CALVIN AND THE BIBLE

During the past several decades a growing number of scholars have come to appreciate the importance of studying John Calvin’s interpretive work as a commentator on Scripture in addition to his better-known writings on theology. In this volume ten essays by scholars specializing in Calvin’s exegetical methods examine the approaches and themes Calvin emphasized when he interpreted major portions of Scripture. These essays focus on Calvin’s work in his biblical commentaries with appropriate cross-referencing to his other writings, including his sermons. A concluding essay synthesizes the main features of what has gone before to present an overall view of John Calvin as an interpreter and commentator on Holy Scripture. An appreciation of Calvin’s exegetical labors and his work as a biblical commentator is now recognized as a key element in Calvin scholarship.

Donald K. McKim is Academic and Reference editor for Westminster John Knox Press. He is author and editor of over twenty-five books including the Cambridge Companions to Martin Luther (2003) and John Calvin (2004).
CALVIN AND THE BIBLE

EDITED BY
DONALD K. MCKIM

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-0-521-83827-6 — Calvin and the Bible
Edited by Donald K. McKim
Frontmatter
More Information
Dedicated to
I. John Hesselink
Superb Calvin scholar and valued friend
Contents

Notes on contributors page ix
Preface xi
List of abbreviations xiii

1 Calvin as commentator on Genesis 1
Randall C. Zachman

2 Calvin as commentator on the Mosaic Harmony and Joshua 30
Raymond A. Blacketer

3 Calvin as an interpreter of Job 53
Susan Schreiner

4 Calvin as commentator on the Psalms 85
Wulfert de Greef
Translated by Raymond A. Blacketer

5 Calvin as commentator on the Prophets 107
Pete Wilcox

6 Calvin as commentator on the Synoptic Gospels 131
Darlene K. Flaming

7 Calvin as commentator on the Gospel of John 164
Barbara Pitkin

8 Calvin as commentator on the Acts of the Apostles 199
Wilhelmus H. Th. Moebn
Translated by Lydia Verburg-Balke

9 Calvin as commentator on the Pauline epistles 224
R. Ward Holder

vii
viii Contents

10 Calvin as commentator on Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles 257
   Gary Neal Hansen

11 John Calvin as an interpreter of the Bible 282
   David C. Steinmetz

Index 292
Notes on contributors

RAYMOND A. BLACKETER is senior pastor of the Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church, Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada. He is the author of *The School of God: Pedagogy and Rhetoric in Calvin’s Interpretation of Deuteronomy*.

WULFERT DE GREEF heads an organization promoting Reformation studies in the Netherlands. He is the author of *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* and is working on a study of Calvin as an interpreter of the Psalms.

DARLENE K. FLAMING is Associate Professor of Christianity at Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.

GARY NEAL HANSEN is Assistant Professor of Church History at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

R. WARD HOLDER is Assistant Professor of Theology at St. Anselm College, Manchester, New Hampshire. He is the author of *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin’s First Commentaries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, forthcoming).

WILHELMUS H. TH. MOEHN is a pastor in the Netherlands and author of *God Calls Us to His Service: The Relation Between God and His Audience in Calvin’s Sermons on Acts*.

BARBARA PITKIN is Acting Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University. She is the author of *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin’s Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context*.

SUSAN SCHREINER is Associate Professor of the History of Christianity and Theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School. She is the author of *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Interpretations of Job Against the Perspectives of Medieval and Modern Joban Interpretations*. 
Notes on contributors

David C. Steinmetz is Amos Ragan Kearns Professor of the History of Christianity at Duke University Divinity School. Among his many books is Calvin in Context.

Pete Wilcox is Rector of St. Paul’s Church at The Crossing, Walsall, West Midlands, United Kingdom and a member of the International Congress for Calvin Research.

Randall C. Zachman is Associate Professor of Reformation Studies in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of His Writings and Thought.
Preface

A common perception of John Calvin (1509–1564) is that he was a rigid logician and systematic theologian of the Reformation period. While it is true that Calvin presented Christian theology in a more organized or “systematic” form than Luther, it is also true that there is much more to his theological understandings than is found within the pages of his magnum opus, the Institutes of the Christian Religion.

The past several decades have focused more attention on Calvin’s biblical interpretation as found in his commentaries. A growing number of scholars have now contributed to the increasing recognition of the importance of studying Calvin’s interpretive work as a commentator on Scripture. To recognize the issues, conversations, questions, and conclusions Calvin drew from his exegetical work on virtually all biblical books is to gain a much wider and deeper appreciation for the nature of his biblical and theological understandings than has been possible before. Scholars will continue to reflect on the relation of Calvin’s interpretation of biblical texts to the development of his theology as a whole. But an appreciation of his exegetical labors and his work as a biblical commentator is now recognized as a key element in Calvin scholarship.

This book provides a study of Calvin as a biblical interpreter and commentator on Scripture. The following chapters are written by Calvin specialists who have studied Calvin as an interpreter of the major portions of Scriptures represented here. It struck me a few years ago while participating in the International Congress on Calvin Research that while it is now axiomatic in Calvin studies to recognize the importance of his exegesis, we did not have a scholarly resource where we could turn to understand the ways he functioned as a biblical interpreter on major segments of the Bible. This book seeks to fill this need and provide such a resource.
Preface

I would like to thank the international array of Calvin scholars who have participated in this project and those who have translated essays. They have contributed their expertise to help us gain a clearer understanding of Calvin and the Bible. This book supplements other studies but is unique in its format and gains its significance from the generosity of these colleagues who have shared their scholarship and insights. I would like to thank all of them and especially David Steinmetz for undertaking the challenging task of writing the concluding essay.

This book owes much at its inception to the interest and facilitation of Kevin Taylor of Cambridge University Press. He listened to the idea and encouraged me to shape an understanding of the project that made it more viable. I am grateful to him for valuable help and support.

Kate Brett, Senior Commissioning Editor for Religious Studies at the Press, took over Kevin’s duties and has been unfailingly helpful, patient, and kind as the project took shape and as the manuscript was completed. It has been a great pleasure and delight to work with her again. I also greatly appreciate the competence of Joanne Hill in her copy-editing work on this volume.

The love and support of my wonderful family means even more as the years go by. I am grateful beyond words to my wife LindaJo and to our sons Stephen and Karl McKim. Their lives bring joys to mine and their love nurtures me in every way.

This book is dedicated to I. John Hesselink, former President and Albertus C. Van Raalte Professor of Systematic Theology, Emeritus at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. John is a superb Calvin scholar who has contributed much to Calvin studies and to the Reformed tradition through the years. For his friendship, I am most grateful.

Donald K. McKim
Abbreviations


**CCSL**  Corpus Christianorum, series Latina.


**CSEL**  Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.


xiii