

# JOHN CALVIN—ERUDITE EDUCATOR

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## 1. Education in Pre-Reformation Geneva

WHILE IT is evident that humanist scholars in Renaissance Italy, in most cases, regarded themselves as an intellectual and artistic elite, showing little concern for common people, the influence of the Renaissance was eventually to exert long lasting effects on the education of public life. The method of scholarship those intellectuals developed and the treatises they composed would come to inspire the Reformers in northern Europe to confer the benefits of literacy and learning in general on the populace as a whole. The invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century encouraged and greatly facilitated the education of the masses. Moreover, and the doctrines of Protestantism produced the motivation that made that goal attainable.

Beginning with Martin Luther (1483–1546), all the Protestant Reformers espoused the supremacy of the Bible, championing its authority for faith and practice. Because they knew the ability to read was essential for implementing that principle, they considered the education of the public an absolute necessity. In Germany alone, between 1500 and 1525, the number of printed books increased from forty to five hundred, and soon Protestant literature for various levels of instruction also appeared in tongues other than German. Among those responsible for the production of such literature was Robert Estienne (1503–59), a learned humanist, whose distinguished Parisian family was engaged in the printing trade. His edition of the Latin Vulgate Bible with marginal notes, to which Roman Catholic authorities objected, led him to move to Geneva in 1545, where he printed an edition of the Greek New Testament and two editions of the Hebrew Old Testament. Estienne proved to be a valuable asset to the Reformation, both through his work as a printer and author, and by his advocacy of vernacular literature which encouraged education for common people.<sup>1</sup>

Protestants regarded teaching as a major function of the church, so they were eager to establish schools for both genders. That was a significant innovation, since prior to the Reformation few females received any formal education, exceptions being nuns and women of wealth. The Protestants' desire that everyone learn the Scriptures eventually brought vernacular instruction to both genders and to all classes of society.<sup>2</sup> The Roman Catholic Church in the

<sup>1</sup> H.G. Good, *A History of Western Education* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1947), 146

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

sixteenth century did relatively little to encourage the laity to read the Bible, but it too had to provide instruction for ordinary people or lose credibility in its conflict with the Reformers.

Martin Luther was an especially vigorous advocate of education. He urged princes and town councils to fund vernacular instruction, with arithmetic, writing, music, and history in the primary schools' curriculum, and Latin, Greek, and Hebrew in secondary schools to facilitate study of the Bible. Luther's collaborators Philip Melancthon (1497–1560) and Johann Bugenhagen (1485–1558) designed syllabi for schools in Germany and Scandinavia, so that the level of learning rose impressively in both of those regions.<sup>3</sup> In Strassburg, Johann Sturm (1507–89) organized a nine-year course of study in his Protestant gymnasium, which became a model for education across much of Europe, winning the admiration of John Calvin (1509–64). In Sturm's arrangement church and state collaborated in funding and maintaining vernacular schools.<sup>4</sup>

By the time John Calvin had become a Protestant theologian, a movement to enlarge urban schools was already underway in Geneva, the headquarters of most of his ministry. The desire of the bourgeoisie for educated merchants produced this effort, and a comparable movement was in progress concurrently in France, where merchants and clergymen had been in conflict about the control of education. When Calvin became involved in such matters, there was a great interest in education already evident in French-speaking areas, especially in French towns which had commercial relations with Geneva. In both countries merchants argued with clerics about subjects to be taught, and municipal schools sometimes refused to employ clerics as teachers. Even before Protestantism appeared, the bourgeoisie gained control over such schools and placed them under the authority of magistrates, not priests.

In Geneva prior to the Reformation, the Roman Catholic bishop was in control, and his cathedral canons administered education. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, city officials established a college with funds from a benefactor, and the government paid the faculty. In 1502 the magistrates assumed full control over the city's schools, but prolonged disputes with the cathedral canons and contention among the teachers impeded the progress of education, so that by 1528 the schools were on the brink of collapse. Such was the state of education when Calvin arrived in 1536.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Calvin's Initial Efforts at Reform

Prior to his debut in Geneva, Calvin had acquired a fine humanist education and had become a proficient scholar in the law, having earned the B.A. and M.A. at Paris, a law degree from the University of Orleans, and a licentiate in law from the University of Bourges. He and some friends had gone to

<sup>3</sup> Luther's extensive writings on this subject have been collected by F. V. Painter, *Luther on Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> For a thorough examination of Sturm's achievements, see Lewis W. Spitz and Barbara Sher Tinsley, *Johan Sturm on Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> William G. Naphy, "The Reformation and Evolution of Geneva's Schools," in *Reformations Old and New*, ed. Beat A. Kumin (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1996), 185-93; William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), 1-35; Charles Borgeaud, *Historie de Universite de Geneve I* (Geneva: Georg & Company, 1900), chapters 1 and 2.

Bourges to study with Andrea Alciati (1493–1550), a celebrated Italian humanist, who taught them to apply the techniques of the New Learning to the study of law. This instruction equipped Calvin to become a skillful educator as well as an insightful Bible commentator, after, at the urging of Alciati, he learned Greek. Although he never practiced law, subsequent to having made his permanent residence in Geneva, Calvin helped to revise and codify the city's laws.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that Geneva had declared itself Protestant before Calvin's arrival there. Its *College de Rive* had closed in the midst of disputes between civil and ecclesiastical authorities, but it reopened in 1535, two months before Calvin's arrival. In 1537 Mathurin Cordier (1497–1564), who had gained fame as an educator in Paris, Nevers, and Bordeaux, began teaching elementary students in Geneva, a sign of considerable improvement in education there. Calvin had studied with Cordier in Paris and from him had acquired the graceful style that marked his own writing thereafter.

The years 1538–41 were a period of exile for Calvin and his co-Reformer, Guillaume Farel (1489–1565), both suffering banishment by decree of the city government because of their insistence on the right of the church to design its own liturgy and their call for careful scrutiny of public morality and the right of the church to discipline its own members. During the time of Calvin's exile, the condition of Geneva's schools became chaotic, as teachers complained of poor salaries, and both the quality of instruction and enrollment in the *College* declined.

### 3. Calvin's Competence as an Educator

Although he had no desire ever to return to Geneva, the Reformer did so at the invitation of the magistrates in 1541, by which time his enemies had lost control of the city councils, so the opportunity for a thorough reform, including in education, seemed promising. *The Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, which were adopted soon after his return, recognized the right of the Reformed pastors to nominate teachers for the schools. Humanist methods of instruction continued, but with greater emphasis on the original languages of Scripture. Progress was underway, but it was not until 1555 that the *College* gained sufficient stability to obtain well qualified teachers in adequate numbers.

With his position apparently secure in relation to the civil government, Calvin took the lead in promoting ongoing improvements in education. The magistrates agreed to form a committee to examine the schools and to make proposals for reforms. As a consequence, several small schools were combined and education was extended to rural areas in need. An Academy for advanced study became the summit of the system. The theological division of the Academy prepared pastors for the Reformed Church, both in Switzerland and in other countries.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps no other Protestant leader of the era was better prepared than John Calvin to undertake the task of reforming education. As one admiring biographer remarked,

<sup>6</sup> W. Stanford Reid, "John Calvin, Lawyer and Legal Reformer," in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Richard C. Gamble (New York: Garland Publishers, 1992), 149-64 is a lucid treatment of this subject.

<sup>7</sup> Naphy, "Reformation and Evolution," 194-202.

Master of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, his legal mind, fully furnished with legal knowledge, profoundly versed in Scripture, with the whole field of patristic literature at his command, saturated with the principles of the Reformation, aware of its conflicting cross-currents, instructed in the views of many sects and parties to which the spirit of revolt had already given birth, with clear ideas as to pastoral duties and qualifications requisite for fruitful congregational life, expert in the weapons of controversy, he returned to Geneva to stamp his name thereon indelibly and write it in large characters upon the face of the whole world.<sup>8</sup>

Support for this exuberance is not difficult to find. Although, unlike Luther, Calvin did not produce treatises directed specifically to education, his numerous expressions of concern about that matter and the actions he took to promote learning attest to his commitment. He was a first-rate scholar himself and so appreciated the value of a learned ministry for the church and a learned laity to serve society.

While at the University of Bourges, Calvin had studied with Melchior Wolmar (1496–1561), who instructed him in both Hebrew and Greek and introduced him to the teachings of Martin Luther. Thereafter Calvin returned to Paris and conversed with other learned people attracted to the German Reformer's ideas. At a gathering there in November 1533, he addressed some fellow humanist scholars and in doing so criticized the corrupt condition of the papal church while espousing *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, the principle features of Luther's soteriology.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the influence of Wolmar, Calvin absorbed Protestant ideas from his association with Jacques Lefevre d'Étaples (1455–1536), another humanist who had become disgusted with the condition of the church and had been participating in efforts to reform the diocese of Meux. The local bishop there shared his concerns. A devout student of Scripture, Lefevre translated the New Testament into French in 1523, and Old Testament in 1528. His commentaries on the Pauline epistles show Lefevre was inclined toward evangelical doctrine even before Luther announced his discovery of *sola fide*, justification through faith alone.<sup>10</sup> Lefevre urged Calvin to read the works of Philipp Melancthon, Luther's closest co-worker and fellow professor at the University of Wittenberg.

It is likely that the most potent influences on Calvin's development as a theologian came from Luther directly and from those whose embrace of Protestant doctrine had preceded Calvin's own conversion. Such figures as Martin Bucer (1491–1551) of Strassburg and Wolfgang Capito (1478–1541) of Basel and Strassburg contributed substantially to Calvin's education in the evangelical faith, and they, like he, stressed the application of humanist scholarship to the reformation of church and society.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A. M. Hunter, "The Education of Calvin," *Evangelical Quarterly* 9 (1937), 32-33. Cf. Philip Vollmer and James I Good, *John Calvin: Theologian, Educator, Statesman* (Philadelphia: Heidelberg Press, 1909), 131-35.

<sup>9</sup> Emmanuel Stickelberger, *Calvin, a Life* (London: James Clarke & Company, 1959), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Philip E. Hughes, *Lefevre, Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984) is an incisive examination of this interesting humanist who never joined the Protestant cause.

<sup>11</sup> Hunter, "Education of Calvin," 28-30.

The early Protestant Reformers, Calvin among them, had some conception of common grace and would therefore have endorsed the dictum *all truth is God's truth*.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence they saw the value of classical learning and duly included it in their educational endeavors. In contrast with the Muslim *caliph* who destroyed the priceless library at Alexandria, Egypt because he thought the Qur'an contains everything necessary to know, the Reformer of Geneva wrote:

those persons are superstitious who do not venture to borrow anything from heathen authors. All truth is from God, and consequently if wicked men have said anything that is true and just, we ought not to reject it; for it has come from God . . . . Why should it not be lawful to dedicate to his glory everything that can properly be employed for such a purpose?<sup>13</sup>

With his humanist education in hand, Calvin demonstrated the great value of classical studies in the service of the Reformation. He, however, qualified his enthusiasm for humanism with a stern rejection of the human-centered perspective most Catholics, as well as secular humanists, espoused. Like Luther before him, the chief pastor of Geneva recognized the depravity of human nature due to sin, and so he could not endorse the belief that education *per se* has the power to shape humans into virtuous beings. He admired the great learning and literary skill of Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), the celebrated Prince of the Humanists, but along with Luther he categorically rejected that illustrious scholar's optimistic view of human goodness.

Soon after Guillaume Farel, the pioneer Reformer in Geneva, convinced him to remain in the city, Calvin initiated a proposal to reform education there. He enlisted Mathurin Cordier to teach, but, as noted above, all three men left the city soon thereafter, being banished by the magistrates for their opposition to state control over the church. Calvin then settled in Strassburg at the invitation of Martin Bucer, and there he witnessed the impressive achievements of Johann Sturm, architect of the gymnasium program mentioned above. At Sturm's urging the authorities merged three Latin school of dubious quality into one excellent institution. There Sturm made eloquence in Latin the major emphasis of instruction, and to that he added competence in Greek. Sturm combined classical studies with theology to promote the spiritual development of his pupils along with the acquisition of academic knowledge. The pedagogical principles of Melancthon guided him in organizing his school. Calvin contributed to this school while in Strassburg by serving as pastor to French refugees who, like Sturm, had fled to escape persecution. The ousted Reformer from Geneva taught at the academy to which promising graduates of the gymnasium were promoted. Calvin instructed them in biblical exegesis. When he returned to Geneva in 1541, he adopted the Strassburg model for education in that city.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Arthur F. Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977) is a helpful study of this concept.

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to Titus*, tr. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2009 reprint of 19<sup>th</sup> century edition), 300-01. Commentary on Titus 1:20.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriel Mutzenberg, "The Rise of the Schoolmaster," in *The Reformation*, ed. Pierre Chaunu (New York: Sl. Martin's Press), 261-65 is a useful brief treatment of the subject. The major study of Sturm is Spitz and Tinsley, *Johan Sturm*, cited above.

Johann Sturm's success as an educator inspired not only Calvin but many others, as enrollment at his school in Strassburg was one of the highest of any comparable institution at that time. Other Protestant cities sought his aid in forming their own schools, but sectarian disputes eventually ended his work in Strassburg. When that city adhered to the Formula of Concord, some Lutherans complained about his subscription to distinctively Reformed doctrines and forced Sturm to vacate his position as rector of the school.

#### 4. Reform of Education in Geneva

Wherever the Reformed faith took root, it excited great interest in education, and successes in Geneva encouraged comparable efforts elsewhere. A closer look at Calvin's contributions to that development is therefore in order. Calvin led the way in combining some poor quality schools into a gymnasium, known as the *schola privata* or college, and *schola publica*, which offered instruction on the university level but did not confer degrees. The humanist commitment to classical studies provided the foundation for an education designed to prepare learned pastors for the Reformed Church and learned officials to administer civil affairs. For persons who were not able to manage the rigors of such curricula, parish schools imparted general literacy and basic instruction in the vernacular. Calvin's catechism was the primary text for the study of Christian doctrine. Completion of studies in the gymnasium was required for admission to the Academy. There students learned Hebrew as well as expanding their knowledge of Latin and Greek. To language-studies were added ethics, logic, mathematics, and physics. Religious instruction pervaded all classes, and attendance at worship services was mandatory as the schools sought to inculcate devotion to Christ along with mastery of the subject matter. During the first year of operation, about 900 students attended the gymnasium and Academy, an impressive beginning which would have far-reaching effects, as the latter eventually became a model for the University of Leiden, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and indirectly, Harvard College in America.<sup>15</sup>

Obtaining an adequate faculty for Geneva's schools was a daunting task, since competent teachers committed to the Reformed faith were not numerous, and Calvin would not accept mediocrity. He and Farel had taught Old Testament and New Testament respectively in the college before being banished. By this time, however, Farel was committed to the ministry in Neuchâtel. By agreement with the civil authorities, all candidates to teach in the new school were to be chosen and examined by the pastors before being employed. They were required to subscribe to a confession of faith and to submit to ecclesiastical discipline. This was the case for teachers in both divisions of the institution.

Magistrates and ministers sometimes argued about the purpose and direction of the Academy. The former promoted the study of law and medicine, subjects they deemed most relevant to public needs, but the pastors stressed the preparation of ministers for service both in Switzerland and abroad.<sup>16</sup> Af-

<sup>15</sup> Frederick Eby, *The Development of Modern Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), 117.

<sup>16</sup> Karin Maag, *Seminary or University: the Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education*

ter Calvin's death Theodore Beza (1519–1605) led efforts to implement the teaching of law and medicine while maintaining the priority of theological instruction. His demise, however, led to a deficit of adequate clerical leadership, and the magistrates increased their control over education. The consequent expansion of non-theological studies caused some pastors much distress, but the institution continued in the direction that would eventually make it the University of Geneva.<sup>17</sup>

The difficulty Calvin encountered in recruiting a faculty for Geneva's schools was overcome to some extent when professors in the academy at Lausanne withdrew in protest against the demand of the civil government which claimed it had the right to control ecclesiastical discipline. Beza had served there in the years 1548–55, when that institution was the foremost Protestant school in Switzerland, one which Calvin regarded as a fine example for Geneva. The ministers refused to comply with the insistence of the magistrates in Bern, which controlled Lausanne, and most of the faculty left the city. Among the dissident teachers was Mathurin Cordier, who had resigned in 1557 and then joined other instructors who left in 1559. Cordier and Beza went to teach in Geneva, where they both enriched Calvin's pedagogy.<sup>18</sup>

Once the educational program, with its two divisions, was in place, the teaching of Scripture took precedence, functioning as the lens through which teachers and pupils were to investigate other subjects. Calvin believed that knowledge of the Word of God was necessary for understanding the whole spectrum of learning. He did not denigrate the value of knowledge obtained from non-Christian sources, although he called for discrimination in using them. The Reformer remarked in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:17:

As for those arts, then, that have nothing of superstition but contain solid learning and are founded on just principles, as they are useful and suited to the common transactions of human life, so there can be no doubt that they have come forth from the Holy Spirit; and the advantage which is derived and experienced from them ought to be ascribed exclusively to God.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding this matter, Calvin's commentary on Genesis 4:20 is even more explicit in that he recognized the achievements of pagans as gifts of common grace for which Christians should be thankful. He contended: "the invention of arts and of some other things which serve the common use and convenience of life [are gifts] of God by no means to be despised, a faculty worthy of commendation."<sup>20</sup>

The chief pastor of Geneva believed learning is a privilege which equips those who obtain it to teach others and is not for one's personal satisfaction alone. He therefore set a proper example by translating his own works into

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(Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1995), 17–18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 87–88; 187–89.

<sup>18</sup> A clear, concise treatment of this appears in Elizabeth K. Hudson, "The Colloquies of Mathurin Cordier: Images of Calvinist School Life and Thought," *Sixteenth century Journal* IX (1978), 57–78.

<sup>19</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, tr. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2009 reprint of 1848 edition), 75.

<sup>20</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, tr. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2009 reprint of 1847 edition), 217; cf. E. Harris Harbison, *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation* (New York, Charles Scribners' Sons, 1956), 144–46.

French for the benefit of those unable to read Latin, the language of scholars. Moreover he understood that cerebral knowledge of Scripture in and of itself is inadequate when pursued apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

Consistent with the Genevan Reformer's perception of common grace, he promoted reading in the classical languages of the works of such distinguished pagans as Cicero, Livy, Homer, Xenophon, Polybius, and other ancient authors. The curriculum he implemented included some attention to the physical sciences too, as a means to explore God's general revelation, although classical learning received more attention.

In the Academy Calvin and Beza taught theology, and in their lectures displayed a skillful mastery of grammatical-historical exegesis as they interpreted Scripture. Rather than concentrate on dialectics, as scholastic theologians had done, they employed exegesis and thereby produced rational explanations of Christian doctrine. In his expositions of the Old Testament Calvin made extensive use of Jewish commentators.<sup>22</sup> Due to the erudition of professors such as Calvin and Beza, the school in Geneva surpassed the earlier academy in Lausanne and gained recognition as the premier institute operating with a firm commitment to the Reformed faith. In general its teachers were as well informed as their pastors.

As graduates of the Academy ministered across Europe, the reputation of their school attracted others to join the cosmopolitan student body in Geneva, and eventually comparable institutions appeared in other lands, especially in France. When Henry IV (1589–1610) ruled there, the royal government subsidized Huguenot schools patterned after the Genevan model. Such Reformed academies operated on humanist principles in education and eventually admitted students not preparing for pastoral ministries. In that way Calvin's influence upon education spread widely in the land of his nativity.<sup>23</sup> When English Puritans went to America, they adopted Calvin's ideas about education for their schools in Massachusetts Bay Colony, where laws of 1642 and 1647 directed the town to provide programs to assure the literacy of all residents. The ordinance of 1647 ordered the formation of Latin classes so the most advanced students would be prepared to enter Harvard College. The congregational polity of the Puritan churches encouraged the development of autonomous political bodies in New England and of school boards as necessary agencies of those entities.<sup>24</sup>

It is evident that the rise of Protestantism, Lutheran and Reformed, led to a major expansion of education, as churches sought to inculcate biblical doctrine and to prepare believers to defend it. Catechism was the primary means to accomplish that end, and no one was more vigorous in pursuing it than

<sup>21</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. Mc Neill, tr., Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), I:vii, 4; II:ii, 12-21. A fine study of this is W. Stanford Reid, "The Academy of Geneva," *Westminster Theological Journal* XVIII (1955), 1-33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16. See too Robert White, "The School in Calvin's Thought," *Journal of Christian Education* 12 (1969), 5-26 and Charles Partee, "Calvin and Experience," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 26 (1973), 169-81.

<sup>23</sup> Karin Maag, "Calvin's Academic and Educational Legacy," in *The Legacy of John Calvin*, ed. David Foxgrover (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1999), 11-30.

<sup>24</sup> Gerald L. Gutek, *Historical Foundations of Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Upper saddle River, NJ: Merrill Publishing Company, 1997), 97.

John Calvin. Committed to objective truth, the Reformer depended upon the Holy Spirit to enable people to receive it, and he made usefulness a mark of scholarship. It was Calvin's firm conviction that learned Christians must teach others in ways they can understand. He therefore disavowed learning for its own sake.<sup>25</sup> He regarded himself as a pastor-teacher, and he viewed the goal of education at the Academy as being the preparation of others committed to the same objective. Education was not to be a mere intellectual exercise but a means to arouse zeal for God while imparting the proper knowledge of God to students. This was to begin formally with catechetical instruction of children. The Reformer's *Instruction in Faith* (1536) was his initial effort of that nature, one in which the influence of Martin Luther is obvious. To Calvin's dismay this work proved too difficult for children to memorize. He therefore produced a second one, using a question and answer method. This work expounds the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments, and it affirms God's moral law as the rule for the Christian life.<sup>26</sup>

So convinced was John Calvin about the need for catechetical instruction that he wrote to Edward Seymore (c. 1500–52), Lord Protector of England during the minority of King Edward VI (1547–53), to urge the English to adopt this form of Christian education without delay. His admonition bears quoting.

The church of God will never preserve itself without a catechism, for it is like the seed to keep the good grain from drying out, and causing it to multiply from age to age.... If you desire to build an edifice ... of long duration, ... make provision for the children being instructed in a good catechism, which may show them briefly and in a language level to their tender age wherein true Christianity consists.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to this advice, Calvin expressed a desire that Protestants could agree on a common catechism as a demonstration of their fundamental unity regarding the cardinal principles of Christianity.<sup>28</sup> Since the true church is a *mother* to believers, she must aid the development of her children through systematic instruction in divinely revealed truth.<sup>29</sup> Although the Protestants did not adopt a common catechism, each of their church bodies did issue its own manual of doctrine, and there was broad agreement among them.

Calvin's concern for the children of believers reflects the covenantal character of his theology. Although he rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration, he maintained catechesis is an effective means to aid children to see their need of Christ and to prepare them to make credible professions of faith after the Holy Spirit has regenerated them. Parents then

<sup>25</sup> Harbison, *Christian Scholar in Reformation*, 158-61.

<sup>26</sup> For a perceptive study of Calvin as a catechizer, see Peter Y. De Jong, "Calvin's Contribution to Christian Education," *Calvin Theological Journal* 2 (1967), 162-201. The text of the catechism appears in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. J.K.S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 83-139.

<sup>27</sup> John Calvin, *Selected Works of John Calvin Tracts and Letters*, ed. Henry Beveridge, Jules Bonnet, and David Constable (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983 reprint of 1858 edition), 191. Letter of October 22, 1548.

<sup>28</sup> Calvin. *Theological Treatises*, 88-89.

<sup>29</sup> De Jong, "Calvin's Contribution," 200; cf. Thomas F. Torrance, *The School of Faith* (New York: Harper Brothers, Publishers, 1959), 3-65.

have the primary obligation for such instruction at home, while pastors must provide it at church. Those who possess saving faith are responsible to convey the truth to their heirs in the covenant.<sup>30</sup> Each parish in Geneva conducted catechism classes every Sunday.

## 5. Conclusion

Although the work Calvin initiated in Geneva produced impressive results in education, its very success almost assured the decline of that tiny Protestant republic, as other centers of the Reformed faith followed its example. By about 1600 the influence of Geneva was diminishing, and its Academy was no longer the major educational institution espousing Reformed theology. The achievements of Geneva's schools had given the republic great prestige across Europe, a development that inspired Protestants to create comparable academies elsewhere. At one time French Monarch Charles IX (1560–74) blamed missionaries educated in Geneva for disturbances agitating his kingdom; and he demanded the magistrates stop the dispatching of such pastors to France, a demand the rulers in Geneva rejected while denying Reformed ministers were promoting sedition anywhere.<sup>31</sup> Once the Huguenots established their own academies, their Roman Catholic opponents directed most of their hostility toward domestic schools, rather than against Geneva.

Among distinguished Protestant leaders who obtained an education at the Academy in Geneva were Kaspar Olevianus (1536–87), compiler of the Heidelberg Catechism, Philippe Marnix (1538–98), advisor to William the Silent, leader of the Dutch resistance to Spanish tyranny at the beginning of the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), Florent Chrestien (1541–96), a tutor to King Henry IV (1589–1610), and Thomas Bodley (1545–1613), founder of the library at Oxford University that now bears his name. John Knox (c. 1513–72), the dynamic Protestant leader in Scotland, also studied in Geneva and thereafter hailed it as "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the Apostles."

Upon the death of John Calvin in 1564, Theodore Beza became chief pastor of the Reformed Church in Geneva and led the Academy until poor health forced him to resign both positions in 1580. After Beza, there was no pastor of comparable ability and influence to lead the church and the Academy; and the magistrates exerted ever increasing control over church affairs. Although Calvin and Beza desired and received state support for the church and schools, they had resisted encroachments from civil authorities in those areas. Once these respected leaders were gone, however, there was no longer an effective means to preserve ecclesiastical autonomy. The influence of both Reformers, nevertheless, continued to be extensive across Protestant Europe, as their writings circulated widely and thereby contributed to education based on Reformed doctrine. For example, by 1630 eighty-eight editions of Calvin's *Institutes* had been published in nine languages, and his catechism was in use in France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Scotland, England, and New England.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> De Jong, "Calvin's Contribution," 191–93.

<sup>31</sup> James Mackinnon, *Calvin and the Reformation* (New York: Russell & Russell inc., 1962 reprint of 1936 edition), 177–97, covers this well.

<sup>32</sup> Herbert D. Foster, "Calvinists and Education:" in *Cyclopedia of Education*, ed. Paul Monroe (New

While the rise of Protestant universities in cities such as Leiden and Heidelberg marked the decline of Geneva as the primary Reformed institution, the work of Calvin and Beza was continued by their heirs in those places. The printing presses in Geneva continued to supply much of Europe with Reformed literature, even though the Academy there had lost its position as the major school for the preparation of Reformed ministers.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile Calvin's influence as an educator permeated existing universities such as Basel and St. Andrews, the latter in Scotland, along with Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Trinity College, Dublin, all of which became vibrant centers of Calvinism.

Once French Protestants gained official toleration due to the Edict of Nantes (1598), some of their academies were eventually able to develop into universities. Dissenting academies in England, although not permitted to grant degrees, sometimes surpassed established universities in the quality of instruction, especially in the teaching of modern history, political theory, and the physical sciences based on observation and experimentation.<sup>34</sup> At Leiden in particular progress in the physical sciences was noteworthy because professors saw their discipline as a means to glorify God through the explanation of his created order. In doing this Leiden scholars demonstrated their concurrence with Calvin's view of general revelation and common grace. The Reformer of Geneva extolled the study of non-Christian authors because he believed God had endowed them with gifts that bring benefits to all humankind. In Calvin's own words,

whenever we come upon these matters in secular writers, let that admirable light of truth shining in them teach us that the mind of man, though fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts. If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit of God.<sup>35</sup>

Contrary then to the contentions of authors hostile to the Scriptures, Calvin did not oppose scientific inquiries.<sup>36</sup> He scorned astrology and alchemy but approved observation and experimentation as valid procedures. The Reformer accepted the accuracy of Scripture on all scientific matters it addresses, but he did not discourage ongoing investigations. Although he was not convinced of Copernican cosmology, he did not attempt to prevent the study of Copernicus' work. Perhaps he knew little about the ideas of the Polish astronomer and therefore wisely refrained from assailing them. In any case Calvin did not disparage scientific endeavors, and the curriculum in Geneva's schools regarded study of the sciences as an appropriate way to honor God through examining his creation. This was the perspective in all schools espousing the

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York: Macmillan Company, 1915), 493.

<sup>33</sup> A fine essay on the role of Geneva in its ascendancy and its decline is that of Lewis Gillian, "Calvinism in Geneva in the Time of Calvin and Beza," in *International Calvinism, 1544-1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 39-70.

<sup>34</sup> See John W. Kuykendall, "The Presbyterian Heritage and Higher Education," *The Presbyterian Outlook* 166 (April 23, 1984), 8-13.

<sup>35</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II.ii.15.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew White, *History of the Warfare between Science and Theology in Christendom*, abridged edition, ed. Bruce Mazlish (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 123 ff.

Reformed faith.<sup>37</sup> Calvin maintained the aim of education should be to inculcate the knowledge of truth as God has disclosed it through general as well as special revelation. Knowledge of Scripture is the foundation for education which must promote appreciation for God's work of redemption along with a grasp of factual content in the various disciplines.

Because he took the cultural mandate of Scripture (Genesis 1:27-28) seriously, John Calvin called for examination of all areas of learning as facets of general revelation, therein to discover the Creator's intention for each one. Correct education will nourish the soul as well as the mind and thereby contribute to the spiritual health of those who pursue it in faith.<sup>38</sup>

It is evident Calvin profited from his own experience with humanism and that he saw the value of humanist pedagogy and research for making education Christian. Although the Reformer stressed the priority of preparing learned expositors of Scripture to serve the needs of the church, he perceived the importance of a literate, informed laity too. His Academy in Geneva and those others which proclaimed his views produced believers well equipped to understand their faith and to defend it against its enemies. As one noteworthy scholar remarked, Calvinist education "supplied the Reformed Church ... with men which it needed to fight its battles and to form the iron in its blood." Calvin realized the Reformed faith needed "an enlightened pulpit speaking to enlightened citizens, and that an educated ministry was helpless without an educated people .... His method for creating both entities entitles him to rank among the foremost makers of modern education."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> A helpful essay on this subject appears in Brian A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New* (Chicago: the University Press, 2004 Reprint of 1982 edition), 164 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Two excellent summaries of Calvin's influence on education are C. Gregg Singer, "Calvin and Education," *The Call* 7 (Spring 1979), 19-21 and Ivan Zablka, "Calvin's Contribution to Universal Education," *Asbury Theological Journal* 44 (1989), 77-96.

<sup>39</sup> A. M. Fairbairn, "Calvin and the Reformation," in *The Cambridge Modern History II*, ed. A. W. Ward, G. W. Prothero, and Stanley Leathers (Cambridge: the University Press, 1969 reprint of 1907 Edition), 372.