

The tone throughout these articles (many of them lectures with a casual style) is affable and welcoming. It is no surprise that fully eight of the 17 pieces here are from *America* magazine. The pitch consistently is to an interested, non-professorial readership. There are no footnotes or bibliography to freight the collection, encouraging a quicker pace through source analyses, historical anecdotes, and clever turns. At the same time, absent references and citations, readers must regularly take O'M. at his word. This is offset somewhat by an index that serves as a unifying instrument for the book. Throughout, O'M. is ever the teacher, always clarifying, sometimes chiding, often entertaining. That posture is conscious and deftly held as the reader finds in O'M.'s patient, enthusiastic work the accomplishments of a master teacher. It's a syllabus worth the reader's engagement, for the rewards include a well-informed understanding of the church as hardly monolithic and the dynamic result of personalities, events, and cultural forces that have always and are still contributing to its making.

William J. Dohar  
Santa Clara University

*The Work of Theology.* By Stanley Hauerwas. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. Pp. xii + 294. \$28.

Hauerwas's latest essay collection reflects on how he has undertaken the theological task, both in form and content. More like an "unplugged" reworking of his themes, H. dubs the book "Stanley Hauerwas—An Attempt to Understand Him." This "entertaining" (4) book repeats familiar themes many times—for example, the reader will certainly know that H. "does not have a 'theory,'" and that "the first task of the church is to make the world the world"—but it does so for the purpose of understanding how these oft-quoted one-liners work. "Hauerwas Unplugged" strips his work down and reveals the fundamental structures of how he thinks, the logic that underpins the familiar "hooks" of his greatest hits.

These signatures do not constitute a method, but rather a way of performing the task of theology in particular contexts. That performance above all "depends on the descriptions" of Christians, which are "meant to entail substantive commitments" (138) to the truth of God's revelation in the events of Israel, Jesus, and the church. H. thinks those descriptions of the world and our lives in it are distorted because their substantive commitments lie elsewhere; his essays wake us up by disrupting the easy use of certain language patterns. Theology must be "edgy" so that it does not "reproduce the grammar" that "legitimizes the assumptions that the way things are is the way they should or must be" (126). Often, alternative questions must be formulated. For example, H.'s reflection on his criticism of human rights concludes, "The question is not: Can a

Christian appeal to rights? Rather the question is whether our moral vocabulary is in good enough condition that such an appeal does not threaten to determine all we have to say" (207). The contexts that require such disruption are varied, though familiar: the end of Christendom, the attempt to control the world, the tendency to make the subject of theology America rather than the church, the reduction of Christianity to pious sentimentality.

Not building a theory of his own, H.'s work depends on extended readings of others. Present in nearly every essay, the unlikely eclecticism of these selections demonstrates H.'s intellectual adventurousness. Similarly, this collection demonstrates H.'s topical breadth. Some chapters (1, 4, 7) will appeal to those interested in the account of practical reason and agency retrieved and refreshed from H.'s earliest work. His essay on agency, for example, explains well his original interest in an alternative to "an ethics of discrete decisions," which led him through character, virtue, narrative, and eventually community, because of "our inability to be wholly in our acts" (88). Others will engage those interested more in his politics, especially the chapters on "political theology," on rights, and on "remembering the poor." H. is not "against" any of these things, but in each case, he thinks conventional approaches are likely to serve our complacency with the present order. Certain chapters show the conceptual depth of H.'s work, dealing with the Holy Spirit and with time. Again, the concern is to work against laziness in our language.

Finally, some chapters reflect on the actual composition of theological work, specifically its use of irony and of humor. Though the self-consciousness of these (and other) chapters is at times distracting, they nevertheless suggest the kind of craftsmanship H. exercises.

H. admits the book is "unapologetically self-referential" (2). While serving as a remarkably compact compilation of and commentary on H.'s themes, it is likely to be a difficult book to navigate for those who are not already "in" the discourse. A claim such as "[Stanley Fish's] *How to Write a Sentence* can be read as an extended commentary on MacIntyre's observation about Nietzsche's remark" is going to be difficult for the uninitiated. What then to make of his claim to do theology for the church? Throughout the book the reader is reminded that H. is "an avowed enemy of 'theory'" and resists the Constantinian temptation to make the church "a representative of generally agreed-upon ideals" espoused by cosmopolitans. Thus, doing theology for the church means H.'s first loyalty is people seeking to follow Christ through the day-to-day life together that is the church. H. does not mean to reject academy and society, but rather clarify the proper *ordering* of the narrative which shapes Christian vision and action. By preserving that order, this book evidences, paradoxically, how he generates powerful engagements with intellectuals and social problems. Those who lose their lives will save them.

David Cloutier  
Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, MD