

EXCERPT



The Making of Stanley Hauerwas ***Bridging Barth and Postliberalism***

September 10, 2019 | \$40, 248 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4916-1

Stanley Hauerwas is often associated with the postliberal theological movement, yet he also claims to stand within Karl Barth's theological tradition. Which is true? Theologian David Hunsicker offers a reevaluation of Hauerwas's theology, arguing that he is both a postliberal and a Barthian theologian, helping us understand both the formation and the ongoing significance of one of America's great theologians.

In the Words of Stanley Hauerwas

It is enough to make me think there is a conspiracy afoot by intelligent young theologians to embarrass me. Robert Dean recently wrote a wonderful book, *For the Life of the World: Jesus Christ and the Church in the Theologies of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Stanley Hauerwas*, in which he developed a very interesting comparison between Bonhoeffer's and my theology. Dean's treatment of my work was positive and constructive. In particular he called attention to the christological commitments that are at the heart of everything I do but critics of my work usually ignore. But who wants to be compared with Bonhoeffer? Bonhoeffer was a great theologian. I am an American academic.

Being put up against Bonhoeffer is one thing, but now I have to face David Hunsicker's investigation of my claim to be a Barthian. Barth, too, was a great theologian. I follow at a great distance. Barth was not only more learned than I could ever hope to be, but he had a theological imagination that was without compare. From my perspective, Barth is a miracle. He seems to have come from nowhere to help us recover the magic of the gospel. Hunsicker is, of course, right to hold my feet to the fire because I have claimed to be a "Barthian," but as he also indicates I have never claimed to be a Barth scholar. Nonetheless, to be put up against Barth, if only to suggest there is something to be said for my claim to be a Barthian, is profoundly humbling.

What then am I to make of the fine books Dean and Hunsicker have written? Why should anyone care if I am a Barthian? Little seems to hang on an answer to that question. Yet the care with which Hunsicker pursues that question means that it might matter not because there is a definitive answer but because the pursuit of an answer can tell us something about how theology needs to be done. In short, theology is best done in conversation with other theologians. Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is one long conversation with Scripture, the Christian tradition, contemporary theologians, and philosophers. What one learns from watching Barth carry on his conversations is how well he listens to his friends . . . and his foes.

I cannot claim to listen as well as Barth, but I hope even at this late time in my life that I can listen to the kind of critiques of what I have tried to do offered by Hunsicker (and Dean). Hunsicker develops criticisms that matter because he has done me the favor of reading me sympathetically but critically. That is a gift I cherish, and I can only hope that Hunsicker's book will attract others to the conversation. For if he is right, as I take him to be, that in some ways I am a pragmatist, then we will know we are on to something by attending to the work done because someone listened.

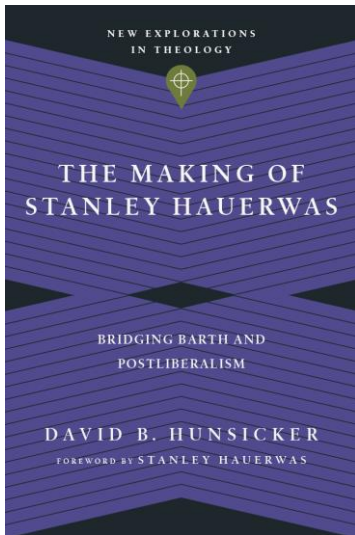
—Taken from the foreword by Stanley Hauerwas



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DETAILS



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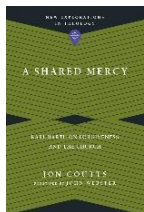
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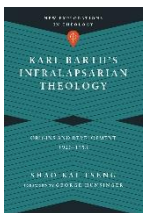
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Theology is flourishing in dynamic and unexpected ways in the twenty-first century. Scholars are increasingly recognizing the global character of the church, freely crossing old academic boundaries, and challenging previously entrenched interpretations. Despite living in a culture of uncertainty, both young and senior scholars today are engaged in hopeful and creative work in the areas of systematic, historical, philosophical, biblical, and practical theology.



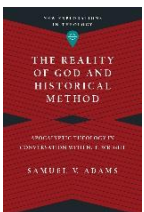
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