

CALVIN TODAY

Reformed Theology and the
Future of the Church

T&T CLARK THEOLOGY

Edited by
ULRICH MÖLLER
MICHAEL WEINRICH
MICHAEL WELKER



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FOREWORD

The 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth was not just an occasion to remember the past. It was even more important to focus on the current significance of his legacy, which happens much more rarely. Historical studies loom large in the present day reception of Calvin, for understandable reasons. Recently, a host of historical analyses and biographical reconstructions have appeared on the subject of Calvin. Not least, the reasons for this are that, particularly in the German-language area, commentators have persistently misrepresented him, particularly his time in Geneva, even with malicious intent. This has made it practically impossible to engage appropriately with Calvin. Despite all the questions that remain unanswered, the numerous historical studies on the social situation of the city of Geneva in the sixteenth century enable us to form a sufficiently detailed picture that unmasks the usual caricatures of Calvin and to some extent also 'Calvinism', showing them to be misrepresentations.

This volume deliberately looks in another direction. It attempts to trace back the present significance of Calvin for Reformed theology and the future of the church. The radiation and relevance of Calvin's work is tackled from different perspectives, sometimes directly, sometimes more indirectly through the choice of a certain focus on Calvin, characterized or challenged by topical questions. It is not simple transitions to directions for modern use that are under discussion, but substantive theological insights linking up in a stimulating way with today's theological debates and potential future. The chapters in this book show that concerning ourselves with his theology still has a most inspiring and motivating effect. Again and again, Calvin's consistent theology speaks with stringent clarity and sometimes even with liberating relevance and modernity.

We have structured the collection of papers under three thematic headings, which, inspired by Calvin, develop insights from Reformed theology for the future of the church: *faith – ecumenism – public responsibility*. They are not specific to Calvin; however, in each dimension, Calvin has something specific to say.

Faith – While Luther's theology first asks how human beings tormented by sin can find a merciful God, Calvin's theology changes the perspective and asks how God deals with the persistent presence of human sin. How do sinful humans justified by God respond to their creaturely calling in their new lives – in fellowship with Christ and in the life of the church as the body of Christ? For Calvin, the chief end of life is to know God and devote our life to his glory. The still topical point is that we are freed from our fixation with ourselves, thereby recognizing and living out our true reality in relation to God.

Ecumenism – The church unity already given in Christ is fundamental for Calvin and for Reformed theology. We must do our utmost to confess it and make it visible. If there is agreement in the understanding of God and grace, all other differences have no church-dividing importance. Calvin was a passionate advocate of cohesion between the churches, which had to express their 'being church' appropriately in the plurality of their differing contexts. That still characterizes Reformed understanding today: the deliberately open tradition of Reformed confession connects contextual authenticity with the catholicity of the church as a whole.

Public responsibility – Calvin, Reformed theology and Reformed churches pose the question about the church's public responsibility, as no other Reformer and churches do. How, based on justification by faith alone, can Christian life take shape in the congregation? And how can life rooted in this new justice prove itself in the conflict areas of society? Part 3 reveals the sources of the worldwide impact of Calvin's and Reformed theology on politics, the law, scholarship and the organizing of life in society, including civil society.

These papers stem from an international Calvin Symposium hosted by the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, at its conference centre, Haus Villigst, 16–18 March 2009. They were an international ecumenical contribution to the Calvin anniversary year. The organizers and editors were Michael Beintker, Michel Weinrich and Michael Welker, representing academic theology, and Gerd Kerl and Ulrich Möller for the Evangelical Church of Westphalia.

Its international and interdenominational character was particularly enriching. Experts presented from different contexts (USA, Canada, Scotland, Netherlands, France, Ghana, Brazil, South Africa, Italy, Switzerland and Germany) and denominational perspectives (United, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, World Alliance of Reformed Churches and World Council of Churches) along with different theological disciplines. The Evangelical Church of Westphalia kindly enabled the translation of the German contributions into English.

The editors received immense support in the process of publishing these proceedings. In particular, Christina Schäfer went to great trouble in finding the standard English translations of the numerous references to

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Michael Welker/Michael Weinrich/Ulrich Möller

PART I

FAITH

Chapter 1

FAITH – INTRODUCTION

Michael Beintker

Nowadays, symposia and congresses on Calvin are mostly historical in orientation. This means that interest in Calvin's theology and the question of his significance for the church are easily sidelined. This symposium was quite different. From the start, it focused on discussing central themes in Calvin's theology as they relate to the present, and resultant perspectives for Christian faith in the world of the twenty-first century.

Calvin lived in a world that, in many ways, was quite different from our own. However, the questions that concerned him prove, on closer inspection, not to be as foreign to us as is often assumed. Sometimes, it is precisely the foreign, the 'Other' about Calvin that can inspire us. Then, we discover in Calvin the teacher, organizer and spiritual director of the church, whose ideas and thoughts have something quite fresh about them; indeed, they seem oddly modern. Calvin still has a lot to say to us. And the churches – not only the Reformed churches or the Protestant churches, but the churches in general – would miss out on important experiences and insights if they bypassed the Genevan Reformer.

For example, there is the question of meaning – the whys and wherefores of reality. Significant thinkers of our age have diagnosed it as the issue of the epoch. Why do we live? Calvin replies as follows: the chief end of life is to know God and devote ourselves to his glory. People might find this answer a little unusual. In fact, however, this is exactly how we are saved from our fixation with ourselves so that we can look to God. And by looking to God, we find ourselves, without great tension or effort. It is perhaps no accident that the chapter by Beverly Roberts Gaventa comes first, which explores the significance of God's glory with the aid of Calvin and Paul. The focus on his glory is the focus on the unimaginably lovely light of God, able to illuminate even the most profound darkness and the most atrocious misery. The light of Easter brings this glory into the midst of the world of death. And so the whole of creation is revealed in the light of God's glory. Randall Zachman then takes up Calvin's praise of nature in interpreting

a psalm, and shows that whoever discovers God's glory also discovers the glory of the heavens and the works of creation as the reflection and image of God's glory.

In the light of this glory, human beings will also develop a new relationship to the finitude of their lives. Life lived here and now moves completely into the providential context of God's loving reality. Susan Hardman Moore demonstrates what that can be like. Her chapter takes us into the world of the seventeenth century, to Susanna Bell, an emigrant and re-emigrant, moving back and forth between the old and new worlds. On her deathbed, she passes on her experience with God's Providence, and precisely in this hour of leave-taking, gives her surviving relatives courage and strength to look to God in their lives.

Such life moves between its justification through God and its new purpose in fellowship with Jesus Christ. The related change of Christian life is characterized by a creative unity of freedom and commitment. Calvin sets great store by the credibility of Christian life. The famous question that Luther attributes to tempted human beings 'How can I find a gracious God?' is rephrased with Calvin to become God's question, provoked by human sin: 'How can I find human beings who respond to their creaturely calling?'

Calvin's doctrine of the church looms large here. It turns out that the Reformed still have much to discover. It is not even clear to everyone that Calvin encourages us to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly in our services of worship. What a wonderful harvest we would reap from the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth if we could finally manage to overcome our Reformed asceticism regarding sacrament! Nor does the frequent glorification of the individual congregation match Calvin's understanding of church. He always kept the big picture in mind, the catholicity and universality of the Church of Jesus Christ. Much of that is taken up in connection with the ecumenical perspective of this collection of papers. Just to note here that, according to Calvin, we cannot believe in God without the church: 'To those to whom he is a father, the Church must also be a mother'. The church as mother! The Reformed confessions avoid this image – it was perhaps too Roman for them. For Calvin, it was extremely important.

This mother gives us Christian life, puts us on the path of faith, raises and fosters, protects and shields, comforts and admonishes. The educational aspect that is part of motherhood means that, for Calvin, raising and educating children is one of the central tasks of the church. He was particularly concerned about schooling. Yet, the Christian community also plays the role of a school. Herman Selderhuis's chapter explores Calvin's view of childhood and youth. That proves to be an exciting new field of research. Calvin's views

on the world of children seem astonishingly progressive. Love expressed in patience and kindness aims to foster children in their development towards mature Christian adulthood. A child's spirit is very fragile, Calvin thinks, and if parents are too strict, this can easily be destructive, or the child might see no sense in parental punishment and judge it to be an expression of lack of love.

The most important educational resource of the Christian community is the Bible. This leads us directly to Calvin's understanding of scripture, his hermeneutics and his interpretation of scripture. Unfortunately, Calvin the exegete is not always granted due attention. Frequently, Calvin's interpretation is confined to his *Institutes*. Naturally, we are then still dealing with scripture, since Calvin considered his 'doctrine of the faith' to be the summation and highlighting of biblical statements – i.e. as a biblical theology that can depend on the whole wealth of biblical records.

But Calvin's theology takes on a quite different complexion when we add his scriptural expositions, both in his commentaries and his sermons. Here, we are at the very heart of the origins of his theological thinking, and observe the way it develops in the expectant encounter with the words of scripture, while always keeping the situation of readers and hearers in mind. Günther Haas shows how Calvin read and expounded scripture on the example of his exposition of 1 Tim. 4.1-5. Calvin's exegeses were amazingly modern, in that he interpreted the texts by all the rules of exegetical art – i.e. critically and discerningly – but precisely in so doing, appraised them as sources of theological knowledge. Without turning to the Bible, faith will die: 'Tolle igitur verbum et nulla iam restabit fides – Therefore, take away the Word and no faith will then remain!' (*Inst.* 3 2,6). Calvin compared the biblical word to a mirror in which faith contemplates God: 'Whether, therefore, God makes use of man's help in this or works by his own power alone, he always represents himself through his Word to those whom he wills to draw to himself' (*ibid.*). We must allow that Word to move us if we want to know him. Consequently, the growth of a congregation is in direct relationship to its attentiveness to the Word in which God wants to reveal himself to it.

With all these insights, we regularly encounter marked agreement between John Calvin and Karl Barth. Their common theme was the movement of God's grace that liberates and yet claims our all. Michael Weinrich highlights what has linked Calvin and Barth across the ages, showing that Calvin's theology inspired no other twentieth-century theologian at so many points as it did Karl Barth. But they held something else in common: the resoluteness and consistency with which they both gained their theological knowledge and represented it publicly. And what was a source of friction and offence proved fruitful for their time and beyond.

Chapter 2

‘FOR THE GLORY OF GOD’: LEARNING THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH FROM PAUL

Beverly Roberts Gaventa

The starting point of my chapter is John Calvin’s elegant identification of the world as ‘the theater of God’s glory’. As the early pages of the *Institutes* insist: human beings ‘cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him’.¹ Yet, as Susan Schreiner’s study of nature and the natural order in Calvin demonstrates, the ‘theater of God’s glory’ is not simply a positive assessment of creation; it is also a way of challenging the anthropocentric tendency that seems endemic in Christian faith and life.² In response to Bishop Sadoletto, Calvin writes:

[I]t is not very sound theology to confine a man’s thought so much to himself, and not to set before him, as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the glory of God. For we are born first of all for God, and not for ourselves. As all things flowed from Him, and subsist in Him, so, says Paul (Rom. 11.36) they ought to be referred to Him.³

To the best of my knowledge, this important theme in Calvin’s work has largely been overlooked in contemporary New Testament scholarship, which repeatedly criticizes Reformed interpreters of Paul for their individualistic readings of Paul (most especially Luther, but Calvin is apparently guilty by association).⁴

As a small step in the direction of correcting this oversight, in this Chapter I explore the motif of God’s glory in Paul’s letter to the Romans. References to ‘glory’ also play an important role in 2 Corinthians, to be sure, but the importance of Romans for Calvin is obvious from the opening lines of his commentary (Romans is ‘an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture’⁵) as well as in his extensive use of Romans in the *Institutes*.⁶ Here, I am concerned with the ‘glory of God’, both for the role it plays in Paul’s explication of the gospel and for its contribution to Paul’s understanding of the church’s existence and its future.

The glory of God in Romans

Contemporary Pauline scholarship has largely neglected the importance of the notion of the 'glory of God'. Even such major treatments of Paul's theology as those of J. D. G. Dunn⁷ and Udo Schnelle⁸ devote little or no attention to the topic in their discussions of Paul's understanding of God. Nor is it the case that contemporary discussions of Romans in particular give more than passing mention to the 'glory of God'. Robert Jewett's recent and massive commentary on Romans is representative of the tendency to overlook the importance of the concept.⁹ Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, the most recent, extensive discussion of 'glory' in the Pauline letters appears in Carey Newman's 1992 study of Paul's christology.¹⁰ The reasons for this relative inattention are not hard to locate, as the scholarly literature in the last 30 years has focused on Paul's understanding of Jew and Gentile, his treatment of the law and his interpretation of scripture, resulting in the neglect of other issues, the glory of God among them.

Yet, attention to the 'glory of God' runs throughout Romans. To begin with, 1.18-32 attributes the origins of humanity's captivity to the powers of Sin and Death to humanity's refusal to acknowledge the glory of God.¹¹ Although 'they' had ample evidence of God, Paul asserts that 'they' 'did not glorify God or give God thanks' (1.21).¹² Further, he writes that 'they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God with the mere likeness of an image of a corruptible human – and birds and four-footed animals and reptiles' (1.23). This withholding of worship, this refusal to acknowledge that God is God, is the problem that generates all the other symptoms that Paul so relentlessly adduces in the remainder of the chapter. When Paul claims that humanity suppresses the truth (1.18) and later that no human being rightly stands in awe of God (3.10-18), it is God's own glory that is being rejected (a fact that paradoxically results in the enlargement of God's glory; see 3.7).

The phrase 'glory of God' returns importantly in 3.23, with the statement that 'all sinned and are deprived of God's glory'. Here, the 'glory of God' is often understood as a reference to the glory of created humanity in Adam prior to the fall,¹³ and some examples from Jewish literature can be adduced in support of the claim that other Jews attributed to Adam a glory that was lost in the fall (*1QS* 4.23; *CD* 3.20; *3 Bar.* 4.16; *Adam and Eve* 20.3; 21.6). Adamic glory cannot be presumed, however, since nowhere else does Paul refer to Adam's glory; nor does he speak elsewhere of the glory of humanity in its created state. In Paul's letters, the history of Adam is concentrated on the event of disobedience and the arrival of death (Rom. 5.12-21; 1 Cor. 15.22).¹⁴ When Paul says that humanity is deprived of

God's glory, he refers to the loss of its proper, worshipful relationship to God or, as Calvin puts it, 'The glory which is in the presence of God'.¹⁵

A similar ambiguity may well be at work in 5.2, where Paul writes that 'we' who have been rectified 'boast based on the hope of the glory of God'. Given the several connections between this passage and Rom. 8.18-21, it is not surprising that the reference to the glory of God here is customarily read as human hope for humanity's own glory.¹⁶ However, in light of the fact that hope for Paul is usually hope in what God is going to do – eschatological hope – it seems entirely possible that this hope in the glory of God is also expectation of God's own triumphant glory.

However the phrases in 3.23 and 5.2 are interpreted, it is important to attend also to Paul's assertion in 6.4 that Christ was raised from the dead 'through the glory of the Father'. This passage is distinctive in that nowhere else does Paul combine reference to the resurrection with the preposition *dia* ('through' or 'by means of'). There seems little ambiguity here. What Paul is saying is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was achieved by the agency of the Father's glory.¹⁷ Here, Calvin writes that the resurrection is brought about 'by the splendid power by which He declares Himself truly glorious'.¹⁸ In addition, 9.23 describes God's action in Israel's history (and that of Gentiles) as action for God's own glory. And in 15.7-13, a passage many regard as the culmination of the letter, he says that Christ 'welcomed you for the glory of God'.¹⁹

This brief review of the evidence confirms that the phrase 'glory of God' is used at a number of important turns in the letter, but it says nothing yet about what connotations are to be inferred. To put the matter directly: would anything be lost to the letter if Paul had simply said 'God' rather than 'the glory of God'? Is the phrase anything more than a loquacious way of saying 'God'? It is at just this point that a review of the use of the phrase and its near equivalent 'glory of the Lord' in the LXX and other early Jewish texts is instructive. While in non-biblical literature, the word 'glory' regularly carries the connotation of 'opinion' or 'reputation', that is clearly not the case in the LXX, especially when used in reference to God.²⁰ In many Septuagintal texts, the 'glory of God' refers to God's own presence, as in:

The glory of the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for six days.... (Exod. 24.16)

Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle and the Tabernacle was filled with the glory of the Lord. (Exod. 40.34)

Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle and, when they came out they blessed all the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. (Lev. 9.23)²¹

Be exalted over the heavens, O God, and let your glory be over all the earth. (Ps. 56.6)

In a number of passages, however, this 'glory' of God (or the Lord) is not only the divine presence, but also that presence as it powerfully triumphs over God's intractable enemies. The Song of Moses in Exodus 15 exults:

Your right hand, Lord, has been glorified in its strength.

Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemies.

And by the size of your glory you crushed those who were hostile.

You sent your wrath, and it devoured them like a reed. (vv. 6-7; see also Isa. 66.12)

Isa. 30.27-33 similarly associates God's glory with God's wrath. Ezekiel associates the display of God's glory with God's judgement (Ezek. 39.21). The prayer of Habakkuk 3 anticipates the arrival of God's glory that causes the nations to tremble and the mountains to shatter. Baruch 4.5-5.9 addresses comfort to the exiles with the promise that God – specifically God's glory – will rescue them from their enemies (4.24; 5.6, 7, 9). In the Qumran *Hodayoth*, the arrival of God's 'glorious truth' is associated with a cosmic struggle between God's forces and those of God's enemies (*IQHa* 3.32-36).²²

This trajectory opens up the possibility that in Romans also, the phrase 'glory of God' is something more than an inflated way of referring to God or even to God's presence; it is God's salvific, powerful presence in an arena of opposition and conflict. That is to say, God's glory is a shorthand reference to the fact of God's active, even militant intervention on behalf of humankind. That should not be surprising, given the fact that this letter abounds in the vocabulary associated with conflict. A few examples will have to suffice, but Romans employs the terminology of slavery (e.g. 6.16-19, 20, 22; 7.6, 25; 8.15, 21; 12.11; 14.18), ruling/reigning (5.14, 17, 21; 6.12), reconciliation (5.10-11; 11.15), not to mention enemies (5.10; 8.7; 11.28; 12.20) and weapons (6.13; 13.12). And the language of conflict is particularly dense in Chs 5-6, just where Paul makes his unusual comment about the resurrection coming about 'through the glory of the Father'.²³

The church and God's glory

Put in this way, the discussion of God's glory in Paul's letter to the Romans could seem to be quite removed from the life of the church. References to cosmic conflict between God's glory and the powers of Sin and Death do not immediately suggest directions for human life in the present. And Romans 8 could be understood to reinforce that notion, since it couples a strong motif of eschatological expectation for the glorification of the children of God with relative silence regarding life in the present (beyond a recognition of present suffering in vv. 18-25 and again in vv. 31-39). What

is striking later in the letter, however, is the way in which Paul emphasizes the glory of God precisely in relation to the church's own life.

A minor caveat is in order here. As is frequently pointed out, the word *ekklēsia* is virtually absent in Romans, occurring only in Chapter 16 in the recommendation of Phoebe and in the greetings to Christians in individual house churches in Rome.²⁴ Nevertheless, it is clear in a number of places in the letter, especially in the extended discussion in 12.1–15.6, that Paul has in view the shared life of those who have been called into the gospel (those to whom he refers in 1.7 as the 'beloved of God, called to be holy').

There is already a bit of a paradox here that is seldom pondered, as Paul's thoroughgoing eschatology might well have rendered him uninterested in human communities. He is only rarely concerned, for example, with questions of marriage and family.²⁵ The discussion in 1 Corinthians 7 appears to have arisen entirely because the Corinthians themselves have asked (or more probably have reported) about their own practices. Despite his frequent use of familial language in the letters (where fellow believers are identified as Paul's children as well as his brothers and sisters), the letters devote little or no attention to actual children or their education in the faith. While that silence may simply mean that Paul's attention is constantly drawn to other matters, it also reflects his assumption that the Parousia is imminent and preparations for future generations assume relative insignificance (as in 1 Cor. 7.31; see also 1 Thess. 4.13–18; Rom. 13.11).

Yet, despite his eschatological convictions, Paul is concerned with the internal life of the congregations, as is evident in every letter. The concerns range from their worship practices (1 Corinthians 12–14 especially) to their sexual conduct (1 Thessalonians 4; 1 Corinthians 5, 7) to their shared support of the poor in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8–9) to their mutual support and comfort for one another (1 Thessalonians 4). Even if Paul devotes virtually no attention to the question of church officers and the development of leadership (although see 1 Thessalonians 5), there is no question that he has the health of these fledgling communities ever before him.

Paul's evident interest in the life of these congregations could be attributed to his hopes to expand his mission; that is, each of these congregations becomes the base from which Paul extends his mission to a new area.²⁶ Yet, that answer only raises the further question of the reasons for Paul's mission in the first place. In my judgement, Paul's concern for the life of these congregations is deeply connected with his comments about the 'glory of God'. The church is the gathering of those who have been called and enabled to recognize the glory of God as it works in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to bring about the redemption of humanity from the powers of sin and death.²⁷

This understanding of the church comes into view most clearly towards the end of the discussion in Rom. 14.1–15.16 about conflicts over dietary

and other practices. The exact nature of the disputes is the subject of extended scholarly discussion, but for the moment it must suffice to stipulate that some Christians (those who continue to be most closely identified with the synagogue, whether Jew or Gentile) regard it as compulsory to continue to follow kosher restrictions, while other Christians understand these restrictions to be at an end.²⁸ Prominent in Paul's response to this discussion is his insistence that, whatever the eating practices of these groups, all of them eat 'in the Lord', and all of them do so by 'giving thanks to God' (14.1-9). The advice that follows cautions the omnivores to be careful that their eating practices do not lead astray the more vulnerable members of the communities; despite this caution, Paul also declares that the omnivores are in the right ('nothing is unclean in itself'; v. 14).

Crucially, the long discussion concludes with instructions about pleasing one another and with a prayer for the congregation's unity. The closing words are quite specific: that God might grant that 'you together with one mouth will glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. In the section that follows, vv. 7-13, which many scholars take to be the culmination of the entire letter, Paul expands on this notion of glorifying God together. Here, he explicitly introduces the language of Jew and Gentile and their shared indebtedness to Christ. He directs the Romans to 'welcome one another, as Christ welcomed you – for the glory of God'. As he expands what he means by this, he repeatedly uses the language of 'glorifying' God (v. 9), 'confessing' and 'praising' God (v. 9), 'rejoicing' (v. 10) and again 'praising' (v. 11).

This notion of Jew and Gentile together praising God stands in stark contrast to the opening chapters of the letter, where (as noted earlier) Paul attributes humanity's captivity to sin to its refusal to give God glory (Ch. 1). In addition, this passage contrasts to Ch. 3 vv. 10-20, Paul's extended catalogue of charges against humanity that gives prominent attention to the corruption of speech (3.13-14) and concludes that the Law 'speaks' in order that 'every mouth might be stopped' (3.19). The defeat of Sin in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by the glory of God (6.4, 9-11) creates a humanity, Jew and Gentile, that is able at last to glorify God together.²⁹ As Barth puts it: 'What the creature does in its new creatureliness, which in Jesus Christ has become gratitude to God, is to glorify God'.³⁰

Now, I will readily admit that much of what I have said is not brought out in Calvin's commentary on Romans, and I am not aware that Calvin develops anything like an apocalyptic reading of Paul (although I would be delighted to be corrected on that point). I suspect that, especially when I introduce the language of the powers of sin and death, I am reading more in the tradition of Luther's commentary³¹ than that of Calvin. Nevertheless,

Calvin does carefully articulate the relationship between the unity of believers and the glorifying of God. Note his comment on Roman 15:

The chief point of his prayer [in v. 5] is to bring their minds to true concord and to make them truly agree with one another... *according to Christ*. Any agreement which is made apart from God is worthless... [W]e do not truly glorify God unless the hearts of all believers are united in His praise, and their tongues too join in harmony.

This comment sits importantly alongside Calvin's comment to Sadoletto: if humanity is born not for itself but 'to illustrate the glory of God', and humanity cannot genuinely 'glorify God unless the hearts of all believers are united in praise', then unity among believers and the giving of glory to God are inextricably connected to one another.

The church, the glory of God and the future of Reformed theology

It is at just this point that Romans (and Calvin's reading of Romans) poses a distinct challenge to much in contemporary Reformed Christianity, at least in those forms of the church best known to me in North America. In Romans 15, as Calvin rightly saw, Paul anchors the church's work with divided humanity (and the church's own divided humanity) in God's own triumphant glory. As I see it, the churches (Reformed and otherwise) seem determined to separate those two dimensions, emphasizing either some aspect of human need, fractured human lives, or escaping into contemplation of a spiritualized understanding of God. The challenge before the theological community is to insist that they belong together. The church exists, in all its fractured humanity, because of and for the glory of God, and it is God's own glory acting in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that brings about the redemption of humanity in, through and beyond its fractured state.

Notes

1. *Inst.* 1 5.1.
2. Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Studies in Historical Theology 3; Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1991), esp. 119–20.
3. *A Reformation Debate. John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto* (ed. John Olin; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1966), 58.
4. A helpful account of this debate is given by Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The 'Lutheran' Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004). On individualism, see especially pp. 252–3.