

# Calvin Courier

H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies  
*Reformation, Research, Teaching, Community Outreach*



Fall 2021  
Number 68

## From the Director

Summer 2021 saw the arrival of six visiting scholars, all of whom held short-term Meeter Center fellowships, mostly deferred from 2020. In spite of the challenges of navigating the library floors due to the renovation of the heating and cooling systems, all of the researchers reported on their satisfaction, and even joy, in being able to conduct in-person research and make use of our collections. See p. 4 for one of the scholars' reports.

Our biennial Genevan paleography workshop, also deferred from 2020, pivoted to an online course over five weeks. Here too, participants reported on the value of this opportunity, both in terms of skill acquisition and networking - many of the participants are continuing to meet online with course instructor Tom Lambert for ongoing paleography tips and advice. Turn to p. 2 to find out more about their experiences.

Finally, our September conference on the Puritans and Their Impact was a great success: six plenary speakers over two days helped our in-person and online audiences delve into the complex issues of identity-building, both among these early modern Protestants and in the modern-day world. See p. 3 for some photos and a write-up of the event. We encourage our readers and their colleagues to apply for Meeter Center fellowships (the deadline is January 1), sign up for one of our upcoming webinars, and look out for forthcoming information on events in 2022 to mark the Meeter Center's fortieth anniversary!

Karin Maag

## Reformation Day 2021

For Reformation Day 2021 we hosted an open house on November 1st followed by a poetry reading and afternoon tea. The open house featured our special exhibit on "The Puritans and Their Impact," and included a short presentation. Read more about this exhibit in the Curator's Corner on page 2.

The Reformation-era poetry reading featured Calvin University English professors Chad Engbers, Debra Rienstra, and David Urban reading poems by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English poets John Donne, John Milton, Mary Sidney and George Herbert. Our afternoon tea included home-made scones with clotted cream and home-made jam (all made by Karin Maag).



## CURATOR'S CORNER:

In addition to "The Puritans and Their Impact" conference the Meeter Center exhibited posters and rare books highlighting and describing the history, thought, and influence of the Puritans during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

One of the posters is a timeline which begins in 1534 with Henry VIII's break from the Roman Catholic Church. It then moves on to the 1620 Mayflower Compact and concludes with the 1689 Act of Toleration. These and other dates show the complicated context and history of Puritan life.

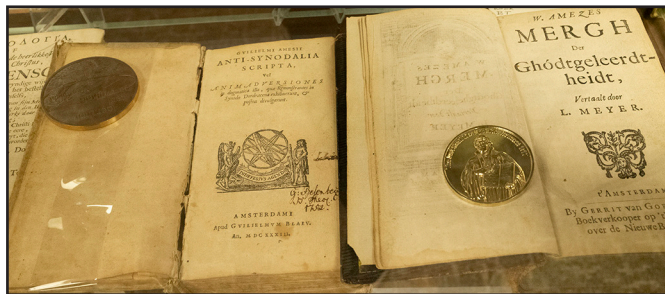
A second poster describes the importance of Scripture for Puritan thought and actions, and especially the influence of the Genevan Bible. A 1606 version of the Genevan Bible in English is on display.

Poster number three highlights various writings from 1582 to 1622 which show the breadth of Puritan thought pertaining to the Christian life, politics, worship, and their history. On display are works from 1609 to 1677 by William Perkins, William Ames, Samuel Rutherford, Richard Baxter, and John Owen.

We are most grateful for the generous permission to borrow several rare books from the library at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. The exhibit is on display in the Center through November.



Pictured above: Karin Maag and Paul Fields



Left: William Ames's treatise against the Remonstrants at the Synod of Dordt. Right: Ames's *Marrow of Theology* in Dutch

## PALEOGRAPHY WORKSHOP 2021

Our 2021 paleography workshop was a notable success, despite being conducted online for the first time. The course was originally offered in 2020 but deferred to 2021 because of concerns about the pandemic. As the pandemic continued on into 2021, the Director, in consultation with instructor Tom Lambert, decided to go ahead with it, but in an online format. Most of the original applicants from 2020 were still able to participate. This year there were two students from Europe, and seven from North America. Of these, four were men and five were women. Dr. Tom Lambert taught the course effectively, as he has in the past, and the students' reports indicate that they benefited from the work they accomplished. Daniel Ruppel wrote, "I feel like I now have a foothold in any early modern French manuscript I might encounter, and I can now approach them as problems of greater or lesser difficulty, rather than a featureless wall that I cannot surmount."

Tom managed to make the workshop engaging as well as productive. Emily O'Brock observed, "Most archival documents that I have encountered are quite dry and not page-turners by any means. However, Tom managed to assemble a corpus of documents that gripped us with counterintuitive handwriting styles as much as gory or unusual details. Beheadings, disownments, demonic apparitions, and stab wounds were some of the topics covered in this course. Who knew paleography could be so thrilling!?"

This workshop is supported by donations to our Friends of the Meeter Center fund, and Joey Low's report stated: "I thank the Meeter Center donors for their generous gift to us all. By offering this workshop, they show that paleography training means more than just providing a student with the wherewithal to study French-related history; it inspires others to keep learning about the past and the present human condition through the close reading of words of the ancients. By that measure and beyond, we may obtain a more empathetically thinking society."

## Please join our circle of support!

Donation checks may be made out to "Calvin University Meeter Center" and sent to The Meeter Center, 1855 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids MI 49546. To donate online, go to: <https://calvin.quadweb.site/giving/meeter-center>

Thank you!



# The Puritans and Their Impact Conference

September 24-25, 2021

Our two-day conference on the Puritans and their impact brought together six plenary speakers and around seventy-five attendees, two-thirds in person and a third online. The audience enjoyed lectures by a panel of distinguished speakers, as well as the socializing around the refreshments and book table. The key themes of the conference included important discussions about the use of the past and origins stories in shaping Americans' sense of themselves as a nation from the nineteenth century onwards. As our opening speaker Margaret Bendroth noted, what is at stake is how the past is claimed, interpreted, and deployed. Speakers also explored the impact of the Puritans on higher education and the place of the liberal arts, on the role of human reason when it comes to our knowledge of God, on political activism even under pressure from hostile governments, and on relations between Native American communities and the incoming English settlers. You can find most of the recordings of the speakers' presentations on our Youtube channel.

We are already looking forward to next year's September conference, likely focused on the Huguenots and life as a religious minority, in the context of the 450th anniversary of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572.



Speakers panel, L to R: Richard Muller, Margaret Bendroth, Adrian Weimer, Matthew Tuininga, Abram Van Engen, Chad Van Dixhoorn



Karin Maag and Margaret Bendroth chat during a break

## In Memoriam: Willem van't Spijker

The Meeter Center joins with Reformation scholars far and wide in remembering Professor Willem van't Spijker, who died on July 23, 2021, in Apeldoorn in the Netherlands, at age 94. He began his teaching career at the Theological University of Apeldoorn in 1971. As a church historian and theologian, his wide-ranging interests included the thought of John Calvin, Martin Bucer, and Martin Luther, but also more recent church history, especially in the Dutch context. He was well-known for his studies on the influence that the Strasbourg Reformer Martin Bucer had on Calvin. Van't Spijker was active in many international organizations, including the International Calvin Congress. As an ordained pastor in the Dutch Christian Reformed Churches, he always saw his work as being done in service of the church. The Meeter Center offers its profound sympathy to Professor van't Spijker's family and friends. His erudition, personal warmth, and kindness will be deeply missed.



## MEETER FAMILY FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT JENNIFER POWELL MCNUTT

This summer the Meeter Center was very pleased to welcome Jennifer Powell McNutt, the recipient of the 2020 Meeter Family Fellowship award. Dr. McNutt deferred her fellowship by one year, as we were closed during the summer of 2020 in response to the pandemic. Rev. Dr. McNutt's report is included here:

I began my fellowship at the Meeter Center on Monday, July 19 with a helpful orientation from Karin Maag and Deborah Snider. Over the course of two weeks, I was grateful for the opportunity to start making use of the collection housed there, and I look forward to continuing that work next summer for another two weeks. The primary focus of my research during this first trip was dedicated to writing chapter two of my book entitled *John Calvin: Refugee for the Gospel*. In that chapter, I am exploring the interplay between Calvin's theology of suffering and the doctrine of God in its social context from 1536 to 1539 with particular attention to the content and function of the *Calvini Opera* as well as other Latin and French sources available on the shelves and through microfiche (including authoritative translations of primary sources) was immensely helpful in advancing my work. I also made significant progress enhancing the historiographical elements of my project broadly through easy access to secondary work conveniently available in the filing cabinets. Furthermore, assistance from the research support staff was greatly appreciated, particularly Paul Fields. I have years of experience researching at archives all over Europe, but the speed at which I was able to access the resources at the Meeter Center is unparalleled. For a researcher in need of maximizing my time, the Meeter Center was a gift in more ways than one!

