



THE  
CICERONIAN  
SOCIETY

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE



March 12-14, 2026  
Creighton University  
Omaha, NE

Friends,

When thinking and praying about this year's meeting, I found myself comparing our conference to a well. We're not simply here for a transaction, where you pay registration fees in return for C.V. lines. It is, rather, a place and time from which we draw deeply of the lifegiving friendship and wisdom among Christian scholars and educators. Each of our core themes – tradition, place, and 'things divine' – are deep wells of refreshment and renewal for research, writing, teaching, and intellectual community.

Hannah Arendt, in *The Promise of Politics*, spoke of a growing "worldlessness" and the "withering away of everything between us," resulting in alienation and an experience of living in a metaphorical desert. Confused, unmoored from truth, and lacking the freedom to discern what is good and beautiful, individuals acclimate to meaninglessness and nihilism. The intellectual wastelands and "deserts" of worldlessness and emptiness are exactly the kinds of places where sin, ignorance, and totalitarian movements thrive. While journeys through deserts or "valleys" are part of life, we are not meant to set up camp there or abandon the pursuit of what Arendt called "oases."

Oases, for Arendt, exist separately from politics and often partake of a friendship where "one heart reaches out directly to the other." And "without the intactness of these oases," she writes, "we would not know how to breathe.... If they who must spend their lives in the desert, trying to do this or that, constantly worrying about its conditions, do not know how to use the oases, they will become desert inhabitants...In other words, the oases, which are not places of 'relaxation' but life-giving sources that let us live in the desert without becoming reconciled to it, will dry up."

These oases are not mere escapes but function as soul-enriching reservoirs of beauty, truth, and friendship. They're not just support groups and networking opportunities but the kinds of moments and places where the experience of being together fuels creativity, persistence, courage, and virtue.

Whether or not you are a Ciceronian Society Member, take comfort in knowing that you have arrived at an oasis that is not dry. You are among people who believe that the pursuit of what is good, true, and beautiful matters and that we have a responsibility to share that pursuit with future generations.

Your research, your questions, your courses, your reading groups, journaling, essays, and obscure (if eccentric) intellectual interests matter.

It is not uncommon for attendees to report, after our conference, that they went home inspired to write more, teach more passionately, and live with greater clarity of purpose as a scholar. They all drank from the same “well” of the Ciceronian Society offered to you here in Omaha. May it bless and refresh you as it has done hundreds of other scholars over the last 14 years.

Thank you to our hosts at the Menard Center, as well as the Board of Directors, members, sponsors, and all our supporters for helping make this weekend possible.

In Christ,  
Joshua Bowman  
Executive Director

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We'd like to acknowledge our Conference Fellows. Their names are marked with the following symbol: 



**Use the QR Code below to view abstracts for many of the papers and panels on this program.**



(Breakout Session #1 cont.)

Publius and His Muses

Shane Leary (Baylor Univ.)

**DISCUSSANT:** Benjamin Kleinerman (Baylor Univ.)

**Ancient and Modern Education  
for the Next Semiquincentennial**

**Room 4068**

CHAIR: Aaron Slutkin (St. John's College, Annapolis)

Friendship in George Washington's Farewell Address

Aaron Slutkin (St. John's College,

"I Sinned for Justice": Lincoln, Faulkner, and 'the Cause'

Nancy O'Gara (Order of St. George)

The Renaissance Politics of Shakespeare's *Tempest*

Michael Lucchese (Pipe Creek Consulting)

Philosophy and Civic Education in Plato's *Republic*

Anna Zikova (New School for Social Research) 

**The Declaration of Independence and its Legacy**

**Room 4067**

CHAIR: Claire Baker (Boyce College)

The Declaration & The Gettysburg Address

Michael Maibach (Save our States / James Wilson Institute)

The Relationship between the Declaration of Independence and State Constitutions

Nathaniel Fouch (Capital Univ. Law School) 

The Declaration of Independence as Binding Law: A Discussion

Stephen Sills (Hillsdale College)

12:30 - 1:45 PM      Catered Lunch

2 PM - 3:30 PM      Breakout Session #2

**Cicero, Shakespeare, and Liberal Education**

**Ballroom A**

CHAIR: Christopher Anadale (Mount Saint Mary's University)

The Ciceronian Tragedy of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*

Katherine L. Bradshaw (Ancient Language Institute)

(Breakout Session #2 cont.)

For the Liberal Arts Without a Parallel: Prospero’s Practical Education

Ted J. Richards, (Univ. of Mississippi)

A Ciceronian Education?: Newman, Cicero, and the Battles of Classical Education

Jonathan Roberts (Ancient Language Institute)

The Place of Pagan and Secular Learning in the CCE Revival

Samuel Sadler (Hillsdale College)

**Roots and Reasons for Religious Liberty**

**Room 4068**

CHAIR: Rudolfo Hernandez (Univ. of Missouri / Kinder Institute)

From Catechesis to Conscience: Early Christian Thought and Religious Freedom

Stephen Presley (Center for Religion, Culture, and Democracy)

The Religion Clauses and the Fourteenth Amendment: An Originalist Settlement

David Upham (St Thomas Univ. College of Law & Univ. of Dallas)

That Time the Devil Beat Daniel Webster: *Vidal v. Girard’s Executors* (1844)

Rodolfo Hernandez (Univ. of Missouri / Kinder Institute)

**Virtue and the Corporation**

**Room 4067**

CHAIR: Sean Griffith

Shareholder Virtue Maximization?

Sean Griffith (Fordham Univ.)

Virtue is for Individuals; Group Virtue results in Theft

Jeremy Kid (Drake U Law School)

Until Philosophers Become Directors, or Directors become Philosophers

Robert T. Miller (Scalia Law School)

3:30 - 4 PM            Break

4 - 5:30 PM            Plenary Session

**Ballroom C**

**Humanomics** (sponsored by the Menard Family Center for Economic

CHAIR: Michael Thomas (Creighton Univ.)

Catholic Social Teaching and Comparative Economic Systems:  
On Free Enterprise and the Common Good

Steven Miller (Franciscan Univ. at Steubenville)

(Plenary Session cont.)

Philosophical Versus Technical Economics

Paul Mueller (AIER)

Dignity Relies on Providence

Diana W. Thomas (Creighton Univ.)

Humanomics: Is it a Complement or Substitute

Michael D. Thomas (Creighton Univ.)

5:30 - 6 PM

Break

6 - 8 PM

Dinner/Storing Prize Presentation

**Ballroom C**

Remarks from Ciceronian Society Leadership

Interview with Jane E. Calvert, winner of the 2026 Herbert J. Storing Prize

8 - 11 PM

Reception with cash bar/drink tickets

**Ballroom C**

## Herbert J. Storing Book Prize

The Ciceronian Society, in partnership with The Maibach Fund, is proud to award the Herbert J. Storing Book Prize on American Federalism and Natural Law. This prize recognizes books of exceptional scholarly quality that focus on the ideas of the American Founders.



Use the QR Code to learn more about Dr. Storing, this award, and to make a nomination for next year.

Herbert J. Storing (1928-1977) was an American political scientist from Ames, IA, best known for reviving the serious study of the American Founding. He was a well-loved and influential teacher at the Univ. of Chicago and had just started at the Univ. of Virginia when he passed away suddenly at the age of just 49.

This prize annually awards the author of a published, book-length project from any academic discipline. The focus of the book should address topics related to the American Founding Era. Winning works will be distinguished by their scholarly quality and their attention to the American republican tradition of self-government, federalism, natural law, virtue, liberty, and statesmanship.

For the 2027 award, we are accepting nominations for books published from July 1, 2024 through July 1, 2026. Nominations are due by September 1, 2026.

## 2026 Herbert J. Storing Prize Recipient

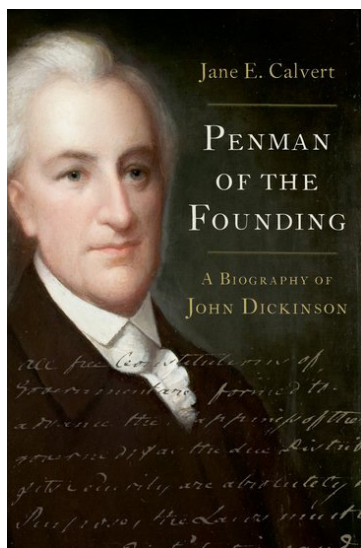
6 - 8 PM | Ballroom C



**Jane E. Calvert** (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 2003) is the Founding Director and Chief Editor of the John Dickinson Project. She is also the foremost Dickinson scholar, having worked on him for over two decades. Her book, *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson* (Cambridge, 2009), was the first work to give a comprehensive explanation of his thought, action, and contribution to the founding of America. She has taught at St. Mary's College of Maryland, the University of Kentucky, and Yale University. Her research has been sponsored by top institutions around the country, including the Newberry Library, the Huntington Library, the American Philosophical Society, the Library Company of Philadelphia/Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the David Library of the American Revolution.

Dr. Calvert speaks to academic and public audiences around the country on Dickinson and issues related to the American Founding. She is a member of the Association for Documentary Editing and a 2010 graduate of the Editing Institute sponsored by the National Historic Preservation and Records Commission and the Wisconsin Historical Society.

We are honored to award Dr. Calvert the Herbert J. Storing Prize for her widely celebrated biography of John Dickinson, entitled *Penman of the Founding* (Oxford Univ., 2024).



The influence of John Dickinson (1732-1808) on the American Founding would be difficult to overstate. As Jane writes, Dickinson “was the only leading Founder present and active in America at every phase of the Revolution, from the Stamp Act crisis through the ratification of the Constitution, he held more public offices than any other figure, from revolutionary committees to the presidency of two states, for a while simultaneously.” He had extensive experience in military service and policy, and authored the widely influential, “Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania.” Although Dickinson famously refused to sign the Declaration of Independence or vote on it, he embodied its highest aspirations as a man of conscience, character, and patriotism. His life and, by extension, Dr. Calvert’s book, is a prescient civics lesson for the Semiquincentennial of the United States of America.

## Friday, March 13

7:30 AM Morning Prayer **Ballroom A**

8 - 9:30 AM Breakout Session #3

**Virtue and the American Founders** **Ballroom A**

CHAIR: Ethan Alexander-Davey (Campbell Univ.)

Founder and Physician: Benjamin Rush and the Health of the New Republic  
Dennis Durst (Kentucky Christian Univ.)

John Jay's Prudence and Virtue in the American Revolution  
Jonathan Den Hartog (Samford Univ.)

"A vigilant and manly spirit": Founding-era efforts to promote republican virtue  
Nick Blanda (Hillsdale College)

**CS Lewis in the World** **Room 4068**

CHAIR: Rod Miller (Hendrix College)

That Hideous Job  
Rod Miller (Hendrix College)

The Pursuit of Happiness: A Lewisian Perspective on the American Dream  
Clayton Carver (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)

Lewis and the Revolution  
Sarah Waters (Sterling College)

"That Little Disc": (Re)embracing human culture in *Out of the Silent Planet*  
Joseph Ricke

**From Death to Life in America** **Room 4067**

CHAIR: Andrew Mitchell

The Spirit of Negation in the Therapeutic Age  
Albert Norton

The Lost Proceedings of "Gnosticism and Modernity"  
Allen Mendenhall (Heritage Foundation)

The Emancipation of Man  
Andrew Mitchell (Grove City College)

Exposing the Culture of Death: Dorothy Parker and Flannery O'Connor  
Neva Hernandez (Kolbe Academy)

9:30 - 10 AM            Break

10 - 11:30 AM        Breakout Session #4

**Prudence and Liberty:  
Lessons from American and International Politics**

**Ballroom A**

CHAIR: Tom Pope (Lee Univ.)

James Brown Scott's Changing Views on International Society  
and the Prospects for Peace

David Clinton (Baylor Univ.)

Completing the Constitution: Competing Logics in the First Congress

Jordan Cash (Michigan State Univ.)

Prudence and Providence

Richard Jordan (Baylor Univ.)

**Learning to Love the Republic (of Letters)**

**Room 4068**

CHAIR: Sean Hadley (Trinitas Christian School)

Beowulf Among the Saints: Hall, Hell, and the Anglo-Saxon Apocalypse

Sean Johnson (The Close Reads Podcast; St. Francis 

On the Bloody Road to Redemption with Cormac McCarthy

Sarah Hadley (Trinitas Christian School; Kepler Education)

“Between that earth and that sky I felt erased, blotted out”:

Willa Cather's Cosmic Connections

Jay Langdale (Independent Scholar)

Finding Greatness, Honor, and Hope in *The Great Gatsby*

Elizabeth Amato (Gardner-Webb Univ.)

**Virtue Education in Classical Classrooms:  
Hein's *Teaching the Virtues***

**Room 4067**

Jacob Hiserman (Thales Academy Rolesville; Pontifical College Josephinum)

Darrell Falconburg (Russell Kirk Center)

Bryant Owens (Virginia Highlands Community College; Thales College)

Zachary Palmer (Thales Academy Apex)

11:30 - 1 PM            Catered Lunch

**Ballroom C**

1:15 PM - 2:45 PM Breakout Session #5

**Localism and Place**

**Ballroom A**

CHAIR: William Batchelder IV (Waynesburg Univ.)

What is Localism and Why Do We Need It?

Tyler Moore (Univ. of South Dakota)

A Biblical Place Case Study from John 1-2

Wayne Braudrick (Frisco Bible Church)

From Nomads to Natives – Recovering a Sacramental Vision of Place

George Harrell (The George Buchanan Forum)

A Right to Community: *Green v. Miss USA*, the Assembly Clause,  
and Associational Self-Government

Luke Sheahan (Duquesne Univ.)

**Confronting Artificial Intelligence**

**Room 4068**

CHAIR: Rachel Ferguson (Concordia Univ. – Chicago)

Man and Machine: Catholic Thought on the Implications of Artificial Intelligence

John Moore (Walsh College)

A Maritainian Guide to Our Moment in History: the Open Society,  
Technology and the new Christendom

Thomas Dias (Acton Institute)

The Narcissist in the Machine

Jeff Bristol

**Revisiting American Political Divisions**

**Room 4067**

CHAIR: Benjamin Peterson (Abilene Christian Univ.)

Charles Hodge: Son of the American Revolution, Defender of Perpetual Union

Andrew McGinnis (Center for Religion, Culture, and Democracy)

Not So Strange Bedfellows: Horseshoe Theory in Concept and Action

Jeff Taylor (Dordt Univ.)

A Federalist in a Progressive Era: Henry Cabot Lodge's Constitutional Conservatism

Koty Arnold (Colorado Christian Univ.)

2:45 - 3:15 PM Break

3:15 - 5 PM

Keynote Address and Lawler Award

Ballroom C

**Presentation of the 2026 Peter A. Lawler Award**

**Keynote Address by Wilfred M. McClay**

**“Dreaming of Ariadne: Thoughts on Cultural Restoration”**

5 - 8 PM

Dinner at attendees’ discretion off campus

8 - 11 PM

Reception with cash bar/drink tickets

Ballroom C



**Wilfred M. McClay** holds the Victor Davis Hanson Chair in Classical History and Western Civilization at Hillsdale College. Before coming to Hillsdale in the fall of 2021, he was the G.T. and Libby Blankenship Chair in the History of Liberty at the University of Oklahoma, and the Director of the Center for the History of Liberty. His book, *The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America*, received the 1995 Merle Curti Award of the Organization of American Historians for the best book in American intellectual history. Among his other books is *The Student’s Guide to U.S. History, Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America, Figures in the Carpet: Finding the Human Person in the American Past*, a very “Ciceronian” book called *Why Place Matters:*

*Geography, Identity, and Public Life in Modern America*, and *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story*.

He served for 11 years on the National Council on the Humanities, the advisory board for the National Endowment for the Humanities, and is currently a member of the U.S. Commission on the Semiquincentennial. He has been the recipient of fellowships from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Academy of Education, and served as a Fulbright Senior Lecturer in American History at the University of Rome. He is a graduate of St. John’s College (Annapolis) and received his Ph.D. in History from Johns Hopkins University.

# Saturday, March 14

- 8 AM Morning Prayer **Ballroom A**
- 9 - 10:30 AM Breakout Session #6
- Democracy and Liberal Learning: Inescapable Realities** **Ballroom A**  
CHAIR: Jason Jewell (Florida Board of Governors)
- Democracy and Liberal Learning: A Synoptical Review  
Chris Butynskyi (Salisbury High School)
- Must Liberal Learning Be Political?  
Jason Jewell (Florida Board of Governors)
- Teaching to Transform: Liberal Arts in America  
Kirstin Anderson Birkhaug (Hope College)  
Anna Snader (Hope College)
- From Representation to Reality: C.S. Lewis, Shop Class,  
and the Well-Crafted Imagination  
Annie Crawford
- Faith, Film, and Ordinary Things Divine** **Room 4068**  
CHAIR: Jordan Cash (Michigan State Univ.)
- The One Principle of Hell: Flight, *Matchstick Men*, and *Up in the Air*  
Micah Watson (Calvin Univ.)
- Tradition, the Demonic, and Despair in *No Country for Old Men*  
Carson Holloway (Univ. of Nebraska - Omaha)
- A Law beyond Law: Life Together in *Deadwood*  
Jordan Ballor (Center for Religion, Culture, and Democracy)
- Robert Eggers's *The Northman* and J.R.R. Tolkien's "Fantasies of Fallen Man"  
J. Columcille Dever (Providence College)
- The American Founding in an International Context** **Room 4067**  
CHAIR: Jeff Bristol
- The American Revolutionaries and Their Unlikely Ally: The Founders and Poland  
Christopher Fritsch (Tarrant County College-Trinity River Campus) 
- America and France: Two Different Publics, Two Different Revolutions  
Stephen Thomas (Baylor Univ.)
- Contre le Grand État: DeKoninck's Views of Federalism in America  
Pedro Kair Medeiros da Silva (Academia Catarinense de Artes Liberais)

10:30 - 11 AM Break

11 - 12:30 PM Breakout Session #7

**Christian Thought and the American Founding**

**Ballroom A**

CHAIR: James Patterson (The Ciceronian Society)

The Ecclesiological Background of American Constitutionalism: Robert Browne, John Wise, and Congregationalist Political Theory

Ben Peterson (Abilene Christian Univ.)

Christianity and Heresy in the Jeffersonian Mind

Paul DeHart (Texas State Univ.)

The Economy of Providence: Witherspoon's Religion of Liberty and Free Markets in Colonial America

Rev. Dr. Luke Farwell (First United Presbyterian Church De Pere, WI) 

**The Declaration and Derailment**

**Room 4068**

CHAIR: John Grove (Liberty Fund)

The Declaration and Rationalism

John G. Grove (Liberty Fund)

Union or Nation: Sovereignty, The Declaration of Independence, and Self-Government

Aaron N. Coleman (Univ. of the Cumberland)

The Declaration, Union, and Confederation

Adam Tate (Clayton State Univ.)

Woke, Anti-Woke, and 1776: Why the Culture War Keeps Nationalizing—and What 1776 Says About Its Legitimacy

Jesse R. Merriam (Patrick Henry College)

**The Origins of Federalism: Executive Authority, Separation of Powers and the Role of the Courts**

**Room 4067**

CHAIR: Vincent D'Angelo (Hillsdale College)

Eric Nelson's Royalist Revolution and the Federalist Papers

Vincent D'Angelo (Hillsdale College)

Condorcet's Progressivism, Publius' Sobriety, and a Divided Legislature

Carlyle Foja (Hillsdale College)

We Offer No Resistance: Judicial Independence in the U.S. Constitution

Theodore Madrid (Hillsdale College)

Ask Forgiveness, Not Permission: Indemnification and Emergency Powers in Early America

Jameson Payne (Hillsdale College)

12:30 - 1:45 PM      Catered Lunch

**Ballroom C**

1:45 - 3:15 PM      Breakout Session #8

**The Wealth of Nations at 250**

**Ballroom A**

CHAIR: Erik Matson (The Catholic Univ. of America)

Theory, Reality, and Public Policy in *The Wealth of Nations*

Erik Matson (The Catholic Univ. of America)

The Continuing Relevance of *Wealth of Nations* to Public Policy 250 Years Later

Paul Mueller (AIER)

A Biblical Myth at the Origins of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*

Jordan Ballor (Center for Religion, Culture, and Democracy)

Adam Smith and Pope(s) Leo on the Origin and Significance of Private Property

John Robinson (James Madison Univ.)

**H.P. Lovecraft Against Modernity?**

**Room 4068**

CHAIR: Jacob Wolf (University of Austin)

Terrifying Vistas of Reality: H. P. Lovecraft and Epistemic Humility

James C. McGlothlin (Bethlehem College and Seminary)

From Primitive to Archaic Man: An Eliadean Reading of H.P. Lovecraft

Joel Iloff (Regent Univ.)

David Banica (Regent Univ.)

Beyond Nihilism? Darker vistas into the primacy of possibility

William G. Batchelder IV (Waynesburg Univ.)

**Rhetoric and Political change in Contemporary America**

**Room 4067**

CHAIR: Coyle Neal

“That’s Not Fair”: A Critique of Rawlsian Rhetoric in America Political Discourse

Peter Keepman (ISI)

Tweeting Trust Away: The U.S. Military on Social Media

Chase Spears (Herzog Foundation) 

Dittos, NatCons! The rhetorical influence of Rush Limbaugh and talk radio on the rise of National Conservatism

Coyle Neal

3:15 - 3:30 PM      Break (shorter time)

3:30 - 5:30 PM      Closing Plenary and  
Batchelder Award

**Ballroom C**

**Religious Liberty in the US Today**

CHAIR: Paul Mueller (AIER)

A Theological Defense of Religious Liberty

John D. Wilsey (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)

The Original Meaning of Religion and the Role of Religious Organizations

Frank Devito (NAPA Legal)

Religious Liberty in the States: 2026

Mark David Hall (Center for Religion Culture and Democracy)

Paul Mueller (AIER)

**Closing Remarks by the Executive Director**

**Presentation of the William Batchelder III Award**

5:30 - 8 PM      Dinner at attendees' discretion off campus

8 - 11 PM      Reception with cash bar/drink tickets

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