

work is not aesthetically pleasing! It is not easy to read, nor is it easy to comprehend what it is Murphy is arguing. This is not a model of aesthetic theology.

One of the major weaknesses of this work is the complicated set of terminology Murphy invents and the ambiguous way she uses it. For example we read about 'Story Barthians' (Hans Frei), 'Grammatical Thomists' (George Lindbeck), 'Story Thomists' (Robert Jenson), 'Cinematic Modalists' (Jenson again), 'postliberals,' 'narrative theologians,' 'foundationalist fideists,' and a host of other such titles. And yet, these terms are not clearly defined, and there seems to be considerable overlap in her application of these titles to certain opponents such as Robert Jenson (who may qualify as all of these!).

My own sense is that Murphy is right in her major contention – that certain forms of narrative theology suffer from speaking of God as an idea rather than relating to him as a personal being. I also sense that her critique of so-called 'Story Barthianism' and 'Grammatical Thomism' is correct and that a form of biblical realism is the antidote. However, the argument was obfuscated by jargon to such an extent that it was lost from sight. This is a shame as a critique along the lines argued here is required, but this work has not yet filled the gap.

Myk Habets

J. Todd Billings. *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. (vii + 218 pp.) [ISBN: 978-0-19-921187-6]

Exponents of Radical Orthodoxy argue that genuine human participation with God in salvation involves a reciprocal relationship in which a gift of grace is both received as a gift but also returned to God through human action. It is returned, as it were, with value added. In justifying such a theology of Gift these writers have taken on Protestant theology at major points in order to overturn long-held views of salvation. In particular the theology of John Calvin has come in for special scrutiny. Exponents of Radical Orthodoxy contend that Calvin establishes such a radical disparity between God and humanity that humanity merely remains passive throughout the process of

salvation. Justification is a divine gift which no human work can merit, sanctification is a divine work which no human synergism can aid, and the work of glorification is equally wholly of God and not of human works.

Into this discussion enters Todd Billings with this work which examines Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ in its catholic and Reformation perspectives, and then brings this theology into dialogue with Radical Orthodoxy; or as he prefers to term them, 'Gift theologians'. Billings' work seeks to counter the claim that Calvin has a negative, merely 'passive' view of humanity and argues that Calvin's theology of participation in Christ is the key to unlocking how he affirms sovereign grace and at the same time opens up the opportunity for humans to genuinely participate by grace in God in grateful service in the church and the world. Through an examination of the differentiated union between God and creation Billings shows how and why the exponents of Radical Orthodoxy have misunderstood Calvin's theology and thus have misrepresented a theology of gift.

In an introductory chapter Billings outlines Calvin's distinctive doctrine of participation and locates this within Calvin studies. We are reminded that Calvin's theology of participation is distinctive, constituted as it is by the *duplex gratia* (double grace), the graces of justification and sanctification. Justification is a forensic act of imputation, however, according to Calvin, it is inextricably tied to union with Christ: believers come to 'possess' Christ and his righteousness. In the second grace of sanctification Calvin draws upon patristic and medieval theologians of participation as impartation. To participate in Christ, for Calvin, involves a grateful fulfilment of the law of love, empowered by the life-giving Spirit.

Billings then provides two chapters in which he expounds Calvin's theology of participation through the various editions of the *Institutes*, commentaries, Tracts and Treatises, and even provides ample illustration of his theology through a selection of Calvin's letters. One of the strengths of Billings' work is the way he shows how Calvin is not a 'man of one book' and how the changing contexts within which Calvin published has a material effect on his theology and should inform our reading of it. Those familiar with accounts of Calvin's life will find much here to interact with; for instance: did Calvin study with John Major while at the College de Montaigu? Was Calvin influenced by Scotistic and Occamist philosophical theology? Billings concludes that Calvin uses

philosophy in an *ad hoc* fashion. He probably did have exposure to the philosophical forms of Scotism and nominalism, but his appropriation of these schools of thought was muted and highly selective.

Then follows a chapter on the activity of believers in prayer and the sacraments and one on the activity of believers in participating in the Law of God. In the first Billings provides an erudite overview of Calvin's Eucharistic theology and highlights the way in which human participation is essential throughout. For those of a baptistic tradition there will be a lot in here to consider. Billings has made standard critiques of Reformed notions of the sacraments that much more difficult. In the chapter on the law, the least interesting of the book, we have some extended debates over the role of natural theology and how church and state relate to one another. Once again Billings highlights the way in which humanity participates in the work of God in the world.

In the final chapter Billings summarises the argument of the book, explicitly addresses some of the concerns of the Gift theologians, and outlines areas for further study. Billings addresses seven 'faulty assumptions' and shows how Calvin's theology of participation in Christ is both not what the Gift theologians accuse it of being, and also shows how it differs from some formulations of post-reformation Reformed theology. This is a helpful outline.

A few weaknesses of the work are evident. This volume marks the beginning of a new series entitled 'Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology' in which each volume will tackle a period or key figure whose significance is ripe for reconsideration. The express aim is to bring these periods or figures into critical dialogue with current research. Billings stated goal is to dialogue with Radical Orthodoxy on theologies of Gift. Throughout the work Billings keeps the discussion focussed on grace, participation, and response, which is good, but he only offers tangential interaction directly with Radical Orthodoxy briefly in the introductory and concluding chapters. I would be surprised if exponents of Radical Orthodoxy will be convinced by Billings central arguments. They may have to concede that their reading of Calvin is not correct (no minor achievement), but that may be all. From the introduction I was expecting a more direct and sustained critique of Radical Orthodox on this point, but it never came. A second weakness is more idiosyncratic – the discussion of the law was, in contrast to the rest of

the work, rather languid and lacked the theological vigour displayed in the rest of the work.

These minor criticisms aside, with this work Billings has made a major contribution to Calvin studies which will no doubt occasion much response, both positive and negative. This is a work of clarity and sanity, and displays Billings' thorough familiarity with Calvin's context and theology. This is superb work. It offers important insights on the development of Calvin's theology, the sources of his thought, and offers an utterly convincing way to read his theology. Excurses on *theosis*, *unio mystica*, the *mirifica commutatio*, and other staples of trinitarian theology offer rich insights and much food for thought.

Myk Habets

Julia Driver. *Ethics: The Fundamentals*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. (vi + 186 pp.) [9781405111546]

Up-to-date introductions to ethics are always required because the field of ethics changes so quickly and its practitioners have such varied commitments. Driver has written an introductory textbook which covers ten topics: cultural relativism; God and human nature; utilitarianism; consequentialism; Kantian ethics; social contract theory; intuitionism; virtue ethics, feminist ethics and nihilism. From this outline one can see both the routine and the original in Driver's selection which in itself offers a barometer of current ethical inquiry. What makes Driver's work different from many others in the field is the liveliness of her writing style, her clarity of expression, and the sense of joy with which she writes. These are virtues often lacking in many other introductory texts to ethics.

After dismissing the idea of cultural relativism in chapter one, Driver examines a range of voices on what constitutes a normative ethic and why. Driver's work proves especially useful as the approaches she canvasses are often ones that are initially appealing to many Christians. Divine command theory and natural law are common Christian approaches; while Kantian ethics is perhaps the default setting for many lay Christians. In addition to these, however,