

Stanley Hauerwas. *Working With Words: On Learning to Speak Christian*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011. 322 pages. \$37.

Oddly enough another book with a similar title was published in 2011 by Marcus Borg called *Speaking Christian*. What is the interest in the linguistics of the Christian faith on the part of these two very different theologians? The reader of this review may take up both books to answer the question comparatively; but for this review, I will scrutinize Hauerwas' agenda as far as I can determine it.

In this work, Hauerwas explains his intentions in the Preface: "What I offer the reader in this book is my explicit reflection and exhibition of what it means for theology to be work and, in particular, work with words." (x)

This book contains a wide array of new and older works. The genre vary: there are sermons, essays, and co-authored essays. It is hard to characterize this work. It contains many topics that span everything from reflections on relativism to the issues the Episcopal Church faces. There seems to be no common thread that binds one essay and sermon to the next. Hauerwas, however, would differ from me on this judgment as he explains in the Preface that in the first section he is trying "to address questions of learning to say 'God,'" while in the book's second section he wants to deal with "more 'normative' matters." And in the last section he looks at various denominational figures and ideas "that have taught me how to do theology." (xiv) Surely any one section is enough for one book.

Most superficially, the sections of this work are divided into: I. Learning Christian: To See and to Speak; II. The Language of Love: From Death to Life; and III. Habits of Speech Exemplified: Some Teachers. There is also an extended bibliography.

It is impossible to quote any one essay as a clear example of the book's multiple intentions, other than merely providing a sample of what the essay itself is about. Quotations, admirable as they might be, cannot link the sections or essays together in any overall sense of what the entire work intends. For readers content with multiple allusions and intentions, this book will satisfy.

Hauerwas has provided a personal theological encyclopedia. For that reason the reader does well to use the Table of Contents to look for specific topics of interest rather than attempting an overall read of this work in search of a more clear unified theme and development along any particular line of thought.

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