



## Word and Response: A Metaphor of Redemption

### ABSTRACT

*At the heart of the Christian faith and the Redemptorist charism is the promise and proclamation of redemption. The challenge for the Church and for theology has been to communicate and to share this Good News in an effective manner with the people of every time and culture.*

*However, the mysteries of faith can only be expressed through narratives and metaphors despite their limitations. The history of theology has offered many narratives and metaphors in an attempt to articulate the Christian experience of redemption. Today, however, some of these narratives no longer speak to the consciousness of people. Every generation will need to comprehend the experience of redemption in a way that is meaningful to itself while remaining faithful to the Christian tradition.*

*What meaningful narrative can we propose for the world today? The writer proposes the word and response model and leitmotif of responsibility of Bernard Häring.*



## THE LIFE AND WORK OF BERNARD HÄRING

The Redemptorist moral theologian Bernard Häring believes that an experience of God's redemption in Jesus Christ—and not moral imperatives—to be the foundation of Christian faith. His word and response model believes that God calls us by the offer of redemption and our response of acceptance leads to genuine freedom and Christian maturity.

*The new Christian [...] combines his sense of fidelity to the Church with a receptivity of new ways of making his faith something real and alive in the world in which he lives. Society today, the Church today, both in a stage of great transition, have therefore only one choice, there is no viable alternative: it is to risk everything by seeking out the mature citizen, to make room for individual responsibility.<sup>1</sup>*

Häring's service as an army medic during the Second World War would have a huge impact in reshaping his understanding of faith and theology. The blind and absurd obedience of his fellow Germans to the Nazi regime led Häring to the conclusion that a responsible and mature faith, and not blind obedience, must be at the heart of Christianity. He said, 'After the war, I returned to moral theology with the firm decision to teach it so that its core concept would not be obedience but responsibility, the courage to be responsible.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Häring, *Christian Maturity* (London: Herder and Herder, 1967), 7.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Häring, *My Witness for the Church* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992), 23-24, Cf. Kathleen Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 4-5. Kathleen Cahalan's doctoral dissertation from the University of Chicago Divinity School was entitled, "The Sacramental Moral Theology of Bernard Häring. A Study of the Virtue of Religion," published as *Formed in the Image of Christ*. This work is a valuable and comprehensive contemporary resource in the study of Häring's thoughts, ideas and legacy in the Church. Cf. *Ibid.*, vi.

## THE NEED FOR 'NEW' METAPHORS OF SOTERIOLOGY

Instead of a clear conciliar statement, there have only been numerous metaphors and narratives attempting to explain the mystery of redemption.

Whereas controversies and official teaching about Christ's person helped to establish some clear terminology in Christology, such conciliar clarification has never taken place in Soteriology. [...] no period of Christianity can claim to have produced a truly unified Soteriology.<sup>3</sup>

*Metaphors and narratives were shaped by the culture, spirituality and thinking of their time. Some connected with the mentality of a particular age, some were superseded or forgotten, and others deeply misunderstood and now seem a distortion of our faith and our image of God.<sup>4</sup>*

This paper will explore the possibility of seeing in Häring's theme of word and response, a metaphor that can express and describe the experience and nature of redemption that appeals to the religious consciousness of people today. We hope to show how the nature of redemption is a reciprocal and dialogical process that elicits human cooperation.

Häring's leitmotif of responsibility can be understood as the fruit of our redemption. In other words, redemption restores in us the freedom, grace, and the ability to respond to the call of God manifest in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>3</sup>Gerald O'Collins, *Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 297-298.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus the Redeemer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3-5.

## THE WORD AND RESPONSE MODEL OF BERNARD HÄRING

The theme of word and response is the foundational concept of Häring's theology. God calls us into fellowship with Himself, and we are called to respond to this invitation. Within his word and response model, Häring chose responsibility as a leitmotif—a theme or a central idea—to describe the nature of Christian faith. Kathleen Cahalan describes these concepts:

Religion and morality share the features of dialogue and response-ability [sic] through word and response; Jesus Christ is the responder *par excellence* to God's initiative; the imitation of Jesus is the central religious and moral response of persons to God.<sup>5</sup>

Christ is both God's perfect word to us and—sharing our human nature—is the man that gives the perfect response to God. Häring suggests that the imitation of Christ is the perfect response to God and our path and means to redemption.<sup>6</sup>

## CREATION AND REVELATION

The book of Genesis seeks to convey two important ideas (Gen. 1:24-17, 2:4-23). First, that God chose to create the universe of his own free will and that all creation is good. Secondly, the climax of creation is humanity created in God's own image and likeness, to be in relationship and dialogue with God. The Bible's aim is not to present God simply as the prime mover of creation, but it is a story of God's relationship with humanity. Since God created the human person to be in dialogue with Him, He is not to be feared, placated or bargained with, but someone with whom one can have a genuine relationship and dialogue.<sup>7</sup>

As the story of the Old Testament unfolds, God reveals Himself and his plan of redemption to Israel, however, God's revelation and salvific action in history comes to its climax in the Incarnation of the divine *Logos*—λογος. We can highlight two aspects of the Incarnation.

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<sup>5</sup>Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ*, 67.

<sup>6</sup>Bernard Häring, *Law of Christ, I* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1965), 40.

<sup>7</sup>Bernard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ, I* (Homebush: Society of St. Paul, 1978), 8.

First, Christ by his Incarnation restores humanity to the *Imago Dei*. The image in which we were created but was lost through sin. Christ, who is true God and true man, restores our image and likeness with God. Creation and redemption are two distinguishable but connected actions of God united in the *logos*. Redemption is not merely the restoration of creation, but part of God's continuing revelation and plan for humanity to arrive at the fullness of God's image.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, Christ is not only God's fullest word and call to humanity; he also shows us the perfect response that the human person can give to God. In the way that he lived, Christ becomes the pattern and prototype of our response to God.<sup>9</sup> We hear God's call in Jesus Christ and we also see in his life, teaching, example and death, the response that we are called to render to God.

#### THE CALL TO COVENANT AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Law is not meant to be a burden or imposition but a free response of gratefulness to God's saving action and fidelity in the covenant. It is a gift of God to guide Israel in the way to live, an election and promise that would shape their destiny and prefigure God's saving action for all of humanity.<sup>10</sup> In living the Law, Israel will come to be an example and witness to other nations, that they may come to know the true God.

The Law is an expression of God's love and fidelity. Haring lamented, in the teaching of the faith, a diminished focus on love and an emphasis on obedience. Understood wrongly, obedience does not elicit a genuine fellowship and dialogue but leads to legalism, where the focus is not on God but on the Law. Only when we approach the Law as a response to God's saving action and love can there exist a genuine dialogue and relationship.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Gerald O'Collins, *The Redemption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18-19.

<sup>9</sup>Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ*, 86-87.

<sup>10</sup>Haring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 9, 13-15.

<sup>11</sup>Haring, *Law of Christ*, I, 42-45.

The covenant and the Law were meant to serve as guides to direct our response to God but Christ invites us to a more radical response, a response of love. The discipleship that Christ calls us to is essentially a response to God; to be partners with Him in bringing about the Kingdom of God by our commitment to justice and the liberation of people from all forms of slavery, just as God had freed Israel.

### *The Call of the Prophets and to the Kingdom of God*

Despite God's call to Israel to be his chosen people, the Scriptures show Israel's imperfect grasp, unreadiness and inability to respond wholeheartedly and faithfully to God's covenant (Jos. 24:14-15; Hos. 3:1; Hos. 4:14; 1 Kg. 16:31-33). The Law had lost its original meaning; rules about minuscule matters were followed meticulously whilst the wider concepts of justice and fairness were ignored. The Law had become the easy way out from living a truly virtuous life.

When Israel failed in its fidelity to the covenant, God sent the prophets to remind the people about the true meaning of the covenant, the Law, and worship. Israel was called to live in truth and justice so that they could be a light to the nations and that all would come to know the one true God and his plan of redemption. The prophets "unmask the atheism of ritualism and all forms of religion that do not bear fruit in love, justice and mercy."<sup>12</sup> When Israel was unfaithful, God continued to speak to them through the prophets, to elicit a response and call Israel back to fellowship.

Häring sees a clear development from the giving of the Law to the message of the prophets. The prophets demand growth in maturity from the Israelites.

It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth (Is. 49:6).

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<sup>12</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 9.

The servants of God are now called through Christ to be his disciples; and partners with God in the building of the Kingdom of God.<sup>13</sup>

## RESPONSIBILITY AS THE FRUIT OF REDEMPTION

A leitmotif is a recurring theme or central idea used by an author, and Häring chose responsibility as the leitmotif of faith. He ties this in with the response to God's call: responsibility is the 'response-ability,' the ability and capacity to respond to God. We will explore how we can discover in this leitmotif of Häring, a description of the fruit of redemption; that our redemption restores in us the capacity to respond to God's call.

Responsibility as a theological concept had become popular among several theologians and was even expounded in the Vatican II Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* on which Häring had profound influence:

Everywhere there is growing steadily a sense of autonomy and responsibility extremely important for the spiritual and moral maturity of men. This responsibility becomes clearer if we bear in mind that the world is becoming united and the charge is laid on us of building a better world in truth and justice. In this way we see that a new humanism is being born in which man is defined by his responsibilities to his fellow-man and to history.<sup>14</sup>

Häring realized that the mentality of people in the modern age was changing.<sup>15</sup> In his article "Responsibility in Moral Theology: Centrality, Foundations, and Implication for Ecclesiology," published in 1971, Charles Curran presented several reasons why responsibility was becoming popular as a central and normative theme in theology. One of these reasons was a growing

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., I, 10-15.

<sup>14</sup>*Gaudium et Spes*, 55.

<sup>15</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 59. See also R. Guardini, "The End of the Modern World," in *Communio* 17 (1990), 285-286. Guardini speaks of 'the invasion of consciousness by personal autonomy.' The article was a prophetic consideration of how contemporary society at the time was changing its perspective with regard to practice and understanding of the Christian faith.

consciousness of the freedom and dignity of the individual. However, this idea also presented the danger of an exaggerated individualism. Freedom can never be an absolute but must always be seen in relation to God, to others, and to the world.<sup>16</sup> However, an emphasis on the transcendence of God played down the aspect of the human person's free response. Häring attempted to highlight the human person's dialogue with God.<sup>17</sup> The human person is created in freedom to respond to God's call to serve the world. The mature Christian must be led to a correct understanding of this freedom. True liberty can never exist apart from our fidelity to God and responsibility is the fundamental concept of freedom and a mature faith.

A Christian understanding of freedom is never understood as a form of license but a response to the call of God. Redemption, as Häring understands it, is the restoration of freedom that enables us to respond positively to God once more. The redeemed person is one who in freedom is able to enter into a dialogue with God. Häring makes this bold assertion in *Free and Faithful in Christ*:

God has shown us that he does not want mechanical application of his laws or weary, stereotyped responses. He grants to us and requests from us a creative response in generosity beyond general norms. The relationship is dialogic [...] That history is one of interaction between God and his people and between person and person, in which all partners are engaged in a co-creative dialogue. The outcome of our response is not something that is already fixed. It is something which God does not reveal directly to man but he looks to man to complete the revelation himself.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>C. Curran, "Responsibility in Moral Theology. Centrality, Foundations, and Implication for Ecclesiology," in *The Jurist* 31 (1971), 124-125. Charles Curran received two Doctorates in Sacred Theology from the Gregorian University and the first doctorate issued by the Accademia Alfonsiana, directed by Häring, in 1961.

<sup>17</sup>Curran, "Responsibility in Moral Theology," 119-120.

<sup>18</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 69.



*We are not simply executors of God's will in blind obedience but co-creators and co-redeemers with the freedom to respond to God in the manner we choose. This freedom also allows us to say 'No' to God and to reject our Creator. God does not determine our response to His call but wants us to respond freely. This, according to Häring, is the most wonderful gift of redemption, the freedom to collaborate with God in*

*bringing about the Kingdom, to be co-responsible in the process of our salvation. 'In his creative love, he calls us to be sharers and co-revealers in his ongoing work of creation and redemption.'<sup>19</sup> In his love, God has created us in freedom and called us to be partners with Him in the work of redemption.<sup>20</sup>*

Kathleen Cahalan describes three essential features of religion as elaborated by Häring in *The Law of Christ*: dialogue, how responsibility illustrates the nature of faith as a personal relationship with God, and the social character of religion.<sup>21</sup>

## RELIGION AS DIALOGUE

Häring understands religion principally as a dialogue between God and the human person. This dialogue begins with God's initiative and is followed by humanity's response through which we enter into relationship and community with God. This is what Häring refers to as responsibility, or our response-ability, the capacity that God has given us to discern and comprehend His call and then to render a response to that call in a dialogue.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., I, 68-70, 72.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., I, 68-69.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ*, 70-79.

<sup>22</sup>Häring, *Law of Christ*, I, 46-47, 67.

Responsibility is our response to God through word and deed and most adequately explains the dynamic of religion as a dialogue between God and human.<sup>23</sup> Häring writes in *The Law of Christ*:

*Religion truly lived must have as essential characteristic the element of response. Response, responsibility, dialogue belong to religion essentially. We have religion only if man conceives of the Holy as a Power which advances toward him and to whom he can turn to in dialogue.*<sup>24</sup>

This dialogue calls us to honor God's initiative by listening to Him and discerning God's word in the events and situations of our lives and human history. 'God takes man seriously,' Häring says and in response, humanity must also take God's call seriously by engaging in a genuine and authentic dialogue.<sup>25</sup> This was Häring's vision for Christian life and faith, the formation of responsible, committed and mature disciples of Christ.<sup>26</sup> Dialogue must inspire Church and social structures that serve the liberation of all people from any form of slavery or unfreedom. The redemption of Christ frees us from being mere followers and allows us to understand our faith as an important mission from God and for the Church.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ*, 64.

<sup>24</sup>Häring, *Law of Christ*, I, 35.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 36-37.

<sup>26</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 82-83. In his moral theology and treatment of moral questions, Häring used this theme of responsibility to highlight the emphasis of teleology (a focus on the reasons behind an action and their ultimate consequence) above deontology (where right and wrong are determined by their value in all circumstances). Häring in no way denies deontology, but stresses the priority of the person's inner telos as a call from God that requires a personal response. The person who is mature and responsible in the faith and in relationship with God, will not only look to follow written rules but will seek to do actions that would promote one's personal and the community's wholeness. (*Ibid.*, 83-84)

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Curran, "Responsibility in Moral Theology," 132-139. Curran believes that this encouragement toward co-responsibility in the Church can have significant implications. It may call us to review structures of the Church to see if they really allow us to respond to the needs of the world.

## RESPONSIBILITY AS THE NATURE OF FAITH

Häring sees responsibility as a key leitmotif of the Bible; that illustrates the nature of faith in God.<sup>28</sup> God's relationship with Israel and Christ's call to discipleship are both founded upon the theme of responsibility. The disciple of Christ, like the Israelites, has been called to responsibility and mission.<sup>29</sup>

Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt is symbolic of God's will that all of humanity was created to be free. If Israel is able to respond to the call of God by accepting the responsibility that God is calling her to, she will discover her true identity and destiny as a servant of God. Jesus Christ embodies perfectly the covenantal response Israel was called to give. Jesus freely accepts this responsibility and calls us to imitate Him as His disciples.<sup>30</sup> Häring saw in the leitmotif of responsibility, the perfect description of Christ and a rediscovery of the true nature of discipleship.

Häring believed theology needed to respond to the needs of modern persons who were struggling to understand freedom and obedience.<sup>31</sup> There had grown powerful alternatives to the Christian vision of humanity. While the Church was perceived to be rigid, legalistic, and authoritarian, new movements seemed to value personal freedom. Häring found that Existentialism—which emphasized the individual's personal responsibility to shape his or her existence and to find one's true meaning in life—similar to Christianity. Although it inspired important contributions to society, Häring rejected its innate individualism and misunderstood sense of freedom, as he writes in *The Law of Christ*:

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<sup>28</sup>Cf. R. Gallagher, "Moral Theology Since the Death of Alphonsus," in *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 51/1 (1985), 6–7. Gallagher shows the influence of the Tübingen School on Häring (where he studied). The moral theologians of the Tübingen School believed that Moral Theology should be an introduction to the Christian life, be seen in the perspective of grace and be linked to a central Scriptural leitmotif, or idea; rather than listing sins and obligations. This could have been influential on Häring in basing his theology on a leitmotif.

<sup>29</sup>Häring, *Law of Christ*, I, 42.

<sup>30</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 7–22. In Chapter One of *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Häring presents the Scriptural basis of the word and response theme. The ways in which God has called us and ways in which we are called to respond.

<sup>31</sup>Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ*, 65, 82–83.

The efforts of non-religious man to perfect himself, we must note, are not worthless. They have, in fact, positive value, at least as long as religion is not dismissed as meaningless. And this positive value can be coordinated with the religious orientation, but not without being reformed, Christianized. To be truly embodied in the realm of the sacred, it must be placed in the service of holiness. Ultimately morality and religion must have the same centre: community and fellowship with God.<sup>32</sup>

The true meaning of freedom is freedom used with responsibility and with a sense of commitment to the Gospel and in response to God. Freedom has no purpose otherwise and is, in fact, a corruption. Häring hoped the leitmotif of responsibility would inspire modern Christians who are looking for meaning and motivation in the way they live.

A response to God demands obedience, but unfortunately, modern prejudices interpret obedience as the opposite of freedom or a blind following of rules. Häring returns to the source of the word: *ob-audire* which in Latin means ‘in order to listen’. It entails listening to God’s word and discerning our response rather than a passive conformity.<sup>33</sup>

God is calling humanity to a radical decision. Responsibility demonstrated by obedience, says Häring, ‘is our God-given capacity to make all of our [...] conscious life, a response to God, and thus to integrate it within the obedience of faith.’<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Häring, *Law of Christ*, I, 41.

<sup>33</sup>Curran, “Responsibility in Moral Theology,” 128-129.

<sup>34</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 65-66.

## RESPONSIBILITY IN AND FOR THE WORLD

Finally, Häring hoped the theme of responsibility would inspire Christians to live their faith in service to the world. Our response to God can only be authentic when we are responsive to the needs of our fellowmen.<sup>35</sup> The salvation of Jesus Christ frees us to give our lives in service to others in the same way that Jesus did. Häring writes in *Free and Faithful in Christ*:

*The New Testament presents redemption that comes from Christ as a freedom for commitment of self to another; this freedom shares in the redemptive and creative power of Christ. Since we receive our freedom from Christ and in Christ, we can rejoice in it only insofar as we are committed to him and have discovered our true selves in that commitment.*<sup>36</sup>

Before the Second Vatican Council, Häring was aware that an *aggiornamento* was needed in the Church and theology. Reform-minded theologians were aware of how the Church had often taken a confrontational and condemnatory stance toward the world, and this now proved disastrous as many abandoned the practice of faith. Häring was critical of the scholastic manualist model<sup>37</sup> because it created a false separation between the sacred and the profane and Christians found it difficult to understand their proper role in the world. The Second Vatican Council revolutionized the Church's self-understanding as existing for service to the world. Häring saw this as the only meaningful way to present the Christian life to the world today. The Christian has a vocation and responsibility to

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., I, 66.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., I, 74.

<sup>37</sup>Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ*, 48, 66-67. See also Gallagher, "Moral Theology Since the Death of Alphonsus," 11-13. Gallagher states some of the inadequacies of the manualist system. However, Curran believes that Häring may have been overly critical of the manualist system. Cf. Curran, "Free and Faithful in Christ. A Critical Evaluation," in *Studia Moralia* 20 (1982), 159.

better the world we live in<sup>38</sup> as a direct response to God's word.<sup>39</sup> If redemption is to make us free, then freedom is for service to the world.

The world that God has entrusted to us is not a completed whole. Häring understood creation and history not as static realities but evolving and changing as humanity shapes it.<sup>40</sup> It suggests that God does not micro-manage humanity and creation, but gives humanity, as steward of creation, the responsibility for shaping creation. Curran gives the example of justice and peace. We do not have a detailed plan from God as to how peace will come about in the world, but we have to do our best by responding to concrete circumstances in a given time and place. Every different form of violence and injustice calls for a different response. However, we must understand that total peace can never be a reality for a humanity corrupted by sin. We are responsible as instruments of God, but only Christ can bring about the Kingdom of God. Still the disciple of Christ has a covenant commitment, to be the salt of the earth and light of world to continue Christ's redemptive work until he comes again.<sup>41</sup> Through his leitmotif of responsibility, Häring hoped that it would lead Christians to a fuller appreciation of their redemption in Christ and their mission as Christians in the world. As Christ has saved us to be free, we have been called to bring others to share the effects of this redemption and liberation as well.

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<sup>38</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ, I*, 100-101. The idea of the Church at the service of the world was expressed clearly in *Gaudium et Spes* 40-45: that although the Church's ultimate purpose is an eschatological one, it exists here and now. The Church and Christians are called to contribute to society and the betterment of humanity. Cf. *GS* 40. This passage speaks of an 'intermingling of the earthly and heavenly cities,' that although its purpose is eschatological, the Church marches in solidarity with the whole of humanity by acting as a leaven for the renewal and transformation of the world.

<sup>39</sup>Cahalan, *Formed in the Image of Christ*, 66-67.

<sup>40</sup>This was the opinion of Irenaeus of Lyon, that God is constantly in relationship and communication with creation as it grows toward maturity.

<sup>41</sup>Curran, "Responsibility in Moral Theology," 135, 142.

This was Häring's motivation in his theology. Pope John XXIII recognized this and personally invited Häring to be a *peritus* on the Theological Commission of the Council. He would later be Secretary of the Editorial Commission for *Gaudium et Spes*, which would propagate many of Häring's theological ideas.<sup>42</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In what way can we use Häring's model of word and response and the leitmotif of responsibility as metaphors that can contribute to our understanding of salvation? We can consider three contributions Häring's thought can offer to the understanding of redemption today.

*Redemption is effected through and for our freedom.* Faith and our redemption are not imposed upon us; but rather God invites us into relationship, and we have the freedom to respond. The gift of redemption—though affected definitively by Jesus' death and resurrection—must be received freely by our response. A crucial element in the consciousness of modern humanity is the awareness of our liberty and the rejection of any form of heteronomy.<sup>43</sup> Häring's word and response model highlights the importance of our response to God's word, and his leitmotif of responsibility seeks to emphasize the Christian idea of freedom, which must be balanced by responsibility. When we look at redemption through this lens, its effect is not the loss of our freedom but the restoration of freedom that enables us to respond to God. His emphasis on response and the leitmotif of responsibility stimulate the Christian life as a demanding challenge of Christ and a call to radical discipleship.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Gallagher, "Häring at Vatican II," in Bernhard Häring, *A Happy Redemptorist*. Martin McKeever, ed. (Rome, 2008), 76–77.

<sup>43</sup>International Theological Commission, *Select Questions on Christology*, III, B, 4. 'They recoil from any notion of salvation that would inject heteronomy into existence as project.'

<sup>44</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 146.

*Redemption is a journey toward maturity of faith.* The Christian life and salvation are not static realities but a lifelong journey.<sup>45</sup> A personal and spiritual growth beyond negative laws and the bare minimum to become evangelizers and witnesses is a manifestation of our redemption in Christ.

Häring saw how many Christians had been formed to approach religion from a moralistic and juridical point of view. He felt the time had come to form mature Christians and presented the values of obedience and responsibility in a radically different way. This leads to our final point:

*Our redemption must be manifested in action.* The situation of today calls for a proclamation of faith that is seen not only in words but manifested in action. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* refers to this as the “essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching.” The proclamation of the Gospel must be accompanied by the witness of our lives. Häring was convinced that the leitmotif of responsibility could help Christians and the Church to come out of their shell to serve the world.

Our ability to be of service to the world is directly brought about by our redemption in Jesus Christ, which gives us the grace to cooperate in our own redemption and the redemption of the world.<sup>46</sup> Redemption cannot simply be understood only as an expiation by death or a ransom paid. The Church exists to herald the advent of God’s kingdom.<sup>47</sup> The choice to be part of this Church is a response to Jesus Christ who calls us to be his disciples and partners in establishing the Kingdom. Our salvation must lead us to be liberators of the oppressed just as Christ was.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>F-X. Durwell, *In the Redeeming Christ* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2013), 11–13.

<sup>46</sup>Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 9,10. See also numerous documents of the Church that sustain the teaching for the need of our response to Christ’s redemption and grace. CCC, 2002. The General Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, Canons on Justification, 9 as found in ND 1959. This canon of the Council of Trent expressly condemns the idea that justification does not require our cooperation.

<sup>47</sup>Durwell, *In the Redeeming Christ*, 9–11. Cf. GS 45.

<sup>48</sup>Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, I, 147.



The role of theology is to provide a language that can express the salvation that Christ has won for us and also give the Church an impetus to mission to share the hope that we have as Christians. The word and response model and the leitmotif of responsibility in the theology of Bernard Häring are a contribution to the ongoing narrative of the mystery of redemption.

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