropriate way, as Koopman following Hans Reinders affirms, "to get rid of the modernistic view of the autonomous, independent human being and open our eyes for an image of human beings which reflect dependence and mutuality as in the being of God." And he adds, "In this context proper recognition is given to the so-called weaker members of society like the mentally disabled" (Koopman 2002:39 n.10). Against communalism, the Trinitarian framework offers a balanced view of individuality which in African context can help, for example, to promote personal initiative and innovativeness and the cultivation of personal identity rather than waiting for the group's decision or submitting to the collective will all the times as well as evading personal responsibility (Van der Walt 2003:71).

Fifth and finally, moral formation based on a Trinitarian framework provides a vision of eschatological community underlying a more accurate account of the role of the church and Christians in the wider society than does the Hauerwasian and neo-Anabaptist social ethic. Underlying Hauerwas's social ethic is a vision of the peaceable kingdom of God based on Christological pacifism, informing the nature of the church as *alter civitas* and promoting Christian embodiment as the primary mode of social ethics. In the words of Herman Bavinck, "God the Father has reconciled His created but fallen world through the death of His Son, and renews it into a Kingdom of God by His Spirit" (cf. Wolters 2005:11). Another way of speaking of the advent of "the already but not yet" kingdom of God is the establishment of His eschatological community. The ideal of the church as an ethical contradiction to the world, the foretaste of God's kingdom, offered by Hauerwas, while not restricted to the dimension of the church being a paradigmatic community, does not do justice to some critical domains of moral formation and action like public theology, an external prophetic role and policy formation.<sup>19</sup> According to Grenz (1997:273), there are additional significant social responsibilities of the church besides the ideal of modelling true community within its corporate life. The church and its members have to embody the essential character or attribute of God — His compassionate love — in all their relationships (2 Pt 3:11-12). In connection to social Trinity and the establishment of God's eschatological community, Grenz

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<sup>19</sup> Hauerwas's account of Methodist perfectionism and Wesley's foundation of Methodist societies omits the commitment of early Methodists to social reforms (*WWW*:259; cf. *WRA*:103-5; see also subsection 3.2.6.). Under the influence of Evangelical Methodism, The Clapham Sect with William Wilberforce (1759-1833) as one of its illustrious members, along with other activists, lobbied in parliament and used rallies, petitions, books and pamphlets for social reforms. They were instrumental in the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and eventually slavery itself in all the British Empire in 1833 (Hunter 2010:72-3; Stott 1999:5)

(1997:273-4) has identified four tasks included in the church's mission to the world, namely proclamation, admonition, prophetic role, and transformation of social structures.<sup>20</sup> Gross violations of human rights in Africa require these kinds of church socio-political involvement.

### **8.3. Moral formation and integrative Christian worldview**

Apart from Trinitarian ethics, the second foundation for moral formation within the churches in general and African churches in particular should be an integrative Christian worldview. Yet there is not such a thing as one version of worldview among and within the various branches of historical Christianity, as well as in social sciences; rather various connotations exist in theological debates (Conradie 2014:1).<sup>21</sup> The proposed version, labelled "integrative Christian worldview," is inspired by the late leading American anthropologist Clifford Geertz's (1926-2006) understanding of a worldview, the neo-Calvinist discourse on worldview, and Hauerwas's promising insights on moral formation. This section describes the components of this combined version of worldview after displaying the relationship between worldview and morality; then it spells out how this worldview helps to better integrate external ethical material into Christian ethics and finally displays the rationale for worldview transformation in an African pluralist context.

#### **8.3.1. The relationship between worldview and morality**

Of course, the theological and ethical framework of the integrative Christian worldview in view can only be accurately formulated after attending to some obvious concerns. These concerns include the need for a working definition of a worldview, the relation between worldview and ethics and the necessity of worldview as a foundation for moral formation in an African context.

To begin with, what is a worldview? As asserted by Bennie van der Walt (1994:39), "There are about as many definitions of what a worldview is as there are philosophers." The word "worldview" has been also spelt "world view" or "world-view" and is the English

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<sup>20</sup> To elaborate, these four tasks consists in (1) "proclaiming God's intention for creation in general and humankind in particular"; (2) "admonishing human society around us to respond properly to Christ's claim to lordship"; (3) "a continually implicit and repeatedly explicit voiced critical stance against every dimension of human social interaction that does not serve or conform to God's goal of establishing true community"; (4) "to affirm the traces of community present by God's grace everywhere and even seek to assist society in the task of structuring itself according to the principles of God's eternal community." (Grenz 1997:273-4).

<sup>21</sup> Ernst Conradie has reached this conclusion through his study based on the use of the term "worldview" in five different contexts, "namely neo-Calvinism, the sociology of knowledge, discourse on religion and ecology, discourse on science and theology and African Traditional Religion" (See Conradie 2014:1-12).



translation of the German *Weltanschauung* generally considered as used for the first time by Immanuel Kant in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Conradie 2014:1).<sup>22</sup> Motivated by the vision of the cultural transformation, that is, the extension of the reformation from church life to the whole of life, meaning all the social, political, economic, educational, academic and artistic dimensions of human life, the neo-Calvinist tradition has particularly concentrated on the significance of worldview in the Christian life. Thus, since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the thinkers of Amsterdam Reformed Philosophy and their contemporary disciples have developed an understanding of worldview as “an integrated, interpretive set of confessional perspectives on reality which underlies, shapes, motivates and gives direction and meaning to human activity” (Van der Walt 1994:39). In this perspective, the term worldview has several synonyms like “life perspective, confessional vision, life convictions, lifeview, world-and-life view, [...] philosophy of life, philosophy, system of values, the whole of a person’s ideas and principles or [...] ideology” (van der Walt 1994:39). A “worldview” is seen as the deeper facet of a given people’s culture coming after the committed beliefs or religious convictions, which are its profoundest level. Customs, behaviour and habits are only external cultural aspects (Van der Walt 1994:6-7).<sup>23</sup> One of the significant roles of a worldview is its “guiding and directing function” because it functions like a compass, an anchor, a roadmap, a square and a dynamo; and as “a magnifying glass or a wide-angle camera, it can help us get rid of our myopic Christianity (van der Walt 1999:10). All these metaphors show that a worldview, as a guide to our life, “orients us in the world at large, gives us a sense of what is up and what is down, what is right and what is wrong in the confusion of events and phenomena that confronts us” (Wolters 2005:5).

Evangelical theology, with a strong affirmation of the necessity of conversion, posits “worldview” as one of the primary concepts in the Christian mission movement. The late missionary anthropologist Paul Hiebert defines a worldview as “the fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people make about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives” (Hiebert 2008:15). He is in accordance with Reformational philosophy about the role of worldview as a set of assumptions, a framework for interpretation or map for navigation through life. He, however, affirms the primacy of worldview over against beliefs as he writes that some explicit “beliefs” are founded on a

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<sup>22</sup> The term *Weltanschauung* is found in Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*, first published in 1790 (Conradie 2014:1).

<sup>23</sup> Here, Van der Walt (1994:6-7) uses the image of a peeled onion with “the following eight layers: (1) habits; (2) behaviour; (3) customs; (4) material and spiritual creations, like buildings, language and works of art; (5) institutions such as marriage and the state and its laws; (6) values and norms; (7) a specific worldview, and (8) finally the religious convictions of a specific group of people”.

worldview; that is, a “worldview shapes beliefs and both shape human behaviours” (Kreitzer 2010:3).

Without exploring this difference, it is useful to point out that the relation between worldview and morality has not only been asserted in theology but also in social sciences. Like many social scientists, the leading American anthropologist Clifford Geertz has asserted the interplay between metaphysics and ethics or worldview and ethos by arguing that the source of a religious group’s “moral vitality is conceived to lie in the fidelity with which it expresses the fundamental nature of reality [or worldview]. The powerful coercive ‘ought’ is felt to grow out of a comprehensive factual ‘is’” (Geertz 1973:126; cf. Hollinger 2002:62-3). For a religious community’s worldview is “the picture of the way things in sheer reality are, their concepts of nature, of self, of society” (Geertz 1973:127; Magesa 1997:3-4). Drawing on Geertz’s understanding of worldview, Samuel Kunhiyop (2009:66) explains the relation between worldview and morality as follows:

Worldviews play a profound role in shaping life and morality. A worldview deals with basic assumptions about reality. A worldview brings out assumptions concerning the organization of the universe, human life, purposes, values, norms of behaviour, time/space, causation, the natural world, interpersonal relationships, and so on. This assumption of reality is basic and profoundly affects our behaviours and actions.

Furthermore, Geertz contends that the “relation between the values a people holds [e.g., ethos] and the general order of existence [e.g., worldview] within which it finds itself is an essential element in all religions” (Geertz 1973:127). Thus “worldviews are always at the heart of the ethical reflection and moral actions” (Hollinger 2002:62). According to Judy Tenelshof (1999:88), “character development includes developing a richer and more in-depth world view.” Because of the interrelatedness of character and conscience, her statement equally applies for conscience development. To be effective, moral formation as character and conscience development should essentially be a process of worldview transformation.

### **8.3.2. Integrative Christian worldview and its components**

Christians in Africa and their churches need to shape a Christian worldview that will help them to see and interpret the world, “to learn to think Christianly and live out the truth of Christian faith” in their context (Dockery 2002:2). Illuminative is Geertz’s definition of a worldview, which any religious group including Christian groups have, in order to single out the essential components of a worldview. For him, a worldview is “[a]n historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz 1973:89; cf. Kunhiyop 2009:66-7).

Elsewhere, he contends that a people's worldview "contains their most comprehensive ideas of order" expressed through "[r]eligious belief and ritual [which] confront and mutually confirm one another" (Geertz 1973:127).

Of note, for Hauerwas "Christianity is no 'world view,' not a form of primitive metaphysics, that can be assessed in comparison to alternative 'world views'" (CET:10). This rebuttal is linked to his legitimate rejection of an understanding of Christian life as a mere intellectual adherence to a belief-system or body of doctrines as he contends that "the truthfulness of [Christians'] beliefs must be demonstrated in their lives. There is a sense in which Christian convictions are self-referential, but the reference is not to propositions but to lives" (CET:10).<sup>24</sup> However, in his critique of character and virtue ethics, including the Hauerwasian account, Hollinger following Geertz contends and develops his claim that "worldview forms a basis for ethics, but we understand by that worldview not only through story but also through rituals and discursive forms" (Hollinger 2002:59).<sup>25</sup> In Christian and other religions, worldview is essentially "manifested in three ways: through a narrative component, a [propositional or discursive] component and a ritual [or practical] component" (Hollinger 2002:63).<sup>26</sup> The understanding of a Christian worldview as an entity of three components is what is called thereafter "an integrative Christian worldview."

### 8.3.2.1. Description of the three components

Following Murdoch, Hauerwas speaks of moral vision as a way of "[seeing] and [interpreting] the nature of the world in a moral way" (VV:66; Murdoch 1964:343-80). And moral vision is nurtured, attuned and trained through Christian narratives and language as well as worship and liturgy (VV:102; cf. DFF:7; RA:39). A worldview, however, is related to more existential issues of human life and the nature of the universe than that of ethos, values, and behaviour or morality.<sup>27</sup> In this respect, worldview encompasses a moral vision and at the

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<sup>24</sup> On the basis of the analogy of good classical philosophy combining study and life-style and the embodiment of religious tenets through virtuous life taught in both Judaism and early Christianity, the legitimacy of his contention has been already acknowledged in Chapter Seven. See Section 7.2.3.1 on "The recovery of classic and early Judeo-Christian ethics."

<sup>25</sup> Although Hollinger does not explicitly refer to Geertz here, one can see more than a mere convergence as he endorses the relation which Geertz establishes between worldview and ethics and his understanding of the components of a worldview. He also states, like Geertz, that this tends to be a universal characteristic of all worldviews (Hollinger 2002:63; Geertz 1973:127).

<sup>26</sup> Here, the terms "propositional or discursive" replace that of "rational" seen as inadequate as narrative and even ritual arguably convey a kind of rationality as asserted by Hauerwas (HC:160-1; RA:125) endorsing MacIntyre's (1988:12, 349-350) account of traditions.

<sup>27</sup> Middleton and Walsh (1995:10-1) summarize the basic worldview questions in this way: (1) Where are we? What is the nature of the reality in which we find ourselves? (2) Who are we? What is the nature and task of human beings? (3) What's wrong? How do we understand and account for evil and brokenness? (4) What's the remedy? How do we find a path through our brokenness to wholeness?

same time this moral vision's means of development and transformation, including its related narratives. The following statement from Connors and McCormick (1998:75) implies the significance of narratives for both morality and worldview:

The major reason that stories are so important to morality is that they express and form (and re-form) how we see ourselves and the world around us, both as persons and as communities. Our stories are not just our literature and entertainment; they are our theology, philosophy and politics. In the stories we choose to attend to, believe in and repeat to others, we are expressing and shaping ourselves as persons and communities. Therefore, on the personal and communal levels our stories express and shape our moral character.

In the Christian community, the narrative component of a Christian worldview includes the instructive biographies of martyrs and heroes as well as stories of accomplishments from role models and friends; let alone all the stories Christians “can tell to make sense of reality” (Hollinger 2002:63). Yet a particular attention should be given to the specific narratives of the Christian faith based on the Scriptures. Hauerwas speaks of the Christian story of Israel and the life of Jesus extended in the history of the Church (*PK:17-34*).<sup>28</sup> Throughout the centuries and in various strand of Christianity emerges the metanarrative or the overarching biblical story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation (Hollinger 2002:63, 70).

Concerning the propositional or discursive component, Alister McGrath (1994:32) rightly affirms the relation between a worldview and doctrine through the following statement: “Morality rests upon a worldview, which it both expresses and reinforces. The worldview comes first; the morality second. This illustrates the importance of Christian doctrine for ethics.” Later on, he stresses that ethics — the critical discourse on morality — “rest upon doctrine,” the rational discourse on theology or worldview (McGrath 1994:32). More clearly, Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson argue that “our interpretive framework [or worldview] comprises our fundamental belief system and constitutes our basic theology” — theology understood as a body of truths, assertions or propositions (Grenz & Olson 1996:120-1; 124-5).

Hollinger (2002:63-4) spells out the expression of a worldview through rituals, symbols and practices, when he states that:

The symbols we use and the rituals we perform both embody and reinforce our worldviews. For example, every Sunday in worship we are enacting our view of reality and thus considering the implications for everyday life. When a marriage is celebrated, we ritualize our beliefs and moral commitments about marriage, family, sexual intimacy, intimacy, and children. And when we gather as a church community at a funeral, we re-enact and reinforce our beliefs and moral commitments regarding the meaning of life, death, and divine providence.

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<sup>28</sup> See also subsection 4.1.2.1 on the significance of the category of narrative in moral formation.

This explanation is consonant with Hauerwas's thoughtful comparison between Christian theology and life with performance studies to stress that Christian faith is enacted. And thus, to describe how Christian worship performance, liturgy and practices through remembrance, memory, patient obedience, attentive listening, and contemplation contribute to the cultivation of virtues (*PF*:99-101).

### 8.3.2.2. The significance of each component

What are the most important components of a Christian worldview? Are they narratives, doctrine or rituals? To emphasize the significance of doctrine, McGrath (1991:8) contends that

Every movement that had ever competed for the loyalty of human beings has done so on the basis of a set of beliefs. Whether the movement is religious or political, philosophical or artistic, the same pattern emerges: a group of ideas, of beliefs, is affirmed to be in the first place true and in the second place important. It is impossible to live life to its fullness and avoid encountering claims for our loyalty of one kind or another.

He adds some examples — Marxism, socialism, atheism and both religious and political forms of liberalism — to claim that the distinctive ethics they generate “are dependent upon worldviews which are in turn shaped by doctrines, by understandings of human nature and destiny” (McGrath 1991:10; 1994:33-4). McGrath and Hauerwas share in common a strong rejection of theological liberalism and an evident affirmation of the distinctiveness of Christian ethics. Yet the former grounds this distinctiveness on doctrines and seems to be more concerned by informed moral decisions and the correlative need for “a set of values [...] determined by beliefs, and those beliefs are stated as doctrines” (McGrath 1991:9). To recall, along with his emphasis on the distinctiveness of Christian ethics based on Christian narratives and traditions, Hauerwas asserts the pre-eminence of narrative, worship and liturgy over doctrines, creeds and beliefs (*PK*:26; cf. *WRA*:107-8, 109-10).

In Africa, there is a great temptation to claim the primacy of a narrative form of communication in moral formation to redress the on-going shortcomings of the Gospel brought by the missionary venture influenced by the Enlightenment rationalism. As Kunhiyop (2009:69) mentions:

The narrative aspect of Scripture replaced by systematization of Scripture [is] not relevant to context. Though Scriptures come to us in narrative form, the Church has reduced the Scriptures to isolated truths that have no immediate bearing to life situations. [There is a] gradual decline of Scriptural authority in shaping morality. Though many parts of the Church in Africa still hold that the Scriptures are authoritative, there is a gradual disregard of the authoritative role of Scriptures in life.

The significance of communicating the Christian faith in a narrative form for moral formation



cannot be denied because of the point of contact offered by the traditional African culture (Kunhiyop 2008:20; 2009:68). This supplements what Hauerwas and other narrative ethicists have rightly endeavoured to direct attention to the important role of narratives in the shaping of personal and communal moral vision, identity and character.<sup>29</sup>

However, Christian doctrines cannot be neglected in moral formation. “We must continue to acknowledge the fundamental importance of rational discourse, but our understanding of the faith must not remain fixated on the propositionalist approach that views Christian truth as nothing more than correct doctrine or doctrinal truth” (Grenz 1996:170). In other words, the significance of doctrine should not be reduced to rational adherence, but doctrine must be held together with life. “Doctrine defines who and what is obeyed, [...] while demarcating between the true and the false church,” between the truth of the Gospel and “the reigning *Zeitgeist* of contemporary culture,” between faithfulness to the Trinitarian God and “the idolatries of the age” (Charles 2002:74).<sup>30</sup> Doctrine is “a practical vehicle of *ethical transformation*,” because “it purifies the Christian community,” reminds Christians for what their forefathers have believed and frees them from the world’s bondages, “while placing [them in the Lord of creation’s] bondservice” (Charles 2002:74; emphasis original).

“All the three components of the Christian worldview,” as Hollinger (2002:64) observes, “play a role in Christian ethics” and one cannot be isolated and given a preferential status as they all contribute to “the content, motivation and means for moral enablement.” Thus, the significance of ritual or practical component cannot be overlooked. All the kinds of rituals found in Christian worship and liturgy (child dedication, Baptism, weddings, Eucharist, ordination, funeral, etc.) represent as Hauerwas says “the enactment of Christian narratives and virtues (*PF*:156; *IGC*:157). But they are more: “their common characteristic is that they are structured and stylized sets of gestures allowing a large number of people to express, in the body, as much as in words, convictions, and feelings that are central to their lives (O’Connell 1998:134). What is to be avoided is ritualism in the church community, when those rituals are emptied of the beliefs and convictions they convey. But when their true meaning and significance are taught and acknowledged, they become “empowering” as “they

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<sup>29</sup> For more details, see subsection 4.1.2 on narrative ethics.

<sup>30</sup> For example the contradistinction between the tenets of Christian faith and African tradition can substantively enhance the Christian moral life in Africa: The God of all creation is not a tribal God justifying ultimate loyalty to the clan and particularist tribal ethics; the Trinitarian, relational God is not a utilitarian God, hence Christian ethics is not a merely pragmatic one; the Trinitarian God is the living, omnipotent, transcendent and immanent God; there is no need for seeking ancestors’ mediation out of fear with compromising malpractices. In addition, the belief of man’s stewardship underlies a proper environmental ethics. The view of work as a calling cannot help but induced a remarkable work ethics. The attachment to amillennialist and postmillennialist beliefs may foster an active church socio-political involvement, while the premillennialist beliefs convey a pessimist view of this involvement.

allow for an experience of common humanity, of solidarity in identity and mission” (O’Connell 1998:134). As O’Connell (1998:135) stresses, rituals of the worship and “liturgical celebrations support the life of discipleship” through their expression of love, the reinforcement and strengthening of commonly shared values and the words, messages, and vision shared in sermons, prayers and hymns.

### **8.3.3. The integration of secular resources into Christian ethics**

A sound Christian moral formation entails the use of relevant external material in addition to specific Christian resources. African churches need a moral formation which integrates Christian ethical approaches with the sound insights of secular ethical theories. The question remains as to what secular resources and how to integrate them with specific Christian material.

#### **8.3.3.1. The sources of moral knowledge and wisdom**

The development of character and conscience requires that Christians acquire “an adequate knowledge of good and evil, of basic moral values and disvalues, rights and duties, as well as a sharpening grasp of various ethical theories, principles, norms or rules” (Connors & McCormick 1998:142-3). At the same time, Christians need to acquire capabilities in moral discernment, deliberation, and decision-making to perform moral actions. To this end, they have to know the importance of intention, motive and alternatives to a course of action and have “the ability to weigh and balance the various circumstances and consequences of an action against the means and methods being considered (Connors & McCormick 1998:143).

The development of character and conscience is correlative to the formation of a worldview through “the manifold influences that come our way and encounters with life we have had, are having and will yet have” in our religious and other social groups (Grenz & Olson 1996:123-4). In the same vein, Van der Walt speaks off a “multi-dimensional network of influences” since:

The formation of a worldview occurs through factors other than merely faith situated *within* the adherent of such a view, such as his/her emotional life, personality type, intellectual development, sex, etc. Factors *outside* the adherent of such a view also play a role, such as education by parents, school, college, etc., influence of friends and peers, the prevailing socio-politico-economic-cultural conditions and so forth (Van der Walt 1994:43-4; emphasis original).

Sane Christian moral formation does not come only through a faithful and concerned Christian church but also through sound programmes outside the church. “All true formation has its origins in God” (Wilhoit 2008:35-6). The triune God is not only active in the church.

Through Christ, he is busy reconciling the world to himself and sustaining the universe by his mighty power and he is undoubtedly “behind growth in virtue, love and justice” (2 Cor 5:18; Heb 1:3; Wilhoit 2008:36).

Several Catholic and Protestant denominations, in particular, those in Methodist and Holiness traditions, consider as critical sources of moral formation, the so-called “Wesleyan quadrilateral” encompassing Scripture, reason, experience and tradition (Thompson 2011:52). In its 2013 report on “Moral Discernment in the Churches,” the WCC offers an exhaustive list of sources for moral discernment or moral formation. The report firstly includes faith sources, namely the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Scripture, tradition, teaching authority, spirituality and church culture (customs, habits, identity). Secondly, it mentions human reason and other sapiential sources as natural law and moral reasoning. Within moral reasoning are integrated the three essential groups of philosophical ethical theories, namely virtue ethics, deontological or value ethics and teleological or consequentialist ethics as well as the various combinations existing between them (WCC 2013:23-9). In addition, the report notes that

All [the churches] recognize the importance of human reason and critical thinking, conscience and experience, and the shared wisdom of humanity, as reflected in: natural sciences; medical sciences; human sciences that help us analyze culture, history, and contemporary experience; international law and human rights; and other disciplines of critical inquiry (WCC 2013: 29-54, 56-7).

There is no consensus about the nature of primacy and the relation between Scripture and other resources, but “[a]ll churches value the Bible as an essential source of moral authority, even though the use and interpretation of it may be sometimes rather different” (WCC 2013:56). On the basis of their doctrine of revelation and inspiration, Evangelical Protestants, believe that “the teachings of Scripture are the final court of appeal for ethics; [...] the highest authority for both doctrine and morals” (Davis 2004b:15)<sup>31</sup>. As the Roman Catholic moral theologians, Connors and McCormick (1998:106; emphasis original), observe:

[M]ost Christian ethicists agree that Scripture plays a critical and unique role in our moral formation, particularly in the way that it shapes and informs our basic worldview, loyalties, attitudes and intentions, and that any *Christian* morality which is not grounded in and shaped by the central narratives of Scripture is not worthy of that name.

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<sup>31</sup> Davis pursues that “Human reason, church tradition, and the natural and social sciences may aid moral reflection, but divine revelation, found in the canonical Scriptures of the OT and NT, constitutes the “bottom line” of the decision-making process. Informed ethical reflection will carefully weigh the various words of men, both past and present, but the Word of God must cast the deciding vote. Evangelicals believe that the canonical Scriptures are the very Word of God, the only infallible and inerrant rule of faith and practice” (Davis 2004b:15).

Furthermore, as far as narratives are concerned, the stories that can form Christians' worldview, character and conscience in African churches include the instructive biographies of martyrs and heroes as well as stories of accomplishments from role models and friends. The true history of Africa, written by Africans for Africans, that encompasses the continent's golden age and the dark eras of slavery, the scramble for Africa, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism and the struggle for liberation and democratization needs to be studied and vulgarized. Equally significant for the transformation of church members' worldview are the narratives from African cultures embedded in tales, parables, poetry, folklore, songs, maxims, and proverbs.

In order to secure the particularism of Christian moral formation through the strictly narrative and community-dependence of Christian ethics, Hauerwas rejects the psychological theories of cognitive moral development elaborated by scholars such as Jean Piaget, Erik Erickson and especially Lawrence Kohlberg as well as James Fowler's theory of spiritual development (CC:129-52; HR:221-54). It is on the grounds that most of those theories rely on the universalist Kantian ethical theory, undermine the narrative and community-dependence and thus the particularity of Christian, and their last stage of the development reveals their propensity to promote an autonomous moral life. However, church moral formation can actually take advantage of some aspects of developmental psychology. First, developmental psychologists have examined the ways we grow and mature as persons — cognitively, affectively and morally — and in the process they have significantly enriched our understanding of the working and development of conscience (Connors and McCormick (1998:139-42). Second, relevant correlations can be found between the findings of developmental psychology and biblical and theological studies for an effective discipleship and nurturing in the church. Christian educators can enrich their art of teaching by envisioning a spiritual growth, which takes into account the six developmental domains: physical, intellectual, emotional, social, faith, and moral (Ward 1995:7-17).<sup>32</sup>

### **8.3.3.2. The criteria for integrating external ethical material**

From the above, sources of moral influence and wisdom for Christians are situated within and outside the church community. They include elements from African and Western

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<sup>32</sup> These words come from Ted Ward's forewords to *Nurture that is Christian: Developmental perspectives on Christian education*, a book edited by James Wilhoit and John Dettoni and which includes three sections. The first presents "the power" of major contemporary developmentalists (Piaget, Kohlbert, Fowler, Erikson, Perry, Belenky and Vygotsky). While the second section deals with developmentalism from the perspective of age groups, the third displays how developmentalism can be applied to Christian nurture.

and other cultures in addition to Christian narratives, doctrines, practices and rituals, let alone philosophical moral theories and insights from human sciences. Every African church is called to be an ordering and integrating community of various internal and external sources. This call is neither new in Church history nor specific to African churches only. Since the Biblical times, the Church in every setting has been confronted with this problem as Birch and Rasmussen (1989:126) observe:

Plural sources and diverse content formed the biblical material themselves, and the churches have always grafted influences which were not Christians in origin onto its own traditions (Augustine used Plotinus, Aquinas used Aristotle). So the question for any present community facing a moral choice is not whether the content is in the Bible, in the church's traditions, or in the Jesus story itself; the question is whether a centre exists to which varied materials can be related, and whether a criterion exists which can take their measure.

In other words, the "issue is not the origin of sources and diversity of content," the real issue is that of determining the compatibility and complementarity of external sources with what is known as "the ancient message of the gospel" or "the prominent lines discerned in Scripture" (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:126). As such, although certainly insightful, this guideline is still very broad. More precisely, the integrative Christian worldview seems to be an adequate tool, which offers a viable and accurate framework to assess not only non-Christian sources and theories but also Christian ethical approaches in order to determine the material of a Christian ethic conducive to a sound Christian moral formation.

The framework offered by the integrative Christian worldview as a whole helps to assess the various approaches in Christian and secular ethics. These approaches are the multiple ethical voices that could speak in Africa today when Christians ask themselves what ought to be a good life for them. They include voices coming from "African ethics, the ethics of the ancient Greece, and the religious ethical influences of the Middle East (Judaism, Islam and Christianity)" (Kretzschmar & Van Niekerk, 2009:61). More specifically, this framework helping to integrate material from alternative worldviews (e.g., African and Western worldviews), moral philosophy and other sources outside the church is determined by the fourfold scheme of biblical story – the Creation, the Fall into sin, Jesus' Redemption and the Consummation of all things. The Catholic moral theologian Charles Curran speaks off this scheme in terms of the fivefold Christian mysteries, namely, "creation, sin, incarnation, redemption, and resurrection destiny."<sup>33</sup> He carries on noting that

These fivefold Christian mysteries constitute the stance or vision that moral theology employs as it sets about its work of systematically, comprehensively, and synthetically

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<sup>33</sup> Curran (1999:34) himself points out that "incarnation is linked with redemption" and "resurrection destiny" corresponds to the "not yet," "the fullness of the reign of God" which Protestant theology generally designates in term of consummation.



understanding Christian moral life within the context of the church. From its vantage point, we can [...] analyze and criticize various approaches to moral theology that have been proposed historically and at the present time [...] (Curran 1999:34).

To illustrate, from this stance, horizons or a set of perspectives, he assesses the theological aspect in natural law theory in Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions, the specific Catholic positions on the issues of killing, suffering and death as well as mediation. Also, Curran demonstrates that the stance is an accurate tool to criticize other approaches to moral theology and Christian ethics by evaluating the Social Gospel School, Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism and liberation theology as well as the work of Stanley Hauerwas (Curran 1999:34-47).

Before Curran, the late prominent Anglican and Evangelical theologian, John Stott (1921-2011) asserted that the four biblical events of Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consummation determine four perspectives: "the good," "the evil," "the new" and "the perfect" respectively. And he perceptively adds that

This fourfold biblical reality enables Christians to survey the historical landscape within its proper horizons. It supplies the true perspective from which to view the unfolding process between two eternities, the vision of God working out his purpose. It gives us a framework into which to fit everything, a way of integrating our understanding, the possibility of thinking straight, even about the most complex issues (Stott 1984:35; 1999:41).

In this respect, he analyzes and criticizes modern positions on human sexuality and political progress (Stott 1999:44-7).

### **8.3.4. Rationale for a worldview transformation in Africa**

Christians in Africa are in desperate need of a sound, biblical Christian worldview for their moral sanity through the development of character and conscience. Effective moral formation cannot take place in African churches without particular attention to a worldview transformation. At least three significant reasons can justify this assertion. First, like non-Christians, Christians in Africa experience the widespread influence of Western worldviews in their context of deeply-rooted traditional African worldviews. To recall, Africa is in a transitional cultural situation as people are caught between the influences of African traditional culture and Western culture. This has already been recognized as one of the prominent causes of moral decline in the continent. As a response to Kinoti's concern, Van der Walt accurately states:

What people today need in Africa, more than anything else, is guidance, which direction to follow in the daily choices they have to make. Like the hyena in the folk tale they are confused because they have to choose between two different kinds of roads, indicated by two different norms. As was the case with the hyena they cannot simply combine the two.

The one road is that of traditional African morality and norms and the other is that of modern Western morality and norms (Van der Walt 2003:66; cf. Kinoti 1999:73).

Those norms emanate from the communalistic, humanistic or anthropocentric, pragmatic and utilitarian as well as tribalistic worldviews of African traditional religions and the Western dualistic, individualistic, secularist, hedonistic and materialistic worldviews respectively. Christians in Africa need an alternative, radical Christian worldview as part of the solution for the moral decline of their continent.

Second, the presence of a majority of nominal believers in African churches is essentially a worldview issue. Those believers are Christians “in name only (from the Latin *nomen*, a name). They may call themselves Christians, they may even run church camps, teach in the Sunday School, or serve in a leadership capacity, but they remain, at heart, pagans” (Kretzschmar 1997:312). They are nominally Christians, as affirms Kunhiyop (2009:62), because “their underlying beliefs, values and practices are rooted in a non-Christian worldview.” Sometimes, they may demonstrate an enthusiastic Christian faith but in times of crisis, their worldview, their frame of reference or mind “emerges more clearly” (Van der Walt 1994:41). In those moments of “existential need and crisis as in danger, illness and death” or even persistent struggle for daily life, all over Africa, many Christians “revert to their traditional faith and view of life” (Van der Walt 1994:16). They go back to ancestral worship, sacrifices or cleansing ceremonies, most of the times without taking responsibility for their own evil behaviours, mistakes or shortcomings. African movies witness the rampant syncretism in the daily life of many Christians. The double allegiance to ancestral gods and Christian faith is particularly manifested in the lives of political leaders threatened to lose power. To illustrate, although from a Christian background, the former President Tombalbaye of Chad, ordered a national and systematic practice of traditional initiation and even “the killing of many pastors in one day, including the pastor who baptized him” (Kunhiyop 2009:65).

Third, the moral crisis in African churches is nothing but a facet of “the crisis of African Christianity [which] is basically a worldview crisis” (Van der Walt 1994:16). The Gospel brought through the missionary endeavour carried on by African leadership, a Gospel wrapped in Western clothes, mostly targeted “the outer, more visible layers of African traditional culture (habits, behaviours, customs, institutions and values)” (Van der Walt 1994:15). Those layers that easily change in cultural encounters have been exchanged with those of Western culture. Unfortunately, the deeper layers of religious convictions and worldview, that is, the heart of African culture has remained almost untouched. In other words, Christian faith, in many occasions, was not introduced as a “new, total encompassing

worldview” or “influencing the whole of life” and meant to replace “an equally encompassing traditional [African] worldview” (Van der Walt 1994:16). The result has been very damaging: a superficial Christianity and a crisis of identity for individual Christians because of “just external conversions without internal, worldview changes” (Kunhiyop 2009:63). At best, the change of some customs and patterns of behaviours have been induced, but at worse, only intellectual adherence to Christian doctrines can be noticed since the traditional worldview, the deepest core of African hearts has almost been left intact. As, the late missionary anthropologist Paul Hiebert (2008:12) points out:

Christians should live differently because they are Christians. However, if their behaviour is based primarily on traditional rather than Christian beliefs, it becomes pagan ritual. Conversion must involve a transformation of beliefs, but if it is a change only of beliefs and not of behaviour, it is false faith (James 2). Conversion may include a change in beliefs and behaviour, but if the worldview is not transformed, in the long run the gospel is subverted and the result is a syncretistic Christo-paganism, which has the form of Christian but not its essence. Christianity becomes a new magic and a new, subtler form of idolatry.

Illuminating is also Hiebert’s implication of missiological perspectives which, of course, includes the ethical task of the church in the contemporary era: “If behavioral change was the focus of the mission movement in the nineteenth century, and changed beliefs its focus in the twentieth century, then transforming worldview must be its central task in the twenty-first century” (Hiebert 2008:12).

There is no need to totally replace the African worldview by the Christian worldview. The positive aspects of African worldview should be retained. They include its holistic approach to life antithetical to life’s compartmentalization, several positive communal aspects such as respect for elders, for the unborn, moral responsibility and accountability to community through shame and honour, etc. There is no need to consider all African pre-Christian beliefs and practices as “pagan and evil” and “[throw] the bath water with the baby” (Kunhiyop 2009:67). The relevant Christian worldview envisioned is not one related to a particular Christian tradition or communion. Its narrative component upholds the overarching biblical story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation; its propositional component turns attention to the doctrine of the Trinity and broadly to the Apostles’ Creed accepted by almost the entire Christianity (Samples 2007:88-9).

The last reason for the promotion of a radical, total and integral Christian worldview in African churches is the need of resources for a constructive social engagement. The legacy of the dualistic view of soul-body, spiritual life-earthly life championed or unconsciously propagated by the missionary enterprise is to be urgently replaced by the “truly Biblical kingdom perspective” (Van der Walt 1994:547-8). The dualist thought has confined Christian

life to the church, individual, marriage and family whereas the churches and Christians have to contribute to the building of the common good in African pluralist societies by tackling their lacerating political, economic and social plights.

## **8.4. Contextual Christian character and conscience formation**

The present constructive proposal that a contextual Christian character and conscience formation be based on Trinitarian ethics and a Christian integrative worldview, rather than the Hauerwasian particularist character formation seems to be a more viable paradigm of moral formation in an African context. Having described the salient aspects of this constructive paradigm and having started to depict its rationale, it is worthwhile displaying what could be achieved through this paradigm claimed to be more biblically sound, theologically and ethically coherent and contextually relevant for African churches. In Africa, as acutely understood by Mwikamba (1992:104), “The urgency of moral reforms both in theory and in practice are of paramount importance. The reforms must be radical at all levels: the churches, individuals and society.” Correlatively, moral formation performed in the church can only be relevant if it nurtures and sharpens the communal, individual and social ethical dimensions of the church’s members. Arguably, the suggested paradigm allows the covering of three strategic dimensions of moral formation within the church. By so doing it could bring about helpful solutions to the crucial moral challenges in an African context. Addressing these three dimensions and their practical aspects is the object of the present section.

### **8.4.1. The communal ethical dimension**

The communal dimension of moral formation is the reflection of both Trinitarian ethics and integrative Christian worldview. It illuminates the necessity for moral formation as part of Christian discipleship by the means of worship and systematic teaching and even the whole life of the churches in Africa.

#### **8.4.1.1. Trinitarian and Christian worldview framework and community life**

Concerning the communal dimension, the apprehension of “God as Trinity unity” — as Louis Berkhof (1958:84) puts it — provides a transcendent foundation for a community-based moral formation. The community of God implies that human beings created in God’s image cannot live a meaningful, fulfilling and constructive life and sustains a sound moral life without

others. This is one of the implications of the doctrine of the Trinity. As Grenz (1994:98) explains,

This [doctrine] means that in his external essence the one God is a social reality, the social Trinity. Because God is the social Trinity, a plurality in unity, the ideal for humankind does not focus on solitary persons, but on persons-in-community. God intends that we reflect his nature in our lives. This is only possible, however, as we move out of our isolation and into relationship, or the life-in-community.

The doctrine of the Trinity also implies that a Christian worldview cannot be individualist. Besides, as a matter of fact, there is no such a thing as a sound individualistic worldview. In the accurate words of Gousmett (1996:10):

Worldviews are not individualistic, but communal in nature: a worldview held by only one person is not considered "normal" but eccentricity or insanity, because no one else sees the world the same way. We share a worldview with those around us, the culture and society which has shaped and nurtured us from birth to adulthood. Worldviews are largely acquired by absorption from the community we live in. They are for the most part not explicitly taught but assumed in everything that we are taught.

In the light of a Trinitarian and Christian worldview framework, moral formation in the African churches should be congruent with the evidence that moral formation essentially comes through the appreciation of history and not autonomous individualism, a cultural context, relationships and discipleship. Central to Jesus' moral teaching in the NT is the pressing call to discipleship. The Jewish culture of his time concentrated the moral life on the Ten Commandments and its widely accepted summary into the "two great commandments: love God and love your neighbour" (Lk 10:25-29; cf. Dt 6:5; Lv 19:18). In the subsequent parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37), Jesus stresses that "being a neighbour is not a matter of having a relationship or being part of one's group. Quite the contrary, being a neighbour is an attitude of life that should manifest itself in all human encounters" (O'Connell 1998:12). This first innovation seems to be antithetical to any form of communalism and discrimination if one considers the adversarial relationships between the Jewish people and the Samaritans (Jn 4:9).

The second innovation is made when Jesus, in a similar occasion, is asked the following question: "(Good) Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Lk 10:25; 18:18). Clearly, it is about discipleship as Jesus recognizes that one thing is missing in the moral life of the rich ruler who declares obeying all the commandments: "come and follow me" (Lk 18:22). Thus, the essence of Christian moral formation is making disciples as asserted by O'Connell (1998:13) who also points out that:

Throughout the pages of the NT this scene [of Luke 18] returns over and over. Indeed, the Greek verb "to follow" (*okoulouthēō*) appears ninety-one times. Even more amazing, the Greek noun "disciple" (*mathētēs*) appears 261 times. Clearly, this is a central theme. We are called to be disciples of Jesus. The Christian moral life is a life of discipleship.



There is a third innovation that Jesus makes to common Jewish morality. Answering to the rich young man, he does not accept to be called “Good Teacher”; rather he reacts by asking, “Why do you call me good?” and stating, “No one is good — except God alone (Lk 18:19; Mk 10:18). His unexpected answer seems to suggest that goodness cannot be separated from godliness, and thus morality and spirituality are inseparable. As Bonnidell Clouse (1985:302-3) stresses,

*Morality as godliness is the only complete definition of morality. [...] morality cannot be separated from goodness, and goodness cannot be separated from God.*<sup>34</sup> Jesus told the young men who came running to him that only God is good and that more than an obedience to OT commandments is required of the one who live forever with God (Mk 10:17-21). A God who is good demands goodness of his followers, and this includes sharing with those who are in need and willingness to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Therefore a sound moral formation should curb individualism, legalism and moralism. The task of moral formation in African churches should be in congruence with its general biblical orientation — an integral part of the task of making disciples putting in tandem moral formation and spiritual formation.

#### **8.4.1.2. Moral formation as part of Christian discipleship**

The task of being conformed to the image of Christ; this task “is nothing more and nothing less than the pursuit of the ‘Great Commission’” (Mt 28:19-20; Hunter 2010:226; Wilhoit 2008:39). Although distinguishable, the task of church moral formation and that of church spiritual formation are inseparable (Ciorra & Keating 1998:8-10). Moral formation is part and parcel of the critical task of discipleship entrusted by Jesus to the church. Moral and spiritual formations are inseparable twins. They are both the faces of the same coin: the church formation mandate of nurturing, moulding and shaping Christians to be transformed into Christ-likeness and live as God pleases. Both include aspects of becoming good and holy, knowing, loving and doing the good in terms of Christian life in general and moral life in particular (Mt 28:19-20). For a deep-rooted and transformative Christianity in Africa, Jesus’ Great Commission should not be reduced to outreach and evangelism but go further to implement his imperative of moral and spiritual formation of Christian disciples. In this respect, at least three significant prerequisites should characterize the evangelistic enterprise

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<sup>34</sup> Clouse (1985:303) argues that “morality as godliness also is a complete expression of what it means to be moral in that it includes within its scope all four psychological expressions of the moral state: moral behaviour, moral reasoning, moral potential, and moral conflict.” He respectively alludes to four psychological approaches: the learning, the cognitive, the humanistic and the psychoanalytic approaches. He claims that, in Christian perspectives for moral development, all the four above-mentioned should be apprehended as functions of godliness (Clouse 1985:303-20).

in Africa. First, evangelistic programmes should not merely aim at recruiting new converts for church numeric growth through intellectual adherence to Christian doctrines. As John Colwell (2001:49) points out:

Evangelistic programmes informing “converts” that they have “become Christians” by virtue of having come to the front of a meeting in response to an appeal, repeated “the sinner’s prayer,” or signed a “decision card,” are merely more blatant instances of the assumptions that becoming a Christian is merely a cerebral process, a matter of an intellectual assent to a series of propositions.

Second, the experience of conversion should not be separated from the intellectual content of the Gospel and detached from the subsequent lifelong experience of discipleship. Again to quote Colwell (2001:49): “[M]ore recent evangelistic programmes that focus on defining experience, feeling or general atmosphere, not only tend to lack significant intellectual content, they also tend to detach Christian “experiences” from the rigor of daily discipleship.” Third, evangelistic programmes in Africa must be sustained by the vision of the total economy of salvation that does not separate justification by faith from sanctification. Justification by grace, God’s declaring a person in right standing with Him, is only a part of the *ordo salutis* and cannot be separated from sanctification as continual growth into Christlikeness. “Salvation is not simply God’s declaration of righteousness. To be declared righteous is also to do what is right.[...] To be saved is to live a saved life [...] — living a life consonant with and growing into the claims of Christian faith” (Reuschling 2008:110-11). Consequently, in African churches Christian teachings should always serve the purposes of transforming minds and lives. Christian faith cannot be reduced to intellectual adherence to doctrines; the pursuit of orthodoxy ought always to go hand in hand with orthopraxis: Christian faith should be all the times put into practices (Ja 2:26; Kretzschmar 1997:312).

#### **8.4.1.3. Christian identity and church membership and discipline**

In this perspective, African churches are called to be worshipping, “disciplining and disciplined communities” and avoid to be mere caring communities fostering undemanding togetherness, as Hauerwas stresses it (CC:83; AC:93;RA:78). To be this kind of community, the African churches must intentionally and creatively order all aspects of their life to spiritual and moral formation of their members. They must encourage the full, active and committed participation of its members in the church’s life and their full immersion into its traditions to gain its specific communal identity. As Birch and Rasmussen (1989:127-8) assert:

For moral development, as for personality development in general, we must be able to situate ourselves before we can go anywhere in a way that is not aimless wanderings. And knowing who and where we are means knowing the tradition or traditions in which we live, move, and have our being. Moral growth and maturity require being part of a history

and being aware of it as part of us. Lack of traditions, and lack of consciousness of them, result in moral drift and limbo.

To be sure, Christianity in Africa could be invigorated if moral formation in churches could focus on shaping Christians who are cognizant of their specific religious and moral identity as Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Reformed, Lutheran, Pentecostal, etc. Christians living out the central doctrinal tenets of their respective churches of affiliation and their ethical implications, in particular, the central virtues they foster cannot help but contribute to the mutual upbuilding and emulation between Christians from various denominations and enrich interfaith cooperation in tackling ethical social issues.

Also, African churches ought to stress the significance of devotional Christian life in terms of disciplines of grace such as the Word of God, prayer, public worship, solitude, giving, fasting, meditation, silence in God's presence, etc. They are precious tools for moral and spiritual development. They bring into God's presence and transform Christians increasingly into the image of Christ. But they can only effect this transformation if they do not become mere routine devotional activities. They must be understood and performed as "a special arena of grace in which, through intensive personal encounter with the living God, in the presence of his Spirit and the power of his Word, our love for him is renewed and deepened, and we are further enlivened in Christ to love our neighbour as ourselves" (Moore 2001:18-9).

A committed membership and participation in the life of the church implies the strong rejection of radical autonomy and individualistic attitudes. The characteristics of these attitudes are voluntarism and "Jesus and me" mentality which undermine the significance of the church community and discipline for the Christian life. A biblical Christianity is based on the integration of neophytes in the communal life and practices of the local church. New converts in the early Church joined the community in their devotion and perseverance into four basic practices: apostolic teachings, fellowship, breaking the bread and prayer (Ac 2:42).

Under the influence of (post)modernity fuelling hedonism, consumerism, claims of personal rights and privacy, especially in urban areas, many Christians irregularly attend church services and live anonymously within the church community. Such an attitude is a way of preventing all initiatives of reproach in the church community since it is considered as judgmental, moralistic or legalistic acts. African churches need to uphold the virtues of apprenticeship and friendship and those of mutual upbuilding, submission and accountability. This kind of mutual accountability is well-developed in small groups, in particular the ones stressing prayer and interactive Bible studies. Church members should be open to the

humble exhortations or reproofs of others and in particular to those of pastors and other church leaders exercising their authority (*RA:103; AC:106-7*).

Committed membership and participation in the church life building Christian identity could help recover two significant practices of African traditional ethics which constitute educational and social emotions contributing efficiently to moral formation: shame and honour (Covaleskie 2013:109-18). Following Magesa, Kunhiyop states that:

[In traditional Africa], [s]hame and honour served as means of public control on morality. Honour — which included respect, dignity, pride, and sense of accomplishment for the community for exemplary conduct or actions by one of its members — served as a major motivation for morally praiseworthy acts. Shame, on the other hand, involves a feeling of letting the community down, and includes a sense of personal failure, or betrayal against oneself and the community [...] Shameful acts not only let the offending person down, but also disgraces his relations and community (Kunhiyop 2009:74-5; cf. Magesa 1997:169, 173)

#### **8.4.1.4. Moral formation through the whole life of the church**

For African churches to be viable locus of moral formation, local churches must raise their awareness to the fact that not only specific teachings but all aspects of church life, including worship, liturgy, church government and the management of human, financial and material resources work for the moral formation of their members. Neglecting this would allow the hidden curricula to strikingly contribute to their malformation. African churches must be inclusive communities welcoming the poor, the disabled (or differently able persons) and the outcasts of society. Through their words and deeds, they must condemn all forms of discrimination (social, sexual, ethnic, racial etc.) and celebrate unity in diversity and promote reconciliation. Also, the crucial role of church leadership cannot be overlooked.

Crucial is the role of the leadership in the church moral formation. Leaders in African churches ought to follow the following NT pattern described by Grenz (1994:613):

The NT [...] places the primacy of leaders within the context of an equal emphasis on servanthood and humility as the mark of true leadership. Leaders ought never to see their position as source of pride or an excuse for dominating others. They are to serve the people (Mk 10:41-5), ministering as shepherds and examples — never as overlords (1 Pt 5:1-5).

Thus, church officers, at all levels, must be characterized by servant-leadership and humility, be blameless and meet other biblical criteria of church leadership (1 Tm 3:1-13; Tt 1:6-9). They must be appointed on the basis of their moral character, calling and gifts and theological and ministerial formation and after pre-established due process. In addition, church officers must not work for the subservience of the church to governments or political leadership but they must always stand for a critical solidarity between the church and the state (De Gruchy 1995:222-3).

## 8.4.2. The individual ethical dimension

After emphasizing the task of the church as a bearer and transmitter of tradition and as a community of virtues shaping an ethical vision, it is necessary to equally stress its role as a community nurturing conscience and fostering individual responsibility.

### 8.4.2.1. Morality as a social and individual phenomenon

Indeed, morality is both social and individual phenomenon (Covaleskie 2013:41). The moral life is nurtured by the wider society in general and in particular in various moral communities (including the church, the family, the neighbourhood, the corporation, etc.) in which the individual participate. In these moral communities, the individual acquires a relevant set of norms, which help “to make accurate judgments about the rightness or wrongness of [her] actions and then [conforms her] actions to those judgments” (Covaleskie 2013:41). This aspect directs the attention to conscience formation. But convergent with the Aristotelian ethics is the Christian ethical affirmation of intentionality: becoming good is doing what is good with good reasons. This is the specific aspect of character formation. Speaking of character and conscience formation in African churches is also stressing that church moral formation should consider not only the behaviours of its members but also their hearts, minds and discernment.

Moreover, the God Christians worship is the Triune God, the community of the Father, the Son and the Holy — the three distinctive persons in the Godhead. Following the model of social Trinity, the Christian ethic underlying moral formation in African churches ought to take into account the nature of human beings as “persons-in-relationships” and thus seek to “bring together the self and the community in which the self is embedded” (Grenz 1997:262). To avoid the bias towards either African communalism or Western individualism, this understanding of Christian ethics should place “[the self] on the same ontological level as [communal relations]” (Grenz 1997:262).<sup>35</sup> This is also congruent with a sound Christian worldview and biblical anthropology, as mentioned earlier. They entail the acknowledgment of human beings who, as *imago Dei*, are not only communal or social but also individual creatures at the same time.

Thereby, while helping Christians to depart from ethical egoism, African churches cannot forget to tackle the challenge mentioned in Chapter Six and as pointed out by Gyekye

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<sup>35</sup> Here, explicitly Grenz speaks of Western liberalism and its individualist political tradition. For this reason, the sentence alters his following statement: “[The Christian ethic following the model of the social Trinity] in a certain sense [...] places communal relations on the same ontological level as the self” (Grenz 1997:262).



(1996:47, 58-9).<sup>36</sup> Moral formation should enhance a “dual moral responsibility” as he suggests: “the responsibility the individual has towards the community and its members does not — should not — enjoin her to give over her whole life, as it were, to others and be oblivious to her personal well-being” (Gyekye 1996:64). Hence, tackling the challenge of balancing the holistic needs of individuals and that of the community and helping Christians internalize communal and individual values should be the motto of churches in Africa.

More importantly, church moral formation in African churches should meet the moral needs of the individuals in their respective social categories and ought to help Christians avoid all blindness, extremism or dogmatism in their various moral communities, including the church community itself. This contention needs an elaboration.

#### **8.4.2.2. Systematic teachings for all the social categories**

A systematic and developmental teaching is key to the kind of discipleship that enhances spiritual and moral formation and which is critically needed in African churches. Churches with such a vision make sure that their average members grasp the essential meaning and practical implications of the story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation (Hunter 2010:237). The same necessity applies for the central biblical themes such as covenant, repentance, conversion and discipleship, as well as sanctification, death, and resurrection; other themes like incarnation, the reign of God and the love of the neighbour and even social justice, and liberation cannot be overlooked (Connors & McCormick 1998:104, 106-12). These churches can also organize their preaching, teaching and worship activities around a specific theme for each year. In addition, their catechetical teachings are not only directed to the Sunday school and the class for baptism and confirmation but also to adult formation. Moreover, they take into account the formational needs of all the social categories of the church community: from children to old people, through teenagers, youngsters and adult. This kind of teachings includes various forms of counselling (pre-marital and marital counselling, counselling for single persons, women and men, parents, widows and professionals). Christians in SSA churches have to learn and understand anew “the significance of the language and the narrative of faith within the context of the social, political, and cultural realities of [their] time” (Hunter 2010:226).

Also, intensive moral and spiritual formations are offered like traditional African initiations or rites of passage to those called to embrace specific ministries and positions of leadership at all the levels of the church community life: Sunday school teachers, choir member and masters, youth leaders, heads of church departments, deacons, elders, etc.

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<sup>36</sup> See subsection 6.3.2 on the limitation of African ethics in a modern and globalized era.

Solemn ceremonies or rites, for memory and remembrance, with special prayers and even the laying of hands requesting Lord's gifts and graces are held for their induction as leaders after intensive teachings related to their specific ministries (2 Tim 1:6).

By so doing, the church demonstrates that there is no "teaching church" on the one hand and "learning church" on the other and that there is not double standards for morality or holiness — one for the clergy and another for the laity. At the same time, the church recommends three important practices that induce moral and spiritual development: study, prayer and service. Not only is the virtue of these practices recognized by various authors, but also these practices were the guidelines of the character and conscience formation of religious candidates in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions (Reuschling 2008:112-3). They demonstrate the intentional character of moral development, the need for a spiritual mentor and the significance of "a moral community capable of bearing and transmitting ethical values and vision to the young persons in questions" (Connors & McCormick 1998:148). Those three practices should be regular habits pursued by all, even by mature and adult persons because they help "develop the requisite moral insights, passions and virtues of a mature conscience" (Connors and McCormick 1998:149).

Perspectives on conscience formation such as Gula's three characteristics of conscience — capacity, process and judgment — described earlier require that moral formation in African churches develops and enlarges Christians' moral imagination and vision. For their discernment and decision-making Christians need at least to "(1) gather relevant information, (2) identify the moral choice to be made, (3) seek counsel, (4) reflect and pray, (5) evaluate alternatives" (Connors & McCormick 1998:126-8). To that end, it is imperative to help them acquire essential knowledge not only in Christian ethical approaches but also in African ethics, world religions' ethics, and universalist insights of moral philosophy — all evaluated in light of the Christian faith or as asserted earlier, the Christian integrative worldview. Thus, creative and developmental teachings should include relevant Christian theological ethical insights from leading theologians such as Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), John Calvin (1590-1564), Karl Barth (1886-1968), Gustavo Gutiérrez (1928-) to name just a few (Kretzschmar & Van Niekerk 2009:60-77). They should also emphasize the promotion of *Ubuntu* (humanness, community, social harmony and communal sharing) and other valuable tenets of African ethics (such as the non-dualistic conception of ethics, the normative conception of personhood, the value of the unborn, the respect for elders, the significance of shame and honour, etc. (Kunhiyop 2009:67-8, 74-5). Moreover, they cannot overlook the sound perspectives of main philosophical ethical theories such as deontological, teleological, utilitarian and aretaic ethics as well as an ethic of

responsibility (Kretzschmar & Van Niekerk 2009:77-82). In other words, as an integrating moral community, the church should embrace particularity and universality in ethics, teach its specific ethical tradition (through essential moral values, doctrinal tenets, worship and liturgy, form of church government, etc.) in highlighting their convergence and divergence with those from other major ethical voices found in its context. Cognizant that Christians are also morally formed or malformed in other communities outside the church, African churches must take seriously this aspect of moral formation.

It goes without saying that teachings in African churches must be contextual and prophetic. They have to challenge Christians to turn to the true, living relational and Trinitarian God away from African traditional utilitarian gods and serve Him rather than come to churches just for material, physical, social or spiritual benefits or blessings. In other words, they have to aim at transforming hearts, minds, characters, consciences and behaviours.

They have to direct their attention to what loving God and the neighbour means in their local, national and international contexts. Teachings have to deal with critical moral issues like integrity in the Christian spiritual and moral life, poverty, inequality, violence, reconciliation, womanizing, democratization, etc. Christian moral and spiritual life would be meaningless where members of churches are unaware of “What is going on.” Undoubtedly, what is happening is one of the most important factors determining the moral accuracy of the course of actions or attitudes to be taken. Unfortunately, most African churches evolve in a context where media are largely controlled by governments and cannot be trusted in terms of completeness, accuracy, honesty and fairness.

#### **8.4.2.3. Conversion and nominal membership in the church**

Moral formation in African churches has to tackle the crucial challenge of nominal membership. Nominal Christians need personal conversion, the “single action of turning from sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith” (Grudem 2000:714). They also need conversion as transformation of character and conscience, the “lifelong journey” or “a process of a lifetime” which “represents a radical change of our hearts, minds, and souls, a change in the basic direction and focus in our lives, and ultimately a change in our very identities” (Connors & McCormick 1998:230, 236-7). In general, Christians need “more than one critical turning points” in their lives; as Connors and McCormick (1998:230, 237) following Walter Conn explain:

We might also have a moment later on when we come to recognize the face of God in the poor, sick and suffering, or suddenly realize our own responsibility in perpetuating sinful social structures. [...] In each of our lives, we may experience numerous critical but distinct moments of moral, affective, cognitive, and religious conversion, moments in

which our ways of thinking, feeling, caring or relating are being changed. Indeed, we may have moments later on that deepen these experiences of conversion.<sup>37</sup>

Through their teachings, worship, liturgy and prayers as well as the guidance of the Holy Spirit, African churches should attend to the double meaning of conversion. Both the initial conversion through repentance and faith and the conversion as “the transformation of the whole person, and of our whole life, and [which] takes us a whole life to be converted” are very critical for the Christian moral life in Africa (Connors and McCormick 1998:237).

It is of the essence that the task of church moral formation should be undertaken with humility. Easily the emphasis on a communitarian ethics could degenerate in authoritarianism, totalitarianism, indoctrination and even induce self-deception. With a background of traditional communalism, those distortions are abiding and ever-present dangers for African churches. Christians within Protestant traditions, especially those with a “low” ecclesiology ought to develop their resources to meet these challenges. This is particularly the case for many Evangelicals for whom Stott (2003:117-8) declares that:

Evangelical Christians have the reputation of being rugged individualists, and so of having an inadequate doctrine of the church. It is certainly true that, since the Reformation, we have insisted both on ‘the right of private judgment’ (the privilege of making up our own mind from Scripture) and on ‘the priesthood of all believers’ (the privilege of an immediate, individual access to God through Christ).

However, some ethicists working in the traditions with a high ecclesiology, like the ones within the Roman Catholic Church, acknowledge the critical need of attending to Christian individuality. While discussing the significance of conscience formation, the Roman Catholic moral theologians Connors and McCormick (1998:160-1) point out that:

In any case, [...] the teachings of the churches, including those of the Roman Catholic Church, are not meant to be a substitute for our responsibility to form our consciences as authentically as possible and to take responsibility for our own moral judgment and decision.

Conscientious membership will also allow Christians to be critical of insidious and sinful practices of their own church communities and take actions for redress. Being conducive to the moral sanity of the local church, this attitude could help the church to recover its witness and viability for church members’ formation. In Africa, nurturing the individual dimension of moral formation in addition to meeting the moral and spiritual needs of Christians is also a way of curbing the ever-present danger of secularism which manifests

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<sup>37</sup> It is noteworthy that Grudem describe conversion as a single encounter with Jesus through repentance and faith also notes both attitudes [faith and repentance] “are not confined to the beginning of the Christian life. They are rather attitudes of heart that continue throughout our lives as Christians” (Grudem 2000:717). The recommend biblical practices of continual prayer for forgiveness (Mt 6:12) or continual repentance (Rev 3:19; 2 Cor 7:10) that he mentions seem to be in support of the concept of conversion as process.

itself through authoritarianism, totalitarianism, tribalism, nepotism, sectarianism, materialist individualism or individualist materialism (Van der Walt 1994:23). This is only possible if both tasks are undertaken in concert.

### **8.4.3. The social ethical dimension**

The communal and individual dimensions have been justified on the basis of discipleship. The present subsection argues that Christian discipleship also entails sharing a vision of *shalom* for all that challenges the church to be the salt and the light of the world. Therefore, African churches should be agents of moral discourse, discernment and action forming their members for social transformation.

#### **8.4.3.1. Christian discipleship and the vision of *shalom* for all**

Indeed, as mentioned above, the church moral formation that African churches ought to undertake is the pursuit of the Lord Jesus' Great Commission of forming disciples. This commission is a formation or edification mandate including the command to teach the nations to obey everything the Lord has commanded (Mt 28:19-20). The Great Commission which stands as a formation or edification mandate cannot be separated from the Creational or Cultural mandate: being a steward of and transforming God's creation (Gn 1:28; 2:15). The overarching biblical story helps us see that the Great Commission linked to Redemption is justified by the restoration of the original divine order present at the Creation and despoiled or depraved by the Fall. Thus, the Great Commission entails an enterprise of reformation of the world formed by God but deformed by sin.

In a sense, the major theological discourses in vogue from the 1970s to 1990s described by Mugambi (2004:154-60) and presented in Chapter Seven, have promoted a dualistic Christianity in Africa. Indeed, "the "liberation-inculturation discourse" and theology of reconstruction mostly found in those years in Ecumenical circles and "the conversion-salvation discourse," still largely characteristic of the Evangelical movement distort the relationship between Christian spirituality and social involvement. To illustrate, Van der Walt (1994:22) states that

The more conservative Evangelicals of Africa allocate priority to the spiritual, the church and redemption. The "vertical" (the relationship to God) is the most important for them and all the stress is therefore placed on evangelisation (the gaining of souls for Christ).

The Ecumenicals (the more liberal Christians), tend to think more "horizontally". Good relations between people at the natural level are more important and they strive for a more humanitarian society.



Both groups (Evangelicals and Ecumenicals) promote a faulty Christianity and dualistic worldview which stresses only one pole of the Christian life. “Neither of them realizes that Christ is the King of heaven and earth, soul and body, individual and society;” hence, their respective visions must not be *combined* but “*replaced* by the full Gospel of God’s kingship in every sphere of life” (Van der Walt 1994:23; emphasis original). What critically lacks is “a broad kingdom perspective” which does not divide the Christian life in “a small ‘sacred’ sphere (personal devotional and church life) and a large ‘secular’ sphere (daily work, politics, economics, education, [leisure], etc.” (Van der Walt 1994:2001:111).

What Hauerwas asserts is not an integral God’s kingdom perspective or an integral Christian worldview. His inadequate social ethic cannot be the foundation of the social dimension of moral formation in African churches. What Hauerwas champions is a vision of *Peaceable Kingdom* as he has entitled the book he presents as *A Primer in Christian ethics* (*PK*: xvi).<sup>38</sup> From his attachment to Christological pacifism derives his strong contention that the hallmark of the church community is “peaceableness;” thus it is non-violence or the Yoderian peace not secured by any form of coercion which is at the core of Hauerwas’s social ethic and the whole Christian moral life (*PK*:135-51; *PF*:26-7; *WAD*:x-34). His social ethic does not integrally reflect the perspectives of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. Hauerwas only stresses Christian embodiment. Therefore, his social ethic “does not give enough importance to creation and incarnation,” as pointed out by Curran (1999:47), who adds: “The created order, the world at large, and the human cannot be separated from the direct responsibility of the church. The incarnation reminds us that the human cannot be cut from the divine.” Also, it does not do justice to redemption, since the church as “post-Easter community” has been endowed with the power of Christ, the Holy Spirit, to fulfill both the Great Commission and the cultural mandate at the same time (Fergusson 1998:68-9).

Christological pacifism, the building-block of Hauerwas’ social ethic, the way God chose to save us as Yoder and Hauerwas claim, concentrates only on one aspect of Jesus’ life, the way he endured the sacrifice of the cross. Therefore, although reflecting a non-negligible aspect of the life and work of Jesus, this social ethic is essentially built on a reduced scope of the NT narrative (Fergusson 1998:68-9). It does not fully take into account the biblical truth that Jesus came to offer an abundant life and to destroy the devil’s work in people life, in the church and the wider society through social or structural sins (Jn 10:10; 1 Jn 3:8). The extended scope of biblical narratives harkens back to Jesus’ eternal pre-

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<sup>38</sup> Hauerwas himself considers his *The Peaceable Kingdom: A primer in Christian ethics* of 1983, reflecting the Yoderian influence, as a methodological book for his theological and ethical project (*HC*:160-1.)

existence (e.g., Jn 8:58). This broad scope also links Jesus as divine Logos to the Creation (Jn 1:1-14) and as almighty Redeemer to the *Proto-euangelion* (Gn 3:15; cf. Rm 16:20). It also takes into account not only the work of the cross but also the Christological significance of the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension, which paved the way of the power of the Holy Spirit poured into the church in order to fulfill its holistic mission into the world.

With his emphasis on the concepts of sin as a non-universal category and the church as a paradigmatic community Hauerwas stresses only the perspective of the fall but fails to take into account the perspective of consummation.<sup>39</sup> This latter perspective requires attitudes and actions of the church which “hasten the consummation of God’s programme,” that is, the establishment of his eschatological community (2 Pt 3:12; Grenz 1997:273-4). Therefore, African churches should broaden their ethical mission to the world through the proclamation of God’s intention for human and non-human creation, the prophetic voice towards the society at large, the transformation of social structures, etc. (Grenz 1997:274).

What Christians in African churches critically need for their moral formation is the vision of *shalom* for all. This vision is the vision of God’s kingdom because the kingdom of God is in itself the *shalom* of God (Hunter 2010:229): The vision of *shalom* reflects God’s original programme. In the words of James Hunter (2010:228):

The vision of this community [the church] — the hope for which it longs and the ideals to which it strives — is the vision of shalom. It is a vision of order and harmony, fruitfulness and abundance, wholeness, beauty, joy, and well-being. For the Christian, this was God’s intention in creation and it is his promise for the new heaven and the new heart.

The divergence between the Hauerwasian vision of peaceable kingdom and the vision of *shalom* seems to be here a difference between the Greek *irene* (peace) of the NT and the Hebrew *shalom* of the OT which conveys a richer connotation and makes all the difference (Hunter 2010:229). In Africa where abject and dehumanizing poverty leads to grumbling and finally to bloody violence, it is the common experience of many people that “there is no peace without bread.” In other words, social peace does not come without well-being, prosperity and social justice. Moreover, whereas the Hauerwasian vision is related to a reduced scope of NT narratives, the vision of *shalom* covers the whole biblical narrative. The theme of the *shalom* of God reflects the Triune God’s providential programme for humanity and the entire creation and captures the integral scope of the overarching story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. To quote again Hunter (2010:228-9):

In this light, the entire biblical narrative centres around the *shalom* God intended that he will, one day, restore. The details of the story, however, focus on the Fall, its

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<sup>39</sup> For details about the Hauerwasian concepts of sin as a non-universal category and the church as a paradigmatic community, see sub-sections 4.2.3.2 and 5.2.3.2 respectively.

consequences, and finally God's response to it. Idolatry, covetousness, envy, pride, vanity, deceit, hatred, and murder, the perversion of justice, political oppression, exclusion, division, and inequality all shattered and despoiled the shalom of God. Again and again, God's judgment was against those who worked against this reality.<sup>40</sup>

Congruent with the Christian life within a pluralist society, the vision of *shalom* for all is adequate for African churches. The Jewish people, even while in captivity, in the foreign land of Babylon, the realm of pagan gods and idolatry, were urgently enjoined by God's prophets to work for the *shalom* of all (Ps 82:3; Is 1:16-7; Jr 7:5-7; Mi 6:8; Hunter 2010:229). As Jesus' disciples, Christians in Africa are called to "*live towards the well-being of others, not just to those within the community of faith, but to all*" (Hunter 2010:229-30; emphasis original). By so doing, they will follow the example of their Master Jesus Christ, the "God became incarnate in Christ, not only to model shalom (by forgiving the sinner, feeding the hungry, healing the sick and infirm, raising the dead, loving the outsider, and caring for all in need) but [also] to be "our shalom" (Eph 2:14; Hunter 2010:229).

#### **8.4.3.2. The church as salt and light**

With its paradigm of "Purity from," the Hauerwasian social ethic is based on radical church-world separation. In contrast, correlative to the vision of the *shalom* of God is the paradigm of faithful presence in the wider society which lays on the dialectic presuppositions of "world's antithesis" and "world affirmation" found in the biblical narratives (Hunter 2010:231-5). This paradigm is correlative to the double main sense of the Greek word *cosmos* (world): "all people at enmity with God" and "the created order, the earth or the earth's inhabitant" (Dodd 1997:1222). In particular, as Stott elaborates, Jesus stresses this truth in his famous declaration "in the world but not of it" (Jn 17:11-19) and his very illustrative metaphors of the salt and the light (Mt 5:13-16). This "double identity and responsibility" is described also by Peter in terms of being "aliens as strangers in the world" and "needing to be conscientious citizens in it" (1 Pt 2:11-17). As Stott concludes his elaboration:

We cannot be totally 'world-affirming' (as if nothing in it were evil), nor totally 'world-denying' (as if nothing in it were good); we need both and we particularly need to be 'world-challenging', recognizing its potentiality as God's world and seeking to conform its life increasingly to his lordship (Stott 1999:30).

As it will be developed further, to "co-labour with [Jesus Christ] in establishing shalom" is the challenge that African churches and their members should take seriously (Hunter 2010:229). The Hauerwasian proposal points more to the responsibility of the church as light of the world

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<sup>40</sup> Hunter (2010:228-9) adds the following biblical references: Mi 2:1-2; Is 3:11; 5:20, 23; 10:1-2; 19:20; Ps 1:17-18; 9:9, 12:5.

(world antithesis) but less as salt of the world (world affirmation) because of its sociology based on the distinctiveness of Christian and the church as *alter civitas*.

However, the Christian integrative worldview implies a more thorough and nuanced sociology for Christian socio-political involvement. Its correlative overarching biblical story offering four perspectives (creation, fall, redemption and consummation) described earlier can be translated into four significant verbs: “to remain,” “to come out,” “to renew” and “to anticipate.” The first three perspectival verbs are suggested by Frederic de Coninck (1992:1-3). The outcomes of the fall require Christians to come out from those living in enmity with God and to be critical about all the structures of their societies. At the same time, Christians should not forget that the world is also God’s creation and a world not abandoned by God; thus, while being critical they also need to remain in the world and collaborate with non-Christians in their various spheres of activities. Jesus’ incarnation and work of redemption demonstrates that the God who sent Him in the world has saved and conquered the world and is working for its restoration or renewal. Christians as Jesus’ disciples are called to participate in this work of transformation (De Coninck 1992: 18-20, 158, 169-71). Though De Coninck considers only the three first verbs, Christian social ethics needs to include the call for anticipation in order to be comprehensive (Grenz 1997:273-4). There is a *telos* for the redeemed creation: the eschatological community with God, a world of perfect *shalom*. Christians in their words and deeds should live and work according to the anticipation of this *telos*. As Grenz (1994:794) points out:

As Christians we may join with others in seeking to facilitate true community on a variety of levels — including the political, societal, and familial, in addition to the ecclesiastical. Wherever people are promoting wholesome relationships in the midst of a fallen world, Christians should be providing active assistance, knowing that we are thereby engaging in kingdom work.

However, while the call for anticipation refers to “The already” of God’s kingdom, there is still the history’s goal as “Not Yet.” Thus Christians ought to be always aware that the eschatological community, God’s kingdom, will be fully established as a gracious act of the providential God and not through violence or human efforts (Grenz 1994:796).

#### **8.4.3.3. The church as agent of moral discernment and action**

Hollinger lists nine modes of Christian influence in the wider society (2002:256-71). On reflection, Hauerwas would recommend five, namely individual impact, evangelism, Christian relief, and Christian alternative institutions, and above all, Christian embodiment and non-violent resistance. Because of his reluctance to support a direct social involvement, Hauerwas would find less suitable the following modes: lobbying, political parties or political

groups, cooperation with non-Christian groups, as well as prophetic pronouncements (*RA*:81; *PK*:101; *WRA*:16; *CET*:149-67; cf. Thomson 2003:52). However, African churches should feel free to use a vast array of modes of social influence in their quest for the *shalom* of all. In many situations, “there is the need for wisdom and discernment. Christians always need to give careful attention to how their efforts are communicating the moral vision and analyze any secondary, unintended consequences of the methods employed” (Hollinger 2002:269-70).

Hauerwas’s vision of the socio-political involvement of the church and its correlative formation of church members could not unequivocally be embraced as the ideal and appropriate vocation of the churches in an African pluralist context, where Christians live with people from various ethnic, racial or religious backgrounds. Being a contrast model to the world, the colony of “resident aliens” on earth whose real citizenship is in heaven, hence an emphasis on character formation of church members in view of their role as faithful witness in the larger society, is a necessity for African churches. However, this responsibility of being a visible virtuous community cannot be given a special status in comparison with other modes of direct socio-political involvement. Thus, Hauerwas’s paradigm concentrates on church’s social responsibility as the light of the world while Jesus’ teaching also insists on the co-operation with non-Christians — being the salt of the world — for the fight against corruption and the betterment of the wider society (Mt 5:13-16).

African churches’ socio-political engagement and moral formation should be based on the conviction that the Trinitarian God is the Lord of every sphere of creation and the human life. As a result, the church and its members must be characterized by a faithful presence in all the spheres of public life. Also, Christians must fulfil all their social responsibilities without secularization and each must undertake her or his work as a vocation. Practically, Christians should not consider themselves as Christian and politician, Christian and civil servant, Christian and doctor etc., but rather as Christian politician, Christian civil servant, and Christian doctor, etc. African churches must add to the “social service”, the “social action” that seeks to transform the unjust structures of society (Stott 1999:15). This quest for justice or God’s *shalom* for all requires Christians to “cease being passive spectators and, instead, become political activists, conscientious voters, and political leaders” (Kinoti 1994:82). The responsibility of the pastors, teachers and other leaders in the church is not only to form members for a virtuous social life inside the community, but also to train and equip them to be relevantly involved in this quest for God’s *shalom* of all. For that reason, African churches must be agent and community of moral discourse, discernment, deliberation and action (Reuschling 2008:111; Birch & Rasmussen 1989:133-40). Using all the available sources of moral knowledge and wisdom, they will have to initiate careful collective reflection on socio-



economic and political plights and urgent moral concerns. African churches have to be committed to being prophetic voices or the voices of the voiceless, performing public theology and endeavouring moral persuasion in the wider society. Bishops' pastoral letters or denominational public letters are commendable initiatives of this kind; but because of the huge illiteracy and low level of education of church members, they must not be only issued by leaders without a collective effort and study from the communities at the base (De Gruchy 1995:171; Birch & Rasmussen 1989:133-7) Thus, the church as institution is to be prepared to take a well-informed public stand when its Christian faith, justice or righteousness for all requires it; under such circumstances it can recommend a common Christian or public action, providing that it "should not enter the political field without necessary expertise" (Stott 1999:17).

#### **8.4.4. Extended moral formation**

The essential aspects of Hauerwas's proposal on the extended church moral formation in the spheres of the family, the school and the seminary as well as in suffering and healthcare have been endorsed for an African context in Chapter Seven (Section 7.4). Indeed, African churches should embark on moral formation as discipleship to help Christians become faithful witnesses in all their respective sectors of activities. As Hunter (2010:226) well summarizes:

Beyond the worship of God and the proclamation of his world, the central ministry of the church is one of formation; of making disciples. Making disciples, however, is not one more programme [...]. Formation is about learning to live the alternative reality of the kingdom of God within the present world order faithfully. Formation, then, is fundamentally about changing lives.

The extended formation should embrace all the sectors of life. African churches should also embrace other strategic spheres of modern public life such as business, the media, sports and leisure. In all these spheres Christians should work without a spirit of secularization and with a sense of calling. In this perspective, African churches have to emphasize the alignment of the "cultural or creation mandate with "the great commission." To quote Hunter (2010:236) again: "When people are saved by God through faith in Christ, they are not only being saved from their sins, they are saved in order to resume the tasks mandated at creation, the task of caring for and cultivating a world that honours God and reflects his character and his glory." The Christian calling should not be confined to the church, the school, and healthcare; but it is to be enlarged to all sectors of activities including businesses, media, arts, sports and socio-political organizations. Christians in African churches should be formed to reflect the biblical image of being filled with God's knowledge and spiritual wisdom and understanding,

pleasing God in every way and bearing fruit in every good work (Col 1:9-10; Hunter 2010:227).

### **Concluding remarks**

African churches need more than the Hauerwasian particularist character formation. Their moral formation should stress the development of character and conscience through discipleship — aiming at an initial conversion to Christian faith followed by a lifelong process of social, emotional, economic and religious conversion — and the acquisition of moral insights, emotions and skills. This paradigm of moral formation is based on a Trinitarian ethic which reflect “the nature and actions of the Triune God of the universe” and an integrative Christian worldview that includes Christian doctrines, narratives (in particular the overarching biblical story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation) and rituals and facilitates the evaluation of Christian ethical approaches and the critical engagement with secular and non-Christian theories. This paradigm addressing the communal, individual and social ethical needs in the African churches seems to be a more viable and contextual proposal than the one presented by Hauerwas. Without explicitly referring to the promising insights from either Hauerwas, Geertz or the neo-Calvinist thinkers, which this kind of moral formation incorporates, Hunter in a nutshell offers a very illuminative and overall vision of this constructive paradigm when he states that:

The task of formation at any time, but not least that is adequate to a time such as ours, is not an easy task. It requires wisdom, discernment, hard work, and the active guidance of the Holy Spirit in it all. Yet when a vision of the renewal of all things is embodied in the church — when reflected in a coherent and common *weltanschauung*, when expressed in a communal narrative that forms the church’s collective memory and identity, when shared in rituals that define a common practice, when enacted in lives that are models of faithfulness in vocation in the world, and when expressed in relationships within which one finds encouragement and accountability — the formation of disciples fit for any calling and any service will unfold as a natural expression of its common life (Hunter 2010:237).

The communal narrative of the church *par excellence* is the overarching biblical story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. In this current intermediary eschatological time between redemption and consummation, the triune God through the Holy Spirit is active in the church community, the individual Christian and the society — the strategic domains for moral formation in African churches. Created as *imago Dei*, Christians are called to mirror God’s actions in every sphere of Christian life. With regard to the church community itself, the African churches’ efforts should, among other priorities, be directed to their contributions to make the church a locus of spiritual and moral formation *par excellence* through discipleship. With regard to the individual, the significance of community initiatives towards personal encounter with God, lifelong process of conversion and the development of character and

conscience cannot be overlooked. With regard to the society, the “desire to mirror God’s love mandates Christian involvement in social issues, including the quest for justice in its many forms” and motivates them to attempt to “transform social structures that work against God’s loving purposes” (Grenz 1997:262). Indeed, moral formation in African churches should not be reduced to the church being a paradigmatic, visible virtuous community and an *alter civitas*. The biblical metaphors of salt and light call the African churches to embark on the implementation of God’s vision of *shalom* for all present in his creation, though hindered by the fall, but reaffirmed through redemption and will be fully realized at the consummation. In this current intermediary eschatological time, a sound sociology guiding the relations between Christians and non-Christians in the quest for the *shalom* for all should be undergirded by an ethic of collaboration, an ethic of critical solidarity, an ethic of transformation and an ethic of anticipation respectively corresponding to the perspectives of creation, fall, redemption and consummation (De Coninck 1992:1-3; Grenz 1997:273).

## **Chapter 9: CONCLUSION**

### ***Introduction***

Three important tasks have been performed so far throughout the previous chapters. The first is the analysis of the proposal of Stanley Martin Hauerwas with its American socio-cultural background in view (Chapter Two to Chapter Five). The second task is the sketch of the socio-cultural and religious features of a typical sub-Saharan African context where Christianity is the predominant religion (Chapter Six). Thus, assessing the appropriateness and relevance of the Hauerwasian proposal for this context is the third task (Chapter Seven). The last and fourth task is the presentation of the significant elements of a constructive proposal on moral formation which, at the same time, incorporates the promising aspects and eludes the inadequate aspects of Hauerwas's proposal and attends to the significant ethical challenges of the churches in Africa. The present and last chapter (Chapter Nine) underwrites the critical dimensions of the work undertaken so far through the summary of the exposition of Hauerwas's proposal in this dissertation and the gist of its contribution to the discussion on the interplay between ecclesiology and ethics. In addition, the two last sections respectively describe the limitations of the dissertation and the possibilities for further research.

### **9.1. Summary of the exposition of Hauerwas's proposal**

The main concern of the present qualitative research has been to attempt to provide a constructive proposal for church moral formation designed for an African pluralist context where Christian worldviews conflict with both African traditional and (post)modern worldviews. At the same time, such a biblically sound, theologically and ethically coherent and contextually relevant proposal ought to culminate in an adequate approach and a typical programme of moral formation for African churches in this particular context.

Rather than starting from scratch, the research has turned to the proposal of Hauerwas, Methodist theologian and communitarian ethicist, one of the most prolific and "influential theologians writing in the USA today" (Wells 2013:406). As stated in the first chapter, interest in Hauerwas's work in South Africa has been demonstrated since the 1980s and has led to almost a unanimous conclusion: his work on virtue, character and community bears promising aspects for moral formation in an African context (e.g., Richardson 1994:89-101). His paradigm on social ethics, largely rejected by South African theologians (De Villiers

2012:762-4; Koopman 2002:38-9), has however been endorsed by the Ugandan theologian Katongole (2005:25; 2011:135-92).

The present qualitative research has combined the virtues of interpretivism or hermeneutics and critical theory coupled with the abductive (deductive and inductive) and interdisciplinary strategies for its methodological approach. It has endeavoured to extensively examine Hauerwas's corpus on moral formation. The bibliographical sources used include Hauerwas's relevant books, essays and articles on moral formation; secondary sources on this topic; relevant theological, philosophical and psychological resources on moral formation or cognitive development; and sources on the American and African socio-cultural and religious contexts. All this methodological apparatus has helped to analyse and assess the appropriateness and relevance of Hauerwas's proposal for an African pluralist context where Christianity competes for allegiance with both traditional African religions and (post)modern outlook.

A careful examination of his voluminous work crafted during his forty years of scholarship has revealed that an ecclesial ethic — or *church ethics* as termed by Duncan Forrester (1997a:97) — undergirds his proposal on moral formation. Although it should be taken as whole, the Hauerwasian ecclesial ethic includes theological and ethical insights which can be enfolded in four broad categories, namely virtue ethics, narrative ethics, community ethics and the Christian embodiment social ethics or neo-Anabaptist social ethics (see Chapter Four). Thus, the moral formation championed by Hauerwas consists of a character formation based on the priority of being over against doing, habituation and imitation (virtue ethics); identity formation through the community's narratives and traditions (narrative ethics); discipleship through the church community's practices and way of life (community ethics).

The Hauerwasian proposal of a "particularist" character formation is the outcome of Hauerwas's family and religious background, personal laborious intellectual journey and social critique. Thus, his proposal, an accurate reflection on American moral life, bears the marks of his lower middle-class bricklayers' family, rejection of Texan racial discrimination, and reaction to an Evangelical Methodist early upbringing, as well as his education at Southwestern University and most importantly at the University of Yale. Also his academic work at institutions of various affiliation — Augustana College (a Lutheran institution), University of Notre Dame (a Roman Catholic university), Duke University (a Methodist university) and the Kennedy Center for Bioethics — has greatly influenced his account of moral formation through an "ecumenical" or eclectic theological ethic (See Chapter Three).



As a result, Hauerwas's virtue ethic reflects his contribution to the recovery of the ethics of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Instrumental to Hauerwas's account of virtue have been Alasdair MacIntyre's conception of virtue ethics and his critique of Enlightenment project and modern ethics, Murdoch's aesthetic ethics and Charles Taylor's communitarianism and anti-secularism. Hauerwas's account of narrative ethics results essentially from his commitment to post-liberal theology. Within this school he has gained insights on scriptural narrative coupled with non-foundationalist, intratextual, communitarian, historicist and ecumenical stances developed by Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, James McClendon and John Milbank. He has also been deeply influenced by two forefathers of this school: Karl Barth with his emphasis on ecclesiology-ethics relationship and church's witness as well as his repudiation of theological liberalism and its apologetical mode; and Ludwig Wittgenstein through his philosophy of language and anti-foundationalism. The crafting a community ethic has led Hauerwas to resort to the resources of the Methodist emphasis on sanctification and perfection, Roman Catholic sacramentalism and Anabaptist social critique and discipleship.

## 9.2. Contribution

It seems useful to describe the contribution of the present work to theological ethics through three stages. As a critical appropriation of Hauerwas is the key concern of the present work, it is necessary to begin with a critical appraisal of his proposal before spelling out the gist of our contribution. Equally important is the brief comparison of the Hauerwasian proposal with the constructive proposal laid out to highlight their convergence and dissimilarity.

### 9.2.1. Critical appraisal of the Hauerwasian proposal

Central to Hauerwas's proposal is his intimate and bold conviction that ethics, whether Christian or secular, is traditioned, storied and community-based and contextual (*RA*:101-2; *PK*:17-24, 117; *HR*:228). Interestingly for Critical Theory, for Hauerwas there is no universal ethic, but only a qualified one since "the very nature and structure of ethics is determined by the particularities of a community's history and convictions" (*PK*:1). Moreover, endorsing the MacIntyrean tenet of "ethics as sociology," he holds that "[n]o ethics is formulated in isolation from the social conditions of its time" (*VV*:48; MacIntyre 1984:23).

Accordingly, the Hauerwasian proposal is first and foremost a response to American socio-political and religious ethical challenges. These challenges derive from the side-effects of American exceptionalism through the American Dream, the American Creed and the

disestablishment of religion which have generated a CLD culture. This culture fuels individualism, consumerism and autonomous life. It is also “a culture of death” causing suicide, criminality, violence as well as militarism and wars, and advocating abortion and euthanasia. This culture induces pluralism, secularism, moral relativism, privatization of religion and has distorted Christianity into a civil religion. The moral life in the churches reflects the divide of the wider society: political and religious conservatives clash with liberals over controversial issues of sexuality, marriage, and family values as well as religious and moral education in public schools, and the place and role of religion in public debate (See Chapter Two).

Hauerwas’s virtue, character or visional ethic is meant to curb his perceived lack of formation of virtuous people in CLD America as people are being lured into the pursuit of happiness fostered by the American proposition. His narrative ethic stands as a corrective to fundamentalist literal, grammatico-historical conservative or critico-literary Mainline Protestant interpretations of the Bible as source of moral knowledge. In addition, narrative theology discards the apologetic theological mode of liberal theology and advocates the Barthian view of theology as discipline of the church. Both his narrative and community ethics target natural law and creation ethics, prized respectively in Roman Catholic tradition and Protestant theology. In Hauerwas’s assessment, they dilute Christian ethics into human ethics or a minimalist ethic. Hauerwas’s ecclesial ethic is also meant to curb an understanding of Christian faith limited to assent, intellectual adherence to beliefs or doctrines without a corresponding performance or Christian life noticed mostly in Protestant (Mainline and Evangelical) circles. At the same time, the Hauerwasian ecclesial ethic alludes to individualism, consumerism and moral relativism fostered by CLD culture and an Enlightenment cultural background with corresponding views on the church membership and ethical theories. Seen as a voluntary association, the church cannot expect a faithful membership and committed loyalty. The universal ethical theories, like deontological and utilitarian modes based on the choice and decision-making of an unnumbered autonomous subject, become the widely praised ethical theories. Of note, the Hauerwasian ecclesial ethic is also an intended response to cognitive moral development theories like the one of Kohlberg. In particular, “the church as a social ethic” paradigm is levelled at American churches’ and Christian social strategies characterized by an exceptionally vibrant socio-political mobilization labelled under the Yoderian designation of “Constantinianism,” the subservience of the churches to America, an idolatrous nationalism and the reduction of Christianity to a civil religion.

Should African churches follow the Hauerwasian approach on moral formation? The answer is that a wholesale endorsement of this proposal could not be an appropriate option. Only a critical and selective appropriation could be beneficial to African churches. Indeed, the Hauerwasian approach includes some promising aspects to be applied in any socio-cultural context. Africa is now in a transitional situation of dialogue between African traditional morality and Western worldview influences (Kinoti 1999:73). However, to be attentive to this situation requires the rejection of some elements of this proposal, which might be relevant in the American context. Moreover, some other elements seem to be inadequate in both the American and African contexts.

Hauerwasian particularist character formation incorporates several valuable modes of moral education. In an allusion to Van der Ven's seven modes in moral education, it must be said to the Hauerwasian proposal's credit that it integrate education for character — which is in itself the most efficient mode of moral education — with other relevant modes, namely discipline, socialisation, transmission and emotional formation (Van der Ven 1998:35). Although it deservedly repudiates the individualistic and autonomous mode of value clarification, it fails to fully acknowledge the significance of cognitive development which is part of conscience formation or moral development (Connors & McCormick 1998:147-9). Hauerwas is among the ethicists advocating that “moral formation *is* spiritual formation,” to borrow from Reuschling (2008:124-5). His view of “worship is ethics” or “worship and liturgy are morality” (*JGC*:154, 157) and the imitation of Jesus through local saints which is among his key concepts of moral formation is very thoughtful and appealing for African churches. Equally promising for overcrowded African churches are his perspectives on discipleship through the metaphor of apprenticeship and his vibrant call for a church discipline of accountability for all (leaders and members) that are at the core of his approach.

In the theological and ethical transition of Africa, it goes without saying that Hauerwas's ecclesial ethic offers valuable insights to curb the deleterious impact of modernity, post-modernity and globalization (e.g.; individualism, moral relativism, and secularism, and hedonism in urban areas or among educated people). Also, elements of particularist character formation are not absent in Africa. To mention only the well-known African maxim, “It takes a village to raise a child,” that is a telling example of the large convergence to be found between Hauerwas's approach and African ethics. Yet, there is more, if one begins with conversion as a lifetime process in Hauerwas's proposal and the African ethno-philosophical notion of the normative concept of personhood and to extend the list to the social nature of the self, the community as locus of moral formation, the moulding

and shaping of communal identity, and the moral authority of leaders or wise persons.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, most importantly is the use of narrative ethics as a traditional approach of moral formation through myths and legends, stories, songs, proverbs, riddles and wise sayings and rituals (Kunhiyop 2008:10-5). All these elements of convergence constitute valuable points of contact for implementation of Hauerwas's proposal in an African context.

However, this very convergence requires that the church's task of moral formation attends to the inadequate aspects of both African ethics and Hauerwas's proposal. In other words, the uncritical and non-selective implementation of the Hauerwasian communitarian proposal can be counter-productive in African churches vividly influenced by the communalistic and humanistic aspects African ethics. For instance, in the African churches, the Hauerwasian approach could potentiate the latent negative side-effects of African ethics or its distortions. Thus, despite the Hauerwasian pacifist stance, his approach could run the risk of exasperating the predicament of the African churches made up of authoritarianism, indoctrination, divisions, individual social irresponsibility, racial and ethnic discrimination, etc. Of note is that these distortions often culminate in social injustice and violence in the wider society.

Surprisingly for a Protestant theologian, Hauerwas has fully endorsed the Roman Catholic doctrine of mediation and some pre-Vatican II tenets like the rejection of justification by faith through grace (*IGC:62*), and salvation as engraftment in the church (*IGC:8*), and conversion as becoming a member of the church and performing its practices (*AC:107*). This includes his view on Biblical interpretation reflecting the patterns of "the teaching church and the learning church" (Curran 1999:14). As Siker (1997:123-5) observed, against the *solus* of the Reformation (*sola gratia*, *sola scriptura*, and *sola fide*) Hauerwas seems to posit *sola ecclesia* with the church as the interpretive community *par excellence*. Rightly, his proposal emphasizes the notion of conversion and sanctification as a process; but it does not fully take into account the dynamics of salvation including also personal conversion through faith and repentance as an individual response to the Gospel, justification through faith and the link between Christian perfection and glorification, let alone the biblical truth that the Church is not the eschatological community.

More problematic is Hauerwas's advocacy of Anabaptist social critique and its corresponding ethic. While the violence and coercion of the state is sufficiently denounced, the subtle violence of the church through patriarchy, racial and ethnic discrimination are not given the deserved attention (Stout 2004:156; Woodard-Lehman 2008:315). Also, added to

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see subsection 7.2.3.3.

his over-determination of the doctrine of the church is an insufficient account of pneumatology. The centrality of the theology of the cross over-emphasizes Christological and eschatological pacifism and the need by remembrance for the Christian community. However, it neglects the empowerment of the post-Easter community by the Holy Spirit to pursue Christ's redemptive work of Christ and the creational "vision of shalom" for all despoiled by the Fall (Hunter 2010:228). The association of MacIntyrean communitarian ethic and Yoderian radical separation church/world has led to the affirmation of a "Purity From" paradigm of church engagement with the wider society or culture.

Designed for a CLD culture praising individualism, solipsism, autonomous choice and decision-making, and universal ethical theories, the Hauerwasian proposal, intended to be a corrective to this state of affairs seems to be characterized by dualist tendencies with an overemphasis of the first term of each dualist pair of terms to the expense of the second. In particular, this seems to be the case for "being/doing"; "virtue/principles (norms)"; "identity/action"; and "heteronomy/autonomy"; as well as "character/conscience (decision-making)"; "communitarianism/individualism" and "particularist/universalist". A similar observation of apparent dualism could be made with regard to the more theological categories of "narrative/doctrine" and "church/world." Since, the Hauerwasian proposal is not a totally adequate answer to the challenges of moral formation in African churches, the constructive proposal set forth has attempted to lessen the dualist leanings found in his approach.

## **9.2.2. Towards a constructive proposal**

In an attempt to draw from the promising aspects of Hauerwas's proposal and dealing, at the same time, with the inadequacies of this proposal with an African pluralist context in view, the suggested proposal consists in making disciples within the church community through Christian character and conscience formation. As described below, this formation is rooted in a Trinitarian ethic and an integrative Christian worldview.

### **9.2.2.1. Christian character and conscience formation**

Rather than being a "particularist character formation" in its essence, the suggested constructive proposal has been termed "Christian character and conscience formation." It is "Christian" and not "particularist," as it is aimed at making use of all the resources of moral wisdom and knowledge available, not only those of a given local church community but also those of other communities and other sources of moral knowledge and wisdom as well. The



proposal is about character primarily formed in the Christian community and through personal actions but also shaped by membership of other communities to whom individual Christians belong (national, neighbourhood, racial, ethnic, professional, sportive or recreational or other communities). The resort to “conscience” is about the clear indication that the church community trains and equip Christians to make informed decisions and choices; thus, the church community renounces authoritarianism and indoctrination as modes of moral formation and shapes the moral judgment of its members for their responsible deliberation.

Put in tandem “character” and “conscience” underwrite the assumption that “our choices and decisions are both *expressive* and *formative* of our character” (Connors & McCormick 1998:147; emphasis original). This kind of formation deals with character as it values the significance of being and communal identity for the Christian moral life. Yet it also equally values moral action, as the self-evident effect of Christian character. Because of the pervasive influence of communalism in African settings, character formation is to be coupled with conscience formation; if the former seeks community, virtues and communal identity, the latter is to direct attention to individuality, moral judgment and decision-making. Character and conscience formation ought to endow the moral agent with a communal identity and a sense of discernment, transform his or her moral judgement, and help the moral agent to choose or decide responsibly though not as a mere autonomous subject but as a member of his or her given community (Ciorra & Keating 1998:21).

The tandem character-conscience also reflects the ambivalent character of Christian ethics (e.g., Trinitarian ethic), being at the same time particularist and universalist, by incorporating into the Christian moral life the sound or positive elements of moral wisdom from other Christian communities and the ones of culture. As such, the task of moral formation is viewed as “ecumenical.” The local church ought not to see itself as an enclave in the extreme sense of the Hauerwasian *polis* or *colony*; rather it is the local community of the national church, its affiliated denomination and its large Christian communion. Obviously, the local community ought to share its resources and seek the human, material and other resources needed for moral formation. In addition, its openness should go beyond its Christian communion in enhancing the moral upbringing of its members. While emphasizing the elements of its own tradition, the church community ought not to neglect the sound resources from other traditions or Christian denominations and those of Christian and non-Christian organizations.

### 9.2.2.2. Trinitarian ethics

Rather than being grounded on the church community, the present proposal is rooted in the Trinitarian God. To alter the Hauerwasian formulation used in the context of family ethics (CC:174), the present proposal considers that “to be a viable [enterprise of moral formation, the local] church requires a community beyond itself, which is [the transcendent community of the Triune God]”.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the present proposal resorts to a Trinitarian ethic, not only to an ecclesial ethic, like the Hauerwasian approach, which essentially includes the insights of virtue/character ethics, narrative ethics, community ethics and Christian embodiment. By so doing it remains open to other sound sources of moral wisdom and knowledge, whether Christian or secular. Although the canonical Scriptures are the sovereign authority or the primary source of moral wisdom (provided that the community is Fundamentalist/Evangelical or not), tradition, *raison*, and experience could not be neglected in moral teaching, deliberation and action. To form its members, the church community ought not to discard the resources from secular moral theories and religions — provided that all wisdom, identified as such through a sound integrative Christian worldview, is God’s.

Speaking of the social Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Spirit as the ultimate foundation the resulting Trinitarian ethic is also a way of affirming that the visible Church, in God’s design and plan, is not the Kingdom of God or the eschatological community but its sign and foretaste and draws the necessary and full implications of this fundamental Christian truth. First, the church should always be cognizant of the fact that at times it has sadly lived not even close of this truth. Second, the Lutheran maxim of *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously just and sinner) reminds the church that individually and collectively we are a mixed people, the Christian is at the same time justified and sinful and the church is made up of righteous people and sinners. Although reformed, “the church needs constant renewal and transformation (*ecclesia semper reformanda*) (Nürnberg 2007:122). Consequently, “[t]he Christian faith is characterized by the same ambiguity as other convictions and thus subject to the same critique” (Nürnberg 2007:150). The enterprise of moral formation ought to be undertaken with not triumphalist leanings but with humility and grace.

With the striking social plights of Africa in view, the Trinitarian ethic distances itself from the widespread paradigms of social ethics found in the USA and their sponsored churches in Africa. As accurately described by James Hunter (2010:213-9), they fall into three

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<sup>2</sup> Hauerwas exactly says, “to be a viable moral enterprise, family requires a community beyond itself, which is the church” (CC:174); this statement has already been quoted in the subsection 5.3.1.

categories: “Defensive Against”, “Relevant To” and “Purity From” respectively in connection with theological and political conservatism; theological liberalism and progressive Evangelicals; Neo-Anabaptists, traditionalist Catholic communities and conservative Evangelical denominations and Pentecostals. Although being a paradigmatic community, the church ought also to be socially responsible for the transformation of wider society, by enhancing God’s *shalom* in it. Collectively and individually, Christians ought to resort to all the relevant modes of Christian social involvement provided they remain faithful to their faith. By so doing, they participate in the redemptive work initiated by the Father and accomplished by the Son, the Resurrected Jesus Christ who endowed the Church with the power of the Holy Spirit. This redemptive work targets individual and collective sin and sinful structures of the wider society. Therefore, the Hauerwasian paradigmatic statement of “the church does not have, rather than is a social ethic” ought to be altered to the following statement: *the church should not only be but also have a social ethic.*

### **9.2.2.3. Integrative Christian worldview**

An integrative Christian worldview is the second main foundation of this constructive proposal. There are in theology and social sciences, several understandings of the concept “worldview” (Conradie 2014:1-12). The qualifier “integrative” witnesses the cognizance of this variety and the combination of some relevant understandings of the concept. The suggested Christian integrative worldview encompasses three components and their various elements: the propositional component (Christian doctrines and moral theories); the narrative component (Biblical narratives and community historical narratives) and the ritual or practical component (worship, practices, the policy and the way of life Christian community). The incorporation of biblical narratives reflects the determinative structure of the grand narrative, the Biblical story found in the OT and NT encapsulated in its four aspects of creation, fall, creation, redemption and consummation. This relevant structure constitutes a sound and accurate framework for the assessment of Christian approaches and secular ethical theories and is helpful in Christian moral deliberation and decision-making (Wolters 2005:8-9; Curran 1999:45-7). In view is the imperative that Christians should develop a sound worldview in contradiction with the alternative worldview (e.g., the African worldview, the modern and postmodern outlook, etc.) which compete for allegiance in Africa.

#### **9.2.2.4. Contextual Christian character and conscience formation**

The moral regeneration and redress of Africa require reforms at the level of the church community, the individual and the wider society. Consequently, moral formation in the church is to be congruent with this contextual need and it has to cover the communal, individual and social ethical dimension.

The communal dimension of moral formation is the reflection of both Trinitarian ethics and integrative Christian worldview. It illuminates the necessity for moral formation as part of Christian discipleship by the means of worship and systematic teaching and even through the whole life of the churches in Africa. It emphasizes the task of the church as a bearer and transmitter of tradition and as a community of virtues shaping an ethical vision and a Christian communal identity.

The individual dimension stresses the role of the church as a community nurturing conscience and fostering individual responsibility through committed membership in the church community. Here, moral formation is attentive to the fact that Christians gain moral knowledge and wisdom, emotions and skills not only from the church but also from other communities and they have to apply them in their actual contexts and situations. In an African context, Christians cannot experience sound and mature character and conscience if they are not taught systematically and developmentally and if African churches do not intentionally endeavour to curb nominalism and foster two types of conversion — the initial conversion through faith and repentance and conversion as a lifelong process targeting all the domains of people's lives.

Christian discipleship also entails sharing a vision of *shalom* for all which challenges the church community and its members to be the salt and the light of the world. Therefore, African churches should be agents of moral discourse, discernment, deliberation and action forming their members and co-operating with other Christians and non-Christians as well for social transformation in Africa.

### **9.3. Limitations of the dissertation**

As stated earlier, the present constructive proposal targets all the local churches serving in at least twenty-two majority Christian countries of SSA region. Indeed the proposal has followed the pattern of Hauerwas's proposal characterized by his eclectic theological position underlying his claim of being neither a Protestant nor a Catholic theologian but the theologian serving the "church catholic" or global church (*PK:xxvi*). To be sure, limiting the

scope of the work to a specific national church or churches of the same denominational affiliation in a local province would have increased the accuracy of the proposal and the modus operandi suggested for moral formation; that is, attending to the particularities of local churches, namely their affiliation (whether Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches in their denominational variety or African Initiated Churches.) and their particular doctrines, practices and location as well their moral challenges could lead to a more detailed and contextual proposal.

In addition, speaking of three categories of worldviews (e.g., Christian worldviews competing with traditional African and Western modern and postmodern worldviews) is certainly an oversimplification of the religious African landscape. In SSA, local churches in a majority Christian country are to some extent exposed to the influence of Islamic faith; within certain provinces, one even finds a strong concentration of Islamic believers. In countries like South Africa, with a relatively great variety of religions including those from Asia, Christianity also competes with their corresponding worldviews. Taking into account the variety of worldviews could have also bring about additional insight to the constructive proposal.

#### **9.4. Possibilities for further research**

The limits identified in the proposal open the doors for further research. To begin, it seems critical to design a programme of moral formation in the light of insights gained through this broad constructive proposal with reference to a particular denomination serving in a specific province. Such a study ought not to overlook the socio-cultural background and non-Christian religious influences experienced by the church members.

Surely, it is useful to undertake an empirical research about moral formation (or malformation) practices in a specific local church or denomination before designing a programme of moral formation. Practical aspects of a contextualized proposal on moral formation subsequent to an empirical inquiry of this kind could undoubtedly be of a great help to African churches.

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