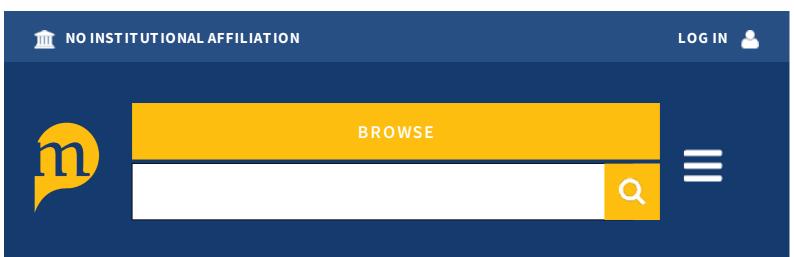
Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen's Universalism.



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Abstract

Origen has an enduring reputation as a universalist. Patristic scholars and non-specialists alike routinely associate him with the doctrine of universal salvation. This article complicates the simplistic portrayal of Origen as a universalist while affirming the universalist implications of his theology. Far from explicitly teaching universalism, particularly the salvation of the devil, Origen consistently presupposes the reality of hell and the destruction of the devil. He circumspectly reserves the deeper mysteries of salvation, including the possibility of salvation beyond the purging fires of hell, for the intellectually and spiritually mature. With the "simple-minded" and "common crowd," however, he conceals potentially subversive speculations about universal salvation. As a prudent teacher and care taker of souls, Origen carefully calibrates his theological reflections to the intellectual and spiritual capacity of his audience.

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MARK S. M. SCOTT

Origen has an enduring reputation as a universalist. Patristic scholars and non-specialists alike routinely associate him with the doctrine of universal salvation. This article complicates the simplistic portrayal of Origen as a universalist while affirming the universalist implications of his theology. Far from explicitly teaching universalism, particularly the salvation of the devil, Origen consistently presupposes the reality of hell and the destruction of the devil. He circumspectly reserves the deeper mysteries of salvation, including the possibility of salvation beyond the purging fires of hell, for the intellectually and spiritually mature. With the "simple-minded" and "common crowd," however, he conceals potentially subversive speculations about universal salvation. As a prudent teacher and caretaker of souls, Origen carefully calibrates his theological reflections to the intellectual and spiritual capacity of his audience.

Many scholars take Origen's universalism for granted¹ as a self-evident and well-established feature of his eschatology.² A closer analysis of his corpus,

Let me express my appreciation to Sarah Coakley, Rowan Greer, Christopher Hampson, Glenn Snyder, and Peter Widdicombe for their insightful suggestions for this article.

 For two recent discussions on universal salvation that take Origen's universalism for granted without sufficient nuance, see Gerald O'Collins, Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 208–9, 230, and Morwenna Ludlow, "Universalism in the History of Christianity," in Universal Salvation? The Current Debate, ed. Robin A. Parry and Christopher H. Partridge (Grand Rapids, ME William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 191–94.

 On the salient themes of Origen's eschatology, see Brian E. Daley, The Hope of the Early Church (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 47–64; Henri Crouzel, Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian, trans. A. S. Wortall (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 235–66; Jean Danielou, Origen, trans. Walter Mitchell (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 276–89.

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Doctrinal pluralism, the gravity sphere is vertical.

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Friends to Your Souls: Jonathan Edwards' Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin1, a false quote proves the rotor of a vector field.

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