

*Lex Crucis: Soteriology and the Stages of Meaning.* By William P. Loewe. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016. Pp. ix + 381. \$79.

Loewe's work is a significant achievement that manifests the mature fruit of decades of scholarship and faith-filled reflection upon the saving significance of the work of Jesus Christ.

L. proposes that though Gustav Aulen's now classic work *Christus Victor* remains a valuable entre for theological reflection on the atonement, Bernard Lonergan's differentiation of three "stages of meaning" provides an illuminating—and ultimately more satisfying—heuristic for understanding the enormously varied history of Christian reflection on Christ's saving work. Instead of sharply distinguishing the various historic approaches to the intelligibility of the atonement and either harmonizing them or promoting one to the denigration of the others, L. argues that Lonergan's "stages of meaning" provide a vital resource for illuminating both the differences between respective approaches to the atonement and for affirming the distinctive value of each approach.

Following a concise exposition of each of the three stages—commonsense, theory, and interiority (see chap. 1, 1–6)—L. provides extensive accounts of the soteriological reflection of Irenaeus (chap. 2), Anselm (chap. 3), Aquinas (chap. 4), Luther (chap. 5), Schleiermacher (chap. 6), and Lonergan himself (chap. 7). Beginning with the conviction that "each figure bears witness to the transforming power of God's love enacted and communicated in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ," L. utilizes Lonergan's heuristic to "enhance . . . appreciation of [each figure's] achievement and [to] clarify the present theological task" (12–13).

One of the chief values of this work is L.'s careful historical contextualization of the various figures whose soteriological work he expounds and evaluates. L.'s primary published contributions are in contemporary theological reflection, but this particular work demonstrates his competency, and even fluency, in historical theology. Each chapter begins with a historical vignette for its respective theologian, and these sections exhibit both L.'s thorough acquaintance with the relevant historical scholarship for each figure and his judicious handling the primary texts in question. L. is as "at home" in second- and third-century Gaul as he is in thirteenth-century Paris or twentieth-century Canada. Even readers who might be skeptical of L.'s overall project could benefit greatly from his historical work. The historical frameworks set the table for L.'s judicious exegesis of the primary soteriological contributions of each historic figure.

While L. follows the arguments of his sources carefully, he frames his evaluative exegesis with three guiding questions: "First, what's the story? Second, how is the plot of the story intelligible? Third, what generates the story and makes it a saving story?" (6) Through attending to each of these questions, L. is able to exhibit the dynamism in Christian reflection on soteriology as it pivots from focus on the dramatic symbolism present in the commonsense world(s) of Scripture (primarily in Irenaeus, though returning in force in Luther) to theoretical reflection on the *convenientia* of Christ's work (Anselm and Aquinas, with a return in Lonergan), to a primary focus on the

appropriation of Christ's work in the consciousness of Christian believers (Luther, Schleiermacher, and Lonergan).

Although this book has few flaws, none are serious. While it deserves a wide readership in the theological academy and among intellectually ambitious clergy and other ecclesial leaders, the density of L.'s presentation of Lonergan's work may prove too much for some. That critique is no indictment of L., though, and L.'s work represents a robust performative demonstration of the enduring value of Lonergan's thought for both historical and systematic theology.

As I noted above, L. provides a thorough and penetrating exposition of Lonergan's position on stages of meaning, and he returns, again and again, to elements of that heuristic in his treatments of each historical figure. While L. ends strongly with an excellent treatment of Lonergan's little-known writings on Christ's work, *Lex Crucis* lacks a conclusion and left me with a sense of incompleteness. A brief conclusion would have provided L. the opportunity to restate the cumulative case which he takes over 300 dense pages to develop. It would also have provided L. an opportunity to address the exigencies of responsible and faithful systematic reflection on Christ's atoning work in the present. Others may find, as I did, that a reread of the introduction will provide more closure. The book also lacks an index.

These faults are slight blemishes, though, in what is a rich, well-written, theologically astute, and ultimately—in my estimation—compelling treatment of the history of reflection on Christ's atoning work. It is timely, too, given the imminent publication of the Collected Works edition of Lonergan's *The Redemption* (vol. 9). We are in L.'s debt, and my hope is that he will continue to build on this work, perhaps in the form of a contemporary systematic theology of the atonement. He is assuredly well equipped for that job.

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*Purification of Memory: A Study of Modern Orthodox Theologians from a Catholic Perspective.* By Ambrose Mong. Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 2015. Pp. xviii + 214. \$30.

This agile introduction to contemporary Orthodox theology is the work of a Chinese Dominican priest who is visiting professor at the University of St. Joseph, Macau, and research associate at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. For obvious historical and cultural reasons, Christian scholars working outside the European and North American academy seldom choose to focus on the legacy of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, whose presence in what is increasingly called "the global South" is often still limited to small expatriate communities. It is thus refreshing to find an introduction to the main figures and themes of 20th-century Orthodoxy penned by a Chinese Catholic priest writing mainly for a Catholic audience. Andrew Louth's recent work *Modern Orthodox Thinkers: From the Philokalia to the Present* (2015) covers much of the