

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.  
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**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 sotériologique. Commenant 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-



trine *apokatastasis*, the universal restoration of creation includes the restoration of rational humans to the participation in the eternal Logos which characterised pre-existent souls. Thus, for Origen, universal salvation is ultimately the soteriological process of universal return. Bringing these two theologians together, Greggs argues that both present a *Christian* universalism because for both universal salvation is 'in Christ'. This particularity is stronger in Origen for whom rationality is the participatory link between the Logos and the *logika*, but for both (and for Greggs) the *particularity* of the Son establishes salvation *for all*.

Part Two argues that Barth and Origen agree that the universally effective work of the Son retains its temporal particularity as the Holy Spirit works to 'allow this objective reality to reach the community and the individual' in the present (124). Thus, for Barth, the economic and temporal remit of the Holy Spirit is the Church in the present. Consequently, the anthropological dividing line is not between redeemed and unredeemed, but between Christian and non-Christian – a difference that has more to do with epistemology (knowing one has been redeemed and being empowered to witness to that object fact) than with soteriology (whether or not one is redeemed).

Like Origen before him, Barth cited the activity of the Holy Spirit in establishing the recognition and confession of revelation, together with the transformative process of intensifying the anticipatory and representative correspondence between Christian and creator, as the defining characteristic of the Christian. For Origen, this transformation was a process enabled by the Holy Spirit who both brought the worthy to Jesus and co-operated with the Christian to produce growth toward God in the present. According to Greggs' synthetic reading, it is the economic activity of the Holy Spirit which creates space for Christian particularity and identity without requiring an exclusivist soteriology. The Church, and each Christian in the Church, relate to the world not as the saved to the damned, but as aware witnesses testifying to God's universal work of salvation in the Son. The conclusion to Part Two, as well as a conclusion proper, imagines some of the positive implications of redefining the church as a witness to this redefined gospel.

This book helpfully avoids the trendy act of locating universalism within pluralism by arguing for the universal significance of the saving work of the particular Son which is particularised in the present by the universal Spirit. In this sense, and to Greggs' credit, this is what the book intended to be: an account of *Christian* universalism. But precisely as such it is open to critique from within. Initial questions arise in relation to Greggs' somewhat cliché claim that separatist soteriologies depend on overly literal readings of the Bible's apocalyptic texts (would the non-literal 'meaning' be any less exclusivist?) and his rhetorically highhanded theodicy question about a loving God creating in full

awareness of the eternal torture awaiting most of creation (Ivan's Karamazov's laments about the horrors of history require more than a 'happily ever after'). Yet this reviewer's fundamental critique is that of Greggs' own theological resource, Karl Barth. Divine grace is characteristically free. This, as Greggs rightly notes, prevents us from limiting the scope of God's grace; but it also prevents us from dogmatic assertions about the universal extent of that grace. Thus, in his nobly motivated and argumentatively rigorous attempt to extend the trajectories of two theological giants, Greggs ultimately transgresses the trajectories he transcends (at least in the case of Barth). With von Balthasar, Barth hoped 'that all might be saved'; but against Greggs' dogmatic universalism Barth's final word, which admittedly stands in some tension with (the implications of) the wider context of his theology, has to be ours as well, '*Apokatastasis Pantos?* No...' (*God Here and Now*, 41-42).

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### *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers: Shaping Doctrine in Nineteenth-Century England*

Benjamin John King

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£50, hb, ISBN 978-0-19-954813-2

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

King analysiert hier John Henry Newmans Schriften über die frühen Kirchenväter, besonders jene aus Alexandria, sowie die Art und Weise, wie Newmans Werk spätere patristische Theologen geprägt hat. Jeder, der theologisch belesen und wissbegierig ist, mehr über Newmans wechselnde Haltung gegenüber Origenes, Athanasius und anderen frühen Kirchenvätern zu erfahren, wird an diesem Beitrag zur laufenden Debatte über Newman interessiert sein. King zeigt ein umfassendes Verständnis seiner Thematik, und die relevanten Fragen werden gründlich und klar erforscht. Seine ausführlichen Argumente überzeugen. King fördert unser Verständnis Newmans, indem er klar und deutlich dessen Beitrag zu der Entwicklung der Dogmengeschichte aufzeigt.

#### SUMMARY

John Henry Newman's writings about the early church Fathers, especially those of Alexandria, and the way this work shaped later patristic scholarship, are ably analysed by King. This contribution to the on-going debate about Newman's scholarship is of interest to anyone who is theologically literate and curious about Newman's changing attitudes to Origen, Athanasius and other early Fathers. King has a comprehensive grasp of his subject and the issues are examined thoroughly and clearly. His arguments are detailed and convincing. King furthers our understanding of Newman, clearly demonstrating his contribution to the development of the history of doctrine.