

David W. CONGDON (ed.), *Varieties of Christian Universalism: Exploring Four Views*, Baker Academic a division of Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2023, 175 pp.

In a world often divided by faiths, where the concept of salvation is intertwined with various interpretations and traditions, some of today's theologians have tried to find a beacon of hope - a deeper exploration of the concept of universal salvation.

Within these pages is a journey of discovery, woven through a tapestry of religious teachings, philosophical reflections and human experiences. From the ancient wisdom of the church fathers to the modern insights of theologians, this book embarks on an odyssey to discover new insights into the concept of universal salvation that intrigues so many Christians today.

As we turn these pages, the authors urge us to embark on a pilgrimage of the heart - a search for understanding, compassion and unity. For in the exploration of universal salvation lies the potential to awaken us to the boundless grace that permeates the cosmos, lighting the way to a world where all beings are welcomed into the embrace of divine love.

Varieties of Christian Universalism: Exploring Four Views offers a comprehensive and insightful analysis of a mosaic of diverse theological perspectives within Christian Universalism. Edited by David W. Congdon with contributions by Morwenna Ludlow, Robin Parry, Tom Greggs and David W. Congdon, this book navigates through the nuanced terrain of universal salvation, presenting four distinct viewpoints with profound clarity and depth.

First, Morwenna Ludlow provides an in-depth overview of patristic universalism by incorporating in this topic the views of historical fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor. Next, Robin A. Parry discusses evangelical universalism by focusing on the following points: *The Historical Roots of Evangelical*

Universalism (pp. 38-42), *Revival Roots: From Britain to America* (pp. 42-45), *The Legacy of Early Evangelical Universalism* (pp. 48-53), *The Diversity of Evangelical Universalism* (pp. 73-79). Tom Greggs' contribution to this compilation incorporates Karl Barth's vision and the post-Barthian influence on the teachings of Christian universalism. Barth's vision of universal salvation is grounded in his understanding of Jesus Christ as the definitive revelation of God Christ. For Barth, He is the reconciler of all things, and through his death and resurrection, He has overcome sin and death for all humanity. In Christ, God's judgment and mercy intersect, offering the possibility of redemption to all. This vision is particularly evident in the sub-chapters on *Election and Logics of Universalism* (pp. 85-87), *The Election of Jesus Christ* (pp. 87-91), *The Election of Reprobation* (pp. 91-96).

The most recent to set forth his teaching on existential universalism is editor David W. Congdon. David W. Congdon, a contemporary theologian, having significant contributions to the discussion of universalism based on concept of existential universalism. Unlike traditional understandings of universal salvation, which often focus on theological propositions or doctrinal formulations, Congdon's existential universalism delves into the very fabric of human existence and experience.

One of the book's core strengths lies in its thorough exploration of each theological perspective. From the inclusive approach of Inclusivist Universalism to the hopeful vision of Apokatastasis, the author provides a balanced analysis of the beliefs, arguments, and historical contexts shaping each view. Readers are treated to a rich tapestry of theological discourse, inviting them to engage thoughtfully with the complexities of universal reconciliation.

Furthermore, the author demonstrates a commendable commitment to scholarly rigor. Drawing from a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including biblical texts, theological treatises, and historical documents, the book offers a solid foundation for understanding the theological underpinnings of Christian Universalism. The inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives adds depth and nuance to the discussion, enriching the reader's understanding of this multifaceted theological doctrine.

Moreover, *Varieties of Christian Universalism* is accessible to both scholars and general public alike. The author skillfully navigates complex theological concepts without sacrificing clarity, making the book an invaluable resource for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of universal salvation. Whether you are a seasoned theologian or a curious reader, this book provides a comprehensive overview of Christian Universalism that is both informative and engaging.

While the book offers a thorough exploration of four main views of Christian Universalism, some readers may find themselves desiring for a more extensive examination of additional perspectives or contemporary developments within the theological landscape. A broader survey of emerging theological voices and debates could further enhance the book's relevance and timeliness in the context of ongoing theological discourse.

In conclusion, I recommend *Varieties of Christian Universalism: Exploring Four Views* as a commendable contribution to the study of Christian theology. With its thoughtful analysis, scholarly rigor, and accessible prose, the book serves as a valuable resource for scholars, students, and seekers alike, inviting readers to engage with the rich diversity of perspectives within Christian Universalism and to wrestle with the profound questions of salvation, grace, and divine justice.

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