

***Reformed Churches Working in Unity and Diversity: Global Historical, Theological and Ethical Perspectives***

Kovács Á (ed.)

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**Forgiving ourselves and others our lack of Christian love**

This book is the product of a conference held in 2015 on: “International Calvinism: A Unity in Diversity?” The conference focused on interactions between international and national Calvinism(s) during the era of Liberalism and Totalitarianism.

The constituent papers are grouped into three sections. The first is on historical, social and pedagogical aspects, considered from Scottish, Hungarian, English, Romanian and USA perspectives. The second focuses on theological concepts and particularly the relationship between Calvin’s view of the Trinity, the African concept of *ubuntu*, the sanctification of French Protestantism and Calvin’s academic legacy. The third considers ethical perspectives on the mission of Reformed churches, *sola caritate* as a response to economic justice, collaboration in the ecumenical movement, reinterpreting work and vocation for a changing global political landscape and the issue of how to deal with tensions between denominations.

All the papers presented are all of a significant quality and variety. I wish to emphasise that I found the final paper by Ciprian Simut on “*The Cures for Division: To the Lovers of Truth and Peace and their Use for Healing Today’s Tensions between Various Denominations*”—as presented by Jeremiah Burrough (1653) in his *Irenicum*—the most practical from an interdenominational and intra-denominational point of view. By integrating Burrough’s Thirteen Principles, we are offered a means of re-evaluating our Christian ethical praxis, and realigning our thoughts, words and actions regarding those who do not share our theological perspectives. Strangely, this paper is not included in the book’s table of contents.



Another important contribution is found in Weber-Berg's paper, *Sola Caritate*, where he examines the concept of eccentricity to denote humans as not 'being identical with themselves' (pp. 222), following Luther's *Extra Se in Christo* as the expression of being "outside himself in Christ." This is the essence of *agape*, Christian love. Plumbing the depths of the concept of being "in Christ" provides a key to our mission and vision in an ecumenically friendly context.

One of the most important things we learn from this book is the contemporary importance of Calvin for today. It is a readable contribution to the discussion of unity and diversity in the Reforming tradition. The authors have all made significant contributions to what will continue to be an ongoing discussion within the wider ecumenical scene. This volume may provide a significant stimulus for students in ministry, and others in Reformed churches, to engage more effectively in much needed dialogue and hospitality.