

# Calvin's Contribution to Universal Education

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John Calvin's contribution to the development of common schools and universal education has been neglected by secular historians of education. He used religious motivations to bring about the civil promotion of education, yet scholars have been distracted from his significance. His theological system, role in promoting French literary style, and contribution to the relation of church and state have drawn attention away from his educational system. Another cause of neglect is that Luther was a more prolific writer upon educational topics, implying to some investigators a greater concern than Calvin's, but such is not the case. Luther was active in defending education against radical reformers who wanted to destroy all education to rid themselves of the supposed blight of Catholic education, while Calvin invested himself in developing a functioning educational system in Geneva. This concern was carried forward in the emerging educational centers of the Reformed Church in Germany, particularly at Heidelberg and Herborn, where educational programs were fashioned with reference to the irenic, evangelical rubrics provided by the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563).<sup>1</sup> Finally, the achievements in education of the French, Dutch, Scottish and English reformers caused attention to be directed away from Calvin and the Genevan schools, even though the leaders of these movements were often trained in Geneva. Thus, at every point Calvin's contribution has been eclipsed.

Calvin's attitudes toward education are not presented in philosophical essays like those of Luther, but in working civil documents. I will survey these Genevan records, describe the schools founded under Calvin's guidance and evaluate his influence upon education in other countries, especially during his own era.

## EDUCATION FOR LEADERSHIP

Calvin's educational intentions are discerned in the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the catechisms, the formal organization of schools, and were influenced by Johann Sturm and Calvin's own education.

The first edition of the *Institutes*, consisting of six brief chapters, appeared

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in 1536. Calvin's intent for the first edition was a simple introduction to the Christian faith that could serve to instruct anyone who wished to learn.<sup>2</sup> In subsequent editions the work gradually lost its teaching intent and became the comprehensive summary of his theology that resulted by 1560. The final form of the *Institutes* did contain his discussion of the teaching attitude of the minister.<sup>3</sup> Teachers, in Calvin's opinion, should exhibit kindness, prudence and skill in giving advice. Advice-giving imparted information and supported the authority of church and state. He indicated that arrogance could not be a part of instruction, and harshness reduced its value.<sup>4</sup> Calvin emphasized that teachers must be honest, sincere and an example to their students, both as scholar and spiritual leader. Wit and reason were presumed helpful. False teachers were a curse from God upon the authorities who failed to select well.<sup>5</sup> Even though these characteristics marked the minister as teacher, one may assume that such attitudes did apply to those who were directly involved in teaching activity. The emphasis upon kindness, while in contrast with Calvin's popular image, was consistently present in his attitudes toward children as learners.

While the *Institutes* provides some understanding of his view of teachers, the catechisms are more helpful with his methodology. The people of Geneva requested guidance in correct theology through the formation of a catechism, having seen the effectiveness of Luther's use of it. In February 1537, prior to his and Guillaume Farel's expulsion in April 1538 following their first efforts at reform, Calvin presented a long and tedious catechism to the city officials for use in the instruction of children and citizens. This initial effort serves primarily to illustrate Calvin's misapprehension of the amount that children or adults could master.<sup>6</sup> During his exile from Geneva, Calvin came under the influence of Johann Sturm in Strassbourg, who had begun the most effective gymnasium of the day. He invited Calvin to deliver theological lectures. While engaged, Calvin apparently learned from Sturm's example and from the limitations of his students. When he later presented a revised catechism in 1541, it was simplified and shortened. It still ran to more than fifty modern book sized pages, but the questions and answers were short, and the student had fifty-five weeks in which to master it.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, the child or citizen had to be able to read the vernacular in order to master the expected theology, thus, elementary schools were necessary.

Calvin's progress in producing better catechisms points to the importance of brevity, clarity and simplicity in educational methods, a perspective that appeared in his other writings as well. In a letter to Simon Grynaeus he stated that the successful interpreter of the Scriptures, a major objective of education, must be clear and brief.<sup>8</sup> The interest in brevity and simplicity extended to any teaching tool, including writing, and consequently Calvin accused other commentators upon the Scriptures of being "much too clever."<sup>9</sup> Calvin's intent is refreshing, although his standard of brevity and simplicity is removed from that of the current century.

Several histories of education assume that Calvin was the originator of the Genevan schools, since he formed the "College" and the "Academy." The honor of founding the vernacular schools, however, must go to the reformers and city fathers responsible for leading Geneva from Catholicism prior to Calvin's arrival. The *Registres du Conseil* indicate that by unanimous action on May 21, 1536, provision was made for the education of all children, with the girls in separate schools, under the leadership of Antoine Saunier.<sup>10</sup> All parents were obligated to send their children, with instruction provided free to the poor. Calvin did not alter the plan of the vernacular schools and sought to aid in the selection of teachers. He was able late in life to aid in reorganizing them more efficiently, as will be seen.

An even more pressing concern to Calvin was the instruction of the people of Geneva in "correct" theology. The content of such "correct" theology was defined by Calvin in terms of a pious, reverential "knowledge of God and man," that had been disrupted by the fall into sin. Hence, the didactic character of theology was integral to all genuine Christian faith.<sup>11</sup> In Calvin's Geneva, education was subordinated to and motivated by this spiritual concern, a concern which appeared in the "Articles concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship," presented on January 16, 1537.<sup>12</sup> In these Calvin claimed that preservation of pure doctrine necessitated that "...infants of tender age be so instructed that they be able to give reason for the faith..." Such instruction was to be from "hand to hand" and "father to son," based upon a prepared catechism. At this time Calvin was emphasizing individual learning and the role of the family in instruction, but it was not working, for he also criticized parents who failed to do it, and recommended that a catechism be adopted and regular teaching instituted, events which transpired by 1541.

The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of September and October of 1541 provide direct evidence of Calvin's influence.<sup>13</sup> In the "four orders of office" for the government of the church, the second listed is "doctors" or teachers. The salary of these officials was to be provided by the state. Their role was clearly defined, so that they did not replace the teaching function of the "ministers" entirely, for the latter were responsible for the mid-Sunday instruction of young children in the catechism. Parents were required to bring their children to the classes.

The principal function of the teachers was the instruction of the faithful in true doctrine, not for citizenship or the Renaissance man. For this purpose lecturers in theology were appointed, one for each testament. Since profit from the lectures would result only from proper instruction in the languages and the humanities, a "college" for the preparation of ministers and civil officials was necessary. The form this took was a middle school, above the vernacular schools and eventually preparatory to the "academy" or University of Geneva. Calvin further recommended the payment of the vernacular school teachers from civil funds again, and the continued separations of girls

from boys. The teachers were to be subject to the same discipline as the ministers.<sup>14</sup>

This brief presentation of the schools in 1541 does not give a full picture of their nature and development, but it does demonstrate that Calvin was active in promoting them at an early date. While all children attended the vernacular schools, it is apparent that a more select group was educated in the College for the ministry and leadership of state. There is no mention of girls, which is expected since they could not hold the positions for which the schools prepared. Even at this early date the potential developed for training more than just local leadership.

In 1547 Calvin returned to the problem of instruction in the catechism, when adjustments had to be made for the differing situation in the country churches around Geneva. The "Ordinances of the Supervision of Churches in the Country," which appeared on February 3, 1547, made provision for instruction in the catechism every other week in each church since the ministers had two churches.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, fathers were liable for their children's penalties for failure to appear at catechism.

As noted, the College was authorized in 1541, and opened shortly after. The next notice of activities related to the College appeared on the fifth of June, 1559, in the "Ordre du College de Geneva," a document which made formal the methods developed over the years. The final paragraphs discussed education beyond the seven levels of the college, and gave formal date to the founding of the University of Geneva. Combination of the schools in this document has caused some confusion of the two among educational historians.

A summary of the contents of this document does much to clarify the nature of Calvin's educational theory for the middle and upper levels. The basic classicism of the content of the instruction will be apparent.

The *Ordre* stipulated that the teachers would elect the rector who would then be approved by the ministers and the Council. (Geneva had three councils: The Little Council, The Sixty and The Two Hundred. Which was intended is not clear.) The teachers were also approved by the ministers and the Council. Students were to be present unless properly excused, circumspect in behavior, and diligent in the pursuit of learning. Rebelliousness and indifference led to punishment. Disputes were referred to the ministers and the Bible. In the treatment of students, teachers were expected to avoid crassness, rudeness, abruptness, and were alternatively to set a good example. They were to listen attentively to their students, and to remonstrate with their errors without losing control of the class.

Scholars were divided into four groups according to the section of the city in which they lived. They were also separated into seven graded levels. Lessons began at six in the morning in Summer and seven in Winter. Placements in the classes were determined by skill and not age. The hours for study, recitation, meals and psalm singing were prescribed, including a 4:00

p.m. public session for the chastisement of those who failed assignments or broke rules. While the public reprimanding of disciplinary problems is poor from a modern perspective, the moderation of such methods from the usual corporal punishment of the day is apparent. Following this, the students recited the Lord's Prayer (in French), the Confession of Faith and the Ten Commandments. On Wednesday they attended morning sermon and followed it with a question and answer session over the content. The Saturday schedule also varied with a special hour for student declamations, and a three-hour study of the catechism in the afternoon.

The curriculum was broadly defined for each year, with the seventh or lowest class expected to know the French and Latin alphabets and to be able to pronounce Latin and read French fluently. If the students were old enough at this level they also began to write.

The first half of the sixth class was spent on Latin declensions and conjugations. During the second half of the year they studied oratory and declamation, comparing French with Latin forms. Students were expected to begin speaking Latin among themselves.

The fifth class studied declamation and syntax using Virgil's *Bucolics*. Exercises in writing continued with simple original compositions expected by the end of the year.

The fourth class was expected to continue the study of syntax until it was mastered, using Cicero's *Letters* and various writings of Ovid. The study of Greek declensions and conjugations was begun.

On the third level emphasis was placed upon Greek grammar in a comparative approach to Latin, with attention to style. Materials used were Cicero's *Letters*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Caesar's *Commentaries*, the *Parentetic Orations* of Isocrates and other less-known works.

The second class studied history through the Latin works of Livy and the Greek works of Xenophon, Polybius and Herodian. Propositional argumentation was studied through the *Paradoxes* and *Smaller Orations* of Cicero. The biblical book of Luke was read in the Greek.

The first class studied dialectics and rhetoric using Cicero's *Orations* and Demosthenes' *Olynthiacs* and *Philippics*. Special attention was paid to style and the Pauline Epistles were read in Greek. The objective of this curriculum was the thorough preparation of ministers to proclaim the "Word," in the best classical tradition.

The headmaster was responsible for maintaining the diligence of the faculty, and resolving minor quarrels. He was responsible for obedience to civil law, and the adherence to the articles of faith by the teachers. His term of office was for two years, and although not stated, it was renewable.

Further regulations governing students included an annual vacation of three weeks at the wine harvest, in addition to the first Friday of every month. The procedures for the promotion of students to the next level began three weeks before the first of May, when one of the academy professors proposed a

theme in French for all students. The students had five hours to write upon the theme in Latin without the aid of books. The professors on the next level of the college evaluated the themes, and submitted them to the rector who made final judgments on the basis of the professor's recommendations. Prior to the first day of May, a conference was held with each student at which a vote was taken among the professors as to advancement. On May first, all the students and professors assembled at the Church of Saint Pierre, along with a councilman, the ministers and the regents of the school. The rector gave a lecture, after which the councilman congratulated those being advanced. The rector then offered words of encouragement to the students and they were dismissed for the day.

The next level upward was the "public lectures," which were the beginning of the academy. The ones giving these lectures were professors of Greek, Hebrew and theology, whose obligations were discussed in the *Ordre*. They were expected to use Aristotle, Plato, Plutarch and Christian philosophers. Students at this level were exposed to oratory, history, physics and rhetoric. They had to register with the rector and confess their faith.<sup>16</sup>

From this summary, the importance of classical Greek and Latin authors is readily apparent. The role of declamation, debate and rhetoric in the preparation of Calvin's ministers is also difficult to miss. The curriculum is similar to Sturm's at Strassbourg, for he also emphasized classical languages and literature, rhetoric, grammar, logic and history. Sturm had less place for the sciences, and seems to have influenced Calvin, although Calvin did include the "physics of space."<sup>17</sup>

Calvin's own experience may have promoted the moderate discipline in the Genevan schools. He left his home in Noyon, France, in 1523 to enter the College de la Marche, at the age of fourteen. Classes began at five in the morning and continued with intermissions until eight in the evening. Calvin moderated these hours in Geneva. School started later and ended earlier with fewer intermissions. In addition to the more humane hours for young bodies, Calvin also worked in a more compact community where children lived with their parents, rather than in boarding schools, leaving the evening hours to the family. Albert Hyma indicated that "Corporal punishments were frequently inflicted [at the College de la Marche], even when the students were not guilty of serious offenses...."<sup>18</sup> The exception to this pattern was Mathurin Cordier, or Corderius, who was a priest, humanist and educator who taught Latin to the lowest level. He had originally taught at the upper levels, but he was so disappointed with the skills of those coming to him that he chose to inspire the beginners. He combined kindness with good teaching, avoiding corporal punishment. Cordier's educational principles involved grouping by age, gradual development and emphasis upon the fundamentals.<sup>19</sup> All of these marked Cordier as a bit different from others, and although Calvin studied with him for perhaps no more than three months,<sup>20</sup> Cordier made such an impression that Calvin later secured him for Geneva, a further evidence of

Calvin's satisfaction with moderation in the treatment of children. The only apparent difference is that Calvin grouped by skill where Cordier preferred age.

Following his brief time at the College de la Marche, Calvin moved on to the College de Montaigu, where he successfully studied the liberal arts and logic. He remained there approximately four years until 1527. He nominally studied for the priesthood by taking scholastic theology from Noel Beda. He also came under the influence of the reformers Nicholas Cop and Pierre Robert Olivetan, a distant relative.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Calvin's father developed trouble with the Bishop of Noyon, to whom he was secretary. After completion of his initial studies his father told him to withdraw from Paris and study law, which Calvin obediently did. He moved to Orleans, where he studied law under Peter de l'Etoile, a successful case lawyer and logician, and under Melchoir Wolmar, another reformer. Upon completion of his studies, the university conferred upon him the doctor's degree. From Orleans, Calvin went to Bourges where he studied with Andrew Alciati, a well known Milanese lawyer.<sup>22</sup> He returned then to Paris for further humanistic studies at the Royal College.<sup>23</sup> The humanism of his early and late education appeared in his love of the classics. The legal aspect of his education undoubtedly appeared in his love of order, completeness of organization and in the *Institutes* in many indirect ways that are beyond the scope of this study.

Throughout this discussion of Calvin's writings upon education, they have been presented as his alone. In actuality he always presented them to the city fathers as the work of the ministers, but Calvin was clearly the moving spirit. He may well have held first place in Geneva as far as influence goes, but he never sought public office, nor did he hold positions of superiority to the other ministers. Even in the schools, he placed others as rector and never held position save as professor of theology. He may have been the leader in forming opinion, but he seldom left the others completely behind. He emphasized the dangers of wealth and office, especially the generation of pride, which he associated with false teaching.<sup>24</sup>

This survey of Calvin's educational writing demonstrates that he wrote little upon the philosophy of education, save as it related to the formation of specific schools in Geneva. He was an organizer, with theory present only when the purpose of the schools was considered. He was primarily concerned with a method of organizing schools to accomplish the goal of training a Bible reading laity and an effective clergy.

## THE SCHOOLS IN GENEVA

Having considered Calvin's perspective upon the education of children for leadership, it is appropriate to turn to the actual schools developed in Geneva and what they were able to accomplish. After a survey of the schools formed and the students who came to study, consideration will be given to the crucial issue for modern educators, that of ideological control. This issue will provide

further insight concerning why Calvin has been neglected.

The development of the schools cannot be clearly understood without at least a preliminary glance at the relationship between the churches and the government in Geneva. Some difficulties in interpreting the significance of the schools are the result of a misunderstanding of the government of Geneva and Calvin's role in it. The ministers and a large segment of the population came to view Geneva as a theocracy where both the church and the state were responsible to God. Even though a majority view, the interpretation of the implications remained a chronic ground for differences of opinion that were often expressed actively and even violently. The ruling church body was the "Consistory," which included the company of the ministers and a dozen lay members selected from The Little Council or The Two Hundred.<sup>25</sup> The Consistory was the primary source of contact with the civil government, and there is no denying the influence that Calvin was able to wield in this body. However, political control always resided in the civil councils, that of The Little Council, The Sixty or Senate, and The Two Hundred, elected representatives of the people. The dominance of the ministers and Calvin among the members of these groups fluctuated with every election. Early efforts by the ministers met with stiff resistance, and Calvin was expelled for three years. After returning he was only once in that specific danger, but he did not always achieve his objectives. An example is the modification of who had final control over the selection of teachers. The Council of the Sixty changed the proposal of 1541 so that they had the final determination.<sup>26</sup> Other proposals were similarly revised and occasionally defeated. Calvin has been called the "undisputed" dictator of Geneva.<sup>27</sup> Any consideration of the activities of the Councils is sufficient to show that this is certainly an exaggeration, for Calvin was even reprimanded upon occasion. While he did seek to eliminate opposition, usually through persuasion, the effort was directed toward accomplishing what the most learned citizens of the city deemed best. While the number of citizens burned and expelled is appalling, it is necessary to keep in view that the civil authorities tried and executed such acts.

Similarly, Calvin did not exercise exclusive control over the schools, but responsibility was divided between church and state.<sup>28</sup> The state's responsibility was control and provision of support, while the education was definitely for the benefit of the church and only indirectly for the state.

As a result of this system of relations, the first schools established were the vernacular schools which were scattered about the city under the direction of Saunier, as previously noted. In these schools the children were taught to read and write French, and the rudiments of arithmetic necessary for daily transactions. After Calvin clearly understood that family teaching of the catechism was not effective, the schools also taught it.<sup>29</sup> The pastors recognized that success in developing a strong church was difficult with an uneducated laity.<sup>30</sup> This was the core of the contribution of Calvin and



Geneva to education: the responsibility of the state to promote literacy by providing schools.

Calvin soon recognized the advantages of more advanced instruction for the pastors. He circulated a prospectus in 1537 for a higher school.<sup>31</sup> Following his expulsion and stay in Strassbourg, the proposal was revised in the light of his experiences with Sturm and presented in 1541, as previously noted. Under this regulation Sebastian Castellio revived the College de la Rive between 1542 and 1544.<sup>32</sup> The document of 1559 was a formalization or revision of the school system, including the reduction of the vernacular schools to four, and the founding of the Academy.

William Boyd indicated that the early progress of the College did not satisfy Calvin, so in 1556 he returned to Strassbourg to evaluate Sturm's school again with an eye to improving his own.<sup>33</sup> Calvin did not slavishly follow Sturm, for there were only seven classes instead of ten, and Calvin used the vernacular in the four lower classes, where Sturm had pressed for the exclusive use of Latin. The difference in number of classes may be explained by the fact that Sturm had no antecedent vernacular schools as Calvin did. While Cicero was still prominent at Geneva, Calvin placed less emphasis upon his works than did Sturm. During Sturm's lifetime his school overshadowed Calvin's efforts, but Calvin was able to achieve more lasting results.<sup>34</sup>

In 1558, the Council approved a plot of ground for a permanent location for the college and academy. Calvin solicited gifts and effectively encouraged the inclusion of the schools in wills. The partially completed building was dedicated and put into use under the forms of the 1559 *Ordres*, although it was not finished until 1563.<sup>35</sup> The academy was not divided into classes as the college was. There were no promotions and no degrees. Students were given attendance certificates and character references. Gifts and government funds allowed the instruction to be free. Arts and theology faculties existed in Calvin's day, and law and medicine were added after his death.<sup>36</sup> Before he died, Calvin was able to place the academy upon firm foundations.

The three levels of schools, the three separate founding dates, and different leaders such as Saunier, Castellio and Theodore de Beza have caused confusion among educational historians. Other problems appear as well, for example, Frederick Mayer, in a standard history of education, listed the courses taught in the academy and included mathematics, although this was not mentioned in the *Ordre*, as was the rest of his list.<sup>37</sup> This may have resulted from Calvin's having a well-known mathematician on the faculty, even though he was teaching philosophy. Similarly, Calvin has often been gently chided for being deductive, even though Francis Bacon was four years old when Calvin died. Cordier has often been cited as rector of Geneva's schools, although there is no evidence that he ever had the position of leadership.<sup>38</sup> Discipline has been called severe in the schools, and it was, compared to the permissive classroom, but compared to the sixteenth century, it was mild.<sup>39</sup>

One of the most significant contributions that Calvin made to the schools

was the recruiting of good teachers. Since the essential purpose of education in Geneva was the religious preparation of the people for service to the church and the city, the Ordinances of 1541 included the teachers under the same discipline as the ministers. They had not only to be adequate pedagogues, but theologically learned and orthodox as well. While this seems restrictive to the present age, it was not unusual then. In addition to Saunier and Cordier, another significant addition was Castellio, who served as headmaster of the college, but whose quarrelsomeness led to difficulties. He resigned because of an inadequate salary, and sought a pastorate. He was found to have a mildly heretical view of the Song of Solomon and the creed, and was denied the pastorate.<sup>40</sup> He developed a deep resentment toward Calvin, whom he felt was responsible for his problems, and in May 1544 he accused the ministers of being guzzlers and licentious, charges he could not prove. For this he was expelled from Geneva and his resentment turned to hate, leading to attacks from distance over the following years.<sup>41</sup> Calvin exercised some moderation here, for the usual result of heresy was death. Fewer problems resulted from Calvin's efforts to staff the academy in the late 1550s. After failing to secure some outstanding French scholars he wished, growing problems at Lausanne led Beza to move to Geneva. A short time later Calvin gained several faculty from the academy at Lausanne who had resigned over Bern's assumption of secular authority over spiritual discipline.<sup>42</sup> These men were Calvinists and gave the academy an instant faculty of repute.

Opinion varies widely among historians regarding the number of students enrolled in the College and Academy in 1559. The uniformly agreed upon number from the rector's book is 162, but whether this is both schools or the academy alone is not clear. Four years later there were 300 enrolled in the academy and 1200 in the college. From these figures, some scholars have assumed extremely rapid growth. Alternatively, Paul T. Fuhrman claims that the 162 refers to the academy, and that there were approximately 800 enrolled in the combined schools.<sup>43</sup> William Monter supports this, indicating that there were 280 in the first class of the college, and Emanuel Stichelberger said there were 900 in the combined schools.<sup>44</sup> If these figures are correct, it would present a more realistic view of growth, doubling over a four year period, and would also make provision for the fact that the college was functioning prior to 1559.

Prior to the reorganization, students were primarily from Geneva and France.<sup>45</sup> Following 1559, students began to come from all over Europe. Many of them were excellent scholars who contributed to the intellectual ferment in Geneva, and then returned to influence their native lands. Among the most illustrious were John Knox, the reformer from Scotland; the tutor of King Henry IV of France; Thomas Bodley, later of Oxford University; Caspar Olivianus, co-author of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (with Zacharius Ursinus); and Marnix of Saint-Aldegonde, a leader of the Dutch revolt against Spain.<sup>46</sup> Indirect evidence of the penetration of Calvinistic thought through Geneva's schools appeared in a 1625 list of eminent men of Louvain, Belgium, one-

fourth of whom studied in Geneva.<sup>47</sup>

The value of the schools has been variously assessed. J. G. Compayré has suggested that the College was little more than a school for the study of Latin.<sup>48</sup> Another has suggested that the primary function was to "...safeguard and advance the interest of his particular church...."<sup>49</sup> This last statement distorts the breadth of Calvin's views, but is at least technically correct. Such expressions, and the claim that Calvin's standards of doctrine "...naturally limited and crippled the education given...,"<sup>50</sup> raise the question of the significance of Calvin's progress toward free and useful education, and the issue of freedom of thought. John T. McNeill, one of the most prolific modern writers about Calvin, made a fine distinction, suggesting that while Calvin was not egalitarian he was not necessarily thereby anti-democratic. As a consequence, at the lower levels, the young had equal educational opportunity regardless of birth or wealth.<sup>51</sup> At the upper levels, since the education was for church and community leadership, women were not admitted, and the wealthy or distinguished had an advantage.

Another aspect of the freedom of thought is the assumed Protestant emphasis upon the right of the individual to interpret the Bible without the intermediation of the church. Such a manner of stating the problem is not quite accurate from Calvin's perspective. He emphasized the right of "understanding" more than the right of "interpretation," and the necessity of correct belief more than freedom of belief. Subordination did not disappear from Calvin's system; it was directed to correct belief and true spiritual teachers rather than to Rome. In the light of this, Calvin wrote little about education to "interpret the Bible," but he did emphasize the necessity of education so that the Bible could be studied and true interpretation recognized and understood.

The use of the catechism made clear that, for the majority of citizens, the learning of specific answers to specific questions was thought the most effective method of teaching the material needed for the defense of the faith. Luther had so ably demonstrated the effectiveness of the catechism, that both Calvinists and Catholics adopted the method with little comment.<sup>52</sup> The catechism, the *Institutes*, expulsions and persecution make clear that there were definite bounds to freedom of thought in Geneva.

Still another element in the limitation of freedom resulted from Calvin's view of man. From classical sources the Humanists had adopted the view that man could raise his estate through education. While Calvin had Humanist influences in his own educational background, he apparently reacted against them in a considerable measure, moving beyond the Catholic view that man could be raised by grace administered through the Church, to a position where grace administered solely by the will of God was the only hope. For Calvin, education was not a panacea for solving the ills of the race, but it was still necessary to educate children concerning their evil state and their obligations to God. Since Calvin did not regard children as partakers of grace until able to comprehend it, they could be especially evil.

Because of Calvin's "failure" to understand education in a modern secular light, some have claimed that he did comparatively little to further education, and that he produced no "new education" independent of the clergy and its authority.<sup>53</sup> This supposedly resulted from a failure to fully grasp the meaning of private judgment, and thus Calvin failed to apply Protestant principles and was not fully Protestant.<sup>54</sup> This is one of the most glaringly anti-historical perspectives in modern educational writing, completely missing the theological consistency of Calvin, and implying that one is not Protestant if the concept of freedom does not coincide with that based upon four hundred years of additional thought about the problem.

Nicholas Hans made an apparent error on the opposite extreme; that is, too favorable to Calvin. He claimed that, while the Calvinist tradition was "essentially progressive," the appearance of rote use of catechisms in Scotland was evidence of degeneration "... into narrow and intolerant dogmatism."<sup>55</sup> This view ignored Calvin's and Luther's use and promotion of catechisms.

A final aspect of the issue of freedom of thought is the different interpretations of Calvin's willingness to allow the study of science. As previously noted, physics was present in the curriculum of the college, but science in the form of medicine did not enter the curriculum of the academy until after Calvin's death. Calvin opposed astrology and palmistry as inimical to seeking God's will by more orthodox means, but, while against some forms of superstition, he did not necessarily endorse science.<sup>56</sup> Some scholars have asserted that there was implicit in Calvinism an impulse toward free inquiry, not necessarily obvious in Calvin, but that found fruition in his followers, leading to the dominance of science by Calvinists as suggested by Robert K. Merton.<sup>57</sup> This is the natural result of the Calvinistic view of natural revelation combined with the right of the student to freely examine and prove all things, an idea that grew among Calvinists. Calvin did have the mathematician Tagaut as a faculty member shortly after the founding of the academy, although he taught philosophy. Copernicus was ignored and John Holywood (Sacro Bosco) was the thirteenth-century astronomical authority at Geneva.<sup>58</sup> Calvin was more pre-Copernican than anti-Copernican in scientific matters. Science did not develop among the Calvinists until the sense of professionalism could be combined with the Calvinist sense of call in the following century.

The rejection of Calvin's views on method and freedom contributed to the neglect of his more important contribution to the practical provision of the means to enlist civil support for education.

#### A SPREADING INFLUENCE

Whatever the limitations of Calvin and his thought, he firmly believed in spreading the gospel by educating learned and zealous pastors. This was the goal of Genevan education. The pastors were further taught, at least by example, that an educated laity was essential to the strong church. As the Calvinistic influence expanded, the growth of schools was not far behind. The

Genevan pattern of educating citizen and minister together until the university level became the normal pattern wherever Calvinistic thought permeated. While Calvinism is narrow by modern standards, it was based on the new learning of the time (save the sciences), and thus appeared dynamic and progressive.

France was the first objective of the Calvinists. Calvin never forgot his homeland, becoming a Genevan citizen only late in life. His first love outside Geneva was the French Reformed Church. The majority of early enrollees in Geneva's schools were French. These students returned to France to strengthen the growing Huguenot movement. Between 1555 and 1566 a minimum of 161 pastors returned to France from Geneva. The flood reached the point that Charles IX asked the magistrates to stop the supply, which request was refused.<sup>59</sup> By 1559, when Calvin wrote the Gallic Confession for the use of the French Church, the French protestants numbered over 400,000.<sup>60</sup> By 1561 there were 2,150 churches.<sup>61</sup> When Calvin died in 1564, a religious war was in progress and persecution growing. Huguenots were numerous, powerful and in a position to dispute the kingdom with the Catholics. The Geneva-trained did not seem to advocate subversion, but persuasively argued the Reformed cause.

The high point of the penetration of Calvinism came with the Edict of Nantes of 1598. The Huguenots had religious freedom and control of some two hundred towns where they were able to develop the schools on the lowest levels.<sup>62</sup> Later they developed thirty-two colleges and eventually eight Huguenot universities, including the best known at Nimes, Montauban, and Saumur. The Geneva standards were observed: the poor and the laity were educated, synods made liberal appropriations for the universities, supervision of both faculty and students was present, and use was made of the Bible and the vernacular.<sup>63</sup> Following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the schools were suppressed and the Huguenots began to flee France. Education in France among the Protestants never became compulsory, as it had been in Geneva, on any basis other than a local one. Power was never concentrated enough for that. The impact upon France was great, but only temporary, and the longer lasting influences of Calvinistic education came from other countries.

Calvinism entered to a limited extent into Italy, Austria, Poland, Hungary and Bohemia, but there is little available evidence that any lasting achievements were made in education. Slightly better results were obtained in the Palatinate, as has been noted, and some of the other German states. The Palatinate became significant primarily through the universities of Heidelberg and Marburg, the former the most significant Calvinist university other than Geneva. It excelled Geneva in law, medicine and philosophy.<sup>64</sup> Frederick III, especially, promoted Calvinism at the university and was responsible for the authorizing of the *Heidelberg Catechism* in 1563,<sup>65</sup> as well as establishing the lower schools in each village. In some of the western German states, schools were established under the German Reformed Church, especially in such

locations as Strassbourg, Nassau, Bremen, Hesse, Baden and Anhalt.<sup>66</sup> These efforts were modest, and they were eventually absorbed into Lutheranism. An exception would be the academy at Herborn in Nassau, that attained the status of a university. Several precursors of modern “non-scholastic” educational theory taught there, including the Christian encyclopedist, Johann Alsted, and John Annos Comenius, the seventeenth-century intellectual leader of the Czech Brethren, who were the catalysts for igniting the national spirit of that land. Under the impact of Pietism, this school also became the center of the foreign missionary efforts of the German Reformed Church in the eighteenth century, especially through the ministry of Philip Wilhelm Otterbein.<sup>67</sup>

The major development of school systems came in Holland and Scotland, where compulsory education was adopted on a nationwide scale. In Holland, where some schools were in existence before the Calvinists came to power, the Dutch merely adapted these schools to their needs and expanded them to make them universal.<sup>68</sup> Freeman Butts, the educational historian, indicated:

The Synod of the Hague in 1586 provided for the establishment of schools in the cities, and the Synod of Dort in 1618 provided for the establishment in all villages of schools under control of the civil magistrates, to give free instruction to the poor.<sup>69</sup>

The salaries of schoolmasters were paid with civil funds.

The middle class had assumed the leadership role in the struggle against Spain, and Calvinism was found to fit very well with their design on both political and religious freedom from Spain. As in Geneva, parents were called upon to read the Bible and teach the catechism to their children. The schools extended religious instruction as well as the more secular elements of education. Only Reformed Church members could instruct in the schools.<sup>70</sup> Pastors were made the superintendents of the schools and were required to inspect them regularly. Some of the provinces passed school taxes based on the number of eligible children, and not those actually attending. Eventually some pastors were designated as truant officers to make sure the children were in school.<sup>70</sup> Such were some of the familiar innovations that are now regarded as commonplace. They were developed in response to the needs of accomplishing the typical Calvinist objectives of educating the citizenry to carry out their task.

The Calvinist influence naturally reached the University, as Geneva became the example for the University of Leiden. Holland became the prime example of that wedding of Calvinism and middle class mercantilism that reached fruition in New England. Comenius’s views on raising sunken humanity through education found especially fertile soil in Holland as well.<sup>71</sup> Leiden was founded in 1575 and was quickly followed by Franeker, Groningen, Utrecht and Harderwijk. All were Calvinistic centers and began to attract foreign students in the fashion of Geneva, especially as zeal declined

in Geneva and the center of Calvinism shifted northward. Holland became the major center for the exporting of Calvinism.<sup>73</sup>

A national system of education also developed in Scotland. There the system was more under the influence of one man, John Knox, as had been the case in Geneva under Calvin. Consequently, education in Scotland seems more narrow than that in Holland, and more subject to the limitations of Knox's influence. The Scottish schools were not unnoticed or failing of influence, but Scotland never became as great a center as Holland in propagating the faith. Part of this may also be that they were less a sea-faring and trading people than the Dutch.

As in Holland, the Scottish schools did not have to be started. In the fifteenth century James I decreed the maintenance of public schools, but little had been accomplished. The catalyst for Scotland was time John Knox spent with Calvin in Geneva around 1556.<sup>74</sup> Knox observed the relation between Church and State and the power of the school system capped by the academy. Such a system, he believed, would promote the reformation in his homeland as well. Knox advocated educating girls in the same schools, and the right of every child of talent to any level in the system.<sup>75</sup> In 1560 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church recommended to the Scottish Parliament that primary schools be established in connection with each church, and middle schools in every town of importance. Many years passed before this was realized, but in 1616, 1633 and 1646, laws were passed which provided for schools in each parish.<sup>76</sup> Knox had hoped to finance the schools from the old church and monastic foundations, but the nobles also had designs upon that income, and Knox was unsuccessful. Some schools were begun on the local level during his lifetime; he died in 1572, but the fruition came after his death. In 1567, Parliament caused the Presbyterian Church to appoint visitors or superintendents for the existing schools, and when the church was established in 1592, these visitors became responsible for licensing teachers.<sup>77</sup> Presbyteries received the right to tax for the schools in 1640, but exercised the right in only a limited fashion. In 1646 the erection of schools became mandatory, a law that was poorly observed.

The influence of Geneva was also apparent in the founding of the University of Edinburgh. Unlike the medieval autonomy of the faculty and nations of the medieval university, Edinburgh was placed under the civil administration and the ministers of the city. This meant much more control of the curriculum and faculty. The university was intended to serve the Church.<sup>78</sup> The success of the Scottish schools was much longer in coming than in Holland, and failed to have as much impact subsequently, but it is notable that the schools that were in existence were nearly as available to the poor as the rich. There was an egalitarianism that is not quite so apparent in any other European country.

England was not without the Puritan influence stemming from the writings of Calvin. The academy was again the pattern for Emmanuel College at Cambridge. Calvinism made its initial inroads there by the mid-

adoption of Calvinistic ideas by Thomas Cranmer, and the subsequent influencing of the Church of England by Calvinism, culminating in the mild Calvinism of the Thirty Nine Articles. The effects of Calvinism in England upon education of the very young were less spectacular than Holland and Scotland. England had much greater difficulty breaking away from the idea that education was for the wealthy. Religious strife also prevented the development of a comprehensive system at an early date.

While a survey of the influence of Calvinism upon American schools is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to note that the founding of schools in every parish in New England is a direct influence of the Calvinism of the early settlers, as were schools in the Carolinas where Huguenots were settling, and the schools of the Scotch Presbyterians in the central colonies. These early American colonists were influenced by what they had seen in Switzerland, Holland and Scotland. The Dutch influenced the formation of the same kinds of schools in New Netherlands. The strongest schools, and those broadest based, tended to be in the colonies with the greatest Calvinist influence. The expansion of education clearly shows the remarkable influence of one man and the schools he promoted in Geneva.

## CONCLUSION

Calvin was extremely influential in developing concepts of Church and State that provided the means of promoting universal elementary education. There is a correlation between the presence of Calvinism and the development of state-supported schools. Calvin wrote little on education, but provided an example of a working system that spread his theological ideas very effectively. His contribution appears to have been neglected or ignored because of the narrowness of his views and the unpopularity in more enlightened ages of the rigorous pursuit of theological and moral error in Geneva.

## Notes

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