Theodore Beza and Translating 16th-Century Latin

The Meeter Center Fall Lecture, by Dr. David Noe of the Calvin College Classic Department, was entitled, “Theodore Beza as Exegete, Humanist, and Polemician: Translating 16th Century Theological Latin.” Dr. Noe’s academic work focuses on the reception of Greek and Roman philosophy and religion in the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods. This lecture was about a recent work Noe translated: Theodore Beza’s essay from 1559, A Clear & Simple Treatise on the Lord’s Supper (Grand Rapids, Reformation Heritage Books, 2016).

Dr. Noe began by explaining the conflict over the Lord’s Supper between the Reformed in Geneva and Joachim Westphal, a Gnesio-Lutheran from Hamburg. Westphal and Calvin went back and forth with each other in multiple tracts for the greater part of a decade. At the core of their debate was the tension between the Lutheran and Reformed views on the nature of Christ’s presence in the Supper. Beza’s work engaged and responded to Westphal’s 1558 Defense of the Lord’s Supper against the Errors and Calumnies of John Calvin.

The lecture then focused in on several passages from Beza’s treatise to demonstrate Beza’s expertise as an exegete, his roots as a humanist, and the polemical nature of theological debate during that era. Dr. Noe showed how Beza sought to use reason properly in answering Westphal’s own blistering attacks. Several times as was common during the Reformation and post-Reformation periods, Beza’s humanist background was illustrated by his references to Scripture to do so as well. Given God’s accommodation, for instance, it would not be unexpected, given God’s accommodation, for scripture to do so as well.

As was common during the Reformation era, Beza uses polemic in answering Westphal’s own blistering attacks. Several times
African Christianity and John Calvin: Research at the Center

My research in the Meeter Center was focused on the new wave of Christian spirituality in Africa directed towards self-development, success, prosperity and interest in miracles. I intended to establish a discussion between Calvin and this new trend. My reading of Calvin has given me a certain perspective of understanding this new trend and also confirming some of my suspicions about it. In all, I think that we must re-emphasize a Christian spirituality in Africa that focuses on God’s claim on us and not just our claim on God.

Besides the academic work, the Center also gave me the opportunity to meet other persons and create contact with other institutions. This will be important to take this opportunity to also express my gratitude to the students and faculty of Calvin College and Calvin Seminary and others who attended the presentation of my report.

My journey with the Meeter Center has just begun and I will always remember the contribution the Center has made to my scholarship. I hope the Center can recommend scholars to publishers. This will be important to take this opportunity to also express my gratitude to the students and faculty of Calvin College and Calvin Seminary and others who attended the presentation of my report.

In Memoriam

Dr. T. H. L. Parker, noted British expert on John Calvin, died in April 2016, in his hundredth year. His best-known works include Calvin’s Preaching (1992), Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought (1995), and his parallel studies of Calvin’s commentaries on the Old Testament and the New Testament. His 1975 (rev. ed. 2007) biography of John Calvin remains one of the clearest and most straightforward accounts of the Genevan Reformer’s life and thought.

Mrs. Thesa Van Halsema died in Grand Rapids on November 8, 2016. She and her family were long-standing supporters of the Meeter Center, especially through the Emo Van Halsema Fellowship for pastors in the Reformed tradition. Many of the contributions to that fund came through donations in memory of her late husband Dr. Dick Van Halsema. She was also the author of This Was John Calvin, published in 1959, which was translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Korean. She will be missed.

Successful NEH Institute

From July 11 to 29, twenty-five college and university teachers from across the United States gathered in Grand Rapids for our three-week institute funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, “Teaching the Reformation after 500 Years.” The three co-directors, Karin Maag (Meeter Center, Calvin College), Kate Van Liere (History Department, Calvin College), and David Whitford (Religion Department, Baylor University) were joined by three visiting lecturers: Katherine French (U. Michigan), John Roth (Goshen College) and Kristen Walton (Salisbury U.). We met in plenaries and small groups, focusing both on content and on pedagogy, including re-envisioning the new ways to play focusing on the Reformation. Participants praised various aspects of the program. One wrote: “This seminar is the best pedagogy-related workshop I’ve done, hands down. I anticipate that it will have a profoundly beneficial effect on my teaching, as well as my scholarship.” Another reported, “This Institute has been nothing short of extraordinary. Not only have I learned an immense amount of information about the Reformation, I have also learned numerous ways to convey that information to my students. This will improve my teaching immensely.” Finally, one participant summed up the experience by saying, “I learned far more about teaching in these three weeks than I have in any previous pedagogical training.”

Funded Research Fellowships

Every year, the Meeter Center offers fellowships for graduate students, faculty, and pastors. Fellowship recipients receive a stipend to come to the Center to do research on subjects pertaining to John Calvin and Calvinism. For further details visit: https://calvin.edu/centers-institutes/meeter-center/fellowships-scholarships/

A Reformation Week Organ Recital

Over a hundred and fifty community members congregated in Calvin College Chapel on October 25 for a spectacular organ performance by Hilary Guter, Director of Music at Woodlawn Christian Reformed Church. Guter’s dynamic gusto and stunning technique complemented the dramatic highs and lows of her Reformation-era selections, which echoed magnificently through the chapel. Through the interplay of sound and silence, Guter expertly drew out melodies, and highlighted the full range of the organ’s pipes. Interpersing music with narration from her husband, Rev. Frank Guter, Hilary Guter offered the audience a musical history of the Reformation via its organ composers. Playing works chronologically by Kaps, Praetorius, Bruns, Sweelinck, Buxtehude, Walther and Bach, Guter conveyed a sense of the central and yet often contested place of organ music within worship during the Reformation, and taught us to listen with an historical ear.

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
- Supporter $40
- Donor $75

Associate $100
Partner $200
Benefactor $500

Celebrating the Reformation’s 500th Anniversary:
Meeter Center Special Events

January Series Lecture: Meeter Center Director Karin Maag will give a January Series Lecture entitled, “After 500 Years: Does the Reformation Still Matter?” The lecture is scheduled for Wednesday, January 4, 2017, 12:30 PM-1:30 PM, at the Covenant Fine Arts Center Auditorium. January Series lectures are free to the public. See http://calvin.edu/directory/series/karin-maag for more details.

CALL Class: Karin Maag is teaching a special January class with Calvin Academy for Lifelong Learning on “Getting the Word Out: Spreading the Message of the Reformation.” Participants will learn about the impact of the Bible from the time of the Reformation until today. This class will be held in the Woodlawn Ministry Center across the street from Calvin College, and will be publicized in advance of the CALL spring curriculum catalog announced at http://www.calvin.edu/academic/call/

CALL Trip: The Calvin Academy for Lifelong Learning is headed to Europe! Tour key Reformation sites with Director Karin Maag and Curator Paul Fields with CALL from September 12-22. See the upcoming CALL newsletter for more information.

Calvin Studies Society Conference: CSSC’s Seventh Annual Reformation Conference, entitled “Calvin and the Early Reformation,” will be hosted this year by Baylor University in Waco, Texas, from 11:00 AM March 16 to 1:30 PM March 18, 2017. To register, see http://www.calvinstudiessociety.org/events/2017/3/16/calvin-studies-society-colloquium.