

That makes it highly useful for the curious theologian, church leader or missionary who wants to look beyond the rim of his own teacup.

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Systematic Theology Volume 1: Grounded in Holy Scripture and understood in the light of the Church – The God who is: The Holy Trinity

Douglas F. Kelly

Fearn, UK: Mentor, 2008, 640 pp., £22.99, hb, ISBN 9781845503864

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der erste Band von Douglas Kellys neuer Systematischer Theologie stellt eine willkommene Bereicherung der theologischen Literatur da. Es handelt sich dabei um eine Einführung in die Lehre von der Offenbarung. Es geht um den Gott, der sich in der Welt und in der Schrift offenbart und auch innerhalb der Glaubensgemeinschaft, die auf Gottes Bund mit den Menschen gegründet ist. Das Buch enthält erfrischende Diskussionen über Bibelabschnitte sowie eine anregende Reflektion über und Auseinandersetzung mit Theologen quer durch die Kirchengeschichte. Es ist der erste Band in einer geplanten Serie und stammt von einem der heute führenden, reformierten Theologen.

SUMMARY

The first volume of Douglas Kelly's new Systematic Theology is a welcome addition to theological literature. It is an introduction to the doctrine of revelation, to the God who reveals himself in the world, in Scripture and within the community of faith grounded in God's covenant with humans. It contains refreshing discussions of Bible passages as well as stimulating reflection on and engagement with theologians throughout the history of the church. It is the first volume in a projected series and comes from one of the leading Reformed theologians in the world today

RÉSUMÉ

On peut saluer ici la parution bienvenue du premier volume d'une nouvelle théologie systématique par Douglas Kelly. Il contient une introduction à la doctrine de la révélation et du Dieu qui se révèle dans le monde, par l'Ecriture et au sein de la communauté de la foi établie dans l'alliance conclue par Dieu avec les humains. S'il contient des discussions rafraîchissantes de passages bibliques l'auteur n'hésite pas à entrer en débat avec des théologiens de différentes époques de l'histoire de l'Eglise. Il nous offre ainsi une réflexion riche et stimulante. Ce premier volume qui en annonce d'autres émane de l'un des meilleurs théologiens réformés contemporains.

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This eagerly anticipated first volume of Douglas F. Kelly's *Systematic Theology* is a treat. It is erudite, straddling

the terrain with ease; it is thorough, engaging with different thinkers, past and present; and it does what it says on the cover: it grounds all its theological reflection in Scripture and is sensitive to the way in which the Church has considered the issues down through the centuries.

Douglas Kelly, who is currently Richard Jordan Professor of Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, states in the preface that his theology has grown out of an inheritance that is at once 'Reformed and Catholic'. This twin perspective is evident throughout: Kelly is a faithful systematiser of biblical truth within the Reformed tradition; he is also a faithful churchman, one who recognises the breadth and scope of the Church of Jesus Christ.

This first volume incorporates questions of prolegomena into its fundamental theme of theology proper. It is a study of the doctrine of God and contains chapters on the God who reveals himself, the knowledge of God in creation and conscience, the Enlightenment's rejection of God's self-disclosure, the Trinity as One Lord, the kind of Sovereign God he is, the revelation of God in the Covenant of Grace, the one Lord as Three Persons, the Church's reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity and the Co-equality of the Persons. Each of these major loci of thought necessitates a series of appendices on subjects such as the theistic proofs, the biblical view of other world religions, the particular positions of Eastern Orthodoxy and feminist theology, the history of covenant theology and the *filioque*. Each appendix is a major section in its own right, characterised by fair, judicious, clear reasoning.

Kelly's fundamental position is that God reveals himself within personal relationship, in covenant. This, in turn, creates a community of faith; faith is the only appropriate response to the truth of revelation (17). Further, it is a scientific response; it is not irrational, emotional or non-cognitive. 'Faith in a sense restores our access to the cognitive first principles on which reason properly functions' (19). Such knowledge of God can only occur within the community of faith, which itself is a mirror of God as community. This is the prolegomenon to all our subsequent reflection on theology: There has been a church from the beginning of history, a line in which Christ has been borne and by which now the truth is manifest. Drawing on a range of patristic and Reformed sources, Kelly is careful to anchor his theology in the experience of the church.

Such an emphasis is important in the twenty-first century. Our calling is to proclaim this God into a context of hyper-individualism, which is the supreme characteristic of postmodernism. Kelly's argument, however, is that this is not new; the early Church too 'turned on calling sceptics and relativists to assent to absolute truth' (38). We can learn from the past not only what it is that must be preached; we can also learn lessons on how such preaching must be done. Nor can theology be divorced from piety. Kelly reminds us that 'the purpose of true theological knowledge is a vital relationship to God,

characterized by continual prayer' (58). Without the language of dependence there is neither root nor fruit to our theological enquiry.

Kelly's approach to Systematic Theology is through the door of exegesis. Throughout, he devotes much needed space to the exposition of salient Bible passages. He also provides stimulating discussion on biblical themes – his sections on 'the Old Testament witness to the binding knowledge of God held by pagan nations' (149-152) and on the majesty of the Triune God (337-349) are particularly moving.

A major development in Kelly's work is the discussion of the covenant (chapter six) within the framework of how God makes himself known, rather than as a theme under soteriology. Kelly's premise is that we cannot know God outside of the community of faith that is constituted by the divine covenant. The strong emphasis on the federal element of revelation is welcome, especially as Kelly engages both with theological controversies over the relationship between law and grace, and with contemporary revisions of covenant theology in 'New Perspective' literature. Kelly's critique of the latter will be welcome for many; his endorsement of Michael Horton's distinction between 'promise covenant' and 'law covenant' may be problematic to some. The emphasis is nonetheless welcome; the covenant idea provides the background for the assertion that only within the Church may the Scriptures be known; any systematic theology worthy of the name must, therefore, engage with the history of the church itself, as well as with its manifold manifestation in different world cultures.

Kelly's work is not slow to make such engagement although it is surprising to see no reference to Bob Letham's works on The Holy Trinity or on Eastern Orthodoxy in bibliography or index. The result is a volume on theology that is a treat to read and a stimulus to further thought and reflection. There is much in this volume on God's self-disclosure as a Triune God that will repay careful consideration and everything in it whets the appetite for subsequent volumes in the series.

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**Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation:
Restoring Particularity**

Tom Greggs

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, xxiv + 242 pp.
\$79.50, pb. ISBN 978 0 19 956048 6

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Greggs Werk stellt sowohl eine Interpretation von Barths und Origenes' Verständnis der ökonomischen Dynamik bei der zweiten und der dritten Person der Trinität dar als auch einen konstruktiven soteriologischen Ansatz. Die ersten Kapitel stecken voller Beschreibungen von Barth und Origenes. Dann stellt Greggs seine positiven Vorschläge in

Form von gestellten Dialogen zwischen den beiden Theologen vor. Die grundsätzliche These des Buches zielt darauf ab, dass die besondere Person und das Werk des Sohnes eine objektive, universelle Erlösung bewirkt, während die Universalität des Heiligen Geistes das universelle Werk des Sohnes in der Gegenwart zur Anwendung bringt.

SUMMARY

Greggs' work is both an interpretation Barth's and Origen's understandings of the economic dynamics of the second and third person of the Trinity and a constructive soteriological proposal. Beginning with descriptive chapters on Barth and Origen, Greggs offers his positive proposals in the form of synthetic dialogues between the two theologians. The book's basic thesis is that the particular person and work of the Son effects an objective, universal salvation while the universality of the Holy Spirit particularises the universal work of the Son in the present.

RÉSUMÉ

Le travail de Greggs est à la fois, une interprétation de la compréhension que Barth et Origène ont de la dynamique économique des deuxième et troisième personnes de la Trinité, et une proposition soteriologique. Commencant par des chapitres descriptifs sur Barth et Origène, Greggs nous offre ses propositions positives sous la forme de dialogues synthétiques entre les deux théologiens. Selon la thèse de l'auteur, c'est la personne et l'œuvre du Fils d'accomplir un salut objectif et universel tandis que le Saint Esprit, de par sa vocation universelle, applique et individualise l'œuvre universelle du Fils dans le présent.

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Intended as a presentation of a distinctively Christian universalism, Greggs' work is both an interpretation of Barth's and Origen's understanding of the economic dynamics of the second and third person of the Trinity and a constructive soteriological proposal. Beginning with descriptive chapters on Barth and Origen, Greggs offers his positive proposals in the form of synthetic dialogues between the two theologians. The book's basic thesis is that the particular person and work of the Son effects an objective, universal salvation while the universality of the Holy Spirit particularises the universal work of the Son in the present. In this way, Greggs argues, Christian soteriology retains its Christian particularity while avoiding the binary classification of humans into categories of saved/damned which, in an age of violent fundamentalism, must be eliminated from religious (i.e. Christian and non-Christian) dogmatics.

Part One considers Barth's doctrine of election and Origen's doctrine of *apokatastasis*. For Barth, Jesus is both electing God and elected human in that he elects rejection for himself 'in order that the rejected (i.e. sinful humanity) may be elect in His election of rejection' (27). As this is a pre-temporal decision to elect precisely the rejected, the temporal history of sin cannot disqualify the sinner from salvation. In Greggs' reading of Barth, Jesus alone is the rejected. According to Origen's doc-