

*Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life.* By Stanley Hauerwas. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Pp. xvii + 251. \$24.

“In my end is my beginning.” That resonant line of T. S. Eliot provides a helpful interpretive key to this collection of essays on eschatology by noted theological ethicist Stanley Hauerwas. The subject matter of the essays varies widely—the doctrine of creation, the decline of the Protestant churches, war, and more—but the volume’s focus throughout is the decisive irruption in history of Jesus Christ and the church. That irruption is an end, an eschaton. It also is the beginning insofar as it creates the possibilities for a new way of life now embodied in the church.

H. has sounded such themes before, but this collection is highlighted by a consistent, elegiac focus on them. H. acknowledges that he is approaching the end of his long teaching career. He also sees the inevitable end of most Christian churches insofar as they have allowed themselves to be co-opted by the strictures of the nation state. More fundamentally, H. turns to the work of philosophers like Stanley Cavell and Cora Diamond to identify the quiet, nearly unbearable agony of human life, reflexively deflected by irrelevant words and skeptical theories. Still, these hard ends are not the last word; reason for hope resides in cross and church.

I always enjoy reading H.—he is endlessly curious and intrepid—and this book does not disappoint. But with other critics of H., I share a concern for his penchant to pose needless polarities and implausible absolutes. The essay “War and Peace” in this volume is a case in point. Why must one accept the claim that citizens necessarily construe the modern nation state as a transcendent reality displacing the one true God (136)?

The book is best suited for graduate students and scholars already familiar with H.’s work.

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*The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach.* Edited by Michael Welker. Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 2014. Pp. x + 396. \$45.

On an almost daily basis we are flooded with new information and theories from archeology, anthropology, and the neurosciences about the origins of the human race, the distinctiveness of the human being, the emergence of consciousness. Some of these theories challenge long-held theological assumptions and have generated a number of recent publications exploring scientific and theological issues.

Welker, a prolific author and executive director of Heidelberg’s Center for International and Interdisciplinary Theology, has assembled this wonderfully informative collection of 20 essays, and updated reader (cited works—exclusively in English and German—up to 2009) on developments in many areas that affect our theological understanding of the human person. His collection is the product of a multiyear-long conversation on anthropology sponsored by the Templeton Foundation.