

*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.

Participants are preeminent theologians, philosophers, scientists, and ethicists, primarily from the North Atlantic region, one each from Japan and India, but only one woman among them. Three essays introduce the general topic, four provide scientific perspectives, six comb resources from the Christian tradition (especially the Bible and Augustine), and seven explore theological, ethical, and interdisciplinary challenges. All the contributions provide an alternative to the often-dualistic approaches that have so often bedeviled the tradition. The essays are written in a way that makes them accessible even for those not familiar with the scientific disciplines, so they should serve a wide audience.

Given such multifaceted contemporary approaches to the human person in the academic world, it is not surprising that selections had to be made, and some issues sidelined, such as the interplay between biological-evolutionary and cultural development.

Origen Jathanna's significant contribution on the concept of the body in Indian Christian theology was especially enlightening, and whetted the appetite for more than one non-European perspective. The collection might also have been enriched by an essay on the intense interest in the person shown by medieval authors. All in all, however, this is an important, readable, and welcome contribution to the field.

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*Questioning the Human: Toward a Theological Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century.* Edited by Lieven Boeve, Yves De Maeseneer, and Ellen Van Stichel. New York: Fordham University, 2014. Pp. vi + 254. \$24.

This collection of essays grew out of a 2011 conference inaugurating the *Anthropos* seminar at the Catholic University of Leuven. The seminar provides a platform for systematic theologians and ethicists to explore issues in theological anthropology in dialogue with philosophy and the natural and social sciences. The range of issues about the human raised in contemporary cultures, the sciences, and philosophy is admittedly broad, and the ten authors in the volume are careful not to overextend themselves. The essays are grouped under three headings: "Human Nature and Science" (where issues of human "nature" and the natural law are discussed); "Christ and the Disputed Self" (taking up issues from neuroscience, Charles Taylor's concept of the "buffered self," and the self in the philosophies of Derrida and Marion); and "Relating in a Fallen World" (relationality of the body, issues on a variety of feminisms, racism, public theology, and Girard's theory of mimetic desire as a way of understanding original sin and social violence). Also included are an amazing number of points of contact between theological anthropology and ethics with other disciplines. David Kirchhoffer provides an illuminating conclusion that finds five recurring themes in the papers and includes other voices from the seminar. The themes are relationality (the inevitable pluralism that marks contemporary life versus a metaphysics of substance as a point of departure for theological anthropology); the dangers of