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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

As we gradually move towards winter in Michigan, we look back on a busy summer and fall. Our Latin paleography workshop, funded in part by the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference, was successful, and our visiting scholars who received Meeter Center fellowships to support their research reported a high degree of satisfaction with their experience. See p. 2 for an account by Dr. Mark Garcia of his experiences at the Meeter Center this summer. Our fall Meeter Center lectures by Jamie Smith of Calvin College's philosophy department, and by Emidio Campi, emeritus director of the Swiss Institute for Reformation Studies were very well attended, with over a hundred people at each lecture. See below for reports on their presentations.

Our major piece of news is that in August, the National Endowment for the Humanities informed us that our grant application to hold a four-week summer seminar for college and university teachers in the summer of 2013

was successful. This grant is the fourth that the Meeter Center has received from NEH since 2004, and we are delighted to be organizing another one of these prestigious events. Please see p. 2 for more information and application details about the seminar, which I will co-direct with Dr. Amy Nelson Burnett of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Finally, please note that from April 4-6, 2013, Princeton Theological Seminary will host the biennial Calvin Studies Society meeting. The organizers have put together an outstanding program of speakers on "Calvin and the Book", and everyone with an interest in Calvin and the Reformation is encouraged to register for this gathering. The web address for information about the program and registrations is [www.calvinstudiessociety.org](http://www.calvinstudiessociety.org)

*Karin Y. Maag*

## "Protestant Reformers and Islam"

In a lecture titled "Protestant Reformers and Islam" co-sponsored by Calvin's Religion Department and the Meeter Center on November 1, Emidio Campi, professor emeritus of church history at the University of Zürich and an ordained minister in the Waldensian Church, discussed the Reformed branch of the Protestant Reformation's response to Islam. Given the (Islamic) Ottoman Empire's presence in Eastern Europe—very near the heart of the Reformation—and the lasting impression of the Crusades on Christendom, it is not surprising that the Reformers would have something to say about Islam. What is surprising is the lack of scholarship done in this area, especially with regard to the Reformed branch of the Reformation.

Campi sought with his lecture to bring to light some of these Reformed responses to Islam. After a brief excursus on the relationship between Christianity and Islam in the medieval period, Campi explained the nature and expansion of Islam in the late 15th-early 16th centuries. As he explained, many of the Reformers would have had access to a Latin translation of the Koran at this point, and the ominous presence of the Turks in Eastern Europe was an ever-present reminder of the importance

of understanding something about Islam, at least with a view toward Christian apologetics. Campi then continued with an examination of the Lutheran position regarding Islam—or "the Turks", as Luther and many of the other Reformers understood it.

Insofar as Luther and Melancthon's positions on the Turks have been recently examined in the scholarly world, the bulk of Campi's lecture was focused on the Reformed position, as articulated by Zwingli, Bibliander, Bullinger, and Calvin. As Campi explained, for Zwingli, following 8th-century Eastern theologian John of Damascus, Islam was a Christian heresy. Zwingli's colleague, Theodor Bibliander, focused on understanding Islam on its own terms and produced an edited version of the medieval Latin translation of the Koran.



*Emidio Campi*

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## Reflections from a Visiting Scholar

Pastoral practice is, in essence, the faithful care of souls in the face of death, whether the time of death proves to be near or far. While it may sound unduly morbid to put it this way, Christian ministers have long recognized that this kind of robust realism is alone able to speak words of realistic hope and grace to human beings so often confronted with the dark hues of a fallen world. Perhaps for this reason, it has become popular in recent years to recall how this ministerial focus on "living in order to die well" was once a distinguishing feature of Reformed pastoral theology, but it is probably less well known how intimately this fact is connected to deep-running beliefs about suffering, evil, and hell.

It was my great privilege to explore some of these connections recently as a 2012 Emo F. J. Van Halsema fellow at the Meeter Center. This was my second stint at the Center, the first coming back in 2003 when I was a PhD research student at New College/School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh. Just as I remembered, yet even more so this time around, the Center proved to be a truly delightful and stimulating environment for exploring the vast heritage of historic Reformed theology and biblical interpretation. Working at the Center seems specially designed to ensure this: I enjoyed an office of my own, easy access to practically limitless text and electronic resources, gracious and truly helpful assistance from a highly knowledgeable and gracious staff, and regular offerings of that indispensable element in any research project: coffee!

Of course, having the resources at hand is only part of the picture: one still has work to do with them and - very closely related to this - requests to ask of the staff all along the way in order to maximize the benefits of a limited amount of time. And once again my time at the Center did not disappoint. I had arrived at the Center eager to explore early modern texts on hell and evil to see if I might come across Reformed theologians and ministers connecting hell with the varied forms of hardship and pain in earthly life, much like certain Franciscans in Italy had done. Within that big picture of a project, I also wondered if I might discover ways in which Calvin's teaching on the "descent into hell" of the Apostles' Creed may have been translated by later writers into particular forms of pastoral care for those who suffer greatly, on the one hand, and a unique kind of defense of the reality of hell, on the other.

My quests were all successful but in different ways. Much like my last time at the Center, only a few days into my month-long fellowship I had already found more than I could hope to examine carefully in the amount of time I had to work with, and the interesting lines of inquiry and exploration multiplied exponentially every time I tapped the resources of the Center in a



*Rev. Mark Garcia*

search for more. This included access to an important but neglected collection of works by the French Reformed minister and theologian, Charles Drelincourt, who was known for his skills in pastoral visitation and wrote solemnly yet graciously in the old "art of dying" tradition, as well as stacks and stacks of useful papers and articles of relevance to my interest in the rapidly changing early modern notions of hell. I was able, in the end, to refine my ideas about how the changes in thinking about the reality of hell were related to other changes in thinking about not just science and cosmology but magic, astrology, and the nature (and avoidance) of evil. At the close of my month of work, I was also afforded an opportunity to discuss my work with a vibrant group of interested people from the College, the Seminary, and the community. This, too, proved to be a helpful aid in bringing a range of disconnected conclusions into sharper focus. Finally, after a month overflowing with profitable work and truly enjoyable fellowship with the staff members, I left the Center not only with a greatly enhanced appreciation for the nuances and richness of my research topic, but also with renewed appreciation for the great service the Center renders to scholars and ministers. And now the only real question is, when can I return?

*Rev. Mark Garcia*

*2012 Meeter Center Emo F.J. Van Halsema Fellowship Recipient*

## NEH Summer Seminar, Jul. 15-Aug. 9, 2013

The topic for our four-week seminar for college and university teachers is "Persecution, Toleration, Co-Existence: Early Modern Responses to Religious Pluralism". The seminar will be co-directed by Amy Nelson Burnett (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) and Karin Maag (Calvin College), with guest presentations by Benjamin Kaplan (University College London), Barbara Diefendorf (Boston University) and Dean Bell (Speratus Institute for Jewish Studies). Faculty at universities and colleges across the United States are encouraged to apply, as are adjunct and part-time faculty, and independent scholars. Two of the sixteen available places in the seminar are reserved for graduate students. This seminar is research-focused: there will be ample time for participants to engage in their own scholarly project, and present their results to their peers at the end of the four weeks. Participants must be US citizens or have lived in the US for at least three years prior to the application deadline, which is March 4, 2013 (postmark deadline). Information about application procedures and materials, and about the seminar topic, schedule, and other practical information can be found on our website:

**<http://www.calvin.edu/meeter/NEH2013>**

We also welcome enquiries by email: contact Karin Maag with any questions you may have at [kmaag@calvin.edu](mailto:kmaag@calvin.edu)

## 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.*

## “Protestant Reformers and Islam”, *continued*

In contrast with Bibliander, Heinrich Bullinger, taking a more moralistic approach, charged Muhammad with inventing a works-based righteousness and ultimately concluded that several principles in the Koran—notably marriage, government, and (lesser) jihad—were fundamentally opposed to the Christian faith. John Calvin, whose writings on the topic are few and far between compared to the other Reformed Reformers, took a heavily theological approach to his understanding of Islam, calling it a heretical sect within Christianity.

In his conclusion, Campi underlines the fact that many of the Reformers’ teachings on Islam were problems of their sociopolitical context. Furthermore, their understanding of Islam was skewed by the limited, violent clash between Islam and Christianity during the Crusades. (Interestingly, Zwingli, Bibliander, and Bullinger were against the Crusades, and Calvin likely would have been, had he widened his focus from theological discussion alone!) Campi’s final point—namely, that Christians ought to strive to build a “safe, just, and tolerant society through dialogue”—is exactly in line with these anti-Crusade sentiments, and seems especially timely in our own day, given the importance of understanding Islam and Muslims for interfaith dialogue and Christian witness in our broken world.

*Andrew Wade, Calvin College student*

## John Calvin’s Catholic Faith?

On Oct. 11th, Prof. Jamie Smith from Calvin College’s Philosophy Department presented at the Meeter Center’s annual fall lecture, a paper entitled “Lift up your Hearts: John Calvin’s Catholic Faith.” Prof. Smith began by asking, “What if we don’t have to choose between being Protestant and Catholic? Indeed, what if being (magisterial) Protestant is a way to be Catholic? Would that somehow denigrate the Reformation?” In the next forty minutes, Smith fleshed out an answer to these questions. He admitted that there is a difference between being Reformed and being Roman Catholic but also stated that he does not “think that Rome owns Catholicity.” He went on to say that we should see the “Protestant Reformation as an Augustinian renewal movement within the church catholic.” He continued by saying that the reformers “saw themselves as heirs and debtors to the tradition that came before them”; which is to say that the Reformed tradition “affirms [the] operation of the Spirit in

history, and thus receives the gifts of tradition as gifts of the Spirit subject to the Word.” Smith then went on to consider ways that John Calvin exhibited such “Catholic” faith through Calvin’s protest against abuses of Roman Catholicism, his views on sacramental theology, as well as a lengthy take on Calvin’s critique and application of monasticism and its connection to the practices of Christian worship, formation, and action or sending.



*Jamie Smith*

Smith summarized Calvin’s positions in this way: “we worship for mission; we gather for sending; we center ourselves in the practices of the body of Christ for the sake of the world;” Drawing largely from Matthew Boulton’s book *Life in God*, Smith restated this idea by saying, “At the heart of Calvin’s vision for reform was the sanctification of ordinary life” and “a celebration of the ‘monkhood of all believers.’” “Our actions flow from our dispositions, our habitus, our nonconscious passional orientation to the world” or as Smith calls it “dispositional deflection”. Smith concluded “I think it is important to see that being Reformed is a way of being Catholic, a distinctive accent within Catholic Christianity.” He concluded his talk with the following list of implications for “what difference it would make for Reformed Christians to understand themselves as “Catholic.” Reformed Catholicity would be an antidote to chronological snobbery; would allow us to find new friends in the wider body of Christ; would be a catalyst to recover the Reformer’s concern with ecclesiology; and finally, would help us appreciate the centrality and gift of our catholic liturgical inheritance.

*Paul Fields, Meeter Center Curator*

### Funded Research Fellowships

Every year, the Meeter Center offers fellowships for graduate students, faculty, and pastors. Fellowship recipient 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>

### 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
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## New Books

Bolognesi, Pietro. *Tra credere e sapere: dalla riforma protestante all'Ortodossia riformata*. Caltanissetta: Alfa & Omega, 2011.

Calvin, John. *Junēbu no gikai to hitobito ni ateta Yakopo Sadorēto sūkikyō no tegami*. Sapporo: Ichibakushuppansha, 2009.

Campi, Emidio, Peter Opitz, and Konrad Schmid, eds. *Johannes Calvin und die kulturelle Prägekraft des Protestantismus*. Zurich: VDF/TVZ, 2012.

Chavura, Stephen A. *Tudor Protestant Political Thought, 1547-1603*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Fesko, J. V. *Beyond Calvin: Union With Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517-1700)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012.

Servetus, Michael. *Thirty Letters to Calvin, Preacher to the*

*Genevans & Sixty Signs of the Kingdom of the Antichrist and his Revelation Which is Now at Hand (from The Restoration of Christianity, 1553)*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010.

Wandel, Lee Palmer. *The Reformation: Towards a New History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Zachman, Randall C. *Reconsidering John Calvin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

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

The 2013 research paper topic is:

#### Self-Denial: The Key to Christian Living According to John Calvin

For further details and application instructions visit:

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

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