

Billings concludes his study with a closer look at Calvin's understanding of the Law as the locus for participation. What is the Christian's relation to the Law, given that they are now forgiven and living under grace? Does the Law serve only to point out moral failure before God? Billings shows that the Law is God's gracious invitation for the believer voluntarily to love God and neighbour, thus 'uniting' humanity to God. Calvin's theology of law displays the 'active, communal, participatory place' (145) of the human being in creation. It is as believers participate in Christ – the Law's fulfilment – that they can once again experience the delight intended for them in creation.

The bottom line is that this book *matters*. Whether or not readers are familiar with the Gift theologians and their critique of Calvin, many Christians stand in an uncertain relationship to their ability to *act*. Some Protestant churches, encamped around Calvin's theology of grace, are uncertain how also to respond to God's gift in Jesus Christ beyond salvation. Billings has broadened our understanding of Calvin as one for whom God's grace and our faithful response form two parts of a whole. Participation is precisely this dynamic reality, whereby one is not following an external standard, but is energized to respond *to* Christ, *in* Christ. It is the 'how' question that naturally follows Bonhoeffer's '*Who*'?

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Calvin and the Bible, Donald K. McKim (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. xiv, 296, ISBN 978-0521547123. £19.99

In the preface to this collection of essays Donald McKim speaks of providing 'a study of Calvin as a biblical interpreter and commentator on Scripture' and comments that, 'while it is now axiomatic in Calvin studies to recognize the importance of his exegesis, we did not have a scholarly resource where we could turn to understand the ways he functioned as a biblical interpreter on major segments of the Bible'.

Donald K. McKim is Academic and Reference editor for Westminster John Knox Press. Formerly, he was Academic Dean and Professor of Theology at Memphis Theological Seminary, and Professor of Theology at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. He is also a minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA). In recent years he has edited *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) and, with Ford Lewis Battles, an abridged version of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

In his objectives McKim is ably and thoroughly assisted by the contributors Randall C. Zachman on *Genesis*, Raymond A. Blacketer on the Mosaic Harmony and *Joshua*, Susan Schreiner on *Job*, Wulfert de Greef on the Psalms, and Pete Wilcox on the Prophets. In the New Testament section, the contributors are Darlene K. Flaming on the Synoptic Gospels, Barbara Pitkin on the *Gospel of John*, Wilhelmus H. Th. Moehn on the *Acts of the Apostles*, R. Ward Holder on the Pauline Epistles and Gary Neal Hansen on *Hebrews* and the Catholic Epistles. Finally, there is a closing essay by David C. Steinmetz which offers an overview of Calvin as an interpreter of Scripture.

I have chosen to focus this review on one particular contribution to this volume, in the hope that it will illustrate effectively the type of analysis which is on offer here. In Darlene K. Flaming's essay, "Calvin as Commentator on the Synoptic Gospels", the reader is immediately struck by Calvin's understanding of how the different parts of Scripture each have a particular purpose. We are shown how Calvin brings to his commentary on the Synoptics the fruits of his exegesis of the rest of Scripture: Flaming describes how Calvin 'saw an important but limited role for the Synoptic Gospels in that they display Jesus as the fulfilment of all the promises of God'. However, our attention is also drawn to the fact that we also see 'Calvin's typical emphasis on "lucid brevity" as he expounds the "genuine and simple sense" of the text'. Flaming outlines Calvin's methods and conclusions as he establishes a text from which to work, and illustrates his care in the analysis of rhetorical devices and figures of speech in order to arrive at the 'natural sense' of the text.

Under the heading of "Commentary Contexts", Flaming provides some fascinating references to the circumstances in which Calvin

is writing, and how these affect his scriptural interpretations of, for example, the passages about the Last Supper. Later on, particular attention is given to Calvin's humanist background and his dialogue with other commentators from the Church Fathers to his contemporaries. Here, readers are shown how Calvin, who criticised Eusebius for amassing the different opinions of others without making it clear whether or not he agreed with them, tends to cite a relatively low number of other writers and always offers clear comment. For example, Flaming shows how Calvin agrees with Bucer on the rejection of allegorical interpretations of the Gospels.

As a preacher I was particularly drawn to the second half of this essay with its sections on "Exegetical emphases and hermeneutical approaches" and "Theological themes". Following a brief list of Calvin's basic hermeneutical principles, particular attention is given to why and how Calvin worked on the Gospels taken together rather than treating each one independently. This discussion echoes Calvin's rejection of allegorical interpretation as we are reminded that, although Calvin recognised the differences between the Gospel accounts, he believed that these were with regard to detail rather than the basic sense.

Also intriguing is the beginning of the closing section which speaks explicitly about Calvin's conviction that, in Flaming's words, 'like Jesus, every good interpreter of Scripture ought to apply it to the "present occasion"'. Although – perhaps inevitably – Flaming doesn't find many examples that translate directly into the context of the twenty-first century, we are nevertheless reminded of Calvin's overall aims, which are directly applicable within our context.

In the closing essay, David C. Steinmetz comments that 'Calvin's critical interests extended to questions of authorship, historical background, philology, and rhetoric. Yet he never allowed such questions to dominate his exegesis, which has as its constant goal the edification of the church'. Although all the essays within *Calvin and the Bible* offer detailed discussion of the technical aspects of Calvin's exegesis and interpretation, no contributor loses sight of Calvin's central purpose.

Certainly, McKim's volume invites further exploration of Calvin's own work. Moreover, for those who are prepared to engage with its

detailed analysis, McKim's volume not only offers insight into Calvin as a biblical interpreter, but may also challenge the reader in their own exegesis and hermeneutics.

Mary M. Cranfield,
Daviot, Inverurie



A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes, Anthony N. S. Lane, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Publishing Group, 2009, pp. 174, ISBN 978-0801037313. £9.99

A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis, David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (eds.), Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2008, pp. 528, ISBN 978-1596380912. £24.21

In many respects, 2009 has been Calvin's year. His modern-day inheritors have descended on Switzerland in droves, marking his 500th birthday with conferences, honorary lectures, and sermons. Such a renewed focus on any theologian invariably leads to increased literary output, and "Calvin 500" is no exception. Noting the recent publication of various Calvin-related books, this short review article selects two on the specific topic of the *Institutes*, and probes the extent to which they enrich the wider sphere of Calvin studies.

At the outset, it is acknowledged that despite the similarity in titles, the works in question are significantly different in composition and purpose. The product of a single author, Anthony Lane's book is reasonably short (174 pages) and functions as a Calvin reader, offering guidance as it follows the contours of the *Institutes*. By contrast, David Hall and Peter Lillback's volume (479 pages) is an edited collection of essays covering the content of the *Institutes*.

A Reader's Guide to Calvin's *Institutes*

Anthony Lane's book wastes little time in setting out its stall: this is not a stand-alone book. Indeed, his intention is that his *Reader's*