



*John Calvin*

# Calvin Courier

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

Spring 2014, Number 53

## From the Director

As Grand Rapids (finally!) moves towards spring after our second-snowiest winter on record, we look forward to welcoming a number of summer guests, including six visiting scholars (see p. 2 for their names, affiliations, and topics) and eight participants in our Genevan paleography workshop (see p. 3 for that list).

In late August, Meeter Center Curator Paul Fields and I will be attending the International Calvin Congress in Zurich, where we will both present papers. We look forward to meeting old friends and making new contacts during the gathering. In October, the Meeter Center is sponsoring three panel sessions at the Sixteenth Century Studies conference in New Orleans: many of the speakers in these three sessions are participants in our 2013 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar.

Closer to home, the Meeter Center will be hosting the biennial Calvin Studies Society conference at Calvin Theological Seminary from April 9-11, 2015. The theme this time is John Calvin and worship. We will provide the speakers' list and registration information in the fall Calvin Courier, but wanted to you to save the date.

Finally, as we get closer to 2017 and the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, we would like to serve as a clearing-house for any and all Reformation-related events that you or organizations you are part of are planning. Let us know by email ([meeter@calvin.edu](mailto:meeter@calvin.edu)), and we'll keep an up-to-date list on our website so everyone can know what all is being planned

Karin Y. Maag

## The Genevan Pastors' *Congrégation*

On April 4, Dr. Erik A. de Boer, professor in the History of the Reformation at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and lecturer in Classical languages and Patristics at the Theologische Universiteit in Kampen, presented a lecture at the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies titled "The Reading of I Corinthians 14 and the Genevan Pastors' *Congrégation* as a School of the Prophets." It examined the interrelationship between I Corinthians 14, the *congrégations* of the Genevan Company of Pastors, and Calvin's expositional program while a minister in Geneva.

I Corinthians 14:3, 6 (ESV) reads "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but one who prophesies edifies the church ... But now brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?" This passage is key to understanding the function of the weekly gatherings of pastors called *congrégations* in Geneva during the time of Calvin. I Corinthians 14 was viewed as warrant to present an interpretation of a text and to comment in a gathering of pastors. This was not simply a Genevan practice; there was a similar practice in Zürich instituted by Zwingli in 1525.

Dr. de Boer pointed out that by understanding prophecy as

exposition of the Scriptures in preaching, this text formed the basis for a collegial gathering of pastors to exhort one another not only in doctrine but also in life. The Bible studies worked through a biblical book via a *lectio continua* exposition of a book, with each pastor taking turns and a maximum of two or three pastors commenting on the text per meeting. The collegial nature of the weekly meeting is best illustrated by the point that Calvin only presented once every fifteen gatherings. Between 1549 and Calvin's death in 1564, there were approximately 750 pastoral *congrégations*. Of these roughly 750 meetings however, only eight full transcripts of the meetings survive. What we do know from the extant manuscripts is that the group of pastors did have opportunity to give feedback and input into each pastor's presentation of the text. Dr. de Boer's contribution to Calvin scholarship at this point is in noting that when one correlates the lectures and *congrégations* with Calvin's sermons and commentaries, we find that the Company of Pastors became a place for Calvin to test and try out lines of exegesis.



Erik de Boer

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## The Genevan Pastors' *Congrégation*, continued

Dr. de Boer also noted that when one analyzes the order of Calvin's expository work in his commentaries, we can find precursors in three forms of exegesis: his lectures and sermons as well as in the *congrégations*. The pastoral gatherings worked through Romans perhaps in 1542; 1550-1551 the catholic epistles; 1553, the Gospel of John; 1555, Matthew and Luke; in 1556-1557, the Psalms; and towards the end of Calvin's life, Exodus through Joshua in 1559-1563.

Calvin's expository plan that started with the New Testament and then proceeded to the Old Testament underscored the priority of the New Testament for Calvin in Christian pastoral ministry. This does not mean that the Old Testament was rejected, however. For Calvin, representing a general trajectory in Christian exegesis, the New Testament more clearly portrayed salvation through a redeemer than the Old Testament. Layered into this priority was also a general understanding that there were two broad emphases of biblical writings for Calvin: *doctrina* and *historia*. In this framework, the pastor should preach through the more explicitly doctrinal books of the New Testament before transitioning to the historical books. So for example from 1539 to 1551 Calvin preached, lectured, and commented through all the doctrinal books of the New Testament from Romans to Jude. Starting in 1549 through 1563, Calvin began lecturing and preaching through the major and minor prophets as well as Genesis, the Psalms, and Deuteronomy. It appears that Calvin proceeded through doctrinal works first and then moved towards historical ones. During this same time frame through sermons and the *congrégations* Calvin also began working through the historical sections of the New Testament, again prioritizing those books that were more doctrinal in nature, thus Acts, John, Matthew, and Luke.

Dr. de Boer demonstrated that one cannot neglect the vibrant role the collegial engagement of the *congrégations* played in the life of the Genevan churches via the mutual edification of the pastors. He also demonstrated that the Genevan pastors were working through similar expository plans such as Calvin, emphasizing the input the Company of Pastors had in each other's exposition, even Calvin's.

For more information on this aspect of Calvin studies, Dr. de Boer has recently published the following books with Librairie Droz:

De Boer, E.A. *Congrégations et disputations*. Series VII, Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia. Varia Volumen I. Geneva: Droz, 2014.

De Boer, E.A. *The Genevan School of the Prophets. The Congrégation of the Company of Pastors and Their Influence in 16th Century Europe*. Geneva: Droz, 2012.

Todd Rester  
Ph.D Student, Calvin Theological Seminary

## Fellowships Awarded in 2014

### Faculty Research Fellowship

Dr. Kirk Essary, adjunct lecturer at the University of Florida in Gainesville, FL, will study the reception of the Pauline notion of folly in the theological exegesis of Erasmus and John Calvin.

### Friends Research Fellowship

Balázs Dávid Magyar, Ph.D student at Debrecen Reformed Theological University in Debrecen, Hungary, will look at the system of John Calvin's social thoughts.

### Non-Stipendiary Fellowship

Rev. Isomi Saito, Ph.D student at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, will study divine adoption in the confessions of the Reformation period.

### Student Research Fellowship

Allison Brown, MA student at Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL, will research John Calvin's influence on the theology of the Marian exiles.

Christopher McFadin, Ph.D student at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, IA, will look at the fiscal reformation of French Protestantism in rural France from 1598-1685.

### Emo F.J. Van Halsema Fellowship

Rev. Heon Soo Kim, Ph.D. Student at the Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, will conduct an examination of the Genevan Psalter.

## Teresa of Avila, Luther, and Calvin

In her Meeter Center presentation on February 6, 2014, Dr. Alisa J. Tigchelaar of the Calvin College Spanish department spoke on the topic of "Vocation in Teresa of Ávila's 'Reformed' Convent Through the Lens of Martin Luther and John Calvin." Dr. Tigchelaar's talk brought together two sides of the Reformation which tend not to be compared. Teresa of Ávila, known in Spanish as Teresa de Jesús, was a Spanish nun in the order known as the Discalced Carmelites, which she co-founded together with John of the Cross. A mystic, pilgrim, writer, abbess, and teacher, she is not often spoken of in the same breath as John Calvin or

### 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.

Martin Luther, but Dr. Tigchelaar demonstrates that there may be more overlap and compatibility in their respective articulation of “vocation” than has historically been credited.

Beginning with a brief history and introduction to the life of Teresa of Ávila, Dr. Tigchelaar quickly moved into the Reformers’ critique of monasticism, which is tied directly to their teachings on vocation. For both Martin Luther and John Calvin, vocation was necessarily rooted in central theological principles and doctrinal understanding, contributed to the common good, emphasized situationally-relevant obedience, and could not be understood apart from the God-human relationship. The Reformers’ critique of late medieval monasticism was precisely that it did not accomplish these four things, having become in many places a corrupt and worldly institution where elite intellectuals contemplated their own salvation, rather than working out their salvation through love for one’s neighbor. It is important to recognize that this assessment is not a rejection of monasticism, but rather a critique of it.

Dr. Tigchelaar’s thesis was that these four things were also recognized by monastic reformers, notably Teresa of Ávila. Teresa of Ávila worked throughout her life to bring about monastic reform. She recognized the corruption and worldliness that had leaked its way into the convent: women from wealthy families were promoted to leadership positions more quickly, families used convents as convenient places to discard their unwanted daughters without paying a full dowry, influence and prestige were measured in very worldly ways, and vows and prayer were not always undertaken with sincerity or calling. Teresa of Ávila recognized the need for a calling from God as a vital prerequisite to monastic life, and thus instituted major reforms of convent life, most notably absolute enclosure of the cloister, which was universally adopted years later at the Council of Trent.

The subsequent picture of monastic life under Teresa of Ávila’s reforms looks remarkably like the “proper and good monasticism” described by Luther and Calvin. Indeed, despite



Alisa Tigchelaar

her strong opposition to the Luteranismos, Teresa of Ávila was brought before the Spanish Inquisition several times for what were viewed as “Protestant tendencies,” including the promotion and encouragement of personal devotional life, silent prayer, Bible reading, spiritual contemplation, communal chores, and others. Teresa of Ávila’s understanding of the monastic life matches Calvin’s understanding of vocation in spirit: communally oriented, properly theological, prioritizing the relationship with God, and emphasizing the necessary interrelatedness of all human activity in bringing one’s life in line with one’s faith.

John Medendorp

Th.M Student, Calvin Theological Seminary

## Summer French Paleography Workshop

This summer the Meeter Center will again offer a two-week course for undergraduate and graduate students and scholars interested in reading manuscript sources in French, whether those documents are stored in French or Swiss archives, or in the Meeter Center’s own collection. The course will draw on a variety of documents from the Genevan State Archives, primarily from the 1540s to the 1560s. It will be taught, as in previous years, by Tom Lambert, an expert in French Paleography. The Meeter Center received a large number of exceptional applications for the course. Those selected are:

**Kristen Coen**, MA student in European history at the University of Arizona, AZ

**Ashleigh Corwin**, Ph.D student in European history at Georgetown University, DC

**Ji Gao**, Ph.D student in French literature at the University of Chicago, IL

**Edward Gray**, Ph.D student in European history at Purdue University, IN

**Rebecca Harmon**, Associate Professor of Modern Languages at Grove City College, PA

**Marjorie Hopkins**, Ph.D student in European history at the University of Guelph, ON

**Katherine Maynard**, Associate Professor of French, Washington College, MD

**Christopher McFadin**, Ph.D student in religious studies at the University of Iowa, IA

### 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



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## New Books

Berg, M. A. van den. *Eerbied: Citaten van Johannes Calvijn*. Apeldoorn: De Banier, 2012.

Engammare, Max. *Soixante-Trois: La peur da la grande année climactérique à la Renaissance*. Geneva: Droz, 2013.

Holder, R. Ward, ed. *Calvin and Luther: The Continuing Relationship*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.

Kooi, Christine. *Calvinists and Catholics during Holland's Gold Age: Heretics and Idolaters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

McGinnis, Andrew M. "The Son of God Beyond the Flesh: A Historical and Theological Study of the Extra Calvinisticum." Ph.D Dissertation, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2013.

Opitz, Peter, ed. *The Myth of the Reformation*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.

Selderhuis, Herman J., Martin Leiner, and Volker Leppin, eds. *Calvinismus in den Auseinandersetzungen des frühen konfessionellen Zeitalters*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.

Speelman, Herman A. *Calvin and the Independence of the Church*. Translated by Albert Gootjes. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014.

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

The 2014 winners are:

1<sup>st</sup> Place: **Jacob Stout** of Escondido, CA

2<sup>nd</sup> Place: **Rachel Vos** of Alexander, AR

Both winners will attend Calvin College in the fall.