

finite in power” (178, emphasis original). In short, although Duby is not out to “defend Reformed Christology simply because it bears the descriptor ‘Reformed’” (176–7), he does raise some concerns about Lutheran Christology. His discussion of the topic comprises only a small percentage of the book, but it is a highlight because of its concise treatment of an issue that continues to divide Lutherans and the Reformed.

More broadly, throughout the book Duby does an excellent job of attending to both the biblical text and relevant theological treatments, older and newer. In so doing he effectively demonstrates that classical theism is not a byproduct of disregarding the biblical witness, but rather a result of reading Scripture rightly. Much of Duby’s scholarly output to date has sought to defend this basic point in various ways, and *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism* is a welcome contribution to this worthwhile task.

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Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 316 pp. \$34.99.

Hans Boersma (PhD, University of Utrecht) serves as the St. Benedict Servants of Christ Chair in Ascetical Theology at Nashotah House Theological Seminary. He previously taught at Regent College and Trinity Western University. Throughout his career, he has written extensively on the topic of sacramental ontology, publishing *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (2009), *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (2011), and *Sacramental Preaching: Sermons on the Hidden Presence of Christ* (2016).

In *Scripture as Real Presence*, Boersma aims to demonstrate that the early church read the Bible sacramentally. His thesis is “that 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” (xiii). But his goal is deeper. He not only wants to convince his readers that the church fathers read the Scriptures sacramentally, but that they should too.

When he speaks of sacrament, Boersma is arguing for the idea that the Bible (along with those ecclesial activities which are more traditionally known as sacraments) do not simply point to the reality of Jesus, but that they actually

“render Christ present” (2) to those who participate in them. The church fathers approached the Scriptures with this understanding because they held the metaphysical and ontological assumption that there is a close connection between visible and invisible realities. In fact, they saw all of creation as sacramental, though they recognized a distinction between “general sacramentality” and the “sacraments of the church” (1–4). As they read the Scriptures, they sought and experienced the invisible but no less real presence of Christ.

Boersma identifies the reason that his own contemporaries do not read the Scriptures with the sacramental eyes of the church fathers. The metaphysical commitments that have dominated biblical and theological discourse since Spinoza and Hobbes have hamstrung moderns with a preoccupation for the surface meaning and historical data surrounding the text which distracts them from encountering the presence of Christ through the text. Moderns are so focused on the letter of Scripture that they have forgotten that they are meant to ascend from the letter to the Spirit. Boersma uses the example of the church fathers to call the modern church and academy to ascend from their preoccupation with the letter to an enjoyment of the Spirit: Christ, the *res* of Scripture.

The first chapter is dedicated to demonstrating the different metaphysical commitments which governed the interpretive methods of the Fathers and that govern most interpreters today. Moderns frequently accuse the Fathers of ignoring the letter of Scripture with an unhinged allegorical method of interpretation. But, according to Boersma, the Fathers did not discount the historical reality of the things presented in Scripture. Instead, their metaphysics freed them to look beyond the historical to invisible. He argues that the modern approach to Scripture which prioritizes the visible over the invisible in the approach to reading the Bible simply reflects the modern metaphysical commitments that are rooted in the Enlightenment.

Once he has established the philosophical foundation for exegesis in the early church, he demonstrates in each of the successive chapters how the Fathers interpreted different types of texts in light of their sacramental ontology. He provides examples of “what it means for biblical reading to be sacramental in character” (xiii). Most of the chapters deal with the hermeneutics of multiple fathers to demonstrate that the sacramental approach was broadly appropriated and not isolated to a few.

The Scripture texts that he has selected for each of the chapters cover the gamut of genres, from the creation account to the Beatitudes. Each chapter is named to reflect the genre and setting of the text in question (e.g. the chapter on Origen and Chrysostom’s interpretation of the theophany in Genesis 18 is

called “Hospitable Reading”). After surveying the hermeneutics of the Fathers throughout various genres of Scripture, he concludes the book with a continued call to theological *ressourcement*.

Boersma clearly succeeds in demonstrating his thesis, leaving no doubt that the church fathers examined in the book read the Scriptures sacramentally. Each chapter serves to prove the sacramental reading of the early church fathers while also demonstrating that they did not discount the historical basis of the text, but instead looked through it to the mystery of Christ revealed in the New Testament.

The chapters are tied into the overall argument of the book and the framework presented in the first chapter, but each chapter could also stand on its own, and each chapter is strong and provides an excellent survey of early church’s exegetical approaches to different types of Scripture. A couple of these chapters are especially important for moderns to grasp the difference between modern approaches to Scripture and the interpretive framework of the Fathers. First, the chapter on the sacramental exegesis of the Song of Solomon demonstrates how the early church gladly saw Christ in analogies that most modern interpreters are uncomfortable with. The second important chapter is the chapter on beatific reading because it demonstrates the beatific vision of the early church interpreters in their approach to Scripture. It was not a science for them, but a search for God’s beautiful presence. But they believed strongly that the search for God ought to be undertaken by those who are increasing in virtue. It is not merely a scientific parsing of Scripture, but an all of life submission to the revelation of God’s presence and demands.

Through this book, Boersma calls his readers to emulate this sacramental approach of the church fathers. Yet, he does not expect us to follow their interpretive conclusions wholesale. At times, he fairly criticizes the church fathers for their poor interpretations. He rightly critiques Gregory of Nyssa’s view that God’s creation of Adam and Eve with gendered bodies anticipated the fall (34), and he rightly calls out Origen’s neglect of history in his exegesis of Joshua 11 (126–7). Skeptical readers will find it reassuring that they are not being called to emulate every interpretive idiosyncrasy of the Fathers but instead to follow their overall interpretive framework with an appropriate level of care.

In response to the call to follow the overall interpretive method of the Fathers, some will argue that there was no *singular* overall interpretive method that can be attributed to the Fathers. They are correct, to a point. Much has been made of the differences of the Antiochene and the Alexandrian interpretive approaches. While Boersma focuses most heavily on the Alexandrian interpreters, especially

Origen, he shows in the chapter on “Hospitable Reading,” in which he compares Origen and Chrysostom’s approaches to the theophany of Genesis 18, that the real presence of God in the text was foundational to their hermeneutic. Origen is primarily concerned with vertical hospitality (i.e., how Abraham welcomed God’s presence) whereas Chrysostom is concerned primarily with horizontal hospitality (i.e., how Christians should welcome those around them). But both had as their starting point the presence of God. Here at least, Origen and Chrysostom approached Scripture with the same metaphysical commitments. They nuanced their interpretations differently, but their foundational assumption was the same. While this chapter represents the only comparison of an Alexandrian interpreter and an Antiochene interpreter, similar comparisons are woven throughout the book, demonstrating that there is flexibility in emphasis and nuance even within the Alexandrian interpretive framework. Despite these differences between Antiochene and Alexandrian approaches and especially within the Alexandrian school itself, he is right to point out that there is more continuity than discontinuity in the interpretive presuppositions and conclusions of the Fathers (277–8).

Finally, he helpfully addresses the accusation that allegorical and christological readings of the Old Testament are arbitrary. He says that those in the early church who were most opposed to allegorical readings never accused allegorical interpreters of arbitrariness. He argues that they did not see christological interpretations as arbitrary because they understood that the Bible belongs to the church. It is only since the academy has claimed interpretive authority over the Bible that christological interpretations are accused of being arbitrary (82–3).

Scripture as Real Presence is a solid contribution to the growing call to reclaim the benefits of the exegetical approaches of the early church, to reject the metaphysical assumptions of modern exegetical approaches, and to return to pre-critical exegesis.

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Fred Sanders, *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. 221 pp. Paperback. \$23.00.

The doctrine of the Trinity increasingly (and thankfully) continues to gain momentum in recent theological discussions. Christianity has always, in one way or another, centered on the Bible, the Triune God, and the incarnate Christ as