New Books & Articles


From the Director

Commemorating the Reformation’s 500th Anniversary at the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies

By Jiabin Qie, Calvin Theological Seminary Student

The Meeter Center’s Reformation Reflections Panels on October 31 and November 1 involved ten panel speakers: Matthew Lundberg (Religion Dept.), Jamie Smith (Philosophy Dept.), Michelle Loyd-Paige (Diversity and Inclusion), Mary Hulst (College Chaplain), Jordan Ballor (Acton Institute), Lyle Bierma (Calvin Seminary), Susan Fetch (Calvin English Dept.), Eric Washington (Calvin History Dept.), Laura Smit (Calvin Religion Dept.), and Suzanne McDonald (Western Theological Seminary). An average of sixty audience members packed into the Meeter Center reading area for each session, listening as panelists reflected on the meaning of the Reformation from the perspective of their faith and their discipline.

Most of the ideas the panelists presented on October 31 and November 1 emphasized the positive personal and social impacts of the Reformation, including the accessibility of the scriptures, diversity of the church governance, freedom for some persecuted groups, emancipation of the Word of God, and recovery of the church fathers, just to name a few. Dr. Bierma and Dr. Lundberg also named some downsides, like the tragic divisions and the Protestant belated zeal for missions.

Apply for the Meeter Center’s July 2018 Paleography Course!

Undergraduate students, graduate students, and scholars are invited to apply to attend our 2018 French Paleography Workshop with Professor Tom Lambert, offered biennially and sponsored jointly by the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies and the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference. Accepted students will receive a $500 stipend. Details for applying can be found here: https://calvin.edu/centers-institutes/meeter-center/paleography-workshop/ Application deadline: March 15, 2018. Workshop runs July 9-20, 2018.

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Continued on page 3

Continued on page 2

Fall 2017, Number 60

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From the Director

This newsletter comes to you towards the end of a very busy year for the Meeter Center. We have been involved in a wide range of Reformation anniversary activities, from courses to panel sessions, from chapel services to presentations for community groups, conferences, and churches. It is remarkable to see what a wide range of individuals and groups have wanted to hear more about the Reformation and its impact during this 500th anniversary year.

The highlights of this year included two ten-day tours to Reformation sites in Germany and Switzerland. It was fascinating not only to see the sites but to learn how the Reformation is being remembered and commemorated in so many different ways. This is also continued on page 2
Visiting Fellow Report: From Genevan Convent to Hospital
By Kristen Coan Howard

As a Research Fellow at the Meeter Center this summer, I conducted research for my dissertation project, “Children at the Hôpital Général in Reformation Geneva, 1535-1570.” My dissertation focuses on the care of impoverished children in Reformation Geneva, especially those who became residents at the city’s newly established Hôpital Général, or General Hospital, which predated the city’s unanimous vote in favor of the Protestant Reformation by just a few months.

At the Meeter Center, I focused on the hospital’s “pre-history”—that is, its time as Geneva’s only religious house for women, the Convent of St. Clare. The Meeter Center’s impressive collection includes primary sources—most notably the Registres de Conseil and nun Jeanne de Jussy’s chronicle of the Poor Clares’ experience of Geneva’s Reformation—that paint a picture of the tumultuous early Reformation in Geneva, and how the city’s nuns were impacted. In 1535, hot-headed iconoclasts decapitated statues, torched altars, and even penetrated the cloister, leading the nuns to abandon their convent and quit the city, fearful for their safety. Geneva’s Small Council capitalized on the situation by quickly transforming the empty convent into a hospital for the poor—the Hôpital Général. Utilizing the Meeter Center’s sources, I reconstructed the physical space and layout of the convent, and compared this with descriptions of the hospital’s use of the same space. This allowed me to understand how a convent housing just twenty-four nuns could, in the space of a few weeks, be transformed into a hospital for the poor housing three times as many residents.

My time at the Meeter Center was pivotal in conducting research for my dissertation, and I am very thankful for this opportunity to work with the Center’s unparalleled collection of sources on Calvinism and Calvin’s Geneva. I strongly encourage all students of early modern Europe and the Reformation to consider the strengths of the Meeter Center’s collection when considering how to conduct their own research projects, even if they appear a bit “out of the box”—even Paul Fields was surprised at the extent of the Meeter Center’s collection in examining the history of Geneva’s Catholic nuns!

A True Geneva Study Bible
By Paul Fields, Meeter Center Curator

The Meeter Center received as a gift from a longtime friend of the Center a 1588 French Geneva Bible entitled La Bible qui est toute la Sainte Escriture du Vieil et du Nouveau Testament. It is an octavo version of the folio edition of the same Bible also published in 1588. Because of its smaller size this work contains shorter marginal notes: notes which are the work of C. B. Bertram, professor of Oriental languages at Geneva, along with T. De Bèze, A. La Faye, J. Jacquemot, S. Goulart, and J. B. Rotan. In addition to the Scriptures and the Apocrypha, the work contains the Book of Psalms set to music (see left), as well as worship aids for the following: prayer, marriage service, the sacraments, Confession of Faith and Catechism, and the Ten Commandments. In one volume a family or community of believers would have everything necessary for Reformed worship and practice. The Meeter Center also owns the 1588 folio edition of this Bible, a work which because of its study notes, was considered the definitive Geneva Bible. Comparing the notes and aids, or lack thereof, in each volume would make an interesting research project.

Did you know?
The Meeter Center has editions of John Calvin’s Institutes in eighteen languages.