

Loci communes, and the Role of Ramism in the European Diffusion of Calvin's Reformation by Irena Backus

I Introduction

Calvin, as Richard Muller noted¹, qualified the *Institutes* as a collection of *disputationes* and *loci communes* already in 1539². He intended his work to be just that: a collection of doctrinal commonplaces or themes which would save him lengthy digressions in his biblical commentaries. By doing this and by calling the work *Institutio* (*Instruction*) he indicated that it was a handbook for teaching Christian doctrine³.

By 1580 Calvin's work was considered the highest authority when it came to extracting *loci communes* (in the sense of chief chapter headings) of Reformed faith if Rudolph Gwalther's preface to the Zurich edition of Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Loci* is anything to go by:

Need I mention – says Gwalther – that illustrious and untiring instrument of the Holy Spirit, John Calvin, whose soul is now living in heaven but whose memory is a joy and a blessing to all those who are pious? As well as explaining most books of the Old and the New Testament in extremely learned commentaries, he ordered in his *Institutes* of the Christian Religion the sum of Christian doctrine into its parts and commonplaces so aptly that those who follow his lead, cannot err in transmitting it⁴.

On the initiative of Geneva and with Zurich's full approval Vermigli's *Loci communes*, which as we know, were compiled from the *loci* scattered in the Florentine reformer's Biblical Commentaries, were being diffused under the Calvin label. Only thus, it was felt, could the work exert the kind of theological influence that it deserved.

To return to Calvin, the number of translations, digests and summaries of the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* produced throughout the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries shows that it was viewed by the reformed world as a handbook suitable for all "pious believers" regardless of their intellectual level, from professional theologians to the barely literate. In order to reach as many actual or potential believers as possible, its editors and publishers augmented it endlessly with lists

of additional chapter headings or commonplaces, which took the form of highlighting of certain themes at the expense of others, not to mention the addition of references, including extraneous ones, and indexes. Names of Nicolas Colladon, Edmund Bunnie, Thomas Vautrollier, Caspar Olevianus and Johannes Piscator immediately come to mind. As it is not possible to examine all of these here, we shall concentrate on Piscator who used the *locus* or, as he called it, the aphorism with great success to diffuse Calvin's main doctrines throughout Europe using the Ramist method.

In 1978⁵ Olivier Fatio argued that this process of multiplying commonplaces was due to the fact that the *Institutes* were perceived as a difficult work and one to be read in a polemical context. This point necessitates some development. Fatio, who, it must be remembered, was the first to explore this field long before the publication of the bibliography of Calvin's works by Jean-François Gilmont and Rodolphe Peter, was not aware that the process of cutting up the *Institutes* into further commonplaces began already in Calvin's lifetime and that the 1559 Latin and the 1560 French editions contained Colladon's commonplaces, while Marlorat's were first added to the 1562 French edition.

The publication dates of these *loci* thus show that Calvin himself approved of this procedure, and that he viewed it first and foremost as increasing the pedagogical usefulness of his work. He says nothing about its intrinsic difficulty. Fatio's judgement therefore is not final. Richard Muller's description of late sixteenth century editions of the *Institutes* as an attempt by Calvin's contemporaries to elaborate on the method which they saw as governing Calvin's undertaking⁶ also requires some qualification. Gwalther's praise of Calvin as the authority *par excellence* on *loci communes* is not just a piece of rhetoric. Therefore the persistent addition of lists of *loci* to the work of an author who is considered an authority on the subject cannot be motivated solely by the editor's wish to bring out the meaning better. There must be other factors at stake. I argue elsewhere⁷ that Marlorat, Colladon and others were motivated firstly by the reading habits of all those who studied theology. Then as now, short summaries, subtitles and similar devices were seen as an aid to learning. The larger the number of these, the better the book was likely to sell. Secondly, different subdivisions of the text into a variety of themes made the book adaptable to a variety of doctrinal positions including those different from Calvin's own. Nowhere is this illustrated better than in the work of the Ramist Herborn theologians Caspar Olevianus and Johannes Piscator. The latter's efforts especially enjoyed a high measure of success in spreading Calvin's doctrines to a wide variety of Reformed communities.

2

Olevianus (1536-87)

Calvin's *Institutes* as *loci communes* was *a priori* very likely to interest theologians with Ramist tendencies. Ramus defined logic as the *ars bene disserendi* singling out as its basic unit neither the term nor the proposition but the "theme" or the *locus communis*. This entailed focusing on summarising arguments, according to pre-established rules. As is generally known, Ramus and his disciples replaced syllogistic reasoning by a series of definitions and dichotomies. The definition was to be as brief as possible and its job was to sum up the essence of whatever was being examined, for example, if examining man's knowledge of God, we could make the general assertion: «God is known to man».

The next step was distribution or *distributio* which consisted of the division of the subject into its principal compartments. Wherever possible the division or *distributio* was to be effected by a dichotomy which split the subject down the middle leaving two classes upon which the operation could be repeated, e. g. «God is known to man either as Creator or as Redeemer». The governing idea was to descend from the most general principle to the most particular⁸.

The next step in the above example might thus be: «Man's knowledge of God as Redeemer is either innate or acquired». The pedagogical usefulness of thus assigning philosophy and logic to the realm of discourse was self-evident, as any lengthy, time consuming treatise could be reduced down to its principal components. This procedure thus became for its advocates a method of reading and understanding of any text on any subject. Aristotelian logic, on the other hand, examined the soundness, completeness etc. of propositions, which often entailed lengthy formal analysis rather than reduction of any subject matter into its simplest components. Thus faced with the proposition «God is the Creator and the Redeemer», an Aristotelian logician would examine the relationship between the subject and the predicate. More specifically, he would enquire whether creation and redemption could be said to «belong to» the subject «God». Ramism as an intellectual movement was rejected in Geneva; Theodore Beza turned down Ramus' candidature for the chair of philosophy at the Academy six years after Calvin's death because he disagreed with Ramus' view of Aristotle, which «entailed disastrous consequences of stopping young people from studying logic and misleading them instead with high-flowing theories of dialectical precepts which have nothing to do with dialectic» (1st October 1569, *ep.* 34)⁹. Calvin's *loci communes* naturally bore no resemblance to Ramus' notion of *definitio* or *distributio* and the reformer made no claims to inventing a method as

Ramus did. Calvin used the term *locus communis* as synonymous with *disputatio* or subject put forward for consideration. This was the standard meaning of *locus communis* (*topos*) and so relegated it implicitly to the realm of rhetoric, as Melanchthon, Agricola, Cicero and Aristotle had done. For these writers the division of a text into *loci communes* was primarily a rhetorical procedure. Ramism, however, conflated rhetoric and logic and there was nothing stopping Ramist theologians and writers generally from imposing their own framework on the *Institutes* or on any other text.

The best illustration of this is Caspar Olevianus' *Institutionis Christianae Religionis Epitome* published in Herborn by Corvinus in 1586. Olevianus, Calvin's former student, was co-author of the *Heidelberg Catechism* with Zacharias Ursinus in 1563. From 1576 to 1584 he taught in Berleberg, then in Herborn where he died in 1585. The *Epitome* appeared posthumously. Olevianus set out the *Institutes* in a way which betrays his Ramist leanings in that he tried to make the scope and purpose of the work clear through a summary. He entitled his introduction neither "the preface", nor "the epistle to the reader", as Calvin was wont to do, but *Method and Arrangement or Subject of the whole work*¹⁰, thus betraying his basic interest in the Ramist view of *loci communes*. He describes the work as having a twofold subject: our knowledge of God, which leads to immortality, and our knowledge of ourselves, which is directly subordinated to the knowledge of God. According to Olevianus, the core around which the work is organised is the:

Apostles' Creed, as that with which all Christians are most familiar. As the *Creed* consists of four parts, the first relating to God the Father, the second to the Son, the third to the Holy Spirit, the fourth to man, so the author, in fulfilment of his task, divides his *Institutes* into four parts, corresponding to those of the *Creed*¹¹.

This is in fact an abridgement of the *Institutes* but one which omits all reference the work's more specific handling of ecclesiology and other matters and apparently divorces it from its historical context. Olevianus, however, was quite correct and faithful to the structure of the 1559 edition in seeing the latter as following that of the *Apostles' Creed*. He established parallels between each article of the *Creed* and each book and chapter of the *Institutes*:

The first article of the *Apostles' Creed* concerns God the Father, the creation, preservation and government of the universe, as implied by his omnipotence. Accordingly the first Book of the *Institutes* treats of the knowledge of God, considered as the Creator, Preserver and Governor of the world and of everything

contained therein. It shows wherein the true knowledge of the Creator consists and what the end of this knowledge is, chap. 1 and 2; that it is not acquired at school but everyone is instructed in it from the womb, chap. 3. Such, however, is man's depravity that he stifles and corrupts this knowledge, partly by ignorance, partly by wicked design and hence does not by means of it either glorify God as he ought or attain to happiness, chap. 4¹².

This short extract from Olevianus' *Method and Arrangement* suffices to show his specificity. It is interesting to note that at no stage does he reproduce Calvin's own summary or his statement that the purpose of the work was to teach the correct interpretation of Scripture. Instead, Olevianus prefers to stress the anthropology of the *Institutes* and concludes his *Method and Arrangement* thus:

Such is the arrangement of the *Institutes* which may be summed up as follows: man being created upright but, afterwards, being not partially but totally ruined, finds his entire salvation outside himself, in Christ, to whom being united by the Holy Spirit freely given without any foresight of future works, he obtains a double blessing, that is full imputation of righteousness which goes with us to the grave and the beginning of sanctification, which progresses daily until it is finally accomplished on the day of regeneration or resurrection of the body and this, so that God's great mercy may be celebrated in the heavenly mansions throughout eternity¹³.

3

Johannes Piscator (1546-1625)

Born at Strasbourg, Piscator¹⁴ was educated at Sturm's Academy before moving on to Tübingen to continue his education. He became professor of theology in Strasburg in 1573, and of philosophy in Heidelberg in 1574 as a follower of Peter Ramus, after having been converted to Ramism by Olevianus. He was made rector of the school in Siegen in 1577 and professor of theology in Neustadt-an-der-Haardt in 1578. He then became rector in Moers in 1581, prior to taking up a teaching post at the theological Academy in Herborn, which he held from 1584 to the year of his death, 1625.

Tireless in industry, Piscator prepared Ramist analyses of the New Testament (Herborn, 1595-97, with the Apocalypse only appearing in 1613) and of the Old Testament (1601-23), as well as a German translation of the Bible (1605-19). He followed it with the *Anhang des herbornischen biblischen Wercks* (1610), noted for its wealth of archeological, historical, and theological material. He left a multitude of text-books in philosophy, philology and theology, including the very popular *Aphorismi doctrinae christianae*. His significance for theology was his opposition to the doc-

trine of the active obedience of Christ, in other words the view that in addition to paying for our sins, Christ actively obeyed every article of God's law. He maintained that if the imputation of the active obedience was effective, man would be free from obedience as well as from the curse of the law. This eventually led in 1588 to an acrimonious exchange of letters with Theodore Beza, who opposed Piscator's view¹⁵. In general, however, Piscator's Ramism and his views on Christ's active obedience notwithstanding, relations between the two men were friendly. Beza openly acknowledged his debt to Piscator in his *Annotationes* on the New Testament, while Piscator appended a prefatory epistle addressed to Beza to the 1589 edition of his *Aphorismi*, which were also to be published in English in 1596 and in French in 1602.

The full title and disposition of Piscator's summary of Olevianus, which we shall refer to as the *Aphorismi*, are revealing of Piscator's Ramism with all the pedagogical preoccupations attendant on it, on the one hand, and of his attachment to Calvin's teaching, on the other hand. In the course of successive editions of the *Aphorismi*, the Ramist element became more and more pronounced without the text undergoing any substantial changes. The title page of the first edition of 1588 states:

APHORISMI || DE SACRAMEN - || TIS: EX INSTITV - || TIONE CALVINI EXCERPTI, || & ad
disputandum propositi in || schola Herbornensi: || Per || IOHANNEM PISCATOREM ||
ARGENTINENSEM, EIVSDEM || scholae Rectorem. || HERBORNAE || Typis Christophori
Corvini. || M.D.LXXXVIII. || [4]¹⁶.

This clearly suggests that Piscator began (immediately after Olevianus' death in 1587 and his own assumption of the rectorship in Herborn) a series of disputations drawn from the *Institutes*¹⁷. Once he extended the *Aphorismi* to cover the whole of the *Institutes* in 1589, the work went through at least nine editions between 1589 and 1619.

The *Aphorismi* adapted itself increasingly to its author's Ramist orientation purely through judicious addition of *marginalia*. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that the Ramism of the work did not become explicit until 1615, the date of the eighth edition, remaining implicit until then. I propose to examine Piscator's preface prior to comparing the *marginalia* in the 1594 and in the 1615 edition both of which were published in Herborn by Corvinus, like most of Piscator's other works¹⁸. I shall then examine the French¹⁹ and English²⁰ versions of the *Aphorismi* with the intention of throwing light on the translators' respective theological views and intentions. In his preface to Beza, Piscator declares that his work is to be viewed as a corollary to the deceased Caspar Olevianus' *Institutionis Christianae religionis epitome ex Institutione Ioh. Caluini*

*excerpta*²¹. Piscator reminds Beza that Olevianus' intention was partly «to provide a help for sound teaching of Christ» to German ministers (many of whom, he judged, were reluctant to read the complete work because of its length) and to render a service to the Herborn Academy, whose teachers could comment in a summary form on one book per trimester and so cover the sum of Christian doctrine in the space of one year²². This shows not only that the *Institutes* were taught at Herborn but also how they were taught. Intended as a basic textbook, Olevianus' *Epitome* was used in the theology foundation course at the rate of one book per trimester. Piscator assures Beza that Olevianus' lectures on the *Epitome* were much appreciated by his own students and that the work proved useful to many others.

After Olevianus' death, Piscator goes on to explain, he was entrusted with continuing the task of lecturing on the *Epitome* where Olevianus had left off, which amounted to six months' work²³. However, despite its undoubted merits, there was one function that the *Epitome* could not fulfil, and that was to serve as a basis for disputations. It was thus that Piscator easily acquiesced to his students' request to put in place theological disputations to enable them to make better progress. He explains that – «so that disputation-matter could follow some sort of order and so that the students could progress more rapidly» – he put together in aphorism-form the *loci communes* of Christian doctrine in the same order as that followed by the *Institutes*, on which he had recently finished lecturing with the aid of Olevianus' *Epitome*²⁴.

Thus Calvin's *Institutes*, once abridged by Olevianus, were then abridged further by Piscator into *Aphorismi* which were intended as disputation theses. However, as Piscator makes quite clear, it was a question not just of successive abridgements but also one of adaptation:

Why I put together these short aphorisms. I of course used Christian freedom in doing so, so that I did not excerpt them from the text [of the *Epitome*] word for word (which I could not do easily because the author's stile is too rich and flowery, whereas an aphorism is brief by definition) and I also sometimes added a sentence or two, which is not in the *Epitome*. However, there is complete agreement with the author's teaching according to my judgement and that of my brothers²⁵.

Piscator's theses are thus at two removes from the original text. The Herborn theologian used Olevianus as his source, not Calvin himself. Moreover, he both abridged and expanded Olevianus so as to adapt his text to the thesis form. Why did he call his work *Aphorismi* rather than theses or, for that matter, *loci*? The choice, as it turns out, was quite deliberate, and dictated by theological criteria. Piscator explains that he

preferred *aphorismi* because the word thesis evokes doubt in Greek, as shown by Aristotle in his *Topics*, who talks about disputants as positing (*tithenai*) something, which they would not assert to be true under any circumstances but which they could defend as if it were true. Piscator notes that to assert something as true is not a part of disputation but of demonstration according to Aristotle. A *thesis* as used sometimes by Aristotle also means an absurd tenet (*absurdum dogma*)²⁶. However, Piscator concludes:

But the propositions contained in these aphorisms are neither absurd (unless the Holy Spirit has not illuminated them so that they adapt to human reason) nor such that it is possible for a Christian to doubt them²⁷.

But then why are these propositions put forward as suitable for disputation? Is that not equivalent to challenging their truth value? Piscator's reply to this question is that using these propositions in disputation does not imply that they are false or open to doubt:

We are not putting them up for disputation because we doubt their truthfulness but so that their truth shines all the more clearly to our students while heretical objections and uncertainties which occur in young minds are dissolved and explained by the word of God, so that it comes about that those who are more learned are instructed further in the heavenly truth and those who are weaker are strengthened by it²⁸.

The *Aphorismi* incidentally raised the issue of publishing material intended essentially for the classroom, seeing as Piscator explains that he followed once again the trend set by Olevianus who intended his *Epitome* not just for his student audience but as a book that would provide a service to a wider public (*exteris quoque*):

If he judged that his *Epitome* could please and serve many people because it was short, then I am all the more allowed to hope they my *Aphorisms*, being more succinct, will make the same impact²⁹.

4

The French version of the *Aphorismi*

The implicitly Ramist form of the *Aphorismi* no doubt accounts for its translations into French and English which appeared in the late 1590s, long time before the formal and explicit subdivision of the work according to Ramist principles. We shall now examine the French and English translation in order to pinpoint their respective purpose and public. Did Piscator's *Aphorismi* become the European Calvin text book or were

other uses also found for it? The second edition of the French translation appeared in 1602 in Hanau. The translator was Jean Cavelle, whose initial version was corrected by Guillaume Hespel, himself a minister in the French church in Wetzlar near Herborn³⁰.

The Reformation had reached Wetzlar in 1525. At the time the cathedral church was simply divided into two parts, the choir being given over to the mass and the nave to Lutheran services. With this open attitude to worship it was inevitable that Wetzlar should become a city of refuge for French and other Protestants. This led to the foundation of the French protestant congregation in 1586 of which Guillaume Hespel was made pastor in 1597. The second French edition of Piscator was intended by Hespel as a help in appeasing a conflict between the French churches in the region. He says nothing about the issues at stake. Instead he vaunts the superiority of the second French version over the first. Not only it is based on a fuller, revised version of the Latin with an appendix by Piscator on Calvin's *Petit traicté de la Sainte Cène*, the translation too has been corrected by Hespel in person³¹. He claims that it was Piscator's wish that the second French edition be published so as to pacify the *calomnies* and disturbances of which the French church had been the object recently. Hespel adds that he too had refused to admit to communion a group of unnamed *troubleurs de nostre Eglise* who had upset the order of service and church discipline³². It transpires further that these "troubleurs" held in abomination all classes and synods of French churches in Germany and did everything to disrupt them³³.

By 1599 the conflict was resolved. Meanwhile Hespel had got officially installed as pastor «by the judgement of the theologians of Nassau» after being encouraged by François du Jon to enter the ministry³⁴. Now the first edition of the *Sommaire* was, as I said, the work of Jean Cavelle and dated from February 1597 just prior to Hespel's appointment. Its preface is addressed to Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, duc de Bouillon, prince of Sedan and Field Marshal of France. It begins with a very flowery *captatio benevolentiae* likening Bouillon to Roman emperors such as Vespasian who considered it their duty to make their subjects happy. Cavelle claims that Piscator's work cannot but profit France and so it is most fitly dedicated to Bouillon who has devoted his whole life to the protection of his country³⁵. He hopes to make Piscator and his work better known in France if his translation comes out under Bouillon's *aegis*.

Transposed into the French context, the scope and purpose of the *Aphorismi* does not alter fundamentally. It still remains primarily a manual, or a digest of the *Institutes*, designed to serve as theses based on the main ideas of Calvin's *Institutes*. Both Cavelle and Hespel, however, have to make an extra effort to get the work accepted in its new language

and wider context. Cavelle hopes to render it authoritative by dedicating it to Bouillon. Hespel for his part uses it as a pacifying document in an internecine dispute between French Huguenot Congregations in Germany.

5

The English version of the *Aphorismi*

The *Aphorismi* were predictably even more popular in England where they appeared in both the English translation of Henry Holland first published in 1596³⁶ and in the original Latin at various times throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. Several features mark out Holland's version from its slightly later French counterparts. Firstly, it sports Calvin's name on the title page while the French translators barely mention him. Secondly, the title page tells the reader exactly what the content of the book is. Finally, it bears a quotation from Hebrews 13, 9³⁷ which pinpoints its purpose, which is not to search for new doctrine when Calvin's still needs to be established. Holland also dedicates the translation to one greater than himself who happens to be Dr. Gabriel Goodman, dean of Westminster.

This short preface is followed by Holland's (longer) *Epistle to the Reader*. The importance of the dedicatee in the shorter preface cannot be underestimated here. Although Henry VIII first established Westminster College as a public school on a definite basis, it was not until the reign of Elizabeth, the school was brought into direct relation with Trinity College, Cambridge. By 1575, Gabriel Goodman (1528-1601), dean of Westminster³⁸, succeeded in introducing some novel provisions in the regulations, among them that relating to the admission of scholars, whereby it was now enacted that no boy should be admitted under the age of eight or allowed to stay after eighteen – limitations rendered necessary by the fact that parents would sometimes send their children when scarcely over five years old. Gabriel Goodman, having been a member of three Cambridge colleges in succession, and being known as a benefactor of the University, was, throughout his life, an active promoter of education and learning.

This commitment to education prompted Holland to dedicate the *Aphorismi* to Goodman even though the latter's churchmanship was far more conservative than Piscator's or Calvin's! Like his lifelong friend, Sir William Cecil, Goodman conformed under the Catholic Mary Tudor. Moreover, by accepting institution (at Cecil's presentation) to the rectory of South Luffenham, Rutland, on September 30th 1558, he gave further proof of his willingness to serve the Roman Catholic Church. He resigned this living by October 1562. When Westminster Abbey was refounded

as a collegiate church on May 21st 1560, Goodman was named one of the twelve canons, being installed with his colleagues on June 30th. Following the premature death of William Bill, Goodman was advanced to the deanery on August 13th 1561, and was installed on September 29th. He held the office for the rest of his life.

Holland's dedication of the *Aphorismi* to what we would call nowadays an Anglican High Church ecclesiastic is symptomatic of the wide range of population that Piscator's work could and did reach. Holland explains that he chose the *Aphorismi* «to help forwards this kinde of men, which do but sip and tast but little of holy religion»³⁹. He chose the work in question for the same reasons as the French translators were to do later:

I have spent some houres to translate this little treatise, which will give the willing mind in a very small time a synopsis or short view of the whole bodie of Gods holy truth, the pure worship and service of God. It hath done much good, no doubt, in Latin and I trust it shall by God's blessing and goodnesse profite some in English⁴⁰.

The *Aphorismi* were generally acknowledged to be an excellent manual not just because of their rigorously pedagogical slant but also because of their conciseness, the small volume reducing Calvin to his simplest components. The Ramist explicit divisions of argument were not added until 1615, so the treatise in its earlier versions was apparently not stamped by any "fashionable" intellectual methodology. It offered just what it claimed to offer: the essentials of Calvin's doctrine in the form of theses. This shows that Calvin's original style and presentation were perceived to be prolix and long and that they prevented the *Institutes* from being used as a textbook for beginners.

Holland, like Piscator himself and the French translators, says as much in his prefatory letter *To the Reader*⁴¹ where he situates the *Aphorismi* and the *Institutes* in the historical context of theology manuals. Holland stresses that the book is an abridgment of a much more important work, Calvin's *Institutes*:

A work so much commended for many years and embraced and published in all reformed churches and in all languages, Latin, French, Dutch, English etc., as no one work of any writer hath had the like acceptation and overall approbation. The learned professors and readers in open scholes haue yearly read ouer and commended this work unto their auditories as the Schoolmen in the blind age haue done the Master of the *Sentences* and others of late yeares Phil. Melancthon's *Commonplaces*⁴².

However, Holland is fully aware that no one ever thought to use abridgements of either Lombard's *Sentences* or Melanchthon's *Commonplaces* to use them in the classroom. Indeed, although these works were not necessarily lectured in their entirety, they were invariably commented and lectured in their original form. He therefore insists that Piscator's intention, as the author states, was not to stop anyone reading the *Institutes* in their entirety («the greate worke itself») but only to «excite and helpe slow wits to search into the fountaine whence these small braunches are deriued». He recommends his readers to use the «little booke but as a methodicall index to helpe and confirme memorie»⁴³.

6

Conclusion

The popularity of Piscator's *Aphorismi* in the greater part of reformed Western Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century shows that, despite the reputation of the work and its author, Calvin's *Institutes*, unlike Lombard's *Sentences* or Melanchthon's *Loci*, was not successful as basic textbook. Above all, its length seemed to act as a deterrent more than the intrinsic difficulty of the doctrines, the essence of which proved easy not just to summarise but to adapt to Ramism, which constituted undoubtedly the most effective pedagogical method at the time. Although, given Genevan predilection for pure Aristotle, none of the city's theologians ever adopted Ramism; Piscator's dedication of the *Aphorismi* to Beza suggests that Calvin's successor and the Academy were prepared to tolerate the method if it was practised with discretion and if it was used for propagating Calvin's thought as widely as possible⁴⁴.

Notes

1. See R. Muller, *The Method and Disposition from the Perspective of Calvin's late 16th Century Editors in the Light of Orthodoxy*, in "The Sixteenth Century Journal", XXVIII, 4, 1997, pp. 1203-29: 1215-6.

2. Cf. J.-F. Gilmont, R. Peter, *Bibliotheca calviniana. Les œuvres de Jean Calvin publiées au XVI^e siècle*, vol. II, *Écrits théologiques, littéraires et juridiques, 1555-1564*, Droz, Genève 1994, n. 39, 4, p. 61-4. Cfr. *Institutio*, Wendelin Rihel, Strasbourg 1539, fol. 1v, *Epistola ad lectorem* where Calvin sketches out very carefully the relationship between the *Institutes* and his hitherto unwritten commentaries. He is of the opinion that doctrinal *disputationes* and *loci* according to which the *Institutio* is ordered dispenses him from having to include lengthy *loci communes* in his biblical commentaries.

3. On the pedagogical function of the *locus communis* in the sixteenth century in general see also L. E. Loemker, *Leibniz and Herborn Encyclopaedists*, in "Journal of the History of Ideas", XXII (July-September 1961), pp. 323-8: 324-5.

4. *Loci communes D. Petri Martyris Vermilii, Florentini, Sacrarum literarum in Schola Tigurina Professoris, ex variis ipsius authoris scriptis in vnum librum collecti et in quatuor classes distributi. Accesserunt huic editioni ab ipso authore P. Martyre scripti nec antea*

publicati loci de libero arbitrio, prouidentia Dei, praedestinatione et causa peccati. Adhaec orationes siue conciones nec non Quaestiones aliquot et Responsa. Epistolae item partim theologiae quibus varii Loci explicantur, partim familiares, Tiguri, excudebat Christoph. Froschouer 1580; hereafter *Loci communes* (1580), f. 3v: «Quid autem de illustri illo et indefesso Spiritus sancti organo Ioanne Caluino dicam (cuius anima nunc cum Christo in coelis uiuit, memoria autem omnibus piis grata et iucunda est) qui vt plerosque veteris et noui Testamenti libros Commentariis doctissimis illustrauit, ita libro suo de Religionis Institutione summam doctrinae christianae per suas partes atque locos ordine commodissimo ita digessit vt in illa tradenda errare non possint quicumque hunc ducem secuti fuerint». Gwalther also mentions Wolfgang Musculus and Philip Melancthon in rather less laudatory, albeit still favourable, terms. See also C. Strohm, *Petrus Martyr Vermigli's "Loci communes" and Calvin's "Institutio Christianae Religionis"*, in E. Campi, F. A. James III, P. Opitz (eds.), *Peter Martyr Vermigli. Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation*, Droz, Genève 2002, pp. 77-104.

5. O. Fatio, *Présence de Calvin à l'époque de l'orthodoxie réformée. Les abrégés de Calvin à la fin du 16e et au 17e siècle*, in *Calvinus ecclesiae doctor. Die Referate des Internationalen Kongress für Calvinforschung vom 25. bis 28. September in Amsterdam*, W. H. Neuser (hrsg.), Kok, Kampen 1980, pp. 171-208: 171-88.

6. See Muller, *The Method*, cit., pp. 1227-9.

7. A book length study of the "*Locus communis*" as the medium of Calvinist thought in Europe, in progress. See also my short article, I. Backus, "*Loci communes*". Ein Medium der europäischen Reformation bei Calvin, Vermigli und Bullinger, in *Calvinismus in Deutschland und Europa*, Ausstellung des Deutschen Historischen Museums in Berlin (April 1st - November 30th 2009), S. Witt (hrsg.), Sandstein, Dresden 2009, pp. 97-103.

8. The most significant book on the subject is H. Hotson, *Commonplace Learning: Ramism and its German Ramifications, 1543-1630*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007. See also K. McRae, *Ramist tendencies in the thought of Jean Bodin*, in "Journal of the History of Ideas", xvi, 3, 1955, pp. 306-23; 310. Cfr. D. McKim, *The Functions of Ramism in William Perkins' Theology*, in "The Sixteenth Century Journal", xvi, 4, 1985, pp. 503-17.

9. *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, éd. par H. Meylan, A. Dufour et al., vol. x, Droz, Genève 1980, ep. n. 34.

10. English translation of his preface as reproduced here on <http://www.reformed.org/books/institutes/method.html> (consulted on August 16th 2008).

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. On Piscator's intellectual profile and theology see F. L. Bos, *Johann Piscator. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der reformierten Theologie*, Kok, Kampen 1932. Curiously Bos does not once advert to Piscator's *Aphorismi*, which have remained thus far unstudied, despite their undoubted importance as textbook. On this see Hotson, *Commonplace Learning*, cit., pp. 102-3, 118-9.

15. Cfr. Bos, *Johann Piscator*, cit., and *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, cit., vol. xxix, Droz, Genève 2007.

16. Bl.: D.; 4 VD 16, ZV 2820.

17. Cf. A. van der Linde, *Die Nassauer Drucke der Kgl. Landesbibliothek in Wiesbaden*, Wiesbaden 1882, pp. 238-9 which does not mention this series on the sacraments but which starts with the first edition (1589) of the *Aphorismi* in their full form.

18. Johannes Piscator, *Aphorismi doctrinae christianae maximam partem ex Institutione Caluini excerpti seu loci communes theologici per Ioannem Piscatorem. Editio tertia ab autore recognita*, C. Corvinus, Herborn 1594 (hereafter *Aphorismi*, 1594). Johannes Piscator, *Aphorismi doctrinae christianae maximam partem ex Institutione Caluini excerpti seu loci communes theologici per Ioannem Piscatorem. Editio octava, limatior*, C. Corvinus, Herborn 1615 (hereafter *Aphorismi*, 1615).

19. *Sommaire de la doctrine chrestienne ou Abrégé des lieux communs de la theologie proposez et exposez sommairement. Par Iean Piscator professeur en theologie en l'illustre escole de Herborne. Et traduits de latin en françois par M. Iean Cauelle estant la traduction en quelques endroits redressee selon l'intention de l'auteur et a sa requeste par Guill. Hespel, A Hanau par Guillaume Antoine 1602* (hereafter Piscator, *Sommaire*, 1602).

20. *Aphorismes of Christian Religion or a verie compendious abridgement of M. I. Calvins Institutions set forth in short sentences methodically by M. I. Piscator. And now Englished according to the authors third and last edition by H. Holland. Be not caried about with diverse and strange doctrines for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace etc. Hebr. 13, 9, Richard Field and Robert Dexter, London 1596.*

21. Published in Herborn in 1586.

22. «[...] nempe partim vt ministris euangelii per Germaniam aliquid afferret ad solide docendum Christum adiumenti, quorum plerosque prolixitate magni illius operis ab eis lectione deterreri iudicabat, partim vero et praecipue vt seruiret scholae nostrae Herbonensi, singulis trimestribus singulos libros summatim interpretando atque ita quotannis doctrinae christianae summam absoluendo»; *Aphorismi* (1594) p. 3.

23. «Sed quoniam ille in medio interpretationis suae cursu nobis per mortem ereptus et a Domino in scholam illam coelestem translatus est, ego necessitate scholae nostrae et officii mei ratione ita postulante, de voluntate fratrum quibus scholae nostrae cura tum erat commissa, Oleuiano defuncto in hac laboris parte successi atque ita paulo post obitum illius Epitomen Institutionis Caluini discipulis meis interpretari exorsus, sesquianni spacio (citius enim fieri commode non potuit) eandem auxilio Dei absolui»; *ivi*, pp. 3-4.

24. «Caeterum quum discipuli me rogarent vt ad maiorem ipsorum in sacrae theologiae studio profectum disputationes theologicas instituere non grauarer, equidem facili petitioni eorum locum dedi ac proinde vt legitimo quodam ordine res procederet illique citius ac plus proficerent, locos doctrinae christianae singulos, quum primum aliquem in Institutione interpretanda absoluissem in paucos aphorismos redegei eosque aphorismos illis ad disputandum proposui»; *ivi*, p. 3.

25. *Ivi*, pp. 4-5.

26. *Ivi*, p. 5.

27. «Imo interdum thesis Aristoteli dogma absurdum significat a claro aliquo philosopho in medium allatum. At hae sententiae quae istis aphorismis continentur nec absurdae sunt (nisi rationi humanae a Spiritu sancto non illuminatae), nec tales de quibus homini christiano dubitare fas sit»; *ibid.*

28. «Neque enim quasi de ipsarum veritate dubitarem, ad disputandum eas proponimus, sed vt ipsarum veritas discipulis nostris clarius elucescat, dum obiectiones haeticorum atque etiam scrupuli qui discipulorum animis incidere solent ex verbo Dei diluuntur et explicantur, quo fit vt erudiores in veritate coelesti plenius erudiantur infirmioresque confirmentur»; *ivi*, pp. 5-6.

29. «Etenim si ille iudicauit Epitomen suam multis gratam atque vtilem fore propter breuitatem, multo magis istud de aphorismis meis sperare mihi licet, quorum breuitas adhuc est succinctior»; *ivi*, p. 6.

30. Piscator, *Sommaire* (1602).

31. *Ivi*, pp. 3-4.

32. «[...] j'aurai mieux aimé obéir à Dieu qu'aux hommes et quitter la vocation que la polluer et profaner en receuant aucuns à la sainte table du Seigneur, qui avoyent présumé d'y fourrer en forçant et renuersant comme bestes sauvages et tauraux échauffés tout ordre, iugement et autorité ecclésiastique [...]»; *ivi*, p. 6.

33. «Il en est donc ainsi, c'est à sçauoir que depuis l'année 1586 en laquelle Dieu par sa grace planta ceste sienne Eglise estrangere par une faueur et benignité singuliere de nos tressages et treshonorez Seigneurs en leur dicte ville de Wetzlar, icelle ayant presque tousiours esté imserablement tourmentée de troubles et diuisions iusques à l'année 1599, par quatre ou cinq espritz enflez, iusques au bout, de leur propre sens et à cause de leurs

richesses, ennemis de la sainte union de nos Eglises et abominans l'ordre et l'image des classes et synodes détracteurs et Calomniateurs, iusques à dire de nos Eglises que tout n'estoit que papauté et seruitude nouvelle des consciences [...]; ivi, pp. 7-8.

34. Ivi, pp. 10-1.

35. Ivi, pp. 11-7.

36. [Iohannes Piscator], *Aphorismes of Christian Religion or a very compendious abridgement of M. I. Calvins Institutions set forth in short sentences methodically by M. J. Piscator. And now Englished according to the Authors third and Last edition*, by H. Holland [...], Richard Field and Robert Dexter, London 1596.

37. «Be not caried about with diverse and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace etc.».

38. He had meanwhile acquired (1559) the first portion of the rectory of Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire, to which he would add the second portion on November 25th 1569. On October 23th 1559, at Cecil's petition, the crown presented Goodman *sede vacante* to the prebend of Chiswick in St Paul's Cathedral, which he held to his death. See C. S. Knighton, s.v. *Goodman, Gabriel*, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007. Online reference: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10976?docPos=4> (consulted on 08.22.2008).

39. *Aphorismes* (1596), *iii v.

40. Ivi, *iiij r.

41. Ivi, A ir-A ijv.

42. Ivi, A ir-v.

43. Ivi, A ir-v.

44. I should like to thank Howard Hotson for his very helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.