

drive differing assessments of these theologians in their traditions (for example, Luther and his Lutheran interpreters). The chapter on Lonergan is a tour de force, in which Loewe deftly connects Lonergan's Latin work, written in Scholastic mode, with his later articulation of human consciousness, generalized empirical method, and a theory of history.

I would add only a few further points. The book lacks an index, which reduces its usefulness. In addition, the concept of realms of meaning as driving the development of soteriology would have been clearer if each chapter more explicitly discussed how it illustrates the realm of meaning it represents; a conclusion to each chapter and/or an epilogue drawing it all together would have helped. That said, the introduction becomes the key to the book and should be read carefully before, during, and after working through the substance of each chapter.

In conclusion, *Lex Crucis* is meticulously researched, deftly written, and well worth a thorough read.

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Walter Benjamin and Theology. Edited by Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016. viii + 329 pages. \$35.00 (paper).

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The German theorist Walter Benjamin, whose life was tragically cut short by World War II, has enjoyed a renaissance in recent decades due in part to the uncannily postmodern profile of his work. Indeed, although most strands of postmodern theory emerged from students and interlocutors of Martin Heidegger, the fragmentary nature of Benjamin's work embodies a kind of postmodern "style." It also engages a number of themes (archives, technologies, media) that would come to greater prominence in thinkers such as Foucault. Benjamin's influence on theology has been somewhat muted (in attention if not significance), even compared with other Jewish thinkers of the period, such as Franz Rosenzweig, Ernst Bloch, and Martin Buber. The present volume seeks to rectify this situation by putting forward a number of perspectives on Benjamin—some explicitly theological, some pointing to theology more obliquely.

The editors acknowledge in their introduction that the volume is "a novel intervention into a field of inquiry," given that theological appreciation of Benjamin has long existed but often been outshone by other thinkers (4). Looming large throughout the work, perhaps inevitably given its significance

for the subject matter at hand, is Benjamin's "Theological-Political Fragment" and its conception of Messiah. A significant number of the essays engage with this work in some way, typically by contrasting its Jewish conceptualization of Messiah with the Christian one.

The volume is divided into three sections, with the first focused on what the editors call "metaphysics of transience." Annika Thiem uses this term in the first essay to describe what she regards as a "historical metaphysics of transient experience" within Benjamin's work (22). Peter Fenves follows with an essay sketching out the aforementioned concept of Messiah, tracing its roots in Benjamin's thought prior to the "Theological-Political Fragment." Also notable is the section's concluding essay, in which Michael Jennings deals with Benjamin's relationship to Christianity as well as his appreciation of the idea of *apokastasis*. In the following section, Howard Eiland's "Walter Benjamin's Jewishness" makes a related contribution, engaging particularly the relation of Benjamin's Jewish identity to his nihilism (133).

One of this volume's greatest distinctions is its making available in English two important works relating to Benjamin, from German and Italian respectively. The two contributions by Jacob Taubes, "Walter Benjamin—A Modern Marcionite?" and his seminar notes on Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," will be important reading for many. The reflections in the seminar notes on the relationship between theology and materialism are particularly valuable. Similarly, Giorgio Agamben's essay on the discovery and publication of the fragments of Benjamin's work on Baudelaire provide both an important contribution and an account of a more important one, namely, the act itself of discovery and publication.

Two of the most distinguished contributions to the volume come in the third section. Judith Butler, herself the subject of the prior essay in the volume by Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, responds to Deuber-Mankowsky while also sketching a response to Benjamin's vision of Messiah. It is a fascinating and yet troubling exploration of Benjamin's theological-political work and what Butler describes as a certain nihilism in its acknowledgment of the fragility and destructibility of political structures (284). The final essay, by Hille Haker, connects Benjamin's work to the political theology of Johann Baptist Metz. Haker's impassioned essay provides a contrastive conclusion to a volume whose essays have, appropriate to Benjamin's thought itself, tended to provoke and raise questions without fully answering them; Haker's essay, with Metz, argues that one can, in dialogue with Benjamin, argue for the Christian idea that "God lives in everyone who suffers and is declared superfluous, waste of the earth" (305).

This volume provides a worthwhile contribution to the ongoing conversation between Continental philosophy and theology, both for those interested

in Benjamin's work itself and for the broader conversations of which it has become a part. Making the work of Taubes and Agamben available in English is invaluable in itself, as are the contributions by Butler and Haker. The volume will be of interest particularly to those interested in political theology, theology, German philosophy in Benjamin's time, and Jewish-Christian theological dialogue.

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Theology and Literature after Postmodernity. Edited by Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, Peter Hampson, and Alison Milbank. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. xi + 286 pages. \$120.00.

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This collection of essays is the third volume in a series called Religion and the University, published by Bloomsbury T&T Clark, and is a welcome addition to the scholarly, interdisciplinary engagement between literature and theology, particularly in how this conversation can help reimagine the nature and purpose of today's university. Indeed, the introductory essay suggests that a "hospitable" conversation between the theologian and the literary critic can create a public space at the university to understand what it means to be human. These essays aim, on a variety of levels, to "un-silo," if you will, the disciplinary specializations that have often truncated broader concerns that affect human flourishing. This space is distinctly a post-postmodern conversation because the essays aim not merely to deconstruct and delineate the gaps and slippages that prevail in some contemporary theological and literary criticism, but attempt to reconstruct a virtuous and meaningful dialogue between them. The authors suggest that only in this respectful space can we understand what it means to be human.

Part 1 focuses on pedagogical principles that nourish this intellectual space, whether it be the configuration of literary study in relationship to, not in competition with, theology; or whether it be the challenge of religion to reveal the latent fideism that lurks in its theological arguments. In these first essays of the volume, the authors illustrate that whether it is poetry or prayer, human purpose and feeling are explored in often complementary fashion. Vittorio Montemaggi's essay, "Theology, Literature, and Prayer: A Pedagogical Suggestion," sees this schooling in humility at work in three texts valuable to both theologians and literary critics alike: Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, Dante's *Paradiso*, and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Part 2 comprises the bulk of the essays, which are acts of reconstruction, for each argues for a hermeneutical revision of postmodern categories in a