

LIVING
for
GOD'S
GLORY

AN INTRODUCTION TO CALVINISM

JOEL R. BEEKE

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM: SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON • JAMES GRIER •
MICHAEL A. G. HAYKIN • NELSON KLOOSTERMAN • RAY LANNING •
ROBERT OLIVER • RAY PENNINGS • DEREK W. H. THOMAS



Reformation Trust
PUBLISHING

A DIVISION OF LIGONIER MINISTRIES • ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Living for God's Glory: An Introduction to Calvinism
© 2008 by Joel R. Beeke

Published by Reformation Trust
a division of Ligonier Ministries
400 Technology Park, Lake Mary, FL 32746

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Reformation Trust. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Cover design: Tobias' Outerwear for books
Interior design and typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK, Colorado Springs, CO

All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, King James Version.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beeke, Joel R., 1952-
Living for God's glory : an introduction to Calvinism / Joel R. Beeke ; with contributions from
Sinclair B. Ferguson ... [et al].
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-56769-105-4
1. Calvinism. I. Ferguson, Sinclair B. II. Title.
BX9422.3.B44 2008
284'.2--dc22

2008020854

CONTENTS

Foreword <i>Michael A. G. Haykin</i>	ix
Preface	xii

PART ONE: CALVINISM IN HISTORY

1. The Origins of Calvinism	3
2. Confessing the Faith	19

PART TWO: CALVINISM IN THE MIND

3. The Marrow of Calvinism	37
4. Total Depravity	48
5. Unconditional Election	60
6. The Extent of the Atonement	74
7. Definite Atonement	89
8. Irresistible Grace and Effectual Calling	101
9. Perseverance and Assurance	115
10. Scripture, Grace, Faith, Christ, and Glory	132
11. Philosophical Calvinism – <i>James Grier</i>	150

PART THREE: CALVINISM IN THE HEART

12. Cultivating the Spirit – <i>Michael A. G. Haykin</i>	163
13. Calvin’s God-Exalting Piety	173
14. Sanctification in Puritan Thought	189
15. Sanctification in Puritan Practice	201

PART FOUR: CALVINISM IN THE CHURCH

16. Reforming the Church – <i>Derek W. H. Thomas</i>	223
17. Foundations of Reformed Worship – <i>Ray Lanning</i>	231
18. Roots of Reformed Preaching – <i>Robert Oliver</i>	247
19. Applying the Word	255
20. Calvin’s Evangelism	275
21. Puritan Evangelism	289

PART FIVE: CALVINISM IN PRACTICE

22. A Theology for All of Life – <i>Ray Pennings</i>	303
23. The Puritan Marriage	317
24. The Puritan Family	333
25. Working for God’s Glory – <i>Ray Pennings</i>	349
26. Political Ministers of God – <i>Ray Pennings</i>	361
27. Calvinist Ethics – <i>Nelson Kloosterman</i>	374

PART SIX: CALVINISM’S GOAL

28. Doxology – <i>Sinclair B. Ferguson</i>	387
Index of Subjects and Names	397
Index of Scripture.	410

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CO</i>	<i>Opera quae supersunt omnia</i> (Calvin’s writings)
<i>Commentary</i>	Calvin’s Commentaries
Inst.	Calvin’s <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (Battles’ edition)
Inst. (Bev.)	Calvin’s <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (Beveridge’s edition)

DOXOLOGY

Sinclair Ferguson

Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels.¹

—THOMAS WATSON

To set the scene for the conclusion to this book, let me invite you to take a simple word-association test. The usual procedure for such a test is that the administrator says a word and the subject responds with the first word that comes to mind. Thus, the word *horse* might immediately prompt the word *cart* from some people, but *race* (as in horse race) from others.

Here, then, is the word-association test:

Calvinism _____

Did the noun *doxology* or the adjective *doxological* come to mind? If so, would it have come to mind apart from the title of this chapter? The terms *Calvinism* and *doxology* are not ordinarily associated with each other, even by Christians. Yet it is the overall contention of both this volume as a whole, and of this conclusion in particular, that Calvinism is *always* doxological—otherwise it cannot be either truly biblical or truly Calvinistic, and therefore, at the end of the day, cannot be true theology. For true theology always leads to doxology.

Doxology is, literally, a word or words of praise. Doxologies punctuate the Bible because they punctuate the life of faith.² This at least was Paul's understanding of the life of Abraham: "he was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom.

4:20). The rhythm of the Christian's life is always determined by the principle that when the revelation of God in His glory is grasped by faith, the response is to return all glory to God.

Paul himself summarizes this truth at the climax of three chapters of the most tightly woven theology found anywhere in Scripture. In Romans 9–11, he traces God's ways in faithfulness to His Word, in divine election, and in distinguishing grace (chap. 9); in gospel proclamation (chap. 10); and in sovereign, divine providence toward Jew and Gentile (chap. 11). Then he draws the conclusion: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

What is being underlined here is, surely, that the knowledge of the sovereignty of God exercised in all of these spheres leads to a single response from the heart of faith: "Glory to God forever," or, in the familiar Latin words by which the teaching of the Reformation is often summarized, *solī Deo gloria*—to God alone be the glory!

These considerations notwithstanding, the expression *doxological Calvinism* may seem strange to many people—an oxymoron or even a straightforward contradiction in terms. Whether one thinks of the so-called five points of Calvinism (in terms of their origin, more accurately labeled "the five corrections to Arminianism"), of the much larger vision of John Calvin himself, or of the teaching of his followers, such as John Knox and the Puritans, *doxology*, *praise*, *worship*, and *adoration* may not be words that come to mind in any word-association test.

But if with B. B. Warfield we consider Calvinism to be no more and no less than biblical theology expressed in its fullest and richest way, we readily see that the effect of such theology will indeed be doxology. That is true because Reformed theology emphasizes doxology-evoking *biblical teaching*, it is illustrated in the expressions of *Calvinistic singing* we find in church history, and it is evident in the *Christian experience* of those who have embraced the Reformed faith and lived it out as a lifestyle.

BIBLICAL TEACHING

Perhaps the historically best-loved gospel invitation in the New Testament is found in the so-called "comfortable words" of Christ: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . Take my yoke . . . ye

shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:28–29). Here is rich grace; here is an open-hearted, genuine invitation to all in need to come to Christ. Here, too, the Lord Jesus is God’s yes and amen to all His promises (2 Cor. 1:19–20)—the rest in God that was symbolized (but rarely experienced) in the old covenant is now realized in the shed blood of Jesus Himself in the new covenant.

But what lies behind these words? Surprisingly to those who are familiar with these words only apart from their context in Matthew 11, they follow a most remarkable outburst of praise from the heart of the Lord Jesus: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. . . .” But for what reason does Christ express such worship? It is “because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11:25–27).

Jesus’ invitation to trust Him emerges from His praise to His Father. That praise is predicated on the distinguishing election of God: in sovereign fashion (His gracious will, Matt. 11:26), God has hidden His truth from some and revealed it to others; only the electing grace of the Son opens the way to the knowledge of the Father. Here the praise of Jesus *presupposes* human depravity and helplessness (the Father is not known by men naturally); it *rests on* a divine choice in which God both hides and reveals; and it *affirms* God’s sovereign good pleasure in irresistible grace. What strikes most readers as so remarkable is that Jesus does all this within the context of the clearest, sweetest, most gracious invitation to sinners to come to Him for rest.

It should be no surprise that it was a Calvinist, Horatius Bonar, who penned the famous hymn lines:

*I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon My breast.”
I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting place, and He has made me glad.³*

The rooting of doxology in divine sovereignty, glory, grace, and freedom—in a word, in God’s “Godness”—is a pattern we find regularly repeated in the New Testament. And it is not in the more recondite texts of the New Testament that

we find doxology closely linked with the truths that “Calvinists” affirm, but in those passages that are the commonly loved property of all believers.

What Christian has never found consolation in the comfort of Romans 8:28—surely one of the all-time-favorite texts of Scripture? Everything works together for our good. Yes, but how do we know that everything works together for good for those who love God? We have this assurance: because we are called according to His purpose. And where is that purpose rooted but in the sovereign, pre-temporal disposition of God: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. . . . Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29–30).

Paul’s repeated and consistent use here of the aorist tense for his main verbs underscores the certainty and the definitiveness of God’s sovereignty; nothing can ultimately resist His will. Moreover, these truths stimulate Paul to speak with a doxological heart and a confident—indeed, exuberant—lyricism in the face of all that might oppose God’s work for and in him. These truths are the marrow of Calvinism and give to true Calvinism the same lyrical and doxological spirit.

The point could be illustrated from a variety of other passages. The doxology of Ephesians 1:3ff (“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . to the praise of the glory of his grace . . . to the praise of his glory . . . unto the praise of his glory”) is rooted in the sovereign, loving election of God and in His equally sovereign outpouring of all spiritual blessings on us. Faith receives these blessings, but it is not their cause.

In the same way, the doxology that opens Peter’s first letter expresses the praise of those who have been chosen by God; brought into new life by sovereign, spiritual new birth; and persevere because God perseveres with them (1 Peter 1:1–5). Faith grasps this, but is not its origin. Rather, we “are kept by the power of God [a present *passive* participle] through faith.”

This point, then, should be beyond dispute. Praise to God in Scripture results from the sense that we are depraved and can contribute nothing to our salvation—yet, God has been pleased to save us. He has chosen us; Christ’s blood has atoned for us; the Spirit has worked irresistibly in us (despite our initial resistance) to give us new life; and we persevere as saints because of the perseverance of God with us. This biblical teaching is precisely what later came to be described as Calvinism.

CALVINISTIC SINGING

The wonderful, albeit absentminded, “Rabbi” John Duncan (1796–1870), professor of Hebrew at New College, Edinburgh, once read out the words of Charles Wesley’s hymn “And Can It Be That I Should Gain”:

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.⁴*

Duncan commented quizzically, “Where’s your Arminianism now, friend?” The Wesley brothers were indeed Arminian in theology (despite their conviction that many of their views were “within a hair’s-breadth of Calvinism”⁵). But at this point, Charles Wesley’s expressions of praise are rooted in a theology borrowed from his Calvinist friend George Whitefield’s preaching on the new birth.

Wesley bids us sing praise to God for His sovereign, liberating, prevenient, divine work on the soul that both awakens us and delivers us. When he does so, he is forced to borrow a Calvinistic frame of reference. A moment’s reflection will underline how contradictory it would be to sing praise to God for something He had not done. Of course, hymns may be written to parody Calvinistic doctrine, and on very rare occasions one hears songs that celebrate “free will.” But the great hymns of ages past, like their predecessors in Scripture, praise God for being God, for being sovereign, for being a saving and keeping God. To cast a critical glance sideways in the contemporary evangelical world, it is difficult to imagine what hymns of adoration and praise might be written by Open Theists (whose chief enemy appears to be Calvinism). Do we praise God for being like us in that He is neither sovereign over all things in the present nor aware of what will unfold in our future?

Most of the old hymns underscore the point that Calvinism is in its very

nature doxological, and that all doxology, in fact, depends on such biblical theology. Here, for example, is the best-known hymn of Augustus Montague Toplady (1740–1778):

*Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.*

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the Fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.⁶*

This is Calvinism in poetry: such is our depravity and helplessness that “Thou must save, and Thou alone.” Only these emphases that are characteristic of Calvinism can give birth to such theology as poetry. Granted, the Calvinism is more pronounced and more deliberately articulated with some hymn writers. But these same truths come to expression in the more pastoral spirit of a John Newton and his “Amazing Grace!” What makes grace so amazing is precisely that it sovereignly frees and sovereignly saves from first to last. Since every stable doctrine of providence stresses God’s absolute sovereignty over the details of life, robust singing on providence is characteristically well-rooted in this Calvinistic emphasis.

It is no surprise, therefore, to discover that at the time of the Reformation, while Ulrich Zwingli, despite his own musical accomplishments, resisted singing in worship, Calvin insisted on it. Not only so, but while Calvin was in Strasbourg, he himself put into verse a number of the psalms for congregational singing, and later he encouraged others to do so in Geneva. We still use many of these tunes. Doxology sits comfortably within Reformed theology; in fact, it is required by it as a logical and spiritual necessity.

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Calvinistic theology has always placed great emphasis on biblical and doctrinal knowledge, and rightly so. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1–2). This transformation is a prerequisite for our worship, since it is by the Spirit’s illumination of our minds through Scripture that we gain understanding of God and His ways. But Calvinism—at least in its consistent forms—has never been merely cerebral. The history of Reformed Christianity is also the story of the highest order of spiritual experience. Calvinistic doctrine expressed in God-exalting words of praise leads to a distinctive Christian experience. The melody that is composed intellectually in Calvinistic theology and sung enthusiastically in Reformed worship also can be heard in the lifestyle and experience of Reformed Christians.

The seriousness of the Reformed world and life view means that, even when the melody is played in a minor key, it remains a melody. Indeed, to use a metaphor of Calvin, as this melody is played in the church, it becomes a glorious symphony⁷ blending the following motifs:

- Trust in the sovereignty of God.
- The experience of the power of God’s grace to save hopeless and helpless sinners.
- An overwhelming sense of being loved by a Savior who has died specifically and successfully for one’s sins.
- The discovery of a grace that has set one free to trust, serve, and love Christ while yet not destroying one’s will.
- The quiet confidence and poise engendered by knowing that God has pledged Himself to persevere with His people “till all the ransomed church of God is saved to sin no more.”⁸

These motifs all conspire to give God alone the glory.

The essence of the Calvinistic life is living in such a way as to glorify God. This, after all, is the burden of the answer to the opening question of the Shorter Catechism written by the Westminster Assembly of Divines: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.” Here is the ultimate surprise in Calvinism for many people: the glory of God and the enjoyment of man are not antithetical, but are correlated in the purposes of God.

The view that God's glory diminishes man and robs him of pleasure is, in the light (or should one say "darkness"?) of Genesis 3, the lie about God that was exchanged for the truth (Rom. 1:25). It is satanic theology that plays God against man.

In sharp contrast, biblical theology that exalts God in His sovereign grace and glory opens the door for man to enter into a quite different order of reality. Here is offered the experience of, and delight in, the rich pleasures of restoration to fellowship with God, transformation into the likeness of Christ, and anticipation of being with Christ where He is in order to see Him in His glory (John 17:24). This, at least, was the view of Isaac Watts:

*The sorrows of the mind
Be banished from the place;
Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less.*

*Let those refuse to sing,
Who never knew our God;
But favorites of the heavenly King,
May speak their joys abroad.*

*There we shall see His face,
And never, never sin!
There, from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.*

*Yea, and before we rise,
To that immortal state,
The thoughts of such amazing bliss,
Should constant joys create.*

*The men of grace have found,
Glory begun below.
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.*

*The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heav'nly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.⁹*

It is surely this outlook that Warfield had in mind when he described the fruits of doxological Calvinism in a story he relates in his essay, "Is the Shorter Catechism Worthwhile?"

We have the following bit of personal experience from a general officer of the United States army. He was in a great western city at a time of intense excitement and violent rioting. The streets were over-run daily by a dangerous crowd. One day he observed approaching him a man of singularly combined calmness and firmness of mind, whose very demeanor inspired confidence. So impressed was he with his bearing amid the surrounding uproar that when he had passed he turned to look back at him, only to find that the stranger had done the same. On observing his turning the stranger at once came back to him, and touching his chest with his forefinger, demanded without preface: "What is the chief end of man?" On receiving the countersign, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever" — "Ah!" said he, "I knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy by your looks!" "Why, that was just what I was thinking of you," was the rejoinder.¹⁰

That is doxological Calvinism—a melody played in the midst of a world of chaos, a life lived in the knowledge that God is the Lord, that the Savior is also the Creator who sustains all things, so that I can be assured,

That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.¹¹

This is doxological Calvinism—and when we see and hear it, we are never in any doubt that we have seen Christianity in its finest flower.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the term *doxological*?
2. What is doxological Calvinism?
3. How is worship viewed from a doxological Calvinistic point of view?
4. How does doxological Calvinism play out in human experience?

NOTES

- ¹ Quoted in I. D. E. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 209.
- ² See, for example, Gen. 24:27; Ex. 18:10; 1 Chron. 29:10–13; Luke 1:68; Rom. 9:5; 2 Cor. 1:3–4; Eph. 1:3; Rev. 5:12.
- ³ From the hymn “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” by Horatius Bonar, 1846.
- ⁴ From the hymn “And Can It Be That I Should Gain” by Charles Wesley, 1738.
- ⁵ From *Minutes of Some Late Conversations between the Rev Mr Wesleys and Others*, Conversation II, August, 1745, Bristol, in *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 8:284.
- ⁶ From the hymn “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” by Augustus M. Toplady, 1776.
- ⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. and ed. James Anderson (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 5:178.
- ⁸ From the hymn “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood” by William Cowper, 1771.
- ⁹ From the hymn “Come, Ye That Love the Lord” by Isaac Watts, 1707.
- ¹⁰ B. B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley, N.J.: P&R, 1970), 383–384.
- ¹¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 1.