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John Calvin

Calvin Courier

The newsletter of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies

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From the Director

As summer turns again to autumn, the Meeter Center continues to offer opportunities for everyone to make use of our resources. We have invited classes from across the college and seminary to come for sessions on printing and the Reformation, and groups from the education, communications, history, religion, and English departments are taking us up on the offer. We are also looking forward to a strong series of lectures presented by international Calvin scholars, including Anthony Lane of London Bible College in September, Bernard Cottret of the University of Versailles-Saint Quentin in France in October, and Herman Selderhuis from Apeldoorn Seminary in the Netherlands in May 2001. It is encouraging that many of these fine scholars not only come to Grand Rapids and give us a presentation on their work, but also spend awhile in the Meeter Center using our collection.

In the summer we welcomed three of our fellowship recipients for this year for stays of between six weeks and two months. They were joined by other researchers who took a week or two out of their summer to delve into our materials

for their various projects. So in August, for instance, our office space was at full capacity!

We are looking forward to welcoming those attending the Calvin Studies Society meeting here at Calvin Seminary in May 2001, from the 24th to the 26th. The theme is "Calvin and the Church." You will find a program and registration form included with this newsletter. I encourage you to plan to attend. The Calvin Studies Society has organized a strong lineup of speakers and commentators, and the meeting provides an excellent opportunity for fruitful exchanges among participants.

As Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary celebrate their 125th anniversary this year, we acknowledge with thanks the strong level of support provided to the Meeter Center from both these institutions. We are also grateful for the continued contributions of the Friends of the Meeter Center. Together, our supporters enable the Meeter Center to flourish. Thank you!

Karin Y. Maag

Was Calvin a Crypto-Zwinglian?

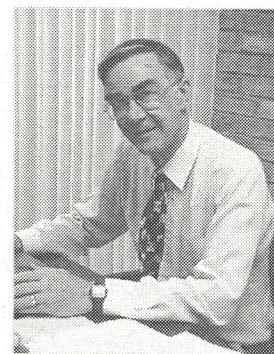
This was the title of a lecture delivered in the Queen's English by Dr. Tony Lane, lecturer in Christian Doctrine at London Bible College in the U.K. This lecture was cosponsored by the Meeter Center and the Department of Religion and Theology of Calvin College. Dr. Lane was no stranger to the Meeter Center, having studied at the Center for six months in 1990. For historical interest, Dr. Lane reminded his audience that as Calvin returned to Geneva on September 13, 1541, Lane also returned to the Meeter Center on September 13, albeit with a much happier attitude.

In his lecture, Dr. Lane tried to answer the charge against Calvin that his view of the Lord's Supper was basically Zwinglian teaching wrapped in Lutheran language. He admitted that it was not easy to get an exact hold of Calvin's teaching on the Lord's

Supper and used the analogy of a greased ferret that always slips through one's fingers.

Dr. Lane explained that Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper was however a *via media*, a middle way, between the view of Zwingli, which Calvin called false and pernicious, and that of Luther. Zwingli rejected the doctrine of the real presence and believed that

Christ was present only in the mind of the believer. Christ's body was in heaven and cannot be on earth. The bread may acquire a



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New Acquisitions

Books

Beza, Theodore. *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*. Vol. 22. Collected by Hippolyte Aubert. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2000.

Calvin, John. *Rechtvaardiging door het geloof*. Houten: Den Hertog, 1999.

Calvin, John. *Sermons on Melchizedek & Abraham: Justification, Faith & Obedience*. Willow Street, PA: Old Paths Publications, 2000.

Crouzet, Denis. *Jean Calvin: vies parallèles*. Paris: Fayard, 2000.

Edmondson, Stephen. "Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Eclectic Christology." Ph. D. diss., Yale University, 1999.

Fedler, Kyle. "Living Sacrifice: Emotions and Responsibility in Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1999.

Greene-McCreight, K.E. *Ad Litteram: How Augustine, Calvin, and Barth Read the "Plain Sense" of Genesis 1-3*. Issues in Systematic Theology, vol. 5. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

Jeffreys, Derek. "Political Disorder and Divine Power: John Calvin and the Theistic Ground of Political Realism." Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1999.

Kingdon, Robert M., ed. *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, Vol. 1: 1542-44. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Articles

Lee, Seung-Goo. "The Purpose of Theology as Reflected in Calvin's Motives for Writing the *Institutes*." In *Studies in Reformed Theology - Towards a Reformed Theology in Korea*. 117-45. Seoul: Hana Publishers, 1999.

Park, Gon-taik. "Calvin and Worship." *Presbyterian Theological Quarterly* 67, 2000: 29-46.

Piper, John. "The Divine Majesty of the Word: John Calvin, The Man and His Preaching." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2, 1999: 4-15.

Vahanian, Gabriel. "Dieu est-il homme ou femme?" *Foi et Vie* 98, 1999: 3-21.



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Was Calvin a Crypto-Zwinglian?

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dignity of what it signifies, but it is only a symbol. Dr. Lane said that it was no wonder that some have referred to this as the doctrine of the Real Absence. Over against this, Luther taught a real presence and that Christ's body present in, with, and under the bread is received orally by both believer and unbeliever.

Dr. Lane explained that Calvin agreed with Zwingli that the elements are symbols. However, they are not empty symbols. They do not lie because the reality is truly present and they hold out the promise of feeding by faith. Through believing in Christ the believer feeds upon the body and blood of Christ and receives all his benefits. Dr. Lane compared Calvin's view of the elements to a check, which signifies real money, whereas Zwingli's view of the elements could be compared to monopoly money.

Dr. Lane pointed out that Zwingli emphasized what the believer does, whereas Calvin emphasized what the believer receives. In the elements of the Lord's Supper Christ is offered and received by faith just as the Word is. The elements are no empty signs. Dr. Lane rejected, therefore, the charge that Calvin was a crypto-Zwinglian.

Dr. Lane also rejected the charge, made because of the Formula of Concord, that Calvin was a subtle sacramentarian. For Calvin the sacrament was an instrument of God's grace, and just as in the preaching of the Word, Christ is offered to all (in the symbols) but only received by faith (through the Spirit). Dr. Lane pointed out that just as the rays of the sun connect us with the sun, so the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ. Christ is in heaven and does not descend, and the bread does not ascend or become his body; but the Holy Spirit unites the believer on earth with Christ in heaven through the elements and by faith. There is no local presence (Luther) or absence (Zwingli), but there is a presence in the sense of communion.

Dr. Lane made it clear that the above does not mean that everything is explained. He pointed out the various ways Calvin used the word *substance* and the confusion this can cause.

Dr. Lane also dealt with the matter of perpetual feeding, because the believer also feeds upon Christ through the Word. This raises the question, What does the Lord's Supper give that the believer cannot get another way? Dr. Lane asked whether there was at this point a weakness in Reformed theology. He pointed out that according to Calvin, the Lord's Supper was a special means of grace and not a means of special grace and that in the Lord's Supper Christ offers grace more clearly than in the preaching of the Word.

Under the heading "Calvin the Calvinist," Dr. Lane explained that for Calvin the real issue is the communion between Christ and the

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Colloquia and Conferences

Meeter Center Colloquium Series

October 25, 2000: Dr. Bernard Cottret, director of the Department of Humanities at Versailles-Saint-Quentin University in France, will speak on his book *Calvin: A Biography*. A book reception will follow.

November 28, 2000: Dr. Karin Maag will give a lecture for the college and seminary's 125th Anniversary Lecture Series entitled "A Genevan Reformer in Grand Rapids: John Calvin and Calvinism at the Meeter Center."

March 30, 2001: Dr. Otto Selles, professor of French at Calvin College, will be the Meeter Center's spring lecturer. His topic will be "A Huguenot 'Treatise on Toleration': The Pastor Antoine Court's *Le Patriote français et impartial* (1751–1753)."

May 24, 2001: Dr. Herman Selderhuis, professor of church history at the Theological University in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, will be the Meeter Center Biennial Lecture speaker. His lecture, entitled "The Church on Stage: The Dynamics of Calvin's Ecclesiology," will be given in conjunction with the meeting of the Calvin Studies Society to be held May 24–26, 2001. The theme of the conference is "Calvin and the Church."

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believer. How this happens is for Calvin a secondary concern. This, according to Dr. Lane and others, is the reason why it is not easy to know exactly what Calvin means by *real* and *true*. Connected with this is Calvin's view of the sacraments. For Zwingli the sacrament is a confession of faith, for Calvin a means of grace.

Dr. Lane concluded his lecture by pointing out that for Calvin how the believer feeds upon Christ is a mystery to be believed rather than to be understood. Calvin was not a crypto-Zwinglian, believes Dr. Lane, though he did say that Calvin's heart was Lutheran while his mind was Zwinglian. There are many obscurities in Calvin's view, though the importance of the role of piety should not be overlooked.

The questions during the discussion time pointed out that the last word has not been said on this subject and that Calvin continues to engage many scholars on his view of the Lord's Supper.

Pieter Tuit, Th.M. candidate
Calvin Theological Seminary

A Genevan paleography course will be taught by Dr. Tom Lambert at the Meeter Center in the summer of 2001. For further information about this two-week course contact the Center.

Enjoying a Meeter Center Fellowship



Dr. Fred A. van Lieburg

I started my stay at the Meeter Center by celebrating the birthday of John Calvin with all the people working at Calvin's campus on the 10th of July. While at the Center, I pursued my research for a short monograph on "Lay Preaching (or Prophesying) in Early Calvinism," a very specific topic that requires a wide approach. I had to check a lot of primary and secondary sources concerning various aspects of Calvinism and its impact in several countries in the sixteenth century. The Meeter Center is simply the best place for such an investigation. Blessed with an office and a laptop, I could consult book after book and article after article. I am sure to have gathered all the relevant information from older and more recent literature. It is not only the richness of the collections, but also the direct availability of all the books and articles on open shelves and in folder cases, that makes research in this library so successful.

Enjoying the Friends of the Meeter Center Fellowship means more than reading a lot of writings and preparing a new publication. Indeed it also includes meeting many people and making new friendships. Beside the other visiting scholars, I contacted several historians and students of Calvin College and Seminary and some people sharing Reformed interests or Dutch origins. A special pleasure, for instance, was to greet the author of a fine book on the Calvinist depths of the music of Bach on July 28, 2000, the 250th anniversary of the death of this wonderful composer. [Editor's note: van Lieburg is referring to Dr. Calvin Stapert, professor of music at Calvin, whose book *My Only Comfort: Death, Deliverance and Discipleship in the Music of Bach* was published by Eerdmans in 2000.]

I would like to mention the staff members of the Meeter Center, as they are experts in church history and bibliography or in management and recreation. They did really everything to make the stay of our family in Grand Rapids easy and happy. Karin, Susan, Paul, and Yudha—thanks so much for providing this wonderful summer vacation to my wife and children! Our oldest daughter celebrated her sixth birthday in America on July 17. A fellow of the Meeter Center should be able to explain to his child what it means to be born 485 years and 7 days after John Calvin's entrance in the world, in which he became and will remain an inspiration for so many Christians and scholars.

Dr. Fred A. van Lieburg
Free University of Amsterdam

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.

Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards to High School Seniors



Mrs. Eve Meeter with the award winners: from the left, Erin Fields, Nathan Bierma, Eve Meeter, Karissa deKoning, and Bronwyn Drost

On September 22, the Meeter Center hosted a tea for Eve Meeter and four recent Meeter Award recipients currently attending Calvin College. It was an enjoyable time for all as students heard from Mrs. Meeter about ways to reach out and make a difference, especially in

the business world. The essay 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.

Music of the Genevan Psalter

Our CD is still available for purchase from the Calvin College Bookstore. The cost is \$12.99 plus tax and shipping. Please contact the bookstore at 1-800-748-0122, or e-mail bookstore@calvin.edu to order your copy. The CD features organ and choral settings of Genevan Psalm tunes and would make a great Christmas present!

Friends of the Meeter Center

We welcome members to the Friends of the Meeter Center. Friends' donations help provide funding for special programs, including the Friends of the Meeter Center Fellowship and the CD *Music of the Genevan Psalter*. Checks may be made out to Friends of the Meeter Center and sent to the Center's address. Thank you for your support! Annual membership fees are:

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