

REFORMING THE CHURCH, HOME, AND SCHOOL: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF CATECHESIS IN CALVIN'S GENEVA

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the Genevan Catechism of 1542/1545 in order to present how it was used and influenced the Reformation in Calvin's Geneva. Various scholars have emphasized Calvin's educational agenda for Geneva, but they seem to overlook the strategic role of catechesis in that process. The author argues that catechesis had a strategic role in Geneva's religious education because of its threefold implementation at church services, home instruction, and school classes. He first presents the use and context of catechesis in the churches of Geneva. Then, he discusses how the catechism was used in the households of that city. Finally, he sheds light on the catechetical use of the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer in the literacy method of the schools in Geneva. In conclusion, the author suggests that Calvin's catechetical threefold approach to Christian education, adequately contextualized, remains challenging for the church today.

KEYWORDS

John Calvin; Genevan Catechism; Education; Church; Household; School.

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INTRODUCTION

Various scholars have shown that Christian education was a major component of Calvin's overall reforming work.¹ Some have tried to understand Calvin as a teacher of future pastors from the *Institutes* (1539-59)² as well as from his biblical commentaries (1540-64), but, as Randal Zachman says, few studies have been devoted to Calvin as a pastor-teacher of the unlearned. In fact, Calvin spent part of his life (1536-45) implementing an educational method for the unlearned in Geneva.³ In this essay, I explore the Genevan Catechism (1542/1545)⁴, the culmination of Calvin's concern to reach his unlearned audience,⁵ in order to understand how it was used and how it influenced the Reformation in Calvin's Geneva. Although scholars have emphasized Calvin's educational agenda for Geneva, they seem to overlook the strategic role of catechesis in that process. Instead, I argue that catechesis had a strategic role in Geneva's religious education because of its threefold implementation at church services, home instruction, and school classes.

¹ See Robert Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," in *Educating People of Faith*, ed. John Van Engen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 294-313; Herman J. Selderhuis, "Calvin, Children and the Church," in *Calvin Today: Reformed Theology and the Future of the Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 56-64; Jeffrey Watt, "Calvinism, Children, and Education: The Evidence from the Genevan Consistory," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33, n. 2 (Summer: 2002), 439-56; Barbara Pitkin, "The Heritage of the Lord: Children in the Theology of John Calvin," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. M. J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 160-93; Barbara Pitkin, "Children and the Church in Calvin's Geneva," in *Calvin and the Church - Papers Presented at the 13th Colloquium of the Calvin Studies Society*, May 24-26, 2001 (Grand Rapids: CRC, 2002), 144-64; Rosanna Anderson, "Calvin's Threefold Strategy for Christian Education," in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 10, n. 1 (2009): 58-72; Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); Matthias Freudenberg, "Catechisms," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis, trans. Henry J. Baron, Judith J. Guder, Randi H. Lundell, and Gerrit W. Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 206-14. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger Press, 1975), 93-115; Thomas A. Lambert, "Preaching, Praying, and Policing the Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998); Karen Spierling, "Making Use of God's Remedies: Negotiating the Material Care of Children in Reformation Geneva," in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36, n. 3 (2005): 785-807.

² Although Calvin did not view the *Institutes* (1536) as a book to instruct children, he considered its primary goal to "transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness." Cf. *Institutio* (1536), CO 1:9.

³ Zachman, *John Calvin*, 133.

⁴ In 1542 Calvin published the French edition of the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, see John Calvin, "Le Catéchisme de L'Eglise de Genève," in *Confessions et Catéchismes de la Foi Reformée*, ed. Olivier Fatio (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1986), 25-110. In 1545 he published its Latin version, see "Catechismus Ecclesiae Genevensis," in *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, 59 vols., Corpus Reformatorum, vols. 29-87 (Brunswick and Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke and Son [M. Bruhn], 1863-1900), 6:1-160 (hereafter abbreviated CO). For an English version, see John Calvin, "Catechism of the Church of Geneva," in *Tracts and Treatises*, v. 2, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 88-139.

⁵ Zachman, *John Calvin*, 133.

This paper has the following outline. First, I present the use of catechism in the churches of Geneva. In addition, I discuss how the catechism was used in the households of the city. Finally, I consider the catechetical presence of the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer in the literacy method of the schools in Geneva. This historical investigation is significant in light of the continuing challenge of training youth in the Christian faith, and seeing that task as a strategic approach for reforming the present-day church.

1. CATECHISM AND THE CHURCH

In this section, I present an overview of the Genevan Catechism, the way it was used in the churches of Geneva, and how this new method of religious education impacted Geneva. For Calvin, the proper education of children was vital to the success of the Reformed church.⁶ Writing to the Duke of Somerset in 1548 on the central task of transmitting the teaching of the gospel in an appropriate manner to the youth, he said:

The church of God will never preserve itself without a Catechism, for it is like the seed to keep the good grain from dying out, and causing it to multiply from age to age... make provision for the children being instructed in a good Catechism, which may show them briefly, and in language level to their tender age, wherein true Christianity consists.⁷

Calvin believed that the true knowledge of God could only prosper if it were passed on by adequate instruction, and the catechism format met such a demand.⁸ Three times Calvin tried to develop an effective summary of doctrine for children in his early ministry in Geneva. On November 10, 1536, Farel and he presented the *Confession*⁹ to the city magistrates, a text intended for the catechesis of children (after Calvin had taken up permanent residence in the city). In 1537, Calvin produced *Instruction in Faith*, originally written in French, and translated by him into Latin in 1538 as the *Catechism or Institution of the Christian Religion of the Church of Geneva*.¹⁰ Following the pattern of

⁶ Selderhuis, "Calvin, Children and the Church," 58; Spierling, "Making Use of God's Remedies," 788.

⁷ CO 13:72, also in Freudenberg, "Catechisms," 206.

⁸ Freudenberg, "Catechisms," 207.

⁹ The authorship of this confession is debated among scholars. Although T. Beza and Coladanus regarded it to be by Calvin, recent writers have credited the authorship to Farel. For the text, see *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. J.K.S. Reid, The Library of Christian Classics, v. XXII (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 25-33. See also Mark Noll, *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 123-32.

¹⁰ For the text, see *Catechismus*, CO 5:313-362. See also I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); Zachman, *John Calvin*, 133-35.

the *Augsburg Confession* (1530), Calvin clearly thought that “the best way to instruct children was to set forth in a clear, simple way the central topics of doctrine, according to the order of law, creed, prayer, and sacraments.”¹¹

However, Calvin changed his mind during his exile in Strasbourg (1538-41). Deeply influenced by Martin Bucer, he learned and had the opportunity to develop his own version of his former catechism.¹² As a result, Calvin also adopted the dialogical form of question and answer in the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, written in French in 1542, following his return from exile. In order to spread the Genevan teaching and strengthen the ecumenical bonds with other churches, Calvin translated his catechism into Latin in 1545.¹³

When Calvin agreed to return to Geneva in 1541, he did so on the condition that magistrates place their full support behind catechesis and discipline.¹⁴ On April 1564, Calvin invited the Genevan pastors to his house and made his farewell speech. Interestingly, after several advices, he exhorted them with respect to the centrality of catechesis for the continuity of the Reformation in the city:

I also ask you to change nothing, to make no innovations, for novelty is often requested. It is not that I desire from personal ambition that what is mine remain and that it be kept without seeking anything better, but because all changes are dangerous... Upon my return from Strasbourg, I wrote the catechism hastily, for I would never have accepted this ministry if they had not pledged me these two things; namely, to keep the catechism and the discipline... I never had the leisure, though I did sometimes think to put my hand to revision if I ever did have the leisure.¹⁵

In accepting both conditions imposed by Calvin, the Genevans were adhering to the severe discipline of the consistory¹⁶, and to a new paradigm of religious education that moved them “from a Catholic reliance on home instruction, particularly by mothers, to a Protestant insistence that catechism

¹¹ Zachman, *John Calvin*, 135.

¹² Kingdon, “Catechesis in Calvin’s Geneva,” 302-3.

¹³ Freudenberg, “Catechisms,” 209.

¹⁴ Kingdon, “Catechesis in Calvin’s Geneva,” 303; Watt, “Calvinism and Education,” 449.

¹⁵ See CO 9:887-91. For an English version, see Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva*, 97.

¹⁶ The consistory of Geneva was created when Calvin agreed to return to the city in 1541. It was a new semi-judicial disciplinary institution that enforced the Reformed lifestyle in Geneva. Comprised of the city’s pastors and elders, this institution supervised the Genevan community on issues of faith and conduct. The consistory exerted direct influence over those who partook in the Lord’s Supper. Calvin was the architect and assiduous member of that institution from its implementation in 1541 until his death in 1564. See Kingdon, “Catechesis in Calvin’s Geneva,” 302-3; Watt, “Calvinism and Education,” 439. For the registers of the consistory, see *Registres du Consistoire de Geneva au temps de Calvin*, ed. Thomas A. Lambert and Isabella M. Watt (Geneva: Droz, 1996).

by professional clergymen supplement home instruction.”¹⁷ As the mother who bears, nurtures, and educates God’s children, the church must recognize that people can love and serve God only when they know him through his Word, Calvin believed.¹⁸

Recent research indicates that the strategy for raising children in Calvin’s Geneva took place in the spheres of church, home, and school. Indeed, writing the “Letter to the Reader” in the Genevan Catechism, Calvin admits that he was bringing nothing new, but only reclaiming a common practice of the Christian church before its corruption.

It has always been a practice and diligent care of the Church that children be rightly brought up in Christian doctrine. To do this more conveniently, not only were schools formerly opened and individuals enjoined to teach their families properly, but also it was accepted public custom and practice to examine children in the Churches concerning the specific points which should be common and familiar to all Christians. That this be done in order, a formula was written out, called Catechism or Institute... What we now bring forward, therefore, is nothing else than the use of practice formerly observed by Christians and the true worshippers of God, and never neglected until the Church was wholly corrupted.¹⁹

Genevan authorities exhorted parents to oversee the religious education of their children, mandated that all of them attend weekly catechism lessons, and forbade matriculation at schools in Catholic territories.²⁰ Calvin believed that these three groups of leaders in their respective realms: parents at home, pastors at church, and teachers at the new Reformed schools would raise the next generation of believers in Geneva.²¹ Like many intellectuals and Reformers of his day, Calvin was intensely interested in children and child rearing.²² Barbara Pitkin mentions that the preparation of ordinances for the regulation of the Genevan church, his catechisms, and his promotion of school reforms in Geneva are clear examples of that interest.²³

1.1 An overview of the Genevan Catechism

Calvin’s catechism is divided into fifty-five sections and contains in its four main sections a total of 373 questions and answers. The theme of worship

¹⁷ Kingdon, “Catechesis in Calvin’s Geneva,” 295.

¹⁸ Selderhuis, “Calvin, Children and the Church,” 63.

¹⁹ *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 88.

²⁰ Watt, “Calvinism and Education,” 439.

²¹ Anderson, “Calvin’s Threefold Strategy,” 58.

²² Pitkin, “The Heritage of the Lord,” 162; and “Children and the Church,” 153-58.

²³ Pitkin, “The Heritage of the Lord,” 164.

is clearly the guiding thread of the Genevan Catechism, and question 8 works as a summary of its design:

T.: What is the proper way to honor Him?

S.: By putting all our trust in Him; that we serve Him by obeying His will; that we go to Him in all our needs, seeking health and all good things from Him; and that we acknowledge, in our hearts as well as with our mouths, that all good comes from Him alone.²⁴

This answer highlights Calvin's aim to teach children the four main topics of Christian faith: the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments. According to that answer, God is to be trusted, obeyed, invoked, and acknowledged as the source of every good thing. For Zachman, this fourfold answer provides the theological framework in which to understand the four major components of the catechism: the Creed (trust), the law (obey), the Lord's Prayer (invoke), and the sacraments (acknowledge).²⁵

In Calvin's view, true worship consists of *four things*.²⁶ First, it requires *faith*, as seen in questions 1-130, which encourage students to place their whole confidence in God. The open questions of the catechism show a striking feature of Calvin's theology: the inseparable relation between doctrine and worship. It begins with the question: "What is the chief end of human life?" Any children in Geneva should be trained to answer: "To know God." It is only possible to know God insofar as we worship him. Thus, the aim of any doctrine of Christianity is to afford the right adoration of the Trinity. Then, the pastor/teacher explains the Apostle's Creed, subdividing it into four parts. The first three concentrate on each person of the Trinity and the fourth on the church. The following twenty Sundays are spent on these four topics.²⁷ It is worth mentioning that Calvin devoted eight lessons to the work of Jesus as Savior, and seven lessons to the nature of the true church. He also explains that good deeds are useless without true faith, for faith is the root of works, a gift of God that cannot be obtained by man. In the last question of this first section, Calvin laid the foundation for what would later be called the regulative

²⁴ Calvin, "Catechism of the Church of Geneva," Question 8.

²⁵ Zachman, *John Calvin*, 141.

²⁶ Karin Maag has published a book examining the early development of Reformed worship in Geneva, providing special attention to Calvin's influence over it. She also discusses a number of Calvin's writings on elements of the worship service such as preaching, baptismal procedures and administering the sacraments, see Karin Maag, *Lifting Hearts to the Lord: Worship with John Calvin in Sixteenth Century Geneva* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016).

²⁷ Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, 104.

principle of worship,²⁸ by saying that “the only worship which He approves is not that which it may please us to devise, but that which He hath of his own authority prescribed.”²⁹

Second, true worship means to obey God’s will in his *law*, as seen in questions 131-232, with an interpretation of the Decalogue as well as themes of brotherly love and use of the law. Compared to his first catechism (1538), Calvin’s new catechism (1542/45) reveals a theological development during his exile in Strasbourg.³⁰ In contrast to his early Lutheran inclination, Calvin changed the order of the first two sections of his catechism, placing faith before the Law. He realized that God’s commandments are only profitable if understood by regenerated Christians on the basis of the gospel.³¹ For instance, Calvin applies the deliverance from Egypt to all Christians, for they were all freed from the bondage of sin.³²

According to Monter, “Calvin’s principal problem was to get beyond the letter of the law to the broader and more symbolic ways in which they should be observed.”³³ In order to obey God’s will, it is necessary to *broaden* the meaning of the commandments, to *internalize* them, and then to make them *positive*.³⁴ Take, for instance, the sixth commandment (You shall not murder). Calvin asks: “Is it enough if we do not hate anyone?” And so comes the answer:

By no means. Since the Lord, by condemning hatred and restraining us from any harm by which our neighbor may be injured, shows at the same time that he requires us to love all men from the heart, and study faithfully to defend and preserve them.³⁵

Third, to worship God is to call upon Him in all of our necessities through *prayer*, as described in questions 233-295, in which Calvin explains the content

²⁸ The regulative principle of worship is a doctrine held by some Calvinists that God commands churches to conduct public services of worship using certain distinct elements affirmatively found in Scripture, and conversely, that God prohibits any and all other practices in public worship.

²⁹ Calvin, “Catechism of the Church of Geneva,” Question 130.

³⁰ See Nobuo Watanabe, “Calvin’s Second Catechism: Its predecessors and its environment,” in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture*, ed. Wilhelm Neuser (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 224-32. See also Freudenberg, “Catechisms,” 207-212, and Zachman, *John Calvin*, 134-46.

³¹ Karl Barth argues that Calvin’s understanding of gospel and law paved the way for the Reformed stress on thanksgiving and sanctification. See Karl Barth, *The Theology of the Reformed Confessions*, trans. Darrell L. Guder and Judith J. Guder (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 97-105.

³² Calvin, “Catechism of the Church of Geneva,” Question 138.

³³ Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva*, 105.

³⁴ Calvin’s multifocal interpretation of the commandments further served as the model for the Heidelberg Catechism (1563).

³⁵ Calvin, “Catechism of the Church of Geneva,” Question 199.

of the Lord's Prayer. Three parts deal with the glory of God, and three parts deal with the person who prays. Young Genevans were trained in this section to approach God with their minds and hearts:

Since God is a Spirit, he requires men to give him the heart in all cases, and more especially in prayer, by which they hold communion with him. Wherefore he promises to be near to those only who call upon him in truth: on the other hand, he abominates and curses all who pray to him deceitfully, and not sincerely.³⁶

Further, the catechist asks: "What kind of feeling does God require in prayer?" The children should be able to answer:

First, that we feel our want and misery, and that this feeling beget sorrow and anxiety in our minds. Secondly, that we be inflamed with an earnest and vehement desire to obtain grace from God. These things will also kindle in us an ardent longing to pray.³⁷

For Calvin, "Prayers must be sincere, spoken in a tongue which the speaker understands, and not directed to saints or angels. Prayers are useless unless grounded in faith."³⁸ The 1545 edition of the Genevan Catechism also contains prayers and psalms suggested for personal devotion, before and after meals, and before going to sleep.

Fourth, the true worship of God consists of embracing *Scripture* with entire heartfelt persuasion, detailed in questions 296-308, and by properly partaking in the *Sacraments*, as covered in questions 309-373. According to Calvin, God communicates with us through his Word in Scripture and through the sacraments. There are only two sacraments: baptism and communion. These are external proofs of the grace of God, representing spiritual realities visibly in order to imprint God's promises more strongly in our hearts.³⁹

Children must be reminded that the power and efficacy of a sacrament is not contained in the outward element, but flows entirely from the Spirit of God.⁴⁰ They also should acknowledge that without faith, partaking in the sacraments is useless. Thus, the way to benefit from the sacraments is receiving them in faith, seeking Christ alone and his grace in them.⁴¹ The master should spend the next four Sundays explaining to children the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper and how it stands in contrast with Lutheran and Catholic

³⁶ Ibid., Question 241.

³⁷ Ibid., Question 243.

³⁸ Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, 105.

³⁹ Calvin, "Catechism of the Church of Geneva," Question 310.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Question 313.

⁴¹ Ibid., Question 317.

views. After concluding these four sections throughout the year, the student was ready for his first communion, though it was still necessary to be examined by the church.

1.2 The use of the catechism in the churches of Geneva

Although acknowledging the role of parents and schools in religious education, Calvin defended it as a primary responsibility of the church.⁴² The Genevan Catechism was used in the three city churches of Geneva: the former cathedral of Saint Peter, the church of Madeleine, and the church of Saint Gervais.⁴³ In Geneva, there were services every day of the week, early in the morning, and three services on Sunday. The first service of Sunday began at 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning depending on the season, followed by the main service at 8:00 a.m., and an afternoon service at 3:00 p.m. In between these two later services, at noon, the catechism classes met. In fact, these catechism classes were meant to be worship services since the instruction was considered a sermon, and baptisms could be celebrated during the classes.⁴⁴ Every child was expected to attend those classes in the parish closest to his/her home.⁴⁵ Attendance was also mandated for those adults who had an insufficient knowledge of the Christian faith.⁴⁶

The catechism classes focused on the children rather than on the teacher. As Watanabe says, “the answer is the main element and the question is introductory.” He adds that recitation of the answer was not compelled, because for Calvin, confessing the faith before the congregation was not merely reciting answers from the catechism.⁴⁷ The aim of catechesis was that children might be able to know both what they believed and why they believed it.⁴⁸

Under the guidance of teachers and pastors, children were supposed to investigate the truth of the gospel by themselves. “They cannot simply receive doctrine from a summary, as they did in Calvin’s first catechism,” Zachman points out, but needed to make the doctrine of the church their own, defend it on their own terms, after inquired into its meaning and veracity on their own.⁴⁹

⁴² Calvin: *Theological Treatises*, 88.

⁴³ See *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, ed. Philip E. Hughes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 40. See also Kingdon, “Catechesis in Calvin’s Geneva,” 301.

⁴⁴ Pitkin, “Children and the Church,” 156.

⁴⁵ Kingdon, “Catechesis in Calvin’s Geneva,” 301.

⁴⁶ For some cases, see *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, v. 1, 1542-1544, ed. Robert M. Kingdon, Thomas A. Lambert, and Isabella M. Watt, trans. M. Wallace McDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

⁴⁷ Watanabe, “Calvin’s Second Catechism,” 227.

⁴⁸ Zachman, *John Calvin*, 146.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

According to the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541), a public catechesis with recitation from the Genevan Catechism had to take place four times per year prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁵⁰ After finishing the catechization period, each child would be questioned by a pastor and, if successful, admitted to a first communion.⁵¹ Through the catechesis, Genevan pastors wanted to make sure that every child in the community could repeat from memory a set of basic summaries of faith: The Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.⁵² Rather than being a peripheral activity, the catechizing task of the pastors in Geneva occupied much of their ministerial activity. As De Greef writes, the catechism reflected what was taught in the church in Geneva. He continues, "Whoever became a preacher there had to assent to the content of this work, which became the catechism of the Francophone churches and was translated into various languages."⁵³

In order to enhance the pedagogical efficacy of religious education at church, Calvin adopted the question and answer format. According to Watanabe:

It seems that Calvin considered this form to be more effective for the instruction of children because 1) short sentences are more conducive to a clear expression of the faith, and 2) they lend themselves more readily to confession of faith by word of mouth. The form by which the minister asks and the child answers is a sort of oral confession of faith in the young believer elicited by the minister. In Calvin, this is not a method of explanation of faith or a method of developing theological theory but rather an exemplary form of confession by young believers.⁵⁴

Freudenberg adds that Calvin's new catechism is "pedagogically skillful, formed in dialogical question-and-answer format, and thus more suitable for teaching children and youth."⁵⁵ Undoubtedly, this last catechism is the culmination of Calvin's concern to reach the unlearned audience.⁵⁶ The missing themes of the Genevan Catechism are the doctrine of election, statements on anthropology, the free-will debates, human traditions, excommunication, and

⁵⁰ *The Register of the Company*, 44.

⁵¹ Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," 304.

⁵² Ibid. Freudenberg reiterates that "in 1551, a catechetical text appeared under the title *L'ABC François*, which included prayers and a Lord's Supper catechesis, whose questions had to be answered before every participation in the Lord's Supper. Since 1553, these questions and answers, titled *La manière d'interroger les enfants qu'on veut recevoir à la cene de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ*, were added to the Catechism of 1542/1545," Freudenberg, "Catechisms," 211; cf. CO 6: 147-160.

⁵³ Wulfert De Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Lyle Bierma (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 117.

⁵⁴ Watanabe, "Calvin's Second Catechism," 227.

⁵⁵ Freudenberg, "Catechisms," 209.

⁵⁶ Zachman, *John Calvin*, 133.

the role of magistrates. The reason for these changes might lie in Calvin's intention to specifically instruct children and youth.⁵⁷ Zachman explains: "The goal of catechesis is therefore the full and informed participation of the child in the worship of God, rather than a mastery of all the rudiments or topics of pious doctrine, as in 1538."⁵⁸ Selderhuis adds that Calvin also wanted to prepare children for the Lord's Supper because he considered adolescence to be the proper age for receiving it.⁵⁹

Another important issue related to catechism and its use at church is the link between catechism and liturgy in Calvin's Geneva. John Witvliet considers this interplay to be pervasive and strong. He remarks that "catechetical links with liturgical music were still strong, even in Calvin's Geneva, where metrical psalmody was the dominant musical practice."⁶⁰ Calvin's own musical arrangements of the Ten Commandments and Apostle's Creed may have been sung in conjunction with catechetical instruction in Geneva.⁶¹ Under Marot's setting, the Decalogue was also sung in Calvin's liturgy after the confession of sins and absolution, as well as following the sermon in Lord's Supper services.⁶²

The interplay of catechesis and liturgy is also perceived in baptism liturgies. Calvin used to exhort the community with the words of the catechism, followed by a prayer, and finish the ceremony with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed.⁶³ Witvliet also points out that the Eucharist in Geneva also included a catechetical exhortation prior to the reception of the bread and cup. After the reception, the church sang the Song of Simeon. Witvliet explains:

Calvin insisted, among several themes, that the Lord's Supper was a "visible word" representing God's promises "as painted in a picture," set before our sight, portrayed graphically and in the manner of images. How poignant, then, in liturgy to invite worshipers to testify that they, like Simeon, had seen salvation and perceived the "light of revelation."⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Freudenberg, "Catechisms," 211.

⁵⁸ Zachman, *John Calvin*, 141.

⁵⁹ Selderhuis, "Calvin, Children and the Church," 59. Watanabe writes that "catechism is not only a means of instruction in preparation for confession of faith. It is also the rule of faith or *summa doctrinae* of a church." Watanabe, "Calvin's Second Catechism," 230.

⁶⁰ John D. Witvliet, "The Interplay of Catechesis and Liturgy in the Sixteenth Century," in *The People's Book: The Reformation and the Bible*. ed. Jennifer P. McNutt, and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 120.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 121.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

Witvliet regards Calvin's approach to catechism as "liturgical catechesis," since its goal was to prepare children and adults for robust liturgical participation.⁶⁵ He claims:

In Calvin's Geneva, each part of the catechism pointed to liturgical engagement: the Apostle's Creed was used in baptism and Lord's Supper liturgies; the Lord's Prayer was used verbatim in prayers for illumination and in paraphrase as part of the post-sermon intercessory prayer; the Ten Commandments were sung in catechetical services and in Lord's Supper; the portions of the catechism on baptism and the Lord's Supper were echoed in exhortations at each sacrament.⁶⁶

The three basic components of the catechism were pervasive in Genevan liturgy during Calvin's life. This brings us once again to the recognition that Calvin's theology is highly liturgical. Theology and worship are inseparable and the communal worship service is where both interplay more visibly. Thus, Calvin saw no profit in worshiping God without understanding, for liturgical assemblies are schools of faith.⁶⁷

Calvin's theology also reveals how much he recognized children's spiritual capacity and their important role at church. In addition to being baptized in childhood, children were supposed to be present in worship services, attend the catechism at noon, and lead the congregation in singing the Psalms. To accomplish that, the city arranged music teachers to conduct daily rehearsals for children in two of the churches.⁶⁸

1.3 The impact of catechism services in Geneva

Calvin's efforts to introduce children to the basics of Christian faith seem to have been effective, especially taking into account his zenith in 1555 to 1564. Among the several reasons that made Calvin's reform successful in Geneva, Monter suggests his very thorough project of indoctrination. Children were trained on catechesis every Sunday noon until they could repeat from memory the essentials of their faith. For instance, in late 1557, "the Consistory discovered five old men who still 'could not give an account of their faith,' and ordered them to hire a tutor and learn their catechism before the next public Communion."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ibid., 127-28.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 127.

⁶⁷ For a detailed Calvin's theology of liturgy, see John D. Witvliet, "Images and Themes in John Calvin's Theology of Liturgy," in *Worship Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 127-48.

⁶⁸ Pitkin, "Children and the Church," 155.

⁶⁹ Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, 100-1.

Lambert also highlights the level of maturity acquired by such children by mentioning the number of adults who were having trouble learning their prayers in this new Reformed fashion. The evidence shows that some of these adults were, in fact, instructed by their own children.⁷⁰ Undoubtedly, if anyone wants to know what was taught to these children, there is no better source than the Genevan Catechism that Calvin composed immediately after his return to Geneva in 1541.⁷¹

2. CATECHISM AND THE HOME

Having said that, I discuss now the state of parenting in Geneva before the Reformation, the way it was affected by Calvin's understanding of the family, and how parents used the catechism in at-home instruction.

2.1 *Family design in Geneva before Calvin*

A degree of religious education at home was already established prior to the conversion to Protestantism.⁷² It was related to memorization of a few prayers and the Apostle's Creed. Mothers trained their children with the basic expectation that they would be capable to say these prayers and attend the Mass. The most important prayers at that time were the *Pater Noster* and the *Ave Maria*, memorized in Latin.⁷³ It is clear that residents of Geneva had learned their prayers and creeds from both parents, and rarely from a priest or at church.⁷⁴ Kingdon explains that

... this type of instruction did not require literacy. At that moment, literacy was lower among women than men. Most of the women who were teaching their children to recite prayers were probably illiterate, repeating texts they had carefully learned from their own mothers, reinforced by constant recitation of them at Mass.⁷⁵

Different from the Reformed model, attendance at the Mass had been required only once a year at Easter. Masses were available every day of the week in seven different parish churches, in religious houses, and elsewhere. However, Calvin and his colleagues of the consistory concluded that this Catholic home-teaching program was very superficial, for it required no more than the ability to recite a prayer or two.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Lambert, "Preaching, Praying, and Policing," 435-37, 457-58.

⁷¹ Monter, *Calvin's Geneva*, 102.

⁷² Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 446.

⁷³ Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," 295-96. See also Lambert, "Preaching, Praying, and Policing," 393-479.

⁷⁴ Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 446.

⁷⁵ Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," 296.

⁷⁶ Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 454.

Geneva had a critical period of transition from the Catholic to the Protestant model of Christian life. The Reformers in Geneva attacked practices they deemed papist, eliminating, for example, baptisms performed postmortem or by midwives, and the naming of children after saints.⁷⁷ Calvin often had problems explaining why Genevans should no longer attend the Mass, and why it was not compatible with the Reformed Lord's Supper.⁷⁸

The paradigm shift on education was probably the turning point for that. They moved from the Catholic reliance on home instruction led primarily by mothers to a Protestant emphasis that catechesis led by professional clergymen should supplement home instruction. As Watt says, "Calvin shared Luther's view that the home was the most important site for the shaping of Christians and that male household heads were to be the religious leaders in their own homes." Instead of abandoning home instruction, the Reformers tried to strengthen it.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, they also acknowledged that home instruction without the supplement of catechism services did not suffice.

2.2 The responsibility of parents in Christian education

Steven Ozment points out that "never has the art of parenting been more highly praised and parental authority more wholeheartedly supported than in Reformation Europe."⁸⁰ Reformers considered the diligent rearing of children as the greatest service to the world, both in spiritual and temporal affairs.⁸¹ In the sixteenth century, in fact, the family was the primary context for the moral, intellectual, social, spiritual, and physical nurture of children.⁸² As Karen Spierling points out, the raising of children was vital to the success of any attempt to establish a Reformed church.

Calvin himself believed that society had an obligation "to provide the right conditions for raising children to be godly." Both consistory and city council sought to give families guidance and assistance in the raising of Genevan children, but both city and church authorities saw Genevan parents as the first and most useful mechanism in providing for those children. Only when parents faltered or failed entirely in their responsibilities did children fall directly under the purview of church and city authorities.⁸³

⁷⁷ Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 454-55.

⁷⁸ Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," 295.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 132.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Pitkin, "The Heritage of the Lord," 169.

⁸³ Spierling, "Making Use of God's Remedies," 789.

In Calvin's Geneva parents had an obligation to provide their children with financial support, ensure their children's religious and vocational education, and impose the proper discipline on them. Spierling states that "mothers also had a role to play in the religious education of their children, although fathers ultimately held public responsibility for the results of that teaching."⁸⁴

Though the Reformed community no longer relied only on home instruction, the consistory displayed frequent concern about home instruction. It reminded men who headed households of their challenge to provide religious instruction to the children in their homes. As Watt remarks, "the registers suggest that the male household head was deemed responsible for the religious instruction of the family."⁸⁵ Ozment explains that the maternal role was greater in the infant and early childhood years, whereas the father's role increased after age six or seven, when the maturing child could respond to regular discipline. He even says that the bond between father and child was deemed as intimate and enduring as that between mother and child.⁸⁶

In Geneva, home instruction included also the young servants at work in most households of the middle class. In the more prosperous households, the number of the servants could be substantial. The entire household was expected to gather together periodically to repeat prayers. The role of women was not emphasized as much as it had been in pre-Reformation Geneva, and the duty of supplying and supervising household religious instruction was much more clearly now a duty of fathers.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the catechism classes were supposed to supplement home instruction because most parents were not well-prepared to teach their own children properly. They may also have feared that parents would continue to teach Catholic versions of these basics.

2.3 The use of catechism at home

Although their methodology is uncertain, it is likely that parents spent time teaching the catechism to their children at home. Regularly, the consistory convoked men and asked them how they instructed their children and wives in the Christian faith.⁸⁸ For instance, the consistory called Claude de Miribello and his wife Pernette for an interview in March 1543. There was a suspicion that both continued to perform Catholic rites in their house. On the contrary, Miribello insisted that he taught his wife and children to pray to God alone, adding that they did not pray for the dead or to the Virgin Mary. In turn, the consistory advised him to instruct his wife and children still further, even

⁸⁴ Ibid., 793. See also Selderhuis, "Calvin, Children and the Church," 59.

⁸⁵ Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 447.

⁸⁶ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 132.

⁸⁷ Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," 300.

⁸⁸ Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 447.

though his wife successfully recited the confession and the Lord's Prayer in the vernacular.⁸⁹

Another case took place in 1543 involving Mathieu Gathsiner, an inn-keeper native of Bavaria. The consistory suspected that he served fish to his guests during Lent. In his defense, Gathsiner said that he and many of his guests ate meat, but he also had to give the papists what they wanted. When asked to recite the confession and the Lord's Prayer, he could say only the latter in Latin and German. The consistory advised him to learn the confession before Easter and to take his wife and children to catechism services on Sundays. In addition, he should instruct his guests in the faith and have a New Testament copy available in the inn for them.⁹⁰ Three weeks later, Gathsiner appeared again saying that he was doing his best to educate his older children and he would later work on the younger – he had seven children. Two weeks later, he appeared again in the consistory. Though this time he successfully recited the confession and Lord's Prayer, they advised him once more to instruct his children in the Christian faith.⁹¹

Those examples illustrate the primary obligation of parents in Geneva, namely, to teach a pious lifestyle to their children. In order to raise a new generation of Reformed Christians, parents should personally understand the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the creed, and the catechism in their own language. Therefore, the use of the catechism at home was mainly a paternal responsibility, which required of the family weekly meetings for the discussion and memorization of the catechism, as well as set-aside times for prayer and biblical reading.⁹²

3. CATECHISM AND THE SCHOOL

Finally, I outline the state of Geneva's educational system before the Reformation, its difference in relation to Calvin's vision for the city, and the role of the children's catechesis at the new Reformed schools.

3.1 *Education in Geneva prior to the Reformation*

Schools were available in Geneva before the Reformation. The most important was a municipal school that aimed to teach boys grammar, logic, and liberal arts. It was located next to the Franciscan Convent of the Rive, in the middle of the city.⁹³ However, Kingdon says that it cannot have been

⁸⁹ *Registres du Consistoire*, 1: 190-91; Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 447.

⁹⁰ *Registres du Consistoire*, 1: 181-82; Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 447.

⁹¹ *Registres du Consistoire*, 1: 190, 205; Watt, "Calvinism and Education," 447.

⁹² See Anderson, "Calvin's Threefold Strategy," 58-60.

⁹³ See Henri Naef, *Les origines de la réforme à Genève* (Geneva: Jullien; Paris: Droz, 1936), 1:278-99.

a very big operation. The building was small, its staff consisted of one to three teachers, and though the city leaders assumed the responsibility for professors' salaries, they expected them to teach students free of charge. In addition, some private masters used to teach in Geneva individuals or small groups for modest fees.⁹⁴

Boys of merchant or professional families were generally taught how to read, write, and do elementary arithmetic. Some have pointed out that female teachers also instructed a few girls at that time.⁹⁵ Religion was perhaps not a necessary part of this education, but it surely provided some part. The basic text used in the college began with instruction in basic reading and moved on to memorization of the Lord's Prayer. Kingdon remarks that on feast days, the rector provided a special public reading of passages from the Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, and the lives of the saints. Every Sunday, this rector was also expected to take the students together as a group to church to listen to a sermon.⁹⁶ Moreover, it is likely that boys were trained for the priesthood at the cathedral church, and it was also possible for girls to get a formal education in the convent of the Clare Sisters, located in the middle of the city. Their religious training involved instruction in Latin, elementary theology, and liturgy.⁹⁷

None of these educational institutions offered advanced instruction. According to Kingdon:

Genevans who wanted instruction on the university level had to go elsewhere, most commonly to Turin if they wished to learn law, or to Paris if they wished instruction in the arts or theology, or to Montpellier if they wished to study medicine.⁹⁸

Formal education was not obligatory in Geneva, and only small numbers of children were enrolled in the schools. Kingdon concludes that "the great majority of Genevans before the Reformation were expected to rely on home instruction to learn the rudiments of religious faith."⁹⁹

3.2 Calvin's educational project for Geneva

According to Calvin, there were four offices instituted by God for the government of his church: pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons. The office

⁹⁴ Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," 296-97.

⁹⁵ Liliane Mottu-Weber, "Les femmes dans la vie économique de Genève, XVIe-XVIIe siècles," *Bulletin, Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Genève* 16 (1979): 391.

⁹⁶ Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," 297.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

proper to doctors “is the instruction of the faithful in true doctrine, in order that the purity of the Gospel be not corrupted either by ignorance or by evil opinions.” Calvin also called this order “the order of the schools”.¹⁰⁰ Supported by the Genevan authorities, Calvin tried to establish schools for all Genevan children. Everyone who had school-age children should send them to Reformed schools only, in order to protect them from “papist teachings.”¹⁰¹ To carry out this project, a college should be instituted:

But because it is only possible to profit from such lectures if first one is instructed in the languages and humanities, and also because it is necessary to raise offspring for time to come, in order not to leave the Church deserted to our children, a college should be instituted for instructing children to prepare them for the ministry as well as for civil government.¹⁰²

As to the structure, teachers, and rules of the college,

For the first, a proper place ought to be assigned for both doing lessons and accommodating the children and others who would profit. There must be a man learned and expert in arranging both the house and the instruction, who is able also to lecture. He is to be chosen and remunerated on condition that he have under his charge lecturers both in languages and in dialectic, if it can be done. Likewise there should be some matriculated persons to teach the little children; and these we hope shortly to appoint to assist the master... There need be no other school in the city for the little children, but let the girls have their school apart, as has hitherto been the case.¹⁰³

In 1549, the same order was reiterated in connection to the specific case of a man whose son was attending Catholic schools. The council ordered him to transfer his son to a place where the gospel was preached.¹⁰⁴ Despite the initial strong resistance to some of these changes, the Genevan laity eventually conformed to the child-rearing practices espoused by Calvin. By 1560, the council declared that no Genevan, under any circumstances, should send any young children to live in Catholic places.

This educational program in Geneva was divided into two departments. The first was the *Schola Privata* and it was divided into seven classes. The children of the sixth and seventh classes had to study a great deal of French and Latin literature. The second department was the *Schola Publica*, the precursor

¹⁰⁰ *Ecclesiastical Ordinances (1541)* in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 62.

¹⁰¹ Spierling, “Making Use of God’s Remedies,” 803.

¹⁰² *Ecclesiastical Ordinances (1541)* in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, 63.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Spierling, “Making Use of God’s Remedies,” 803.

of the Genevan Academy, that would later become the University of Geneva.¹⁰⁵ The children were supposed to be quiet during classes and work together. They learned and sang Psalms during classes and spoke only in Latin from the fourth class on. According to Selderhuis, “there was strict discipline, the academic slap was permitted and was regarded as being very beneficial.”¹⁰⁶ *The College de Rive* reopened and was relocated in 1544 to the former Franciscan monastery. The college provided instruction in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and French. Small schools also existed to provide more rudimentary education.

3.3 *The role of catechesis at schools*

Included in this desire for universal schooling was the understanding that the schools would also provide religious education. The schools had sermons on Wednesdays, and at the end of every week, three scholars were selected to recite the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Pitkin comments,

These efforts to provide universal schooling were motivated by the desire to hold good citizens and to prepare educated leaders and civic employees. Included in this desire was the understanding that the schools would also provide religious education. In fact, primers for learning such things as the alphabet, numbers, and basic grammar were, as in medieval times, often combined with basic catechetical content, such as the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed.¹⁰⁷

An example of how catechetical teaching was pervasive at schools in Geneva can be seen in the elaboration of the *L’ABC François* in 1551, a condensed version of Calvin’s catechism – but not in Q&A format – used to teach Reformed beliefs to the children.¹⁰⁸ Although Calvin was not even the editor of the primer, its main content closely resembles Calvin’s catechism. According to Rodolphe Peter, this booklet was an excellent summary of Calvin’s catechism adapted to religious education at school.¹⁰⁹ This primer was designed specifically for teaching children to read through catechetical content. It contained the alphabet, the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, a list of

¹⁰⁵ Selderhuis, “Calvin, Children and the Church,” 61. For a fresh scholarly account of the history of the Geneva Academy from primary archival sources, with special attention to the *Schola Publica* (1559-1620), see Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1995). This book is an adaptation of Maag’s Ph.D. thesis.

¹⁰⁶ Selderhuis, “Calvin, Children and the Church,” 61.

¹⁰⁷ Pitkin, “The Heritage of the Lord,” 180.

¹⁰⁸ For an English translation of the French text, see Rodolphe Peter, “The Geneva Primer on Calvin’s Elementary Catechism,” *Colloquium on Calvin Studies V*, ed. John Leith (Davison: North Carolina, 1990), 135-161.

¹⁰⁹ Peter, “The Geneva Primer,” 139.

prayers and biblical texts for several situations, preparation for the profession of faith, and elementary arithmetic.¹¹⁰ Yudha Thianto explains:

There were some booklets being published that contain basic instruction for young children to learn how to read and write. An example of such booklets is entitled *L'ABC François*. These booklets do not bear the names of the authors, most likely because they were not original works by an author, but only a collection of teaching material, as well as selection of biblical texts, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and several standard prayers to be used at school. These booklets also functioned as a very basic instruction to reading and writing for young children. While these works do not bear the name of any particular author, one can see in them Calvin's influence.¹¹¹

The *L'ABC François* starts with the introduction to the alphabet, which is to be done in one week. Once the children memorize the letters, they must then learn how to write those letters. After that, children are introduced to the Lord's Prayer with each petition occupying one line. As Thianto remarks, "These notes are meant to help the pupils to connect between this primer and Calvin's catechisms."¹¹² The next section deals with the Apostles' Creed, which is divided into four parts: the belief in God the Father Almighty; in Jesus Christ; in the Holy Spirit; and in the church. Next come the Ten Commandments, which have been divided into two tables and interpreted in light of the New Testament, as Calvin has done in his catechism. As aforementioned, this primer also includes a list of prayers, biblical texts for various situations, and a preparation for the children's profession of faith. As Thianto summarizes,

These are some variations of prayers before a meal and after a meal, in longer or shorter forms, morning prayer, evening prayer before bed time, a morning prayer based on Psalm 119, and a brief prayer before starting to work. These prayers are certainly intended to help the youngsters say the right prayers besides the Lord's Prayer on each appropriate occasion. In faithfully following the prayers they will then learn to pray constantly, throughout the day, in their vernacular.¹¹³

Given that children knew how to read, write, and had sufficient understanding of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Decalogue, they would be trained for their profession of faith. Using the twenty one questions and

¹¹⁰ For an outline of the *L'ABC François*, see Yudha Thianto, "Reformed Education From Geneva Through the Netherlands to the East Indies," in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor, David Sytsma and Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 493-95.

¹¹¹ Thianto, "Reformed Education," 490.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 493.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 494.

answers at the end of *L'ABC François*, the teacher would ask children about their comprehension of the basics of Christian faith before the children were allowed to partake in the Supper. Thianto concludes,

In all, the entire booklet could then function as pedagogical material – or a simple curriculum – to teach the young children to live as Christians who can also function properly in society... Geneva had ably shown that teaching the young people the most basic doctrines of the church would ensure the growth of the church.¹¹⁴

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Christian education stood at the center of Calvin's reforming work in Geneva. He believed that God's truth could only prosper when doctrine was passed on by adequate instruction. As a result, apart from a strategic program for instructing the unlearned, especially children, there would be no success in reforming the church. Calvin had in mind that children are God's people and thus should have the right to be taught the essential truths of the gospel as soon as possible. He came to the conclusion that an educational project involving church, home, and school would be the best way to teach children how to give reason for their faith, and incorporate them into the liturgical life of the Genevan community.

I have argued in this article that the Genevan Catechism was strategically used by Calvin to reach that goal. Following his return from exile in 1541, he required from the city leaders that religious education, strategically condensed in his catechism, must be implemented at catechism services on Sundays, in at-home instruction led by parents throughout the week, and in an adapted form at the new Reformed schools of Geneva. It seems that despite the initial resistance by the city, Calvin achieved his objective being supported by local authorities.

Although in a very different social context from Calvin's, the way he implemented Christian education at church, at home, and at school remains challenging for us today. Avoiding its intrusive enforcement by church-state leaders upon church members, and adapting it to each context properly, the interplay of catechesis and its threefold application still stands as a useful strategy for training youth in the faith today.

RESUMO

Este ensaio explora o Catecismo de Genebra de 1542/1545 a fim de demonstrar como ele foi usado e influenciou a Reforma na Genebra de Calvino. Diferentes estudiosos têm destacado a agenda educacional de Calvino

¹¹⁴ Thianto, "Reformed Education," 495, 500.

para Genebra, mas parecem desprezar o papel estratégico da catequese nesse processo. O autor argumenta que a catequese teve esse papel estratégico na educação religiosa de Genebra por causa de sua tríplice implementação nos cultos da igreja, na instrução doméstica e nas classes escolares. Primeiro, o artigo apresenta o uso e o contexto da catequese nas igrejas de Genebra. A seguir, discute como o catecismo foi usado nos lares daquela cidade. Finalmente, lança luz sobre o uso catequético do Credo Apostólico, dos Dez Mandamentos e da Oração do Senhor no método de alfabetização das escolas de Genebra. Em conclusão, o autor sugere que a tríplice abordagem catequética de Calvino para a educação cristã, adequadamente contextualizada, permanece desafiadora para a igreja atual.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

João Calvino; Catecismo de Genebra; Educação; Igreja; Família; Escola.