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John Calvin

Calvin Courier

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

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From the Director

The flowers are starting to bloom once again on campus, and we are happy to provide an update on the Center and its work. This summer we will be welcoming five visiting scholars, with a sixth coming in September, and a seventh next spring. See p. 2 for the list of fellowship recipients and their topics.

In early April, we hosted the twentieth biennial Calvin Studies Society colloquium. This conference began on our campus, as a project of the late Meeter Center curator Pieter de Klerk. Since its early days, the colloquium has met every two years in a range of venues, returning regularly to the Calvin campus. See a report on p. 3 for more about the gathering.

As we get closer to 2017 and the 500th anniversary of Luther's 95 Theses, more and more organizations are planning commemorative events to mark to start of the

Reformation. The Meeter Center is involved in planning various events on campus, including an exhibit of Reformation-era portraits and engravings, concerts, special lectures, and other activities. If you or your group is interested in having someone from the Meeter Center come lead a presentation on the Reformation in 2017, please do get in touch with us (meeter@calvin.edu), as our calendar will fill up swiftly!

Finally, we wish to thank Professor Richard Muller, of Calvin Theological Seminary, who is retiring at the end of this academic year. He has provided steady leadership for the Meeter Center's governing board and his active interest and research in the field of Reformation and Calvin studies have had a huge impact. We wish him well as he pursues further scholarship in his retirement.

Karin Y. Maag

17th Century Anglo-Dutch Relations

The traditional historiographical account of England's outlook and connections to the European continent in the seventeenth century tends to focus on the influence of links to Italy and France, especially in terms of arts and culture. Yet in the Meeter Center spring public lecture, Professor Craig Hanson of Calvin College's Art and Art History department argued for the importance of continued bonds between England and the Netherlands, both in art and in shaping the English world-view at the time. Through an analysis of texts and images, including several striking anatomical engravings, Hanson noted the ongoing close ties between the two nations and emphasized the need to change the story that is usually told about the rise of the visual arts in seventeenth-century England. He highlighted the important personal connections between the two countries, as artists, scholars, and physicians travelled and studied and worked in both places, including the Dutch artist Peter Lely, the Dutch medical doctor and royal physician Govart Bidloo, and the English physician Richard Meade.

Bidloo's biography underscores how easily people could move between the two lands: although he was professor of medicine at Leiden, Bidloo spent most of his time at the court of King William III in England. Given Bidloo's rather unpleasant and quarrelsome personality, his colleagues in Leiden seem not to

have minded his absence except for the fact that they repeatedly failed to get permission to replace him or appoint a substitute to teach his courses. Bidloo's works also crossed the Channel: his *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (1685) was pirated by an English physician, William Cowper, who reprinted the contents of the work in 1698 (including the numerous illustrations by Gerard de Lairesse) under his own name.

For his part, Richard Meade grew up as the son of a famous English dissenting pastor, studied medicine in Leiden, and eventually returned to England and moved from his dissenting upbringing into allegiance to the Church of England, opening the door to preferment and patronage. In the course of his lecture, Hanson carefully analyzed a previously-overlooked letter from the dean of Norwich to the archbishop of Canterbury, which gave an account of Meade's move from non-conformity to support for the Church of England, in spite of his family's objections.



Craig Hanson

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17th Century Anglo-Dutch Relations, *continued*

Hanson's well-received lecture is part of a bigger research project he is undertaking on the connections between England and the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. We look forward to seeing the results of his research in print.

Karin Maag
Director, Meeter Center

Fellowships Awarded in 2015

Faculty Research Fellowship

Dr. James Blakeley, associate professor at St. Joseph's College in Brooklyn, NY, will study the Reformation in Western Switzerland.

Dr. Paul Helm, adjunct teacher at the London School of Theology in the United Kingdom, will look at human nature in Calvinistic theology from John Calvin to Jonathan Edwards.

Friends Research Fellowship

Rev. Dr. Louis Ebong, instructor at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary Kumba in the Cameroon, will research Calvinism and African Christianity.

Dr. Nathan Jacobs, visiting lecturer at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY, will study Calvin and perseverance.

Student Research Fellowship

Rebekah Earnshaw, Ph.D Student at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, will look at John Calvin's doctrine of Creator and creation as evident in his commentary and sermons on Genesis.

Emo F.J. Van Halsema Fellowship

Rev. Dr. Heber Campos, Jr., assistant professor at Centro Presbiteriano de Pós Graduação Andrew Jumper in Brazil, will research the imputation of Christ's righteousness in 16th and 17th century Reformed theology.

Rev. Douglas Shank, Pastor at Redeeming Love Christian Reformed Church in East Grand Forks, MN, will explore Calvin's thoughts on why God hides Himself.

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. **Previous fellowship recipients may re-apply after a minimum one-year hiatus.** For further details visit:

<http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/new/fellowships-and-scholarships>

Lessons from Reformation Geneva

Karin Maag, Director of the Meeter Center, gave this plenary presentation at the Calvin Worship Symposium, a major gathering on worship that takes place every January in Grand Rapids at Calvin College. This presentation was geared towards the pastors, liturgists, and church leaders in attendance.

"How to Implement Changes in Worship, Without Losing Your Congregation in the Process: Lessons from Reformation Geneva"

Here are ten lessons learned from dramatic changes in worship in Reformation Geneva, a city of around 10,000 people that moved from being Catholic to being Reformed in the course of a decade in the 1530s and 1540s:

1. Focus on the fundamentals and integrate these into worship services: to assess whether Genevans were taking in the basics of Christian belief, the Genevan church leaders insisted that everyone – male and female, young and old, should be able to recite from memory and off by heart the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed. Understanding the texts and their meaning was a second step, but the first priority was to have people memorize these texts: all three were also regularly recited during weekly church services.
2. Set the fundamentals to music – if you want people to learn new things, set them to music to aid memorization and recall, and use it in worship. The Genevan Psalter included not only all 150 psalms by 1561, but also settings of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments, all set to music, and all regularly used during worship services.
3. Use your young people! Genevan school-boys had an hour of psalm-singing a day as part of their curriculum, and quickly gained familiarity and confidence – so much so that they were asked at times to lead the congregational singing, to help everyone get to grips with this new practice.
4. Explain what you are doing and why you are doing it – reading over the liturgies of Geneva for a regular Sunday service and for the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper can be a dry business – the pastor seems to spend as much time working through an explanatory preamble as he spent actually saying the words of the liturgy – but week by week, and month by month, people heard the pastor explain why infants were to be baptized,



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and why the Lord's Supper was to be celebrated, allowing these teachings to take root.

5. Encourage worship practices in the home – the Genevan catechism taught the fundamentals of the Reformed faith in a question and answer format, but also included a section of prayers for use at home: when getting up, before and after meals, before going to school or work, before going to bed – everyone in Geneva had the same catechism, so everyone had the same prayers. Help congregation members feel connected to each other through their home-based worship during the week.

6. Be flexible when necessary. Calvin wanted to have the Lord's Supper celebrated on a weekly basis – the Genevan magistrates, wanting to make a greater distinction between the Reformed Lord's Supper and the Catholic Mass, said no: four times a year was their preferred option – in this instance, Calvin was willing to shelve his wishes and not insist on having his way.

7. Retain older traditions if these are helpful and do not go against any core teachings: the key one the Genevans retained was the practice of having godparents. The practice goes back to the early church, where sponsors would provide spiritual support and mentoring for baptismal candidates. By the middle ages, the practice was enshrined in the church, ensuring both spiritual guidance and practical support, especially crucial in an era in which people died young, and children may well grow up without one or other birth parent. Calvin himself served as godfather to numerous children baptized in Geneva during his time in the city.

8. Don't move too fast or make too many changes at once – Calvin's first stay in Geneva only lasted just over two years, from 1536 to 1538, at which point he and his ministerial colleague Guillaume Farel were exiled from the city. Part of the reason for their sudden dismissal was political, but part of the problem was due to the two pastors' rigid insistence that every Genevan had to swear individual agreement to a new confession of faith, and to their determination that only pastors could regulate admission to the Lord's Supper. On his return to Geneva in 1541, Calvin quietly shelved the idea of the individual confessional oath swearing, and asked for and helped create the consistory, a mixed body of pastors and elders (who were all elected magistrates) to oversee church discipline and admission to the Lord's Supper.

9. Work as collaboratively as possible. Contrary to some assumptions, Calvin did not rule Geneva, nor did he set up a theocracy in the city. The Company of Pastors (all the pastors of Geneva and the surrounding countryside), and the Consistory (all the city pastors, and twelve elders) worked together to set up and oversee Reformed worship in the Genevan churches.

10. Be patient: it took nearly a generation for the majority of Genevans to accept and internalize the dramatic changes in worship that had taken place during their lifetime. Many older Genevans were very attached to the traditional rituals and practices of their Catholic faith, and saw little need to give these

up. Are you trying to introduce new music to a reluctant congregation? Are you trying to bring in liturgical dance, or reconfigure your worship space? Be patient! Understand that those who voice opposition are implicitly telling you something about what they value, what anchors their worship practice. Try to find common ground, and remember to focus above all on your common commitments to faithful servant-hood and following Christ.

2015 Calvin Studies Society Conference

Conference participants from across the US and Europe gathered at Calvin Theological Seminary for the twentieth biennial Calvin Studies Society colloquium. The theme was Calvin and Worship. Participants enjoyed hearing and discussing nine plenary papers and the shorter communications from a panel of graduate students and recent faculty, and participated in two evening events: a panel discussion on infant baptism versus infant dedications and a Psalmfest. The Meeter Center was the local organizer and host for the event, and participants expressed appreciation for all the planning and the smooth running of the conference. The next colloquium will be hosted by Baylor University in March 2019 – the theme will be Calvin and the early Reformation.

below are photos of participants enjoying the conference



New Books

Andor, Békési and Galsi Árpád, eds. *Evangéliumi Kálvinizmus*. Budapest: Magyarországi Református Egyház Kálvin János Kiadója, 2009.

Balserak, Jon. *John Calvin as Sixteenth-Century Prophet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Burnett, Amy Nelson, Kathleen M. Comerford, and Karin Maag, eds. *Politics, Gender, and Belief: The Long-Term Impact of the Reformation*. Geneva: Droz, 2014.

Hasselhoff, Görg K. *Johannes Calvin interkulturell gelesen*. Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz, 2012.

McGinnis, Andrew M. *The Son of God Beyond the Flesh: A Historical and Theological Study of the extra Calvinisticum*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Raith, Charles, II. *Aquinas and Calvin on Romans: God's Justification and Our Participation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Selderhuis, Herman J., ed. *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Walt, B. J. van der. *At the Cradle of a Christian Philosophy: Calvin – Vollenhoven – Stoker – Dooyeweerd*. Potchefstroom: The Insitute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa, 2014.

Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors

The 2015 winners are:

1st Place: **Elena van Stee** of Western Springs, IL

2nd Place: **Jo-Anna Aalbers** of Midland, MI

Luke Brandsen of Holland, MI

Aren Plante of Caledonia, ON