From the Director

Spring is coming to Grand Rapids, albeit mixed with late season snowstorms. As we begin to prepare for our busy summer, let me update you on our latest work. Several projects have come to fruition since our last newsletter. Many of you have already heard of our main endeavor, the CD Music of the Genevan Psalter, which the Meeter Center coproduced along with the Calvin Institute of Christian Music and the Calvin College Music Department. This project began with an Evening of Psalms back in 1998, so we are very pleased to have produced the CD at this stage (see page 4). We have also published an illustrated History of the Meeter Center, available on request from the Meeter Center. Finally, the directors of the Meeter Center and Institute of Christian Worship obtained a major grant of $27,000 from the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship for a symposium and edited volume on change and continuity in medieval and early modern worship. The invitational symposium will take place in August at Calvin College, and the volume should appear in 2001 or 2002.

The Center organized three public lectures since October, and each presentation attracted significant interest. In November, Dr. Debra Rienstra of Calvin's English Department spoke on Mary Sidney and the Psalms. Her focus on the literary aspects of the Psalms in sixteenth-century England helped to broaden the understanding of the

Reformation's impact beyond historical and theological analysis. In February, the Meeter Center joined the Religion and Theology Department in sponsoring a lecture by Dr. Ward Holder of Stonehill College. Dr. Holder's analysis of John Calvin's understanding of the church as intersection of theology and Scripture helped clarify important aspects of Calvin's exegetical approach. In March, we welcomed Professor J. John Hesselink for his lecture "Calvin: The Theologian of Sweetness."

The Meeter Center also hosted its first visiting scholar for 2000, as Jeff Mayfield of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary used his Student Research Fellowship in January to investigate Calvin's doctrine of the atonement. We look forward to hosting four more visiting scholars between now and October, and encourage all interested students, faculty, and pastors to apply for next year's awards. Our fellowship holders consistently rate us very highly in terms of the helpfulness of the staff and availability of the primary and secondary sources. The deadline for applications is January 1, 2001, and application forms are available online as well as from the Center.

We wish you all a happy and productive summer, and encourage you to visit us online or in person at any time.

Karin Y. Maag

A Kinder and Gentler Calvin

As the title "Calvin: The Theologian of Sweetness" suggests, I. John Hesselink, emeritus professor of systematic theology at Western Theological Seminary, questions the popular conception of the reformer and his theology. In this recent Meeter Center colloquium delivered March 9, 2000, at the seminary auditorium, the noted Calvin scholar presented a “kinder and gentler Calvin” based upon the use of the term sweet and its cognates in the writings of Calvin. Professor Hesselink argued that if an author's vocabulary reflects his character, then Calvin's use of sweet reveals his pastoral heart and the emotive dimension of his theology.

Although largely ignored by most readers of Calvin, the term sweet and its cognates appear with surprising frequency in his

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New Acquisitions

Books


Rare Books


Dissertation

Articles


Meeter Center Holds Book Launch
Richard A. Muller, P. J. Zondervan professor of historical theology of Calvin Theological Seminary, was recently honored at a reception held in the Meeter Center for the publication of his book *The Unaccommodated Calvin* by Oxford University Press.

The book summary describes the work as an attempt “to understand Calvin in his sixteenth-century context, with attention to continuities and discontinuities between his thought and that of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. Richard Muller is particularly interested in the interplay between theological and philosophical themes common to Calvin and the medieval doctors, and in developments in rhetoric and method associated with humanism. He shows that Calvin’s theology evidences the impact of humanist philology and rhetoric, of patristics, and also—both positively and negatively—of the categories of medieval scholastic thought. Calvin’s conclusions, together with those of a group of contemporary Reformed and Lutheran thinkers, became the basis of much later Protestant theology. When understood in its sixteenth-century context, Muller argues, Calvin’s theology proves both intriguing and intractable to twentieth-century concerns. This intractable and unaccommodated Calvin, he says, is important to our historical understanding in direct proportion to the level of distortion found in several generations of modern dogmatic analysis of Calvin’s thought.”
Colloquia and Conferences

Meeter Center Colloquium Series

February 14, 2000: Professor Ward Holder, assistant professor of religious studies at Stonehill College, Massachusetts, gave a lecture entitled “The Church as Intersection of Theology and Scripture in Calvin’s Thought.” The lecture was coproduced by the Meeter Center and the Religion and Theology Department.

March 9, 2000: Dr. John Hesselink Jr., the Albertus C. Van Raalte professor emeritus of systematic theology at Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Michigan, spoke at our spring colloquium (see page 1).

September 14, 2000: Dr. Anthony N. S. Lane, director of research and senior lecturer in Christian doctrine, London Bible College, will speak on the topic, “Was Calvin a Zwinglian?” at our fall colloquium.

Announcement

The second session on Genevan paleography will be held at the Meeter Center in the summer of 2001. Dr. Tom Lambert, who has extensive experience in Genevan paleography, will teach a two-week course to scholars who wish to begin paleography or brush up on their paleography skills. For further information contact the Meeter Center.

Fellowships Awarded in 2000

Faculty Research Fellowship Dr. Max Engamare, director of the Librairie Droz (Droz publishing house) of Geneva, Switzerland, will continue his research and writing of a book on Calvin’s preaching.

Emo F. J. Van Halsema Fellowship Rev. Seung-Goo Lee, professor of systematic theology, Guk-Je Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea, plans to do work on the function of Coram Deo in the theologies of Luther, Calvin, and Kierkegaard.

Student Research Fellowship Mr. Jeff Mayfield, an M.Div. candidate from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, spent time at the Center studying Calvin’s doctrine of the atonement. Ms. Nicole Kuropka, a Ph.D. candidate at Kirchliche Hochschule, Wuppertal, Germany, will study Melanchthon and Reformed theology.

Friends of the Meeter Center Fellowship Dr. Fred van Lieburg, a senior researcher from the Free University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, will pursue research on lay preaching in the Reformation.

Fellowship Applications for 2001 may be obtained from the Meeter Center upon request and must be returned by January 1, 2001. Application forms are also available on our Web site.

Calvin Studies Society

On May 24–26, 2001, the Calvin Studies Society will hold its 13th annual colloquium on the theme “Calvin and the Church” at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Speakers for this colloquium are Gene Haas, Redeemer College; Ray Menzter, University of Montana; Bill Naphy, University of Aberdeen; Barbara Pitkin, Stanford University; Marylyne Robinson, University of Iowa; Herman Selderhuis, Apeldoorn; and Karen Spierling, University of Wisconsin at Madison. Registration forms will be sent out in September. For more information contact the Meeter Center.

The Genevan Consistory Registers

On Monday, May 8, the Meeter Center held a book reception to mark the publication of the Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin, Volume I: 1542–44, edited by Robert Kingdon and a team of researchers and published by Eerdmans. Professor Kingdon attended the reception and spoke to an appreciative audience about the project and its significance for Reformation studies. He outlined the importance of providing an accessible version of the Genevan consistory registers, which were only available in manuscript form and were still in their original, barely legible French handwriting. Thus Kingdon and his team began the laborious process of transcribing, editing, and finally translating the text. This is the first volume in a series that will go until 1564, the year of Calvin’s death.

The Meeter Center provided significant financial support to the project in its early stages beginning in 1987, and so we are delighted to see the first fruits of that investment. The registers provide a fascinating window into ordinary people’s lives in Geneva and will attract attention from both scholars and general readers. The Genevan consistory dealt with a wide range of issues, from attempts to eradicate continuing Catholic practices, to reconciling quarreling families and neighbors, to making sure that Genevans knew the fundamentals of their Reformed faith. The Consistory registers are particularly valuable as a historical source, as they allow us to hear the voices not only of the Genevan church leadership but also of the Genevans themselves.

Volume one is available from Eerdmans for $50. Volumes two and three should be published in French in the next year, with English translations to follow. We congratulate Professor Kingdon on this achievement and encourage all our readers to use this wonderful resource.

Karin Maag
Director, H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies
Calvin College and Seminary
Music of the Genevan Psalter

This CD brings the music of the Genevan Psalter to life! Many psalms are sung by the Campus Choir and Capella of Calvin College, the Sweelinck Singers, three church choirs, and a congregation of several hundred. Other psalm arrangements are played by different organists on a variety of instruments in Canada and the U.S.

The cost is $12 per CD plus tax and shipping and is payable by check in U.S. dollars (in advance); by Visa, Mastercard, or Discover card; or in person at the Calvin College Bookstore in Grand Rapids. To order, contact the bookstore at 1-800-748-0122 or e-mail bookstore@calvin.edu.

A Kinder and Gentler Calvin (continued from page 1)

writings. Moreover, its usage is not limited to the Institutes but is common in his commentaries and sermons. As Professor Hesselink makes clear, such frequency indicates not only Calvin’s writing style but reveals an aspect of his theology. By utilizing the term sweet as a common description for various doctrines, Calvin reveals that he is not satisfied with mere explanation of doctrine but also wants to deal with its application and acceptance. In his discussion of the law of God, for instance, Calvin focuses on the sweetness of the law as one of the important motivations for obeying God. He exhorts his readers to obey not only because obedience is demanded by God but also because God draws his people to obedience by the sweetness of the law and its promises. According to Professor Hesselink, by emphasizing the sweetness of the law and other doctrines, Calvin succeeds in exalting the goodness and grace of God who desires to fill the hearts of his people with joy and love by their knowing and tasting the sweetness of God and his provisions.

Professor Hesselink’s lecture served as a helpful correction to common caricatures of the character and theology of Calvin. His insightful presentation was not only intellectually stimulating but also spiritually edifying.

Joel Kim, Ph.D. candidate
Calvin Theological Seminary

Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors

Fifteen papers were submitted on the topic “John Calvin on the Role of the Pastor in the Sixteenth Century and Today.” Erin Fields from Lowell, Michigan, won the first-place award of $2,500, and second-place winner Carolyn Kuipers from Trenton, Ontario, won $1,250. The topic for 2001 is “John Calvin on the Place of Music in Worship and the Relevance of His Ideas for Today.” Contact the Meeter Center for an informative brochure about the awards. Papers must be received by January 15, 2001.