

Seagram Murals. She allows questions and insights for understanding the vulnerability of the Incarnation to emerge through this exploration.

Through the Dark Field is an original and insightful work in constructive theology. Babka's language and style of writing lead the reader to spaces of unknowing, to voids where certainty falls away and only questions remain. Furthermore, she draws upon rich and varied aspects of human experience as a resource for theological inquiry. These multiple examples range from the ordinary to the catastrophic and confirm her theses that "God may be glimpsed but never grasped—a divine kenosis of self-emptying that is continually poured out for the fulfillment of the Other in the sphere of time and space" (xiii).

This book makes a valuable contribution to interdisciplinary Christian theological scholarship and will provide both theologians and artists with valuable insights for their work. As a theologian reading this monograph, I found it difficult at times to follow Babka's exploration of some artistic images because I could not visualize the artistic works. Babka points out the difficulty of trying to convey the impression of an artistic masterpiece through small black-and-white grayscale copies in books (228). While this is a valid point, I was unable to fully appreciate Babka's exploration of the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas, until I looked at images online. In addition, the valuable path Babka forged for the reader into places of unknowing was sometimes marred by a lack of clarity. Babka rapidly shifts from one theological reference to another, from one field of discipline to another, and discusses one artistic work with reference to many others. It is clear that she has expertise and perceptive analysis of the sources she explores, but at times she fails to adequately articulate the reasons for her rapid transitions and shifts, leaving the reader with appreciative impressions of these sources but unable to tie them to the larger argument of the book. Despite these limitations, the book articulates a profound vision that makes reading this monograph a valuable experience.

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Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King. By Matthew W. Bates. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017. xvi + 234 pages. \$24.99 (paper).
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What must people do to be saved? For half a millennium two main Christian views in the West have stood opposed: Protestant championship

of “faith alone,” and Catholic insistence on faith embodied in doing God’s will with the help of God’s actual grace (i.e., bringing about concrete actions of ours). New Testament specialist Matthew Bates thinks he sees a way to synthesize these views. When Christianity began, he argues, faith meant allegiance to the living Christ who is now exalted to God’s throne, an allegiance that comprised affirming the truth about Christ, committing oneself to him, and obeying him. For the sake of effective mission, the church today needs to recover this rich sense of faith.

Bates is well situated to draw from both sides of the divide, having a solid conservative-evangelical education (Whitworth University, Regent College), a doctorate from Notre Dame, and a faculty position at a Catholic university (Quincy). He pitches his appeal broadly to theologians and also to the wider church.

To establish “allegiance” as the most adequate English synonym for the word *pistis* (“faith, belief, trust,” according to the standard lexicons of classical and NT Greek), Bates engages in both word study and biblical theology. A core chapter (4, “Faith as Allegiance”) highlights passages from Greco-Roman literature where “allegiance” fits best, and in these passages he has a strong case. Few would demur to Bates’ eloquent contention that the apostolic gospel was a larger narrative centering on Jesus’ ascension and present reign—not just on Jesus’ atoning death and rising from the dead—than we often hear in contemporary evangelization (chapters 2–3 and 9); and that the great goal of God’s redemptive program is a renovated human community raised to somatic glory in a new creation, conformed to God’s image represented iconically by Christ (chapters 6–7). These latter points ride waves in current New Testament scholarship, especially those stirred by N. T. Wright, the author most frequently listed in Bates’ bibliography. For *pistis* directed to a living Lord and taking part in cosmic transformation, “allegiance” may well be a preferable “macro” or “overarching” translation (5, 78).

Nevertheless Bates’ exegesis in places (especially in chapters 5, “Questions about Allegiance Alone,” and 8, “Justification and Allegiance Alone”) renders aspects of his proposal debatable. An example is his lexicography. Of course he is fully aware that the sense of a lexeme in one context does not necessarily carry over into others (78). Does the word “allegiance,” then, clarify—or does it obscure—verses where Paul sets works and *pistis* over against each other, as he does in Romans 4:5 or 9:32? Is this works-*pistis* antithesis really between two kinds of deeds (those “performed apart from the new creation” versus those “performed as allegiance to Jesus”), as Bates suggests (121)? Can the ungodly indeed produce allegiance to Jesus resulting in justification (Rom 4:5)? Or is Paul’s contrast in fact the familiar difference between moral

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.

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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).

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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