



John Calvin

Calvin Courier

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

Spring 2008, Number 41

From the Director

As Michigan moves ever so slowly into spring after the second-snowiest winter on record, the Meeter Center continues to keep busy with current events and future plans. In November, the Meeter Center fall lecture was given by Dr Charles Gunnoe of Aquinas College. An audio version of his lecture can be found on our website: <http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/audio/audioresources.htm> In early April, I gave a presentation on the results and impact of our most recent NEH summer institute, and in mid-April we welcomed Dr John Thompson of Fuller Seminary for a public lecture co-sponsored with the Dean of the Chapel's office. See below for a summary of his lecture. Both these presentations are also available as audio files at the link listed above.

This summer, we will welcome six visiting scholars to the Center – see p 3 to find out more about them. We will also welcome participants in our two-week

Genevan Paleography class. We are deeply grateful for financial support from the Sixteenth Century Studies Society and Friends of the Meeter Center that helps make this and other programs possible. We could not do it without you.

As noted in previous newsletters, we also continue to make preparations for a number of events marking the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth in 2009. Plans are underway for lectures, conferences, concerts, exhibitions, a commemorative medal, and more. Please see <http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/events/calvin2009.htm> on our website for a list of the events taking place at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary and conferences taking place elsewhere. We will be updating these pages as events are confirmed, so keep checking regularly.

Karin Y. Maag

Anger Management, On Earth as it is in Heaven

Dr. John L. Thompson of Fuller Theological Seminary, in an ample and winsome manner, presented a thumbnail sketch of his most recent book *Reading the Bible With the Dead: What You Can Learn from the History of Exegesis That You Can't Learn from Exegesis Alone* (Eerdmans, 2007) by way of a lecture on the exegesis of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin on such imprecatory Psalms as Psalm 137 and 139. The lecture was entitled: "Anger Management, On Earth as it is in Heaven: What Christians Have Learned About Cursing Over the Years". The anger-management motif is but one test case in a broader project to demonstrate that simple exegesis of a particular passage would not lead to the highly nuanced approach found in the history of the Church's exegesis. Furthermore, as the modern tendency is to gloss over hard sayings in lectionary readings, the

focus of his lecture was how exegetes from the New Testament onward have dealt with the imprecatory psalms in conjunction with Jesus' command to love our enemies. As representative figures, Thompson chose Augustine, Luther, and Calvin. Augustine is key for the patristic period since he appropriated and further developed exegetical currents in Jerome and Origen. Luther and Calvin are key figures in the rise of Protestantism in the 16th century. Perhaps if Dr. Thompson had more time in the lecture, as his demonstration from the



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Anger Management, On Earth as it is in Heaven

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enumerated sources is compelling, he might have mentioned one or two key medieval exegetes on the imprecatory Psalms (e.g. Gilbert of Poitiers *inter alios*) to further elucidate his thesis.

Thompson highlighted Augustine's christological approach to the psalms which interprets the imprecatory psalms in terms of the ultimate evils of sin, Satan, and heretics, among other things. As a result they cannot be co-opted as excuses to exact vengeance upon private enemies due to Christ's command to love our enemies. For example, the Babylon children who must be dashed upon the rock are the spiritual enemies of our soul who must be destroyed upon the rock of Christ. Like others in the medieval period, Luther also shared a christological approach to the psalms and interpreted them similarly to Augustine with the added nuance of Luther's two-kingdom ethic of faith and love. From the perspective of love, we can never speak in terms of imprecation, but from the perspective of faith, we can and must in defense of the faith. In agreement with Augustine, Luther also emphasizes that these imprecations are against Christ's enemies and not ours. In continuity with Augustine there is an emphasis on leaving the exercise of God's wrath to Him and thus individuals must not seek to execute their own vengeance in the name of God. Calvin adds another interesting twist in terms of God's sovereign election. The only persons to whom the imprecations apply are the ultimately reprobate. In the Psalms, David was speaking according to his office, his character or piety, and his discernment. As to his office, David was typological; as to his piety and discernment, he was speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus the imprecations fittingly apply to the reprobate. The believer cannot rightly apply these prayers to his or her own individual enemies. The pastor in the position of office bearer in the Church should pray these prayers in the corporate worship as cries against the ultimate enemies of Christ and His Church. Part of Calvin's appeal to election is a safeguard in the sense that though one may have assurance of his or her election there is no such thing as assurance of reprobation. With a similar emphasis as Augustine and Luther, Calvin arrives at a careful use of the imprecatory psalms to promote the glory of God, and the perseverance of the Church, all the while balancing the justice of God with a concern for His mercy and love.

In his conclusion, Thompson pointed out that (1) God

cares about injustice and suffering; (2) only Jesus is fit to curse and to lament absolutely; (3) the Church recognizes that injustices require redress; (4) imprecations are for the "real" enemies of God and not our own personal, "toy" enemies. In the Q&A period, Thompson also noted that "the exegetes of the past are skeptical when finding who are true enemies. It is enough to know that God is our ally." Indeed, we must remember along with Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, that through the work of the Holy Spirit, the enemies of God today very well could be His saints tomorrow.

Todd Rester

Ph.D. student, Calvin Theological Seminary

Meeter Center Lecture Recordings Online

The Meeter Center now offers recordings of its hosted lectures online. To listen go to:

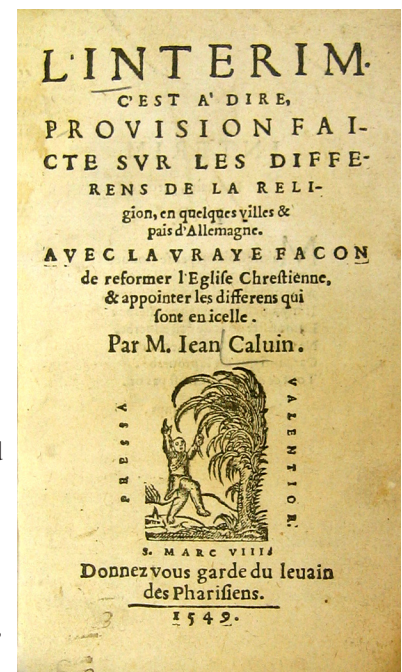
<http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/lectures/> or click on the "Audio Resources" link on the main page of the Center's website.

New Rare Book

The Meeter Center recently purchased Calvin's 1549 *L'interim avec la vraye façon de reformer l'église*; the French translation of the original Latin work also published in 1549.

The book was ultimately written in response to discussions initiated in 1544 with the Emperor Charles V concerning Roman Catholic and Protestant relations and the condition of the Church. In 1544, at the Emperor's urging, the Council of Trent was convened by Pope Paul III to discuss these issues, but was not attended by Protestants and ultimately rejected by them. The Emperor then issued the Interim in 1548 at the diet in Augsburg. Drafted by two Roman Catholics and a Lutheran, the Interim provisionally established conditions necessary to restore unity between Roman Catholics and Lutherans.

Calvin responded with the above work which consists of two parts – the text of the Interim and Calvin's exposition of the best way to achieve Christian peace and to reform the Church. The following topics are addressed: justification by faith, confession of guilt and penance, the service of God, the church, the sacraments, intercession of the saints and angels, prayers for the dead, fasting, celibacy, and ceremonies.



Calvin Courier is published twice yearly by the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, 1855 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546.

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Fellowships Awarded in 2008

Student Fellowships:

Mr. Scott Marr, Ph.D. candidate from Boston University, plans to research Huguenots and Catholics in Saumur.

Emo F. J. Van Halsema Fellowship:

Rev. André Gazal, Ph.D. candidate from Trinity International University, will research the Biblical role of the monarch in the English Reformation.

Rev. Jason Van Vliet, Th.D. candidate from the Theological University of Apeldoorn, will research Calvin, *Imago Dei*, and the conflict with Osiander.

Faculty Research Fellowship:

Mr. Luca Baschera, Assistant Professor from the Institut für Schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte, University of Zurich, will research Lambert Daneau's hermeneutics.

Dr. Jeffery Hankins, Professor of History from Louisiana Tech University, will research Dutch weaver immigrants and Calvinism.

Friends of the Meeter Center Fellowship:

Dr. Zhibin Xie, Associate Professor in Christian Studies at Shanghai Normal University, will research Common Grace in Calvin.

In Memoriam

The Meeter Center notes with sadness the death of noted Calvin scholar Professor David Wright, on Wednesday, February 19, 2008. Professor Wright had spent forty years teaching at New College, the faculty of divinity at Edinburgh University in Scotland. He had also played an important role in the leadership of the Church of Scotland. He was the author of numerous monographs, scholarly articles, and key reference sources, including *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community* (1994) and was a co-editor of *The Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (1993). He also co-edited volumes 18 and 20 of John Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries (Ezekiel and Daniel) in the Rutherford House translation series. He served on the Praesidium of the International Calvin Congress and was one of the key hosts when the Congress was held in Edinburgh in 1994. Everyone who met David Wright spoke highly of his scholarship, but also of his warmth and genuine interest in others. He will be missed.

New Searchable Database for Early Modern Books

Noted Calvin scholar and expert in early modern printing, Professor Jean-François Gilmont, has alerted us to a database he has established of books printed in Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel and Morges in the 15th and 16th century. Users can search by author or keyword. The information provided by the database includes a description of the book in question (including the printer's mark), a list of the libraries that own a copy, and a list of modern editions, if available. The database is divided among books that the team has physically inspected through ones that are known to exist through catalogues or other sources, to ones that may have existed or may in fact be phantom editions. Scholars working in book history will find this database enormously useful. Users should note that the database provides its information and instructions entirely in French. The website for access to the database is <http://www.ville-ge.ch/bge/gln> Note that Mac users cannot access the site through Internet Explorer.

Summer Genevan Paleography Course

This summer the Meeter Center will again offer a two-week course for undergraduate and graduate students and scholars interested in reading manuscript sources in French, whether those documents are stored in French or Swiss archives, or in the Meeter Center's own collection. The course will draw on a variety of documents from the Genevan State Archives, primarily from the 1540s to the 1560s. It will be taught, as in previous years, by Tom Lambert, an expert in French Paleography. The Meeter Center received a large number of exceptional applications for the course. Those selected are:

Donna Donald, Ph.D. student at George Mason University.
Thomas Donlan, Ph.D. student at the University of Arizona
Meghan Drohan, undergraduate student at Roanoke College
Adam Duker, M.A. student at the University of Arizona
Ryosaku Inoue, Th.M. student at Western Seminary
Christopher Lane, Ph.D. student at the University of Notre Dame
John McCormack, Ph.D. student at the University of Notre Dame
Todd Rester, Ph.D. student at Calvin Theological Seminary
David Scaer, Associate Professor of French, Roanoke College
Otto Selles, Professor of French, Calvin College
Ted Van Raalte, Ph.D. student at Calvin Theological Seminary

Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors

The 2008 winners are:

1st Place: **Rebecca Veldkamp** of Grand Rapids, MI

2nd Place: **Andrew Knot** of Flossmoor, IL

Both winners will attend Calvin College

The research paper topic for 2009 is

**Would John Calvin's ideals of government work
in today's North American society?**

For more details go to

http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/scholarships/highschool_award.htm

New Acquisitions

Austin, Kenneth. *From Judaism to Calvinism: The Life and Writings of Immanuel Tremellius*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Bonney, Richard. *Persecution and Pluralism: Calvinists and Religious Minorities in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1700*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2006.

Calvin, John. *Jia er wen: ji du jiao yao yi*. Taipei: Calvin Publications, 2007. (The *Institutes* in Chinese)

Dommen, Edward and James D. Bratt, eds. *John Calvin Rediscovered: The Impact of His Social and Economic Thought*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

Dufour, Alain. *Théodore de Bèze: Poète et théologien*. Geneva: Droz, 2006.

Holt, Mack P. ed. *Adaptations of Calvinism in Reformation Europe: Essays in Honour of Brian G. Armstrong*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Jostock, Ingeborg. *La censure négociée: le contrôle du livre à Genève, 1560-1625*. Geneva: Droz, 2007.

Pinard, André. "La notion de grâce irrésistible dans la *Response aux calomnies d'Albert Pighius* de Jean Calvin." Thesis (Ph. D.) Université Laval, 2006.

Szczech, Tomasz. *Państwo i prawo w doktrynie św. Augustyna, Marcina Lutra i Jana Kalwina*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2006.

Vanlalauva, H. *Doctrine of God: John Calvin's Doctrine of God With Special Reference to the Indian Context*. Delhi: ISPCK, 2006.

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