



## Editorial

### *“A destiny, a calling, a vocation ...”*

In this issue of *Theology in Scotland* we mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Calvin’s birth in 1509. We publish here a selection of papers from the Scottish Church History Society’s conference at Crieff held in January 2009. An article excerpt from a forthcoming book on Calvin is also included.

Bernard Cottret begins his renowned biography of Calvin with these words about his chosen subject:

Calvin [...] a discreet individual, secret, ardent, yet timid. In short, the absolute opposite of a celebrity – a man, in all the accepted senses of the term, who was at the same time one of the greatest authors writing in the French language. Calvin the writer; Calvin the thinker; Calvin the preacher; Calvin the city organiser ... we need all these titles to describe what was above all a destiny, a calling, and a vocation.

(Bernard Cottret, *Calvin*; Paris: Éditions Payot et Rivages, 1998, pp. 9–10)

Some of these aspects of Calvin’s life, work and influence are explored in this issue. In a paper that challenges contemporary Reformed thinking, Professor Donald Macleod draws our attention to Calvin’s views on politics. He touches on the thought of Alexander Shields, Abraham Kuyper, and the Barmen Declaration and brings us up to the present day. He draws the article to a close by suggesting that the Reformed Church in Scotland has yet to answer the challenge of contemporary secular values.

In a major article Professor Ian Hazlitt re-examines historical interpretations and caricatures of Calvin from a variety of perspectives regarding: predestination; *l’affaire Servetus*; anti-Calvin sentiment; Calvin’s influence in England and Scotland; and, finally, Calvin as kill-joy. What emerges from this study is not, of course, the Calvin of contemporary media portrayal, but Calvin the man.

The visitor to the old city of Geneva today will still be impressed by the ordered streets and sober architecture of the buildings clustering around the Church of St Pierre. That same view must have struck the many Scots who visited the city in the sixteenth century. In her paper Professor Jane Dawson lays out the ways in which views of Geneva were of major influence in Scotland in the sixteenth century and after.

Dr Susan Hardman Moore's article is a study of the wider impact of Calvin's theological approach to signs and signifieds, i.e., his steady insistence on words and the Word. In this paper, she draws our attention to the nature of the intellectual transformation this insistence brought about in aspects of the thought of Northern Europe.

In her article *What does it mean to be human?*, Dr Julie Canlis offers an introduction to her wider studies concerning Calvin's profound understanding of the mediation of Christ. She demonstrates that an understanding of relationality is at the heart of Calvin's views on our participation in Christ and, through Christ, our relational being in the Father.

### *Congratulations*

On behalf of the Editorial Board of *Theology in Scotland*, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to the Revd Professor (emeritus) D. W. D. Shaw, founding editor of this journal. Bill was awarded an OBE in this years Honours List and the investiture ceremony took place in December 2009.

*Ian Maxwell*