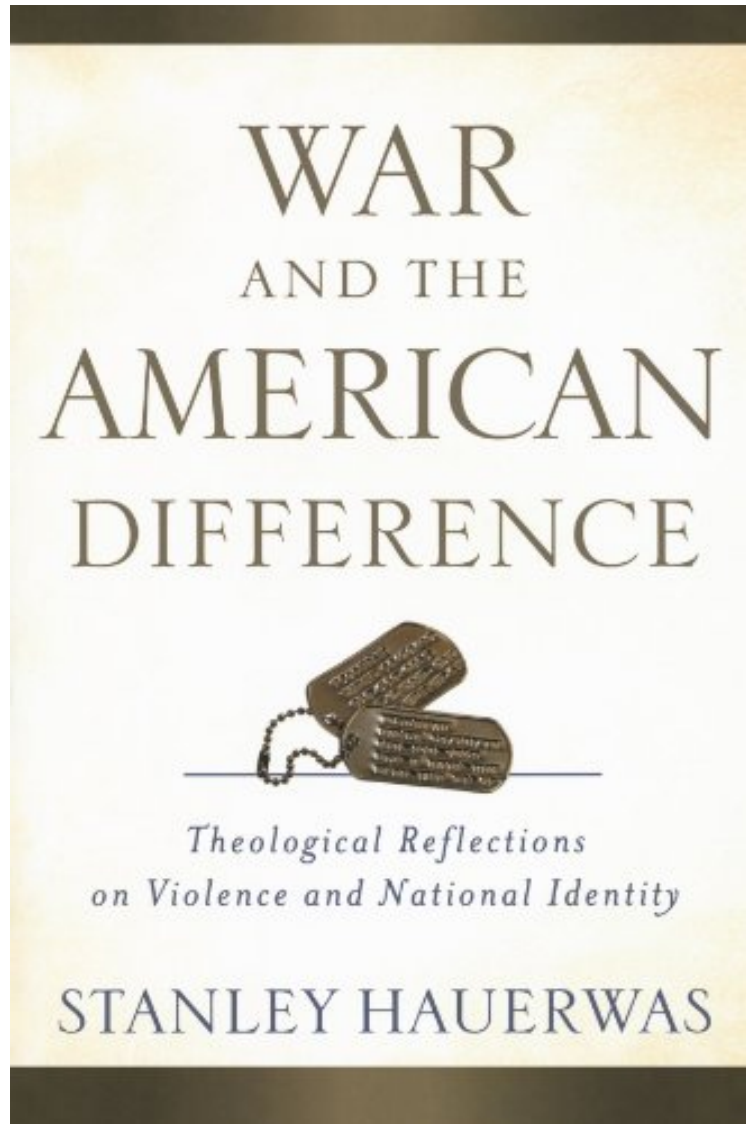


War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity

Stanley Hauerwas

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Stanley Hauerwas : War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity:

35 of 37 people found the following review helpful. Incredible Insight and LessonsBy Edward J. HassertI am a patriotic disabled vet and a Christian pastor. This book made me think about war in ways I had never considered. It is

insightful, well written and a great read. I found it hard to put down which is not usual for a philosophy/theology book. No matter if you are a pacifist, just war theorist, or an advocate of preventive war, you will learn something if you read this book with an open mind. Honestly, after reading this book, it is impossible for me, as a pastor, to defend our wars from the aspect of Christianity any longer. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Plenty of gold to be mined here. By Grant Marshall I enjoyed this book. Hauweras' central thesis is that in the death and resurrection of Christ war itself has been abolished. For Christians we are then called to live non-violently in the world as we follow Christ and seek to embody his Kingdom. This point was excellent and thoroughly biblical. I think Hauweras could have strengthened his case by discussing Revelation 5 where the Lion John hears is the slain lamb. Another major point is that war is a sacrificial system. Those who die in war make those for whom they have died feel obligated to accept their gifts and repay them in kind. For Hauweras America is a country that cannot live without war. It provides a common and cohesive story that binds the nation together. It also gives us a common enemy to fight against, and people are never so united as when they have a common enemy. However, I wasn't totally convinced by this point. A national identity can be forged in the furnaces of war, but I've always seen America's national identity as "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness". Yet there are connections between that identity and War, especially if we are willing to go to war to protect, and in some cases enforce in other nations. Americans have rarely been willing to die for Christianity or any other sectarian faith, but have regularly been willing to die for the nation. This gives us some idea of the religious power behind the nation state. These points are worked out in Parts 1 and 2. There is so much gold to be mined in these parts that I will no doubt re-read them soon. In part 3 Hauweras focuses on the difference that the body of Christ makes to the world and war. His discussion on Jesus as the justice of God was excellent, rooting the idea of justice not as an abstract or external concept to which Christianity is accountable but something that cannot be understood apart from Christian theological concepts and practices. The last few chapters in this section were a bit too technical and philosophical for me to follow. I did have two main concerns with the book. Hauweras repeatedly said that the gift Christians can give the world is the refusal to kill each other. This conclusion, which Hauweras reached on multiple occasions, often came out of nowhere and was not a valid conclusion from the arguments he was advancing. Note that he says "each other" not others. The implication is that Christians are out there actively killing other Christians. Evidently Hauweras felt no need to substantiate this with statistics, citations or research. I had to wonder if there was some epidemic of Christians killing each other that we needed to oppose? Secondly, even if you agree with him in regards to pacifism he doesn't answer two crucial questions that everyone will eventually ask or be asked: (1) Can a Christian serve in the Military? (2) What about war that is truly in self defence? One thinks of Hitler invading Poland or North Korea invading the South. I find pacifism works fine for me and my own life. It gets very difficult to take to a national level. I kept wanting these questions to be answered but they never were. To be fair I think these questions were not the central focus of his book. I got the impression that he was trying to do some big picture stuff, and shift the discussion beyond the traditional Pacifist, Just-War or Crusade categories. However a little bit on these questions would no doubt have helped greatly. On the whole, even with my concerns, I found the book to be excellent food for thought, especially parts 1 and 2. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Overall good, but not quite a 5. By C. Anderson Good explanation but a bit disjointed at times.

How are American identity and America's presence in the world shaped by war, and what does God have to do with it? Esteemed theologian Stanley Hauerwas helps readers reflect theologically on war, church, justice, and nonviolence in this compelling volume, exploring issues such as how America depends on war for its identity, how war affects the soul of a nation, the sacrifices that war entails, and why war is considered "necessary," especially in America. He also examines the views of nonviolence held by Martin Luther King Jr. and C. S. Lewis, how Jesus constitutes the justice of God, and the relationship between congregational ministry and Christian formation in America.

From the Back Cover How are American identity and America's presence in the world shaped by war, and what does God have to do with it? In *War and the American Difference*, Stanley Hauerwas reflects theologically on war, church, justice, and nonviolence. He explores such issues as how America depends on war for its identity, how war affects the soul of a nation, the sacrifices that war entails, and why war is considered "necessary," especially in America. He also examines the views of nonviolence held by Martin Luther King Jr. and C. S. Lewis, how Jesus constitutes the justice of God, and the relationship between congregational ministry and Christian formation in America. "Disenthraling Americans from war will require an authentic realism that displaces the illusions commonly passing for realism. In this luminous volume, Stanley Hauerwas continues the vital work of planting the signposts that show us the way." -- Andrew J. Bacevich, Boston University; author of *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* Beginning from the startling claim that war defines American political identity, these essays should interest both religious and secular readers. Hauerwas defends a Christian pacifism that allows no compromises with war, including that most common form of compromise--just war theory. Christians will be powerfully challenged by his claim that nonviolence is a necessary condition of a church that is a living witness to Christ. Secular readers will be forced to rethink the ground of their own commitment to a politics built on violent sacrifice. Hauerwas demands of all of us that we think

through the character of our faith and the sources of ultimate meaning in our lives."--Paul W. Kahn, Robert W. Winner
Professor of Law and the Humanities, Yale Law School
About the Author Stanley Hauerwas (PhD, Yale University) is professor emeritus of divinity and law at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. He is the author of over forty books, including *Cross-Shattered Christ*, *A Cross-Shattered Church*, *With the Grain of the Universe*, *A Better Hope*, and *Matthew* in the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible.