PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(Faculty of Humanities--History)

Axel Schoeber

2005 University of Victoria M.A.
1990 Faith Lutheran Seminary D.Min.
1987 Regent College Th.M.
1976 UBC B.Ed.

“Gérard Roussel: An Irenic Religious Change Agent”

April 16, 2013
9:00 am
University Centre, room A207a

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Sara Beam, Department of History, UVic (Supervisor)
Dr. Mitchell Lewis Hammond, Department of History, UVic
Dr. Andrea McKenzie, Department of History, UVic
Dr. Hélène Cazes, Department of French, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Mack Holt, Department of History and Art History,
George Mason University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Graham McDonough, Curriculum and Instruction, UVic
Abstract

Gérard Roussel was a prominent French ecclesiastical leader in the sixteenth century and yet is little known. The Catholic, Protestant and Enlightenment historical narratives have all ignored him. A member of the renewal-minded Circle of Meaux from 1521 to 1525, he collaborated with the famous humanist, Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples, to produce an evangelical preaching manual. This study examines its emphases. When this Circle was crushed, Roussel fled to Strasbourg and admired the Reformation taking place there. Marguerite de Navarre recalled him to France and became his patron in various ways. He translated into French a children’s catechism originally published by the German reformer Johann Brenz. The translation puzzles readers today, because it is too complicated for children. This study suggests it was targeted at the royal children to influence their future rule. Roussel became the Lenten preacher in Paris in 1533, experiencing great success. John Calvin was one of his admirers. While traditionalists reacted with tumult, the crowds flocking to hear Roussel suggest that the French evangelicals were more significant in the first third of the century than is commonly understood. They offered a “third option” in France, in addition to the traditionalists and the rising Protestants. Consistently, these evangelicals sought reform of the French church and society through gospel preaching and irenic living. They strongly rejected church schism. Roussel accepted the Bishopric of Oloron in 1536, where he diligently taught, preached and modelled his irenic evangelical emphases. Calvin viciously turned on him as one practising dissimulation. Roussel prepared both a guide for episcopal visitation of a diocese and an extensive catechism for theological students that had the same goal as the preaching manual produced in Meaux. Traditionalist opposition ensured they would not be
published, but we have a manuscript available. This study examines them, finding that Roussel was intent on building bridges between all reformers, both Protestant and Catholic. He avoids, as a key example, embracing any of the hotly contested positions on the Lord’s Supper that surrounded him. He instead constructed a simplified biblical Mass, consistent with much traditional piety, but clearly emphasizing gospel preaching as well. Killed in an attack by a Catholic traditionalist in 1555, his life points to the French evangelical embrace of both gospel preaching and irenic living. Recent scholarship has discovered that such irenic impulses had a greater impact on Christian society in this era than has often been recognized. This study deepens that awareness.

Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships

2005-2009 Doctoral Fellow
2006-2007 Winnifred Lonsdale Fellow, Centre for Studies in Religion and Society
2005 Margaret De Santis Scholarship
1981 Highest G.P.A.
1979 Highest G.P.A. and Hebrew Prize

Presentations


4. “Melanchthon and Bucer: Compromisers or Peacemakers?” Public Lecture Series, Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria, November 22, 2006.


Publications
