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*John Calvin*

# Calvin Courier

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

Fall 2011, Number 48

## From the Director

As the trees outside the Meeter Center turn to red and gold, we are planning events for the next few months, including the celebration of the Meeter Center's thirtieth anniversary in 2012. We are going to hold two days of events in March (March 28 and 29) to mark the occasion, including a public lecture given by Dr. Karen Spierling (Denison University) at 7:30 PM on Thursday, March 28, an open-house and Reformation book sale at the Meeter Center on the morning of Friday, March 29, and a mini-symposium on the present state and future directions for Reformation studies on the afternoon of March 29. The symposium will feature a panel of experts including Dr. Spierling, Dr. Raymond Mentzer of the University of Iowa, and me. Those interested in attending the symposium are asked to register their interest by emailing [meeter@calvin.edu](mailto:meeter@calvin.edu). Full details will be sent out in January.

We also encourage applicants for our seventh biennial paleography course, from June 4 to June 15, 2012. This year's workshop will focus on Latin paleography, and will be led by Todd Rester, an expert in Medieval and early modern Latin. The first eight selected applicants will each receive a \$500 bursary from the Meeter Center to help defray travel and accommodation

costs. The workshop is partly funded by the Sixteenth Century Society and Colloquium. To find out more and access the registration form, see:

<http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/paleography/>

Applications for Meeter Center fellowships are due January 1 – each year, we offer funding for student research, faculty research, and for pastors in the Reformed tradition, for periods of one to three months. See p. 2 of the Calvin Courier for a report from one of this year's recipients. A period of research at the Meeter Center provides an excellent opportunity for concentrated study using a wide range of primary and secondary sources in print, microfilm/microform, or in digital form, all readily to hand. Fellowship forms are available for download at <http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/fellowships-and-scholarships/>

As we turn our attention to our upcoming anniversary, we acknowledge with thankful hearts and deep appreciation the support and interest of many friends of the Meeter Center in North America and around the world. We look forward to many more years of fruitful work in the field of Calvin and Reformation studies.

*Karin Y. Maag*

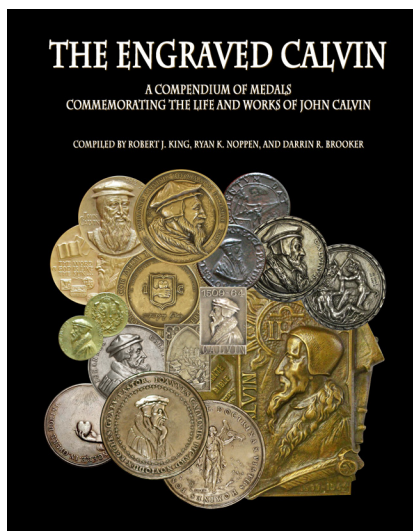
## A Special Visit

In mid-October, the former prime minister of the Netherlands, Jan Peter Balkenende, came to Calvin College to give a lecture for the international conference on Herman Bavinck. While on campus, he took the opportunity to visit the Meeter Center, in the company of the Dutch Consul-General of Chicago, Mr. Hans Heinsbroek. We were delighted to show our visitors some of the items from the Meeter Center's rare book collection, and they enjoyed the opportunity to see, touch, and discuss the history of the works, including Calvin's 1532 commentary on Seneca, his 1563 Sermons on Job, and our 1534 French Bible. We are always ready to receive individual visitors or groups who would like to learn more about the Meeter Center and its collections. Please call 616-526-7041 or email [meeter@calvin.edu](mailto:meeter@calvin.edu) to make arrangements for a visit.



*Karin Maag and Jan Peter Balkenende*

## The Engraved Calvin



For the past two years Robert King, local pastor and expert on John Calvin medals, and Ryan Noppen, Meeter Center Program Coordinator, researched and wrote what is considered to be the most complete resource documenting medals made to commemorate John Calvin. Their book, *The Engraved Calvin*, is now finished and available for purchase.

For almost five centuries artisans have crafted the likeness of the Protestant reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) onto medallions. As with medals of other notable individuals of the period, the purpose of these was to commemorate Calvin's life and works (and in a handful of instances to satirize the reformer). As the years went on, medals of Calvin were made to commemorate not just anniversaries pertaining to his life but other historical events related to the Reformed faith and in some cases to promote civic and nationalistic themes. Thus the medals of John Calvin give us today a unique and tangible historical record of the reformer and how his legacy has been invoked by individuals and institutions for a variety of purposes.

With over 100 medals cataloged and over 180 color photographs, this hard-bound compendium is the result of years of research not just documenting all known medals of John Calvin, but also attempting to discover the historical context in which some of these pieces were crafted. It is also intended to serve as a thorough reference work for numismatic collectors and religious scholars. The number of medals made of all the Protestant reformers over the past five centuries is vast but now those of one of the most important founders of the Reformed faith have been thoroughly cataloged.

The cost of the catalog is \$40.00 USD. To order contact Robert King at: [r-j-king@juno.com](mailto:r-j-king@juno.com)



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## A Guest From Brazil

Friends of the Meeter Center Fellowship recipient Antonio Barro, former Chancellor of the South American Theological Seminary in Londrina - Paraná, Brazil, reflects on his fellowship visit to the Meeter Center in August 2011:

"I applied to come to the Meeter Center with a great expectation to understand better the theology of John Calvin and make a special application for the mission of the church. I was surprised with the amount of resources available at the Center. The richness one finds there is hard to describe and I realized how important such a place is for ongoing research on Calvin and for the continuation of the Reformed faith.



Antonio Barro

The Meeter Center is also blessed to have a formidable staff. Since my first day until the last one I was enthusiastically welcomed and felt at home all the time that I was there. I am especially grateful for the daily assistance I received in order to carry on my research. I also appreciated the fact that a special room was provided for me so I could use it as my own office. A computer was also provided to make my research more profitable. The books are well kept and the files are also well maintained. The quietness of the place is also another blessing.

It was a joy to be in such a wonderful place and I pray that the Meeter Center will continue its ministry and provide opportunities for the increasing understand of Calvin and the application of this theology for the mission of the church. Many thanks also to the donors who made my coming here possible."

## The Electronic Calvin Courier

Over the years we have been happy to provide copies hard copies of the Center's newsletter, *The Calvin Courier*, to all who wish to receive it and will continue to do so. We would now also like to give the option of receiving the *Courier* electronically as a PDF. If you would prefer to receive an e-mail with a link to the electronic copy rather than a hardcopy please contact us at [meeter@calvin.edu](mailto:meeter@calvin.edu) and provide us with the e-mail address. You can also access PDF versions of all of the previous issues of the *Courier* via the Center's website at: [http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/publications/calvin\\_courier.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/publications/calvin_courier.htm)

## Lecture Recordings

*For our friends who cannot attend, Meeter Center Lectures and Colloquia are recorded, with speakers' permission, and are accessible on the Center's website via podcasts.*

## “Retrieving Calvin’s Theology of the Lord’s Supper”

On November 1, 2011, J. Todd Billings delivered the Meeter Center’s annual Fall Lecture, entitled, “Retrieving Calvin’s Theology of the Lord’s Supper: Prospect and Promise.” Billings, Associate Professor of Reformed theology at Western Theological Seminary (Holland, MI), argued that when situated properly within its historical and theological context, the Genevan Reformer’s theology of the Supper is a resource that ought not to be ignored in contemporary attempts to attain a modest form of visible unity in the church. He advanced this thesis along three lines. First, as a second generation Reformer, Calvin did not develop his understanding of the Supper in theological or ecclesiastical isolation from his contemporaries. His theology of the Supper was fundamentally derivative rather than novel. In particular, when contending that Jesus Christ, the substance of the sacramental sign, is truly communicated by the Spirit to believers, Calvin was drawing upon various insights from Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, and Bucer, among other sixteenth-century Protestant theologians. Moreover, while maintaining his own preferred formulations, Calvin nevertheless evidenced a conciliatory spirit by subscribing to Melancthon’s revised Augsburg Confession (1540) and the distinctly Reformed Consensus Tigurinus (1548). According to Billings, therefore, inasmuch as Calvin demonstrated a concern for a limited form of evangelical unity on the sacraments, his theology of the Supper provides a model for ecumenical discussion today – one that unlike other recent proposals neither ignores nor minimizes but rather draws upon the rich distinctives of the Reformed confessional tradition.

Billings devoted the remainder of his lecture to delimiting two particular accents of Calvin’s theology of the



J. Todd Billings

Supper that hold promise for such ecumenical dialogue. Rather than privileging an abstract Word over the sacrament, Calvin maintained that Word and sacrament were complementary means of grace for the people of God precisely because they promised one and the same Christ. God, according to Calvin, condescends to human weakness, holding forth Christ and his benefits not only in the preached Word but also in the tangible, visible, indeed, edible signs of the Supper. In this way, Billings noted in the third place, the genius of Calvin’s sacramental theology lies in the fact that he placed the gospel and the sacrament in a symmetrical relationship. The complementarity between the preached Word and the sacramental sign is rooted in the symmetry of the promise of the gospel and the promise of the Supper. Thus the Christ faith receives and rests upon for salvation is the same Christ believers feed upon in the sacrament. For Calvin the Supper exhibits – that is, promises and holds forth – to believers the very substance of salvation: union with Christ by the Spirit, involving the double grace of justification and sanctification, received by faith alone. Because Calvin’s theology of the sacrament is so closely tied to his understanding of the gospel and of salvation in Christ, Billings concluded, it offers a more promising theological and practical basis for recovering a gospel-centered identity in the church today.

*Stefan T. Lindblad, Ph.D. Student at Calvin Theological Seminary*

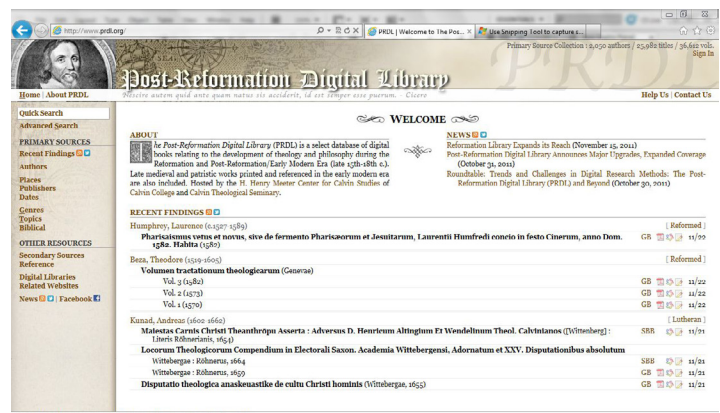
## New Version of PRDL Launched

On the second anniversary of its public launch, the Post-Reformation Digital Library (PRDL) has become available in an upgraded form. This new version of the library is powered by a database format, which allows detailed search queries and integrates findings of source material from a wide variety of digital libraries and digitization projects. This upgrade cements the place of the Post-Reformation Digital Library as one of the most comprehensive public databases for early modern research in theology in the world. At this time the new version of the Post-Reformation Digital Library includes coverage of over 1,900 authors, 24,000 titles, and 34,000 individual volumes. Visit the PRDL and find out more at [www.prld.org](http://www.prld.org)

### 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 Fellowships, the Rare Book fund, and the biennial paleography workshop. 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:

|           |      |            |       |
|-----------|------|------------|-------|
| Student   | \$20 | Associate  | \$100 |
| Supporter | \$40 | Partner    | \$200 |
| Donor     | \$75 | Benefactor | \$500 |





## 2011 Summer Workshop for Teachers

In late July, Meeter Center director Karin Maag ran a one-week workshop for teachers through the graduate education program at Calvin College. Five teachers from across West Michigan participated and gained valuable knowledge about the Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist and Catholic Reformations of the sixteenth century. Participants particularly valued the primary sources and on-line resources that were highlighted in the workshop. As one of the participants noted, “this workshop, ‘Teaching the Reformation Effectively to 21st Century Students’ was helpful, fascinating, and relevant to my teaching.” Said another, “Through this class I have come to a deeper appreciation for the wonderful heritage of the Reformation and its history. I have also felt quite inspired by the teaching that I have received this week and have a greater enthusiasm to return to teaching this fall. I am certain that I will use this class directly to teach a more contextual unit on the Reformation.” We hope to repeat this workshop in future summers.



**A Limited Number of  
Calvin 500th Anniversary Medals  
are still available**

Visit the Meeter Center's homepage  
to learn how to purchase this unique  
commemorative piece.

<http://www.calvin.edu/meeter>

### **Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors**

The 2012 research paper topic is:

#### **John Calvin and the Role of Providence in Human Suffering**

For further details and application instructions visit:

<http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/new/fellowships-and-scholarships/high-school.htm>