

*Christ – the teacher of salvation. A study on Origen’s Christology and soteriology.* By Anders-Christian Jacobsen. (Adamantina, 6.) Pp. 372. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2015. €52. 978 3 402 13718 5  
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The preface and conclusion to this monograph advertise a new methodology, which is said to consist in the reading of Origen’s *corpus* not with any presumption of dogmatic unity, but with an eye to the ‘complexity’ engendered by the manifold accommodations of the saving Word to the changing capacity of his creatures. This is not so much a methodology as a statement of presuppositions; the word ‘methodology’ is best reserved for Origen’s biblical hermeneutic, which, as Jacobsen rightly says, is at once allegorical, in the sense that it yields a variety of meanings, and noetic, in the sense that to grasp these meanings we must undergo an inward maturation from the fleshly to the spiritual level of understanding (p. 79 n. 240). Jacobsen shows more methodological novelty on his own account when he undertakes a chronological survey of Origen’s works, to ascertain in each case whether he is aiming at an audience of novices or adepts. This enterprise is carried out with learning, precision and subtlety of discernment. I cannot say, however, that it has come to any conclusion that is new to me, except for the recurrent thesis that Origen typically understands creation as emanation from the Word (pp. 284, 338). The evidence adduced in its support is very fragile: it is one thing to say that creatures participate in the creator and another to say that they emanate from him, one thing to say that the rays of light which illumine us emanate from the Word and another to say that it is we who emanate (pp. 125–30). This is not the only case in which Jacobsen reads more into the text than a wary scholar would read out of it. He cites no passage which justifies his inference that the devil will be saved (p. 173), although it is certain, in Origen’s view, that he will cease to molest the saints; the assertion that *kenosis* in Origen signifies an emptying of divinity (p. 169) is retracted on p. 299; that bodies will not survive the last day of the world is only one possible deduction from the statement at *First principles* 3.6.3 that they will offer no impediment to the soul’s union with God (p. 249). While Jacobsen rightly handles the translations of Rufinus with suspicion (pp. 58–62), he accepts without scrutiny a hostile reading of *First principles* 1.4 which quite unwarrantably interprets the falling away from God as an act of the soul before embodiment (p. 263 n. 899); the witnesses who ascribe this tenet to Origen do not even profess to be quoting his own formulations, though their calumnies continue to be printed in parallel to the Latin rendering of Rufinus, which says nothing to this effect. Jacobsen’s notes (though his bibliography is better) do scant justice to the twenty-first-century scholars who have attempted a truly original reading of Origen, unprejudiced by those who quoted him only to condemn.

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