On Hauerwas and the Possibility of a More Robust Evangelical Theological Ethics

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It should be said at the outset that the significance of Stanley Hauerwas for the field of theological ethics is hard to overstate. Indeed, it has been observed that Hauerwas 'is perhaps North America's most important theological ethicist […]. No one in the field […] can afford to ignore him. Hauerwas is certainly the most prolific and comprehensive theological ethicist alive.'[1] Another scholar has noted that in the world of theological ethics Hauerwas 'has become a name in every discussion, a required footnote in every exploration, an acknowledged dimension in every analysis.'[2] And yet, despite his towering presence and long-term influence, it seems that within the ethical conversations of the Evangelical community Hauerwas has largely fallen upon deaf ears. Though Roman Catholics and postliberal Protestants have found much to commend, critique, and incorporate in Hauerwas's work,[3] it seems that Evangelicals have largely ignored his contributions to the field of theological ethics.[4] Though there is the occasional minority report,[5] it is clear that Evangelicals (particularly of a more conservative bent) have failed to sufficiently grapple with Hauerwas and his influence upon the landscape of Christian ethics.

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1 J. Berkman, 'An Introduction to the Hauerwas Reader', *The Hauerwas Reader*, eds. J. Berkman and M. G. Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 3.

2 S. Wells, 'Introduction to the Essays', *Faithfulness & Fortitude: In Conversation with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), pp. 7-8.

3 We could cite C. Curran's *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States: A History* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008) for the former and *God, Truth and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. by L. G. Jones, R. Hütter, and C. R. V. Ewell (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005) for the latter.

4 Note, for instance, his conspicuous absence from standard Evangelical textbooks on ethics such as J. J. Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 4th edn (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015).

5 One example is D. P. Gushee and G. H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

It is the proposal of this paper that Hauerwas is a figure Evangelicals need to become more familiar with. Though we will certainly need to approach his work with critical discernment, it seems to me that there is much to be gained from dialogue with Hauerwas and that some of his contributions should be incorporated into how we as Evangelicals 'do ethics.' It will thus be the task of this paper to explore the work of Hauerwas from an Evangelical perspective, seeking to determine in what ways his insights might serve to bolster Evangelical ethics, assisting us in honing and maximizing the distinctive elements that we bring to the table of theological ethics. I will particularly argue that Hauerwas's more confessional approach, centred on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as witnessed to in the church, is one that lends itself quite nicely to the Christ-centredness and prophetic protest of Evangelicalism. This compatibility, I will argue, can enable us to hear from Hauerwas what we have often been unwilling to receive from Roman Catholic and postliberal voices, namely the centrality of the church (a Roman Catholic distinctive) and the significance of virtue ethics (a postliberal distinctive) for a more robust Evangelical theological ethics. I will critically assess potential pitfalls of Hauerwas's work and then conclude by briefly exploring the issue of euthanasia as a case study to envision what Evangelical theological ethics informed by Hauerwasian insights might look like. Ultimately my hope is that engagement with Hauerwas might help Evangelicals toward overcoming what Michael Sleasman has called 'the bifurcation of dogma and praxis [… of] theology and ethics,'[6] a bifurcation that Hauerwas has been quick to observe and lament as well.[7]

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF HAUERWAS

We must begin this project by drawing out what is distinctive about Hauerwas and thus what makes him a unique and crucial voice for Evangelicals to engage. Hauerwas is a Protestant most often associated with the postliberal school, though his work is largely understood as bucking any particular label, whether it be postliberal, liberal Protestant, or Evangelical. But as I will argue, it is his ability to interact with and draw from diverse theological traditions while transcending the boundaries typically erected between them that enables Hauerwas to make a unique contribution to contemporary Evangelical ethics.

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6 M. J. Sleasman, *On Visions and Virtues: A Theological Proposal for a Spesiential Virtue Theory*, PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, IL: Proquest, 2008), p. 6.

7 S. Hauerwas, 'How "Christian Ethics" Came to Be', *The Hauerwas Reader*, p. 47.

As a prime example of this capacity, we can note that Hauerwas has spent much of his career engaging in dialogue with Roman Catholics, even teaching at the University of Notre Dame for thirteen years. Though a Protestant by tradition (specifically a Methodist), there is indeed much resonance between Hauerwas's ethics and the well-established tradition of Catholic moral theology. Thus Hauerwas in his primer on Christian ethics can answer the question 'Do I write as a Catholic or a Protestant?' by saying 'The answer is I simply do not know.'[8] But the work of Charles Curran has served to make the distinction between Hauerwas and Catholic moral theology a bit more distinct than Hauerwas admits, noting that the Catholic tradition disagrees with Hauerwas's approach to ethics in at least two significant ways: 1. it recognizes a universal morality applicable to all people,[9] and 2. it has traditionally seen itself as directly addressing the world and working together with all others for a more just human society.[10] Curran acutely summarizes Hauerwas's contrast with Catholic moral theology when he notes that, for Hauerwas, 'the Church has an interest in what happens in the world and in the broader society, but it fulfills its role by bearing witness to the story of Jesus in its own life and not by directly working with others to change society.'[11] Indeed, as we put Hauerwas alongside a natural law proponent such as Romanus Cessario[12] or the universalizing tendencies of the papal encyclicals,[13] we see that there are in fact areas where Hauerwas departs significantly from the Catholic fold (departures that we as Evangelical Protestants are likely to join him in). And Hauerwas himself has made those departures explicit, arguing, for instance, that 'the abstractions of "nature" and "grace" in particular have distorted how ethics has been undertaken in the Catholic tradition.'[14]

But in some ways an even greater contrast exists between Hauerwas and the liberal Protestants with whom he is often in dialogue. This is perhaps best seen in Hauerwas's essay 'How "Christian Ethics" Came to Be,' where he sets out a brief history of the discipline and particularly argues

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8 S. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. xxvi.

9 For corroboration on this disagreement see J. D. Charles, *Retrieving the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 141-9.

10 Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States*, pp. 159-60.

11 Ibid., p. 159.

12 R. Cessario, *Introduction to Moral Theology* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. 69-99.

13 Take, for example, Benedict XVI's *Caritas In Veritate*, addressed not just to Catholics but to 'all people of good will.'

14 Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 55.

that it was only in the modern period that ethics became problematic. Hauerwas notes that the Enlightenment project, and specifically the work of Kant, had a devastating impact on the cohesiveness of theology and ethics (which in the patristic, medieval, and reformation periods were still fully integrated). He specifically makes the claim that 'Theology, at least Protestant liberal theology, became ethics, but the ethics it became was distinctively Kant's ethics dressed in religious language.'[15] Hauerwas thus largely follows Barth in critiquing Protestant liberalism for departing from distinctively Christian convictions that make Christianity unique and even scandalous, convictions such as God's Trinitarian nature and Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead. But this critique also carries over into ethics, for Hauerwas sees the bifurcation of orthopraxy and orthodoxy and the abstraction/isolation of ethics as a distinct discipline as ultimately the legacy of Protestant liberalism, claiming that 'notions such as "the good" or the "Categorical Imperative" are far too abstract to give the guidance that can come only from the concreteness of God's command as found in Jesus Christ.'[16] His dissonance with Protestant liberalism is also clear in his essay 'On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological,' where he attributes some of the difficulties of keeping Christian ethics distinctively Christian to the heritage of Protestant liberalism. He states ultimately that the contribution of Protestant liberalism to the development of Christian ethics 'in many ways […] failed to represent adequately the resources for ethical reflection within the Christian tradition.'[17]

But as we examine Hauerwas's relationship to Evangelical Protestantism, here too we see signs of discontent and dissonance. Indeed, it is not just Hauerwas's more liberal stance on Scripture or his adamant pacifism that make him a figure Evangelicals largely shy away from; the distance also stems from a decidedly different approach to ethics. Charles Curran notes this difference well when he states that Hauerwas opposes both the 'individualistic liberalism' and the 'emphasis on quandary ethics' that can be found quite often at the centre of Evangelical ethics as it is done today.[18] Indeed, even a cursory examination of some standard textbooks on Evangelical ethics reveals their generally individualistic and quandary-oriented nature. For instance, Feinberg and Feinberg's *Ethics for a Brave New World*[19] dedicates only the opening chapter to prolegomena

[15] Hauerwas, 'How "Christian Ethics" Came to Be,' p. 45.

[16] Ibid., p. 49.

[17] Hauerwas, 'On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological', *The Hauerwas Reader*, p. 70.

[18] Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States*, pp. 158-9.

[19] J. S. Feinberg and P. D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, second edit. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

and ethical theory before diving into thirteen chapters dedicated to distinct ethical issues facing Christians in our cultural moment. John Jefferson Davis's *Evangelical Ethics* gives away its quandary-orientation in the subtitle alone, 'Issues Facing the Church Today.' Like Feinberg and Feinberg, Davis dedicates a single chapter to preliminary questions and spends the remainder of the book exploring isolated ethical issues such as abortion and euthanasia. In contrast, Hauerwas adamantly denies that 'the central task of morality [is] to help us resolve difficult moral quandaries,' and he refuses to hold that 'ethics can be done in abstraction from any concrete community.'[20]

THE SITUATEDNESS OF HAUERWAS

Another factor we must consider in preparing to hear from Hauerwas is his situatedness within the larger field of Christian ethics. As a theologian/ethicist who seems to be at home with neither Catholics nor liberal Protestants nor Evangelicals, we must ask where it is that Hauerwas belongs in the discipline and what distinctive emphases he brings to the table. In answering these questions there is no greater place to turn than his essay 'On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological.' There Hauerwas sets forth his understanding of the development of Christian ethics, once again underlining the concerning nature of the Enlightenment project and the problematic efforts by liberal Protestants (following Kant's lead) to 'save theology by isolating its essence' leaving morality to become 'the "essence" of religion, but ironically […] understood in a manner that makes positive religious convictions secondary.'[21] As Hauerwas traces out this development through the work of Schleiermacher, Rauschenbusch, the Niehbuhrs, Ramsey, Fletcher, and Gustafson it is clear he is none too pleased with the peculiar situation in which contemporary theologians find themselves, one where 'they [wind] up finding it increasingly difficult to articulate what, if anything, Christian ethics [has] to contribute to discussions in ethics.'[22] Hauerwas's summary is that, as theologians 'sought to avoid the more traditional particularist claims of Christianity' so that they could remain actors on an increasingly secular stage, the 'dominant modes of philosophical ethics,' by which he primarily means individualist and quandary orientations, 'received little challenge from the theological community.'[23] For Hauerwas, 'the task of Christian ethics, both socially

[20] Hauerwas, 'On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological,' p. 72.
[21] Ibid., pp. 55-6.
[22] Ibid., p. 66.
[23] Ibid., pp. 68-9.

and philosophically, [became] not revision but accommodation,'[24] and, in his estimation, this was simply unacceptable.

So where does this leave Hauerwas? As he readily acknowledges, 'I am certainly aware that the position I have developed is not in the recent mainstream of Christian ethical reflection.'[25] Yet Hauerwas is not without a tradition of his own; indeed he draws explicitly on the work of John Howard Yoder and more implicitly on the work of Karl Barth. Hauerwas's concern to keep theological ethics theological grows out of a more confessional turn, one which emphasizes (following Barth and Yoder both) that we must not downplay our particularistic theological tradition and distinctives, but instead, as Curran summarized it, we as Christians 'must be true to our own story, thereby bearing witness to the world.'[26] Indeed, for Hauerwas, ethics is inherently part of the larger theological task and thus is best done by the church, but only if the distinctiveness of the Christian confession is maintained. Only then is theological ethics truly robust because it is genuinely *theological* and able to criticize, rather than capitulate to, the dominant philosophical paradigms of the day.

It is particularly Hauerwas's confessional turn that I think makes him such a palatable figure for Evangelicals to engage. The fact that he wants to remain grounded in the distinctiveness of the Christian story and confession as he proceeds with his ethical program is something with which many Evangelicals can resonate (and that makes him more appealing to them than many other, especially liberal Protestant, voices). Yet his consistent, prophetic critique of the current state of Christian ethics is something that is quite distinct from what is emerging out of most Evangelical circles, where it seems that the individualist and quandary orientations inherited largely from Enlightenment concerns still dominate. Thus I believe that Evangelicals are not only *amenable to* hearing from Hauerwas; they also *need to* hear from him, and that in two primary areas concerning their theological ethics: the centrality of the church (combating the largely individualistic tendency) and the significance of virtue ethics (combating the gravitation toward quandary ethics).

THE CONTRIBUTION OF HAUERWAS

First, then, we must examine Hauerwas's proposal of a more communal orientation for our theological ethics. At times Hauerwas has stated his position quite straightforwardly, saying things like 'I have argued […]

[24] Ibid., p. 69.

[25] Hauerwas, 'Why the "Sectarian Temptation" is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson', *The Hauerwas Reader*, p. 97.

[26] Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States*, p. 159.

that the church matters not only for how we as Christians live but how we do theology and ethics,'[27] and even more simply, 'I like to think that theology is a communal activity.'[28] His interlocutors have observed that 'Hauerwas has redirected Christian ethics away from what is always right for everyone to what is currently faithful for the Church.'[29] Indeed, Hauerwas's elaboration on how to do theology/ethics in community and his proposal that our ethics should be done by the church (with confessional convictions intact), in the church (as a community that sharpens, corrects, and forms one another), and for the church (i.e. its implications are particularly for those who are a part of the community of faith) are among his most distinctive contributions to contemporary ethical dialogue. The church is radically central in his conception of theological ethics, so much so he can claim that Christian ethicists 'will not say [anything] significantly if they try to disguise the fact that they think, write, and speak out of and to a distinctive community.'[30] Hauerwas thinks that Christian ethics can't even proceed without 'the recognition of the narrative structure of Christian convictions for the life of the church,' going on to note that 'the basis of any Christian social ethic should be the affirmation that God has decisively called and formed a people to serve him.'[31] It is this church-centredness that guides his most substantial presentation of his theological ethics, *A Community of Character* and *The Peaceable Kingdom*. In the first he argues that the church is a story-formed community which ought to serve as a 'distinct society with an integrity peculiar to itself […] capable of hearing the story of God we find in the scripture and living in a manner that is faithful to that story.'[32] In the second he goes on to show how this story-formed community is 'a servant community […] and a community of virtues,' a perspective that is essential in his mind to any attempt to define *Christian* ethics.[33]

The claim being made here is that Hauerwas's church-centredness is a particularly important corrective for Evangelicals to engage and incorporate when it comes to their theological ethics. There is an increasing resonance in Evangelical circles with the catholic (universal), communal

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27 S. Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 4.

28 Wells, 'Introduction to the Essays,' p. 6.

29 Ibid., p. 5.

30 Hauerwas, 'On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological,' p. 73.

31 Hauerwas, 'Reforming Christian Social Ethics: Ten Theses', *The Hauerwas Reader*, p. 111.

32 S. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 1.

33 Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 102-3.

nature of Roman Catholic ethical reflection (think the papal encyclicals), and this is accompanied by an increasing realization that the strength of Catholic moral theology is indeed a weakness within our own tradition. Many Evangelicals are longing to do ethics and to consider moral problems out of a more communal orientation, and this is where I think Hauerwas can be a tremendous help to us, pointing us back to the church as the story-formed community where we can experience a deep-seated unity with other believers, those who have gone before us and those who labour alongside of us. The unity emerges out of the *particularity* of our convictions (e.g. that '*Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures') as the testimony of Scripture shapes and bolsters them ('Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*.'). Essentially, Hauerwas presses us in just the right way by asking: what contribution does our ecclesiology makes to the task of theological ethics (if any)? And in calling us to give an answer to that question, he prompts us to envision the church not as an aggregate of individual Christians making isolated moral decisions, but as a theological community that embodies, together, a distinctive and formative Christian social ethic.

Secondly we must examine Hauerwas's invitation to incorporate virtue ethics into our theological ethics. It should be stated from the outset that, for Hauerwas, this emphasis is intimately connected with church-centredness, for the church is the Scripture-formed community in which virtuous people are cultivated. He claims that 'an individual's character is only intelligible as it draws its substance from a social context,'[34] and thus we should realize that, for Hauerwas, the problems of individualistic liberalism (addressed by his ecclesial-centredness) and quandary ethics (addressed by his virtue ethics) are closely related. Indeed, before Hauerwas argued that the church was central to Christian ethics as a 'community of character' he argued that, 'Christian ethics is best understood as an ethics of character since the Christian moral life is fundamentally an orientation of the self.'[35] Part of Hauerwas's potent critique of many Christian ethicists (including not a few Evangelicals) is that they have largely succumbed to the presuppositions of their secular colleagues by assuming 'that questions of the "right" are prior to questions of the "good," that moral principles [are] more fundamental than virtues […] and that the central task of morality [is] to help us resolve difficult moral

[34] S. Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations into Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 2.

[35] S. Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1975), p. vii.

quandaries.'[36] Hauerwas wants us to consider that there is a more ancient and, in his opinion, a more biblical way of approaching ethics, one that focuses on character formation, the development of the virtues, the cultivation of the good, and a concern for the ultimate *telos*. For Hauerwas, virtue ethics is a viable system that breaks down the prevalent orthodoxy/orthopraxy dichotomy and, in its Christian manifestation, offers a genuinely biblical way of thinking about ethics as the process of holistic character formation rather than a specific method for solving moral dilemmas. Though this system originated in the West with the ancient Greeks, Hauerwas argues in *Christians among the Virtues* that 'Christianity is not a continuation of the Greek understanding of the virtues, but rather the inauguration of a new tradition that sets virtues within an entirely different telos in community.'[37]

There seems to be the ring of truth to Hauerwas's characterization of contemporary ethics (with Evangelical ethics largely providing no exception) as primarily centred on deontological concerns about 'the right' rather than teleological concerns about 'the good.' This is an unfortunate emphasis when one considers the preponderance of ethical issues and moral quandaries which we must study and even master if we are to operate under a model that emphasizes right method over formation of the good. Simply consider the innumerable advances in the arena of reproductive technologies alone and one quickly realizes that new ethical dilemmas emerge with every new study and technical capacity. Would it not be better if we sought to incorporate certain aspects of virtue ethics so that we might focus more on how we can be better formed into the kind of people who can approach any emerging ethical issue with a prudence, charity, and depth that no amount of methodological proficiency or technical study could prepare us for? This is the vision which Hauerwas asks us to consider, one that undoubtedly speaks to certain blind spots of Evangelical ethics today and is palatable to the Evangelical mind because of its grounding not in Aristotle or even Aquinas, but rather in the Scriptures which call us to be formed more and more into the image of Christ.

THE CRITIQUE OF HAUERWAS

As Hauerwas has acknowledged many times, he is certainly not without critics. Probably the most consistent critique levelled against him has been that his more confessional turn, with its church-centredness and

[36] Hauerwas, 'On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological,' p. 71.

[37] S. Hauerwas & C. Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), p. 63.

particularistic orientation, is ultimately sectarian in nature. This was the primary criticism brought by influential Christian ethicist James Gustafson. Hauerwas responded in kind with his 'Why the "Sectarian Temptation" is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson,' where he argued that Gustafson's criticism is a dismissal much in the vein of Richard Niehbuhr's rebuke of the 'Christ Against Culture' category, unfairly applying Christendom standards to a movement that is raising questions about those very same standards. Ultimately Hauerwas's point is well taken: a prophetic voice raising issues with the fact that Christian ethics has become compromised by the project of Enlightenment liberalism ought not to be dismissed simply because it is raising questions about the good of Enlightenment liberalism and its compatibility with the particularist claims of Christianity.

Perhaps more substantive is Joseph Kotva's criticism raised in *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*. Kotva, while very thankful for Hauerwas's work, is concerned that he has not gone far enough in providing 'an explicitly Christian case for virtue ethics [… failing to] show how virtue ethics connects with and expresses Christian convictions.'[38] Indeed, as I read Hauerwas on this point it seems that he is guilty of the very accusation he made against Gustafson: assuming compatibility of a system (in this case, virtue ethics) with Christianity rather than actually arguing for it. But as Kotva's work goes on to show, thankfully there is a pretty compelling case to be made for Christianity's compatibility with virtue ethics, one which Hauerwas may have assumed but never systematically set forth. This relates to a third critique we might make of Hauerwas, namely that his large-scale suspicion of method often leads him to not be as methodologically rigorous as he should be. Jones and company can note that 'we find ourselves frustrated by his apparent lack of focus or attention to such matters as historical detail and contextual specificity.[…] Engaging Hauerwas is frustrating because he spends far more time writing occasional essays than he does displaying the coherence of his thought.'[39] This sentiment echoes the criticisms of Michael Sleasman[40] and Samuel Wells,[41] and indeed, it is largely recognized that Hauerwas would have done well to consolidate his sprawling set of essays on theological ethics into a more systematic and cohesive expression. Thankfully there are some attempt-

[38] J. K. Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996), p. 50.

[39] L. G. Jones, R. Hütter and C. R. V. Ewell, 'Engaging Stanley Hauerwas', *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*, p. 7.

[40] Sleasman, *On Visions and Virtues: A Theological Proposal for a Spesiential Virtue Theory*, p. 30.

[41] Wells, 'Introduction to the Essays,' p. 8.

ing to do just that on his behalf,[42] making Hauerwas's prophetic critique of Christian ethics today and particular vision for what Christian ethics ought to be all the more accessible and clear, especially to any Evangelical theologians who might be listening.

THE APPLICATION OF HAUERWAS

Here we can only briefly examine one ethical issue as a case study for what Evangelical ethics informed by Hauerwasian insights might begin to look like. Let's take the moral issue of euthanasia, a hot-button topic addressed in virtually all Evangelical ethics textbooks. A standard approach to the issue in the literature today would revolve around almost exclusively deontological concerns of what is morally right and what is morally permissible. Generally this would begin with a definition of key terms and then move on to an examination of legal background, reflections on relevant biblical passages, arguments for and against the practice, and a definitive conclusion intended to direct someone faced with a difficult end-of-life scenario. Now contrast that with the approach that Hauerwas takes in his essays 'Memory, Community and the Reasons for Living: Reflections on Suicide and Euthanasia' and 'Must a Patient be a Person to Be a Patient?'

Hauerwas notes there the folly and futility of trying to proceed by determining whether the person who is dying has 'yet passed some line that makes him a person or a nonperson.' 'Rather,' he insists, 'we care […] for him because he is Uncle Charlie.'[43] Thus Hauerwas argues that our approach to ethical issues, rather than being guided exclusively by pre-quandary analysis and philosophical determinations about the state of human personhood, should actually be much more guided by the relational bonds which exist between the parties involved, bonds which grow out of the community of which we are all a part. He claims that we should seek to understand how euthanasia 'relates to the story that forms the Christian community,' coming to realize that the practice is 'incompatible with and subversive of some fundamental elements of the Christian story.'[44] For Hauerwas, euthanasia is ultimately ambiguous when approached as a moral quandary; it can only be properly considered within the framework of someone's communal story (which, in the Chris-

[42] See, as just one example, M. Coffey, *The Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas: A Very Concise Introduction* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2009).

[43] Hauerwas, 'Must a Patient Be a Person to Be a Patient', *The Hauerwas Reader*, p. 600.

[44] Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations into Christian Ethics*, p. 102.

tian case, is a story where all God-created life is valued). Thus, for Hauerwas, what is vital is not methodologically training individuals what the right answer to each particular manifestation of the euthanasia scenario is. Rather, the all-important task is cultivating people, and even communities, of character who will act virtuously no matter the particulars of the quandary they encounter because they have been formed by the story of the gospel found in Scripture and are seeking more and more to embody the lordship and servanthood of Christ which that story sets on full display.

It seems to me that this perspective helpfully fills in much of what is lacking in Evangelical ethics today, causing us to re-evaluate our individualistic tendencies and quandary orientation to pursue ethics a bit more holistically. For instance, we see in the work of Scott Rae's *Moral Choices*[45] what a more well-rounded Evangelical ethics informed by Hauerwas's confessional, communal virtue ethics could look like. Rae's work wonderfully incorporates more communal and church-historical perspectives while dedicating four opening chapters to introductory issues, including a substantial section on virtue ethics. This is well on the way to an ethical orientation which balances deontological concerns about 'the right' with teleological concerns about 'the good,' asking not just 'what should we do?' but also asking, in a more foundational way, 'what sort of people are we becoming?' and 'how do we become people who more and more imitate Christ?'

It is for this reason that I hope more Evangelicals will engage Hauerwas as an important conversation partner and even corrective for Christian ethics today, one who rightly insists that Evangelical ethics will only be sufficiently robust when it is robustly *theological*, pressing into our particular confession derived from Scripture (i.e. the gospel) and our distinctively Christian convictions that the church is central rather than peripheral to our ethics and that who we are and are becoming in Christ is far more important than developing a methodology for navigating every (multiplying!) ethical quandary under the sun. By heeding Hauerwas's insights (while remaining aware of his shortcomings) we will be on the way to bringing the best of Evangelical theology to the table of Christian ethics and persisting in the all-important task of keeping theological ethics theological.

[45] S. Rae, *Moral Choices*, 4th edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018).