

exertion of sinners, which a righteous God cannot justify, and sinners' accession in what God has done for them, which they could never do for themselves?

Again, does Habakkuk 2:4, a key text for Paul (quoted in Gal 3:11 and Rom 1:17), truly mean that people are saved by their "faithfulness" (Hebrew *'emunah*), as Bates urges (42)? The prophet's original situation involved an apparent delay in the fulfillment of God's visionary promise, calling for steadfast faith while waiting (one sense of *'emunah*).

Bates may enhance the reception of his proposal by delimiting it more carefully. Could it be that faith-as-allegiance (including obedience to God through actual grace) does characterize Christian discipleship in the present age from regeneration to Last Judgment, whereas faith-as-letting-God-act-on-our-behalf from beginning to end (excluding any contribution of ours) defines the comprehensive sphere of absolute grace within which alone allegiance can come about? After all, that too is a way to incorporate both perspectives from the historic debate.

Bates' main thesis is important, and this book should be in libraries, classrooms, and pastors' studies, even though some will hesitate to concur with some of the author's points.

PAUL A. RAINBOW
Sioux Falls Seminary

Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church. By Hans Boersma. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017. xx + 316 pages. \$39.99 (paper).

doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.9

In *Scripture as Real Presence*, Hans Boersma offers a learned and stimulating contribution to the growing collection of studies on the relevance of pre-modern Christian reading strategies for contemporary Christian theological interpretation of Scripture.

Boersma's two-pronged argument is that (1) "the church fathers were deeply invested in reading the Old Testament Scriptures as a sacrament, whose historical basis or surface level participates in the mystery of the New Testament reality of the Christ event," and that (2) "this sacramental approach to reading the Scriptures is of timeless import and ... is worthy of retrieval today" (xiii).

In the first major chapter, Boersma examines the impact of metaphysical commitments for scriptural interpretation. The kind of "sacramental hermeneutic" that Boersma argues undergirds premodern exegesis, and the kind he

promotes for contemporary use depends upon a “sacramental ontology.” Boersma maintains a Christian Platonist metaphysic that holds that “eternal realities are really present in visible things” (12). Such commitments, Boersma argues, are foundational for his premodern interlocutors and are superior to the atomistic modern metaphysical commitments that have often undergirded modern historical approaches to the Bible.

In the nine chapters that follow, Boersma examines premodern “sacramental” treatments of a number of texts, from the creation narratives (chapter 2) to the Beatitudes (chapter 10), by significant premodern figures, including Irenaeus, Melito of Sardis, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Augustine, and others. These studies can stand on their own, as Boersma notes (xii), and they serve to advance contemporary understanding of the particularities of premodern Christian exegesis. For that contribution alone *Scripture as Real Presence* has value within the ongoing conversations about theological interpretation. But it is not without its problems.

The mystery that God is reconciling all things in Christ (Eph 1:10) clearly elicited a commitment in premodern Christian interpreters to something *like* the kind of sacramental hermeneutic Boersma promotes. From the New Testament onward, early Christians held that the God who inspired the ancient Scriptures pointed readers beyond those texts to deep, even sacramental, truths (*sacramentum* was actually the Latin word most often used to translate the Greek *mystērion*, in fact). The texts were and are able to mediate to readers the truth of Christ’s presence.

But while many premodern interpreters found “Platonic” metaphysics useful, explicit commitments to Platonism were by no means necessary for such exegesis. From a strictly historical perspective, not all of Boersma’s interlocutors exhibit the influence of Plato or his interpreters. And “Platonism” was by no means monolithic and unchanging. All of the premodern readers Boersma treats were, however, *explicitly* committed to a Christocentric understanding of reality (as Boersma notices; see p. 15 n. 55).

Boersma treats historical-critical scholarship as almost entirely problematic in this work. But the mystery of God’s self-revelation in history is also a scandal of (historical) particularity. As Henri de Lubac has noticed and emphasized, the historicity of that work entailed a commitment to the value of historical investigation in Christian thought that has affinities with the attentiveness to particularity manifest in historical-critical scholarship. I am in full agreement with Boersma that the Church Fathers would find any presupposition of methodological “atheism” a fundamental obstacle to the understanding of Scripture. But how would they have responded to the *actual achievements* of historical criticism? We cannot say with certainty whether or not Origen or Augustine would have rejected those achievements,

but I sincerely doubt they would have. We will need more than a return to a Platonic metaphysic (if there ever were such a uniform commitment) to appreciate both the achievements and the shortcomings of premodern and modern engagements with Scripture.

JOSEPH K. GORDON
Johnson University Florida

Theology at the Crossroads of University, Church, and Society: Dialogue, Difference, and Catholic Identity. By Lieven Boeve. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016. vii + 239 pages. \$114.00
 doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.10

Boeve's book is broken into three main parts that reflect the book's subtitle, and includes an insightful conclusion on the surprising resignation of Pope Benedict XVI in 2013. Benedict, Boeve claims, experienced enough "cognitive dissonance" between his vision for the Catholic Church and the reality of the actual Catholic Church that it may have led implicitly to a paradoxical situation in which his resignation was perhaps, even if symbolically, the only way to resolve the tension. Boeve's call for a Catholic Church that takes seriously its own call to repentance and conversion—hence one that is willing to see its own failings on display before it—is argued as the only path forward, one that Benedict failed to see. Boeve's realistic vision of a "poorer and humbler church," to my mind, gives us a glimpse into the inner workings of the essays collected here, which attempt to do what Benedict could not do: find dialogue as the answer to what many perceive as a dissonance that cannot be overcome.

In the first part of the book, Boeve discusses how the church exists both at the margins of society and simultaneously at a crossroads where multiple discourses meet. In the midst of a plurality of identities and communities, religions and scientific conversations, theology must learn to be a marginal discourse within each of these settings, not the dominant one that has guided European history for so long and colonized so much of the remaining world. Starting with his home context of Belgium and the increasingly secular culture of Europe, Boeve displays an adept sense of the issues of contextualization that theology faces. He outlines accordingly how theology has something important to contribute to the conversations that take place in the scientific setting of a modern university, within the life of the church where it is often contentiously held (as he discusses in an essay on the International Theological Commission's document "Theology Today"), and in an increasingly secularized society at the same time.