



Calvin Courier

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

Fall 1996, Number 18

From the Director

The *Meeter Center Newsletter* was begun in the fall of 1988 to meet what was perceived as a need for communication in the world of Calvin studies. At various academic meetings individual scholars could share ideas and hear of each other's publications and research proposals, but no place existed as a clearinghouse for information. Sent to under 400 people, the first newsletter did meet a need and is now distributed to over 600 people and institutions around the world.

This edition of the newsletter (now renamed and reformatted) marks the end of my work as editor and as director of the H. Henry Meeter Center. Starting in January, I will assume responsibilities as professor of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary at their Orlando, Florida, campus.

Reformed Theological Seminary has given me the

opportunity to set aside my administrative responsibilities and put all my efforts into teaching and research. I will be able to continue my specialized work in Calvin studies in their Th. M. program in Reformation studies.



The work of the Meeter Center will go on. The Governing Board of the Center has begun a director-search process, and in the meantime the Center is capably served by the administrative aide, Susan Schmurr, and the curator and acting director, Paul Fields.

Richard C. Gamble

Colloquia

Meeter Center Lecture Series

The second biennial Meeter Center Lecture Series featured two lectures, "Calvin and the Irrepressible Spirit" and "The Scholastic Calvin," by the noted Reformation scholar, David C. Steinmetz of Duke University. In those two lectures Professor Steinmetz drew on his expertise in the history of exegesis and in the medieval background of the Reformation to illuminate aspects of Calvin's thought. The first lecture raised the issue of Calvin's exegetical practice in relation to his understanding of the Pauline text, "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." As Calvin well knew, Origen and many church fathers, together with the medieval doctors, understood the text as a basis for arguing "allegorical" interpretations of Scripture. Calvin rejected this use of the text in favor of the alternative, soteriological reading and did so as part of his rejection of allegorical exegesis. Yet, as Steinmetz demonstrates, the allegorical method, rightly called the "quadriga" or four-fold method, recognized that many biblical texts demand

more than a purely literal interpretation—and that Calvin himself recognized this, particularly in his exegesis of the Old Testament. In fact, Calvin's understanding of Old Testament, akin to that of Luther and other Reformers, assumed the doctrinal, moral, and eschatological meanings that were at the heart of the quadriga. Calvin appears, in Steinmetz's reading, not as the harbinger of higher-critical method, but as a loyal son of the church whose exegesis reflects the tradition, specifically the textual, literal emphasis of much later medieval exegesis, coupled with the patristic and medieval concern that the text speak to the living church rather than to the dead of ancient Israel.

In his second lecture, Steinmetz opened a new perspective on the scholastic background of Calvin. While acknowledging in Calvin's thought the presence of scholastic distinctions and of concepts flowing out of the tradition of Christian Aristotelianism,

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New Publications

Books

Steinmetz, David C. *Luther in Context*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995.

Van Kley, Dale. *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1569-1791*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Dissertations

Dowd, Matthew F. "Calvin and the Astronomical Revolution." Ph. D. diss., Notre Dame University, 1995.

Lambert, Thomas. Working on dissertation concerning popular religion in Geneva at the beginning of the Reformation. University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Book Reviews

Olson, Jeannine E. Review of *The Peter Martyr Library, Volume One: Early Writings*, by Peter Martyr Vermigli. Translated by Mariano Di Gangi and Joseph C. McLelland. Edited by Joseph C. McLelland. *Sixteenth Century Studies Journal* 26 (Winter, 1995): 986-88.

Forthcoming Works

Hesselink, I. John. *On Being Reformed*. Translation into Korean by Doug-Sung Choi. To appear in late 1996 or early 1997.

Kingdon, Robert M. *Registres du Consistoire de Geneve au temps de Calvin*, vol. 1. Edited by Thomas A. Lambert and Isabella M. Watt. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1996.

_____. "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva." In *Forming and Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Christian and Jewish Communities*. Edited by John Van Engen.

Olson, Jeannine E. "The Crisis of the Advent of Catholicism in a Protestant State: Changing Structures in Social Welfare." In *The Identity of Geneva: The Christian Commonwealth, 1564-1864*.

David C. Steinmetz spent the spring semester at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbuettel, Germany, working on a book entitled, *Divided by a Common Past: The Reshaping of Christian Tradition in the Sixteenth Century*.

Conference Papers Presented

Kingdon, Robert M. "The Consistory and the Education of the Laity in Calvin's Geneva," Paper presented at The American Society of Church History in Atlanta, Ga., January, 1996.

Olson, Jeannine E. "Social Welfare and the Transformation of Polity in Geneva," Paper presented at The American Society of Church History, Atlanta, Ga., January, 1996.

_____. "Le groupe des amis proches (de Jean Calvin)," Colloque: Calvin et ses contemporains, organisé par la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme français avec le patronage de la Société

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Meeter Center Lecture Series

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Steinmetz pointed primarily to another significant parallel between Calvin's work and the scholastic curriculum. Calvin's preaching consisted, typically, in series of sermons on whole books of the Bible in which the entire text of the biblical book was analyzed in sequence. In other words, Calvin did not, like medieval parish priests, preach on select pericopes. His practice, in fact, reflects the scholastic university curriculum in theology, in which the basic course in theology was based on the Ordinary Gloss, a running commentary on all the books of the Bible. Calvin, it must be remembered, understood the church as the school of faith—indeed, Reformed preaching after Calvin focused worship on the exposition of the biblical text. And the form of that exposition can be argued to arise directly out of the pattern of medieval scholastic biblical exposition.

Taken together, Steinmetz's two lectures revealed the medieval roots both of Calvin's exegetical method and of his approach to preaching. These conclusions in no way undermine either the intensity of Calvin's protest against errors and abuses of late medieval theology or the profound indebtedness of Calvin to philological and rhetorical learning of Renaissance humanism. Rather, these conclusions point toward the broader common ground on which Calvin stood with the great medieval doctors of the church, to the fundamental catholicity of Calvin's Reformation, and to the fact that "scholasticism" and "humanism," "Middle Ages" and "Reformation" are not hermetically sealed containers that insulate their occupants from other influences. Calvin could and did incorporate scholastic as well as humanistic models into his thought—and for all its genuine protest, the Reformation was profoundly indebted to the Christian tradition of the Middle Ages, indebted specifically in doctrine, exegetical method, and expository style.

*Dr. Richard A. Muller
P.J. Zondervan Professor of Historical Theology
Calvin Theological Seminary*



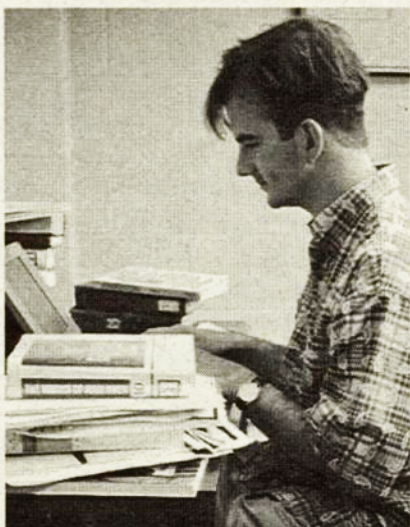
Calvin Courier is published twice yearly by the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, 3201 Burton Street S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546. Ph. 616-957-7081

Fellowships

The Meeter Center was alive with activity this summer as five scholars, recipients of fellowship awards, and nonstipendiary scholars utilized the rich resources found in the Center. Dr. Carl Trueman, a professor of theology from the United Kingdom, spent six months here working on the background to John Owen's theology in John Calvin (see article below). Fellowship applications for 1997 can be obtained upon request. Completed applications must be submitted to the director of the Meeter Center by January 1, 1997.

A Scholar's Impressions

The Meeter Center was neither the most obvious nor the most convenient place for me—an English academic with a young family, including a new-born baby—to choose to spend six months study leave. Nevertheless, I can honestly say that the last six months have been some of the most intellectually stimulating and happy times I can remember.



Carl at work in his Meeter Center office

The reasons for this are not hard to find. The resources of the Center placed a wealth of Reformed literature quite literally at the door of my office. In addition, what material the Center did not have, it was only too willing to find for me via inter library loan.

Then there was the atmosphere at the Center. The constant arrival of scholars from

all over the world made the Center a place where I could interact with a variety of perspectives on Calvin and the history of Reformed theology. Coming from England—where Reformed theology is almost unknown in centers of higher learning—the discovery that, on a world-scale, I am not as peculiar as some of my colleagues think, was something of a relief.

Finally, the aspect of the Center that was most conducive to a fruitful study leave was the staff: the Center's greatest resource is undoubtedly its personnel, who, from the student assistants right up to the Director, provided me with a happy scholarly environment in which to pursue my study.

*Dr. Carl Trueman
Professor of Theology
University of Nottingham, UK*

Awards for High School Seniors



Mrs. Eve Meeter with the award winners: from the left sitting, Stacey Wieland, Scott Westhouse, and Mrs. Eve Meeter; standing, Bronwyn Drost and Amanda Drost

The Calvin College students pictured above enjoyed their recent meeting with Mrs. Eve Meeter, who challenged them to be diligent in their pursuits for God's glory. These students received Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards in 1996. The topic for the 1997 awards is "John Calvin's Views on God's Law and the Magistrate in Creating the Good Society." Contact the Meeter Center to receive an informative brochure about the awards. Papers should be received by January 15, 1997.

Colloquia and Conferences

Meeter Center Colloquium Series

October 10, 1996: Professor Dr. Bernard Roussel, director of studies at École Pratique des Hautes Études at the Sorbonne in Paris, presented the first fall lecture on "Clement Marot's Psalms."

October 14, 1996: The Meeter Center Lecture Series featured Dr. David Steinmetz, professor of the history of Christianity at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, who delivered two lectures entitled "Calvin and the Irrepressible Spirit" and "The Scholastic Calvin." (See article on page 1.)

February 20, 1997: Dr. William Stevenson, a professor of political science at Calvin College, will deliver the February lecture on the political implications of Calvin's idea of freedom.

April 16, 1997: The third annual student colloquium featuring students from Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

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Conference Papers Presented

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française des Études sur le Seizième Siècle, de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études, et avec la participation de l'Université de Paris, October, 1995.

Steinmetz, David C. "Luther und Calvin am Jabbokufer: Ein Beitrag zur Auslegungsgeschichte des Alten Testaments." Spring of 1996 in Wolfenbuettel, Germany, for the Stipendiaten-kolloquium of the Herzog August Bibliothek, the Studium Universale of the University of Bonn, and the Theological Faculties of the University of Heidelberg and the University of Erlangen.

New Acquisitions

Articles

Brentnall, John. "Calvin and the Free Offer." *The Banner of Truth* 383-384 (1995): 28-32.

Davis, Thomas J. "Images of Intolerance: John Calvin in Nineteenth-Century History Textbooks." *Church History* 65:2 (1996): 234-48.

Godfrey, Robert W. "Beyond the Sphere of Our Judgment: Calvin and the Confirmation of Scripture." *Westminster Theological Journal* 58:1 (1996): 29-39.

Hesselink, I. John "John Calvin on the Law and Christian Freedom." *Ex Auditu*, 11 (1995): 77-89.

Mentzer, Raymond. "The Persistence of 'Superstition and Idolatry' among Rural French Calvinists." *Church History* 65:2 (1996): 220-33.

Naphy, William G. "Calvin's Letters: Reflections on their Usefulness in Studying Genevan History." *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 86 (1995): 67-90.

Yardeni, Myriam. "Autour de quelques textes de Calvin sur Jerusalem." In *Le Mythe de Jerusalem du Moyen Age à la Renaissance*, edited by Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, 181-86. Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 1995.

Rare Book

Calvin, Jean. *In librum Josue commentarius. Addita sunt de eiusdem morbo et obitu*, édité par Théodore de Bèze. (Genève: François Perrin, 1564).

Meeter Center Colloquium Series

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October 11, 1997: In honor of Melancthon's 500th birthday, the fall 1997 colloquium will focus on his theology. Participants will be: Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. Richard Muller, Dr. John Schneider and Dr. Timothy Wengert.

Eleventh Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies

This colloquium will be held April 24-26, 1997 at Louisville Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. The theme is "Calvin and His Contemporaries: Colleagues, Friends, and Conflicts."

International Congress on Medieval Studies

May 8-11: the 32nd International Congress on Medieval Studies will be held at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Mich.

Announcement

David C. Steinmetz has been asked to serve as the first president of the American Society of the Friends of the Herzog August Bibliothek.

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