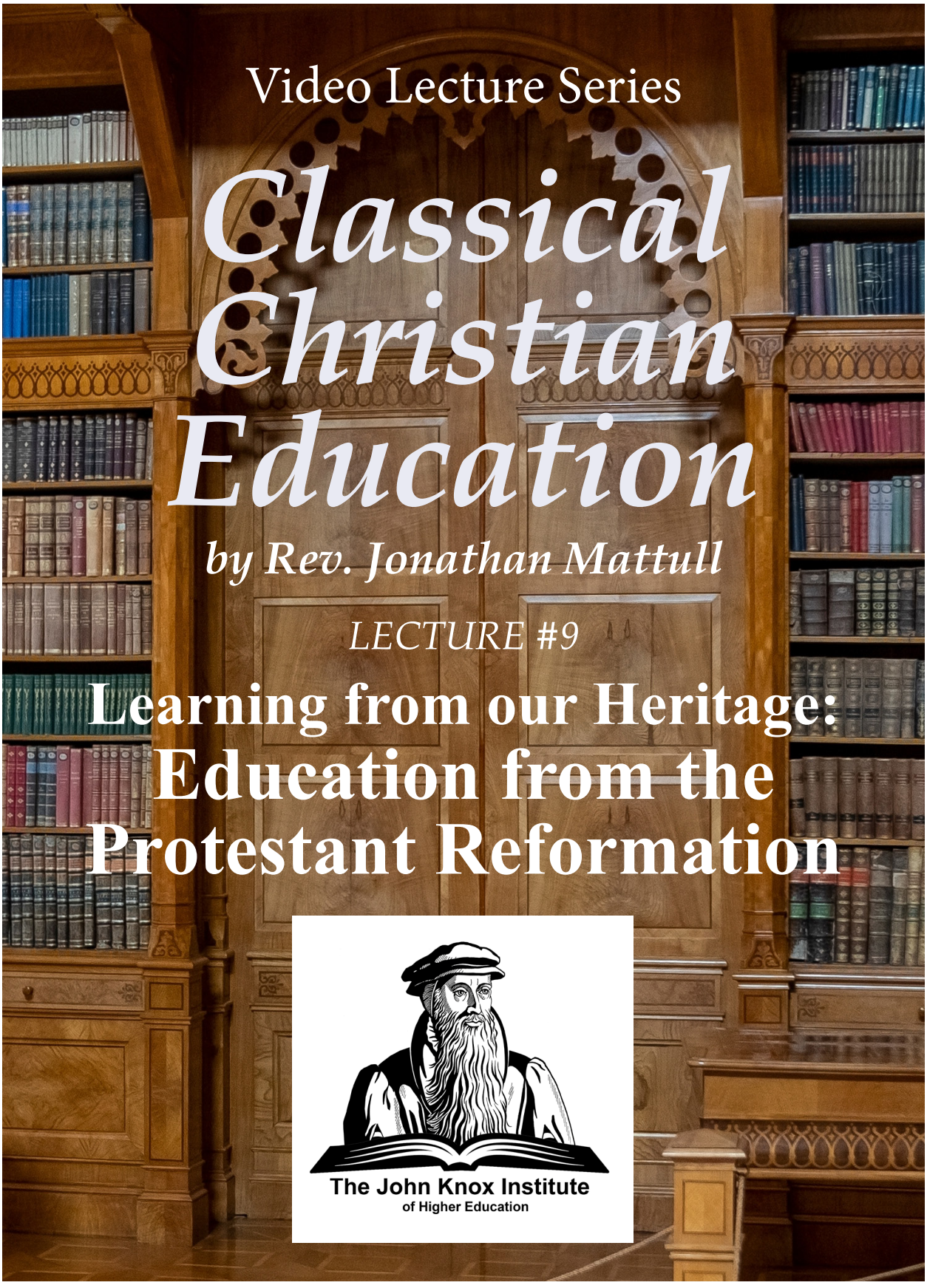
Video Lecture Series
Classical Christian Education
by Rev. Jonathan Mattull
LECTURE #9
Learning from our Heritage: Education from the Protestant Reformation
The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

John Knox Institute of Higher Education
Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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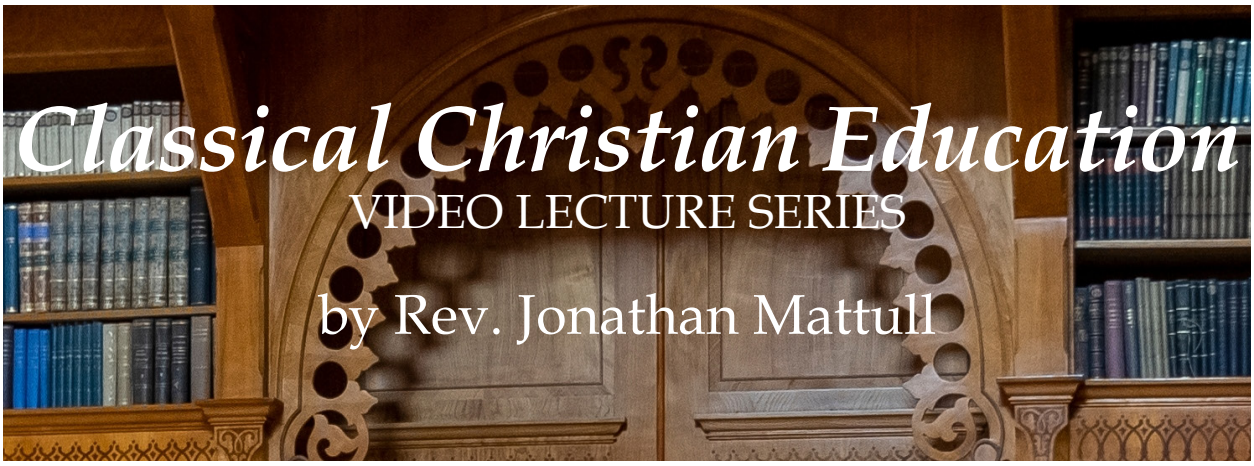

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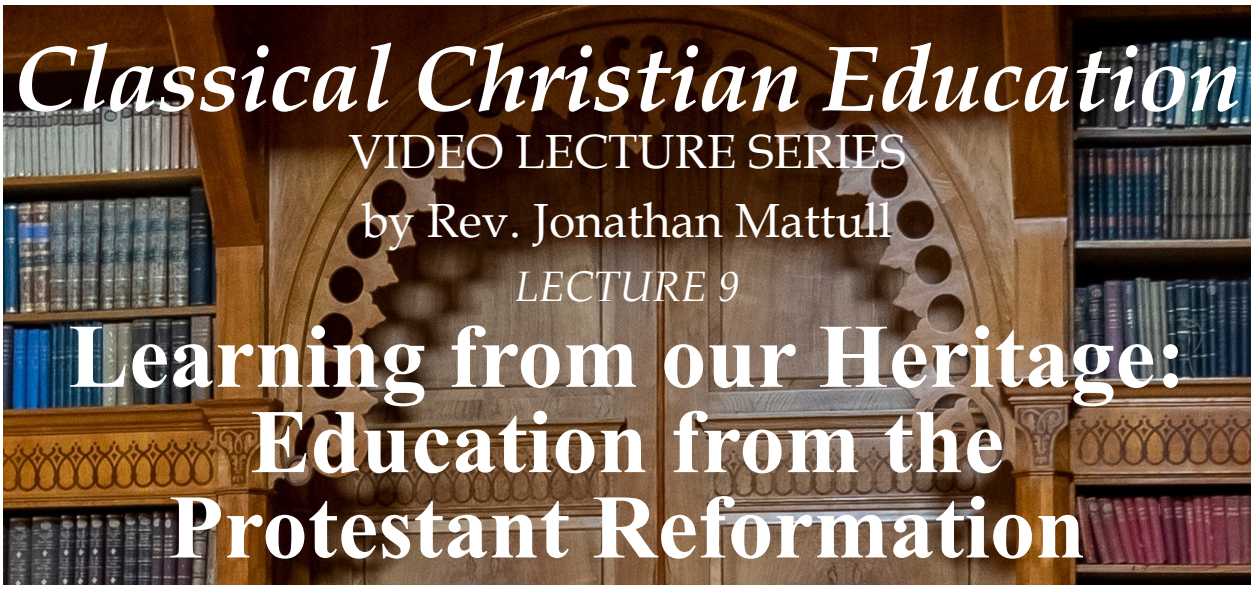

Introduction
1. A Shared Commitment Among the Reformers
2. A Purposed Plan By the Reformers

Introduction

We have surveyed briefly Ancient Classical Education. A deeper study of ancient education would prove helpful. But to understand our own context better, we take a lesson to focus on education at the time of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. We do this because the Reformation impacted most of the modern Western world. As Protestantism expanded to the New World, it carried with it the general approach to education. Moreover, the Reformers themselves inherited an approach to education that was already established throughout Europe, and likewise, would be modified by them in Europe. And so, all that the Protestant Reformation impacted would be impacted as well by their approach to education.

There is the temptation to identify the Reformation of the sixteenth century with merely a handful of doctrines: Scripture's authority, salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. These indeed are, to emphasize it, weighty and vital doctrines. And yet, far from only reforming the doctrines of faith and bringing those back into an alignment with the Scriptures, the Protestant Reformation is best seen as a Reformation of entire society, that is, the bringing of Christ's headship to bear on all the structures, functions, and offices of a people, of which biblical doctrine was preeminent. The Reformers agreed on their all-encompassing vision. Limiting ourselves simply to confessional statements, we find the Belgic Confession,[1] the French Confession,[2] the Geneva Confession,[3] and the Scots Confession[4] all in harmony on the national implications of Reformed. To be Reformed was not merely to embrace the doctrines of grace.

1 Belgic Confession—1561

2 The French Confession—1559, John Calvin.

3 The Genevan Confession—1536, John Calvin.

4 The Scots Confession—1560, John Knox, John Winram, John Spottiswood, John Willock, John Douglas.

Now, again, to emphasize this, the doctrines of grace are vital. But the Reformers were laboring for a comprehensive reform. And it's when this principle of the Reformation is understood, then there is no surprise as to why the Reformers so clearly focused upon education in their reforming work.

The Reformers did not consider Classical Education as absolutely essential for the existence of a Christian church. One could indeed be a Christian, and indeed, there were many, and are many Christians who have not been classically trained. However, they did not consider it something that could be thought of as merely an option. Instead, the Reformers saw the establishment of comprehensive programs of education as an important component—perhaps, even, we should say it this way—an essential component of a Reformed society, and thus, a necessary means for the thorough propagation of truth. Now, I say nothing in this lesson about the Lutheran Reformation, and the masterful work of Phillip Melanchthon.[5] This is doubtless a shortcoming of our lesson today. We focus, however, upon the Reformed wing of the Reformation, if you can call it that—that is, the Reformation as represented by the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism,[6] the French Confession, the Scotts Confession; and after the Reformation, by the work stated and held forth in the Westminster Confession.[7] People, with whom you are doubtless familiar, are included in this wing of the Reformation: Bullinger,[8] Calvin,[9] and Knox[10].

So, for our lesson, let's look at two basic points. First, *A Shared Commitment* among the Reformers; and second, *A Purposed Plan* by the Reformers; all of this, of course, with reference to education. First then,

1. A Shared Commitment Among the Reformers

Martin Bucer,[11] the Reformer of Strasbourg, who would later live and labor in England, wrote to King Edward VI of England to promote the Reformation. He wrote a book, which was translated as, *On the Kingdom of Christ.* And this was for the purpose of confirming and encouraging the king to "a fuller acceptance and reestablishment of the Kingdom of Christ in your realm," as he wrote. He proceeded to demonstration what the Kingdom of Christ entails, and how such should be embraced. He did so by proposing fourteen laws for Parliament to introduce, by which the nation would be governed for the cause and glory of Jesus Christ. Consider his eighth law in this work. It's titled, "The Civil Education of Youth, and Suppression of Idleness." In its explanation, he states that the Lord,

> …demands that not only every private person, but also every state and commonwealth, should educate, form, and train its children with utmost care, and adapt each of them to those skills and activities for which the Lord himself has created each to be most suited. Thus, each person, as a sound a useful member in the body of the commonwealth may contribute his share also to the good of the entire commonwealth.

5 Melanchthon, Philip (1497–1560), a German Lutheran Reformer, a collaborator with Martin Luther. He was the first systematic theologian of the Protestant Reformation.

6 The Heidelberg Catechism—1563, Zacharius Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus.

7 The Westminster Confession of Faith—1646, The Westminster Assembly.

8 Bullinger, Heinrich (1504–1675), was a Swiss Reformer and theologian, the successor of Huldrych Zwingli as head of the Church of Zurich.

9 Calvin, John—or, Jean Calvin, (1509–1564) – well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and well-known Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teachings.

10 Knox, John (c. 1514–1572), Scottish minister, theologian, author, and leader of the Reformation in Scotland; founder of the Church of Scotland.

11 Martin Bucer (1491–1551), was a German Protestant Reformer based in Strasbourg, who influenced Lutheran and Anglican doctrines and practices as well as Reformed Theology.

Furthermore, he noted:

> And the first heading of such a law ought to establish this, that in every village, town, and city, there should be appointed a certain number of men in proportion to the population. They should be men of outstanding piety, wisdom, and prudence, whose task it would be to be in charge of education, from childhood, through young manhood, in every jurisdiction, and to arrange that every citizen should give his children over to the learning of certain skills, and each one to the particular skills to which it seems that the Lord has made him best suited in the opinion of these youth directors. For everyone brings forth children more for Christ the Lord, the church, and the commonwealth than for himself.

Well, that's lengthy quote, but it's important to see that a chief Reformer arguing to the king for the whole of that nation, his argument was arguing for the embrace of this Classical Education, in every town, for all of the children. And Bucer was by no means alone in his proposal.

John Knox, who would later become known as the great Reformer of Scotland, also addressed England as a nation for such a cause. In his *Brief Exhortation to England*, he wrote:

> For the preservation of religion, it is most expedient that schools be universally erected in all cities and chief towns, the oversight whereof to be committed to the magistrates and godly learned men of the said cities and towns, that of the youth, godly instructed amongst them, a seed may be reserved and continued for the profit of Christ's church in all ages.

Furthermore, when Scotland, as a nation, had the opportunity to codify the work of the Reformation, Knox set forth a demand forth a demand for education along the same lines of reasoning. Composed in 1560, *The First Book of Discipline* noted:

> Of necessity it is that your honours be most careful for the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this realm, that either you now thirst unfeignedly for the advance of Christ's glory, or yet desire the continuance of his benefits to the generation following.

Now, a nation rightly prizes its chief commodities and natural resources. However, if the nation does not move to protect, develop, and further the use of these resources, the very resources themselves will remain unused, open for attack, and ready for pollution. So too is the Reformed faith.

Now, you'll notice a couple of things. Bucer and Knox were not saying this education is needed simply for the training of ministers. Rather, this education is needed as a foundation for all their children, and the schoolteachers—the masters of the school—would have an important hand in discerning the gifts and callings of their students, and help direct them to an appropriate calling. But fundamental is to see this clear point: they saw this education as an education for all. They were motivated preeminently for the kingly rights and the glory of Jesus Christ over all people; and secondarily, yet related, the benefits that come from Christ's kingly reign—the benefits being to society and to the church. This education serves the whole, not only of the church, but of society.

With reference to society, Johannes Sturm,[12] in 1538, stated the benefit of such schools. He wrote, "This institution of schools will be useful to our citizens, generous towards neighboring city-

12 Johannes Sturm, or Sturmius, or, Jean Sturm, (1507–1589), a German educator and Protestant Reformer who was influential in the design of the gymnasium system of secondary education. Sturm was generally regarded as the greatest educator connected with the Reformed Church. He implemented a gradation of the course of study, and novel methods of instruction, and his work shaped the practice of secondary education in Germany, England, and France.

states and people, necessary for posterity, for all the hope of the republic rests on the instruction of the youth." Well, as an aside, we've mentioned Sturm already. He was at the center of the Reformation's theory of education. He held close correspondence with the main Reformers. He was a friend, a close friend, of the tutor of Queen Elizabeth, and articulated what proved to be the shared approach to education by all Reformers. We'll consider him more in a moment.

But before moving on to the purposed plan, notice how the company of pastors in Geneva, where Calvin was, demonstrate the relationship between this twofold benefit—church and society. They write:

> But since it is possible to profit from such teaching, only if, in the first place, there is instruction in the languages and humanities, and since also there is need to raise up seed for the future, so that the church is not left desolate to our children, it will be necessary to build a college for the purpose of instructing them with a view to preparing them both for the ministry and for the civil government.

So, you'll notice that they have this commitment that education—particularly Classical Education, as we'll see—was important for both the church and society. And as such, it was important that all the children were so trained.

So now, we move, second, to,

2. A Purposed Plan By the Reformers

The purpose of the plan was ultimately to glorify God, to promote the crown rights of Jesus Christ. The mediate purpose, to that end, was the cultivation of wisdom, grace, and eloquence. Consider Sturm's simple statement—we've mentioned this before: "We have proposed that the goal of studies is a wise and eloquent piety." Sturm, a fellow laborer with Martin Bucer in Strasbourg, and a friend of John Calvin, was by no means alone in this purpose. The Reformers, as students in the humanistic training that they received, in turn, passed on such training to the upcoming generation, for the sake of educating and nurturing the gospel throughout society. It is this sort of education which is believed to provide the vehicle needed to carry on the message of Christ, and thus, resist the resurgence of Roman Catholicism and false religion. As one commented, "Only if adequate education were given to the people as well as to their leaders, could the Reformation movement be powerful to overcome the massed forces of Romanist error and political despotism." The entire curriculum adopted in the various educational centers of Reformed societies demonstrate the same.

This leads to the plan. We've seen the purpose, but what was the plan? Well, regarding the nine years allocated for boyhood education, Sturm set forth a plan:

> We see [he says,] of these [that is, the nine years],we have set aside seven for teaching clear Latin speech. The remaining two are sufficient for developing ornate style. The basic instruction in this style is passed on in these two grades. More correct practice and greater skill will accrue in those next five years, which we think necessary to free schools, and for a method of speaking suitably.

So, what we see is, Sturm proposes a plan for approaching education and promoting a wise and eloquent piety. And when a nation was presented the opportunity to reform an entire educational system in that nation, Scotland, Knox continued the Reformed commitment articulated by Sturm. Thus, *The First Book of Discipline*, directs the following:

> Of necessity, therefore, we judge it that every several kirk [or church] have one schoolmaster appointed, such a one at least as is able to teach Grammar and the Latin tongue, if the town be of any reputation. And further, we think it expedient that in every notable town, especially in the town

> of the superintendent, there be erected a college, in which the Arts, at least Logic and Rhetoric, together with the tongues [or languages], be read by a sufficient masters.

And again, he writes,

> Two years we think more than sufficient to learn to read perfectly, to answer to the Catechism, and to have some entrance into the first rudiments of Grammar, to the full accomplishment whereof, we mean of Grammar, we think other three years, or four at most sufficient to the Arts, namely, Logic and Rhetoric, and to the Greek tongue, four years. And the rest, to the age of twenty-four, to be spent in the study, wherein the learner would profit the church or commonwealth, be it in the Laws, Physic [that is, medicine], or Divinity. Which time of twenty-four years being spent in the schools, the learner must be removed to serve the church or commonwealth, unless he be found a necessary leader in the same college or university.

Now, this is all what Knox is setting forth for the church in Scotland when the nation embraced the Reformation. But what you'll notice is, he's setting up an approach to education that is comprehensive and intense, as we considered in a previous lesson, that would serve for the benefit of the church and the state.

Now we move further. Seeking to understand what their pathway was, we can think about Calvin's academy in Geneva. Importantly, the formal development of Geneva's academy came after meeting with Johannes Sturm in Strasbourg, in 1557. Calvin had at least two trips to Strasbourg: one, when he was exiled, spending 1538 to '41 there, and then again when he visited in 1557. And he spent lengthy times discussing educational problems. And of course, he had a massive ministry of writing—letter writing, receiving letters, and answering them. And all of this sets up the general approach to education provided in Geneva. There was the setting up of the private school, and the public school. And one tells us that in the summer classes, they commenced at 6 am, and in the winter, at 7 am, continuing until 4 pm, with a half hour for breakfast, and probably an hour-and-a-half or two for lunch.

Now, this included the study of the Ten Commandments and the recitation of them, being taught moral responsibilities in light of the Scriptures, but this approach was a very diligent approach to education. There was the private school and the public school. And in this private school, there were very careful studies in the Latin language, in the learning of literature, and the consideration of those Classic standards we've already touched on. There was the reading of Virgil, the *Epistles of Cicero*, and many other works, *the Aeneid*,[13] likewise, the works of, in later years anyway, Homer in Greek. And so, what happens is, the student who progressed through Latin, mastered that, would be moved then on to Greek, and studied the Greek classics, and all of these, of course, leading to a thorough mastery of their understanding of the Bible itself. They would continue their studies with studies of Math and Science, all of which would promote their reading, and thinking, and their ability to speak well. All of this was in Calvin's Academy. One writes of it this way:

> The private school was highly structured and regulated, even more than Sturm's Strasbourg Gymnasium. The public school was less regulated, and those who attended were often referred to as auditors, and had a freer life with less academic regulation than the private school. The curriculum of the private school insisted upon a thorough acquaintance of Latin and French, and in the lower classes, Greek. Class 7's basic text is the *Latin and French Catechism for Reading, Spelling, and Pronunciation*. Then followed a very Classical study, ending in rigorous teaching in the Dialectic. The goal in the private school was to produce a student who could read, think, and express himself well.

13 *The Aeneid* is a Latin epic poem about the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who fled the fall of Troy.

Although Calvin would have inherited much of this from his personal experience, it is essentially the flesh and blood of Sturm's proposals drafted in 1538. And so, it's to Sturm that we look, which provides us the basics, indeed the essence, of all the forms of education and approaches that would be embraced by the Reformation. One writes of Sturm in the following:

> Sturm's expectations for boys astonishes modern readers, who find it hard to believe that the seven year old often brought to his first year teacher without knowledge of the alphabet, were, by the end of that year expected to be reading Cicero's shorter letters.

Well, we could go on with that quote, but we pass on to look more particularly at Sturm's educational model, which provides us something of a pathway to reaching the goal. Now, it might be helpful to realize that when grade 9 is mentioned, that's the beginning grade. And so, one progresses toward the highest grade, which is actually grade 1. And this ranges from ages 6 and 7, to 16 or 17 years old. So grade 9 would be for the 6 or 7 year old, whereas grade 1 would be for the 16 or 17 year old.

So, a brief survey, grade 9, here's what Sturm says should be done. First, teach the letter forms, the compound forms, the sounds. Second, give attention to morals. He says, "Therefore, one should be instructed in the Catechism, and likewise, teach inflections of nouns and verbs." He also says, "In this grade, the shorter letters of Cicero ought to be introduced." All of this, taking place in grade 9.

Now, grade 8 comes to pass, 7 or 8 years old. "The first six months," he says, "should be providing grammatical distinctions." And he actually specifies. He says, "Two hours a day, this should be the focus." The second six months should be what he calls "Construing speech"—two hours a day, by which they translate sentences from everyday speech to Latin. Again, looking at the first six months and the remaining two hours—he broke up his day into four hours of instruction—there was to be attention given to Virgil and Cicero. The letters were to be analyzed, words inflected, interchanged, and again, combined, and a reason for each word sequence given. So there's a deep assessment of what these masters were writing. And the second six months, he says, in the remaining two hours were to be given time for reading and imitating poetry in meter. Now, notice this. This would include grade 8, 7 or 8-year-olds—focusing upon Cicero, and Virgil, and others, learning poetry, learning language.

We move into grade 7, an 8 or 9-year-old. They would review for one hour the length and quantities of words and syllables. They would read Cicero, particular works specified, for an hour. They would read Virgil, *The Aeneid*, and others as well. And they would work on composing, developing arguments in particular. Thus, four hours a day for the year—very focused, very intentional.

And then we move to grade 6, 9 or 10 years old. They would review all previous learning. For two hours, they would look at *The Aeneid*, and the teacher would expound the meaning and the use of language. They would look at certain poetry, and "illustrious," as he says, "passages from Cicero." Moreover, they would commit such to memory, making use of what were called "commonplace books." Think of this for a moment, as we just pause. These 9 or 10-year-olds are exposed to *The Aeneid*, to Cicero, memorizing the same, analyzing deeply the language. They're learning to read Caesar, and others, everyday of their week, as they met for class. Another hour of the day was for repeating the material that was for writing assignments. And so, they're learning material, and then they're using that material for writing. And then an hour for correcting the written works. So they would write; the teaching would come and assess that; and they would have

their corrections noted. All of this, again, focused upon the mastery of language.

We move into grade 5, 10 or 11 years old. They would now turn to learning Greek. So they, in a large degree, mastered Latin—not perfectly, but they're able to think through it, read through it, even write it. Now, in this grade, they begin their Greek instruction. One hour each day was to be given to grammatical rules. They would read *Aesop's Fables.* They would read Demosthenes, and they would return, of course, to Latin, reading Cicero, and he particularly specifies Cicero's work on *Duties*. They would read Virgil, and they would spend an hour, likewise, writing and composing with assigned books on Rhetoric.

Then we move to grade 4, 11 or 12 years old. Two hours are now spent to Demosthenes, with Cicero, and alternating that with Homer and Virgil, thus, further instructing them in Greek and Latin. One hour specifically focused on Greek grammar; another hour specifically focused on rules of Rhetoric, making use of the work by Cicero—11 or 12-year-olds focusing on these things.

He moves then to the next grade, 12 or 13 years old. This, which he calls "the last year of boyhood," and they would focus on dialectics and principles of Rhetoric. They would, as he says, "condense the dialectics from Aristotle's books, and give illustrations from examples of philosophers and theologians. Among the rhetorical treatises, a treatise ought to be read, which is sought out for the art of making distinctions." Particularly he would use Cicero's *Topics*. They would oppose speeches of famous Greek orators, looking at what one says, and what the other says, and comparing, and seeing how they develop their arguments. They themselves would compose, then, as students, speeches in Greek and in Latin. They would read the history of Caesar and others. And so they're immersing themselves, both in the language, but also the content that these wrote in. And so, the whole work is exposing them to these things.

He looked at grade 2, 14 years old, and he says "The goal of ornate speech is the principle and beginning of the art of apt speech." And so here, they've been learning these things, and now they're going to push further into rhetorical training. And so, students are given continuous practice. They're looking at Aristotle's arguments and rules regarding dialectics. They're looking at *The Dialogues* by Plato, and they're looking at Cicero illustrating further the method of practice, and the correct system of arguments. They make use of works by Cicero, particularly moving into his work, *The Orator.* And they're composing speeches in their mind, that is, mentally able then to speak at the moment, and then also in writing. And so, this great foundation that they've received from 6 or 7 years old is now helping them at this age to compose speeches modeled after, informed by the theory of the greatest speakers in such a way that they, as teenagers, would be able to speak well.

And then grade 1, 15 years old, "The fifteenth year promises," as Sturm says, "freedom to the students and opens the way to the highest Arts and the greatest disciplines, for after this, one ought to try to have the young men attain that kind of speech which is apt." Sturm says, "I call that whatever is literary, embellished by learning, worthy of a free man, and appropriate to the occasion and the person." And now, we're devoted to Aristotle, using his *On Interpretation*, and on the world. We now move to the Science of numbers, and thee look at astrology. We start to start to see the Quadrivium come into play. Demosthenes and Homer are now interpreted with greater care. Cicero's books on oratory are more thoroughly used. And now, there is leisure provided for personal writing and composition, at 15 or 16 years old. If brought though this and blessed of the Lord, they would have mastered these things, and have been made ready to serve the church or the state in a way that would truly prove a blessing.

Now, as we come to a close, we should notice that there's an obvious danger to such a form of

education. And this would, of course, be the abuse of that education. Calvin himself dealt with this in a number of places. One place in particular was his Commentary on 1 Corinthians. On chapter 1, verse 17, he comments:

> Eloquence is not at all at variance with the simplicity of the gospel, when it does not merely not disdain to give way to it, and be in subjection to it, but also yield service to it, as a handmaid to a mistress. For, as Augustine says, "He who give Peter a fisherman, gave also Cyprian an orator." By this he means, that both are from God, notwithstanding that the one, who is much the superior of the other as to dignity, is utterly devoid of gracefulness of speech; while the other, who sits at his feet, is distinguished by the fame of his eloquence….Hence the eloquence that is suited to the Spirit of God is of such a nature that it does not swell of empty show, or spend itself in empty sound, but is solid and efficacious, and has more of substance than elegance.

Further, on 1 Corinthians 3:19, Calvin writes:

> Natural perspicacity [intelligence and clarity] is a gift of God, and the liberal arts, and all of the Sciences by which wisdom is acquired, are gifts of God. They are confined, however, within their own limits; for into God's heavenly kingdom they cannot penetrate. Hence they must occupy the place of handmaid, not of mistress: nay more, they must be looked upon as empty and worthless, until they have become entirely subject to the word and Spirit of God. If, on the other hand, they set themselves in opposition to Christ, they must be looked upon as dangerous pests, and, if they strive to accomplish anything of themselves, as the worst of all hindrances.

Now, this lesson has included some lengthy quotes, and of course, though perhaps overwhelming when we think of the substance of it, a very brief survey of an illustrative approach to pursuing this purpose of serving the church and state with an educated people. Well, having surveyed the Reformers' commitments to establishing comprehensive education as an essential component of a Reformed society, we would do well to remember that such education was never meant as an end in itself. The goal of such education was the goal of Reformation, namely, to promote the glory of Christ as King and Head of his church—as King of kings, and Lord of lords. It's important to remember that these individuals committed to such ordered, measured, and deliberate means of impacting society are the same individuals who would call all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel. They earnestly exhorted men in the church to examine themselves. They implored believers to cultivate close communion with the living Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are tempted, in our day, to divide the two: a vital godliness, or a learned society. The Reformers did better, when they saw the combining of those was the best. I hope you glean this much. Our Reformed heritage presents a robust embrace of Classical Education, a thorough training in the Liberal Arts. This was an important means that the Lord used to cultivate the Reformers, Puritans, and Covenanters, and to provide us their writings and sermons which benefit us still. Doubtless there are times when you have read such a sermon or a work on theology, and set it down and thought, "How?" Well, preeminently because of God's grace, but we should also note, God's grace used their education to enable them to write clearly and in such weight as to promote our better understanding of the Word of God. We would do well to reclaim this heritage, joining together a thorough commitment to the vital teachings of God's Word in the gospel, with that union of a thorough education, mastering language, mastering thought, training in true virtue, by God's grace. And should the Lord so bless us, we are confident that we would seek the return of such a promotion of his kingdom as we've read of in the past, and this, not to the glory of the past, but to the glory of God alone.