

The Hauerwas Reader

Stanley Hauerwas

Edited by John Berkman and Michael Cartwright

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2. On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological (1983)

A distinctive programmatic history of the development of “Christian ethics” in the United States in the twentieth century, this evaluation of Rauschenbusch, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, Ramsey, and Gustafson attempts to answer the following question: How did Christian ethics go from “Christianizing the Social Order” (a Rauschenbusch book title) to “Can Ethics Be Christian?” (a Gustafson book title)? Against tendencies of Protestant liberalism, Hauerwas advocates a more confessional approach to theological ethics, one centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as witnessed to in the church. Principal influences are Barth and Yoder. Although the history offered is “Protestant,” Hauerwas sees analogous developments in recent Catholic moral theology.

I. The Ethical Significance of Saying Something Theological

“Say something theological” is a request, as Gustafson notes, theologians frequently hear.¹ Such a request, often made in a more oblique manner, may be entirely friendly, as the inquirer—possessed by an archaeological curiosity in still living antiquities—simply wants an example of a religious relic. More likely, however, the request is really a challenge: “Say something theological in a way that convinces me that you are not talking nonsense.” Such a challenge thus assumes that anyone who wants theological language to be taken seriously—that it is essential for telling us about how things are or ought to be—bears the burden of proof.

This is particularly the case in matters having to do with ethics. For even though at a popular level many continue to assume there must be a close

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1. James Gustafson, “Say Something Theological,” 1981 *Nora and Edward Ryerson Lecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 3. Gustafson notes that he has the presence of mind to say “God.”

connection between religion and morality, this is not the dominant philosophical view. Indeed, the persistence of this popular assumption only testifies how hard it is to kill certain habits of thought. For the assumption that there is a strong interdependence between religion and morality is but the remains of the now lost hegemony of Christianity over Western culture. That many still assume religion is essential to motivate us to do the good is an indication, however, that no satisfactory alternative has been found to replace Christianity, as worldview and cult, in sustaining the *ethos* of our civilization. We find ourselves in the odd situation in which many of our society's moral attitudes and practices are based on Jewish and Christian beliefs that are widely thought by many to be irrelevant or false. This situation does not provide an argument for the continued viability of religious practices, but only an indication that as a culture we still have not fully faced the implications of generating a genuine secular morality.

Our culture's persistent failure to find an adequate substitute for Christianity has presented theologians with a temptation almost impossible to resist. Even if they cannot demonstrate the truth of theological claims, they can at least show the continued necessity of religious attitudes for the maintenance of our culture. Of course these theologians think it unwise to continue to use the explicit beliefs derived from the particular historic claims associated with Christianity (and Judaism) as the basis of a secular morality. Such beliefs bear the marks of being historically relative and contingent. If religion is to deserve our allegiance, so the thinking goes, it must be based on what can be agreed upon universally. Thus, theologians have sought, at least since the Enlightenment, to demonstrate that theological language can be translated into terms that are meaningful and compelling for those who do not share Christianity's more particularistic beliefs about Jesus of Nazareth. In short, theologians have tried to show that we do not need to speak theologically in order to "say something theological," as other forms of speech are really implicitly religious. After all, hasn't talk of God always really been but a way to talk about being human?²

Even though this understanding of the theological task is relatively recent,

2. This development is as true of Roman Catholic as of Protestant theology. See, for example, Thomas Sheehan's review of Karl Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith*, in which he applauds Rahner's attempt to carry out Feuerbach's program of transforming theology into anthropology. Of course, the odd thing about Sheehan's enthusiasm for this move is that Feuerbach assumed that to do so was the agenda of atheism, not theism. "The Drama of Karl Rahner," *New York Review of Books*, 4 February 1981, 13–14.

there is ample precedent for this endeavor in Christian tradition. As early as the second century, Christians felt their faith contained enough in common with the nonbeliever to legitimate an apologetic strategy. Moreover, such a strategy seems required by a faith that claims a strong continuity between the God who redeems and the God who creates. Thus Christians should not be surprised to find their specific religious beliefs confirmed by the best humanistic alternatives.

Without denying some continuity between recent theological strategies and some modes of past Christian theology, it is equally important that we see the fundamental differences. The apologist of the past stood in the church and its tradition and sought relationship with those outside. Apologetic theology was a secondary endeavor because the premodern apologist would never allow questions of unbelief to order the theological agenda. But now the theologian stands outside the tradition and seeks to show that selected aspects of that tradition can no longer pass muster from the perspective of the outsider. Such theologians try to locate the “essence” of religion in a manner that frees religion from its most embarrassing particularistic aspects.

Ironically, the success of this strategy has only served to underwrite the assumption that anything said in a theological framework cannot be of much interest. For if what is said theologically is but a confirmation of what can be known on other grounds or can be said more clearly in nontheological language, then why bother saying it theologically? Of course, it may still be useful to keep theologians around to remind us of what people used to believe, or to act as a check against the inevitable perversities of those in our culture who persist in the more traditional forms of religious practices and belief, but theology as such can no longer be considered a constructive or even serious intellectual endeavor. Furthermore, while contemporary theologians may have important insights concerning general human and moral issues, that is but a testimony to their individual intelligence and insight rather than to the significance of their particular theological convictions or training.

For example, much of the recent work in “medical ethics” has been done by theologians, but their prominence in that area has been purchased largely by demonstrating that they can do “medical ethics” just as well as anyone who is not burdened by a theological agenda. As a result it is very hard to distinguish between articles in medical ethics written by theologians and those written by nontheologians except that often the latter are better argued.³

3. That is not to say that much of the work done by philosophers in medical ethics is free from

The fact that it has become hard to distinguish work done by theologians in ethics from that of philosophers has only reinforced the impression that theologians have nothing interesting to say as theologians. Theologians and religious ethicists avidly read philosophers; the compliment is seldom returned. There are signs, however, that philosophers are beginning to turn their attention to matters traditionally the province of theologians.

For example, many philosophers writing about ethics are beginning to challenge the assumption that ethics is best understood on analogy with law. For centuries Christian theologians discussed that question and at no time more intensely than the Reformation. That discussion had rich results, with Christian thinkers consistently maintaining that law is not sufficient to depict the Christian moral life.⁴ In a related manner many philosophers now challenge overly optimistic assumptions about humanity and moral rationality. Nowhere in modern literature have such assumptions been more decisively challenged than by Reinhold Niebuhr.⁵ Furthermore, some philosophers are now suggesting that ethicists must free themselves from their fascination with quandaries and rules, and pay more attention to the virtues and character. Again religious traditions provide rich resources for such an analysis, and some theologians, for example, James Gustafson, have developed well-argued accounts of ethics so understood.⁶ Yet each of these significant developments in theology has largely been ignored outside the theological community. Why is that the case?

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons is the sheer prejudice of many secular thinkers. They are simply ignorant of the disciplined nature of theological reflection and assume any reflection informed by religious claims cannot possibly be intelligible. But I suspect that there is a further reason, not so easily addressed, that is internal to how theological reflection about ethics has been done in our time: the lack of attention to the inability of Christian theologians to find a sufficient medium to articulate their own best insights for those who do not share their convictions. In order to understand why that is the case, it

difficulty. By "better argued" I mean it is more adept at working within the set paradigms of philosophical analysis. However I am by no means happy with those paradigms. For example, see my *SP*.

4. See, for example, Edward Long's fine article, "Soteriological Implications of Norm and Context," in *Norm and Context in Christian Ethics*, ed. Eugene Outka and Paul Ramsey (New York: Scribner's, 1968), 265–96.

5. In particular, see Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Self and the Dramas of History* (New York: Scribner's, 1955).

6. James Gustafson, *Can Ethics Be Christian?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

will be necessary to describe the development of Christian ethics during this century. For it is only against this historical background that we can understand the failure of Christian ethics to command attention, and furthermore, why that failure should not be perpetuated, since those convictions still offer a powerful resource for ethical reflection, even for those who find they are unable to envision and construe the world through them.

II. The Difficulty of Keeping Christian Ethics Christian: The Heritage of Protestant Liberalism

The very idea of Christian ethics as a distinct discipline is a relatively recent development.⁷ Of course, Christians have always had a lot to say about moral matters, but neither in their practical discourse nor their more systematic reflection did they try to make ethics a subject separable from their beliefs and convictions. The Church fathers did not write ethics *per se*; rather, their understanding of theology shaped their view of the moral life. Prior to the Enlightenment, the notion that there might be an independent realm called “morality” to which one must try to determine one’s relation religiously and theologically simply did not exist.

The story of the development of “Christian ethics” as a distinct field, at least in the Protestant context, has two different strands, one philosophical and the other more pastoral. The first begins in Europe, especially in Germany, where Protestant liberalism tried to save theology by isolating its essence, that is, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Immanuel Kant, the great exponent of this solution, maintained with his characteristically admirable clarity that “since the sacred narrative, which is employed solely on behalf of ecclesiastical faith, can have and, taken by itself, ought to have absolutely no influence upon the adoption of moral maxims, and since it is given to ecclesiastical faith only for the vivid presentation of its true object (virtue striving toward holiness), it follows that this narrative must at all times be taught and expounded in the interests of morality; and yet (because the

7. I am keenly aware of the inadequacy of the brief overview of the development of Christian ethics over the past century. Not only do I leave out of the account many of the main actors, even those I treat are not analyzed with the nuance they deserve. I hope soon to write a more adequate, book-length account that will do justice to this complex story. However, for present purposes I thought it worthwhile to tell the history in a somewhat contentious manner, since my interests are more systematic than historical. Moreover, I am certainly ready to defend the interpretive features of my account, even though I have not taken the time here to document them adequately.

common man especially has an enduring propensity within him to sink into passive belief) it must be inculcated painstakingly and repeatedly that true religion is to consist not in the knowing or considering of what God does or has done for our salvation, but in what we must do to become worthy of it.”⁸ For Kant, morality becomes the “essence” of religion, but ironically it is understood in a manner that makes positive religious convictions secondary.

1. *Rauschenbusch and the Social Gospel*

The other part of our story does not begin with such an explicit intellectual agenda, but involves a group of Protestant pastors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and their attempt to respond to the economic crisis of their people.⁹ Taking their bearings from the prophetic traditions of the Hebrew Scripture, these men challenged the widespread assumption that poverty was the fault of the poor. They preached against political and economic structures that they believed were the roots of poverty. They thought they had rediscovered an old truth—lost through centuries of Christian accommodation with the status quo—that the essential characteristic of the Christian religion is its insistence on organic unity between religion and morality, theology and ethics.¹⁰ For Walter Rauschenbusch, salvation consists in nothing less than “an attitude of love in which we would freely coordinate our life with the life of our fellows in obedience to the loving impulses of the spirit of God, thus taking our part in a divine organism of mutual service. God is the all-embracing source and exponent of the common life and good of mankind. When we submit to God, we submit to the supremacy of the common good. Salvation is the voluntary socializing of the soul.”¹¹

The “social gospel,” as we learned to call this movement, cared little for the development of Christian ethics as a reflective mode of discourse. The purpose of “Christian ethics” was to mobilize the energy and power of the church for social renewal.¹² Adamant in their opposition to all eschatologies that

8. Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. with an introduction by Theodore Greene and Hoyt Hudson (New York: Harper, 1960), 123.

9. C. H. Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940).

10. Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1945), 140.

11. *Ibid.*, 98–99.

12. *Ibid.*, 210. That does not mean that advocates of “the social gospel” were unsophisticated, for they were deeply influenced by Protestant liberalism, particularly the Kantianism of Albrecht Ritschl.

might justify passive Christian response to societal injustice, advocates of the social gospel sought “to develop the vision of the Church toward the future and to cooperate with the will of God which is shaping the destinies of humanity.”¹³

In the wake of the social gospel movement, serious courses began to be taught in American Protestant seminaries in Christian ethics—though they were often called “Christian sociology.” These courses tended to be primarily concerned with why Christians should be committed to social justice and this required analysis of the economic and social strategies that furthered that end. As a result, one of the central agendas of Christian ethics, still very much present, was a concern to make use of the social sciences for social analysis and action.¹⁴ As a result, many Christian ethicists became social scientists with a religious interest. Furthermore, this concern for social analysis meant that the primary conversation partners for most Christian ethicists were not philosophers but social scientists.

It was not long, however, before some of the more naïve theological and social assumptions of the social gospel began to be questioned, especially by historical criticism in biblical studies and post–World War I cultural pessimism. Regarding the former, the social gospel’s conviction that “the first step in the salvation of mankind was the achievement of the personality of Jesus”¹⁵ was rendered problematic by historical-critical claims that the Gospels do not portray Jesus “the way he really was.”¹⁶ Regarding the latter, the social strategy of the social gospel was called into question by the intractability of many social problems that resisted unambiguous solutions. In spite of their trenchant criticism of American capitalism, the social gospellers were committed to progressivist ideology and policies. They never doubted the uniqueness of the American experience or entertained any critical doubt about the achieve-

13. *Ibid.*, 224.

14. For example, in his fine article on one of the early social gospellers, Francis Greenwood Peabody, David Little observes that “like many of his contemporaries, Peabody recommended wide exposure to the methods of social science as the basis for sound moral action. Since the ethical aims of true religion and manifest patterns of social development were believed to be rooted in one and the same phenomenon, inductive empirical investigation of social life could only complement and enrich the moral task. He is very clear about this: ‘Ethics is finally social science and social science is ethics. *Ethics is the end of sociology*’” (“Francis Greenwood Peabody,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 15, no. 3 [July 1967]: 287–300).

15. Rauschenbusch, *Theology*, 151.

16. Thus the attempt of liberal Protestantism to free Jesus from past “schemes of redemption,” to base his divine quality not in metaphysical questions but on the free and ethical acts of his personality, ironically failed to meet the challenges of a critical approach to Scripture.

ment of the American ideal, which they saw as nothing less than the realization of the Kingdom of God. The only question was how to bring the economic institutions of American life under the same spirit of cooperation that American political institutions had already achieved. The primary difference between “saved and unsaved organizations” for the social gospel is that the former are democratic and the latter are autocratic and competitive. Their attempt to turn American business into worker cooperatives was but the continuing attempt to create the secure “saved institutions.”¹⁷

Though often more realistic and theologically profound than these aims suggest, it was clear that the movement started by the social gospel required not only a new social strategy, but also a new theological rationale.¹⁸ “Christian ethics” became the discipline pledged to find just that. The great figure representing this project was Reinhold Niebuhr, who began his long career as a social gospel advocate, became its most powerful critic, and was quite possibly the last publicly accessible and influential theologian in America. Niebuhr seemed to be saying something theological that was compelling to a wide range of people, including people in government, but, as we shall see, his accomplishment was fraught with ambiguity.

2. Reinhold Niebuhr’s “Neo-Orthodox” Criticism of the Social Gospel

Niebuhr’s criticism of the social gospel originally centered on his increasing dissatisfaction with its optimistic view of social institutions and change. His own experience as a pastor in Detroit during the great labor struggles taught him to distrust any idea that institutions qua institutions are capable of moral transformation, much less salvation.¹⁹ Influenced by Marx, he came to see the exercise of power and coercion as essential for achieving, not a “saved” society, but one that might be more relatively just.

Niebuhr’s theological transformation was at least partly the result of wrestling with the implications of this changed perspective on social action. Theologically, how can we come to terms with living in a world that might well require us to kill for a relative political good, and with the full knowledge that

17. Rauschenbusch, *Theology*, 112–13.

18. For a particularly able defense of Rauschenbusch, see Max Stackhouse’s, “The Continuing Importance of Walter Rauschenbusch” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 13–59, which introduces Rauschenbusch’s *The Righteousness of the Kingdom*.

19. Niebuhr’s reflections on his change of mind can be found in his *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic* (New York: Living Age Books, 1957). See also Niebuhr’s “Intellectual Autobiography,” in *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*, ed. Charles Kegley and Robert Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 1–24.

any achievement of some justice necessarily results in some injustice. Thus Niebuhr came to conclude that “the tragedy of human history consists precisely in the fact that human life cannot be creative without being destructive, that biological urges are enhanced and sublimated by demonic spirit and that this spirit cannot express itself without committing the sin of pride.”²⁰

Though by education a theological liberal, Niebuhr found the liberal progressivism with its optimistic understanding of humanity insufficient to sustain his social vision. He turned to that line of Christian theology represented by Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard, who emphasized humanity’s fallenness and the need for a redemption not of human making. What is needed to sustain the struggle for social justice is not, as the social gospel presumed, a grand idealistic vision, but the possibility of forgiveness which is necessarily a “moral achievement which is possible only when morality is transcended in religion.”²¹ Thus, for Niebuhr, Jesus’ cross represents the ultimate sacrificial love that will always call into question every social and political order. Such a cross is necessary to sustain moral action in an inherently unjust world, for only as it stands on the edge of history do we have the basis for a hope that does not result in either despair or utopianism.²²

Under Niebuhr’s influence, the task of Christian ethics came to be understood by many as the attempt to develop those theological, moral, and social insights necessary to sustain the ambiguous task of achieving more relatively just societies. Though Niebuhr understood himself to be making a decisive break with his social gospel forebears, in fact Niebuhr continued to accept the social gospel’s most important theological and social presuppositions. Like them he assumed that the task of Christian ethics was to formulate the means for Christians to serve their societies, particularly American society. His understanding and justification of democracy was more sophisticated, but like

20. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Scribner’s, 1941), 1:10–11.

21. Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Living Age Books, 1956), 201. It is interesting that Niebuhr’s stress on forgiveness as the hallmark of Christian ethics is not carried forward in his later work. Rather, his emphasis is almost entirely on self-sacrificial love. It is my hunch that Niebuhr was much closer to being right by focusing on forgiveness than love as more important for the systematic display of Christian ethics.

22. In his *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), Dennis McCann suggests that rather than providing a strategy for social action Niebuhr is best interpreted as trying to form a “spirituality” necessary to sustain political activity. That seems to me to be a particularly fruitful way to read Niebuhr, as it helps account for the lack of any conceptually clear connections between Niebuhr’s theological views and his strategic judgments.

the social gospelers he never questioned that Christianity has a peculiar relationship to democracy. For Niebuhr and the social gospelers the subject of Christian ethics was America.²³ They differed only on how nearly just such a society could be and the theological presuppositions necessary to sustain social involvement.

Niebuhr, far more than was seen at the time, continued to be essentially a liberal theologian. His emphasis on the sinfulness of humankind in his magisterial *The Nature and Destiny of Man* led many to associate him with the “neo-orthodox” movement of Bultmann, Brunner, and Barth. Yet Niebuhr never shared Barth’s theological rejection of liberalism as a basic theological strategy; he, like Bultmann, continued liberal theology’s presumption that theology must be grounded in anthropology. Thus, his compelling portrayal of our sinfulness, which seemed to function as a critique of liberal optimism, was in fact a continuation of the liberal attempt to demonstrate the intelligibility of theological language through its power to illuminate the human condition. In spite of Niebuhr’s personally profound theological convictions, many secular thinkers accepted his anthropology and social theory without accepting his theological presuppositions.²⁴ And it is not clear that in doing so they were making a mistake, as the relationships between Niebuhr’s theological and ethical positions were never clearly demonstrated.

It was becoming increasingly apparent that Christian ethics must be written in a manner that allowed, and perhaps even encouraged, the separation of ethics from its religious roots. Perhaps this seems an odd result for a move-

23. See, for example, Niebuhr’s *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Scribner’s, 1944) and *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribner’s, 1962). This perhaps helps explain the oft-made observation that Niebuhr paid almost no attention to the social significance of the church—for finally, in spite of all the trenchant criticism he directed at America, America was his church. Thus the criticism that failed to sustain his trenchant perspective in the last years of his life in some ways is misplaced, since it fails to note that Niebuhr from beginning to end was involved in a stormy love affair with America. In some ways the social gospelers were less accommodationist than Niebuhr in this respect; Rauschenbusch, in particular, assumed the necessity of the church to stand as a critic against American society.

The importance of America as the subject of Christian ethics can also be seen in the tendency of many Christian ethicists to think of ethics as a form of “American studies.” H. R. Niebuhr’s *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper, 1937) remains the classical text for this genre.

24. Niebuhr profoundly influenced such people as Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and many others. It is, perhaps, a mark of the instability of Niebuhr’s position that often both sides of a political issue, particularly in foreign affairs, can claim with some justice to be Niebuhrians.

ment that began by asserting the “organic unity” between religion and ethics, but it was a development that was a necessary outgrowth of the social gospel commitments. The social gospelers were able to make direct appeals to their religious convictions to justify their social involvement, because in the late nineteenth century they could continue to presuppose that America was a “religious” or even a “Christian civilization and country.” Niebuhr, more aware of our religious pluralism as well as the secular presuppositions underlying the American experience, attempted to provide a theological rationale for why Christians should not seek to make their theological commitments directly relevant for social policy and strategy. Though extremely critical of the Lutheran law–Gospel distinction, Niebuhr also drew extensively on the resources of that tradition, now reinterpreted in existential categories, to justify an understanding of justice and its social attainment that did not require any direct theological rationale.

Niebuhr’s views prevailed for no other reason than that they were more in accord with the changing social and religious situation in America. American society was increasingly becoming a pluralist and secular society.²⁵ As a result, Christian social ethicists felt it necessary to find ways in which their ethical conclusions could be separated from any theological framework. In the hope of securing societal good, the task of Christian ethics thus became the attempt to develop social strategies that people of goodwill could adopt even though they differed religiously and morally.

Though Niebuhr criticized the Catholic natural law tradition for “absolutizing the relative,” he nonetheless was a natural law thinker. Albeit Niebuhr’s understanding of natural law, through which justice was defined, involved “not so much fixed standards of reason as they are rational efforts to apply the moral obligation, implied in the love commandment, to the complexities of life and the fact of sin, that is, to the situation created by the inclination of men to take advantage of each other.”²⁶ In fact, Niebuhr’s understanding of the “law of love” as an unavoidable aspect of the human

25. Arthur Schlesinger documents this well in “The Political Philosophy of Reinhold Niebuhr,” in *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought*, 125–50. Schlesinger rightly notes that Niebuhr, the penetrating critic of the social gospel and pragmatism, ended up “the powerful reinterpreter and champion of both. It was the triumph of his own remarkable analysis that it took what was valuable in each, rescued each by defining for each the limits of validity, and, in the end, gave the essential purposes of both new power and vitality. No man has had as much influence as a preacher in this generation; no preacher has had as much influence in the secular world” (149).

26. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History* (New York: Scribner’s, 1951), 188–89.

condition was in many ways a powerful attempt to provide a natural theology that could make the cross intelligible as a symbol of human existence.²⁷

3. *H. Richard Niebuhr's Theological Critique of the Social Gospel*

If Reinhold Niebuhr's work resulted in an ambiguous account of Christian ethics, in many ways his brother's work proved to be a more decisive challenge for that task. While Reinhold Niebuhr's critique of the social gospel arose primarily from difficulties with its way of sustaining the social imperative, H. Richard Niebuhr was preoccupied with the theological difficulties that the social gospel had occasioned. Deeply influenced by Ernst Troeltsch, he was acutely aware that the social gospelers' attempt to move directly from their theological convictions to social strategies was fraught not only with social ambiguities but with theological difficulties. Moreover, he was increasingly doubtful of any position that assumed that God could be used to underwrite humanity's interests, even if those interests were most impressive.

Under H. Richard Niebuhr's influence it became the business of many Christian ethicists to find the most adequate conceptual means to explicate what kind of moral implications might follow from Christian convictions.²⁸ Thus, Christian theologians began to give more serious attention to what philosophers were doing, hoping they would supply just such conceptual tools. But the kind of philosophical ethics to which Niebuhr's students turned had exactly the opposite effect. They learned from those philosophical sources that there was an inherent problem in trying to move from theological claims to normative recommendations, for in doing so one commits the "supernaturalistic fallacy."²⁹ As a result, theological ethicists began to pay even less attention to positive theological claims and instead attempted to show that, formally, a theological basis for ethics was not inherently incoherent and, in

27. Niebuhr's stress on the sinfulness of man leads some to forget that for Niebuhr theology is still primarily anthropology. As a result Niebuhr never answered satisfactorily how the cross of Jesus is necessary for our adequately understanding why the cross is the necessary symbol of "the perfection of *agape* which transcends all particular norms of justice and mutuality in history" (*The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2:74).

28. For the best short introduction to H. R. Niebuhr's work, see James Gustafson, introduction to *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy*, by H. R. Niebuhr (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 6–41.

29. H. R. Niebuhr was not himself very taken with ethics done out of the analytical tradition, but instead was influenced more by the pragmatist tradition of Royce and Perry. However, a later generation of students, trained by Gustafson, turned increasingly to Moore, Ross, and Hare in attempts to think through the problems they had inherited from Niebuhr.

particular, that theological claims could underwrite antirealist and objectivist concerns.³⁰ In the hands of some, Christian ethics became but another form of metaethics. In the process, it became just as ahistorical as its philosophical counterpart.

That was certainly not a result that would have made H. Richard Niebuhr happy. Even though in his work Christian ethics was less an aid to action than an aid to understanding, he did not want Christian ethics to lose its theological rationale. On the contrary, his focus on the question "What is going on?" rather than "What should we do?" was an attempt to keep theological questions primary for ethical reflection. It was H. R. Niebuhr's task to show that the former question could only be answered adequately in theological terms. Thus, in *The Responsible Self*, he maintained that the central Christian claim is "God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as to respond to his action."³¹

For H. R. Niebuhr the problem was not how to secure justice in an unjust world, but rather how to account for moral activity amid the relativities of history. His theological project was to provide a theological interpretation of the relativity of our existence so that the knowledge of our finitude was relativized by our relation to a God who alone deserves our complete loyalty. While the task of Christian ethics for H. R. Niebuhr was theological, the ironic result was that his own theology made it difficult to keep Christian ethics Christian. For the very idea of "Christian ethics" suggested a far too narrow conception of God to do justice to the relativities of our existence.³²

While Karl Barth was certainly influential on H. R. Niebuhr, Friedrich Schleiermacher was even more influential. Niebuhr reacted strongly against the christocentrism of Barth and—equally importantly—shared with his brother Reinhold a faith in the liberal project of securing the intelligibility of theological discourse by demonstrating how it reflects as well as describes the human condition. Therefore, while differing deeply with his brother on particular theological issues, he remained essentially in the tradition of Calvin-

30. Arthur Dyck's enthusiasm for and theological justification of the "ideal observer" theory is a good example of this tendency. See his *On Human Care: An Introduction to Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1977).

31. H. R. Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 126.

32. For H. R. Niebuhr, Jesus is normative only as he "represents the incarnation of radical faith," which is faith that "Being is God, or better, that the principle of being, the source of all things and the power by which they exist, is good, as good for them and good to them" (*Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* [New York: Harper and Row, 1960], 38).

ism, as opposed to Reinhold's Lutheranism, but in many ways the structure of their theologies was similar. H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Responsible Self* was an attempt to analyze the inherent relatedness of human to human, human to nature, human and nature to God, who enters a covenant with his creation.³³

4. *Recent Developments in Christian Ethics: 1960–1980*

The recent history of the discipline called "Christian ethics" in the American context has largely been the story of the attempt to work out the set of problems bequeathed to us by the social gospel and the Niebuhrs. Since Vatican II, the other significant figure in the drama has been Roman Catholic moral theology. Roman Catholic moral theologians have increasingly made contact with their Protestant counterparts, hoping to learn how to put their natural law commitments in a more compelling theological framework. For their part, Protestant thinkers, struggling with the failure of their own tradition to develop nuanced arguments about particular issues, looked to the Catholic tradition of casuistry for help in thinking about such issues as marriage, abortion, and war. This tendency among Protestant thinkers was best represented by Paul Ramsey. For Ramsey continued to assume that the task of Christian ethics is to address the American body politic. But by Ramsey's time, there was no longer the hope of transforming the polity (as was hoped by the social gospelers), but merely the hope of sustaining that polity against the increasing onslaught of relativistic and consequentialist moral theories. While an heir of both Niebuhrs, Ramsey could not find an adequate framework for disciplined ethical argument in either the work of the brothers Niebuhr or in Protestant thought generally. To find arguments that, at least in principle, would be publicly acceptable, Ramsey looked to the Catholic tradition. Still, the influence of the Niebuhrs meant that Ramsey could not accept Roman

33. Thus he says,

Man responsive and responsible before nature, fitting his actions into those of nature; man responsive in political or economic or cultural society as responsible citizen; responsible businessman, responsible educator, responsible scientist, responsible parent, responsible churchman—such men we know and understand. But what ties all these responsibilities and responsibilities together and where is the responsible *self* among all these roles played by the individual being? Can it be located within the self, as though by some mighty act of self-making it brought itself into being as one "I" among these many systems of interpretation and response? The self as one self among all the systematized reactions in which it engages seems to be the counterpart of a unity that lies beyond, yet expresses itself in, all the manifold systems of actions upon it. In religious language, the soul and God belong together; or otherwise stated, I am one within myself as I encounter the One in all that acts upon me. (*The Responsible Self*, 122)

Catholic assumptions about the relative autonomy of natural law and morality. As a result, his work clearly manifested the tension inherent in the development of Christian ethics: namely, a concern to provide a theological account of the moral life while at the same time underplaying the significance of theology for purposes of public discussion.³⁴

A major context for Ramsey's perspective was the situation ethics debate of the 1950s and 1960s. Against Joseph Fletcher's advocacy of "act-agapeism" (a Christianized form of act-utilitarianism) as the most appropriate expression of Christian love, Ramsey insisted that Christian love must be "in-principled." Moreover, the principles he thought best expressed or embodied Christian love were very much like the traditional Roman Catholic prohibitions against unjust life-taking, lying, sexual misconduct, and so on. Thus Ramsey maintained that Christian ethics was best expressed in terms of deontological normative theories and should reject all forms of consequentialism.³⁵

While on one level it is hard to see any relationship between this agenda and that of the social gospelers, in many ways Ramsey continued that project. Though Ramsey did not promote the social activism that the social gospelers thought required by the "organic unity between religion and ethics," he did share their assumption that the primary subject of Christian ethics was to support and sustain the moral resources of American society.³⁶

34. The theological side of Ramsey's work was more apparent in his early work where he was emphatic that "natural law" must be transformed by love. See in particular his *War and the Christian Conscience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1961). Ramsey's shift to the motif of covenant fidelity as the central metaphor for Christian reflection also seems to have been accompanied with a greater appreciation for the continuity between the "natural" covenants we find in our lives and that which God has made with us. As a result he is able to proceed with much less direct appeal to theological warrants. See, for example, *The Patient as Person* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

35. Thus Ramsey argues that "Protestant Christian ethics is often too profoundly personal to be ethically relevant, if in this is included even a minimum of concern for the social habits and customs of a people. Ordinarily, we do not take Christian ethics with enough seriousness to illumine the path that men, women, and *society* should follow today. This suggests that only some form of rule-agapism and not act-agapism, can be consistent with the elaboration of a Christian's social responsibilities. No social morality ever was founded, or ever will be founded, upon a situational ethic" (*Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics* [New York: Scribner's, 1967], 20).

36. Moreover, like Reinhold Niebuhr he assumes that this project requires an account sufficient to underwrite a politics of realism in which we see that we may well have to kill in the name of a lesser evil; but unlike Niebuhr, Ramsey sought to provide, through a theological reinterpretation of the just war tradition, a control on realism's tendency to consequentialism. Ramsey's profound debt to Niebuhr can be most clearly seen in *The Just War: Force and*

As for what makes ethics Christian, Ramsey believed that the deontological commitments of our culture required theological convictions to be sustained. Therefore, in Ramsey's work in such areas as medical ethics, most of the theology can be done in the preface of his books. As a result, even many of those who are sympathetic with Ramsey's construal of the ethos of medicine in deontological terms see no reason why those deontological commitments require Ramsey's peculiar theological views about the significance of covenant love to sustain that ethos. Or again, many may well side with Ramsey against the act-utilitarianism of Fletcher, but see no reason why that debate involves theological questions, since it is simply a straightforward philosophical matter involving whether a coherent deontological or teleological normative theory can be defended. All the talk about love by both Fletcher and Ramsey is but an obfuscation of the issue.

Therefore, contemporary theologians found themselves in a peculiar situation. Having increasingly turned to philosophical sources to help them illumine the logic of their ethical commitments, they wound up finding it increasingly difficult to articulate what, if anything, Christian ethics had to contribute to discussions in ethics. What they failed to see was that the very philosophical sources from which they drew to clarify the nature of their normative claims made it difficult to suggest how religious convictions might challenge just those philosophical frameworks. Thus theologians assumed, along with their philosophical colleagues, that ethics must basically be about dealing with quandaries, the only question being whether Christian convictions are more basically deontological or teleological or some as yet unspecified combination of the two.

Thus, the distinctive nature of much of theological ethics in the 1970s continued to be shown not by the expression of any distinctive convictions, but rather in the sets of issues theologians addressed. By continuing to draw on the inspiration of the social gospel, theologians continued to be concerned about questions of social and economic justice, marriage and the family, the

Political Responsibility (New York: Scribner's, 1968). There Ramsey, like Niebuhr, argues that the failure of all peace movements is that they presume the illusion that force can be avoided in politics and as a result only increase the likelihood of war. In contrast the just war tradition influenced by the theological insights of Augustine rightly sees that war can never be fought for peace, but only for more relative just ends. Thus Ramsey argues the ethos necessary to control violence through just war principles must ultimately draw on religious presuppositions. For only if you think death is not ultimate power over life can you be willing to expose yourself to death and to kill others for the limited moral goods of political community.

status of the nation-state, that hitherto had tended to be ignored by the philosopher. Yet, with the work of John Rawls and the rise of journals such as *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (founded in 1971) the theologian could no longer claim even that mark of distinction. The only alternatives left seemed to be to retreat to working in a confessional stance or analyzing the methodological issues and alternatives for understanding how theological ethics has been or should be done.

Much of the latter work has been done by James Gustafson, a student of H. R. Niebuhr, who has sought through careful analysis of historical and current options within theological ethics to keep the discourse alive.³⁷ Though much of Gustafson's work is descriptive, his concerns are primarily constructive. It is, therefore, not accidental that Gustafson began to direct attention to the importance for ethics of the "sort of persons we are," of character and virtue, as the appropriate context for assessing the significance of theological language for ethical behavior.³⁸

Above all, Gustafson's work is centered on the question "Can ethics be Christian?" For him the Christian theologian's ethical task is done for the sake of a community that shares a set of common experiences and beliefs about God and his particular revelation in Jesus Christ.

The Christian community is not, however, the exclusive audience. Since the intention of the divine power for human wellbeing is universal in its scope, the historically particular medium through which that power is clarified for Christians also has universal significance. The theologian engaged in the task of "prescriptive" ethics formulates principles and values that can guide the actions of persons who do not belong to the Christian community. They will be persuasive to others, however, on the basis of supporting reasons different from those that Christians might respond to. In effect, the theologian moves from the particular Christian belief to a statement of their moral import in a more universal language. These statements will be persuasive to nonreligious persons only by the cogency of the argument that is made to show that the

37. See, for example, Gustafson's *Christian Ethics and the Community* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971) and *Theology and Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974), both of which are collections of his essays that attempt to bring some intellectual clarity to the activity of other Christian ethicists.

38. This emphasis, of course, is but an indication of Gustafson's indebtedness to H. R. Niebuhr's attempt to identify the central issue of Christian ethics as that of the "self." Unfortunately many of the interpreters of H. R. Niebuhr tend to stress more his account of "responsibility" and, as a result, fail to see that Niebuhr's primary concern was the "self."

“historical particularity” sheds light on principles and values that other serious moral persons also perceive and also ought to adhere to. Indeed, since the Christian theologian shares in the general moral experience of secular people, and since one facet of this work that is theologically warranted is the inferring of principles and values from common experience, he or she need not in every practical circumstance make a particular theological case for what is formulated. The theologian ought, however, to be able to make a Christian theological case if challenged to do so.³⁹

Gustafson’s reasoning is based on his theological belief that God’s purposes are for “the well-being of man and creation,” and thus on most occasions the reasons that justify any moral act would justify the moral acts of Christians. The only case he can give that might be an exception to this is some Christians’ commitment to nonviolent resistance to evil, since the justification of such a response clearly must rely on appeal to certain “religious” reasons that go beyond what we mean by morality.⁴⁰

5. Summary

If this is all that is to be gained by speaking theologically about morality, then one may well question if it is worth the effort. In this brief history of the development of the “discipline” of Christian ethics, I have tried to show how the primary subject theologically became how to keep Christian ethics Christian. This situation is no doubt partly the result of the changing historical and sociological stance of the churches vis-à-vis American society. As American society becomes increasingly secular, Christian ethicists come to think that, if they wish to remain political actors, they must translate their convictions into a nontheological idiom. But once such a translation is accomplished, why is the theological idiom needed at all?

The difficulty of making and keeping Christian ethics Christian, however, derives not only from social strategies, but, as we have seen, also from theological difficulties. For the recovery of the ethical significance of theological discourse was part of a theological movement within Protestantism that in large measure sought to avoid the more traditional particularistic claims of

39. Gustafson, *Can Ethics Be Christian?*, 163.

40. It is telling, I think, that in his recent constructive work, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), Gustafson thinks John Howard Yoder’s “sectarian” stance to be the most intelligible alternative to his own position.

Christianity. Ironically, just to the extent that the development of Christian ethics as a field was a success, it reinforced the assumption that more positive theological convictions had little purchase on the way things are or should be. It is no wonder, therefore, that the dominant modes of philosophical ethics received little challenge from the theological community. Indeed, exactly to the contrary, theologians and religious thinkers have largely sought to show that the modes of argument and conclusions reached by philosophical ethicists are no different from those reached by ethicists with more explicit religious presuppositions. The task of Christian ethics, both socially and philosophically, was not revision but accommodation.

III. A Revision of Theological Ethics

I have tried to suggest why the development of Christian ethics during this century provided no significant alternative to the dominant modes of ethical reflection done by philosophers. While aspects of the work of Rauschenbusch, the Niebuhrs, Ramsey, and Gustafson certainly stand in sharp contrast with the accepted mode of doing philosophical ethics, it is simply the case that their work has failed to influence or even to be taken very seriously by ethicists working in a nontheological context.

Of course part of the reason for that is more sociological than intellectual. Religion has increasingly become marginal in our culture, both politically and intellectually. Attempts to assert the relevance of religion in the social and political realm are often done with a crudeness that serves to underwrite the general assumption that our society will do better to continue to relegate religious concerns to the private and subjective realm. This same kind of relegation has occurred in the intellectual realm, often with much less good reason. Few modern intellectuals feel the obligation to read the better work done in theology, because they prejudicially assume that theology must inherently be a form of special pleading.

As I suggested at the beginning, attempts to address this prejudice on its own terms are doomed to failure. The more theologians seek to find the means to translate theological convictions into terms acceptable to the non-believer, the more they substantiate the view that theology has little of importance to say in the area of ethics. It seems that the theologian is in a classical "no-win" situation.

Yet in important ways this is not the case. It may be that theology can make

a virtue of necessity. In many ways the social and intellectual marginality of the church in our culture is an intellectual resource that can provide the opportunity to recover some of the more important aspects of Christian reflection, particularly concerning morality. As I have tried to suggest, the very development of “Christian ethics” as a branch of theology was inspired by an attempt to reawaken Christian social responsibility. But the very terms of that reawakening and its underlying theology had already accommodated itself far too much to the secular ethos. Therefore, in spite of the significant advances in Christian reflection represented by the development of Christian ethics, in many ways it failed to represent adequately the resources for ethical reflection within the Christian tradition. Thus one of the ironies is that many of the challenges made by philosophers against the reigning paradigm could have been made, and perhaps made even more forcefully, from a theological perspective. But they were not, and they were not because Christians in general and theologians in particular continued to assume that they had built a home within Western civilization that they had a stake in continuing. As a result, Christian ethicists accepted an account of the social good that failed to manifest the struggle and the transformation of the self necessary for any adequate account of the moral life.

It is odd that Christians, of all people, could have made that mistake, since who could know better than they that the moral good is not an achievement easily accomplished by the many, but a demanding task that only a few master. Christians are not called merely to do what is right, or merely to observe the law, though doing the right and observing the law are not irrelevant to being good. Rather, for Christians the moral life is to be seen as a journey through life sustained by fidelity to the cross of Christ, which brings a fulfillment no law can ever embody. Thus Aquinas says:

There is a twofold element in the Law of the Gospel. There is the chief element, namely, the grace of the Holy Ghost bestowed inwardly. And as to this, the New Law justifies. Hence Augustine says: “There (that is, in the Old Testament) the Law was set forth in an outward fashion, that the ungodly might be afraid; here (that is, in the New Testament) it is given in an inward manner, that they might be justified.” The other element of the Evangelical Law is secondary; namely, the teachings of faith, and those commandments which direct human affections and human actions. And as to this, the New Law does not justify. Hence the Apostle says: “The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth” (II Cor. 3:6), and Augustine explains this by saying that the letter

denotes any writing that is external to man, even that of the moral precepts such as are contained in the Gospel. Therefore the letter, even of the Gospel, would kill, unless there were the inward presence of the healing grace of faith.⁴¹

From such a perspective Christian thinkers, above all, should have been among the first to criticize the attempt to model the moral life primarily on the analogy of the law. Instead, fearing moral anarchy, like our philosophical colleagues, Christian ethicists assumed that questions of the “right” were prior to questions of the “good,” that moral principles were more fundamental than virtues, that a coherent morality required a single primary principle from which all others could be derived or tested, and that the central task of morality was to help us resolve difficult moral quandaries.

Ironically, Christian theology attempted to deny the inherent historical and community-dependent nature of our moral convictions in the hopes that our “ethics” might be universal. But as Schneewind reminds us, the justification of our moral principles and assertions cannot be done from the point of view of anyone, but rather requires a tradition of moral wisdom.⁴² Such a tradition is not a “deposit” of unchanging moral “truth,” but is made up of the lives of men and women who are constantly testing and developing that tradition through their own struggle to live it. The maintenance of such a tradition requires a community across time sufficient to sustain the journey from one generation to the next. The Christian word for such a community is church.⁴³

It is my suspicion that if theologians are going to contribute to reflection on the moral life in our particular situation, they will do so exactly to the extent they can capture the significance of the church for determining the nature and content of Christian ethical reflection. This may seem an odd suggestion, for it seems such a move would only make the theologian that much further removed from being a serious conversation partner. It is as-

41. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I–II.106.2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1946). Many others besides Aquinas could be quoted to substantiate this point. I purposely chose Aquinas, since many who defend a natural law approach to Christian ethics appeal to him as their primary authority. Yet as the quotation makes clear, Aquinas assumed that an adequate theological ethics could not be limited to or based on an analogy with law.

42. J. B. Schneewind, “Moral Knowledge and Moral Principles,” in *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 113–26.

43. For a fuller account of this perspective, see *cc*.

sumed, by theologian and philosopher alike, that any distinctive contribution of theological ethics must begin with beliefs about God, Jesus, sin, and the like, and the moral implications of those beliefs. And of course there is much truth to that. Yet the problem with putting the matter in that way is that such “beliefs” look like descriptions of existence, some kind of primitive metaphysics, that one must then try to analyze for their moral implications. To force Christian moral reflection into such a pattern is to make it appear but another philosophical account of the moral life.

But that is exactly what it is not. For Christian beliefs about God, Jesus, sin, the nature of human existence, and salvation are intelligible only if they are seen against the background of the church—that is, a body of people who stand apart from the “world” because of the peculiar task of worshiping a God whom the world knows not. This is a point as much forgotten by Christian theologians as by secular philosophers, the temptation being to simply make Christianity another “system of belief.” Yet what was most original about the first Christians was not the peculiarity of their beliefs, even beliefs about Jesus, but their social inventiveness in creating a community whose like had not been seen before. To say they believed in God is true but uninteresting. What is interesting is that their very understanding that the God they encountered in Jesus required the formation of a community distinct from the world exactly because of the kind of God he was. From a Christian perspective, the atheist cannot understand the kind of God he or she does not believe in apart from understanding the kind of community necessary across time to faithfully worship such a God. The flabbiness and banality of contemporary atheism is, thus, a judgment on the church’s unwillingness to be a distinctive people.

Therefore, when as Christians we are asked to say something theological, especially when the questioner is seeking to understand the ethical significance of religious convictions, perhaps we should not say “God” (as does Gustafson) but “Church.” For my criticism of the emphasis in contemporary ethics on law, on rights, on principles, on quandaries, on facts distinguished from values, is fundamentally a criticism of what becomes central when one tries to write ethics for anyone, as if ethics can be done in abstraction from any concrete community. It is not surprising that the law becomes the primary analogue for such an ethic as law is often seen as that set of minimum principles needed to secure order between people who share little in common. Ethics, like law, thus becomes the procedural means to settle disputes and resolve problems while leaving our individual “preferences” and desires to our own choice. To say more about morality requires not simply a conception of

the good, but a tradition that carries the virtues necessary for training in movement toward the good.

Many philosophers and theologians are calling for a fuller account of the moral life. They rightly criticize the “thinness” of much of contemporary ethical theory; yet they offer no persuasive alternative. They point to the need for revision, but the social and political practices necessary for that revision to be institutionalized are missing. Moreover, any attempts to create them appear utopian or totalitarian. Of course, appeals can be made to particular individuals as paradigms of the kind of moral life desired, but moral geniuses are never sufficient to sustain our best moral convictions. For such sustenance we need a community to direct attention toward, and sustain the insights of, those who have become more nearly good.

Christians believe that to live well, we need not only a community, but a community of a particular kind. We need a community of people who are capable of being faithful to a way of life, even when that way of life may be in conflict with what passes as “morality” in the larger society. Christians are a people who have learned that belief in God requires that we learn to look upon ourselves as creatures rather than as creators. This necessarily creates a division between ourselves and others who persist in the pretentious assumption that we can and should be morally autonomous. Of course Christians are as prone to such pretensions as non-Christians. What distinguishes them is their willingness to belong to a community that embodies the stories and the rituals of the faith, to belong to other people committed to worshiping God truthfully. Such a community must challenge our prideful pretensions as well as provide the skills for the humility necessary for becoming not just good, but holy.

Theologians, therefore, have something significant to say about ethics, but they will not say it significantly if they try to disguise the fact that they think, write, and speak out of and to a distinctive community. Their first task is not—as has been assumed by many Christian ethicists who continue to write under the spell of Christendom—to write as though Christian commitments make no difference in the sense that they only underwrite what everyone already in principle can know, but rather to show the difference those commitments make. At least by doing that, philosophers may have some idea how the attempt to avoid presuming any tradition or community may distort their account of the moral life. Our task as theologians remains what it has always been: namely, to exploit the considerable resources embodied in particular Christian convictions which sustain our ability to be a community faithful to

our belief that we are creatures of a graceful God. If we do that we may well discover that we are speaking to more than just our fellow Christians, for others as a result may well find we have something interesting to say.

Further Reading

“How Christian Ethics Came to Be,” essay 1 in this volume

“The Non-Resistant Church: The Theological Ethics of John Howard Yoder” (1972), in *vv*

“Why the ‘Sectarian Temptation’ Is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson” (1988), essay 4 in this volume

“God as Participant: Time and History in the Work of James Gustafson” (1985), in *ww*

“Tragedy and Joy: The Spirituality of Peaceableness” (1983), in *PK*

“History as Fate: How Justification by Faith Became Anthropology and History in America” (1997), in *ww*

“The Irony of Reinhold Niebuhr: The Ideological Character of Christian Realism,” with Mikael Broadway (1992), in *ww*

“How Christian Ethics Became Medical Ethics: The Case of Paul Ramsey” (1995), in *ww*

“Communitarians and Medical Ethicists: Why I Am None of the Above” (1993), in *DF*