



# Witness Is Presence: Reading Stanley Hauerwas in a Nordic Setting

By *Miika Tolonen*

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**Witness Is Presence: Reading Stanley Hauerwas in a Nordic Setting** By Miika Tolonen

In a postsecular cultural situation the conditions for understanding and communicating a Christian tradition have changed. None of the established religions can any longer claim monopoly in the "marketplace of religions". A claim of this study is that a postsecular situation characterized, among other things, by dwindling memberships in established churches as well as a new visibility of alternative religious expressions, opens up a need to reflect on alternative ways of understanding Christianity in its context. This study focuses on the question, how can a Christian tradition be communicated understandably in a postsecular context? In traditional terms: how can Christian witness be understood in our situation? It is to this need, according to this study, that the ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas provides a meaningful perspective. This perspective becomes relevant because in a postsecular context a Christian church, even a folk church, cannot assume to be in a position of majority or power. There is, therefore, a need to ask how to understand Christianity as a community of witness that is neither in power nor a majority. The study suggests that embodiment of Christian convictions becomes a central factor in a meaningful postsecular notion of witness.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

This book is a wonderful indication of not only the great relevance of Hauerwas' theological-ethical vision for the wider church of Christ in general, but also with regard to particular contexts such as the Nordic lands. Thoroughly knowledgeable of the intricacies of the post-secular European ecclesiastical context and the theological nuances of the leading American ethicist, Miika Tolonen's patient and insightful investigation is a call for the church to live up to its message. Indeed, having read this inspiring text convinced me that whatever else it might be, primarily witness is presence. --Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Fuller Theological Seminary

#### **About the Author**

Miika Tolonen (BA, MA, DrTheol) is lecturer at Iso Kirja College in Keuruu, Finland.

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