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African Americans rests not on "romantic assumptions about their moral or spiritual excellence" but rather on "God's freedom and love" (127). Nevertheless, like Margaret Walker Alexander's poem of the same title, *We Have Been Believers* ought to be required reading for divinity, theology, religious studies, ethics, and American studies students.

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WAR AND THE AMERICAN DIFFERENCE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON VIOLENCE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY. By Stanley Hauerwas. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011. Pp. xvii + 188. $19.99.

Perhaps the oldest and most fundamental problem of Christian politics is how to deal with the "present-not yet" character of the kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus Christ. Christians are a "new creation," called to a new existence. But all too obviously the world around them has not seen radical change. As Hauerwas says in introducing this collection, "The question is how Christians can and should live in a world of war as a people who believe that war has been abolished" (xi).

The essays that follow, however, do not all offer the same answer; they seem to envision plural aims: to command the attention of scholars like Andrew Bacevich, the realist Boston University historian (who wrote a cover endorsement and was invited by H. as president of the Society of Christian Ethics to deliver a plenary address at the 2012 convention); to join the campaign of H.'s Catholic friend Enda McDonagh, who actually wanted to "Abolish War"; and to embellish H.'s own vision of the church, captured in aphorisms such as "the church does not have a social ethic; it is a social ethic" (*The Peaceable Kingdom* [1983] 99; *War and the American Difference* 68), and now the church is an "alternative politics" (xii), and "is the alternative to war" (34). Yet Bacevich thinks the United States should cease military engagement in no-win wars because it is a senseless use of resources (*The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* [2008]); McDonagh, however, thinks that if theologians and church leaders join forces, they can persuade governments to renounce war as a political tool because God created all people to desire peace; and H.'s very different ecclesiology (up to now) is conveyed in his concluding proposal: "Let Christians of the World Agree That They Will Not Kill Each Other" (181). Do the different essays come together in a coherent stance? No. But maybe coherence is not what H. is interested in. Maybe he wants to provoke reconsideration of the status quo across as broad a swath of the American public as possible.

H. has made his name by taking a strong stance in favor of a faithful church modeled on Christ's cross that renounces cooperation with corrupt

social and political powers, and disavows action for change in favor of "witness." Yet if one considers H.'s broad impact over the years—in 2001 *Time Magazine* named him "America's Best Theologian"—it is easy to see that his views have been a leavening agent among just-war thinkers, proponents of Catholic social teaching, and even Christian realists who, like H., question a national proclivity to militarism in the name of American exceptionalism and divinely conferred destiny. H. has engaged public politics directly before (see *Christianity, Democracy, and the Radical Ordinary: Conversations between a Radical Democrat and a Christian* [2008], coauthored with Romand Coles).

In *War and the American Difference*, H. diagnoses the interdependence of war and national identity as having in this country a peculiar and pernicious origin that, even apart from theological considerations, should alarm and appall everyone.

The book has three parts, concerning the national ethos of violence, the specific arguments for Christian nonviolence, and the distinctive nature and role of the church in a violent society. In Part 1, "America and War" and the first chapters of Part 2, "The Liturgy of War," H. develops the thesis that war is the "glue that gives Americans a common story" (xvi), by weaving together their immigrant histories and diverse faiths around the liturgical blood sacrifice of heroes in war. "War is America's altar" (33). This analysis makes sense of the way Americans see their past participation in at least some wars (World War II but not the Vietnam War), and the way today's military ventures are promoted as a defense of American "freedom."

But is war still America's main instrument of power, or is it economics? Wars of our nation against other nations—H.'s main target—have declined since the 1950s. Most war deaths today are civilian. They result from civil conflict usually tied to economic competition, occurring largely in Africa, and abetted but usually not instigated by the United States. How does H.'s critique connect with these developments?

Part 2, "The Liturgy of War," moves into the rationale for Christian nonviolence, engaging figures such as Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and C. S. Lewis. But the most interesting chapter is the first, on Enda McDonagh's "Appeal to Abolish War," based not only on Christ but on common moral values as well. The "Appeal" urges development of concrete "alternatives to war," "structures for resolving conflicts nonviolently" (41–42). Part 3, "The Ecclesial Difference," seems to take away the necessary premises by insisting (with Daniel Bell and against Nicholas Wolterstorff) that justice is known only through Christ, that religious particularism rules out "universalism" (borrowing from Jonathan Sacks), and that faith traditions can speak only local and not universal languages, engaging local politics (building on Herbert McCabe and Alasdair MacIntyre). Certainly

these assertions are important cautions against a facile and false "globalized" moral program.

But if H. really means that "the world is not condemned to live violently" and "can and will respond positively to a witness of peace" (xii), he needs to show what that witness should look like (beyond not personally killing anyone), and how it communicates with "the world." Despite a chapter on "the future of parish ministry," H. does not illustrate what Christian churches or organizations (such as the Catholic Peacebuilding Network of which Mennonite John Paul Lederach is a member) can do or are doing to create "alternatives to war." There is much to be learned from those actually suffering the violence of civil conflicts, or working in conflict zones to bring reconciliation and restorative justice. Surely they would not agree that inordinate suffering is simply an inevitable part of life (123–25), or that talk of justice cannot span acutely local instances of rape, mutilation, and killing.

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INTERPRÉTER ET AGIR: JALONS POUR UNE ÉTHIQUE CHRÉTIENNE. By Alain Thomasset, S.J. Cerf: Paris, 2011. Pp. 422. €32.

In this engaging volume, moral theologian Thomasset reaffirms the task of today's moral theology: the promotion of our humanization. To achieve this task, he relies, first, on a phenomenological approach that includes the critical contribution of our ethical reflection, the normative role of moral theology, and the practical wisdom that is demanded in the various situations we face. Second, he lays out his understanding of moral theology as a triple hermeneutics that focuses on God's word, on the Christian tradition, and on the experience of believers. These directions of research constitute the first three parts of his volume, followed by a section on the ecclesial and social dimensions of Christian action.

Part 1 studies, first, the use of the Bible in moral theology, by discussing historical and theological models in dialogue with William Spohn's foundational work. Second, it examines the ethical and moral biblical message, by relying on the theological concepts of creation and alliance, inspired by the work of Paul Beauchamp on the unity of the two Testaments.

Part 2 provides the author's hermeneutic in analyzing the Christian tradition. To limit his task, T. focuses, first, on four historical figures (Augustine, Aquinas, Ockham, and Alphonsus Liguori) as emblematic of key historical ages in moral theology (patristic, Scholastic, nominalist, and casuistic). Second, he critically studies natural law by highlighting the difficulty of defining nature and law, its diverse use in magisterial teaching on sexual and social issues, and its complex history (from Aquinas, through