

# THE HISTORY OF THE H. HENRY MEETER CENTER FOR CALVIN STUDIES

Hugh J. Meeter



*With a Foreword by Eve Meeter*



*John Calvin*

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3201 Burton St. S.E.

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

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The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies of Basic Historic Calvinism culminates the dream of Dr. H. Henry Meeter who served as head of the Bible Department of Calvin College from 1927 to 1957. His vision for this scholarly research center included both a large number of rare books pertaining to Calvinism and related memorabilia and the physical housing for the collection. He particularly wanted the doors of this fine center open to students and laypeople alike.

This torch of enlightenment was later passed on to Dr. Meeter's only son, Hugh J. Meeter, who remained active in further enlarging the scope of the Meeter Center in the U.S. and abroad. When people posed the question "Why Calvinism; why not just Christianity?" my husband, Hugh, would respond, "In a world of exploding technology and information we need the biblically rooted worldview of Calvinism that once made our nation great and our churches strong. We are living in a vast mission field that requires believers to be deeply rooted in their historic faith as rediscovered in the Reformation."

John Calvin has been underestimated by many historians, but he can now be looked upon, in the words of Sir Alfred T. Davies, K.B.E., C.B., as "one of the greatest lights of the world upon which he had an amazing influence." Calvin was humble, considerate, and generous with his time. He made available his aid and advice to almost anyone who sought them. Loyal, he never deserted a friend or took advantage of an antagonist. He preferred a simple lifestyle and chose to be buried in an unmarked grave. Nevertheless, Calvin's influence was widespread and encompassed theological, legal, economic, and social areas. While frail in health most of his life, John Calvin was an intellectual athlete. James Russell Lowell said of his own native land, "America has never produced a man of wider information or more varied and brilliant gifts."

This center represents John Calvin's many accomplishments so that future generations can appreciate the rich heritage of his world-and-life view and pattern their lives after it.

With a hope toward recapturing the spark that kindled the Reformation, we enthusiastically invite all who enter here to accept our warm spirit of hospitality and appreciation for each of you as together we endeavor to glorify God in our hearts and lives through the work of the Holy Spirit.

May this center serve as a beacon for enlightenment, knowledge, and truth both here and around the world. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”

Soli Deo Gloria!

Eve Meeter

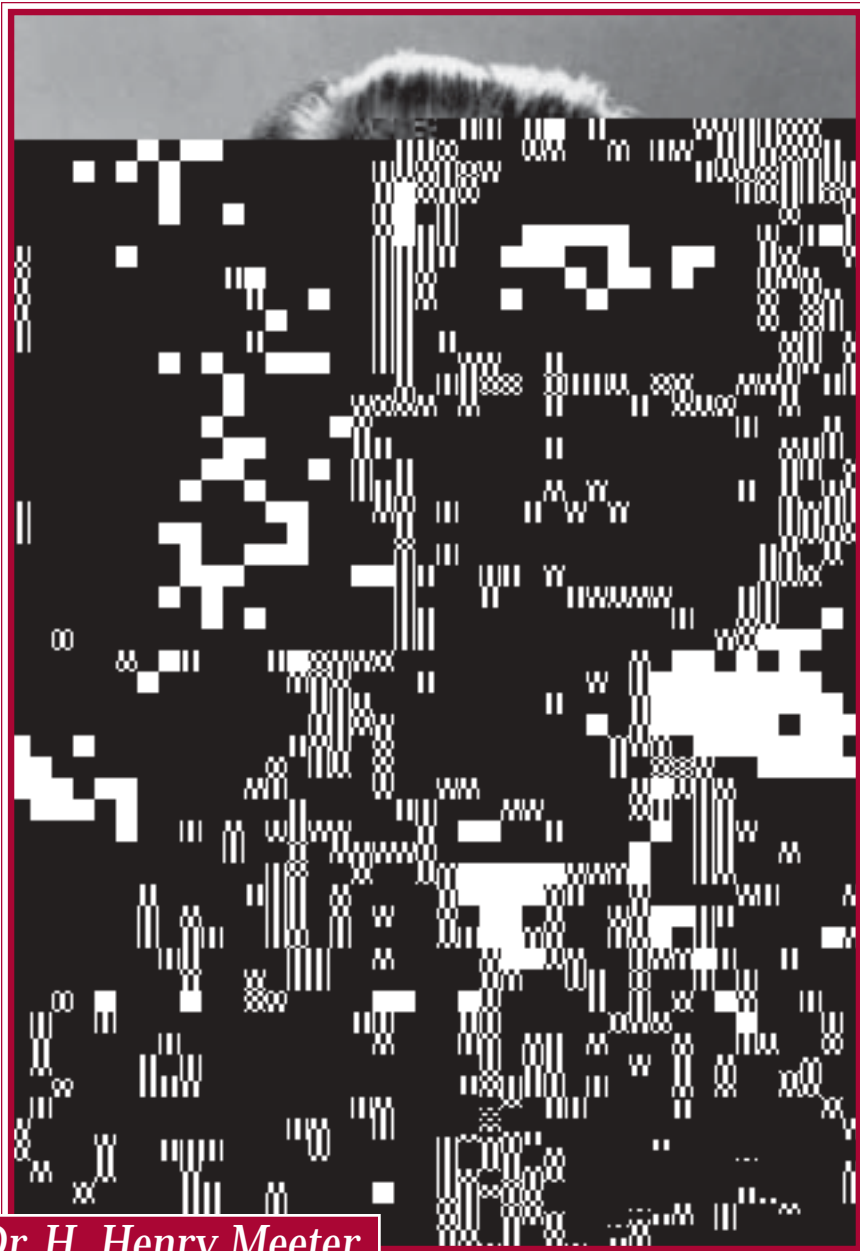


*John Calvin*



# JOHN CALVIN

John Calvin was born in Noyon, France, on July 10, 1509. He studied humanities in Paris and law in Orléans and Bourges. His father's first intention was for Calvin to become a priest, but after a quarrel with the church in Noyon, his father decided Calvin



*Dr. H. Henry Meeter*





# THE

The history of the H. Henry Meeter Center is a long and winding one. It began with a collection of important books and a bibliography by Calvin College Professor Dr. H. Henry Meeter during his tenure of teaching in the Bible (now Religion and Theology) Department from 1927 to 1957. The collection was enlarged by the intensive work of College Librarian Dr. Lester DeKoster and enthusiastically supported by College President Dr. William J. Spoelhof from 1951 to 1976.

After the establishment of the Meeter Center the collection and bibliography were expanded expertly by Curator Peter DeKlerk from 1981 to 1990. That expansion continues under his successor, Curator Paul Fields. Today the Meeter Center with its rare items, books, articles, literature, and bibliographies is acclaimed worldwide as one of the most extensive of all Calvin/Calvinism collections. Meeter Center materials by Lester DeKoster, for example, and the bibliographies of Peter DeKlerk are known and appreciated by Calvin scholars everywhere.

At the initiative of Dr. Meeter, Calvin College and Seminary established the Committee for Scholarly Research and Development of Basic Historic Calvinism in 1961. Dr. Meeter bequeathed monies for the work to continue after his death in 1963. The members of the committee were Mr. Hugh J. Meeter (son of Dr. Meeter), chairperson, Calvin College President Dr. William J. Spoelhof, Calvin Seminary President Dr. John Kromminga, Calvin College and Seminary Director of Development Mr. Sydney Youngsma, and Calvin College Bible Department Chairperson Dr. John Bratt.

The collection of materials continued rapidly and by the early 1970s was looked upon as one of the world's leading resources on Calvin and Calvinism. With this growth of materials came the need for additional space which was anticipated in Dr. Meeter's will.

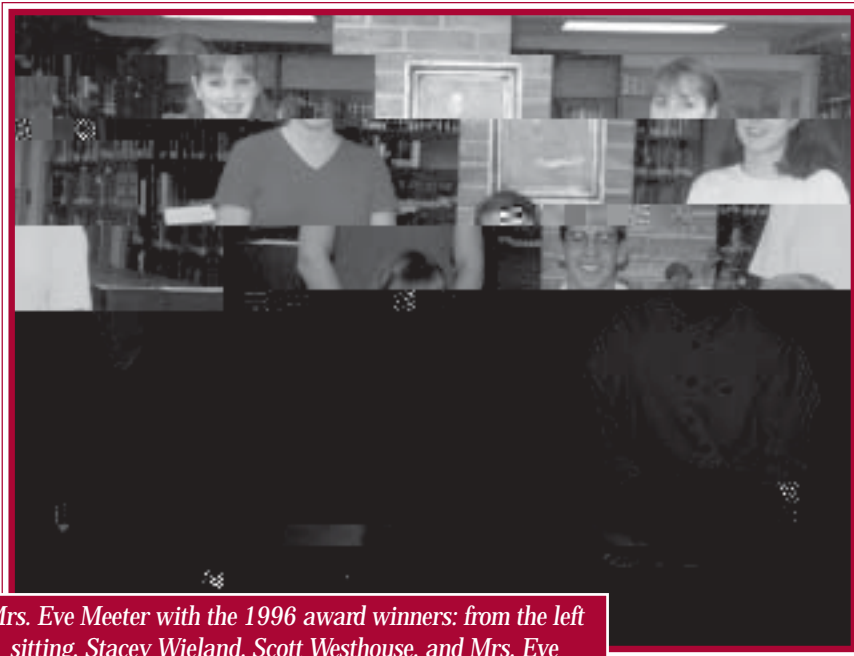
Some members of the committee thought the collection should be integrated into the campus both physically and through the curriculum. Others believed the collection should be integrated through the curriculum but housed separately in an

Gamble, who led the center until 1997. In that year, the Meeter Center Governing Board appointed Dr. Karin Maag to be the center's new director. The Meeter Center extends the invitation to scholars everywhere to pursue their studies at this rich reservoir of Calvinism. And thus it has come to pass, through God's grace and human perseverance, that the vision of Dr. H. Henry Meeter articulated in the 1920s and cultivated over the decades became a reality.

The primary goal of Dr. Meeter was to make scholarly research on Calvinism understandable to and applicable by students and laypeople. This goal was articulated and achieved in his classic 1939 work that has come to be known as *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*. Published by Baker Book House, the book is now in its sixth edition; additionally it has been translated into five languages: Dutch, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, and Russian.

Unrealized, however, were the plans of Dr. Meeter to write two additional books, the one to be entitled *Calvinism, Economics, and Sociology* and the other *Calvinism, Science, and Art*. It is prayerfully hoped that these publications will be undertaken by the Meeter Center in the years ahead.

Impetus for this came in 1994 when the first two laypersons were added to the governing board of the Meeter Center. Mr. Pieter Lion and Mr. Wayne Muller were appointed to give emphasis to the practical applications of Calvinism for students and laypeople, which was the long unrealized and cherished goal of Dr. Meeter and his son, ~~Mr. Hugh Meeter~~.



*Mrs. Eve Meeter with the 1996 award winners: from the left sitting, Stacey Wieland, Scott Westhouse, and Mrs. Eve Meeter; standing, Bronwyn Drost and Amanda Drost*

market place. It remains the prayer always of the Meeter family that God will be glorified and Christ's kingdom extended through the monumental work of John Calvin—and also that many students, scholars, and laypeople will be drawn to a personal acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ in all areas of life through the inspiration of the Meeter Center.

The following documents were crucial in the development of what has come to be the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies and provide additional chronological information.







Through God's providence the Calvin Study Center was born out of commitment and frustration.

The commitment was a thirty-year dedication of Dr. H. Henry Meeter, chairman of the

restrict itself to offerings in its own discipline. Thus Dr. Meeter was not allowed to broaden the scope of his teachings on Calvinism to areas that were the responsibility of other academic departments.

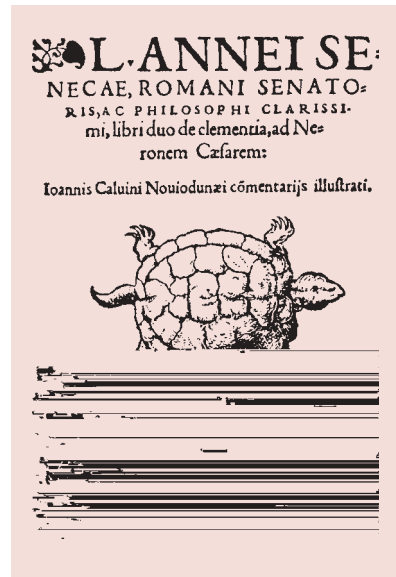
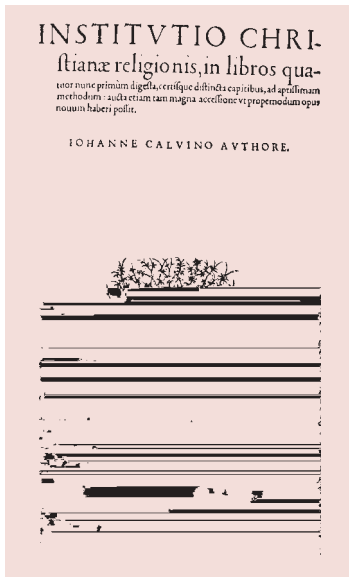
His classic work was written originally under the title Calvinism: The Theological and Political Ideas and was intended to be the first volume of a series. Volumes two and three were to be Calvinism: The Sociological and Economic Ideas and Calvinism: Science and Art. However the burden of very large classes (the largest in the history of the college), other responsibilities (such as the position of campus spiritual adviser), and duties of the departmental chairmanship, campus committees, and extensive denominational service, prevented the writing of the latter volumes.

This career-long frustration providentially inspired Dr. Meeter in 1959 to provide in his

Calvinism collection should be integrated into the institution's library.

However the study committee's recommendation resulted in a decision that central housing should be constructed for the collection. Today, upon completion of the structure, the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies is rated second to the library of Geneva as the world's preeminent center for the study of Calvin and Calvinism.

At a time when cults are so prominent across this continent and around the world, the Meeter Center courageously and effectively offers the Calvinistic application of scriptural truth to daily life. It is my prayer now, as it was of H. Henry Meeter many years ago, that this powerful tool will bring balance and stability to the Christian life. I am convinced that it will provide wisdom in applying God's timeless Word to the world of today and tomorrow.





Needs: Additional room for both books and users, greater prominence, physical continuity with the existing library, shelf space that might be integrated with the Colonial Origins Collection in Heritage Hall.

Options: Modest expansion into the balcony area of Heritage Hall; moderate expansion with a wing added to the library structure; plush creation, if funds

