

Apostolic Theology and Humanism at the University of Paris, 1490–1540

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Preface

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

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This PhD thesis investigates changing ideas about theology in early sixteenth-century Paris. Previous scholarship has addressed this development through a dichotomous model that pits humanists from the Republic of Letters against scholastics from the Faculty of Theology. In my study, this misleading model is replaced by a focus on how new ideas about theological competence arose within the University of Paris. The first major task of my thesis is to show how Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples developed a new programme of theological studies inspired by the apostolic era. I argue that Lefèvre read the works of ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite as a guide to a more original and pious form of Christian erudition compared to the Faculty's curriculum. He also involved students and colleagues in this project by integrating religious perspectives into his teaching of arts and recruiting students to edit theological texts, thereby shaping an alternative theological community.

Lefèvre's case illustrates the important yet limited role played by humanism in the reevaluation of theological competence. I argue that his scholarship resonates with humanist ideas about returning to ancient sources; however, the theology that he promoted was little concerned with textual criticism or philology. Moreover, I show that several advocates of the *studia humanitatis* in Paris combined their humanist eloquence with studies at the Faculty of Theology. I therefore propose that we must distinguish between the ways in which the expansion of humanist educational practices effected theology as a discipline, on the one hand, and Lefèvre's specific argument to revive a certain form of pre-scholastic theology, on the other hand. The final two chapters of my thesis explore how conflicts arose between proponents of apostolic or patristic revival and the Faculty. I show that the Faculty's attempts to restrain the spread of Lutheran ideas after 1520 brought them to defend a progressivist view of theology. Although Lefèvre's model of religious scholarship did not reshape the Faculty's curriculum, Paris became a centre for the study and printing of Greek patristics. By revealing the role that Lefèvre and his collaborators played in this development, my thesis illuminates the efficacy of the amalgamate that Lefèvre constructed between the pious imitation of the apostles and the scholarly examination of ancient sources.

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Transcriptions and translations

All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

For the sake of clarity, I have expanded '-e' to '-ae' where appropriate in Latin text and modified the use of 'u' and 'v.' I have also modernised the punctuation.

When citing fifteenth- and sixteenth-century books, I provide the date according to the Gregorian calendar whenever this is possible. In cases when books are unpaginated, I refer to specific sections using printed signatures or the text's internal divisions depending on which method refers most precisely to the relevant section.

INTRODUCTION

1. The quarrel over theological competence in Paris

If there is a single text that captures the hostility and spite of the early sixteenth-century quarrel over theological competence, it is Noël Beda's *Annotations* (1526) – an elaborate polemic against two Scriptural commentators, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Desiderius Erasmus. Beda, the Faculty of Theology's conservative syndic, scolded them for embarking on a subject for which they supposedly lacked the necessary training. In doing so, Beda argued, they did not only endanger the health of the discipline but directly contributed to the development and spread of Lutheran heresy. Beda condemned in the strongest possible terms the audacity of these *humanistae theologizantes*: mere humanists dabbling in theology.

Beda's epithet for Lefèvre and Erasmus has shaped the historiography about the early sixteenth-century controversy of theological competence since it captures well the perspective of the Faculty of Theology. For them 'theologian' was not simply a neutral term describing a kind of learned activity but a juridical status achieved through lengthy studies and confirmed by the papal *licentia*, the permission to teach. The concept of 'theologising humanists,' however, shaped the discussion of Beda's opponents in problematic ways. Those accepting the term have assumed that 'humanist' is an appropriate designation for the disciplinary background and learning of Lefèvre and Erasmus. Moreover, the idea of a theological battle between scholastics and humanists has brought into play a misleading set of dichotomies. The University's traditionalist scholastics are pitted against the innovative humanists of the Republic of Letters – a narrative fuelled by the symbolic significance of the year 1500 as the boundary between the old and the new.¹

This dissertation aims to overcome this problematic account by investigating how Lefèvre and his circle came to study theology and the ensuing clashes with Beda. I argue that Lefèvre's turn to studying and propagating early Christian theology in the 1490s is best understood within the context of disciplinary reform within the University. The first part of my study explores how Lefèvre began studying the Church Fathers in the 1490s, when he was teaching philosophy

¹ The most recent literature on this topic embraces these dichotomies. See Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance & Reformation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); James K. Farge, *Le Parti conservateur au XVIe siècle : Université et Parlement de Paris à l'époque de la Renaissance et de la Réforme* (Paris: Collège de France, 1992).

at the Collège de Cardinal Lemoine. Lefèvre particularly idealised the earliest times of Christian theology. He associated the apostolic age with the hermeneutics and the contemplative practices of ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, whom he considered an authentic disciple of Paul. Drawing on a wide range of documents including works of Lefèvre and his collaborators, University registers, and student notes, I aim to show that Lefèvre's approach to theology was informed by his philosophical teaching and, conversely, that he incorporated religious elements into his teaching. These findings provide insights not only into Lefèvre's intellectual activities but also into how his ideas became popular amongst a generation of students – the foundation of collaborations making Lefèvre's circle into the city's leading editors of Church Fathers and the authors of Scriptural commentaries and other theological works.

Lefèvre and his collaborators were active in a city where they could not avoid clashing with graduate theologians. In the second step of re-examining the quarrel over theological competency, I investigate how the confrontations between Lefèvre's community and the Faculty of Theology reflected two alternative perspectives on the theological tradition. Whereas Lefèvre, Guillaume Budé, and others idealised the apostolic theology of the very early Church, Faculty theologians celebrated a progressive view of their discipline. In response to the dissemination of Lutheran books and ideas after 1520, the Faculty took increasingly aggressive measures to retain control over theological publishing through censorship and heresy investigations. Through these measures, the Faculty simultaneously regained control over the printing of Church Fathers and used their influence to curb the anti-scholastic rhetoric that had characterised the earlier phase.

2. Lefèvre's theological studies

In a recent survey of the early sixteenth-century editors of Church Fathers, Lefèvre was grouped with Erasmus and Beatus Rhenanus as an intellectual working outside the University.² Yet much of Lefèvre's editorial work on patristic texts was in fact undertaken while he was not only immersed in a University environment – more specifically the Collège de Cardinal Lemoine – but also actively teaching and developing new pedagogical materials in said institution. To appreciate the novelty of Lefèvre's approach to religious texts, we cannot ignore his tenure at the University, nor what made him diverge from the conventional path of studies.

² Irena Backus, 'The Fathers and the Reformation', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, ed. Kenneth Perry (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 428–41.

Comparison with other long-term teachers of philosophy in Paris during this period helps us appreciate Lefèvre's unusual career. Examples include Thomas Bricot (lic. 1490), Pierre Tartaret (lic. 1501) and John Mair (lic. 1506).³ Like them, Lefèvre had become a master of arts (in the late 1470s) and thereafter began to teach. We know nothing about his whereabouts in the 1480s, but early in the subsequent decade, Lefèvre emerges as the author of printed textbooks and a leading teacher of philosophy at Collège de Cardinal Lemoine. What puts him apart from the examples just mentioned is that Lefèvre did not embark on studies in the Faculty of Theology.⁴ Bricot is a particularly intriguing *comparandus*, since both he and Lefèvre were affiliated with Collège de Boncourt during their own studies in arts and Bricot incepted in arts under the supervision of Pierre Bonnard, who was Lefèvre's teacher.⁵ The pattern holds true also for men whom we know Lefèvre admired. Gillis van Delft's editions of Aristotelian translations by Johannes Argyropoulos and Leonardo Bruni in 1489 and 1490 are the most immediate precursors to Lefèvre's project of bringing humanist philosophy to Paris. Van Delft received the license in theology in 1492.⁶ Among the notable educational and religious reformers of the 1460s–80s who inspired Lefèvre, Jan Standonck and Jean Raulin were both doctors of theology and Robert Gaguin was a doctor of canon law.⁷

Why did Lefèvre decide not to gain a degree in theology? Ultimately, we can only speculate about Lefèvre's motivations for not registering at the Faculty of Theology. One might think that finances posed an obstacle since there were substantial fees associated with studies in theology.⁸ In Lefèvre's case, however, this is not a likely reason. An account from 1512 tells

³ Lefèvre taught longer than the great majority of arts teachers, who only went through one or two cycles of students, each cycle being three and a half years. However, Lefèvre was the regent of fewer arts graduates than John Mair, Pierre Tartaret, and Jérôme de Hangest – at least among the students who sought certificates in 1512/13. See James K. Farge, ed., *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris: The Generation of 1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); James K. Farge, 'John Mair: An Historical Introduction', *A Companion to the Theology of John Mair*, 2015, 13–22.

⁴ Students of theology were formally registered with the Faculty only after six years of attending lectures on the Bible and the *Sentences*. We have no way of knowing whether Lefèvre attended such lectures. On the many stages of theological studies in Paris, see James K. Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France: The Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500–1543* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 16–28.

⁵ Lefèvre's studies in arts are attested in documents from the Picard nation, see Charles Samaran and Emile A. van Moe, eds., *Auctarium chartularii universitatis parisiensis IV: Liber procuratorum nationis picardiae in universitate parisiensi* (Paris: H. Didier, 1938), 183–84. A close comparison between Bricot's philosophical textbooks and those of Lefèvre has not to my knowledge been undertaken. Their use of paraphrases might indicate the common influence of Bonnard or other fifteenth-century teachers at Boncourt.

⁶ Their friendly relationship is signalled in Lefèvre's letter to Gillis van Delft from 1507 (a dedicatory epistle to Lefèvre's translation of *De orthodoxa fide* by John of Damascus) in Eugene F. Rice, ed., *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Related Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 161–63.

⁷ Lefèvre mentions his admiration for the monastic reformers Jean Raulin, Philippe Bourgoing, John Mombaer, and Jean Standonck in a preface from 1505, see Rice, 141.

⁸ On the student fees, see Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 28–31.

us that Lefèvre owned property in Picardy that he gave away to relatives.⁹ Moreover, if we consider Lefèvre's good standing at Cardinal Lemoine, in the Picard nation, and with prominent Parisian patrons of learning, it appears that Lefèvre would have had access to financial support had he needed it. Another explanation – namely, that Lefèvre simply was not interested in theology at this time – does not hold its ground either. We know that by the early 1490s, he studied different Latin translations of the Old Testament side by side.¹⁰ He was in other words conducting independent religious studies while teaching philosophy at Cardinal Lemoine.

During the 1490s, Lefèvre engaged in theology in two main ways. He studied the writings of ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, preparing an edition of Ambrogio Traversari's Latin translation, which appeared in 1499. Second, he began to introduce religious themes in his teaching at Cardinal Lemoine. Lefèvre particularly transformed the course on metaphysics into an exploration of how ancient philosophers approximated religious truths in their studies of 'the being of beings' (*ens entis*). These two projects overlap in ways significant of Lefèvre's theological interests in this period: his interpretation of both ps.-Dionysius's writings and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* promote contemplation as a means of gaining knowledge of God. They are, moreover, deeply marked of a humanist rhetoric of 'returning to the sources' – discovering Aristotle, the theologian, underneath the medieval commentary tradition, and unearthing the unique spirituality of the earliest Christians.

This early phase of Lefèvre's career is not only significant as a time of 'preparation' for his work as a 'Biblical humanist' – when he wrote commentaries on Paul's epistles (1512), commentaries on the New Testament (1522) and translated the Bible into French.¹¹ The educational setting sheds light on the formation of what is commonly referred to as the 'Fabrist circle.' Richard Oosterhoff shows that Lefèvre involved students in the production of textbooks as authors, editors, and proof-readers, thereby providing an 'apprenticeship' in the scholarly

⁹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 289.

¹⁰ An isolated but intriguing example of Lefèvre's early Biblical studies (ca. 1492–1494) is found in his treatise on natural magic, where Lefèvre cites the Bible drawing on two different translations by Jerome, see Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, *La magie naturelle 1. L'Influence des astres*, trans. Jean-Marc Mandosio (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2018), 29 and Mandosio's commentary on p. 264.

¹¹ On Lefèvre's scriptural hermeneutics, see especially Guy Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures* (Geneva: Droz, 1976); Guy Bedouelle, *Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d'Étaples: un guide de lecture* (Geneva: Droz, 1979). A lucid discussion of Lefèvre's exegesis compared to that of Erasmus is John B. Payne, 'Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples as Interpreters of Paul', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 65 (1974): 56–85. See also Irena Backus, 'Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples: A Humanist or a Reformist View of Paul and His Theology?', in *A Companion to Paul in the Reformation*, ed. R. Ward Holder (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 61–92.

work associated with the printing press.¹² In my thesis, I shall explore how this phenomenon intersects with an observation made by James Farge in his prosopography of Paris graduate theologians: a strikingly small number of Lefèvre’s students ever came to study at the Faculty of Theology.¹³ I shall suggest that Lefèvre’s students, following in his footsteps, sought alternative ways of developing Christian erudition, becoming editors of sacred literature and theologising philosophers instead of pursuing the traditional course of studies.

The second reason for studying Lefèvre’s emergence as a religious scholar in the University context relates to discourses on disciplinary reform. As an educational reformer, Lefèvre advocated increased attention to the Aristotelian primary texts of the curriculum in arts and argued that they could be profitably read in their entirety if only students had access to good summaries and translations. In other words, texts were at the heart of Lefèvre’s attempt to improve education in arts. There are clear analogies between this project and how Lefèvre approached theology – namely, by advocating a return to Scripture and the sources of apostolic theology. In the same way as Lefèvre recommended early Aristotelian commentators like Themistius, he suggested that one should strive to read the Psalms like the apostles had read them.¹⁴ By studying apostolic theology, one could restore the discipline of theology to what it had been like in the earliest generations of the Church.¹⁵

It has been claimed that sixteenth-century scholars preferred authors like John Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine ‘while showing virtually no interest in their comparatively “primitive” and “uncultured” predecessors, such as Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, and Hermas.’¹⁶ As I shall argue, Lefèvre’s case casts serious doubts on this thesis, which depends on a narrow view of humanists as students of ‘great authors.’ If we take his scholarly editions into account, we cannot but reverse the evaluation. Lefèvre edited writings

¹² See Richard J. Oosterhoff, ‘Apprenticeship in the Renaissance University: Student Authorship and Craft Knowledge’, *Science in Context* 32, no. 2 (June 2019): 119–36.

¹³ Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 76 n. 17.

¹⁴ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 193–94. ‘me contuli ad primos duces nostros, apostolos dico, evangelistas et prophetas, qui primi animarum nostrarum sulcis divina mandarunt semina et literalem sacrarum scripturarum aperuerunt ianuam; et videor alium videre sensum, qui scilicet est intentionis prophetae et spiritus sancti in eo loquentis...’ The apostolic inspiration has been very little discussed compared to other aspects of Lefèvre’s hermeneutics.

¹⁵ For the earlier history of ideas about the apostolic era, see Anthony Hilhorst, ed., *The Apostolic Age in Patristic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Today, the term ‘Apostolic Fathers’ refers to a specific collection of first and early second century texts. This collection was formed in the seventeenth century. See Bart D. Ehrman, ‘General Introduction’, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, Loeb Classical Library 24 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5–10. The precise details of the historiographical term ‘*Patres Apostolici*’ in the seventeenth century is discussed in David Lincicum, ‘The Paratextual Invention of the Term “Apostolic Fathers”’, *The Journal of Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (2015): 139–48; Clare K. Rothschild, *New Essays on the Apostolic Fathers* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 7–33.

¹⁶ Ehrman, ‘General Introduction’, 4.

by ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite and letters by Ignatius (1499), various ps.-Clementine works (1504), and the *Shepherd of Hermas* (1513). Lefèvre certainly did not reject them as ‘primitive’ and ‘uncultured.’ I shall argue that Lefèvre on the contrary took these early writers to be the best guides to a more pious and original form of theology compared to the scholastic tradition.

To reconstruct an ‘apostolic theology,’ Lefèvre particularly turned to the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, a Greek man whom Paul converts in the *Acts of the Apostles*. We now know that the Areopagite Corpus is a forgery from Late Antiquity. Already in the Renaissance, Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus raised doubts about the authorship of the corpus. However, many French scholars including Lefèvre and Budé remained convinced about its authenticity and were deeply engaged in studying these texts.¹⁷ In a treatise defending Plato, Cardinal Bessarion made a remark that resonated with French readers: ps.-Dionysius was the first Christian theologian, with the possible exceptions of Paul the Apostle and Hierotheus, ps.-Dionysius’s second, possibly fictitious, teacher. French scholars were divided about Bessarion’s claim that ps.-Dionysius was inspired by Plato – Budé and Champier agreed whereas Lefèvre fervently denied this thesis – but the appeal of pinpointing the beginning of the theological tradition was obvious.

Compared to the works of authentic Apostolic Fathers, ps.-Dionysius’s works offered a particularly strong methodological focus.¹⁸ In *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*, ps.-Dionysius suggests strategies for Scriptural interpretation and, furthermore, describes how one can gain knowledge of God through contemplative techniques. Another reason why the Dionysian corpus was so attractive for Lefèvre and Budé was directly related to the late antique forger’s concern with the *persona* of Dionysius: the author often mentions his close relationship with Paul and an array of other known and invented characters of this period, thus not only portraying himself as an authoritative voice but also providing Renaissance readers insights into the theological community of this period. These qualities of ps.-Dionysius writings help explain why ps.-Dionysius seemed to offer a viable alternative to theology as practiced by the contemporary Faculty of Theology.

¹⁷ On the continued vivacity of the myth of Dionysius the Areopagite in early modern France, see Jean-Marie Le Gall, *Le Mythe de saint Denis : entre Renaissance et Révolution* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2007).

¹⁸ The authentic Apostolic Fathers did not depict Paul as a theologian in the way that ps.-Dionysius does, see Helmut Koester, ‘The Apostolic Fathers and the Struggle for Christian Identity’, in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 10.

3. Scholastics and humanists

Studying Lefèvre and his circle involves navigating a long and fraught historiography concerned with humanist-scholastic relationships. It is well established that historians have often favoured humanists over scholastics.¹⁹ This is due to several reasons. One contributing factor is that historians tend to buy into humanists' claims about their own learning and their arguments against scholastics.²⁰ A related, more fundamental reason is disciplinary bias: historical education forms readers more readily appreciative of philological than dialectical methods. Furthermore, the persistent association between humanists and modernity seems to inspire a positive bias.²¹ The effects of historians' favouritism of humanists are clearly visible in the early twentieth-century historiography of French humanism. For example, Louis Delaruelle's intellectual biography of Guillaume Budé from 1907 described how the scholar singlehandedly assured the 'triumph of French humanism.'²² One main indicator of the supposed triumph was the collaboration between Budé and King Francis I to create a trilingual college in the 1530s – an institution that historians saw as a rival to the scholastic University.²³ Augustin Renaudet's *Préréforme et humanisme* (1916) offered a more nuanced account of the development of humanism in Paris, particularly illuminating its close relationship to religious reform movements. The narrative explaining the humanist turn was, however, predicated upon the 'sterility' of late medieval scholasticism – for which Renaudet blamed nominalism – and the idea of spiritual and ecclesiastical crisis that prompted individuals to search for new avenues of learning.²⁴ In his essay *Une question mal posée* (1929), Lucien Febvre sided with

¹⁹ The common prejudice of historians against scholastics is noted in Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance', *Byzantion*, 1944, 346–74.

²⁰ For a critical approach to humanist claims about humanist education, see Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Duckworth, 1986). On antischolastic discourses, see Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance & Reformation*.

²¹ On how the 'pull of modernity' continues to affect scholarship on humanism, see Elizabeth McCahill, 'Humanism between Middle Ages and Renaissance', in *New Horizons for Early Modern European Scholarship*, ed. Ann Blair and Nicholas Popper (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021), 22–24.

²² Louis Delaruelle, *Guillaume Budé : les origines, les débuts, les idées maîtresses* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1907).

²³ Abel Lefranc, *Histoire du Collège de France depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin du premier empire* (Paris: Hachette, 1893); The triumphant narrative is repeated in Gilbert Gadoffre, *La révolution culturelle dans la France des humanistes: Guillaume Budé et François Ier*, ed. Jean Céard (Geneva: Droz, 1997).

²⁴ Augustin Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494–1517)* (Paris: E. Champion, 1916).

Renaudet's account of scholastic theology – describing theologians as 'decadent' and shaped by a 'degenerated Ockhamism.'²⁵

One strategy for approaching humanism and scholasticism in a more neutral fashion harks back to the work of Paul Oscar Kristeller. One of the main advantages of Kristeller's narrow definition of humanism as a rhetorical enterprise was that it allowed him to construe the humanist-scholastic conflict as professional competition between two different 'branches of culture': philosophy and rhetoric.²⁶ In the 1990s, Erika Rummel developed this model to account for the humanist-scholastic conflicts about theology in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.²⁷ According to Rummel, Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus were the architects of the humanist concept of applying the tools of textual criticism to the Bible.²⁸ Opposed to this view were the professional theologians with University degrees, according to whom a completely different training was necessary for interpreting Scripture. In sum, the humanist-scholastic conflict just before and during the Reformation was fundamentally about differing definitions of theological competence. Rummel provides a convincing explanation for how the humanist-scholastic conflict changed over time, and specifically how it came to intersect with the Reformation.²⁹ As I shall argue in more detail below, however, her account of humanist claims to theological expertise is not suited to account for Lefèvre's explorations of apostolic theology.

A different strategy underlies the most impactful attempt in recent historiography at reversing the triumphant narrative of French humanism. James Farge argues that the best way of dealing with the traditional bias in favour of humanists is to focus more efforts on their opponents. Through studies of the Faculty of Theology and the French Supreme Court of Justice, the Paris Parlement, Farge therefore strives to render intelligible the mentality of the early sixteenth-century majority, which he characterises as traditionalist, conservative, and concerned with orthodoxy.³⁰ Beyond making the case that historians need to understand this

²⁵ Lucien Febvre, 'Une question mal posée : Les origines de la réforme française et le problème général des causes de la réforme', *Revue Historique* 161, no. 1 (1929): 41–42. On Febvre's idealisation of humanists and reformers, see James K. Farge, 'Text and Context of a Mentalité: The Parisian University Milieu in the Age of Erasmus', in *Editing Texts from the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 12.

²⁶ Kristeller, 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance', 372.

²⁷ Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance & Reformation*; Erika Rummel, 'The Importance of Being Doctor: The Quarrel over Competency between Humanists and Theologians in the Renaissance', *The Catholic Historical Review* 82, no. 2 (1996): 187–203.

²⁸ Rummel, 'The Importance of Being Doctor', 189.

²⁹ See now also the sections on the humanist-scholastic conflict as one dimension of the Reuchlin affair in 1514 in Erika Rummel, *The Case Against Johann Reuchlin* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

³⁰ On this mentality, see especially the introductory essay in Farge, *Le Parti conservateur au XVIe siècle*. Rummel also contributed to this effort through her study Erika Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics, 1515–1536* (2 Vols.) (Nieuwkoop: Brill Hes & De Graaf, 1989).

group, Farge's work reveals the effectiveness of sixteenth-century institutions in repressing reformers and humanists. He also shows that Francis I did not create an independent institution for the study of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew but appointed Royal lecturers that held a frail position within the University.³¹ Farge undercuts the narrative of Renaudet and Delaruelle of a triumph of humanism in the decades after 1500 by showing the considerable power of their adversaries.

Yet to really dismantle the narrative of 'heroic humanism' that Farge deplores, it is not enough to explore their opponents. After Farge's studies the situation seems to be reversed: the mentality of graduate theologians in the early sixteenth century are more accessible to historians than those of their local critics. We must find a way to tell the story of men like Lefèvre and Budé without overemphasising their achievements, success, or modernity. One necessary first step is to establish that the term 'humanist' is not an actor's category and that its meaning must be carefully established in relation to particular cases. To the point of the present investigation, I particularly suggest abandoning the term *humanistae theologizantes*, which not only originates in a hostile interpretation of Lefèvre's and Erasmus's work but also assumes a humanist identity that in Lefèvre's case is questionable. A better starting point and more accurate actor's category can be found in the concept of *scriptor ecclesiasticus* popularised by Johannes Trithemius (1462–1516). For the bibliographical catalogue *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* (1494), Trithemius composed over nine-hundred entries on Christian authors from apostolic times to the present. Many authors were part of the theological canon but he also included a range of predominantly secular writers, including Ermolao Barbaro, Marsilio Ficino, Giorgio Valla, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Johann Reuchlin, Conrad Celtis, Charles Fernand, and Josse Bade. Some of these authors had not written a single work about theology, which greatly puzzled the Franciscan Albertus Morderer. In response to Morderer's enquiry, Trithemius explained that philosophers and orators contribute in important ways to the Church. Philosophers help defeat heresies and errors; rhetoricians elucidate the figures of Scripture and add persuasion to theology.³²

Trithemius's wide concept of Christian erudition reflects a reality commented on by contemporaries: as important as doctors of theology were, other types of learning also served

³¹ James K. Farge, 'Fifteenth-Annual Bainton Lecture: Erasmus, the University of Paris, and the Profession of Theology', *Erasmus Studies* 19, no. 1 (1 January 1999): 18–46; James K. Farge, 'Les lecteurs royaux et l'université de Paris', in *La Création (1530–1560)*, ed. André Tuilier, vol. 1, Histoire du Collège de France (Paris: Fayard, 2006), 209–28.

³² Johannes Trithemius, *Liber de Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis* (Basel: J. Amerbach, 1494), 141r–v. Clichtove recommended this work to a Hungarian bishop as a finding list for theologians.

the Church. As Aurelio Brandolini noted in the introduction of his *Epitome of the Old Testament* in the 1480s, the pope did not have a policy of only consulting graduate theologians.³³ At the other end of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, it is clear that learning played a role in the religious lives of individuals. Learned practices were particularly embraced by the fifteenth-century spiritual reform movement ‘Devotio Moderna,’ which encouraged study of the Church Fathers as a way to deepen one’s piety.³⁴ This wider approach to theological learning, as I shall argue, helps explain why Lefèvre and other scholars associated with the Faculty of Arts embarked on theological studies. That they fit well into this paradigm is confirmed by a Parisian edition of *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* printed by Berthold Rembolt in 1512. An anonymous collaborator wrote an addendum, including Lefèvre, Bovelles, Guillaume Budé, and several other contemporary authors to be encountered in this dissertation.³⁵

4. Patristic scholarship in Paris

By approaching Lefèvre and his collaborators as *scriptores ecclesiastici*, we can discuss their contributions to religious scholarship without running the risk of overemphasising their commitments to humanist methods. Historians have increasingly noted Lefèvre’s limited knowledge of Greek as well as his lack of concern with the dating and analysis of manuscripts.³⁶ Unfortunately, these insights seem to have convinced scholars that Lefèvre’s editorial techniques and conceptions of historical texts are therefore not worthy of study. Many more studies explore Erasmus’s engagement Church Fathers, which is more innovative in terms of textual criticism than Lefèvre’s contributions.³⁷ The tendency to focus all attention on

³³ John F. D’Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 146.

³⁴ Nikolaus Staubach, ‘*Memores pristinae perfectionis*. The Importance of the Church Fathers for *Devotio moderna*’, in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 405–69.

³⁵ Johannes Trithemius, *De scriptoris ecclesiasticis additis nonnullorum ex recentioribus vitis & nominibus: qui scriptis suis hac nostra tempestate clariores evaserunt* (Paris: Bertholdus Rembolt, 1512). According to Rice, the selection of added names might indicate that the author was a French Dominican. See Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 287. Trithemius’s letter to Albertus Morderer was not included in the edition.

³⁶ Irena Backus, ‘John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*: Translations by Burgundio (1153/54), Grosseteste (1235/40) and Lefèvre d’Étaples (1507)’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986): 211–17; Irena Backus, ‘Renaissance Attitudes to New Testament Apocryphal Writings: Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples and His Epigones’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (1998): 1175.

³⁷ Some examples among a very great deal of texts: André Godin, *Erasmus, lecteur d’Origène* (Geneva: Droz, 1982); Hilmar M. Pabel, *Herculean Labours: Erasmus and the Editing of St. Jerome’s Letters in the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Arnoud Visser, ‘Reading Augustine through Erasmus’ Eyes: Humanist Scholarship and Paratextual Guidance in the Wake of the Reformation’, *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 28, no. 1 (2008): 67–90.

Erasmus is clear from John D’Amico’s study of Lefèvre’s pupil Beatus Rhenanus, which gives little weight to Beatus’s early experiences working with Lefèvre. According to D’Amico, it was only after beginning to collaborate with Erasmus that Beatus acquired the philological skills that allowed him to develop a historical understanding of Christianity.³⁸ As I shall argue further below, this evaluation is based on a lack of awareness of how Lefèvre conceptualised editorial work and its role in reshaping the theological tradition.

Parisian scholarship from the first decades of the sixteenth century is similarly left out in accounts of patristic publishing in the city. Pierre Petitmengin and Jean-Louis Quantin both explore how Paris developed into one of several centres of patristic publishing and dominated the genre in the 1560s. Both argue that scholarly merit played but a minor role in this outcome. Quantin also points out that an imprint from Paris was not a guarantee for passing the censorial committees in Rome; Paris was known for producing both orthodox and heretical books. Most important, Petitmengin and Quantin conclude, were the ruthless business practices of publishers, who swiftly reprinted any new books published by their foreign rivals.³⁹ Amongst the printers who partook in these competitions were Claude Chevallon and Charlotte Guillard of the workshop Soleil d’Or. According to Rémi Jimenes, their ambitious editions of the *Opera omnia* of Church Fathers including Ambrose, Augustine, and Chrysostom imitated the production of Johannes Amerbach and Johannes Froben, who were active in Basel.⁴⁰ Chevallon had continued to print Gregory the Great (1523) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1527) in the gothic style of Guillard’s first husband, Berthold Rembolt; however, it was the style and editorial rhetoric of the Basel printers that set the tone for Chevallon’s editions after 1527 and the many patristic editions printed by Guillard after 1537.⁴¹ The emerging narrative states that the Basel patristic operations, with ambitious printers like Amerbach and Froben and the expertise of men like Erasmus and Beatus, provided the model for the patristic edition of the mid-century.

Historians of scholarship and printing have in this way emphasised the influence of Erasmus and largely neglected to study the contributions of Lefèvre and his circle. This dissertation

³⁸ John F. D’Amico, *Theory and Practice in Renaissance Textual Criticism: Beatus Rhenanus between Conjecture and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

³⁹ Pierre Petitmengin, ‘Le match Bâle-Paris au XVI^e siècle: éditions princeps, éditions revues des Pères latins’, in ‘*Editiones principes*’ delle opere dei padri greci e latini : atti del Convegno di studi della Società internazionale per lo studio del Medioevo latino (SISMEL), Certosa del Galluzzo, Firenze, 24–25 ottobre 2003, ed. Mariarosa Cortesi (Florence: SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 2006), 3–34; Jean-Louis Quantin, ‘A European Geography of Patristic Scholarship in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 27, no. 3 (September 2020): esp. 324–331.

⁴⁰ Rémi Jimenes, *Charlotte Guillard. Une femme imprimeur à la Renaissance* (Tours: Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2017), 169–97.

⁴¹ Jimenes, 173.

contributes to remedying this one-sided picture of sixteenth-century patristic scholarship. By exploring how Lefèvre and his collaborators edited works of apostolic and patristic theology, I aim to shed light on the craft of editing in a milieu that had not accepted the view of the editor as a textual critic. How did they approach translations? What theological competence did they consider necessary for editing John of Damascus or Cyril of Alexandria? What criteria were used to select texts? To what extent were members of the Faculty of Theology involved in these projects? I approach these questions in two steps, beginning with a close investigation of Lefèvre's editorial techniques in *Theologia vivificans* (1499) in the first chapter. In the third chapter of the thesis, I discuss more broadly how Lefèvre and his collaborators published texts promoting patristic theology as an alternative to the curriculum of the Faculty of Theology.

One dimension of Lefèvre's scholarship that particularly resonates with the later orientation of patristics in Paris was his interest in Greek Fathers. Lefèvre did not often comment on this preference, which appears almost accidental: he preferred Greek Fathers not because they were Greek but because they happened to be early. Nevertheless, his inclination resonated with the growing enthusiasm for Greek patristics in Paris.⁴² As the series *La France des humanistes. Hellenistes* shows clearly, sixteenth-century students of Greek did not only, or even primarily, read Homer; among the 'authors transmitted' are countless Church Fathers.⁴³ The interest in Greek theology thus unites the early and mid-century religious scholars in France – a continuity that earlier histories have failed to acknowledge. Budé is the character best placed for illuminating the close links between Lefèvre's conception of apostolic theology and the interests of the emerging community of Hellenophiles. Budé's own contributions to religious scholarship have been largely overlooked in favour of his work on ancient law and economics. The last chapter of the dissertation argues that Budé not only shared Lefèvre's interest in the theology of ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite and accepted the apostolic dating of the writings. In Budé's influential Greek dictionary, he also speculated about the role of ps.-Dionysius – whom he considered to be the first Christian theologian – in developing a vocabulary for the discipline and sought to locate echoes of his writings in those of Gregory of Nazianzen and other Greek theologians. Budé's work on ps.-Dionysius was well known by patristic publishers and scholars of the 1560s. Budé furthermore shared Lefèvre's sense that apostolic theology and spirituality provided the best image for reform. In *De transitu Hellenismi ad Christianismum* (1535), Budé

⁴² Natasha Constantinidou, 'Aspects of the Printing History and Reception of John Chrysostom and Other Greek Church Fathers, c. 1450–1600', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 27, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 277–99.

⁴³ Jean-François Maillard et al., *La France des Humanistes. Hellenistes I* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Jean-François Maillard and Jean-Marie Flamand, *La France des Humanistes Hellenistes II* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

suggested that early Greek theology was the only tool that could help heal the conflicts caused by the Reformation. Neither Lefèvre nor Budé managed to effectuate a complete re-orientation of theological culture after apostolic ideals. Nevertheless, they shaped the quickly developing field of Hellenic studies in France into one that prominently featured early Christian texts.

5. Sources

To study the development of ideas about theology in the cultural and institutional context of the University of Paris, my study primarily draws on two kinds of sources: documentation from the University and discursive sources – including treatises, letters, orations, and textbooks – from this milieu. In the final section of the introduction, I shall make some general observations about my sources and the limitations I have faced in my investigation based on what does and does not survive.

The administrative records of the University are far from complete, but we have some registers from each of the major bodies of decision-making. This includes the four Nations that together constituted the Faculty of Arts. Minutes also survive from the three higher faculties: the Faculties of Theology, Medicine, and Law. Finally, some registers testify to the meeting of all four Faculties as the University of Paris.⁴⁴ Many of these documents have been edited and are useful sources for debates within the University and biographical details. For the present study, the registers of the Faculty of Theology have been particularly relevant.⁴⁵ I have also consulted seventeenth-century histories of the University of Paris, whose authors had access to further sources, some of which were undoubtedly lost during the revolutionary re-organisation of the University.⁴⁶ Further manuscript sources to shed light on University culture might yet be found in foreign libraries. In Chapter Four, I discuss a set of graduation orations from the Faculty of Theology (1510) that I discovered in the Vatican Library and an equivalent set from 1514, which was recently found in Prague.

⁴⁴ The records of the Nations' meetings as the Faculty of Arts in 1512–1537 are extant but only a few folios are transcribed in an unpublished thesis by Agnès Masson-Maréchal, 'L'université de Paris au début du XVI^e siècle (1512–1536), Edition des registres 12, 13, et 14 des conclusions des nations réunies, École nationale des chartes, 1984. I have not been able to consult this thesis.

⁴⁵ Alexandre Clerval, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de théologie de Paris, 1505–1523* (Paris: V. Lecoffre-J. Gabalda, 1917); James K. Farge, ed., *Registre des procès-verbaux de la faculté de théologie de l'Université de Paris : de janvier 1524 à novembre 1533* (Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990).

⁴⁶ Most notable of these are César Égasse Du Boulay, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis ... à Carolo M. ad nostra tempora ordine chronologico complectens*, 6 vols (Paris: F. Noel, 1673); Jean Launoy, *Regii Navarrae gymnasii Parisiensis historia*, 2 vols (Paris: Vidua E. Martini, 1677).

Direct evidence of how teaching was organised is scarcer. Few administrative documents survive from early sixteenth-century Parisian colleges, including the Cardinal Lemoine.⁴⁷ The situation is somewhat better for the major theological colleges, particularly Navarre and Montaigu.⁴⁸ A register of studies from 1512–1514, recently edited by James Farge, is a gold mine for investigating the pathways of students and teachers, particularly in the Faculty of Arts.⁴⁹ Student notes from this period are rare. A lucky exception is the library of Beatus Rhenanus in Sélestat, with notes from courses at the Cardinal Lemoine and annotated books bought during his studies in Paris.⁵⁰ Printed textbooks therefore often constitutes the best evidence for different kinds of pedagogies.

I will not say much here about the printed books that make up the bulk of my sources other than explain why this is the case. Lefèvre and his circle left behind little unpublished material like private letters, working papers, notes, annotated books, and other sources letting us peak ‘behind the scenes.’ In the case of Lefèvre, his itinerant life helps explain their absence. Lefèvre repeatedly changed institutions: transferring from the Cardinal Lemoine (ca. 1490) to St Germain des Près (ca. 1507), later moving to Meaux (ca. 1520), and he spent two years in exile (1525–1526).⁵¹ The circumstances of his scholarly work were not conducive to building a private library or archive. Furthermore, a letter from 1519 suggests that Lefèvre preferred to be known through texts that he had finished and published. Lefèvre explained to Beatus that he rarely wrote letters anymore: ‘since I do not want my private letters, which are rough and without much preparation, as is my habit, to be printed. I once noticed that this was done, and I did not like it.’⁵² Consequently, I have concluded that in order to learn about Lefèvre’s editorial methods and scholarship, it is most conducive to trace back elements in the finished, published product.

⁴⁷ An exception is James K. Farge, ed., ‘La réforme du Collège du Cardinal-Lemoine (1544)’, in *Le Parti conservateur au XVIe siècle : Université et Parlement de Paris à l’époque de la Renaissance et de la Réforme* (Paris: Collège de France, 1992), 151–73.

⁴⁸ A very useful finding list is Marie-Madeleine Compère, ed., *Les Collèges français 16e–18e siècle Répertoire 3 - Paris* (Paris: INRP, 2002).

⁴⁹ Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*.

⁵⁰ Some of Beatus’s annotated textbooks are listed in an appendix to Richard J. Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture: University and Print in the Circle of Lefèvre d’Étaples*, Oxford-Warburg Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁵¹ Jonathan A. Reid, *King’s Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 341–45.

⁵² ‘Tam rarus nunc scribo epistolas, et tam dissuetus, ut in albo sim obscurorum virorum. Unum etiam est quod me continet ab scribendo, quia nolim ullo modo literas meas familiares, incultas et nullo apparatu, ut scribere soleo, excudi: quod animadverti aliquando factum, quod et mihi displicuit.’ Aimé Louis Herminjard, ed., *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française : recueillie et publiée avec d’autres lettres relatives à la réforme et des notes historiques et biographiques*, vol. 1 (Geneva: H. Georg, 1866), 44–45. On Lefèvre’s surviving autograph letters, see Stéphane Toussaint, ‘Deux autographes de Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples et quelques précisions bibliographiques’, *Accademia (Société Marsile Ficini)*, no. XVII (2015): 117–22.

Some scholars discussed in this thesis did leave behind manuscripts. Josse Clichtove preserved some drafts and sermons in manuscript form.⁵³ Guillaume Budé's impressive library and system of annotations can be partly reconstructed despite the dispersion of individual items between libraries and private collectors. Annotated books and notebooks survive, allowing us to trace cross-references within his library.⁵⁴ Others gathered materials for preservation, which were later destroyed. For example, Charles de Bovelles kept a large number of unpublished manuscripts in Noyon. These were likely destroyed alongside Bovelles's other possessions in a fire that devastated the town in 1552. If he managed to save some books, these disappeared later, plausibly in the frequent military raids of the Carthusian monastery where Bovelles was buried in 1566/67.⁵⁵ In another case, we can pinpoint the disappearance of manuscript evidence even more precisely. A volume containing correspondence between the Benedictine Charles Fernand, Budé, Bovelles, and many other characters of interest was last seen by Dom Jean Colomb in 1765 at Abbey Saint-Vincent in Mans.⁵⁶ The monastery's collections were dispersed during the revolution and the volume has not resurfaced.⁵⁷

Revolution, fires, and wars in France thus destroyed material highly relevant to my project. Much of the important evidence of Lefèvre's teaching survived in German areas – the abovementioned library of Beatus Rhenanus and the correspondence of Johannes Amerbach with his two older sons who studied in Paris. The letters between the erudite printer and his sons provide unique insights into student life in Paris, the alternative pedagogies available, and the circle of students associated with Lefèvre. Were German humanists of this generation wealthier and more inclined to collecting than their French colleagues? Or did their communities remain more committed to maintaining the collections? Answering these questions would require a whole different investigation. Suffice to say that unlike the Amerbachs, the Paris-based printers and booksellers working with humanists in the early sixteenth century did not assemble archives. Although some, such as the Estiennes, built a comparable printing dynasty we encounter them, along with Wolfgang Hopyl, Jean Petit, and

⁵³ This manuscript was well investigated by Jean-Pierre Massaut, *Critique et tradition à la veille de la réforme en France : étude suivie de textes inédits traduits et annotés* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974).

⁵⁴ Budé's notebooks are in a private collection but have been made available to some researchers. Better reproductions (than the single microfilm at IRHT in Paris) or, in the best case, a reliable transcription would greatly improve accessibility.

⁵⁵ Charles de Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles : édition critique, introduction et commentaire du ms. 1134 de la Bibliothèque de l'Université de Paris*, ed. Jean Claude Margolin (Paris: H. Champion, 2002), xxxiii–xxxv.

⁵⁶ Dom Jean Colomb, 'Mémoires pour servir de supplément et de corrélatif aux écrivains qui ont parlé de Charles Fernand', *Suite de la Clef ou Journal historique sur les matières du tems*, 1765, 12.

⁵⁷ On the dispersion of the library, see Didier Travier, 'Les manuscrits de la bibliothèque de l'abbaye Saint-Vincent au XVIIIe siècle', *La province du Maine* 19 (2006): 359–76.

Josse Bade mainly in notarial documents, occasional letters, and very occasional left-overs from the printing process.⁵⁸ Like Lefèvre, these are men known primarily through their trace in print.

To conclude, my thesis will draw on a wide range of sources from the University milieu, from official records of the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Arts to academic orations and student notebooks. Based on this evidence, I shall argue that the conflict over theological competence was not only a scholarly problem but one closely related to curricula, pedagogy, and students' pathways through the University of Paris. Before exploring the educational context, however, I shall first discuss how Lefèvre emerged as a religious scholar in the 1490s. I will do so by dissecting a single printed book – namely, his edition of ps.-Dionysius's writings, which is equally revealing of Lefèvre's scholarly methods and his vision for a different theological culture.

⁵⁸ Philippe Renouard, *Documents sur les imprimeurs, libraires: cartiers, graveurs, fondeurs de lettres, relieurs, doreurs de livres, faiseurs de fermoirs, enlumineurs, parcheminiers et papetiers ayant exercé à Paris de 1450 à 1600*, Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Île-de-France (Paris: H. Champion, 1901); For a manuscript used by Henri Estienne, see Peter Way, 'Jehan de Mouveaux's "Primum Exemplar" A Model Copy Made for Henri Estienne's 1512 Edition of Eusebius' Chronicon', *Quaerendo* 32, no. 1–2 (1 January 2002): 60–98.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING APOSTOLIC THEOLOGY

1. *Theologia vivificans* (1499)

Lefèvre made his debut as a patristic editor with *Theologia vivificans*, printed in 1499. This volume contained Latin translations of works by ps.-Dionysius, and letters by Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp.¹ *Theologia vivificans* is especially apt as a starting point of this dissertation. First, it contains Lefèvre’s most programmatic statements about the nature and potential of apostolic theology – the foundation of various theological projects among Lefèvre’s students and controversy with graduates of the Faculty of Theology explored in subsequent chapters. Second, this edition allows us to gain particularly deep insights into Lefèvre’s scholarly methods because the medieval Latin reception of ps.-Dionysius is well explored; consequently, we are well placed to locate the tools Lefèvre used in preparing the text.

Theologia vivificans marked Lefèvre’s transition from focusing on textbook production towards also publishing theological writings.² In this area, Lefèvre displayed even more zeal than he had when producing books for the use of students. He described editing pious texts as a vocation: a substitute for joining a monastery, which his health prevented him from doing.³ Despite Lefèvre’s high valuation of editing and long career in this field, scholarship has hitherto neglected to study his editorial methods.⁴ The present chapter aims to fill this gap by scrutinising Lefèvre’s early edition of writings attributed to the apostolic era. I shall examine the revised translation, the woodcut diagrams, and the scholia of *Theologia vivificans*. Lefèvre did not clearly declare what changes he made to the text or exactly what materials he consulted;

¹ Dionysius the Areopagite and Saint Ignatius, *Theologia vivificans. Cibus solidus. Dionysii caelestis Hierarchia, divina nomina, mystica Theologia, undecim epistolæ*, ed. Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples, 1st ed. (Paris: J. Higman and W. Hopyl, 1499). An indispensable resource for the relevant bibliography and informative notes is Eugene F. Rice, ed., *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples and Related Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972). See also Eugene F. Rice, ‘Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples and the Medieval Christian Mystics’, *Florilegium Historiale: Essays Presented to Wallace K. Ferguson*, 1971, 90–124; Eugene F. Rice, ‘The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity: Lefèvre d’Étaples and his Circle’, *Studies in the Renaissance* 9 (1962): 126–60.

² On the involvement of Lefèvre’s students in these publishing projects, see Oosterhoff, ‘Apprenticeship in the Renaissance University’.

³ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 142. I discuss this concept more fully in Chapter Three, section 2.a.

⁴ Irena Backus has studied how Lefèvre motivated editions of apocryphal texts, see Backus, ‘Renaissance Attitudes to New Testament Apocryphal Writings’.

as Irena Backus remarks, ‘the problem of manuscripts was of very little interest to [Lefèvre].’⁵ It is never nevertheless possible to reconstruct many steps of the editorial process. I shall argue that Lefèvre prepared *Theologia vivificans* surrounded by alternative translations of the text, a thirteenth-century pictorial tradition, and resources relating to the Bible and liturgy.

The investigation of Lefèvre’s editorial process shall help us to specify the parameters of Lefèvre’s balancing act between traditional and humanist approaches to the Dionysian corpus. In the preface, Lefèvre claimed that he had corrected the humanist translation by Ambrogio Traversari using old manuscripts from the venerable French Abbey of St. Denis. As we shall see, the situation is more complex. By examining how Lefèvre tailored Traversari’s scholarship for French readers, this chapter furthermore sheds light on a phenomenon only noted by historians in passing: Lefèvre’s reliance on fifteenth-century translations of Greek Fathers made by Italian scholars. Exploring how Lefèvre tailored Italian humanist scholarship to French readers, this chapter highlights the cultural dimension of the editor’s craft and illuminates one major pathway of the *translatio studii* connecting the Italian and the French Renaissance.

By inviting us into the actual working space of Lefèvre in the late 1490s, *Theologia vivificans* highlights the continued significance of the Dionysian corpus. These texts had been venerated since their arrival in France in the eighth century and, despite humanist doubts about their authenticity, Lefèvre thought that they had much to offer contemporary readers. In the last part of this chapter, I shall examine Lefèvre’s ideas about apostolic theology, specifically as regards the interpretation of Scripture. Studies of Lefèvre’s biblical commentaries have suggested that ps.-Dionysius’s ideas about anagogical meaning inspired Lefèvre’s hermeneutics.⁶ It is therefore all the more surprising that Lefèvre’s scholia to the Dionysian corpus have not been closely examined. I shall argue that Lefèvre’s scholia focus on how ps.-Dionysius read Scripture. Lefèvre also paid close attention to what the writings revealed about apostolic theology more broadly: mining the texts for references to supposed colleagues of ps.-Dionysius, the pedagogical context, as well as the state of Scripture in the early Church. Lefèvre represented the Dionysian corpus as a guide to the methods of the earliest Christian theologians. His explicit aim was to convince readers to adopt the same practices.

⁵ Backus, 1175.

⁶ On Lefèvre’s ‘mystical hermeneutic,’ see Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d’Étaples et l’Intelligence des Écritures*, 36–46; Payne, ‘Erasmus and Lefèvre d’Étaples as Interpreters of Paul’, 66–68.

2. Prefatory entanglements

The texts published in *Theologia vivificans* have perplexing histories. The Dionysian corpus itself is a prime example of this: a late antique forgery that Lefèvre (and many before and after him) mistook for a document of genuinely apostolic theology. The confusion, however, does not end here. For reasons to be explored below, Lefèvre mistook another late antique text – a Byzantine prologue – for the words of the translator Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439), monk and eventually prior general of the Camaldolese. This misattribution has inspired several persistent errors in literature about the Renaissance reception of ps.-Dionysius. In this section, I propose an explanation for the misattribution and some resulting errors, which help us to understand Lefèvre’s working process.

The very first text in *Theologia vivificans* is a prologue attributed to Traversari. In truth, however, it is the Latin translation of a prologue written in the sixth century C.E. by John of Scythopolis. The preface is concerned with the authenticity and orthodoxy of the Dionysian corpus and does not contain any claim or information that makes the attribution to Traversari impossible. It is nevertheless striking that Lefèvre mistook this sixth-century text for the prologue of a near-contemporary. One circumstantial factor that might have contributed to Lefèvre’s blunder is that Traversari usually wrote prefatory epistles to his translations. Awareness of this habit set a recent scholar on the hunt for a preface to Traversari’s translation of ps.-Dionysius. Thinking that he found it in *Theologia vivificans*, he followed Lefèvre in attributing the Byzantine prologue to our Italian humanist.⁷

The mistake is nevertheless puzzling in light of the fact that none of the many fifteenth-century manuscripts of Traversari’s translation at the Vatican Library include the prologue.⁸ There are, however, at least two manuscripts of the text that include the translated prologue of John of Scythopolis – one in Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome and the other in the Royal Library in Brussels.⁹ These manuscripts have in common that they are less luxurious than the ones in the Vatican library. The Casanatense manuscript includes some textual notes indicating that it

⁷ Michiel Op de Coul, ‘Byzantine Literature in Translation: Ambrogio Traversari and his Legacy’, in *Byzanzrezeption in Europa: Spurensuche über das Mittelalter und die Renaissance bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. Foteini Kolovou (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 126.

⁸ See Elisabetta Guerrieri, *Clavis degli autori camaldolesi: secoli XI–XVI* (Florence: SISMEL, edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012), 20. I have examined the following manuscript copies from the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV): Vat. lat. 169; 170; 171; 172; 173; and 174.

⁹ Biblioteca Casanatense MS 1029, 130v–131f; The Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) MS 756, 9v–10v. Both manuscripts provide a longer version of the prologue than Lefèvre, confirming that they were not copied from the printed edition.

originated in a scholarly context.¹⁰ The latter manuscript is an edition providing four Latin translations of the Dionysian corpus – another sign of scholarly reading – and even attributes the prologue to Traversari.¹¹ Lefèvre must have used a similar manuscript when preparing his edition.

Besides the prologue Lefèvre also attributed to Traversari a second set of paratexts, although he decided not to publish them. In his own preface to *Theologia vivificans*, Lefèvre embraced the misguided idea that Traversari had produced scholia to the writings of ps.-Dionysius. Lefèvre explained that he omitted them because the annotations did not fit his plan (*institutum*) for the edition.¹² There are two distinct possibilities why Lefèvre felt confident in dismissing Traversari's (non-existent) scholia. One possibility is that Lefèvre's source manuscript of the translation contained some marginal annotations that he attributed to Traversari. The previously mentioned manuscript in Biblioteca Casanatense includes marginal labels announcing important topics in the text but no proper scholia.¹³ It is nevertheless possible that something was added to the manuscript used by Lefèvre. Another option is that Lefèvre only assumed that Traversari had annotated the treatises because the actual author of the prologue, John of Scythopolis, claimed to have done so. In that case, Lefèvre never saw the scholia that he allegedly chose not to print.

In the preface where Lefèvre explained why he had not printed Traversari's alleged scholia, Lefèvre furthermore advised his readers that those who wished to consult Traversari's scholia should contact his order, the Camaldolese.¹⁴ If anyone among Lefèvre's readers took this advice, they were most likely met by confounded monks who were unable to help. This potential embarrassment was, however, not the end of Lefèvre's misfortunes. To crown this list of errors, a Strasbourg reprint of *Theologia vivificans* from 1502 attributed Lefèvre's own scholia to Traversari.¹⁵ From that edition, the error has infiltrated modern scholarship, which

¹⁰ See for example Biblioteca Casanatense MS 1029, 113r.

¹¹ According to S. Harrison Thomson, the manuscript was written soon after the publication of Traversari's translation in 1436 [1437] and written by a West German or Lowlands scribe, see S. Harrison Thomson, 'An Unnoticed Ms of Hilduin's Translation of the Pseudo-Dionysius', *The Journal of Theological Studies* XXXVII, no. 146 (1936): 138. A useful overview of the contents of the manuscript, which however errs in attributing the prologue to Traversari, is Gabriel Théry, *Études Dionysiennes. I. Hilduin, Traducteur de Denys*. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1932), 37–45.

¹² Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 65.

¹³ Biblioteca Casanatense MS 1029

¹⁴ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 65.

¹⁵ Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera. Veteris et nove translationis. Etiam novissime ipsius marsilii ficini cum commentariis hugonis. Alberti. Thome. Ambrosii oratoris. Linconiensis. et vercellensis*. (Strasbourg: Georg Husner, 1502–1503).

consequently propagates Lefèvre's initial mistake – the assumption that Traversari wrote scholia to the writings of ps.-Dionysius – at Lefèvre's own expense.¹⁶

The reason for discussing these misattributions is not to show that Lefèvre was a careless editor of humanist manuscripts, although the errors admittedly indicate that he did not go to great lengths to verify information. What I mean to call attention to is that the errors tell us two things about the textual background of *Theologia vivificans*: first, it helps us narrow down the possibilities for what copy of Traversari's translation Lefèvre used. Notably, the paratexts transmitted in the version used by Lefèvre exclude the possibility that he based his text solely on the *editio princeps* of Traversari's translation, which lacked the prologue.¹⁷ Secondly, it demonstrates how crucial it is to read Lefèvre's preface with caution and scepticism. A credulous reader might assume that Lefèvre did indeed confer with the Camaldolese order about Traversari's marginalia. As I shall argue in this chapter, the story Lefèvre told about his edition had several other misleading elements.

Lefèvre's prefatory epistle provided some information about the edition. He stated that he revised the translation in many places where Traversari had used a faulty codex or made a mistake *humano more*. It is significant that the revision, as Lefèvre tells us, took place in the Abbey of Saint-Denis outside Paris. This abbey was of central importance for the cult of the French patron saint Denis whom Lefèvre and many contemporaries identified with Dionysius the Areopagite. The abbey library furthermore played a crucial role in the Latin reception of ps.-Dionysius's writings from the ninth century onwards.¹⁸ According to Lefèvre, the monks provided him with *vetusta originalia* of the Dionysian texts. Lefèvre claimed that these texts were superior to the ones used by Traversari and warned readers against thinking that Traversari's version was more worthy of study than the old texts.¹⁹ This report led commentators to think that Lefèvre corrected Traversari's Latin using the early Greek codices kept in the abbey library. As we shall see in the next section, however, Lefèvre likely used Latin manuscripts more intensely than Greek ones. I shall argue that the word *originalia* did not necessarily refer to 'original language' manuscripts and that Lefèvre additionally used manuscripts that he most likely accessed in the Sorbonne library. Contrary to Lefèvre's claims,

¹⁶ Georg Husner's 1502–3 edition announces on the main title page that it includes 'De celesti hierarchia cum scholiis sive commento Ambrosii oratoris.' Relying on this information, a recent editor of John Colet's commentary ascribed Lefèvre's scholia to Traversari, see John Colet, *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysius: A New Edition and Translation with Introduction and Notes*, ed. Daniel T. Lochman (Boston: Brill, 2013).

¹⁷ Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera*, tr. Ambrose Traversari (Bruges: Colard Mansion, 1479).

¹⁸ Le Gall, *Le mythe de saint Denis*.

¹⁹ 'ut nullus etiam putet ea quae Ambrosius [Traversari] manu sua scripserit hac recognitione studiis utiliora.' Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 65.

moreover, his revisions did not correct mistakes of meaning. Instead, they aligned Traversari's text with Lefèvre's own preference for a more traditional, literal translation of certain key concepts in the Dionysian corpus. Close examination of the text of *Theologia vivificans* thus helps us to go beyond the humanist narrative invoked by Lefèvre's preface and readily picked up by historians.

3. The translation

Traversari's translation of the Dionysian corpus was published in 1437. He considered it a particularly demanding project, which had required him to reach a certain state of tranquillity before beginning the translation.²⁰ The result is one of his most widely read contributions. The text was copied many times in the clear style of humanist scribes and decorated with typical ornaments; these manuscripts are now found in libraries all over Europe. Traversari's former student Giannozzo Manetti praised the translation in *A Translator's Defence* (ca. 1458). For Manetti, Traversari's ps.-Dionysius was ground-breaking because it was made 'not word for word but according to sense.'²¹ Manetti remarked that he had seen two earlier translations of the same writings that 'were so ambiguous, confusing, and obscure that, without the support of some commentators, they can scarcely or imperfectly and wrongly be understood.'²² From a humanist point of view, Traversari's translation far surpassed the previous tradition.

As suggested, Lefèvre's attitude to this translation was less positive than Manetti's. He reassured his readers that he did not slavishly follow the word of Traversari; he had checked the translation and rectified it in accordance with manuscripts – *vetusta originalia* – that were made available to him by the monks of Saint-Denis. Scholars who read this passage have usually thought of two Greek manuscripts that were among the principal treasures of the monastery: the copy of the Dionysian Corpus received by Louis the Pious in 827, which kickstarted the Latin reception of ps.-Dionysius, and a second manuscript brought from

²⁰ Charles L. Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1368–1439) and Christian Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 158–62.

²¹ On Traversari's approach to translating and its humanist context, see Stinger, 100–113. In a footnote to this section (Stinger, 264, n. 92), Stinger suggests that one can compare the translation of Traversari with earlier ones in Philippe Chevallier, *Dionysiaca: recueil donnant l'ensemble des traductions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'aréopage* (Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer, & Cie, 1937). This is not a good idea since Chevallier prints Lefèvre's revised version of Traversari's translation rather than the text of the dedication copies (e.g. BAV MS Vat. lat. 169) or the *editio princeps* from 1479.

²² Giannozzo Manetti, *A Translator's Defense*, ed. Myron McShane and Alfonso De Petris, trans. Mark Young (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016), 245–47. By contrast, Paul Lehmann claimed that Traversari's translation was little more than a stylistic adaptation of Hilduin's earlier translation, see Paul Lehmann, 'Zur Kenntnis der Schriften des Dionysius Areopagita im Mittelalter', in *Erforschung des Mittelalters*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1961), 136.

Constantinople in 1167.²³ This interpretation makes the reasonable assumption that Lefèvre in good humanist manner compared Traversari's translation to the Greek text and corrected it before publication.

However, there are problems with this characterisation of Lefèvre's *modus operandi*. It is uncertain whether Lefèvre at this point knew enough Greek to independently judge the accuracy of Traversari's work. Lefèvre had studied Greek with Janus Lascaris (ca. 1445–1535) and was on friendly terms with Guillaume Budé.²⁴ He later published his own translations, amongst others one of John of Damascus's *De fide orthodoxa* in 1507. However, as the printer Johann Amerbach (1440–1513) suspected and Irena Backus confirms, the text Lefèvre prepared should rather be characterised as a revision of earlier translations.²⁵ Another sign that Lefèvre did not engage much with the Greek text is the paucity of references to Greek words in the scholia. If Lefèvre had closely examined the entire translation with reference to the Greek text, we would expect him to sometimes comment on the original terminology. The lack of evidence of close engagement with Greek sources makes the hypothesis doubtful.

These considerations prompt the question of whether *vetusta originalia* might refer to other manuscripts. Donatella Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda shows that this term was used in Parisian medieval libraries to refer to reference collections of patristic manuscripts. For example, the Sorbonne library had a collection of *originalia* that included Latin translations of the Dionysian corpus.²⁶ Similar manuscripts were owned by the Abbey of Saint-Denis.²⁷ If we take into account this practice, another hypothesis can be formulated: Lefèvre compared Traversari's translation to one or several earlier Latin translations.²⁸ In what follows I shall present support for this hypothesis by examining some of the revisions that Lefèvre made to Traversari's text as well as evidence from the scholia.

²³ The current shelf numbers are BNF MS Grec 437 and MS Grec 933. For the suggestion that Lefèvre compared Traversari's text with Grec 437, see Silvano Cavazza, 'Platonismo e Riforma religiosa: La "Theologia vivificans" di Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples', *Rinascimento* 22 (1982): 112; Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures*, 42, n. 29.

²⁴ Bedouelle, *Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d'Étaples: un guide de lecture*, 78–80.

²⁵ Bedouelle, 78–70; Backus, 'John of Damascus, De fide orthodoxa'.

²⁶ Donatella Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda, 'L'"Originale" et les "originalia" dans les bibliothèques médiévales', in *Auctor et Auctoritas. Invention et conformisme dans l'écriture médiévale*, ed. Michel Zimmermann (Paris: École des Chartres, 2001), 487–505.

²⁷ Donatella Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda, *La Bibliothèque de l'Abbaye de Saint-Denis en France du IXe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1985). The relevant numbers in Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda's register are 62, 63, 129, 148 and 158.

²⁸ A good overview of these translations and their dependence on each other is found in Hyacinthe-François Dondaine, *Le corpus dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIIIe siècle* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1953), 23–34.

Unfortunately, Lefèvre did not record in the edition what changes he made to Traversari's text. Consequently, the only way to learn about this aspect of his editing process is to compare *Theologia vivificans* to earlier copies of Traversari's translation. In the absence of a critical edition of the text, I have compared parts of the text of Lefèvre's edition with a manuscript of Traversari's translation copied for Pope Nicholas V in 1450, which I shall call 'N.'²⁹ Not all revisions are relevant for my current aim. For example, I shall not consider minor tweaks relating to punctuation, connecting words, spelling, or a choice of *iis* instead of *his* ('those' instead of 'these'). Such minor differences to N are found far more frequently in *Theologia vivificans* than in the *editio princeps* from 1479/80.³⁰ This is indicative of the considerable liberties Lefèvre took when revising texts for publication.³¹ However, I shall focus on changes that tell us something about how Lefèvre approached the translation and what alternative texts he might have used.

Lefèvre most intensely revised two of ps.-Dionysius's treatises: *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*. These treatises had been re-translated by Marsilio Ficino in 1490–92. Lefèvre could easily access this commented translation in the library of his patron Germain de Ganay.³² Silvano Cavazza has argued that Lefèvre's scholia often responds critically to Ficino's commentary.³³ We shall therefore especially examine the possibility that besides comparison with *vetusta originalia*, Ficino's translation made Lefèvre question some of Traversari's choices.

To illustrate the nature of Lefèvre's revisions, I shall focus on a single chapter of *The Mystical Theology* and two types of alterations found in it. The first kind of revision is concerned with Traversari's approach to translating superlatives. Ps.-Dionysius frequently used the prefix ὑπερ- to create superlatives that expressed the transcendence of God in relation to human modes of perceiving, thinking, and praising. For example, he referred to divine beauty as ὑπερκαλός: 'more than beautiful.' The early Latin translations rendered these expressions by the equivalent compound, using the prefix 'super-.' This manner of constructing

²⁹ BAV MS Vat. Lat. 169.

³⁰ Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera*, tr. Ambrose Traversari (Bruges: Colard Mansion, 1479).

³¹ On correcting texts for publication in this period, see Anthony Grafton, *The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe* (London: British Library, 2011).

³² BNF MS Latin 2613 is a copy of Ficino's translations previously owned by Germain de Ganay. See Sebastiano Gentile, 'Giano Lascaris, Germain de Ganay e la "prisca theologia" in Francia', *Rinascimento; Firenze* 26 (1 January 1986): 51–82; Stéphane Toussaint, 'L'Influence de Ficin à Paris et le Pseudo-Denys des humanistes: Traversari, Cusain, Lefèvre d'Étaples. Suivi d'un passage inédit de Marsile Ficin', *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 5, no. 2 (1999): 381–414. For the Latin translation and commentary, see Marsilio Ficino, *On Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. Michael J. B. Allen (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

³³ Cavazza, 'Platonismo e Riforma religiosa: La "Theologia vivificans" di Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples', 117–20.

Latin superlatives did not speak to Traversari's humanist sensibility. He rendered these passages in different ways, for example through the standard superlative forms: *pulcherrimus* rather than *superpulcher*. Many of these instances were emended by Lefèvre. To describe the 'lucid cloud,' in which one might reach union with God, Traversari chose to speak of a *luminosam... liquidissimam caliginem*. Lefèvre, however, preferred a *superluminosam... superliquidissimam caliginem*; where Traversari wrote of something *excellentissime*, Lefèvre thought *plusquam excellentissime* more fitting.³⁴

One of Lefèvre's 'superlative' revisions was inspired by Ficino's translation. Traversari had succinctly rendered the Greek phrase τῶν ὑπερκάλων ἀγλαῖων ὑπερπληροῦντα³⁵ by *honestissimis fulgoribus replentem*. Lefèvre followed Ficino in expanding the phrase. Ficino's translation was: *splendoribus plus quam pulchris ad exuberantiam implet...* Lefèvre chose partly different vocabulary but re-introduced the superlatives in a similar way: *honestissimis fulgoribus et plus quam pulchris excellenter implentem*.³⁶ Earlier Latin translations, by contrast, had with only small variations provided the literal translation first suggested by Hilduin in the ninth century: *superpulchris splendoribus superreplentem*.³⁷ Again, Lefèvre's revisions mark the return of compounds with *super-* to express transcendence. Compared to the earlier Latin translators, he used a wider range of expressions (including *plus quam* and *excellenter*). He did not, however, agree with Traversari's radical change of practice.

Some of Lefèvre's revisions thus brought the text in line with the earlier Latin tradition. Other revisions served to clarify the meaning of the text. One particularly dense and difficult sentence at the end of the chapter exemplifies well this aspect of Lefèvre's correction. The passage describes the experience of a union with God through unknowing. This is precisely the type of paradoxical expressions that makes ps.-Dionysius notoriously difficult to translate. The following table illustrates how Lefèvre attempted to make the Latin text less confusing by adding the words underlined in the second column.

³⁴ BAV Vat. lat. 169, 115r; *Theologia vivificans*, 79r. Lefèvre did not adopt Ficino's translation, which is considerable freer in this section, see Ficino, *On Dionysius the Areopagite*, 10.

³⁵ Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, 'De mystica theologia; Epistulae', in *Corpus Dionysiacum, Band 2, Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. De Coelesti Hierarchia, De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia, De Mystica Theologia, Epistulae*, ed. Günter Heil and Adolf M. Ritter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 142.3–4.

³⁶ Ficino translates 'splendoribus plus quam pulchris ad exuberantiam implet...' See Ficino, *On Dionysius the Areopagite*, 10.

³⁷ See the earlier translations cited in Chevallier, *Dionysiaca*, The Mystical Theology 1.1.

BAV, Vat. Lat. 169 [N], 116r. With one addition from the <i>editio princeps</i> of 1479 in square brackets.	<i>Theologia vivificans</i> , 79r. Cf. Chevallier, <i>Dionysiaca</i> , Vol. 1, 577–578.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tum vero ipsa quoque visibilia atque intellectualia linquens ingreditur ignorationis mysticam profecto caliginem: 2. in qua omnia scientiae adminicula excutit: 3. atque in eo qui tactum penitus [visumque refugit]³⁸ transcendit omnia: et nullius neque suimet neque alterius iuris <u>efficitur</u>: 4. ceterum ei qui penitus incognitus est: scientiae omnis vacatione: prestantiore modo coniunctus: 5. nihil scire <u>quid</u> sit: sensum atque intelligentiam transcendendo cognoscit. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tum vero ipsa quoque visibilia atque intellectualia <u>contemplator</u> linquens ingreditur ignorationis mysticam profecto caliginem: 2. in qua omnia scientiae <u>et cognitionis</u> presidia terminans totus 3. in eo <u>fit</u> (qui tactum penitus visumque refugit transcenditque omnia et qui nullius est neque suimet neque alterius) 4. penitus autem ignoto scientie omnis <u>et cognitionis</u> vacatione prestantiore modo coniunctus 5. et <u>eo quoque ipso quod</u> nichil cognoscit: <u>supra</u> sensum mentemque cognoscens.

To the first clause of the sentence, Lefèvre added a subject to guide the reader – namely, *contemplator*. There is no precedent for this in the Greek text or in earlier Latin translations.³⁹ The adjustment in the next part (2) clarifies that not only tools of knowledge (*scientia*) but also thought (*cognitio*) is left behind by our contemplator. This is indeed suggested by the Greek τὰς γνωστικὰς ἀντιλήψεις, which is imprecisely rendered by Traversari’s *adminicula scientiae*.⁴⁰ Lefèvre did the same thing in another part of the passage (4), presumably for consistency since it is not suggested by the Greek. In section 3, Lefèvre followed the medieval translators in rendering γίγνεται as *fit* instead of Traversari’s *efficitur*. He also moved it to the beginning of the sentence while marking out the relative clause within brackets, facilitating the reading of this dense phrase. Lefèvre furthermore revised Traversari’s translation of a genitive construction that indicates the contemplator to be free, ‘not of himself or anyone else.’ Traversari rendered this by saying that such a man is *nullius iuris*, ‘of no law,’ and Ficino followed his example. Lefèvre rejected this expression and restored the text to the literal and less determined sense. In the fifth section, Lefèvre again rejected Traversari’s alternative

³⁸ This variant is also found in the Biblioteca Casanatense 1029, f. 111.

³⁹ cf. Chevallier, *Dionysiaca*, Vol. 1, 577–578.

⁴⁰ Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, ‘De mystica theologia; Epistulae’, 144.11–12.

translation of ὑπέρ and returned to *supra*. Additionally, Lefèvre changed words relating to cognition, choosing *mens* instead of *intelligentia* and, quite unnecessarily, adding *sensus*. Finally, in line with another established pattern, Lefèvre clarified the meaning of this section by introducing an ablative (*eo quoque ipso*), which is stylistically less smooth but easier to follow than Traversari's version.

This examination of his revisions to *The Mystical Theology* suggests that Lefèvre had the following main agendas: facilitating the understanding of complicated passages, picking the right words to describe the cognitive aspects of mystical union, and conveying ps.-Dionysius's language of transcendence. As we have seen, some of these revisions were inspired by Ficino's translation. But more often, Lefèvre changed the wording that Traversari had introduced and Ficino had kept. One might conjecture that the reason why Lefèvre made more textual changes to the two treatises that Ficino translated than the other works of ps.-Dionysius stemmed from a convergence in philosophical interests between Lefèvre and Ficino, rather than from the translation itself. Lefèvre shared Ficino's interest in one aspect of ps.-Dionysius's thought that is closely investigated in these treatises – namely, the question of how to construct a theology that properly appreciates divine transcendence. Whereas Ficino decided to re-translate the texts, Lefèvre used occasional revisions to bring the Latin text in line with his own way of thinking about transcendence, ascent, and mystical union.

These revisions do not reveal whether Lefèvre used a specific Greek text or Latin translation. On the one hand, several of the emendations resemble earlier translations. This includes the re-institution of the frequent use of *super-* as a prefix, and the choice to replace *efficitur* by *fit* to render γίγνεται. However, this revision is at the same time a return to a more literal interpretation of the Greek text. Luckily Lefèvre's annotations provide further clues to what texts he consulted alongside Traversari's and Ficino's translations. In one scholium Lefèvre referred explicitly to a reading from an *originale* of the Dionysian corpus. A printed marginal annotation to *The Divine Names* VIII states, 'where this text often uses *deus* and *a deo*, the source text (*originale*) has the divine name ὄν – that is, "being" and "he who is."⁴¹ It would make little sense for Lefèvre to comment in this way on a Greek text, which obviously would not use the Latin *deus*. Instead, his reference points us to the translation of John Scotus Eriugena. The Abbey of Saint-Denis had one full copy of this text, which is now in the Vatican

⁴¹ *Theologia vivificans*, 72r: 'Ubi hic "deus" et "a deo" frequenter dicitur originale habet nomen dei "on": hoc est ens et qui est.' The text has no significant revisions compared to the text of Traversari in 'N', cf. MS Vat. Lat. 169, 103r.

library. This copy, as it happens, uses the Greek *ὄν* in the passage indicated by Lefèvre.⁴² Further evidence that Lefèvre used this (or a similar) manuscript in preparing his edition is found in an annotation to *The Celestial Hierarchy* VII, where he cited ‘another translation,’ which gave a different reading than Traversari.⁴³ The alternative reading he quotes is Eriugena’s translation.⁴⁴

These passages point to a practice of reading multiple Latin translations of Greek texts comparatively. This reading strategy had been part of ps.-Dionysian scholarship for centuries. As François Dondaine shows, Parisian scholars of the thirteenth century, including Albertus Magnus, read the Dionysian corpus in a complex collection of Latin translations and commentaries.⁴⁵ One fifteenth-century manuscript by a West German or Lowland scribe had already incorporated Traversari’s translation into this format.⁴⁶ The practice continued after the introduction of printing. A printed edition from 1502 included Lefèvre’s text from *Theologia vivificans* alongside several other Latin translations.⁴⁷ An edition prepared by the Carthusians of Cologne, printed in 1536, included four Latin translations, one paraphrase, the commentaries of Dionysius the Carthusian, and various shorter texts many of which defended the authenticity of ps.-Dionysius.⁴⁸

Lefèvre opted for printing a single text, but his revision of Traversari’s translation reveals that he worked with multiple Latin translations. Some indication of how or why can be gained from an edition Lefèvre published two years before *Theologia vivificans* – an edition of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* including three translations: the early thirteenth-century rendering of Robert Grosseteste and two recent ones by Leonardo Bruni and John Argyropoulos.⁴⁹ The latter was Lefèvre’s main text and the one upon which he based his commentary. Nevertheless, he also discussed instances where the translations of Bruni and

⁴² BAV MS Reg. lat. 67, 66v. This manuscript is item 148 in Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda, *La Bibliothèque de l’Abbaye de Saint-Denis en France du IXe au XVIIIe siècle*. No other Latin manuscripts of the complete Dionysian corpus have been identified by Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda as belonging to the library of Saint-Denis in the relevant period. On the manuscript, see also Timothy R. Budde, ‘The *Versio Dionysii* of John Scottus Eriugena. A Study of the Manuscript Tradition and Influence of Eriugena’s Translation of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* from the 9th through the 12th Century’ (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2012), 79.

⁴³ *Theologia vivificans*, 9r, at R.

⁴⁴ BAV Reg. lat. 67, 8r.

⁴⁵ Dondaine, *Le corpus dionysien de l’Université de Paris au XIIIe siècle*.

⁴⁶ KBR MS 756.

⁴⁷ ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera. Veteris et nove translationis. Etiam novissime ipsius marsilii ficini cum commentariis hugonis. Alberti. Thome. Ambrosii oratoris. Linconiensis. et vercellensis*. (Strasbourg: Georg Husner, 1502–1503).

⁴⁸ ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite and Dionysius the Carthusian, *D. Dionysii Carthusiani ... super omnes S. Dionysii Areopagitae libros commentaria* (Cologne: P. Quentel, 1536),

⁴⁹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 41–45. On earlier printed books combining several translations of *NE*, see Jill Kraye, ‘The Printing History of Aristotle in the Fifteenth Century: A Bibliographical Approach to Renaissance Philosophy’, *Renaissance Studies* 9, no. 2 (1995): 195.

Argyropoulos disagreed, which indicates that he read them side by side.⁵⁰ An example that is indicative of Lefèvre's method of parallel reading is found in his annotations to a passage where Bruni and Argyropoulos disagreed about the interpretation of a Greek article. According to Lefèvre, the two different translations were both correct: one interpreted Aristotle's sentence literally and the other, Lefèvre claimed, rendered the passage's spiritual sense.⁵¹ This highlights Lefèvre's tendency to read multiple translations not in order to pit them against each other but with the aim of harmonising them.

Lefèvre addressed the question of the hermeneutic value of multiple translations in his preface to his *Quincuplex psalterium* (1509). This edition included five different translations of the Psalms and, according to Lefèvre, it was influenced by the manuscript tradition of triple Psalters as well as Origen's *Hexapla*.⁵² But he motivated the use of multiple translations with reference to the interpretation of the text. For Lefèvre, earlier commentators on the Psalms were limited by the fact that they used only one translation, whereas he had 'consulted various texts in order to dig out their primary meaning faithfully.'⁵³ Lefèvre thought that 'from the mutual comparison of these [translations]' the meaning of the text would emerge better.⁵⁴

In the case of *Theologia vivificans*, Lefèvre did not opt for printing multiple translations. Nevertheless it appears that he approached the text in a similar way as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, reading the many available Latin translations side by side. This is not incompatible with the idea that Lefèvre also consulted the Greek text; however, it provides good reasons to believe that the *vetusta originalia* to which Lefèvre devoted most attention were Latin manuscripts. Unlike Traversari's student Manetti, Lefèvre saw continued value in the older translations. He modified certain aspects of Traversari's text to be more like the word-by-word renderings that preceded it, thus presenting a version of Dionysian expression that would have been familiar to Parisian scholars. As we shall see in next section, Parisian theologians might have recognised and appreciated another aspect of the edition: a set of diagrams adapted from a local manuscript tradition.

⁵⁰ Aristoteles, *Ethica ad Nicomachum; Magna moralia; Isagogicon moralis disciplinae; Virtutis quaerimonia; Ars moralis in Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea introductoria*, ed. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, trans. John Argyropoulos et al. (Paris: Johannes Higman and Wolfgang Hopyl, 1496), sig. 17; m6.

⁵¹ 'nam Leonardus propter articulum grecum quod Aristoteles ad bonum adiecit: altiore intelligentiam manifeste sentit. iccirco Leonardus hoc pacto litteram interpretatus est...' Aristoteles, *Ethica ad Nicomachum*, sig. a3.

⁵² Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 197. See especially the notes of Rice, 200–201.

⁵³ 'Nos varias litteras consulimus, ut primarium inde sensum fideliter erueremus,' Rice, 196.

⁵⁴ 'Ceterum in unum corpus quinque psalteria redegiemus, Gallicum, Romanum, Hebraicum, Vetus et Conciliatum, ut ex eorum mutua invicem collatione iuventur ii quos similis indaginis cura mordebit, et ob id praeterea ut multi cantus ecclesiastici unde sumpti sint agnoscantur.' Rice, 196.

4. The diagrams

One recurring feature of *Theologia vivificans* is its illustrations. The tone is set by the striking design of the title page (Fig. 1.1).⁵⁵ It features two eagles that nibble on a circle, while standing on another lower circle. In the upper circle we find the titles of ps.-Dionysius's surviving writings: the contents of the edition. The allegorical significance of the eagles is explained by an added tag-line: 'Vivifying theology. Solid food.' (*Theologia vivificans. Cibus solidus.*) Beyond the title page, sixteen images are found in Lefèvre's annotations to ps.-Dionysius's work. These diagrams are more abstract than the title page, yet they preserve the pictorial theme of text in interlinked circles. Images contributed to making *Theologia vivificans* into a beautiful and high-end object and, more importantly, they provided an efficient medium through which Lefèvre communicated his understanding of ps.-Dionysius's theology.⁵⁶

Lefèvre did not comment on how or why he developed the sixteen diagrams, and scholars have not so far addressed this question. In this section, I shall argue that Lefèvre adapted the diagrams from a thirteenth-century edition of ps.-Dionysius: the so-called 'Parisian corpus.'⁵⁷ This family of manuscripts is direct testimony to the intense efforts of thirteenth-century scholars to grasp the thought of ps.-Dionysius.⁵⁸ As mentioned above, the anonymous editor compiled multiple Latin translations. A wealth of additional material was included: a paraphrase, Byzantine scholia in translation, anonymous Latin glosses, excerpts from philosophical works by John Scotus Eriugena, and last but not least, diagrams.⁵⁹

Besides Dondaine's brief description, the medieval diagrams accompanying the writings of ps.-Dionysius have received no scholarly attention.⁶⁰ In order to keep the focus on my investigation on *Theologia vivificans*, I will be concerned only with the earlier diagrams that shed light on Lefèvre's illustrations. While my aim is not to identify a particular copy used by Lefèvre, I have nevertheless selected two manuscripts that Lefèvre could have accessed in the

⁵⁵ All images referenced in this chapter are gathered below in section 5.

⁵⁶ The count excludes Lefèvre's tables comparing apostolic and contemporary religious rituals.

⁵⁷ The corpus is described in Dondaine, *Le corpus dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIIIe siècle*.

⁵⁸ An alternative corpus was used by Franciscans, see J. Guy Bougerol, 'Saint Bonaventure et le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite', *Études Franciscaines* 18 (1968): 33–123. A good overview of the late medieval reception is David Luscombe, 'Some examples of the use made of the works of the Pseudo-Dionysius by University teachers in the later Middle Ages', in *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Jozef IJsewijn and Jacques Paquet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1978), 228–41.

⁵⁹ Dondaine, *Le corpus dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIIIe siècle*, 117–22.

⁶⁰ On the medieval use of diagrams in general, see Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'Les images classificatrices', *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 147, no. 1 (1989): 311–41; Eckart Conrad Lutz, Vera Jerjen, and Christine Putzo, eds., *Diagramm und Text: diagrammatische Strukturen und die Dynamisierung von Wissen und Erfahrung* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2014).

Sorbonne library in the 1490s.⁶¹ At this time, the library had at least one copy of the Parisian corpus: the manuscript now found at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF) as Latin 15630.⁶² There are good chances that a reader in the Sorbonne library in this decade could also have encountered an older manuscript that included some simple diagrams – namely, the current BNF Latin 2612, which I have included for reference.⁶³ The third manuscript is another copy of the Parisian corpus of largely unknown provenance, BNF Latin 17341. This is the most complete copy of the Parisian corpus – possibly the prototype – and it includes one treatise excluded in MS Latin 15630.⁶⁴ Using these three manuscripts, I have compiled a table of diagrams equivalent to the ones in *Theologia vivificans*. The left column of the chart below lists all diagrams in Lefèvre’s edition. The three following columns list the instances where an illustration explicating the same passage is present in the three manuscripts. When corresponding diagrams are found but they are significantly different, I have included the reference in round brackets.

Table 1: Diagrams illustrating the treatises of ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite.

<i>Theologia vivificans</i> ed. Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples (1499)	Latin 2612 (11 th /12 th c)	Latin 15630 (13 th c)	Latin 17341 (13 th c)
<i>The Celestial Hierarchy</i>			
1. fol. 4r: ‘Divine beatitude’	13v	(missing)	48r
2. fol. 4v: ‘The chief of the hierarchy’	13v	(missing)	49r
3. fol. 4v: ‘The sacred orders’	-	(missing)	-
4. fol. 5v: The tree of Porphyry	-	(missing)	52r
5. fol. 7v: ‘The celestial hierarchy’ I	(16v)	(missing)	(64v–65r)
6. fol. 10r: ‘The celestial hierarchy’ II	-	(missing)	99r

⁶¹ Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, ‘La bibliothèque du collège de Sorbonne’, in *Histoire des bibliothèques françaises.*, ed. André Vernet, vol. 1, 4 vols (Paris: Promodis, 1989), 113–24; Jeanne Viellard and Marie-Henriette Jullien de Pommerol, eds., *Le Registre de prêt de la bibliothèque du Collège de Sorbonne (1402–1536)* = *Diarium Bibliothecae Sorbonae: Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, ms. 3323* (Paris: CNRS, 2000); Gilbert Fournier, ‘Le catalogue inédit de la bibliothèque du collège de Sorbonne (milieu du XVI^e siècle)’, *Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), Section des sciences historiques et philologiques. Résumés des conférences et travaux*, no. 148 (1 September 2017): 149–65.

⁶² This manuscript is mentioned in catalogues before and after 1500. In 1338, this is one of the four *originalia* of the works of ps.-Dionysius owned by the Sorbonne library. It is also mentioned in a mid-sixteenth century catalogue of the library: *Tabula* (Paris: Michel de Vascosan, ca. 1550) shelved as Mazarine Ms 4204. See the partial edition annexed to Gilbert Fournier, ‘Livre après livre. Un catalogue inédit de la bibliothèque du Collège de Sorbone (milieu XVI^e siècle)’, *Scriptorium* 67 (2013): 184–217. The manuscript also has owner’s marks and stamps that indicate its continued presence in the Sorbonne library.

⁶³ BNF Latin 2612 was in the Sorbonne library in 1338, see Fournier. The next known owner is the Parisian collector Jacques Auguste de Thou (1533–1617). It is not known at what time the manuscript left the Sorbonne collection.

⁶⁴ The later Sorbonne manuscript (Latin 15630) accompanied a separate edition of ps.-Dionysius’s treatise *The Celestial Hierarchy*. This part was in the college library in 1338 but is now lost. I have therefore included in my comparison a close relative of this ms that includes *The Celestial Hierarchy*: BNF Latin 17341. See Dondaine, *Le corpus dionysien de l’Université de Paris au XIII^e siècle*, 15–21, 67–68. This manuscript is the most complete version of the corpus described by Dondaine.

7. fol. 18v: ‘The pyramid of everything’	-	(missing)	-
<i>The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy</i>			
8. fol. 26r: ‘Christ’	37r	13v	169v
9. fol. 35v: ‘Supermundane perfection’	-	-	-
10. fol. 35v: ‘Human perfection’	-	-	-
11. fol. 36r: ‘The ecclesiastical hierarchy’	-	-	(185v–186r)
12. fol. 39v: ‘The purifying orders’	-	40v	190v
13. fol. 41v: ‘Those who are asleep’	-	44v	193v
<i>The Divine Names</i>			
14. fol. 48r: ‘All things desire providence’	65r	61v	207v
15. fol. 56v: ‘All things pursue the good’	-	-	222v
16. fol. 74v: ‘The movement of God’	96	84v	239v

Twelve of Lefèvre’s sixteen diagrams have counterparts in the manuscripts. All twelve are found in Latin 17341, and half of them occur in the earlier Latin 2612. One example of a diagram that changed little between the twelfth century and 1499 is the first one (Fig. 1.2). It presents a division familiar to any reader of ps.-Dionysius’s *The Celestial Hierarchy*, namely the triad of purification, illumination, and perfection. The diagram illustrates that God is the origin of these acts. Diagrams 1, 2, 8, and 16 are further examples of diagrams that are largely uniform from the early manuscripts to *Theologia vivificans*. As we can observe, the oldest diagrams are all simple tools for clarifying divisions in the text.

Among the diagrams that were introduced in the thirteenth century, Lefèvre borrowed the following: an enumeration of classes of people who become purified by the ecclesiastical orders (number 12 in the table above); a division presenting the various possible (religious) states of people at their death (number 13); and one diagram mapping out the degrees of being: existing, living, sensing, thinking (Fig. 1.3). The latter diagram went through a notable iconographical change between the thirteenth-century manuscript (BNF Latin 17341) and *Theologia vivificans*. In the organic design of the manuscript, the diagram clearly alludes to the Tree of Porphyry, a division commonly used in contemporary textbooks of logic.⁶⁵ As adapted to Lefèvre’s theme for the layout – interlinked circles – the diagram rather recalls the ‘great chain of being.’⁶⁶

Compared to the medieval manuscripts, Lefèvre favoured larger and more complex images. For example, the eleventh- and thirteenth-century manuscripts depicted the angelic hierarchy

⁶⁵ Annemieke R. Verboon, ‘The Medieval Tree of Porphyry: An Organic Structure of Logic’, in *The Tree: Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, ed. Pippa Salonijs and Andrea Worm (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 100–104.

⁶⁶ A. O. Lovejoy, *Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936).

described by ps.-Dionysius in multiple small diagrams. Lefèvre replaced them with a single large woodcut that displayed the entire hierarchy in one image (see figure 5). This figure was modelled on the *Circulus universorum* in *De conjecturis* by Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464).⁶⁷ The same woodcut was used three times (for diagrams 5, 6, and 11). He also constructed a new diagram of the ‘sacred orders’ (diagram 3), a composite version of the two preceding figures (diagrams 1 and 2). Moreover, Lefèvre added a large ‘Pyramid of all things’ (diagram 7), which again is strongly reminiscent of a pyramid diagram from Cusanus’s *De conjecturis*.⁶⁸

Even in cases where Lefèvre followed his medieval model relatively closely, detailed comparison reveals differences between the manuscript versions and those printed by Lefèvre. As is clearly seen from Figures 2 and 3, Lefèvre modified the text and sometimes changed the number of classes. Some adjustments are related to Lefèvre’s use of a different translation, or preferences for a different terminology. Other changes have complex explanations, as is the case with diagram 14 (Fig. 1.4). In the thirteenth-century manuscript (BNF Latin 17341), the diagram ‘All things desire Providence’ (14) had three divisions labelled as ‘rational beings,’ ‘irrational living beings,’ and ‘inanimate beings.’ This illustrated ps.-Dionysius’s statement that all things desire providence in different ways: through knowing, perception, or ‘by way of the stirrings of being alive and in whatever fashion befits their condition.’⁶⁹ The third category includes both plants and lifeless objects. For an Aristotelian like Lefèvre, this made little sense. He therefore changed the Latin translation to accommodate two separate categories for plants and lifeless objects.⁷⁰ He also added a scholium explaining how each of the two groups desire providence in different ways and included a diagram with four categories.⁷¹ This example indicates Lefèvre’s deep involvement with the diagrams. Because the figures were essential to the understanding of ps.-Dionysius, they needed editorial attention just like the text.

Lefèvre’s *Theologia vivificans* allows us to follow closely the migration of one set of diagrams from manuscript to print. This case therefore provides an opportunity for scrutinising

⁶⁷ Nicholas of Cusa, ‘De conjecturis’ in *Opuscula theologica et mathematica* (Strasbourg: M. Flach, ca. 1488), sig. i.2. Lefèvre considered Cusanus to be the best guide to ps.-Dionysius, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 346.

⁶⁸ Nicholas of Cusa, ‘De conjecturis’, sig. h.5.

⁶⁹ English translation from Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (London: Spck, 1987), 54. The Latin translation in BNF MS Latin 17341, 207v: ‘secundum vitalem motum et essentialem et conditionalem necessitatem.’

⁷⁰ In Traversari’s Latin translation, the same passage was rendered in the following way: [the third class desire providence] ‘vitalis ratione et motus: sive quod substantiatliter atque constanter idonea sint.’ (cited from BAV MS Vat. Lat. 169, 70r.) Lefèvre’s revised the text to cut the last class into two: ‘alia vero vitalis ratione motus: aut per substantialem habituaalemve aptitudinem.’ See *Theologia vivificans*, 48r.

⁷¹ *Theologia vivificans*, 51r (at T).

the thesis that printing technology changed the use of diagrams.⁷² Considering the economics of printing, it would be desirable to reduce the number of different woodcuts needed for the edition. The sixteen diagrams in *Theologia vivificans* were produced using only eight woodcuts.⁷³ This raises the question of whether Lefèvre changed some figures to conform them to an existing woodcut. The first two diagrams would support this idea. Their equivalent figures in manuscripts had different shapes, whereas they are uniform in Lefèvre's edition and printed using the same woodcut, which can be seen from an imperfection in the uppermost ring (see figure 2). To achieve this uniformity, Lefèvre added a third category to the second diagram – an addition not motivated by the chapter it illustrates.⁷⁴

A more complex story emerges, however, from the diagram on Providence (Fig. 1.4). Lefèvre's annotations to this diagram directed the reader to a second similar one, which is printed with the same woodcut (diagram 15 in the above table).⁷⁵ In the manuscript BNF Latin 17341, these two diagrams had three and five categories; in Lefèvre's edition, both have four. One could print both with a single woodcut, and we might again suspect that the editor made compromises for economic reasons. However, Lefèvre's cross-reference indicates that there is something more at play. He highlighted the connection between the two diagrams because he considered it significant that the creation's striving after providence and the good were uniform. We know that Lefèvre had a keen interest in analogies. As Richard Oosterhoff shows, he used analogies as a pedagogical tool for comparing and introducing disciplines; he suggested that it could function as a universal method or 'art of arts.'⁷⁶ By repeating the same woodcut, Lefèvre did not only limit printing costs but also highlighted analogies and recurring patterns in ps.-Dionysius's theology.

In conclusion, Lefèvre both absorbed and transformed the diagrams of earlier scholars. The development from simple to more elaborate diagrams had begun well prior to the advent of

⁷² For the view that printing had a very significant impact on the use of diagrams, see Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958). On the gradual increase of diagrams throughout the Middle ages, see Schmitt, 'Les images classificatrices'. See also Lutz, Jerjen, and Putzo, *Diagramm und Text*.

⁷³ It is not known who made these cuts. On fifteenth-century woodcuts in general, see Arthur Mayger Hind, *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut: With a Detailed Survey of Work Done in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1935); Peter W. Parshall, ed., *The Woodcut in Fifteenth-Century Europe* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2009).

⁷⁴ Diagram 2 was used in the manuscripts to illustrate a key point of the third chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy*: the division into entities that are prior in hierarchy (that purify, illuminate, and perfect) and those that are posterior (that are purified, illuminated, and perfected). In Lefèvre's version of this diagram, he adds a middle order that is both purifying and being purified. This middle order is not mentioned in the pertinent chapter and, although it is in fact part of Dionysius's theory of hierarchy, it does not belong in that figure. A similar example is diagrams 12–13.

⁷⁵ *Theologia vivificans*, 51r: at T.

⁷⁶ Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, 77–85.

printing. Two of the complex diagrams that Lefèvre added to the edition were inspired by the work of Nicholas of Cusa, whose works were only printed after his death. The evidence from this investigation thus weighs in favour of those who warn against overemphasising the distinction between manuscript and print culture in this period.⁷⁷ The continuities would have been apparent to contemporary readers at the Sorbonne library. By the mid-sixteenth century, Lefèvre's edition was present in their collections alongside the Sorbonne copy of the Parisian corpus.⁷⁸ In addition to Lefèvre's revision of Traversari's translation, the diagrams provide further evidence that although he selected a recent translation and discarded the traditional glosses, the edition was by no means a humanist *tabula rasa*.

⁷⁷ See Daniel Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). On the interaction between print and manuscript in Lefèvre's teaching, see Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*.

⁷⁸ See the partial edition annexed to Fournier, 'Livre après livre'. Item 8.08 (*Opera D. Dionysii Areopagitae, & D. Ignatii*) appears to be Lefèvre's *Theologia vivificans* since it also includes writings by Ignatius. This is not a standard arrangement.

5. Figures

Figure 1.1: Title page of Lefèvre's edition *Theologia vivificans* (1499)

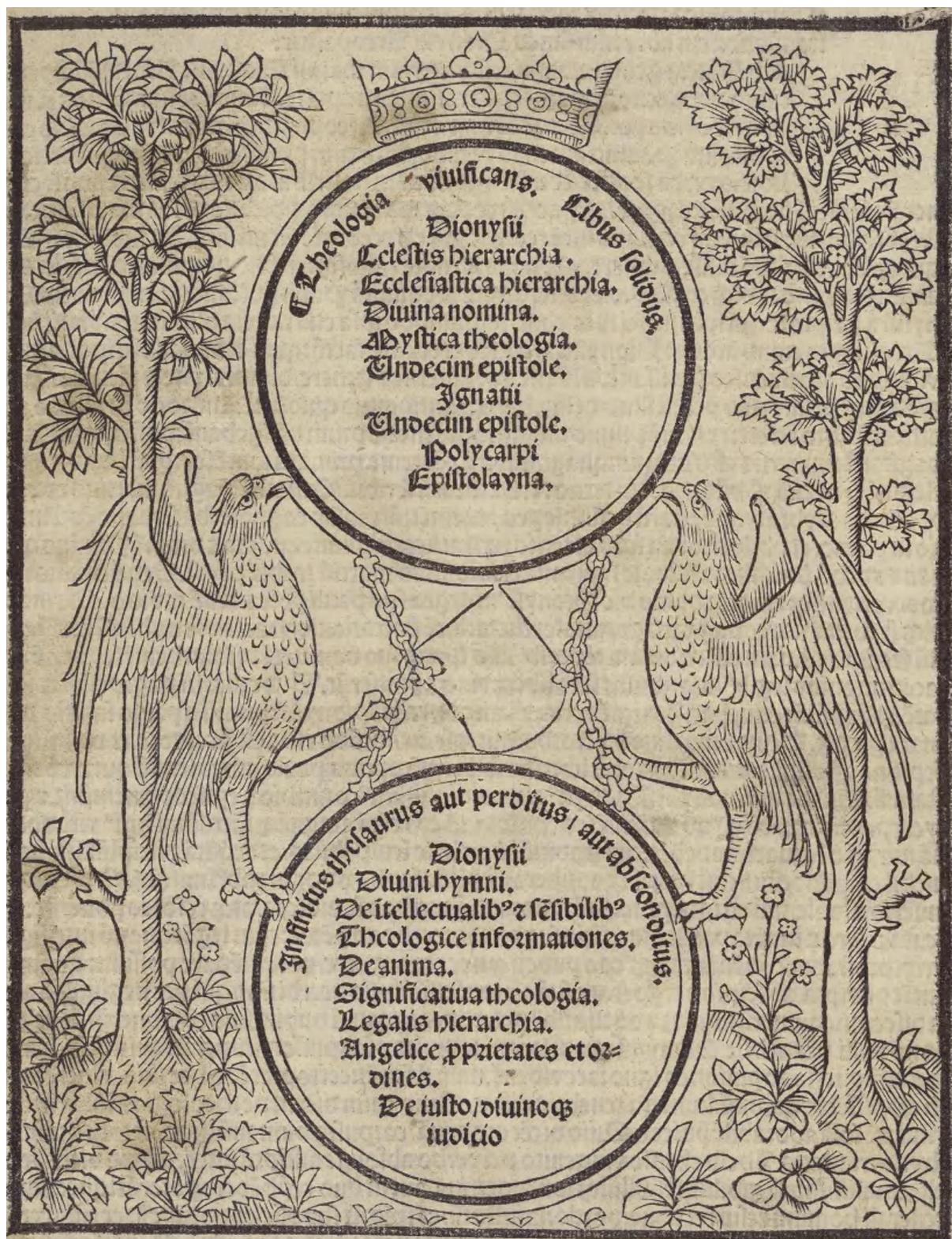


Figure 1.2: Diagrams illustrating ps.-Dionysius's theory of divine beatitude

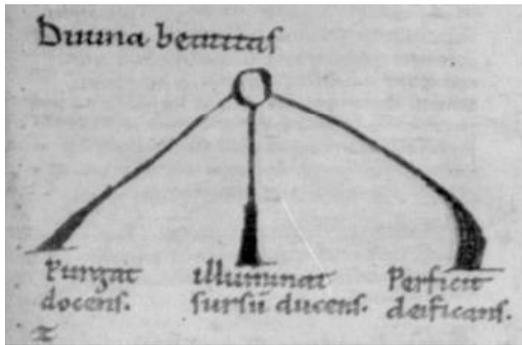


Fig. 1.2.1 from BNF Latin 2612, 13v.

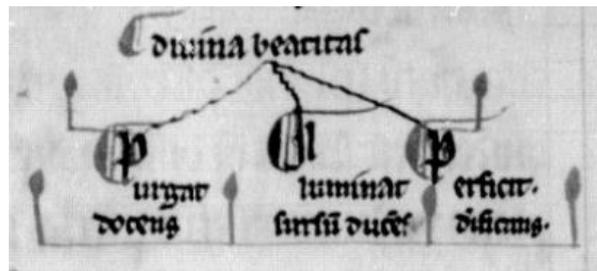


Fig. 1.2.2 from BNF Latin 17341, 48r.

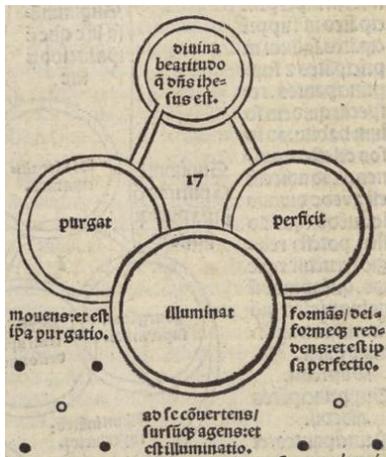


Fig. 1.2.3 from Theologia vivificans, 4r.

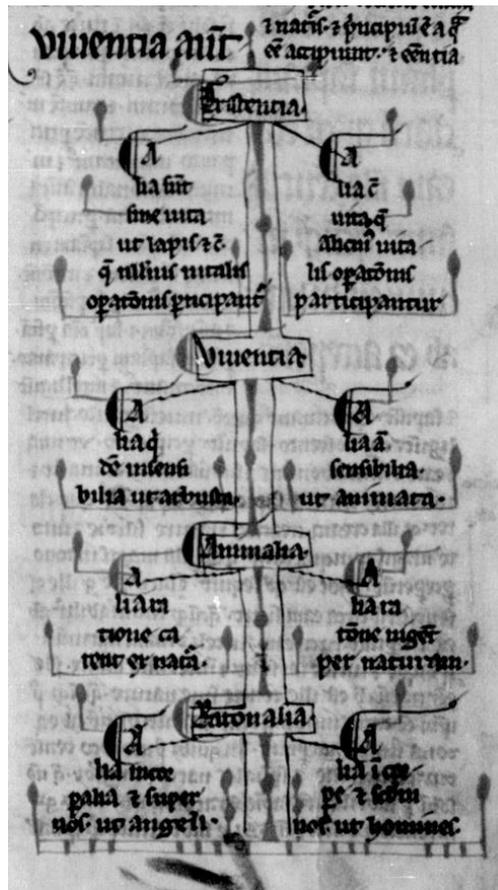


Fig. 1.3.1 from BNF Latin 17341, 52r.

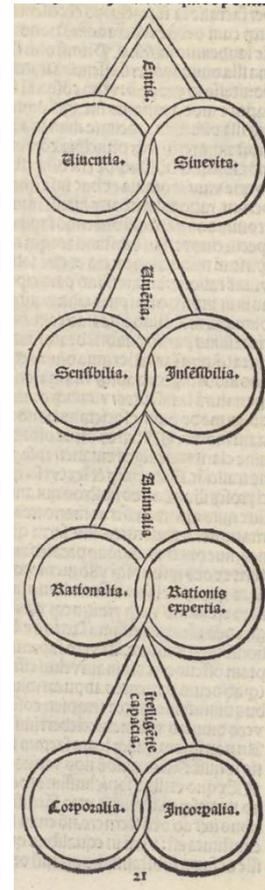


Fig. 1.3.2 from Theologia vivificans, 5v.

Figure 1.3: Diagrams illustrating ps.-Dionysius's division of living beings

Figure 1.4: Diagrams illustrating ps.-Dionysius's ideas about providence.

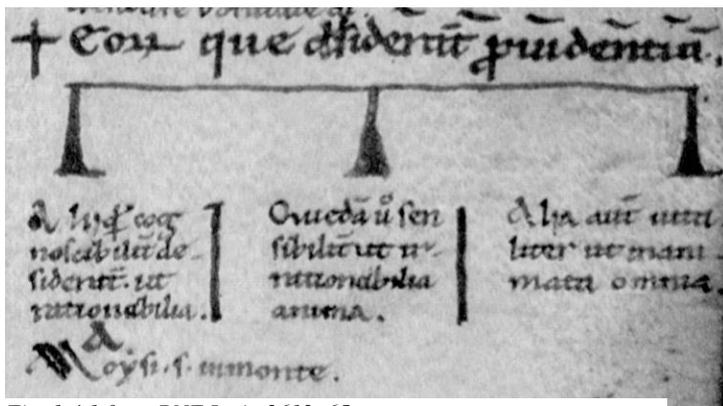


Fig. 1.4.1 from BNF Latin 2612, 65r.

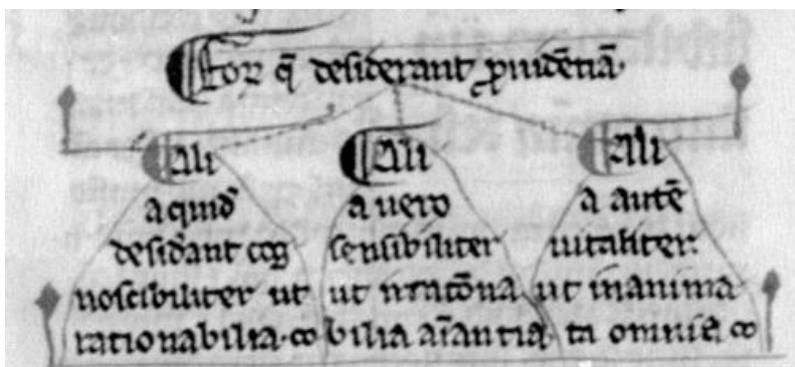


Fig. 1.4.2 from BNF Latin 17341, 207v.

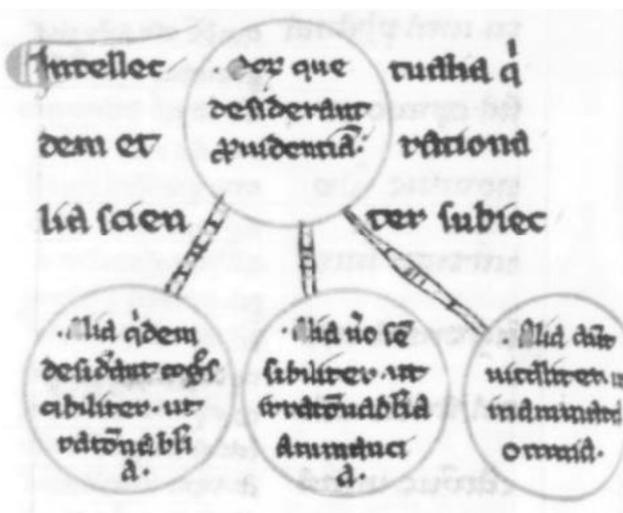


Fig. 1.4.3 from BNF Latin 15630, 61v.

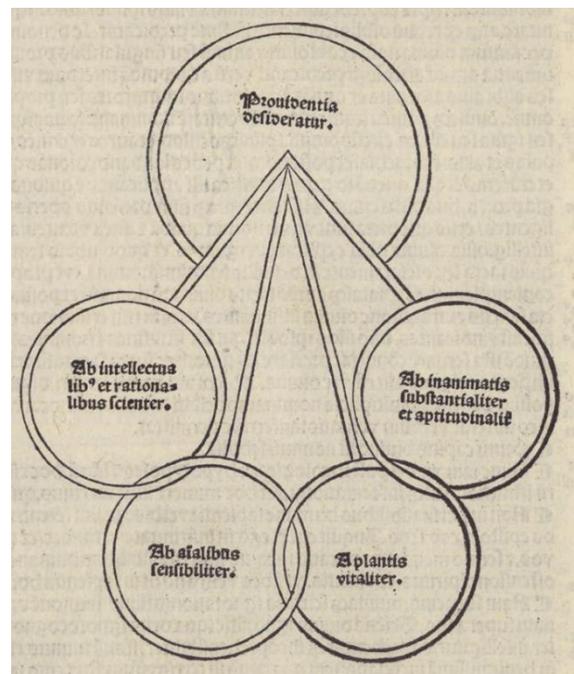


Fig. 1.4.4 from Theologia vivificans, 48r.

Figure 1.5: Diagrams illustrating ps.-Dionysius's notion of 'celestial hierarchy.'

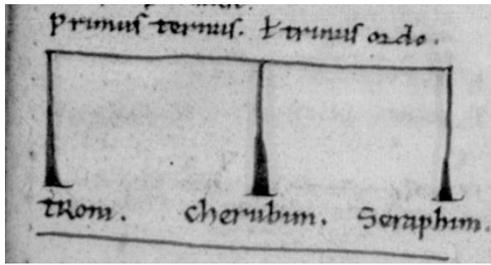


Fig. 1.5.1 from BNF Latin 2612, 16v.



Fig. 1.5.2 from BNF Latin 17341, 64v.

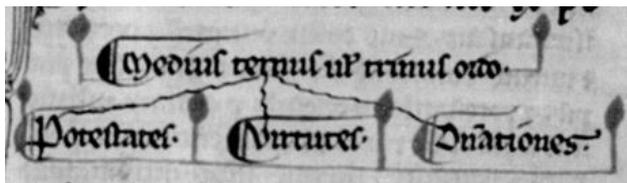


Fig. 1.5.3 from BNF Latin 17341, 65r.

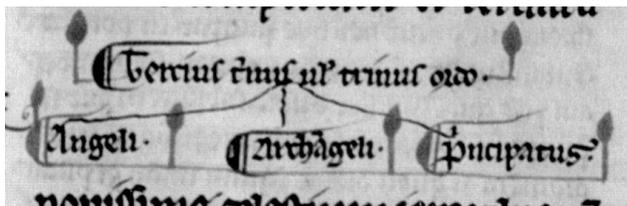


Fig. 1.5.4 from BNF Latin 17341, 65r.

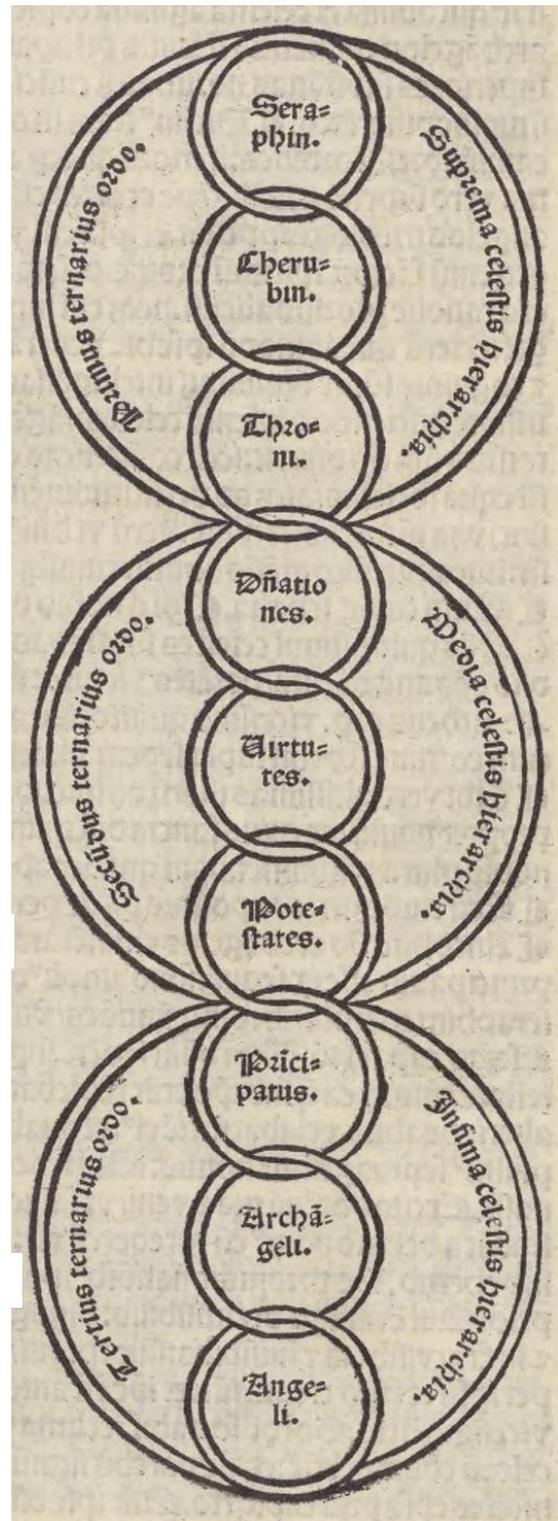


Fig. 1.5.5 from Theologia vivificans, 7v.

6. The scholia

The previous sections have unearthed medieval sources that Lefèvre used to revise Traversari's translation and to add diagrams to the edition. I shall now turn to one aspect of *Theologia vivificans* that sets it apart from the earlier Latin tradition. As Paul Rorem argues, most interpreters of the Dionysian corpus – both medieval and modern – overlook the topic of Biblical hermeneutics despite the central role that this theme plays in ps.-Dionysius's mystical theology.⁷⁹ In what follows, I shall argue that Lefèvre's commentary is an exception to Rorem's general characterisation of the reception of the Dionysian corpus. Already in the preface, Lefèvre portrayed ps.-Dionysius as an interpreter of Scripture: 'This celestial and supramundane theologian opened the divine ark and brought in sacred light in which we can contemplate the marvellous beauty of the unlocked scriptures.'⁸⁰ In other words, Dionysian hermeneutics was the key that could unlock the hidden meanings of Scripture. Lefèvre moreover stated that his scholia would elucidate this aspect of the Dionysian corpus:

I added scholia about the aim [*praecipua causa*] of the writings of the blessed father ... In this way it may be clearly understood that [ps.-Dionysius] brought out everything from sacred writings and their spiritual and enlivening meaning, just as he was taught by the blessed Paul, the divine Hierotheus, and the Holy Spirit who is greatest of all.⁸¹

This passage indicates two main points that Lefèvre wanted to make about the text. First, ps.-Dionysius 'brought out everything' from Scripture – namely, its full meaning.⁸² Second, this powerful hermeneutics was not ps.-Dionysius's invention but one acquired from two human teachers and the Holy Spirit. In what follows, I shall first discuss what Lefèvre says about the interpretation of scripture and then how he understands the pedagogical context of the apostolic era.

⁷⁹ Paul Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 3–10, 142–48.

⁸⁰ 'Hic autem caelestis et supramundanus theologus divinam arcam aperit et sacrum lumen infert, in quo reseratorum eloquiorum mirificum decorem contemplari valemus.' Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 62.

⁸¹ 'Nos ea quoque (post publicam ad Iesu vitae auctoris venerationem excogitatam utilitatem) praecipua de causa ad litteram beatissimi patris scholia adiecimus, ut cognoscatur aperte ex sacris litteris et earum spirituali et vivificante intelligentia (prout a beatissimo Paulo et divino Hierotheo et spiritu sancto, quod omnium maximum est, fuerat edoctus) omnia deprompsisse.' Rice, 64.

⁸² The formulation is somewhat ambiguous but the alternative interpretation – that everything in the Dionysian corpus is deduced from Scripture – is unlikely considering, for example, the focus on liturgy in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.

6.a Interpreting scripture

Scriptural interpretation has long been the dominant theme in historical research on Lefèvre's religious scholarship. Lefèvre later published several Biblical commentaries – notably, annotations on the Psalms in 1509 and a commentary on Paul's epistles in 1512.⁸³ In these writings he developed an idiosyncratic approach to Scriptural interpretation; in particular, he insisted that the true literal sense of Scripture coincided with its spiritual sense.⁸⁴ Guy Bedouelle's account of how Lefèvre interpreted Scripture recognised the influence of ps.-Dionysius on Lefèvre. Nevertheless, he considered the scholia to be too fragmentary to reveal much about the development of Lefèvre's hermeneutics.⁸⁵ I shall argue that Lefèvre's annotations, on the contrary, are deeply informative about Lefèvre's own Biblical studies as well as the lessons he took from ps.-Dionysius concerning the pious, apostolic mode of reading Scripture.

From a quantitative perspective, Lefèvre's scholia in *Theologia vivificans* are dominated by citations from the Bible. He supplied verses to which ps.-Dionysius explicitly referred, passages that were implied or echoed by ps.-Dionysius, and yet others that are better classified as associations – relating to a concept or person mentioned in the text. Whenever ps.-Dionysius was content to say 'you find this in Scripture,' Lefèvre gave multiple examples.⁸⁶ When ps.-Dionysius alluded to various Biblical accounts of angels, Lefèvre located the exact passages.⁸⁷ He even provided evidence from Scripture for doctrines only mentioned indirectly, for example when ps.-Dionysius wrote that during one ritual, deacons 'read out the true scriptural promises concerning our sacred resurrection.'⁸⁸ In his scholium, Lefèvre cited verses from Job 19, Psalm 145, Jeremiah 4, Ezekiel 37, Mark 12, Luke 14 and 20, John 5, 6, and 11, and I Cor. 15.⁸⁹ Apparently Lefèvre did not expect his reader to have a Bible at hand, since he provided both the reference and the full text in Latin translation.⁹⁰ Certain passages were even cited in full

⁸³ Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, ed., *Quincuplex psalterium. Gallicum. Romanum. Hebraicum. Vetus. Conciliatum*. (Paris: H. Estienne, 1509); Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Epistole divi Pauli apostoli cum commentariis* (Paris: H. Estienne, 1512).

⁸⁴ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 192–201; Payne, 'Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples as Interpreters of Paul', 66–68.

⁸⁵ Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures*, 44, 120–32, 164–65.

⁸⁶ *Theologia vivificans*, 14r. On ps.-Dionysius's references to Scripture, see Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, 11–26.

⁸⁷ *Theologia vivificans*, 3r et passim. Cf. Rorem 13.

⁸⁸ Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, 251.

⁸⁹ *Theologia vivificans*, 41v–42r.

⁹⁰ By contrast, later reprints of Lefèvre's edition often included the references but omitted full citations. See e.g. ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera*, tr. Traversari (Paris: A. Briere for A. Wechel, 1555).

multiple times.⁹¹ As a result, the reader of *Theologia vivificans* approached the writings of ps.-Dionysius surrounded by brief excerpts from Scripture.

This de-contextualised approach to Scripture was not only an effect of habit of annotation; it was part and parcel of ps.-Dionysius's hermeneutics. Ps.-Dionysius's method of interpretation focused on singular images or expressions rather than entire chapters, let alone books, of the Bible. The approach was explained in *The Divine Names*, which deals with expressions in Scripture that refer to God. Examples of divine names range from 'life' and 'wisdom' to ones that we might less readily apply to a divinity, such as when God is said to be a potter.⁹² In a scholium to ps.-Dionysius's Ninth Letter, Lefèvre filled more than five folio pages with a catalogue of thirty-six divine names, each exemplified by one or several quotations from the Bible.⁹³ Yet Lefèvre also set limits to *copia*. For example, he decided that it would take too long to collect all references to 'Holy of Holies' in books like Exodus and Leviticus. Neither could he gather every passage in Scripture that related to divine names like 'wisdom,' 'mind,' 'word' etc. However, he encouraged his readers to do so, saying that it would be a good exercise and that such collections of divine names are useful to have.⁹⁴

Lefèvre regarded the study of divine names as one way of approaching the spiritual meaning of Scripture. He claimed that it was the essence of the method that ps.-Dionysius had learnt from Paul, Hierotheus, and other theologians from the apostolic era.⁹⁵ Building on the text of ps.-Dionysius but adding some drama of his own, Lefèvre exclaimed:

You who love the contemplative life, bend your knees, humble your mind, and pray to the first entries of divine reading. Advance with awe and fear to worship the names of God, which will without doubt illuminate you when you are prepared in this way.⁹⁶

⁹¹ One example is as I Cor. 8:[6]: 'yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came', which resonated with the recurrent theme of unity and plurality in the Dionysian corpus, see *Theologia vivificans*, 59r.

⁹² e.g. *Theologia vivificans*, 74r-v.

⁹³ *Theologia vivificans*, 97r-100r. See also *ibid.* 19r-20r for a similar list.

⁹⁴ *Theologia vivificans*, 51r. 'Et nisi magis onerosum quam necessarium esse videretur, reliqua dei nomina quae consequenter exprimit – sapientia, mens, verbum, omnes thesauros sapientie et scientie absconditos in se habens, virtus, potens, rex regnum et quaeque sequentia – ex sacrarum litterarum autoritate suis locis fuissent restituta. Sed fortasse haec restituendi exercitatio aliis prodesse valebit neque inutilis aliis erit hic occupationis labor.'

⁹⁵ *Theologia vivificans*, 50v: 'deifica lumina: divinorum nominum illuminationes ex sacrarum litterarum spiritualibus intelligentiis desumptae. quemadmodum et beatissimo patri spiritalis preceptores eius apostoli, Paulus, Hierotheus, et alii sanctorum in illa plenitudine temporum viventium sacram humanissime communicarunt intelligentiam.'

⁹⁶ *Theologia vivificans*, 50v: 'vitae contemplatricis amatores: ad primos divinarum lectionum introitus genua submitte, submitte mentem et supplices. Cum reverentia et timore ad reverenda dei nomina accedite, quae vobis sic paratis proculdubio illucebunt.'

As this citation makes clear, Lefèvre regarded affect and piety as absolutely central to the understanding of Scripture. Studying divine names was a suitable focus for readers of Scripture since these terms highlighted God’s presence in the text. Moreover, Lefèvre emphasised that this form of reading – one centred on the spiritual meaning of the text – did not lead to quarrels. Although Lefèvre does not here fully spell out what type of theological controversies he rejected as ‘useless aporias,’ this statement resonates with his critique of scholastic method elsewhere. For Lefèvre, the contemplative way of interpreting divine names that he discovered in the writings of ps.-Dionysius appeared both more pious and more conciliatory.⁹⁷

Whereas Lefèvre was committed to restoring an apostolic method of reading Scripture he hesitated to say that a restoration of the Biblical text itself was necessary. When praising the greatness of early Christianity, Lefèvre claimed that the contemporaries of ps.-Dionysius had access to a more correct Biblical text compared to his own age.⁹⁸ However, he did not draw the conclusion that the Latin translation in current usage needed revising. This point of view would soon be associated with Erasmus, who published Lorenzo Valla’s *Annotations to the New Testament* in 1505 along with a preface defending revisions of the Latin Bible translation.⁹⁹

Lefèvre’s comments about Biblical translations in *Theologia vivificans* are evidence of a different attitude. As Lefèvre argued in his preface, ps.-Dionysius had used the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible, which sometimes differs from the common Latin text. This was an observation already made by John Scotus Eriugena. In his commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Eriugena contrasted a passage where the Latin translation attributed to Jerome differed from the Septuagint used by ps.-Dionysius. He concluded that the two different translations nevertheless had the same meaning (*unus tamen sensus in utrisque est*).¹⁰⁰ Lefèvre employed the same strategy. In the preface, he explained that ‘occasionally there is some difference [between the texts] but the Spirit brings agreement and life to everything.’¹⁰¹ In every scholium commenting on passages where the two translations of the Old Testament

⁹⁷ *Theologia vivificans*, 53v: ‘Et summopere de his altissimis et vivificantibus dei nominibus, in quibus summa illa divinitas omnem teletam voluit omnemque sanctificationem perfici, iurgia – quae graeci merito “apora” inutiliaque dicunt – minime suscitari debent. Hec enim digniora sunt quam quae in contentiones litigiosasque controversias veniant. Sed omni religione in silentio ... tam coniuncta quam discreta dei nomina profunda mente recondenda sunt et qui ad illa auditores accedunt velut ad aeternae vitae cibum: omni cum humilitate et veneratione accedant necesse est.’

⁹⁸ One good example is *Theologia vivificans*, 3v. See also *ibid.*, 16r.

⁹⁹ Alastair Hamilton, ‘Humanists and the Bible’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 110–13.

¹⁰⁰ John Scotus Eriugena, ‘Expositiones super Ierarchiam caelestem S. Dionysii’ in Heinrich Joseph Floss, ed., *Joannis Scoti opera quae supersunt omnia*, Patrologia latina 122 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1865), cols 201–202.

¹⁰¹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 65. ‘interdum aliquanta apparet varietas, sed spiritus omnia concordat et vivificat omnia.’

differed, Lefèvre argued that the two texts complemented and informed each other.¹⁰² In other words, textual differences posed no threat to religion, since the meaning of the text was guaranteed by the Holy Spirit.

This conviction remained fundamental to Lefèvre's own hermeneutics. In his first direct contribution to Biblical scholarship – the *Quincuplex Psalterium* from 1509 – Lefèvre stated his view that there was no literal sense of Scripture. The true literal meaning, he claimed, coincided with its spiritual sense.¹⁰³ Moreover, Lefèvre argued that meaning was not found mainly by locating the best edition or translation. Instead, one ought to study several different versions, which is why his edition of the Psalter included five different translations of the same text.¹⁰⁴ This is the logical conclusion of Lefèvre's view in *Theologia vivificans* that differences between the Septuagint and the Latin translation of the Old Testament are not textual problems that ought to be solved but rather sources of additional meaning. In Lefèvre's view, translations and texts should be accumulated and meaning should be sought in them together. This approach to translations was not only an integral part of the medieval study of Greek Fathers. It was also one that reflected Lefèvre's desire for a theology without quarrel and conflict.

6.b The apostolic community

One extended annotation to ps.-Dionysius's First Letter detailed many faults that Lefèvre saw in the contemporary church, such as the lack of respect for sacraments, ministers who did not guard from immorality, monks with material possessions and interests.¹⁰⁵ After painting a bleak picture of contemporary religious life, Lefèvre suggested calling a council that 'after having collated the present with antiquity... may bring that which is disorderly back to shape and order.'¹⁰⁶ In another annotation, he suggested that a council should review rituals and sacraments.¹⁰⁷ To this end, Lefèvre produced tables that listed each moment of rituals described by ps.-Dionysius in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In the second column he noted which ones were observed by the contemporary church. These tables encouraged more than one later reader

¹⁰² E.g. *Theologia vivificans*, 4r; 6r; 11r; 43v–44r; 66r.

¹⁰³ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 192–201; Payne, 'Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples as Interpreters of Paul', 66–68. Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures*, 44, 120–32, 164–65.

¹⁰⁴ 'Ceterum in unum corpus quinque psalteria redegeimus, Gallicum, Romanum, Hebraicum, Vetus et Conciliatum, ut ex eorum mutua invicem collatione iuventur ii quos similis indaginis cura mordebit, et ob id praeterea ut multi cantus ecclesiastici unde sumpti sint agnoscantur.' Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 196.

¹⁰⁵ *Theologia vivificans*, 82v.

¹⁰⁶ *Theologia vivificans*, 83r: 'Concilium convocate perquirite et arbitrium comittite sanctis viris ex deo non ex mundo sapientibus. Qui omni cura et diligentia presentibus cum antiquis collatis nunc ex maiori luce ad minorem nunc figuram et umbram in suam revocantes veritatem quod inordinatum est ad formam ordinemque redigant.'

¹⁰⁷ *Theologia vivificans*, 25r. One could say that the Council of Trent executed this plan as suggested by Cavazza, 'Platonismo e Riforma religiosa: La "Theologia vivificans" di Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples', 135.

to do the same: to compare in detail the practices described by ps.-Dionysius (and Lefèvre) with their own experience.¹⁰⁸ Although Lefèvre left it to councils to make recommendations for action, he thought that knowledge of apostolic times was essential to the process of reforming the church.

We have already seen that Lefèvre did not propose any reform of the Latin Bible analogous to his suggestions about the sacraments and other liturgical matters. He similarly had a more cautious attitude to the general question about how to study theology. He did not suggest that a council should review the program of studies at the Faculty of Theology to bring it in line with apostolic precedent. This could in part be explained by Lefèvre's status as a teacher in the Faculty of Arts: he lacked authority to suggest changes in one of the higher faculties of the University. By making works of apostolic theology available in print, Lefèvre hoped that people would nevertheless become converted to this approach.

From Lefèvre's scholia in the *Theologia vivificans*, we learn that he hoped to find many more works of apostolic theology. Ps.-Dionysius mentioned that he had written several treatises besides the four that are included in Lefèvre's edition. Lefèvre wrote that if only those writings appeared, 'they would undoubtedly bring life and enlightenment to the whole world.'¹⁰⁹ This line was repeated each time ps.-Dionysius mentioned works that he or his presumed teachers had written. When ps.-Dionysius referred to Bartholomew the Apostle and cited a few lines from him, Lefèvre added a prayer expressing his wish that some of Bartholomew's writings might have survived.¹¹⁰

The title page of *Theologia vivificans* doubled as an advertisement for the lost treatises of ps.-Dionysius. Lefèvre had made the unusual choice to list titles *not* included in the edition on this page. I discussed above one part of the allegorical woodcut illustration, namely the upper ring of 'solid food' that the eagles nibble on (Fig. 1.1). In the lower ring, on which the eagles balance, we read titles of treatises that ps.-Dionysius claimed to have written: 'An inestimable treasure that is either lost or hidden' (*infinitus thesaurus aut perditus aut absconditus*). The circle with the lost works is halfway sunk into the ground, as if it was buried beneath the foliage, perhaps signalling Lefèvre's hope that the treasure would one day be unearthed.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ One good example is a copy of Clichtove's expanded edition of *Theologia vivificans* from 1515 belonging to the Catholic University of Lyon (LFCC 146.A-1).

¹⁰⁹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 62. 'sufficere haud dubie possent ad totius orbis vivificam illuminationem'

¹¹⁰ *Theologia vivificans*, 79v: 'Et que vir iste divinus, unctusque dei apostolus, angelorum ut memoria proditum est familiaris collocutor: divina litterarum monumenta scripta reliquerit ad nostrorum temporum cognitionem non pervenerunt. Ihesu suprema bonitas dei: ut ne omnino perierint.'

¹¹¹ I don't insist that the woodcut was produced especially for this edition. The point is that it is well chosen to illustrate views about ps.-Dionysius that Lefèvre expressed elsewhere too.

In the meantime, Lefèvre tried to learn as much as possible about the apostolic theological community from the writings of ps.-Dionysius. Lefèvre noted with interest a ‘holy and elevated discussion’ between ps.-Dionysius and an unnamed colleague that is referred in *The Celestial Hierarchy*; Lefèvre considered this proof of the sublime theological understanding of the period.¹¹² Whereas Lefèvre could not find any works by Hierotheus or Bartholomew the Apostle, he had better luck with Ignatius of Antioch (d. 101), whom ps.-Dionysius cited in *The Divine Names* 709B. Lefèvre found a collection of letters attributed to him in an old Latin translation and published them after ps.-Dionysius’s writings.¹¹³ Ignatius provided Lefèvre with further proof of the deep spirituality of the period. Ignatius’s letters, Lefèvre wrote, were once read aloud to early Christian communities and ‘opened their hearts.’¹¹⁴

Lefèvre paid particularly close attention to ps.-Dionysius’s notes on his alleged teacher, Paul, and Hierotheus, a former student of Paul’s. Hierotheus, who is otherwise unknown, might simply be an invention by ps.-Dionysius.¹¹⁵ Lefèvre was less interested in Hierotheus than Paul. On one occasion when ps.-Dionysius mentioned a teacher without specifying if this was Hierotheus or Paul, Lefèvre remarked that it did not matter: Paul was in any case the ultimate source of their doctrine.¹¹⁶ In another instance, ps.-Dionysius cited an arrangement of angels that he attributed to his ‘famous teacher’ (again without further specification). Lefèvre was, however, convinced that it was Paul who had taught ps.-Dionysius about angels.¹¹⁷ He lamented the absence of surviving writings by Paul on this topic: ‘If only by the kindness of divine piety more [writings] remained for us. For we lack the Hebrew books that set these things out clearly.’¹¹⁸ As indicated by the last example, Lefèvre relied on ps.-Dionysius as a source for an otherwise lost doctrine of Paul.¹¹⁹ He also attributed some of ps.-Dionysius’s key ideas to Paul, taking his Letter to the Ephesians 1:21 as proof that Paul had promoted negative theology.¹²⁰

¹¹² *Theologia vivificans*, 15v: ‘sanctam et elevatam conferentiam.’

¹¹³ Rice, ‘The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity’, 142. See also Dennis E. Rhodes, ‘The Letters of St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch: The “Fortuna” of Their Fifteenth-Century Editions’, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 57, no. 2 (June 1963): 152–56.

¹¹⁴ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 72.

¹¹⁵ Ps.-Dionysius does not cite Paul more than other New Testament writings, see Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, 13–14.

¹¹⁶ *Theologia vivificans*, 23v at S. Lefèvre’s reference to a passage in Paul is rather stretched.

¹¹⁷ *Theologia vivificans*, 7v.

¹¹⁸ *Theologia vivificans*, 7r: ‘Quod dictum est propter Paulum ex cuius sancta disciplina sequentia deducit. et utinam divinae pietatis indultu nobis plura reliquisset. Nam qui hec aperte declarent, hebreorum libros non habemus.’

¹¹⁹ See also *Theologia vivificans*, 28v.

¹²⁰ *Theologia vivificans*, 90v.

Although Lefèvre's special fondness of Paul dominates his account of the apostolic theological community, the scholia to *Theologia vivificans* displays a considerable ability to enliven texts from a distant period. Lefèvre built on the mythology designed by ps.-Dionysius to invoke a thriving community of apostolic theologians. He claimed that they had all been engaged in the same pursuit of spiritual interpretation of Scripture. They used different names for it but meant the same thing. Paul called it 'vivifying' theology, whereas ps.-Dionysius wrote about an understanding that was 'cleansing, illuminating, or perfecting.'¹²¹ Lefèvre even found that the religious sect of *therapeutes* described by Philo practiced the same thing, although they called it allegorical or figurative understanding.¹²² Onto this distant and only fragmentarily known group of theologians from the apostolic period, Lefèvre projected concord.

7. Conclusion

This chapter has uncovered tensions within the *Theologia vivificans*. On the surface level, the edition appears guided by humanist allegiances. Lefèvre selected Traversari's *ad sensum* translation of ps.-Dionysius, corrected it against old manuscripts, and published the text without excessive commentary. When one looks closer, however, it becomes clear that Lefèvre at the time of his debut as a religious scholar – or an *editor ecclesiasticus*, to paraphrase Trithemius – was deeply immersed in traditional methods of translating and interpreting ps.-Dionysius. I have shown that Lefèvre's stylistic revisions of the translation recovered aspects of the familiar *ad verbum* renderings that Traversari had sought to avoid. Lefèvre's use of diagrams reveal his familiarity with the medieval Latin reception of ps.-Dionysius – he studied and edited ps.-Dionysius surrounded by the earlier Latin translations and commentaries.

The compromise between humanist and traditional approaches to ps.-Dionysius is a plausible explanation for the success of Lefèvre's edition. The title and allegorical imagery that Lefèvre chose were preserved in many sixteenth-century editions, not only in Paris but also abroad. The earliest reprints were published already in 1502. Georg Husner in Strasbourg reprinted *Theologia vivificans* entirely, including a copy of the characteristic titlepage woodcut, as part of his collection of old and new Latin translations of ps.-Dionysius's works. The same year, Johannes Tacuinus de Tridino published an edition in Venice that preserved the title *Theologia vivificans Cibus solidus* and copied the full text, including Lefèvre's prefatory

¹²¹ *Theologia vivificans*, 22v at A. Lefèvre gives no particular reference for his statement about Paul but is probably thinking of II Cor 3:6 [KJV:] 'the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.'

¹²² *Theologia vivificans*, 82v.

epistle, diagrams, and scholia.¹²³ Still in the 1550s, Annetus Briere in Paris printed Lefèvre's edition for various book sellers. These later, simple editions did not include woodcuts but preserved Lefèvre's introductory paratexts and the Scriptural references that he had added in the margins.¹²⁴ The *Theologia vivificans* itself survives in many copies.¹²⁵

Beyond seeking compromise between humanist and traditionalist methods of reading ps.-Dionysius, Lefèvre also brought to the edition a powerful conceptual angle expressed in both text and image. As I have shown, the title page illustrated the message that ps.-Dionysius's theology was 'vivifying' (*vivificans*) and nourishing. In his preface and scholia to the text, Lefèvre introduced ps.-Dionysius as the conveyor of an apostolic theology taught by Paul and ultimately originating with the Holy Spirit. This theology was fundamentally an approach to Scripture: a method of reading focused on God's presence in the text. For Lefèvre, a reverent reading of Scripture focused on 'divine names' was not only the best way to proper understanding of the Bible's spiritual meaning. It was also a pathway to a less contentious theological culture. This notion of apostolic theology – as a historical reality and as an ideal – was to play an important role in the Parisian theological landscape over the coming decades. It is to this wider context that we shall now turn.

¹²³ Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera*, tr. Traversari (Venice: J. Tacuinus de Tridino, 1502); Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera. Veteris et nove translationis. Etiam novissime ipsius marsilii ficini cum commentariis hugonis. Alberti. Thome. Ambrosii oratoris. Linconiensis. et vercellensis.* (Strasbourg: Georg Husner, 1502–1503). Strasbourg printers later used the characteristic title page woodcut in various other editions.

¹²⁴ See, for example, ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera*, tr. Traversari (Paris: A. Briere for A. Wechel, 1555).

¹²⁵ The high survival rate of *Theologia vivificans* was remarked upon by Denis Rhodes in 1963 with reference to the over ninety surviving copies then listed in the Gesamtkatalog (GKW 8409). Rhodes, 'The Letters of St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch', 156. The Incunabula Short Title Catalogue currently lists 107 holding institutions (<https://data.cerl.org/istc/id00240000>, 22 December 2021.) The catalogue includes five hundred other incunable editions that survive in equal or higher numbers than the *Theologia vivificans*, showing that the survival rate was high but not exceptional. Research on the survival of incunabula generally focus on those extant in low numbers or entirely lost. In this genre see Jonathan Green, Frank McIntyre, and Paul Needham, 'The Shape of Incunable Survival and Statistical Estimation of Lost Editions', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 105, no. 2 (1 June 2011): 141–75; Flavia Bruni and Andrew Pettegree, *Lost Books: Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO: PIOUS PEDAGOGY

1. Teaching at Cardinal Lemoine

During the years when Lefèvre was preparing and publishing the edition of ps.-Dionysius's writings, his main occupation was teaching Aristotelian philosophy at Collège de Cardinal Lemoine in Paris. Historians have long recognised that Lefèvre's religious scholarship and his work promoting educational reform were not entirely independent from each other. According to Augustin Renaudet, the two legs of Lefèvre's activities were both aimed at spiritual renewal.¹ More recently, Richard Oosterhoff has argued that Lefèvre's conception of teaching mathematics was inspired by late medieval movements of spiritual reform.² I shall argue that Lefèvre's theological interests shaped his teaching at Cardinal Lemoine in even more pervasive ways: that Lefèvre incorporated religious practices in the philosophical curriculum.

This chapter focuses on how Lefèvre and other teachers at the College theorised and taught metaphysics. While arts students spent more time on other disciplines, especially dialectic and natural philosophy, metaphysics nevertheless played an important part in the philosophical curriculum. During their final year, students were introduced to Aristotle's ethical thought and his *Metaphysics*. The latter branch of philosophy had long been considered propaedeutic to theology – after all, Aristotle had described metaphysics as a 'divine science'³ – yet late medieval teachers in Paris cautiously refrained from making the connections to theology explicit in their teaching. In the distinction of Charles Lohr, they propagated a vision of metaphysics as a 'science of being.' Going against this consensus, Lefèvre embraced the view of metaphysics as a 'science of God.'⁴

For Lefèvre, metaphysics became another way of 'searching God' besides the study of Scripture. I will suggest that two elements are particularly crucial for illuminating how Lefèvre's study of ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite informed his methods of teaching metaphysics. First, Lefèvre prescribed a pious approach to the discipline and to the text of the *Metaphysics* itself. As with someone setting out to interpret Scripture, the student of

¹ Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme*.

² Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, 25–55.

³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 983a.

⁴ Charles H. Lohr, 'Metaphysics', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 537–638.

metaphysics needed a suitable attitude and a practice of spiritual exercises, including prayer.⁵ Second, Lefèvre suggested using a contemplative method for bringing metaphysics to bear on Christian doctrine, drawing on theorists of theological contemplation including ps.-Dionysius and Ramon Lull (ca. 1232–1315).

Beyond exploring Lefèvre’s ideas about metaphysics, this chapter aims to investigate how the subject was taught at the Cardinal Lemoine in the decades around 1500. Textbooks are particularly useful for learning about the educational ideas of Lefèvre and his colleagues. But how much do such sources tell us about what went on in classrooms? One might question whether Lefèvre’s *Introduction to metaphysics* (1494), for example, is at all useful for learning about the ways in which Lefèvre taught students at Cardinal Lemoine.⁶ I shall suggest that in this case, it is possible to go from textbook to classroom. We know that Lefèvre used his own manuals in the classroom.⁷ It would therefore be misguided to distinguish strongly between ideas expressed in textbooks and educational practice. Furthermore, there are additional sources available to corroborate how Lefèvre’s ideas and practices influenced his students and colleagues, including their printed treatises about metaphysics, testimony, as well as course notes taken by Beatus Rhenanus in 1504.

In the last part of the chapter, I shall introduce a previously unnoticed phenomenon with important consequences for our understanding of philosophical studies at Cardinal Lemoine. Drawing on letters and a register of studies from 1512–1514, I show that teachers at Cardinal Lemoine offered postgraduate courses in philosophy for students who had already received their MA. Piecing together the surviving evidence for the nature of these courses, I suggest that the more advanced courses in contemplative metaphysics discussed in the chapter were likely directed primarily to this group of students. This indicates a practical purpose for the advanced study of metaphysics as a means of bridging the arts curriculum and the varied religious professions taken on by students of the Cardinal Lemoine.

The organisation of the teaching of philosophy at the University of Paris

In order to assess the character and novelty of the Cardinal Lemoine’s course in metaphysics, it is useful to first establish how metaphysics was usually taught and what freedom individual

⁵ On ‘spiritual exercises’ in the history of philosophy, see Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁶ On the difficulties of reaching classroom reality, see Anthony Grafton, ‘Teacher, Text and Pupil in the Renaissance Class-Room: A Case Study from a Parisian College’, *History of Universities* I (1981): 37–70. On textbooks in this period see also Emidio Campi et al., eds., *Scholarly Knowledge: Textbooks in Early Modern Europe* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2008).

⁷ Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*.

teachers had in shaping the course. During the late fifteenth century, the organisation of philosophical teaching had changed in important ways. Previously, the courses were offered centrally by the Faculty of Arts. But due to rising student numbers towards the later middle ages, teaching migrated into colleges such as Collège de Cardinal Lemoine. Founded by Jean Lemoine in 1302, the college was originally designed to support students from the region of Picardy at the University of Paris by providing room, board, and community. Alongside paying students and masters, the recipients of endowed scholarships lived a communal life while preparing for exams in arts and theology.⁸ During the second half of the fifteenth century, the college also took charge of providing teaching. By 1500, only the lectures in ethics were still offered at the Faculty. At Cardinal Lemoine six regent masters of philosophy lectured and guided students through set texts introducing dialectic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. In this way, Cardinal Lemoine became one of several colleges offering a *cursus artium* within its walls.⁹

This did not mean that colleges had complete liberty in shaping the course. The Faculty of Arts still selected the texts and even prescribed pedagogical practices. For example, the updated regulations from 1452 required teachers to comment on Aristotle ‘chapter by chapter’ and prohibited them from repeating someone else’s commentary. Lessons were supposed to reflect what the masters themselves knew and were capable of (*quod per seipsos sciant et valeant*).¹⁰ A different set of constraints was the result of regulations around exams. Students were tested in disputations led by impartial examiners. Additionally, the more advanced students attended the disputations of masters at the Faculty of Arts, where they had to take part (*respondere*) in order to qualify for taking the licentiate exam.¹¹ To prepare for these disputations, the colleges

⁸ On the institution Cardinal Lemoine, see especially Nathalie Gorochov, ‘Le Collège du Cardinal Lemoine au XVI^e siècle’, *Paris et Ile-de-France* 42 (1991): 219–59; Marie-Madeleine Compère, ‘Cardinal Lemoine’, in *Les Collèges français 16^e–18^e siècle Répertoire 3 - Paris* (Paris: INRP, 2002), 130–38.

⁹ A very good summary of this development is Marie-Madeleine Compère, ‘Les collèges de l’Université de Paris au XVI^e siècle: structure institutionnelle et fonctions éducatives’, in *I Collegi Universitari in Europa tra il XIV^e e il XVIII^e secolo*, ed. D. Maffei and Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (Milan: Giuffrè, 1991), 101–18.

¹⁰ Guillaume d’Estouteville, ‘Reformatio Universitatis Parisiensis (1452)’, in *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. Heinrich Denifle and Emile Chatelaine, vol. 4 (Paris: Fratres Delalain, 1897), 727. On the rules about dictation, see Ann Blair, ‘Textbooks and Methods of Note-Taking in Early Modern Europe’, in *Scholarly Knowledge: Textbooks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Emidio Campi et al. (Geneva: Droz, 2008), 45–47.

¹¹ On the disputations, see Estouteville and on the importance of choosing the right examiner, see e.g. Estouteville, ‘CUP IV. 2690: Reformatio Universitatis Parisiensis (1452)’, 729. On the form of disputation used in these examinations, see Olga Weijers, *In Search of the Truth: A History of Disputation Techniques from Antiquity to Early Modern Times* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 127–28, 135–36.

provided practice sessions. Even at Cardinal Lemoine, where some masters expressed disdain for certain types of scholastic disputation, students had to participate in such exercises.¹²

Within the constraints just described, the new *collège d'exercice* catalysed pedagogical innovation. Collèges began to offer courses in humanities, such as Latin grammar, rhetoric, and Greek. As Marie-Madelaine Compère argues, competition amongst colleges for paying students appear to have influenced this development.¹³ The flourishing of Cardinal Lemoine during Lefèvre's regency and beyond fits well into the narrative of a diversified educational landscape. For example, Richard Oosterhoff shows that Lefèvre promoted an intensified study of mathematics – a discipline that had received relatively little attention in the medieval University of Paris.¹⁴ Lefèvre's philosophical textbooks have long been recognised as milestones in their genre.¹⁵ While following the curriculum decided by the Faculty of Arts and continuing to prepare students for centrally organised examinations, Lefèvre and his colleagues at the Cardinal Lemoine were able to offer a specific approach to the arts curriculum. As we shall see, this included their promotion of piety and religious practices as part of the philosophical curriculum.

Metaphysics was a small but important part of the curriculum for students of arts at the University of Paris. After studies in dialectic, ethics, and natural philosophy, students read selected parts of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Books 1–6.¹⁶ The dominant approach to the *Metaphysics* in late medieval Paris is well known from Paul Bakker's study of six fifteenth-century commentaries on this text. Bakker illuminates two aspects of teaching particularly relevant to our present concerns.¹⁷ First, he shows that fifteenth-century Parisian teachers generally discussed a coherent set of topics. Students were taught to reason around questions

¹² On these exercises, see Weijers, *In Search of the Truth*, 123. Lefèvre's collaborator Josse Clichtove discussed such disputations in his introduction to dialectic, see E. J. Ashworth, 'Renaissance Man as Logician: Josse Clichtove (1472–1543) on Disputations', *History and Philosophy of Logic* 7, no. 1 (January 1986): 15–29.

¹³ Compère, 'Les collèges de l'Université de Paris au XVIe siècle'.

¹⁴ See Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, 27–38.

¹⁵ Charles B. Schmitt, 'The Rise of the Philosophical Textbook', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 792–804; Eckhard Kessler, 'Introducing Aristotle to the 16th Century: The Lefèvre Enterprise', in *Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Conversations with Aristotle*, ed. Constance Blackwell and Sachiko Kusukawa (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); David Lines, 'Lefèvre and French Aristotelianism on the Eve of the Sixteenth Century', in *Der Aristotelismus in der Frühen Neuzeit – Kontinuität oder Wiederaneignung?*, ed. Günter Frank and Andreas Speer (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007); Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*.

¹⁶ That Parisian teachers skipped over parts of the *Metaphysics* is clear from George de Bruxelles and Thomas Bricot, *Textus abbreviatus in cursum totius physices et metaphysicorum Aristotelis* (Paris: W. Hopyl and J. Higman, 1494), 158v, 'Residuum, quia tamen de opinionibus antiquorum est, Parisii non legitur' and ibid. 161v: 'Tercius liber, quia nihil in eo resolutorie dictum est, parisii non legitur.'

¹⁷ On why these commentaries were probably teaching manuals, see Paul J.J.M. Bakker, 'Fifteenth-Century Parisian Commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*', in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. Fabrizio Amerini and Gabriele Galluzzo (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 611–12.

including: What kind of knowledge is metaphysics? What is its subject-matter? Can humans know separate substances? What is the relationship between ‘being’ and ‘unity’?¹⁸ Second, the commentaries surveyed by Bakker all emphasised the distinction between metaphysics and theology. Bakker shows that the Parisian masters consistently defined the subject-matter of metaphysics as ‘being *qua* being’ (*ens inquantum ens*). The commentators admitted that metaphysics was relevant for understanding God only in so far as divine being is either univocal or analogous (depending on one’s ontology) with the being of substances. In their argumentation, several commentators explicitly rejected an alternative position that they associated with the twelfth-century Aristotelian Ibn Rushd (Averroes) – namely, that the subject-matter of metaphysics was ‘God and the immaterial intelligences.’¹⁹ Bakker’s study thus confirms Charles Lohr’s thesis that fifteenth-century Parisian masters, following the ideas of Thomas of Aquinas, emphasised the distinction between secular and religious knowledge by maintaining the conception of metaphysics as the ‘science of being.’²⁰ That definition of metaphysics and pedagogical approach were both completely overturned in Lefèvre’s introductory textbook in metaphysics.

2. Dialogues on metaphysics (1494)

Lefèvre’s *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis* (1494) openly and repeatedly announced that it abandoned the secular approach to the subject.²¹ The title page described metaphysics as ‘the theology of philosophers.’²² The colophon alluded to the merging of metaphysics and Christian theology by stating that the year of imprint was ‘the year of the Lord’ and also ‘the year of the being of beings and of the greatest good.’ The dedicatory letter to Germain de Ganay called Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* ‘a work of theology’ and argued that philosophers were the ‘priests and prophets’ of ancient Greece. In a remarkable move of philosophical piety – of which we shall see much more of in this chapter – Lefèvre prayed that ‘the highest being... illuminate all readers and lift them up to meditate great things.’²³

¹⁸ See the compilation of questions in Bakker, 619–29.

¹⁹ Bakker, 585–91.

²⁰ Lohr suggests that Parisian masters returned to the Thomist view in connection with the Council of Basel (1431–1449), see Lohr, ‘Metaphysics’, 600.

²¹ Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis* (Paris, 1494). The imprint is attributed to Johann Higman, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 20.

²² Lefèvre d’Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, title page: ‘hec introductio... in theologiam philosophorum pandit auditum.’

²³ The preface is edited in Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 20–22. Rice, 21: ‘Oroque supplex ipsum summum bonum, summe ens, atque summe unum quo de per totum agitur: ut omnibus legentibus illuceat: et ex parva occasione ad magna et digna ipso contemplanda feliciter rapiat ac euevet.’

The theological orientation of Lefèvre's textbook in metaphysics has not gone unnoticed by scholars. Augustin Renaudet cited the textbook as an example of Lefèvre's concern with reconciling Aristotelianism and Christianity.²⁴ The wider educational context and the consequences of Lefèvre's break with the local metaphysical tradition have, however, not been investigated. Ideas about teaching are central to Lefèvre's textbook, which innovates in terms of genre as well as in the presentation of the subject. I suggest that *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis* contains the recipe of a pious pedagogy: a set of practices that would guide student's attitude and, moreover, gestures towards a gradual transition from studies in philosophy to theology that, as we shall see later in the chapter, reflect educational practice at Cardinal Lemoine.

Lefèvre's textbook is revelatory of his pedagogical ideas in part because it is highly self-referential: it is a book that teaches how to study – and teach – an introductory textbook to *Metaphysics* I–VI. The textbook consists of two parts, the first of which is a ten-page summary of the Aristotelian text. This epitome briefly introduces important themes of the relevant books, lists questions relating to the text, and provides the information necessary to answer them.²⁵ Unlike in the fifteenth-century commentaries investigated by Bakker, Lefèvre did not provide arguments for and against different responses to the questions. There were, however, right answers. Lefèvre only used polar questions and provided a key in the preface to the epitome. Questions containing the conjunction 'an' or 'nunquid' should be answered in the negative and any other question should be answered affirmatively. To answer the question, the student should draw on a specific paragraph in the epitome.²⁶ In this way, Lefèvre began to teach his audience how to read the epitome.

The same concern guided the second part of the textbook: four dialogues featuring an inexperienced student of metaphysics (Neanias) and a teacher (Theoreticus).²⁷ The first dialogue begins when Theoreticus meets Neanias, who is studying a book that he has borrowed from a friend, which turns out to be Lefèvre's epitome. Theoreticus agrees to explain the book

²⁴ Augustin Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris, pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494–1527)*, second revised edition (Paris: Librairie d'Argences, 1958), 154.

²⁵ On Lefèvre's ideas about epitomes, brevity, and memorisation, see Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, 100–103.

²⁶ Lefèvre d'Étapes, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis* (1494), sig. bi. Text from Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 22. 'Admonuit me preterea legentes monere, fronti praefixam Isagogen, quo facile memoriae mandetur, in artificio esse constitutam, et quaestiones per an et nunquid responsonem exigere negativam, et contra negativas affirmativam; et earum dilutiones propriis elementis suo ordine paragraphis distinctis esse quaerendas.'

²⁷ On the use of the dialogue format, see Luca Bianchi, 'From Jacques Lefèvre d'Étapes to Giulio Landi: Uses of the Dialogue in Renaissance Aristotelianism', in *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000), 41–58.

to Neanias, which he goes on to do in the following dialogues. In this way, Lefèvre dramatised the use of the epitome in teaching. As Lefèvre announced in the preface, the dialogues showed ‘how one should ask and teach those being asked.’²⁸ The dialogue form furthermore meant that the book was instructive for both students and teachers, who could read it from different perspectives: ‘Someone about to take on the duty of teaching may see himself in Theoreticus. An upright young man about to be taught may think of himself as Neanias or Eutycherus.’ According to Lefèvre, the dialogues provided an ideal to which teachers and students should aspire and at the same time introduced more fully the arguments so briefly stated in the epitome.

2.a Aristotle as theologian

It was not in the epitome but in the dialogues that Lefèvre introduced the pious dimension of metaphysics. His two main characters were attentive to the religious significance of metaphysical concepts like ‘the one’ and ‘the being of beings.’ Most strikingly, such concepts frequently moved teacher and student to prayer. These prayers, as Oosterhoff points out, transcend the usual boundaries of arts philosophy.²⁹ Oosterhoff argues that they constitute a form of theurgy aimed at the successful instruction of Neanias. On several occasions, Theoreticus explicitly asks for illumination and for Neanias to receive help on his path towards metaphysical insight. By intercepting the flow of questions and replies, the prayers make room for divine grace in the quest for wisdom.³⁰

However, a different pedagogical function emerges when we consider how prayer is introduced in the first dialogue. At this point, Neanias has just spoken in praise of sight, ending his discourse with gratitude: ‘And whenever I turn my eyes to that lucid region of the blessed beings... I thank the good founder of nature who adorned me with eyes so that I can see that happy region.’³¹ Theoreticus responds to Neanias with encouragement but also suggests a correction (*potius dicere debuisses...*). In what follows Theoreticus teaches Neanias a superior way of giving thanks. He addresses the object of gratitude directly: ‘Oh, you best and most

²⁸ Lefèvre d’Étapes, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, sig. bi v. The dialogue format will show ‘qui docturi erunt quo pacto interrogare debeant interrogataque docere et similiter utiliter discipulo consules & docenti.’ On the related theme of friendship and collaborative truth-seeking in Lefèvre’s dialogues, see Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, 184–85.

²⁹ Richard J. Oosterhoff, ‘Jacques Lefèvre d’Étapes and Charles de Bovelles on Platonism, Theurgy, and Intellectual Difficulty’, in *Plotinus’ Legacy: The Transformation of Platonism from the Renaissance to the Modern Era*, ed. Stephen H. Gersh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 86 et passim.

³⁰ Oosterhoff, 86–88.

³¹ Lefèvre d’Étapes, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, [Dialogue] I. [section] 21: ‘Et revera quotiens ad lucidam illam beatissimorum entium regionem visum attollo: oculos ipsos diligo agoque gratias optimo nature parenti: quod me luminibus ad illam felicem regionem induendam ornaverit.’

blessed residents of this lucid region!’ Whereas Neanias expressed gratitude for his ability to see the heavens, Theoreticus emphasises that human sight is weak and that human beings can only glimpse the ‘blessed region’ through divine illumination.³² Finally, Theoreticus describes the appropriate posture for such prayer: extended arms and locked hands.

The first instance of prayer in the dialogues is a lesson to Neanias. Theoreticus teaches him how to improve and express his piety. Subsequent occasions for prayer confirm that Neanias learned the lesson. In the next case, Neanias asks that he may be raised to God out of his fragility and infirmity. Theoreticus confirms that he is on the right track: ‘Your wish is pious.’³³

For Theoreticus piety had already been an integral part of metaphysics in antiquity. In the dialogues, Lefèvre thus outlined an unusually far-reaching form of *prisca theologia*.³⁴ He did not only claim that philosophers approximated some Christian truths by reason. He suggested that they also participated in similar pious behaviours. According to Theoreticus, Aristotle did not only discover that the being of beings (*ens entium*) is one and that it is found everywhere, but he revered it:

Theoreticus: ‘To this being of beings ... Aristotle used to entrust himself and beg for its mercy... Why should we not entrust our prayers to it?’

Neanias: ‘We should pray.’

Theoreticus: ‘And now we entrust ourselves: O being of beings ... open for us the path and entry to you...’³⁵

The image of Aristotle praying to the ‘being of beings’ acts as a powerful *exemplum* in Lefèvre’s pious pedagogy.³⁶

According to Lefèvre’s dialogues, the inherent piety of metaphysics is discovered through diligent study. This developmental aspect is illustrated through a third character, a more

³² Lefèvre d’Étapes, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, I. 21. ‘O vos beatissimi et optimi huius lucidissime regionis cives et incolae’

³³ Lefèvre d’Étapes, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, I. 33: ‘Pium tuum desiderium.’

³⁴ On ideas about *prisca theologia* in Renaissance France, see D. P. Walker, ‘The Prisca Theologia in France’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 17, no. 3/4 (1954): 204–59.

³⁵ Lefèvre d’Étapes, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, II. 16: ‘T: Quid nos, O Neania, nos ne debemus ipsi supplices commendare? N: Debemus supplices. T: Et ex nunc commendamus: O ens entium... pande nobis ad te viam et accessum.’

³⁶ See also Lefèvre’s preface to the textbook in moral philosophy, in which he says that Aristotle ‘Fuit namque in Logicis rationalis subtilissimus, in Physicis mundanus philosophus, in Ethicis totus prudens et activus, in Politicis iuris consultus, in Metaphysicis sacerdos aequae theologus.’ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 23.

advanced student named Eutycherus, whom Neanias invites to join the conversation.³⁷ Eutycherus is considerably more receptive to the religious dimension of metaphysics than Neanias. This is clear from his reaction after Theoreticus introduced Aristotle's discussion of opposites in *Metaphysics* IV. Having listened to Theoreticus, Eutycherus exclaims: 'Oh Theoreticus, you have brought me joy through your way of talking about one and many, indivisible and divisible, the same and different, similar, dissimilar, rest and movement.'³⁸ Theoreticus confirms that there is a 'sublime and steep contemplation stemming from these things.' Neanias, however, is not yet ready for such contemplation. At this point, Theoreticus outlines a path of metaphysical exploration leading beyond the epitome and the dialogues. According to Theoreticus, finding this more pious and joyous dimension of metaphysics requires long contemplation of metaphysical concepts like *ens*, *unum*, *bonum*, *verum*, *plenum*, *potens*, *necessarium*, *sapiens*, and *vivens*, and also pairs of opposites like one-many, indivisible-divisible, same-other, like-unlike, and rest-movement. As Theoreticus explains to Neanias, he must often turn these over in his mind and 'seek their meaning through skilful inquiry.'³⁹

Having outlined a path of contemplative metaphysics, Theoreticus returns to Lefèvre's epitome. An introductory textbook is not the right place for a deeper discussion of the contemplative potential of metaphysics. Yet the episode plays an important programmatic role by indicating the religious *telos* of metaphysics – an ideal that, as we shall see, resonated with Lefèvre's colleagues at Cardinal Lemoine.

2.b Aristotle vs Lull

Charles Lohr's overview of Renaissance metaphysics does not discuss Lefèvre, yet his case fits perfectly into Lohr's narrative about the intellectual influences that guided opposing views. According to Lohr, the opposition between those understanding metaphysics as a 'science of being' and those characterising it as a 'science of God' does not simply map onto the humanist

³⁷ This description of Eutycherus is found in Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, III.6 and III. 9.

³⁸ Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, III: 17: 'Eu. affecisti me gaudio O Theoretice: cum de uno et multis, indivisibili et divisibili, eodem et altero, simili, dissimili, statu et motu ita disseruisti.'

³⁹ Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, III: 17–18: 'The. sublimis et ardua quae ex illis pendet O eutychere contemplatio: sed quam oia nostra et cum neania susceptum introductorie disputationis officium impresentiarum pertractare non sinunt. Proderit tamen Neanie sepius hec elementa ens, unum, bonum, verum, plenum, potens, necessarium, sapiens, vivens: insuper unum multa, indivisibile divisibile, idem alterum, simile dissimile, statum et motum mente revolvere: et eam (quam divina requirunt) solerti indagine queritare intelligentiam. nos ergo (si vobis gratum est) ad aperiendam litteram convertamus.'

debates about the relative superiority of Aristotle and Plato. According to Lohr, the theological view of metaphysics was distinctly Christian and deeply ingrained in the Latin tradition. He associated it in particular with the Catalan philosopher Ramon Lull. The Renaissance ‘battle’ between Aristotle and Plato, in so far as it pertained to metaphysics, played out within an older opposition between Aristotelian scholasticism and the Lullist tradition. Nicholas of Cusa, Lohr argues, approached the ‘Plato vs. Aristotle’ debate from a perspective informed by Ramon Lull, Anselm of Canterbury, and the Chartres theologians.⁴⁰

In this short section, I shall make the case that Lefèvre’s approach to metaphysics is shaped by his reading of Ramon Lull more deeply than Platonist influences.⁴¹ In doing so, I contribute to the shift already begun in recent scholarship on the Fabrist circle of revising the older tendency to see them as heirs and followers to Ficino and other Italian Platonists.⁴² Jean-Marc Mandosio has traced with precision how Lefèvre became increasingly sceptical of Ficino, culminating in his remarks against Platonising interpretations of ps.-Dionysius in *Theologia vivificans*.⁴³ A recent article by Oosterhoff effectively reframes the ‘Plotinian echoes’ found by Françoise Joukovsky in writings by Lefèvre and his circle. These echoes, which have often been interpreted as signs of a Platonist revival in France, are the result of complex, indirect transmission through authors including ps.-Dionysius and Cusanus.⁴⁴

The case that Lefèvre’s dialogues on metaphysics are ‘Platonising’ Aristotle is not entirely without merit. There are clear intertextual links to Plato in the dialogues, including in Neanias’s and Theoreticus’s first prayers about the infirmity of human eyes. This first clear ‘pious’ moment in the dialogues recalls the analogy of the sun from Plato’s *Republic*.⁴⁵ The most striking connection to Ficinian Platonic revival is, however, the dedicatee of the dialogues, Germain de Ganay, who corresponded with Italian Platonists like Marsilio Ficino and Francesco Cattani da Diacceto. Ganay owned and studied Ficino’s translation of ps.-

⁴⁰ Lohr, ‘Metaphysics’, 565.

⁴¹ Scholarship on the reception of Ramon Lull in Lefèvre’s circle includes Joseph M. Victor, ‘The Revival of Lullism at Paris, 1499–1516’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (December 1975): 504–34; Joseph M. Victor, ‘Charles de Bovelles and Nicholas de Pax: Two Sixteenth-Century Biographies of Ramon Lull’, *Traditio* 32 (1976): 313–45; Richard J. Oosterhoff, ‘Idiotae, Mathematics, and Artisans: The Untutored Mind and the Discovery of Nature in the Fabrist Circle’, *Intellectual History Review* 24, no. 3 (2014): 301–19.

⁴² Walter Mönch, *Die italienische Platonrenaissance und ihre Bedeutung für Frankreichs Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte (1450–1550)* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1936).

⁴³ On Lefèvre’s shifting view of Ficino, see Jean-Marc Mandosio’s *Introduction* in Lefèvre d’Étaples, *La magie naturelle 1. L’Influence des astres*, xxxvii–xli. See also above Chapter 1, section 3.

⁴⁴ Richard J. Oosterhoff, ‘Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples and Charles de Bovelles on Platonism, Theurgy, and Intellectual Difficulty’. See Françoise Joukovsky, *Le regard intérieur: thèmes plotiniens chez quelques écrivains de la Renaissance française* (Paris: Nizet, 1982). Jean-Marie Le Gall’s account of the affinities between monasticism and Fabrist ‘neoplatonists’ relies very heavily on Joukovsky’s ‘echoes,’ see Jean-Marie Le Gall, *Les moines au temps des réformes: France (1480–1560)* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2001), 207–9.

⁴⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 508 A–D.

Dionysius's *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*,⁴⁶ as well as Ficino's commentary to Paul's epistles.⁴⁷ He moreover convinced Janus Lascaris to produce translations of *The Orphic Hymns*, Proclus's hymns, and *The Magical Oracles of the Magi of Zoroaster*.⁴⁸ The dialogues on natural magic that Lefèvre dedicated to Germain, and in which the latter was an interlocutor, framed magic as the 'Chaldean' equivalent of Greek philosophy.⁴⁹ Lefèvre could safely assume that Germain would appreciate a textbook that presented metaphysics as 'the theology of philosophers.'

Historians have long recognised that the network of Germain was valuable for Lefèvre's project of educational reform.⁵⁰ Accounts from the 1490s portray Germain's house in Paris as a meeting point for local and travelling humanists.⁵¹ In one letter to Germain, Lefèvre listed humanists he considered as allies in his philosophical reformation, many of whom moved in Germain's circle.⁵² In addition to these known facts about Lefèvre's relationship with Ganay, I have been able to find evidence that Germain's brother, Jean, was directly involved with supporting Cardinal Lemoine and the Picard nation. This is clear from a letter by Jean Molinier, who succeeded Lefèvre as regent master of the College.⁵³ Writing to Jean de Ganay, Molinier mentioned that he regularly went to him for advice on College business:

⁴⁶ BNF MS Latin 2613. On Germain's annotations in this manuscript, see Toussaint, 'L'Influence de Ficin à Paris et le Pseudo-Denys des humanistes: Traversari, Cusain, Lefèvre d'Étapes. Suivi d'un passage inédit de Marsile Ficin', 401–4.

⁴⁷ BL MS Harley 4695.

⁴⁸ Gentile, 'Giano Lascaris, Germain de Ganay e la "prisca theologia" in Francia'.

⁴⁹ Germain de Ganay was the dedicatee and interlocutor in Lefèvre's work on natural magic, in which L. claims that magicians were the Chaldean equivalent of Greek philosophers, albeit with a more practical orientation. cf. *La Magie naturelle*, 1.

⁵⁰ Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris, pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494–1527)*, 413.

⁵¹ Eugene F. Rice, 'The Patrons of French Humanism, 1490–1520', in *Renaissance: Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, ed. Anthony Molho and John A. Tedeschi (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), 691. The main contemporary account of a salon organised by Germain de Ganay is the preface of Guy Jouenneaux to his commentary to Terence, in which he refers to *litterata convivia*, see James H. Kim On Chong-Gossard, 'The Pope's Shoes: The Scope of Glosses in Guido Juvenalis's Commentary on Terence', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 27, no. 2 (1 June 2020): 200–201. Fra Giocondo's lectures in Paris in 1503, attended by both Lefèvre and Budé, were possibly at the house of Germain de Ganay, see Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, 224.

⁵² Lefèvre mentioned Fausto Andrelini, Janus Lascaris, Giovanni Giocondo, Paulo Emilio, Hermonymus of Sparta, and Guillaume Budé in his corollary to Germain de Ganay in Aristotle, *Libri logicorum ad archteypos recogniti cum novis ad litteram commentariis*, ed. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étapes and Josse Clichtove (Paris: W. Hopyl and H. Estienne, 1503), 77v–78v.

⁵³ On Molinier (also known as 'de Molendino'), see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 108. Information from the Register of studies (to be discussed below in section 4.b) updates the biography as follows: Molinier was not a former student of Lefèvre as Eugene Rice supposed. He had studied at Navarre, and thereafter taught grammar and eventually philosophy in Collège de Bourgogne before teaching at the Cardinal Lemoine. Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 109. A certificate from 31 December 1512 claims that Molinier **recently** (*nuper*) became 'primarius' of Cardinal Lemoine. He was now also a canon in Tours, see Farge, 239.

I often went to your house because I entrusted the Cardinal College to you as its highest protector. I know that you by no means scorn the college, both because of its unusual renown for good teaching and because of Lefèvre d'Étaples, easily the prince of philosophers. Frequently I also humbly entrusted business among the professors of the Picard nation to your loyalty. And I was never received with less than matchless kindness, which you particularly show towards men of letters.⁵⁴

The letter to Jean de Ganay indicates that Lefèvre's philosophical teaching was a particular asset to Cardinal Lemoine and to the Picard nation; their good reputation in humanist circles earned them access to advice from a leading figure in French politics.

Considering all of this: should we read the textbook with its references to ancient theology and contemplative metaphysics as an attempt to catch the attention of a patron with connections to Italian Platonists? Several things speak against this view. First, the only explicit discussion of Platonic ideas in Lefèvre's dialogues does not end in an endorsement. At the very end of the last dialogue, Theoreticus briefly discusses the differences between the Platonists' conception of 'the One' and Aristotle's metaphysics. Lefèvre's account here recalls a dictum cited elsewhere in his teaching: 'Plato descends. Aristotle ascends.'⁵⁵ What this means is that Plato and Aristotle are largely in agreement about the nature of reality and the relationship between the sensible and the intelligible but use different methods to get there. As Oosterhoff points out, Theoreticus speaks dismissively of how according to Plato a lion standing in front of you is not real but only an image of the divine exemplar.⁵⁶ For Theoreticus this approach misses the usefulness of sensible reality, which the Aristotelian method takes as a starting point for contemplation that eventually reaches divine unity, goodness, and truth.⁵⁷

Second, later writings of Lefèvre suggest a different genealogy of his ideas. In 1505 he edited Ramon Lull's *Liber contemplationis quae fit in deo*. In the prefatory epistle, Lefèvre

⁵⁴ Jena, MS Bud. q. 58, 3–4. Prefatory epistle from Jean Molinier to Jean de Ganay: 'Saepe etenim domum tuam adii ut tibi summo presidi commendarem Cardineum gymnasium, quod scio nequitiam aspernaris cum propter bonarum disciplinarum famam haud vulgarem tum propter Fabrum Stapulensem philosophorum facile principem, frequenter etiam negocium professorum nationis Picardie supplex tue fidei commendavi. Ceterum nunquam abs te sum acceptatus nisi cum singulari ac summa quadam humanitate: qua in litteratos omnes uteris peculiariter.' The letter is written between 1507, when Jean became chancellor, and 1512, when he died. A date towards the end of that span is most likely considering the information about Molinier's biography cited in n. 53 above.

⁵⁵ Emmanuel Faye, 'Nicolas de Cues et Charles de Bovelles dans le manuscrit «Exigua pluvia» de Beatus Rhenanus', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 65 (1998): 433. 'Descendit Plato. Ascendit Aristoteles.'

⁵⁶ Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, dialogue IV, section 7. Oosterhoff, 'Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Charles de Bovelles on Platonism, Theurgy, and Intellectual Difficulty', 86.

⁵⁷ Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, IV: 7 [concluding section on the last page].

recalled the transformative experience of encountering this title in 1491.⁵⁸ Upon finishing *Liber contemplationis*, Lefèvre had been filled with desire to join a monastery. However, unfinished studies, alongside serious insomnia, deterred him from doing so. After much pondering Lefèvre decided to devote himself to publishing pious books: *libenter emissioni librorum (qui ad pietatem formant animos) operam do.*⁵⁹ Lefèvre did not specify what books ‘shaped souls for piety,’ besides the *Liber contemplationis*. To this category clearly belongs most of the theological literature published by Lefèvre, which I shall discuss in the next chapter, and additionally textbooks in so far as they promote pious practices.⁶⁰ Lefèvre’s experience reading Lull’s work on contemplation had inspired him to focus on producing piety-inducing books.

There are further concrete connections that indicate that Lefèvre’s dialogues were inspired by the *Liber contemplationis*. In this work, Lull’s entire discourse is addressed to God and he frequently erupts in the same kind of exclamatory prayers that we encountered in Lefèvre’s dialogues.⁶¹ One portion of *Liber contemplationis* was directly concerned with the question of how to pray well and like Theoreticus, Lull recommended that one begin in the recognition of human frailty and humility.⁶² Even closer parallels are found on the topic of contemplation. In *Liber contemplationis*, Lull instructed how to contemplate divine attributes including God’s infinity, eternity, essence, and trinity.⁶³ Lefèvre’s dialogues prescribe taking the same approach to the concepts of the *Metaphysics* by contemplating being, unity, and goodness.⁶⁴

One last detail from Lefèvre’s 1505 preface again brings us back to the College context. Lefèvre mentioned that after discovering *Liber contemplationis*, he showed it to Nicolaus Moravus, Nicolas de Grambus, and Raymond Boucher. We know too little about the biographies of Moravus and Boucher to tell whether they were Lefèvre’s students at that time.⁶⁵ Grambus, however, was certainly a student at the Cardinal Lemoine in the 1490s, receiving his

⁵⁸ Ramon Lull, *Contemplationum Remundi duos libros. Libellus Blaquerne de amico et amato*, ed. Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples (Paris: Guy Marchant for Jean Petit, 1505).

⁵⁹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 142. ‘Quapropter ad priores artes reolutus ... libenter emissioni librorum (qui ad pietatem formant animos) operam do...’

⁶⁰ According to Oosterhoff, this preface suggests that Lefèvre viewed University reform in general as a substitute for joining a monastery. See Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, 39.

⁶¹ See for example Ramon Lull, *Contemplationum Remundi duos libros*, 56: ‘O summa bonitas, eterna, et infinita, laus et gloria insit tue divine essentie nunc et semper...’

⁶² For Lull’s views on prayer, see Ramon Lull, *Contemplationum Remundi duos libros*, 76–78.

⁶³ On Lull’s method of contemplating God’s attributes, see Annemarie C. Mayer, ‘Contemplatio in Deum – or the Pleasure of Knowing God via His Attributes’, in *Knowledge, Contemplation, and Lullism: Contributions to the Lullian Session at the SIEPM Congress*, ed. José G. Higuera (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 135–52; Annemarie C. Mayer, ‘Lull and the Divine Attributes in 13th Century Context’, *Anuario Filosófico* 49, no. 1 (31 March 2016): 139–54.

⁶⁴ These recommendations clearly prefigure Lefèvre’s ideas about reading Scripture with a focus on divine names in *Theologia vivificans*, see Chapter One, section 6.a.

⁶⁵ See Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 143–44, nn. 2 and 4.

master's degree in 1496.⁶⁶ This supports the thesis that I shall explore in the rest of this chapter: Lefèvre and other colleagues at Cardinal Lemoine offered courses in metaphysical contemplation that went far beyond the Aristotelian text to which Lefèvre's epitome and dialogues had remained tied.

3. Pious metaphysics as a shared ideal and practice

Lefèvre's textbook in metaphysics presents an idealised account of teaching, aiming to inspire colleagues. In this section I investigate the success of Lefèvre's ambition. Did other teachers at Cardinal Lemoine highlight conceptual similarities between metaphysics and Christianity? Did they encourage their students to pray and contemplate? Was piety a guiding ideal for how metaphysics was taught in the College? To answer these questions, I shall turn to a different set of sources, which can shed light on the educational practices of Lefèvre's colleagues. In what follows, I shall discuss first published writings by some of Lefèvre's students and thereafter a manuscript record of a course in metaphysics given at Cardinal Lemoine in 1504.

3.a Metaphysician of Cardinal Lemoine: Charles de Bovelles

Among Lefèvre's students, Charles de Bovelles (1479–1567) was the most committed to the discipline of metaphysics. He received his master's degree under Lefèvre's guidance in 1498 or 1499. Instead of pursuing a degree in a higher faculty, Bovelles remained dedicated to philosophical projects. He taught at Cardinal Lemoine until around 1505 and became a prolific author of philosophical, mathematical, and religious treatises.

From the beginning of his career as an author, Bovelles pursued Lefèvre's programme of developing philosophical methods that did not rely on Aristotelian logic and rationality. This project defined one of Bovelles's earliest publications, the cryptic short treatise *In artem oppositorum introductio* (1501).⁶⁷ In Lefèvre's dialogues on metaphysics, Theoreticus had suggested that Neanias should study and contemplate opposites.⁶⁸ Theoreticus further explained that affirmations, negations, and opposites function differently in metaphysics than in logic.⁶⁹ Bovelles's treatise aims to contrast the logical approach to opposites (in particular,

⁶⁶ Grambus went on to study theology and later became the principal of Cardinal Lemoine. See Rice, 143, n. 3; James K. Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 205–6; Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 132.

⁶⁷ Charles de Bovelles, *In artem oppositorum introductio* (Paris: W. Hopyl, 1501). The edition has neither pagination nor signatures.

⁶⁸ See above section 2.a.

⁶⁹ Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, III. 32.

the principle of non-contradiction discussed by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* IV.3) with another approach that is ‘intellectual’ and contemplative.⁷⁰ To begin, he describes different levels of oppositional relationships. This ambition is well encapsulated by a diagram accompanying the first chapter, which resembles the ‘square of opposition’ commonly found in Aristotelian textbooks. But whereas the original diagram clarifies logical relationships between propositions with a view to their truth value, Bovelles’s version maps the relationships between different combinations of

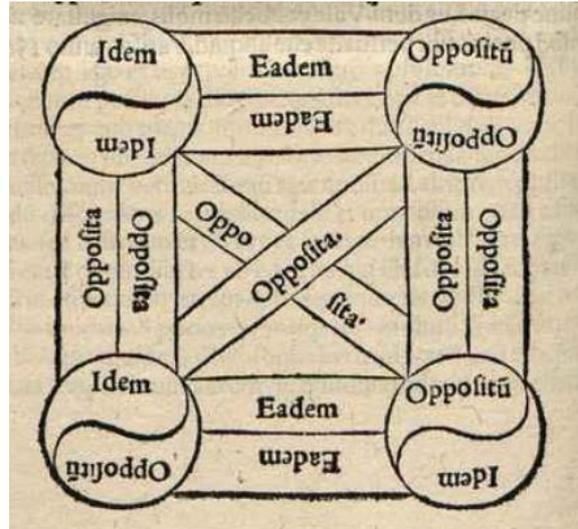


Figure 2.1 Diagram illustrating the first chapter of Bovelles’s *In artem oppositorum introductio* (Paris: W. Hopyl, 1501).

‘the same’ and ‘the opposed’ – suggesting, for example, that there is a kind of ‘sameness’ between same/same, on the one hand, and opposed/opposed, on the other hand (Figure 2.1). Bovelles’s claims about opposition make little sense to the general Aristotelian reader. When read against the background of Fabrist metaphysics, however, we see that it constitutes a clear example of how Lefèvre imagined that one might ‘go beyond’ mere rationality. As Lefèvre wrote in his epistle introducing the treatise, Bovelles contributed to this project by developing an ‘intellectual’ philosophy characterised not by opposition but by unity, concord, and harmony.⁷¹

Lefèvre not only confirmed that Bovelles followed in his footsteps but praised the achievements of his former student. In the area of ‘intellectual’ philosophy, Lefèvre wrote, ‘I gladly endure to be surpassed by him and others like him, and I revere the divine gift in him and the maker of that gift.’⁷² Lefèvre’s early encouragement of Bovelles’s philosophical pursuits is also attested by another colleague at Cardinal Lemoine, Jean Molinier. In a preface to Bovelles’s *Metaphysicum introductorium* (1504), Molinier remarked that Lefèvre had advised Bovelles to work on metaphysics (*prima philosophia*).⁷³ Moreover, his epistle

⁷⁰ On the ‘rational’ approach, see Bovelles, *In artem oppositorum introductio*, ch. vi and on the intellectual approach see Bovelles, ch. vii–viii. Victor discusses a later version of this treatise in Joseph M. Victor, *Charles de Bovelles, 1479–1553: An Intellectual Biography* (Geneva: Droz, 1978), 73–87.

⁷¹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 94–97.

⁷² Rice, 95. ‘Ego vero qui eius aetatem duplo libenter ab eo et iis qui illi similes sunt superari fero, et divinum in eo munus venero ipsiusque muneris opificem.’

⁷³ Charles de Bovelles, *Metaphysicum introductorium cum alio quodam opusculo* (Paris: G. Marchant, 1503). Rice, 114. ‘Nam quanto esset ingenio praeditus haudquaquam ignorabas; propterea illi in prima philosophia potius esse elaborandum, quae ut dignitatis et eminentiae ita et plurimum habet laboris.’

emphasised that Bovelles's moral and spiritual character made him suitable for his project. Addressing Lefèvre, Molinier praised Bovelles's exceptional disdain for games, wine, and money. According to Molinier, Bovelles claimed that bodily health was unimportant as long as the spirit was well. Indeed, he took so little interest in his body that he often remained out of his colleagues' sight for two or three days without coming out for food. Eventually, Bovelles fell ill with stomach aches and fever and it was only thanks to the intervention of a physician that he was convinced to attend to his health. After returning to strength, Molinier explained, Bovelles immediately wrote the book now published – an introduction to metaphysics. On one interpretation, the 'moral' of Molinier's story concerns moderation: health provides the conditions for intellectual productivity. Yet, Molinier's letter also emphasises the intimate relationship between ascetic contemplative practices and the discipline of metaphysics, since the treatises published in 1504 are presented as the end-point of a spiritual journey.

Although Bovelles designated the treatise as an 'introduction,' it is no textbook and it has little to do with Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Modern scholars have rarely examined this dense and difficult text.⁷⁴ In what follows, I shall discuss an aspect of the treatise that aligns it to Lefèvre's view of metaphysics – namely, the idea that metaphysical contemplation is an inherently joyful activity. In Lefèvre's dialogues, this theme was introduced as a gloss on Aristotle's view that human happiness consists in the contemplation of truth. Theoreticus comments that indeed he would be happy if he was permitted to touch a point (*unum punctum*) of the highest being, which would allow him a glimpse of God, who 'alone and by himself is the happiest' (*seipso solus maxime felix est*).⁷⁵ This conception of affective metaphysical contemplation further underlies the delighted exclamation made by the more experienced of the two student interlocutors to Theoreticus's exposition of Aristotle's account of opposites.⁷⁶

Bovelles's *Metaphisicum introductorium* provides a less direct justification for the link between metaphysical learning and happiness. For Bovelles, natural science is the study of individual objects *qua* separate entities. By contrast, metaphysics provides an intuitive understanding of all things together.⁷⁷ According to Bovelles, having such knowledge is as close as humans can get to a state in which one lacks nothing. And happiness is precisely 'a

⁷⁴ See Faye's discussion of the existing literature in Emmanuel Faye, 'The First Metaphysical Thoughts of Bovelles in 1504, Harbingers of the *Book of the Wise*', *Intellectual History Review* 21, no. 3 (September 2011): 268.

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H Tackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), esp. X. 8. Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, II: 15.

⁷⁶ Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Introductio in metaphysicorum libros Aristotelis*, III: 17.

⁷⁷ This contrast is developed in the seventh chapter, see the edition and translation in Faye, 'The First Metaphysical Thoughts of Bovelles in 1504, Harbingers of the *Book of the Wise*', 269–71.

disposition that removes every lack and every movement.’⁷⁸ On these grounds, Bovelles claimed that metaphysics makes humans joyful because it provides a unified and tranquillising understanding of the world. He insisted that metaphysical learning leads to happiness, solitude, tranquillity, freedom, and perfection.⁷⁹

Unlike Lefèvre, Bovelles thus produces an argument for the felicity of metaphysics that does not directly involve divine agency or grace. Bovelles’s account is in this respect closer to how Denys the Carthusian (1402–1471) described philosophic contemplation. In *De contemplatione*, Denys argued that philosophers could contemplate ‘the highest truth’ in an imageless and affective manner. The main difference between philosophical and Christian contemplation is that grace is not involved in the former, and thus no immediate knowledge of God is possible.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, philosophers could achieve what Denys called a ‘natural beatitude.’ He even admitted that a philosopher might experience rapture, although not as reliably or for as long as Christians.⁸¹ Bovelles’s account of metaphysics describes a ‘natural’ version of Lefèvre’s pious metaphysics, explaining why he nevertheless encourages readers to persevere in the discipline and ‘go forth in bliss’ (*evadite beati*).⁸²

This examination of Bovelles’s two early philosophical treatises has indicated some thematic similarities with Lefèvre’s introductory textbook. A contemporary, literary depiction of Lefèvre and Bovelles strengthens the impression that the two men were engaged in a collaborative exploration of contemplation. The author is Alain de Varènes, a former student of Lefèvre and Bovelles. We know little about Varènes’s studies in Paris other than that he had a master’s degree in arts and a bachelor’s degree in law when he left Paris in 1502.⁸³ Varènes thereafter continued his studies in law in Bologna, where he published two philosophical

⁷⁸ Bovelles, *Metaphysicum introductorium*, sig. a2: ‘Nam si felicitas est rerum omnium habitus privationem omnem motumque tollens...’

⁷⁹ Bovelles, *Metaphysicum introductorium*, sig. a2.

⁸⁰ Kent Emery, ‘Twofold Wisdom and Contemplation in Denys of Ryckel (Dionysius Cartusiensis, 1401–1471)’, *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, no. 18 (1988): 115. Kent Emery, ‘A Complete Reception of the Latin *Corpus Dionysiacum*: The Commentaries of Denys the Carthusian’, in *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter*, ed. T. Boiadjev, G. Kapriev, and A. Speer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 201–2.

⁸¹ Emery, ‘Twofold Wisdom’, 132. On the differences between Denys’s approach to mystical theology and the majority position in his order, see Emery, 101–7.

⁸² Bovelles, *Metaphysicum introductorium*, sig. a2v. ‘Vos igitur quibus est sciendi animus: hanc unam pre ceteris earum consummatricem, iudicem, ac principem expedite: eiusque possessione primum vos ipsos agnoscentes evadite beate.’

⁸³ See the biographical note and bibliography by J. N. Pendergrass in Jean de Pins, *Letters and Letter Fragments*, ed. J. N. Pendergrass (Geneva: Droz, 2007), 60–61.

dialogues in 1503.⁸⁴ The dialogues featured Lefèvre (*Iacobus*) and Bovelles (*Carolus*) as interlocutors and vividly portrays their philosophical search for knowledge of God.

Varènes's dialogues have clear resonances with the Fabrist teachings on metaphysics explored in this chapter. In *De luce intelligibili dialogus*, Carolus finds Iacobus immersed in contemplation and asks him to explain what he is thinking about.⁸⁵ Iacobus shares with Carolus that he had contemplated the sun as an image of God and reflected on how the ancient philosophers would not have been wrong to admire or pray to the sun.⁸⁶ In the short dialogue the two men discussed the contemplation in more detail, focusing in particular on the sun as an image of divine emanation, and contrasting the sun's finitude with God's infinitude. Like in Lefèvre's dialogues on metaphysics, Varènes proposed that ancient philosophers had some knowledge of God, although not of the trinity.⁸⁷

In *De amore dialogus*, Carolus is surprised to encounter Iacobus reading a book about love. Varènes depicts a conversation in which Iacobus shows that the topic of divine love is pious⁸⁸ Like in the previous dialogue, Iacobus contrasts the worldly variant of love with its divine image. Doing so, Iacobus suggests, entails speaking in a 'metaphysical and ultramundane way,' (*methaphysico modo & ultramundano*), since divine love is transcendent and cannot be defined.⁸⁹ Their discussion not only brings Carolus towards realising that the topic is pious; he eventually describes feeling 'drawn by a certain supercelestial power,' a feeling of melting from divine heat, 'not differently than if clay or pitch was brought next to the fire.' Iacobus responded: 'Ecstasies, as they call them, are these motions and alleviations, by which the soul ... burst forth into divine praise.'⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Alain de Varènes, *De amore dialogus unus* (Bologna: G. A. Benedetti, 1503); Alain de Varènes, *De luce intelligibili dialogus unus* (Bologna: G. A. Benedetti, 1503). I shall cite the following Parisian edition (ca. 1515), which is paginated: Alain de Varènes, *In hoc opere contenta: De amore dialogus I. De luce dialogi II. [...] Epistolae complures*. (Paris: Henri Estienne, n.d.)

⁸⁵ Varènes, *In hoc opere contenta: De amore dialogus I. De luce dialogi II.* (2nd edition), 16r.

⁸⁶ Varènes, 17r.

⁸⁷ Varènes, 19r.

⁸⁸ On the Lullist themes of the dialogue on love, see José Higuera Rubio, 'Ramon Llull y la concepción humanista del amor (El *De amore* de Alain de Varènes, un lulista "menor" del círculo lefevriano)', in *En torno a Ramon Llull: presencia y transmisión de su obra*, ed. José Higuera Rubio and Francisco José Díaz Marcilla (Ribeirão: Húmus, 2017), 133–47.

⁸⁹ Varènes, *In hoc opere contenta: De amore dialogus I. De luce dialogi II.* (2nd edition), 5v.

⁹⁰ Varènes, 6v: 'CA. Alius michi esse videor: quando divinos sermones audio magna mentis prostratione in divinas laudes effusus. Abripior profecto, vi quadam supercaelesti trahente: et me totum pene absumente. Tunc liquescit animus calore quodam divino: non aliter quam cera aut pix si igni propius fuerit admota. IA. Extatici quos vocant sunt hi motus et sublevationes: quibus anima magno dei beneficio magna illius dignatione affecta prae dulcedine prae nimio splendore caligans in laudes divinas tota ignita subito erumpit.' Klinger-Dollé argues that the image of Lefèvre and Bovelles's 'rapture' in Varènes's dialogues reflects a Fabrist appreciation for divinely inspired literature – the conviction that *l'inspiration serait en définitive la source d'autorité par excellence du sage*, in Anne-Hélène Klinger-Dollé, 'L'humanisme parisien du début du xvie siècle et les figures antiques du sage: autour

While Varènes chose his two former teachers as interlocutors and took inspiration from Lefèvre’s dialogues on metaphysics, his version does not play out in a classroom or in the College context where Lefèvre placed Theoreticus and Neanias.⁹¹ In Varènes’s dialogues, Carolus is not a student being quizzed but a disciple asking persistent questions.⁹² Iacobus is not seeking to lecture but must be convinced to pause the contemplation and reading in which he is immersed. In this way, Varènes’s dialogues represent a different pedagogical model where *Iacobus-Lefèvre* plays the role of a spiritual teacher guiding *Carolus-Bovelles’s* religious experience. He thereby contributed a second act to Lefèvre’s dialogues, depicting how metaphysical contemplation continues outside the University context and eventually rewards the disciple with ecstasy.

3.b Beatus Rhenanus and *Metaphysica collecta* (1504)

Our best source for the student experience at the Cardinal Lemoine is the library of Beatus Rhenanus in Sélestat. He came to Paris in 1503 to study arts at the Cardinal Lemoine with teachers such as Lefèvre, Josse Clichtove, and Bovelles. During his time in Paris, Beatus bought a great deal of books, many of which he annotated.⁹³ These books provide insight into what Beatus read throughout the course in arts. Moreover, he collected lecture notes in a volume that is also preserved in his library; this document allows us to learn about the teaching that was delivered orally in the College.⁹⁴

While the library of Beatus is an important resource for reconstructing the course of studies at Cardinal Lemoine, we need to keep in mind that Beatus progressed more quickly than the average student. He was older than most students when he arrived in Paris: not fifteen but

de Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples et Charles de Bovelles’, in *Figures du maître: De l’autorité à l’autonomie*, ed. Cristina Noacco et al. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013), paras 20–24.

⁹¹ Lefèvre does not specify where the four conversations take place but the presence of teachers and students suggests that they are in a college.

⁹² *Iacobus* exclaims that it seemed impossible to exhaust *Carolus’s* desire for knowledge. See Varènes, *In hoc opere contenta: De amore dialogus I. De luce dialogi II.* (2nd edition), 11r.

⁹³ See the catalogue in Gustav C. Knod, *Aus der Bibliothek des Beatus Rhenanus: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Humanismus* (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1889).

⁹⁴ There is now a substantial body of scholarship on different aspects of Beatus Rhenanus’s books and notes from his time in Paris. On his philosophical courses and, in particular, studies with Bovelles, see Emmanuel Faye, ‘Beatus Rhenanus lecteur et étudiant de Charles de Bovelles’, *Annuaire des Amis de la Bibliothèque Humaniste de Sélestat*, 1995, 119–42; Faye, ‘Nicolas de Cues et Charles de Bovelles dans le manuscrit «Exigua pluvia» de Beatus Rhenanus’. On Fabrist pedagogy and reading with a focus on mathematical books, see Richard J. Oosterhoff, ‘A Book, a Pen, and the *Sphere*: Reading Sacrobosco in the Renaissance’, *History of Universities* 28, no. 2 (2015): 1–54; Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*; Oosterhoff, ‘Apprenticeship in the Renaissance University’. On Beatus Rhenanus’s studies in Paris in general, see Stanislas Musial, ‘Beatus Rhenanus étudiant de philosophie à Paris (1503–1507)’, in *500e anniversaire de la naissance de Beatus Rhenanus*. (Sélestat: Amis de la Bibliothèque humaniste, 1985), 271–79; James S. Hirstein, ed., *Epistvlae Beati Rhenani: le correspondance latine et grecque de Beatus Rhenanus de Sélestat. Vol. 1: 1506–1517* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

eighteen years old. More significantly, he was better prepared since he had attended and taught at the humanist Latin school in Sélestat. This helps explain why the chronology of his studies in Paris – to which we shall now turn – is not wholly consistent with the official programme of courses in philosophy.⁹⁵

During his first year in Paris, Beatus bought various texts on natural philosophy and metaphysics. In 1503 he purchased an edition of Aristotle's works in Latin that included Johannes Argyropoulos's translation of the *Metaphysics*. The same year Beatus bought the most recent edition of Lefèvre's introductory textbook in natural philosophy, which was now expanded with Clichtove's commentary and including Lefèvre's dialogues on metaphysics.⁹⁶ Beatus additionally acquired textbooks from rival Parisian teachers covering the same material; in 1504 he bought Thomas Bricot's edition of George of Bruxelles's commentary on Aristotle's physics and metaphysics.⁹⁷ Although the dates of purchase do not necessarily reflect the order of study, it is remarkable that Beatus systematically bought books required for the more advanced parts of the arts curriculum when he had formally not even acquired the bachelor's degree.

Beatus's archive confirms that he began to study metaphysics during his first years in Paris. As Emmanuel Faye shows, some of Beatus's notes indicate that he studied under the guidance of Bovelles, who taught at Cardinal Lemoine until 1505. One manuscript copied by Beatus suggests that Bovelles introduced him to the ideas of Nicholas of Cusa, who had inspired his 'art of opposites.' The manuscript contains propositions extracted from the work of Nicholas of Cusa, a reference to a conversation with Bovelles, and an otherwise lost treatise likely authored by Bovelles.⁹⁸ Beatus also bought and annotated Bovelles's *Metaphisicum*

⁹⁵ People have often assumed that Beatus Rhenanus's degrees in Paris would follow the common order of studies, achieving the BA in 1505, MA in 1506/7. However, it is obvious from the notebook's content that he studied the more advanced topics related to the master's degree from the very beginning. I therefore disagree with the thesis that Beatus's notebook from the Cardinal Lemoine contained a kind of introductory overview of the different areas of philosophy, directed to beginning students, suggested in Christoph Clemens Baumann, '*Dictata in quinque predicantes voces: ein Kommentar zur Isagoge des Porphyrius in der Aufzeichnung des Beatus Rhenanus, Paris c. 1503/4 (BHS Ms. 58), Editio princeps*' (University of Zurich, 2008), LVII. There is little to substantiate this claim beyond the fact that the notebook originates from Beatus's first year in Paris.

⁹⁶ Bibliothèque humaniste de Sélestat [BHS], K 1199. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Josse Clichtove, *In hoc opere continentur totius philosophiae naturalis Paraphrases: adiecto ad litteram familiari commentario declarate et hoc ordine digeste...* (Paris: W. Hopyl, 1502).

⁹⁷ BHS, K 950. On this commentary, see Bakker, 'Fifteenth-Century Parisian Commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*'.

⁹⁸ Faye, 'Nicolas de Cues et Charles de Bovelles dans le manuscrit «Exigua pluvia» de Beatus Rhenanus'; Emmanuel Faye, 'Vis intellectualis et perfection de l'homme selon Bovelles. Réflexions autour d'un inédit', in *Métaphysique de l'esprit: De la forme à la force*, ed. Pierre Magnard (Paris: J. Vrin, 1997), 65–89. Faye, 'Beatus Rhenanus lecteur et étudiant de Charles de Bovelles', 135.

introductionum, published early in 1504. It seems likely that the latter's enthusiasm for metaphysics inspired Beatus to pursue the subject.

Amongst Beatus Rhenanus's notes from the Cardinal Lemoine, we encounter a course on metaphysics: *Metaphysica collecta*.⁹⁹ This anonymous work was probably dictated to Beatus in the college, since he notes at the end of the text that it was finished in 1504 at the Cardinal Lemoine.¹⁰⁰ Scholars have not been able to assign it to Bovelles or another teacher associated with Cardinal Lemoine.¹⁰¹ The most puzzling aspect of the course, however, is how little it has to do with Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Unlike Lefèvre's dialogues, the *Metaphysica collecta* does not introduce or explain this set text, instead outlining a method of metaphysical contemplation. *Metaphysica collecta* provides what Theoreticus promised in Lefèvre's dialogues: a way to contemplate and seek the meaning of concepts as they apply to God.

Throughout forty-six commented propositions, *Metaphysica collecta* is concerned with the relationship between God, human beings, and nature. The author pays some attention to what the Bible reveals about the relationship between God and man. He cites John 15:5 ('without me you can do nothing'), Hebrews 2:7 ('you have made him a little lower than the angels'), and Luke 18:19 ('No one is good except God alone').¹⁰² Nevertheless, there is no sustained interpretative effort. Instead, two philosophical frameworks are invoked for explaining the relationship between God and nature. The first model describes reality through a hierarchy of perfection.¹⁰³ The second model is natural theology, which emphasises the imprint that the creator left on the creation.¹⁰⁴ Within these models, the human being is positioned as a mediator capable of moving between both extremes.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ BHS MS 58, 195r–206v. The uppermost part of these pages is seriously damaged and is not always legible. Thirteen of the forty-six propositions have been edited in Emmanuel Faye and James Hirstein, 'Metaphysica Collecta. Un cours de métaphysique fabriste pris en note par Beatus Rhenanus. Présentation et édition partielle', in *Chemins de la pensée médiévale : études offertes à Zénon Kaluza*, ed. Paul J. J. M. Bakker, Emmanuel Faye, and Christophe Grellard (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 169–91.

¹⁰⁰ This text is mixed up with another metaphysical manuscript attributed to Bovelles in Oosterhoff, 'Apprenticeship in the Renaissance University', 124. On the second manuscript, 'Exigua pluvia,' see Faye, 'Nicolas de Cues et Charles de Bovelles dans le manuscrit «Exigua pluvia» de Beatus Rhenanus'.

¹⁰¹ On the question of attribution, see Emmanuel Faye's discussion in Faye and Hirstein, 'Metaphysica Collecta. Un cours de métaphysique fabriste pris en note par Beatus Rhenanus. Présentation et édition partielle'.

¹⁰² Anonymous, *Metaphysica collecta* in BHS, MS 58: Propositions 5, 36, and 39. The author also invokes Scriptural support in propositions 12, 43, and 44.

¹⁰³ Proposition 7 as edited by Faye and Hirstein, '*Metaphysica Collecta*. Un cours de métaphysique fabriste pris en note par Beatus Rhenanus. Présentation et édition partielle.', 184: 'Ex varia et imperfecta rerum inferiorum perfectione summe perfecti immensam perfectionem accommodate pervestigare...' On perfection, see also props. 10–11 and 36–37. On how Italian Renaissance Aristotelians criticised this model, see Lohr, 'Metaphysics', 602.

¹⁰⁴ See esp. Anonymous, *Metaphysica collecta*, props. 30–31.

¹⁰⁵ On the mediating role of human beings in *Metaphysica collecta*, see Faye and Hirstein, 'Metaphysica Collecta. Un cours de métaphysique fabriste pris en note par Beatus Rhenanus. Présentation et édition partielle', 172–73.

The principal thesis of *Metaphysica collecta* is that God's attributes, such as unity, simplicity, plenitude, and permanence, can be investigated through opposite characteristics in the created world. For example, the author claims that a good way of grasping divine simplicity is to first consider how all created things are simple and composite in different ways and applying the two aforementioned models. First, one can contemplate the imperfection of the material world, in which all things are composite and then imagine divine simplicity as its opposite. Second, one can seek examples of relative simplicity in created beings and contemplate how much more perfect the original, divine simplicity must be.¹⁰⁶ The author of *Metaphysica collecta* suggests that metaphysical contemplation consists in using one's understanding of natural philosophy to contemplate God.¹⁰⁷

Like Lefèvre's dialogues and Bovelles's *Metaphisicum introductorium*, *Metaphysica collecta* emphasises the affective dimension of seeking God through metaphysics.¹⁰⁸ The author uses terms like 'ardentissimam in deum dilectionem' and 'feliciter evehi possumus' and cites an imagined speech of a contemplating mind:

Oh, highest perfection of all things, how many signs of your immense perfection did you leave us by which we may be drawn to you and ardently desire you! *Look down from heaven and visit this vine* [Ps 80:14] in order that we may soon imitate your infinite perfection and return and finally contemplate perfectly.¹⁰⁹

In this tendency to highlight prayer and pious experience, *Metaphysica collecta* is consistent with the programme outlined in Lefèvre's dialogues.

¹⁰⁶ Anonymous, *Metaphysica collecta*, propositions 4, 7, 13, 16, 19, 22, 24, and 38 all express versions of this idea written on the same grammatical format, e.g. 'Ex multiformi rerum compositione summe entis simplicitatem incompositionemque simplicissimus perquirere'(prop. 16) and 'Ex rerum occupatione et exigua admodum plenitudine ad summae plenitudinis latissimam immensumque amplitudinem cognoscendam perducere.' (prop. 19).

¹⁰⁷ Anonymous, *Metaphysica collecta*, propositions 30–31.

¹⁰⁸ Anonymous, *Metaphysica collecta*, proposition 12: 'Ad eam tandem perspicatuis innuendam contemplandamque feliciter evehi possumus.' On the process of contemplation, see also prop. 22: 'Et si quicque motui persimila ut contemplationem et ardentissimam in deum dilectionem habeant sunt igitur magis stabiliam: ex his ut gradibus quibusdam haud difficile quidem est ad summam stabilitatem evehi. ... Summum autem ens propter idem sui que simile manens: maxime a motu distat.' For a very close parallel between Lefèvre's account on happiness in the dialogues on metaphysics and *Metaphysica collecta*, see Faye and Hirstein, 'Metaphysica Collecta. Un cours de métaphysique fabriciste pris en note par Beatus Rhenanus. Présentation et édition partielle', 176.

¹⁰⁹ Proposition 7 as edited by Faye and Hirstein, 185. 'ut antequam ad ipsum summe perfectum mens perveniat admirabunda dicat: 'O summa rerum perfectio quanta reliquisti nobis tuae immensae perfectionis insignia quibus ad te trahi et aspirare ardentem possemus: respice de celo et visita vineam istam et perfice eam ut quam proxime possimus tuam infinitam perfectionem imitari et referre et tandem perfecte contemplari possimus.'

Like Bovelles's *opuscula* on metaphysics, *Metaphysica collecta* is evidence that members of the Cardinal Lemoine further developed the ideas about contemplation encountered in Lefèvre's dialogues. Moreover, it becomes clear that this kind of metaphysics was being taught to some students. This recalls a passage from Lefèvre's commentary to Aristotle's *Politics* from 1506:

Those who wish to set themselves a higher end and a happier leisure will prepare themselves by studying Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which deals with the first and supramundane philosophy. Turn from this to a reverent reading of Scripture, guided by Cyprian, Hilary, Origen, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Nazianzen, John of Damascus, and other fathers. Once these studies have purified the mind and disciplined the senses (and provided one has extirpated vice and leads a becoming and upright life), then the generous mind may aspire to scale gradually the heights of contemplation, instructed by Nicholas of Cusa and the divine Dionysius and others like them.¹¹⁰

Lefèvre's plan for how students can transition from philosophy to theology is often read as a programmatic statement in relation to his editions; however, *Metaphysica collecta* is proof that the concept of a transition from metaphysics to contemplation was actually integrated in the teaching at Cardinal Lemoine. As we shall see next, further sources about the students in this College allow us to pinpoint more precisely how this was done.

4. Postgraduate arts students at Cardinal Lemoine

4.a The case of Bruno Amerbach's postgraduate studies in Paris

In 1506, the printer Johann Amerbach sent his son Bruno to Lefèvre for postgraduate studies. Bruno had already received his master of arts degree in Paris in a different college. This meant that he had formally completed the philosophical curriculum. His second round of studies in Paris, documented in the letters between Bruno and his father, sheds light on a little noted phenomenon in early modern universities: the pursuit of postgraduate studies outside any of the three higher faculties. Johann's letter recommending Bruno to Lefèvre reveals that his views about philosophy and theology were closely aligned with those of Lefèvre:

¹¹⁰ Aristotle, *Politicorum libri octo*, ed. Lefèvre d'Étaples (Paris: Henri Estienne, 1506), 123v–124. Translation cited from Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, xvi.

I am sending my son Bruno to your kind self for philosophy ... so that he may ... put down other roots ... from which in the course of time the tree of philosophy and sacred theology, once planted, can grow and so that my son and I, as a parent, can enjoy some renown, because he was taught and grounded from the start by the most learned and foremost of philosophers and the most profound theologian Jacques d'Étaples.¹¹¹

Johann thus requested precisely the kind of smooth ascent from philosophy to theology that Lefèvre outlined in his commentaries on Aristotle's *Politics* published the same year.¹¹²

However, Bruno's postgraduate studies in Paris did not go according to plan. By 1506 Lefèvre had begun a close collaboration with bishop Guillaume Briçonnet and he was often absent from Cardinal Lemoine. Lefèvre was nevertheless able to continue leading editorial projects, often focused on spiritual or patristic texts.¹¹³ Some students worked with him on such projects, for example, Bruno's friend Michael Hummelberg. In a letter to Bruno, Hummelberg wrote that Lefèvre's circle would have welcomed Bruno's help in producing copy.¹¹⁴ But Bruno had not come to Paris to get involved in editorial projects, which he could easily have done with his father in Basel.¹¹⁵

Instead, Bruno settled into Collège de Boncourt, where he pursued a range of different subjects. In February 1507 Johann asked his son to specify what he was studying and whether he was 'making progress in Hebrew and Greek.' Bruno replied, 'I am reviewing both branches of philosophy and if I had passed over something carelessly, I now work through it with great thoroughness. In addition there are humanistic disciplines. Whatever time is left I devote to Greek and Hebrew letters.'¹¹⁶ Surviving textbooks in the Basel University Library suggest one way in which Bruno might have combined the revision of philosophy with study of languages: his copy of Lefèvre's introduction to Aristotle's moral philosophy is annotated with Greek

¹¹¹ Alfred Hartmann, ed., *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, vol. 1 (Basel: Verlag der Universitätsbibliothek, 1942), pt. 320. Translation cited from Johannes Amerbach, *The Correspondence of Johann Amerbach: Early Printing in Its Social Context*, trans. Barbara C. Halporn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 274. It is noteworthy that Amerbach calls Lefèvre a theologian in this letter. By 1506 *Theologia vivificans* remains Lefèvre's most important theological publication.

¹¹² See Lefèvre's outline in the *Politics*, cited above.

¹¹³ On these projects, see below, Chapter Three.

¹¹⁴ Hartmann, *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, 1:407.

¹¹⁵ On the editorial projects associated with Lefèvre's circle as an 'apprenticeship in the craft of books,' see Oosterhoff, 'Apprenticeship in the Renaissance University'.

¹¹⁶ Hartmann, *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, 1:331. I am citing Barbara C. Halporn's translation from Amerbach, *The Correspondence of Johann Amerbach*, 278.

translations of key terms.¹¹⁷ In a letter from July that year, Bruno gestured towards his father's desire that he study theology, explaining, 'I do not want to approach the study of theology without being knowledgeable in every branch of philosophy.'¹¹⁸

Bruno's continued studies in Paris were not exactly what his father had hoped for, as is evident from their correspondence. Instead of a smooth transition from philosophy to theology guided by Lefèvre, Bruno set his own schedule of humanist lectures and philosophical readings. Nevertheless, he succeeded in one respect. During these years, Bruno laid the foundations of his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, which would allow him to work on producing scriptural and patristic editions. During the academic year of 1507–8, both Bruno and Hummelberg followed the Greek lectures of François Tissard.¹¹⁹ Upon his return to Basel, Bruno worked with his father and with Johannes Froben, and played an important role in Erasmus's edition of the works of Jerome.¹²⁰

One might think that a printer's son was set to have an exceptional educational experience in Paris. Johann Amerbach had at this point just finished printing his collected edition of Augustine's works;¹²¹ he would value different skills than most parents. Postgraduate study in arts was, however, more widespread than historians have previously realised. This phenomenon, as I shall now argue, helps explain the more advanced courses in metaphysics at Cardinal Lemoine.

4.b Postgraduate students in the Register from 1512–14

In 1512–1514 the University of Paris gathered certifications of studies in Arts in a register. Former students appeared before the official scribe of the University together with witnesses who could testify to the length and nature of their studies. This information could later be used to control eligibility for certain ecclesiastical benefices.¹²² While the Register is not complete

¹¹⁷ Basel UL Bc III 28:1 is a copy of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Josse Clichtove, *Artificialis introductio per modum Epitomatis in decem libros Ethicorum Aristotelis adiectis elucidata commentariis* (Paris: W. Hopyl and H. Estienne, 1502). The book has Bruno's signature. I have not yet been able to find an example of Bruno's Greek hand with which to compare the annotations. These could, for example, also be by Bruno's younger brother Bonifacius. The textbooks owned by the Amerbach sons have not, to my knowledge, been studied.

¹¹⁸ Hartmann, *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, 1:346. I am citing Barbara C. Halporn's translation from Amerbach, *The Correspondence of Johann Amerbach*, 283.

¹¹⁹ Hartmann, *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, 1:407.

¹²⁰ On the collaborations behind the edition, see Hilmar M. Pabel, 'Credit, Paratexts, and the Editorial Strategies in Erasmus of Rotterdam's Editions of Jerome', in *Cognition and the Book: Typologies of Formal Organisation of Knowledge in the Printed Book of the Early Modern Period*, ed. Karl A. E. Enenkel and Wolfgang Neuber (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 217–56.

¹²¹ On this edition, see Arnoud Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority in Europe, 1500–1620* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13–27.

¹²² Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, xvi–xx.

– not everyone appeared to certify their studies – it nevertheless constitutes a treasure trove of information about the educational pathways of students.¹²³ Most students who wished to stay in the University context became teachers in grammar or arts. Meanwhile they also participated in disputations and solemn acts of the Faculty of Arts and attended the public lectures in ethics.¹²⁴ By contrast, some students at Cardinal Lemoine did not teach but continued to study under a teacher, whom the Register names. Among the near thousand certificates in the Register, these continuing students stand out by their unusual trajectory.

In the Register, we find ten entries testifying to postgraduate studies at the Cardinal Lemoine. The earliest entry concerns David Lauxius, who assisted Lefèvre with several textbook editions in the early 1490s. Lefèvre certified that Lauxius had attended his *lectiones publicas et privatas* in arts for over two years after receiving the master's degree.¹²⁵ By 1503, Lauxius had become a schoolmaster in Arras and was eventually appointed as canon in the cathedral in the same town.¹²⁶ Four other entries for students from the Cardinal Lemoine indicate that the continuing students often rotated between different teachers. Nicolaus Le Vasseur had studied with the master Yvone Bailleul at Cardinal Lemoine until the master's degree.¹²⁷ After his degree, Le Vasseur studied arts with Clichtove for more than two years.¹²⁸ Similarly, Johannes Drouyn had studied with Bovelles until his master's degree and then continued his studies in arts under Clichtove.¹²⁹ Two students who had been taught by Johannes Pelletier until their degree continued with Nicolas Le Franc.¹³⁰

Five further postgraduates attended courses offered by Bovelles: Guillelmus de Clauso, Egidius de Leae, Johannes Thierry, Robertus Roger, and Jacobus Russy alias Lineti.¹³¹ Among these, four had studied for their arts degree at Cardinal Lemoine or with teachers

¹²³ The register only records certifications of study for students who were clerics and wished to apply for ecclesiastical benefices. The selection of students is by no means representative of the arts graduates at the University of Paris. Cf. James K. Farge, 'Was Paris a regional or an international University in the era of the Renaissance?', in *Les échanges entre les universités européennes à la Renaissance*, ed. Michel Bideaux and Marie-Madeleine Fragonard (Geneva: Droz, 2003), 61–66.

¹²⁴ Many of the entries state that the candidate has frequented disputations and 'acts' (*actus*) in the Faculty of arts after receiving the MA. See for example Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 14, 32, 33, 41.

¹²⁵ Farge, 193.

¹²⁶ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 19–20. Laxius/Lauxius apparently returned to Paris to study law (possibly funded by his canonate); an application for ecclesiastical benefices from 1513 notes that he was then 'actu Parisius Decreti studens.' I am grateful to James Farge for sharing with me his transcription of the entries from Registers 60, 61, and 62 from the Archives de l'Université de Paris, Sorbonne, which contain benefice requests made by graduates in 1497–1502 and 1508–1518. The original is in the Sorbonne Library, AUP Reg. 61, 145r.

¹²⁷ This is probably the same Yvo de Baileuil who matriculated at the Medical Faculty in Montpellier in 1503, see Marcel Gouron, ed., *Matricule de l'Université de médecine de Montpellier, 1503–1599* (Geneva: Droz, 1957), 4.

¹²⁸ Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 184.

¹²⁹ Farge, 187.

¹³⁰ See the entries on Cornuaille and Leonicum in Farge, 215, 217.

¹³¹ Farge, 107, 179, 181, 292, 410.

closely associated with Lefèvre.¹³² Only Roger had attended the course of Jacques Almain at Collège de Saint Barbare.¹³³ Unfortunately, the Register tends not to record what years students attended courses or received degrees. However, the fact that the five students brought other members from the ‘postgraduate cohort’ as witnesses indicates that they studied with Bovelles during overlapping periods. Thierry and Lineti both testified to de Leau’s studies with Bovelles for the register.¹³⁴ Lineti and De Clauso were both present for the certification of Roger’s studies with Bovelles.¹³⁵ Furthermore, additional information about two of the five students allows us to date their trajectory a little more precisely. De Clauso had received his master’s degree by 1501 as is clear from an application for ecclesiastical benefices that he put in that year.¹³⁶ De Leau had studied with Clichtove for two and a half years and graduated around the spring of 1501.¹³⁷ To sum up, we know that Bovelles’s five postgraduate students likely studied with him at Cardinal Lemoine beginning around 1501.

The Register does not reveal the precise nature of the courses attended by continuing students at Cardinal Lemoine. However, the wording does not suggest that the students repeated the courses that they had already completed for their degree. Such cases can also be found in the register. Usually these were students who attended a second entire cycle of arts lectures of three and a half years with a renowned teacher, such as the Scotist Pierre Tartaret.¹³⁸ This raises the question of what Bovelles taught his postgraduate class. One clue for answering is found in a letter written by Lefèvre in December 1501. In his preface to Bovelles’s *In artem oppositorum introductio*, Lefèvre wrote:

[Bovelles] was scarcely eighteen years old when he was experienced enough in the seven liberal arts that he could teach in a logical manner. Now that he advances to his twentieth year, he is rising to the higher and intellectual mode of philosophy. And he is

¹³² One was a former student of Lagrenus in a different college. On Lagrenus’s close relationship with Lefèvre, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 414; Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles*, lxxviii–lcv. Lagrenus had also taught at Cardinal Lemoine, see Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 53.

¹³³ Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 292. At the time of Roger’s *cursus*, Almain had just begun his studies in theology. On his short but celebrated career, see below in Chapter Four, section 3.d.

¹³⁴ Farge, 179–80.

¹³⁵ Farge, 292.

¹³⁶ This is according to James Farge’s transcription of benefice requests, see above n. 126. The original entry is in AUP, Reg. 60, 156r.

¹³⁷ We can date De Leau’s studies with Clichtove because the former was part of Theobald Petit’s last, incomplete abandoned course of arts teaching. Petit likely quit teaching philosophy around the time when he became a doctor of theology, which was on 18 September 1498. For the dates of Petit’s doctorate, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 38.

¹³⁸ See the entry of Noel Godefroy in Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 520–21.

not only observing [*coniectans*] it from afar but he is already prepared to both dictate and write it.¹³⁹

The chronology is a perfect match with the evidence from the Register. According to Lefèvre's account, Bovelles had begun teaching the standard curriculum of philosophy in 1499. Two years later, he also began *dicere et scribere* about an *altiolem philosophandi modum*. While Lefèvre does not explicitly say that Bovelles is teaching (*docere*) the type of philosophy encountered in the treatise on opposites, he claims that Bovelles both speaks and writes. Clearly, the 'writing' refers to the printed treatise at hand. If we consider the timing and wording of Lefèvre's letter, one plausible interpretation is that his Lefèvre's 'dicere' refers to Bovelles's lectures for more advanced students.

If Bovelles taught his 'art of opposites' to postgraduate students, as appears likely based on this evidence, one might wonder what other material from the College derives from such courses. Two texts found only at the very end of Beatus's notebook are good candidates: the course on metaphysical contemplation from 1504 discussed above and Lefèvre's *Libros de anima, analogiarum compendium*.¹⁴⁰ Unlike the majority of notes in the manuscript notebook, neither of these texts would be of any immediate use in Beatus's examinations. Since we know that Bovelles around this time introduced Beatus to Cusanus – one of the major figures in the 'intellectual philosophy' pursued by Lefèvre and Bovelles – it is plausible that he was also included in the more advanced courses in philosophy despite not having finished his degree.¹⁴¹

In Beatus's case, it appears that he was introduced to the courses in intellectual philosophy while working towards his master's degree. This is reasonable since, as mentioned above, Beatus was an unusually well prepared student when he arrived in Paris. One might wonder, however, what compelled the five students in Bovelles's group of postgraduates to continue studying at Cardinal Lemoine. It is possible that some intended to pursue a degree in theology. However, only one of the ten known postgraduate students at Cardinal Lemoine is known to have enrolled at the Faculty of Theology. Johannes Drouyn, one of Clichtove's postgraduate philosophy students, became the recipient of a prestigious theological scholarship from Collège

¹³⁹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 95. 'et quo magis admireris, vix duodeviginti annorum erat cum septem liberales artes sufficienter callens rationaliter docere potuisset; nunc vero vicesimum agit annum, ad altiolem philosophandi modum conscendens ac intellectualem, et non solum quasi a longe coniectans, sed et in quo et dicere et scribere iam sufficiat.' Lefèvre is exaggerating the youth of Bovelles, who was twenty-two years old in 1501.

¹⁴⁰ The latter work is found in BHS MS 58, 206v–216v. The treatise was copied from another manuscript, see Oosterhoff, 'Apprenticeship in the Renaissance University', 124–35. On Lefèvre's use of analogies see Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, passim.

¹⁴¹ Faye, 'Beatus Rhenanus lecteur et étudiant de Charles de Bovelles', 135.

de Navarre.¹⁴² In addition, we know from the letters of Johann Amerbach that he wanted Bruno to study philosophy and then theology in Paris. However, it is not clear whether he wanted Bruno to enrol in the long programme of studies offered by the Faculty of Theology or simply wanted Lefèvre to introduce him to the subject.¹⁴³ In sum, there is not much evidence that postgraduate courses at Cardinal Lemoine were intended as a ‘bridge’ between graduating from the Faculty of Arts and beginning studies in theology.

A more promising explanation for the phenomenon of postgraduate studies relates to the ecclesiastical benefices available to University graduates. For four months every year, graduates of the Faculty of Arts had an advantage in applications for ecclesiastical benefices. Having a master of arts degree was a prerequisite for making these applications. With two extra years of studying arts or, more commonly, teaching grammar or philosophy, candidates could instead be certified for five years of study, the *quinquennium*, which improved their chances.¹⁴⁴ It is reasonable to assume that some postgraduate students at the Cardinal Lemoine aimed at this higher qualification. As mentioned above, the main purpose of the register was to record study certificates for future applications for ecclesiastical benefices. Since only those who had retained clerical status were eligible for such benefices, we know that anyone with an entry had neither married nor entered a secular trade. The ten postgraduate students listed in the register are therefore precisely those who remained dedicated to an academic or ecclesiastical career.

Many gaps remain in our understanding of how graduates of the University of Paris applied for and received ecclesiastical benefices in this period.¹⁴⁵ The state of research does not reveal whether it mattered for the outcome of such applications in what college or with whom one studied until the master of arts degree or achieved the *quinquennium*. One reason to think that the collegiate affiliation was relevant in this context is that the list of nominations for

¹⁴² Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 187. By 1512, Drouyn was already ‘baccalarius formatus.’ A letter from Beatus Rhenanus to Drouyn from 1509 is edited in Hirstein, *Epistulae Beati Rhenani*, 138–43. Drouyn’s position as a bursary in theology explains why Beatus addresses him as ‘theologian,’ cf. Hirstein’s n.1. This identification also solves the problem of why Beatus addresses him as being from Blois – the Register of Studies records that Drouyn is from the diocese of Chartres, which at the time encompassed Blois.

¹⁴³ There is no mention of any concrete plans in the surviving correspondence. Bruno’s younger brother Basilius studied law in Freiburg and similarly returned without a degree. On the later careers of Bruno and Basilius, see Peter G. Bietenholz and Thomas Brian Deutscher, eds., *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) s.v. Basilius AMERBACH and Bruno AMERBACH.

¹⁴⁴ Brief notes on how the rules for the *quinquennium* changed over the sixteenth century are found in Compère, ‘Les collèges de l’Université de Paris au XVIe siècle’, 110–11.

¹⁴⁵ For the fourteenth-century applications, see William J. Courtenay and Eric D. Goddard, eds., *Rotuli Parisienses: Supplications to the Pope from the University of Paris, Volume III: 1378–1394* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). The rules for benefice applications changed with the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges in 1438, after which the University of Paris no longer applied directly to the pope for ecclesiastical positions.

ecclesiastical benefices sometimes mention the candidate's college.¹⁴⁶ Another reason is that there were formal links between colleges and ecclesiastical institutions. For example, it was the chapter of Saint-Vulfran d'Abbeville who nominated candidates for the scholarships in arts at Cardinal Lemoine.¹⁴⁷ Bovelles himself was by 1501 already a canon in St. Quentin in Picardy.¹⁴⁸ It is therefore possible that Cardinal Lemoine was particularly attractive for students pursuing ecclesiastical careers in the region north of Paris.¹⁴⁹

None of this explains, however, why the candidates would continue studying under a named teacher rather than teach grammar or philosophy. It does not appear that Cardinal Lemoine lacked teaching opportunities as entries in the register reveal that the College recruited many masters of arts to teach grammar.¹⁵⁰ A different explanation is suggested by Bruno Amerbach's correspondence. Johann Amerbach had in fact suggested that his son might take on some 'school exercises' in order to lessen the financial burden on the family. Bruno, however, replied that his studies in philosophy and literature did not leave any time for teaching.¹⁵¹ Since Bruno continued to receive support from his father, he was able to focus on his own studies. If the postgraduate students at Cardinal Lemoine shared Bruno's attitude, their continued studies in metaphysics with Bovelles and other teachers indicates that they considered the courses more attractive than alternative ways of reaching the *quinquennium*.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has investigated how Lefèvre and his colleagues at the Cardinal Lemoine propagated a view of metaphysics as a 'science of God.' Inspired by Ramon Lull, Nicholas of Cusa, and ps.-Dionysius, they developed several different styles of metaphysical contemplation. A rudimentary description of how to contemplate metaphysical concepts was already found in Lefèvre's dialogues from 1494. Bovelles published a treatise about metaphysical thinking and invented a new and peculiar method for thinking about opposites.

¹⁴⁶ This is according to Farge's transcription of Registers 60, 61, and 62 cited above in n. 126.

¹⁴⁷ See the document about the reformation of Collège de Cardinal Lemoine from 1544 edited in Farge, *Le Parti conservateur au XVIe siècle*, 156–57.

¹⁴⁸ Pierre Desportes and Hélène Millet, *Fasti ecclesiae Gallicanae: répertoire prosopographique des évêques, dignitaires et chanoines des diocèses de France de 1200 à 1500. Diocèse d'Amiens*, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 99.

¹⁴⁹ On the preferences of graduates for different kinds of benefices, see Nicola Lemaître, 'Génération de 1512', in *De l'histoire de la Brie à l'histoire des Réformes: mélanges offerts au chanoine Michel Veissière*, vol. 2 (Paris: Fédération des sociétés historiques et archéologiques de Paris et de l'Île, 1993), 29–47.

¹⁵⁰ For two examples of students at the Cardinal Lemoine who qualified for the *quinquennium* by teaching grammar in the College, see the entries for Jacobus du Res and Thomas Douillet in Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 72, 94–95.

¹⁵¹ Hartmann, *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, 1:343.

The unknown author of *Metaphysica collectanea* provided detailed instructions for how one could use knowledge gained in the study of natural philosophy to reach an improved understanding of God. Crucially, these contemplative methods were not only speculations on the part of philosophers associated with the Cardinal Lemoine: they were actually taught to the college's students. Lefèvre's pious pedagogy was more than an ideal represented in his textbooks.

It is difficult to say for how long teachers at the Cardinal Lemoine continued to follow Lefèvre's approach to metaphysics. We know less about the college's pedagogical practices in the years after Lefèvre left to join Guillaume Briçonnet in focusing on religious reform. If we consider the inherent conservatism of the curriculum in arts, it appears likely that teachers in subsequent decades reverted to a more traditional perspective. While individual teachers could, as we have seen, shape their presentation of the texts, Aristotle remained the foundation of philosophical studies.¹⁵² In this system pedagogical innovations were dependent on interpersonal networks and particular contexts. Petrus Ramus, the iconoclastic educational reformer of the 1540s, understood metaphysics in a way that was diametrically opposed to that of Lefèvre. He introduced his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* with the following argument: 'Aristotle's entire metaphysics is nothing other than logic obscured by many logical and some theological *sophismata*.'¹⁵³

Even after leaving Cardinal Lemoine, Lefèvre continued to view metaphysics as an important part of Christian education. As late as 1515, he edited Cardinal Bessarion's Latin version upon which he had based his introductory textbook.¹⁵⁴ True to his habit of reading multiple Latin translations side by side, Lefèvre added the rendering by Johannes Argyropoulos in a second column. In a prefatory epistle to Robert Fortuné, Lefèvre repeated his view that metaphysics was primarily about the study of divine substance – 'for it is to this being that all others are recalled by analogy: from which all things are, through which all things are, in which all things are.'¹⁵⁵ Metaphysics was about that which is μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ – 'post physica sive post

¹⁵² Laurence W. B. Brockliss, 'Curricula', in *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 563–620.

¹⁵³ Petrus Ramus, *Scholae in liberales artes* (Basel: E. Episcopius and the heirs of N. Episcopius, 1569): The thesis of Ramus's commentary on *Metaphysics* is stated on the (unnumbered) page before column 829: 'tota Aristotelis metaphysica nil aliud sit, quam logica logicis plurimis & theologicis quibusdam sophismatis obscurata.'

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Continetur hic Aristotelis castigatissime recognitum opus metaphysicum... Theophrasti metaphysicorum liber 1. Item Metaphysica introductio: quatuor dialogorum libris elucidata*, tr. Cardinal Bessarion and Johannes Argyropoulos, ed. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Paris: H. Estienne, 1515).

¹⁵⁵ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 356. 'de substantia, sed non mobili ac medi verum prorsus immobili et summa prorsusque divina. Haec ipsum ens est ad quod omnia sunt analogice revocanda, ex quo omnia, per quod omnia, in quo omnia, cuius gratia omnia, ipsi honor in saecula; haec prenosse, huius sapientiae clavis est.'

naturalia.’ Lefèvre further translated this in terms recalling the ps.-Dionysian language of transcendence, claiming that metaphysics was the discipline of the ‘transnatural, transmundane, or supramundane.’¹⁵⁶

As in the introductory textbook, Lefèvre again emphasised the importance of combining philosophy with piety. Without rising from human matters to divine, from the imprint to the exemplar, and from obscurity to light, he argued, one could never reap the fruit of philosophy.¹⁵⁷ Lefèvre’s preface furthermore clarified the relationship between Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and the knowledge of God. He suggested that the understanding of God needed to be extracted from the *Metaphysics*: ‘For the divine in this work is mostly overshadowed under the cover of natural matters. It is not unlike fire in flint: he who knows how to extract it sees the light and it is indeed remarkable that this was hidden, which is so unlike the colour of flint.’¹⁵⁸

As in the preface to *Theologia vivificans* sixteen years earlier, Lefèvre proposed that piety was at the heart of a hermeneutics oriented towards the divine. One and the same method provided the key to discovering the hidden spiritual meaning of Scripture and finding God in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

¹⁵⁶ Rice, 356. ‘transnaturalem, transmundanam, suprave mundanam.’

¹⁵⁷ Rice, 357.

¹⁵⁸ Rice, 356. ‘Sunt tamen divina maxima pro parte in hoc opere sub naturalium involucris adumbrata, haud secus ac ignis in silice; quem qui novit excutere, lucem videt et admirabilem quidem, quam velabat longe dispar silicis opacitas.’

CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGICAL PUBLISHING IN LEFÈVRE'S CIRCLE

1. The Officina Stapulensis

During the first two decades of the sixteenth century, Lefèvre became the leading editor of patristic texts in Paris. Whereas *Theologia vivificans* (1499) had been a solo project, he now brought in a range of collaborators, many of whom he recruited among the students at Cardinal Lemoine. Lefèvre became the central node of a network including printers, suppliers of copy, and correctors, thereby developing what an acquaintance of Bruno Amerbach referred to as the '*officina Stapulensis*.'¹ Lefèvre and his collaborators specialised in two kinds of literature: textbooks for the courses in arts and religious books.² The former category was directly linked to the pedagogical activity at Cardinal Lemoine.³ By contrast, the editions of Church Fathers and medieval mystics dealt with matters that were not obviously within the expertise of Lefèvre and other masters of arts. This chapter shall explore questions that arise from the apparent mismatch between teachers of arts and theological publishing. What knowledge of Scripture or theology did Lefèvre and his colleagues think necessary for editing John of Damascus, Cyprian, or Hilary? Did editors with formal education in theology play a different role in these projects compared to those who were only educated in arts? What criteria were used to select texts? Tackling these questions, I shall provide an account of these collaborative projects that considers the context of disciplinary renewal and competition between faculties within the University of Paris.

Some masters of arts in Lefèvre's circle went beyond editing theological writings by others and also published their own work. This category includes the commentaries on Scripture written by Lefèvre, who was soon criticised by members of the Faculty of Theology for overstepping the boundaries of his competence. Even bolder in asserting his theological expertise was Bovelles, who published both commentaries and works of systematic theology.

¹ Rice, 183. For Bruno's correspondent see Bietenholz and Deutscher, *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Johannes HESS.

² A remarkably complete list of editions by Lefèvre, his students, or known collaborators is Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*. The editions of religious books are discussed in two articles by Rice: Rice, 'The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity'; Rice, 'Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Medieval Christian Mystics'.

³ On the textbooks see Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*.

As we shall see in the second half of this chapter, Bovelles's writings developed further the contemplative metaphysics that he and others had practiced at the Cardinal Lemoine. In these largely neglected works, I shall argue, we encounter an extreme version of Lefèvre's quest for a more pious theology – namely, one that is exclusively oriented towards the achievement of ecstatic, beatific vision: the *visio dei*. Unlike the Fabrists pursuing patristic renewal, Bovelles took little interest in the history of theology and his case therefore illustrates a separate conception of theological competence developed in opposition to the scholastic tradition.

Through an examination of the books published by Bovelles and his former colleagues, this chapter explores the role of printing in the formation of new concepts of theological competence and grapples with two overarching questions: first, how did the concrete tasks of correcting and preparing theological texts for publication shape views about theological learning? second, did the medium of print allow masters of arts to claim theological competence more publicly than in the preceding centuries? The view that printing did play a role in these developments is suggested by the Faculty of Theology's censorial regime, which they introduced in 1521 to regain control over the publication of theological books. The introduction of censorship marks the end of a uniquely unregulated period of religious publishing in the *ancien régime*.

2. Editing the Fathers

2.a Publishing for pious readers

Studying Lefèvre's editorial programme comes with certain challenges. In moving from the consideration of particular books to this wider perspective, one first faces the problem of delineating 'Fabrist editions.' This difficulty stems from the collaborative nature of many publications in which Lefèvre and his colleagues participated. Eugene Rice's annotated bibliography of publications by the Fabrist circle rightly takes an expansive approach, listing the translations and editions prepared by Lefèvre and both close and peripheral associates.⁴ To the latter category belongs some publications in which Lefèvre played a negligible role. For example, Rice includes Jacques Toussaint's edition of early and contemporary Christian poetry from 1513. Lefèvre's only known connection to this edition is that Toussaint mentioned him in the preface as one of several scholars to point out that an earlier edition had misattributed

⁴ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*. In order not to overcrowd the footnotes of this chapter with references to all editions mentioned, I generally refer to the relevant pages of Rice's bibliography.

poems by an Italian author to Nicholas Chappusot.⁵ This example shows the importance, for our current purpose, of distinguishing, among the editions listed by Rice, between those that Lefèvre himself prepared, those he inspired, and others that his colleagues undertook on their own accord.

Another challenge is evident if we consider the limitations of the analogy between Fabrist editing and a printing workshop (an *officina*) led by Lefèvre. In reality Lefèvre did not play the role of a publisher or printer – he did not pay wages or exercise final control over the printed product. Nor did he collaborate with one particular printer for the editions of theological texts in the way that Erasmus worked with Johannes Froben to publish the Church Fathers.⁶ Lefèvre and his colleagues helped prepare editions for a great variety of different publishers including Henri Estienne, Josse Bade, Jean Petit, and Berthold Rembolt. The Fabrists were not unaware that working with one and the same printer could be advantageous. For example, Lefèvre’s sometime collaborator Antoine Roussel exploited the commercial benefit of using layout to forge connections between titles. Roussel had been convinced to edit Sigebert of Geombloux’s early twelfth-century *Chronicon* by Guillaume Parvy (ca. 1470–1536), a member of the Faculty of Theology, confessor to the king, and an avid hunter of manuscripts.⁷ In the preface, Roussel explained that since Parvy wished that the text be made available to many readers, he arranged for Sigebert’s *Chronicon* to be printed after the image (*ad effigiem*) of Henri Estienne’s recent edition of Eusebius’s more famous work by the same title.⁸ Moreover, the textbooks prepared by Lefèvre and Clichtove were generally published by the same workshop, initially by Wolfgang Hopyl and after 1503 by Henri Estienne.⁹ Unlike the textbooks, however, the theological editions involved a variety of different collaborators, which might explain why no attempt was made to present them as a series.

The titles that Lefèvre was involved in publishing, finally, are not easy to gather in a single category since they span a wide chronological and thematic range. What nevertheless lends

⁵ Rice, 305–8.

⁶ On their collaboration see Valentina Sebastiani, *Johann Froben, Printer of Basel: A Biographical Profile and Catalogue of His Editions* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

⁷ Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 367–73. On Parvy’s contribution to various editions, see also Ernst Philip Goldschmidt, *Medieval Texts and Their First Appearance in Print* (New York: Bibliographical Society, 1943), 71f; Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, passim. See also below Chapter Four, section 3.e.

⁸ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 320–21; see also Way, ‘Jehan de Mouveaux’s “Primum Exemplar” A Model Copy Made for Henri Estienne’s 1512 Edition of Eusebius’ *Chronicon*’, 86.

⁹ On Lefèvre’s collaborations with Wolfgang Hopyl and then Henri Estienne, see A. E. Tyler [Elizabeth Armstrong], ‘Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples and Henry Estienne the Elder, 1502–20’, in *The French Mind: Studies in Honour of Gustave Rudler*, ed. Will Moore, Rhoda Sutherland, and Enid Starkie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 20.

coherence to these projects is Lefèvre's criterion for selecting texts. Following a spiritual crisis caused by reading Ramon Lull's work on contemplation in 1491, Lefèvre decided to serve the Church by editing books 'that shape souls for piety.'¹⁰ I shall next explore the different kinds of books that Lefèvre found to be conducive to piety and discuss the 'pious readers' addressed by these editions.

One category was books like the one that had inspired Lefèvre's resolution: writings about contemplation, visions, and the mystical meaning of Scripture. Lefèvre edited several books by Lull.¹¹ Lefèvre and Clichtove furthermore both edited treatises belonging to the local tradition of mystical theology at the eleventh- and twelfth-century Abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris.¹² Lefèvre also travelled to German libraries and collected material for an edition of Christian visions, which he published in 1513. This last volume illustrates the continuity that Lefèvre saw between early Christian and medieval monastic spirituality, since it features the *Shepherd of Hermas*, attributed to a character mentioned in Romans 16:14, and Hildegard von Bingen's *Scivias* side by side.¹³ In collaboration with a long list of German scholars, Lefèvre gathered and edited the writings by Nicholas of Cusa, including his theological, mathematical, and contemplative works, which Lefèvre considered to be particularly useful for understanding ps.-Dionysius.¹⁴

In *Theologia vivificans*, Lefèvre emphasised the efficacy of apostolic piety and the good example it presented to his contemporaries. In his commentary, Lefèvre suggested that finding the lost works of apostolic theologians would 'bring life and enlightenment to the whole world.'¹⁵ It was therefore not only contemplative or visionary literature that shaped the readers' piety but any texts relating to the apostles or their times fell into this category. This is evident from a volume that Lefèvre edited in 1504 and that directly addressed the pious through its title: *Pro piorum recreatione* – 'for the recreation of the pious.'¹⁶ In the volume, Lefèvre included Palladius's *Lausaic History* about the Desert Fathers and apocryphal literature about

¹⁰ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 142. See also Chapter Two, n. 59.

¹¹ Rice, epistles 22, 45, 118.

¹² For a full list and discussion of these texts, see Rice, 'Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Medieval Christian Mystics'.

¹³ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 308–13. On Lefèvre's discussion of in what sense these writings attributed to the Shepherd of Hermas were apocryphal, see Backus, 'Renaissance Attitudes to New Testament Apocryphal Writings', 1184–88.

¹⁴ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 346.

¹⁵ See above Chapter One, n. 109.

¹⁶ *Pro piorum recreatione... Paradysus Heraclidis, Epistola Clementis Recognitiones Petri apostoli. Complementum epistole Clementis. Epistole Anacleti*, ed. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Paris: G. Merchant for J. Petit, 1504).

the apostle Peter.¹⁷ Members of Lefèvre's circle searched for further works by apostolic writers including the chronicler Hegesippus, whom Jerome had described as 'an apostolic man and near the time of the apostles.'¹⁸ They failed to find any works by Hegesippus about the apostolic era but Hummelberg and Bade instead edited a work of Jewish history falsely attributed to this author.¹⁹

Continuing another theme from *Theologia vivificans*, Lefèvre and Clichtove both edited books from Scripture. After becoming a doctor in theology in 1506, Clichtove inherited an edition of the Pauline and Catholic epistles from Gillis van Delft. Van Delft's presentation of these texts in the Vulgate translation was originally published in 1491 and reproduced several times.²⁰ When Clichtove took over the edition he added a new preface, which described Paul in a way reminiscent of *Theologia vivificans*, suggesting that Paul was uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit and claiming that his writings are second only to the Gospel. He also preserved Van Delft's verses in praise of Paul.²¹ By contrast, Lefèvre's earliest scriptural editions were far more ambitious. Lefèvre first prepared an edition of the Psalter including five different Latin translations and his own commentary on the text. In the preface to the *Quincuplex psalterium* (1509) Lefèvre explained the purpose of the edition was to uncover the spiritual sense of the Psalms, without which 'monasteries decay, devotion dies out, the flame of religion is extinguished...'²² Lefèvre next began to prepare a revised translation and commentary on the Pauline epistles, in which he similarly stressed the importance of discovering the Holy Spirit speaking through human authors.²³ In sum, Lefèvre's editions encouraged the pious way of reading Scripture that he had discovered in the writings of ps.-Dionysius.

Around the same time, Lefèvre and his colleagues also began to edit Greek Fathers more frequently. Lefèvre himself revised the Latin translation of *De orthodoxa fide* by John of

¹⁷ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 117. On Lefèvre's editions of apocryphal literature, see Backus, 'Renaissance Attitudes to New Testament Apocryphal Writings'.

¹⁸ 'apostolicus vir et apostolorum temporibus vicinus.' See Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 219–23. Bade and Beatus Rhenanus both searched for Hegesippus's writings on Christian history mentioned by Jerome, see notes of James Hirstein in Hirstein, *Epistulae Beati Rhenani*, 200.

¹⁹ On the edition of *De bello judaico*, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 219–23.

²⁰ Andrew Pettegree and Malcolm Walsby, *French Books III & IV: Books published in France before 1601 in Latin and Languages other than French* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 268. The succession of editors is noted by Giancarlo Pani, 'Patristic Commentaries on Pauline Epistles from 1455 to 1517', in *Studia Patristica Vol. XVIII*, ed. J. Baun et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 379–84.

²¹ These verses are so reminiscent of the Fabrist image of Paul that Rice suggested Clichtove as a possible author, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 165.

²² Translation cited from Heiko A. Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought, Illustrated by Key Documents*, trans. Paul H. Nyhus (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), 297. Latin text in Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 193. It is perhaps no coincidence that Gillis Van Delft had published metrified on the same texts that Lefèvre treated in his first two commented editions; the Pauline epistles and the Psalms, see Pettegree and Walsby, *French Books III & IV (FB) (2 vols.)*, 872.

²³ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 295–302. I shall discuss this edition in chapter five.

Damascus in 1507.²⁴ Clichtove edited works by Cyril of Alexandria in 1508 and 1514.²⁵ He also added commentary to new editions of John of Damascus (1512) and *Theologia vivificans* (1515).²⁶ Beatus edited works by Nemesius of Emesa in a Latin translation corrected by his Greek teacher, Cono of Nuremberg, in 1512.²⁷ Josse Bade's large edition of works by Basil the Great in 1520 gathered contributions from collaborators including Lefèvre and Nicholas Bérault.²⁸ Lefèvre also played some role in encouraging editions of works by Latin Church Fathers, such as Hilary (1511), Cyprian (1512), and Pope Leo I (1511).²⁹ In these highly collaborative editions, Lefèvre's colleagues praised the Church Fathers for the simplicity and clarity of their writings and for approaching Scripture humbly and affectively.³⁰

We have seen that Lefèvre's concept of preparing souls for piety through books motivated the publication of many different kinds of theological texts: some describing contemplative techniques, providing examples of holy men and women, and others teaching how to read Scripture. Several historians interpret this project against the background of monastic reform movements, suggesting that the pious readers addressed by Lefèvre were first and foremost members of religious orders. One argument supporting this view hinges on the close connections between Lefèvre's editions and monastic libraries: Lefèvre gratefully acknowledged that many Celestine and Carthusian monasteries had lent him 'contemplative books.'³¹ Jean-Marie Le Gall shows, furthermore, that the printed books in turn became part of monastic libraries.³² Another reason for thinking that monks were Lefèvre's target audience is his active involvement in reforming the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Germain des Près, a project initiated by Lefèvre's patron Guillaume Briçonnet.³³ Briçonnet was also involved in arranging the construction of a new Minim convent on the Pincian Hill in Rome. The construction of the convent was supported by multiple French kings, particularly Charles VIII and Louis XII, who were inspired by the severe lifestyle of the order's fifteenth-century founder, Francis de

²⁴ Rice, 161–63.

²⁵ Rice, 182, 333.

²⁶ Rice, Eps. 92, 111.

²⁷ Rice, 266.

²⁸ Rice, 419.

²⁹ Rice, Eps. 71, 81, 95.

³⁰ Rice, 'The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity', 129–36.

³¹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 277. 'Huiusmodi tamen librorum plerosque Celestini Meduntenses, Senonenses, Marcusienses, Parisienses et Cartusii Audomarenses, Montis Dei, Burgofontis, et Pariseae solitudinis Vallis viridis frequenter nobis communicaverunt atque in dies cum res exposcit communicant quam humanissime...'

³² See Le Gall, *Les moines au temps des réformes: France (1480–1560)*, 601–11.

³³ Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494–1517)*; Jean-Pierre Massaut, *Josse Clichtove: l'humanisme et la réforme du clergé*. (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1968); Le Gall, *Le mythe de saint Denis*.

Paolo.³⁴ Bovelles donated a book to the new convent, perhaps during his visit to Rome in 1507.³⁵ The book he offered them was Lefèvre's edition of works by Ramon Lull from 1499.³⁶

The focus on Lefèvre's monastic audience in earlier scholarship is therefore justified albeit one-sided. I shall next argue that several of the Fabrist editions more particularly targeted members of the University. We saw above that Lefèvre prescribed his students a pious approach to metaphysics, publishing a textbook that encouraged the readers to pray humbly to the *ens entis*. Furthermore, Lefèvre recommended Lull's contemplative writings not only to monks but also to his students.³⁷ Lefèvre's theological publications were thus in part directed at this student audience, encompassing not only textbooks and contemplative literature but also editions of Church Fathers who could act as *exempla* for how to study the Bible. In the next section, I shall the ways in which the Fabrist theological editions attempted to contribute to reforming the curriculum of theology.³⁸

2.b Reforming theology

When Johannes Aventinus looked back at his studies with Lefèvre and Clichtove around 1504, he recalled that both men constantly complained about the use of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. According to Aventinus, they claimed that the *Sentences* 'disturbed the truth and pure source of sacrosanct philosophy ... with muddy questions and rivers of opinions.'³⁹ Although the theological publications of Lefèvre's circle do not openly criticise the *Sentences* in this way, Aventinus's testimony is credible. Critique of scholastic philosophical methods was a staple of

³⁴ For the history of the convent, see Charles-Pierre Martin, *Histoire du couvent royal des Minimes français de la très Sainte Trinité sur le Mont Pincius à Rome*, ed. Giovanna Canzanella Quintaluce (Rome: École française de Rome, 2018).

³⁵ On Bovelles's trip see Jean-Claude Margolin, 'Bonet de Lattès, médecin, astrologue et astronome du pape', in *Ecumenismo della Cultura III* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1981), 107–48.

³⁶ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Inc.III.228. The annotations in this volume are not by Bovelles but the signature on a flyleaf is his. Bovelles wrote his name 'Carolus de bouvielles' rather than 'c. bovillus' found in the student register of 1512 and reproduced in Jean-Claude Margolin, 'Deux autographes de Charles de Bovelles', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 43, no. 3 (1981): 527–36.

³⁷ On both of these topics see above Chapter Two.

³⁸ Rice suggests an important aim of their patristic editions, 'was to undermine the authority of [scholastic theology] by magnifying the authority of the [Fathers]' but does not investigate this relationship further. See Rice, 'The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity', 129.

³⁹ Johannes Aventinus, *Annalium Boiorum libri septem* (Ingolstadt: A. and S. Weissenhorn, 1554), 638: 'Ea tempestate Petrus Longobardus Lutheciae Poarisiorum creatur Pontifex. Is quidem Theologoumenon quator libros scripsit, sed sacrosanctae Philosophiae veritatem, fontemque purissimum, sicuti plus millies a Iacobo Fabro, Iodoco Clichtoveo praeceptoribus meis accepi, atque audivi, caeno quaestionum, rivulis opinionum conturbavit. Id quod & usus rerum magis (nisi caeci simus) saits superque docet.' Aventinus studied arts in Paris 1503/4–1504/5, see Gerald Strauss, *Historian in an Age of Crisis: The Life and Work of Johannes Aventinus, 1477–1534* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 32, 40.

Fabrist textbooks in arts philosophy.⁴⁰ On the topic of scholastic theology, however, the Fabrist rhetorical register in print was different from that used in the intimate circle.

Beatus's letters and books also testify to a strong anti-scholastic tenor in discussions and teaching at Cardinal Lemoine. While Lefèvre did not offer any formal training in theology, we have already seen that the course in metaphysics provided opportunities for incorporating religious practices and ideas. According to Beatus, Lefèvre also introduced students to theological studies. In a letter from 1509 he wrote that Lefèvre 'undertook to restore to splendour not only the disciplines that are called "liberal" but also that highest theology.'⁴¹ In another epistle Beatus referenced a programme of theological readings that he associated with the Cardinal Lemoine: ps.-Dionysius, Bonaventure, and Nicholas of Cusa.⁴² This suggests that teachers in the College introduced students to theologians who were external to the scholastic tradition.

In the writings of Cusanus, Beatus encountered a particularly outspoken critic of the scholastic method. We know that Beatus was introduced to Cusanus before 1505, likely by Bovelles. As Emmanuel Faye shows, Beatus copied a collection of extracts from Cusanus's writings and, in the same manuscript, included a short philosophical treatise by Bovelles.⁴³ Beatus also mentioned Bovelles at the very beginning of this manuscript where he cited a French proverb and its mystical interpretation, adding the note: 'Charles de Bovelles told me this during a walk.'⁴⁴ Around the time when Beatus studied with Bovelles, Lefèvre began preparing an edition of Cusanus's writings, however this project was only completed in 1514 due to the difficulty of locating manuscripts.⁴⁵ In the meantime Beatus got his hands on a Strasbourg edition of Cusanus's writings.⁴⁶ The margins of Beatus's copy are filled with notes relating to authors cited or remarks about theology. Among the texts that Beatus read closely

⁴⁰ Eugene F. Rice, 'Humanist Aristotelianism in France: Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and His Circle', in *Humanism in France at the End of the Middle Ages and in the Early Renaissance*, ed. Anthony Levi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), 132–49; Ann Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 91–102.

⁴¹ Hirstein, *Epistvlae Beati Rhenani*, 128. 'Hic etiam non eas modo disciplinas quas liberales vocant sed etiam ipsam Theologiam supremam suo candorii restituere aggressus est.'

⁴² Hirstein, 128. These readings are partly reflected in Beatus's surviving library. We find no early purchases of works by Bonaventure. Beatus's copy of *Theologia vivificans*, K 643a, is not inscribed with place and date of purchase.

⁴³ Faye, 'Nicolas de Cues et Charles de Bovelles dans le manuscrit «Exigua pluvia» de Beatus Rhenanus'. The date (ca. 1505) is suggested by the dates of the printed books with which the manuscript is bound, see Faye, 428.

⁴⁴ 'hoc mihi inter conspiciendum D<i>x<i>t Caro<lus> Bo<villus>.' Cited from Faye, 'Nicolas de Cues et Charles de Bovelles dans le manuscrit «Exigua pluvia» de Beatus Rhenanus', 422.

⁴⁵ See Lefèvre's thanks to the many people who helped him with locating manuscripts in Nicholas of Cusa, *Haec accurata recognitio trium voluminum operum* (Paris: J. Bade, 1514), I, sig. āā3v.

⁴⁶ BHS K 951 is an edition of works by Nicholas of Cusa that Beatus bought in Paris in 1506: Nicholas of Cusa, *Opuscula theologica, philosophica, et mathematica* (Strasbourg: M. Flasch, n.d. [ca. 1488]).

was *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* (1449), in which Cusanus defended his notion of ‘learned ignorance’ against the criticism of the nominalist theologian Johannes Wenck.⁴⁷ The *Apologia* criticised scholastic theologians for epistemological hubris. By applying Aristotelian logic to theology, in particular the principle of non-contradiction, they severely limited their understanding of Scripture. Cusanus fashioned himself as a new Socrates, who unlike the scholastic theologians was aware of his ignorance.⁴⁸

In the *Apologia*, Cusanus contrasted the scholastic method with the theology of ps.-Dionysius and drew extensively on the latter to defend his own interpretation of mystical theology.⁴⁹ Through Cusanus, Beatus was introduced to ps.-Dionysius as an antischolastic thinker – a confrontational perspective that was mostly absent in Lefèvre’s *Theologia vivificans*.⁵⁰ We know that Lefèvre later promoted Cusanus as an important interpreter of the Dionysian corpus. In the epistle introducing the *Opera* of Cusanus in 1514, Lefèvre wrote that Cusanus’s works of ‘intellectual theology’ were the best guides to the ‘sacred recesses’ (*sacra adyta*) of ps.-Dionysius.⁵¹ Only on one point did Beatus protest against the interpretation of ps.-Dionysius in the *Apologia*. When Cusanus suggests that ps.-Dionysius imitated Plato in his writings, Beatus followed Lefèvre by protesting in the margin – ‘I do not believe you, my best Cusa.’⁵²

That Beatus, like Aventinus, stressed the conflict between Lefèvre’s theological studies and the scholastic tradition transpires from an epistle that he addressed to Johannes Drouyn. Drouyn was one of the few students from Cardinal Lemoine who embarked on the traditional course offered by the Faculty of Theology and he was even a *bursarius* at the prestigious Collège de Navarre.⁵³ Beatus, however, was convinced that Drouyn should remain committed to Lefèvre’s approach to theology. Beatus wrote that he assumed that Drouyn remained committed to reading first and foremost ps.-Dionysius, and then Cusanus, and Bonaventure alongside

⁴⁷ E. Vansteenbergh, *Autour de La docte ignorance: une controverse sur la théologie mystique au XVe siècle* (Münster i. W.: Aschendorff, 1915).

⁴⁸ This theme is introduced at the very beginning of *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, in Beatus’s copy (BHS K 951), sig. f5r–v.

⁴⁹ On the role played by conflicting interpretations of ps.-Dionysius in debates between affective and intellectualist interpretations of mystical theology, see Christian Trottmann, ‘Lectures de Denys et enjeux des trois controverses renaissantes: docte ignorance, théologie mystique, et vies active ou contemplative’, in *Le Pseudo-Denys à la Renaissance*, ed. Christian Trottmann and Stéphane Toussaint (Paris: H. Champion, 2014), 93–124.

⁵⁰ On Lefèvre’s restraint in this regard, see above Chapter One, section 6.b. Critique against scholastic theology was as old as the practice itself, see Farge, ‘Fifteenth-Annual Bainton Lecture: Erasmus, the University of Paris, and the Profession of Theology’, 39–41.

⁵¹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 346. On how the Fabrist circle read Cusanus, see Richard J. Oosterhoff, ‘Cusanus and Boethian Theology in the Early French Reform’, in *Nicholas of Cusa and the Making of the Early Modern World*, ed. Simon J. G. Burton, Joshua Hollmann, and Eric M. Parker (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 339–66.

⁵² ‘Non crediderim tibi: cusa optime.’ Annotation in BHS K 951, Nicholas of Cusa, *Opuscula*, pt. 1, sig. f6v.

⁵³ On Drouyn see above Chapter Two, section 4.b.

Lefèvre's recent *Quincuplex psalterium* (1509) 'since you, shunning display, do not worry about the remaining mass of theologians.'⁵⁴ Beatus offered Drouyn as recreational reading various *opuscula* by the fifteenth-century poet Matteo Bosso.⁵⁵ We unfortunately know nothing about Drouyn's career after 1512 or whether his reading preferences explain why he never reached the doctoral degree in theology.⁵⁶ But the letter illustrates the tensions between the new model of theological education emerging at the Cardinal Lemoine and the traditional curriculum and suggests the difficulty of navigating between them.

Only one of Lefèvre's publications explicitly addressed the possibility of curricular change within the Faculty of Theology – namely, Lefèvre's revised translation of *De fide orthodoxa* by John of Damascus, published in 1507. Written in the early eighth century, *De fide orthodoxa* provided a *summa* of Greek theology by weaving together excerpts and paraphrases of ideas from ps.-Dionysius, Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, and others.⁵⁷ Since the twelfth century, it was known and used by Latin theologians in the translation by Burgundio.⁵⁸ In the thirteenth century, scribes added divisions that assimilated the structure of this work to the *Sentences*.⁵⁹ The manuscript tradition thereby highlighted the possibility of viewing *De fide orthodoxa* as a Greek equivalent of the *Sentences*.

This background helps explain Lefèvre's suggestion that the Faculty might adopt *De fide orthodoxa* as a textbook. To this end, Lefèvre made a thorough revision of the earlier translations by Burgundio and Grosseteste. Lefèvre changed features associated with *ad verbum* translations, such as eliminating transliterations of Greek and adjusting the text to convey the full sense of Greek words.⁶⁰ The edition was published by Henri Estienne in 1507 with a dedication to the theologian Gillis van Delft.⁶¹ The latter had returned to Paris in May

⁵⁴ Hirstein, *Epistulae Beati Rhenani*, 140. 'de reliqua siquidem Theologorum plebe scriptoribusque proletariis nulla tibi, ostentationem fugienti, prorsus cura.'

⁵⁵ Matteo Bossi, *De Veris & salutaribus animi gaudiis, Dialogus tribus libris seu disputationibus distinctus* (Strasbourg: M. Schürer, 1509).

⁵⁶ I am not convinced that this Drouyn is the French translator of *Ship of Fools* first published by Bade in 1501. On the translation, see Paul White, 'Marketing Adaptations of the Ship of Fools: The *Stultiferae naves* (1501) and *Navis stultifera* (1505) of Jodocus Badius Ascensius', in *Translation and the Book Trade in Early Modern Europe*, ed. José María Pérez Fernández and Edward Wilson-Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 22–39.

⁵⁷ See Andrew Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁸ See Richard Cross, 'The Reception of John of Damascus in the Summa Halensis', in *The Summa Halensis*, ed. Lydia Schumacher (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 71–90.

⁵⁹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 282, n. 6.

⁶⁰ Backus, 'John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*'.

⁶¹ His doctorate had been granted on 7 June 1492, see Bietenholz and Deutscher, *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Gillis van DELFT.

1506 after a longer absence to assist in the doctoral disputations of Clichtove.⁶² Lefèvre's epistle clearly shows his pleasure at having friends within the Faculty – allies who might be able to exert change in the curriculum. He wrote to Van Delft:

It will be your and Clichtove's task to discern whether perhaps this work could be of use in that renowned school since the latter is commended for being particularly learned in theology and deriving from Athens – both of which the present work by the Damascene seems to bring. For through no other work were [students] of the Greek schools introduced to the sacred exercise of theology.⁶³

The idea of replacing Peter Lombard's *Sentences* as the basis of theological education was clearly attractive to Lefèvre's students and collaborators. One reason was that they found *De fide orthodoxa* to be more eloquent than the *Sentences*. Beatus later made the equivalent argument in favour of incorporating Paolo Cortesi's humanist commentary on the *Sentences* in theological education.⁶⁴ According to Beatus, doing so would allow the Faculty of Theology to separate their discipline from *fæda barbarie*.⁶⁵ Besides eloquence, however, John of Damascus's earlier date clearly was attractive. When Clichtove published his commentary on this book in 1512, he stressed that *De fide orthodoxa* not only preceded but was the 'archetype' of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.⁶⁶ One contributing factor to his view of the Damascene was the erroneously early dating that Clichtove took from Trithemius's *De scriptoris ecclesiasticis*. Trithemius suggested that the Damascene lived around year 390, making him into a relatively early Church Father.⁶⁷

⁶² Launoy prints a speech by Clichtove thanking his teachers and benefactors. The source does not seem to survive. See Jean Launoy, *Regii Navarrae gymnasii Parisiensis historia*, vol. 1 (Paris: Vidua E. Martini, 1677), 230.

⁶³ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 162. 'Tuæ igitur partes erunt et Clichtovei ... agnoscere an opus forte tale sit quod usui celeberrimo illi studio esse possit, cum ipsum maxime theologiae probetur studiosum et ab Atheniensi defluxisse, quod utrumque videtur præsens Damasceni opusculum præferre. Neque enim in Graecorum gymnasiis alio in opera ad sacram theologiae palaestram solebant initiari.'

⁶⁴ On Cortesi's commentary, see D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation*, 148.

⁶⁵ Hirstein, *Epistvlæ Beati Rhenani*, ep. 49, esp. 410–12. On the Fabrist pursuit of theological eloquence, see Rice, 'The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity'.

⁶⁶ On the background to this view, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 282, n. 6. See also the useful overview of how Christian theology moved 'From story to system' in Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁷ See Josse Clichtove, *Theologia Damasceni quatuor libris explicata: et adiecto ad litteram commentario elucidata* (Paris: H. Estienne, 1512), 7r. Clichtove lifts entire phrases from Trithemius, *De scriptoris ecclesiasticis*, 23v. One possible explanation why Trithemius misdates John of Damascus would be that he (or his source) confuses Theodosius I and Theodosius III (reg. 715–717).

Even more important than the dating, however, was that Lefèvre and his collaborators considered the Damascene as a faithful transmitter of early theology. To the first edition, Beatus added verses that invoked the apostolic doctrine found in *De fide orthodoxa*: ‘The ray nearer the sun, which rises from the heaven / has more of the sunlight’s brightness... For [John of Damascus] rightly transmits the very beginning of faith / and teaches sacred mysteries to pure minds.’⁶⁸ In these lines, Beatus echoed the beginning of the preface to *Theologia vivificans*, in which Lefèvre wrote: ‘The closer light is to the sun, the more brightly it shines...’⁶⁹ A sumptuously decorated presentation copy of *De fide orthodoxa* – printed on vellum – similarly echoed Lefèvre’s ps.-Dionysius: the gilded and gaufered edges were inscribed with the words ‘Theologia Damasceni cibus solidus,’ clearly referencing the title *Theologia vivificans. Cibus solidus*.⁷⁰ Already in the first edition, and particularly in the presentation copy, Lefèvre’s team emphasised the close connection between *De fide orthodoxa* and ps.-Dionysius.

Clichtove’s commentary explicitly addressed the relationship between John of Damascus and ps.-Dionysius, in order to explain why his commentary so often cited the earlier Father:

It should not be thought out of place that I bring into these explanations the words and views of the blessed Dionysius to corroborate what the author says. For the holy Damascene ... was such a devoted follower of the most sacred and divine theology of the holiest Father Dionysius... that in several places of this work he brought in multiple sentences taken from the holy books of Dionysius... From this we can clearly conclude that the author carefully handled the works of the divine Dionysius and read them eagerly; in fact, he took many things from them which he treats here. This should sharply incite anyone to read the work of this author and willingly accept it.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 163. ‘Eoo propior radius qui surgit ab axe / Hic plus Phoebea luce nitoris habet... Tradit enim fidei prima incunabula recte / ac puras mentes mystica sacra docet.’

⁶⁹ See the first lines of Lefèvre’s preface in Rice, 60–61. ‘Lumen quanto solis vicinius est, tanto splendet illustrius...’

⁷⁰ The book is now found in Beatus’s library (BHS K 1213) but might well have been produced for someone else, such as Gillis van Delft. Beatus had a different copy of the same edition that bears his signature (K 1078a). Like two other books discussed in next chapter, K 1213 is a hitherto undetected binding of the so-called At lier Louis XII. See below chapter four, section 4a.

⁷¹ Clichtove, *Theologia Damasceni*, 5r–6v. ‘Neque ab re id factum putetur: quod beatissimi Dionysii verba interdum et sententias ad corroboranda authoris dicta in his explanationibus adduxerimus. quandoquidem sacratissimae et imprimis divinae theologiae sanctissimi patris Dionysii: sacer Damascenus (cuius praesens opus adiutore deo elucidandum suscepimus) admodum fuit studiosus et assectator. quod vel eo indicio facile est depraehendere: quod plerique in locis huius operis complures afferat sententias ex Dyonisii sacris libris depromptas et illis propemodum consentaneas... Unde perspicuum sumitur argumentum: authorem ipsum in divini Dionysii operibus sedulo versatum esse illaque studiose lectitasse, quinimmo et ex illis multa quae hic

For Clichtove, the Damascene's reliance on ps.-Dionysius was an argument for the former's authority.⁷²

Having established why Lefèvre's collaborators appreciated *De fide orthodoxa*, we shall return to the issue of whether this edition could help bridge the two theological cultures in Paris. Clichtove's commentary did not respond explicitly to Lefèvre's suggestion that *De fide orthodoxa* could be used at the Faculty of Theology. Nor did the content of his commentary contribute to bridging Greek patristics and the theological style practiced at the Faculty. Clichtove did not apply the structure of distinctions or pay attention to conflicting interpretations and theories in the manner typical of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.⁷³ His exposition instead focused on demonstrating the concord between *De fide orthodoxa* and a range of Greek and Latin authorities, including besides ps.-Dionysius also Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Augustine, Jerome, and Bede.⁷⁴ That Clichtove positioned his commentary firmly within the Fabrist tradition is clear from the many citations of authors edited by Lefèvre and himself. These include Cyril of Alexandria's commentary on John, which Clichtove had edited in 1508.⁷⁵ Among more recent authors, the most frequently cited was Richard of Saint-Victor, whose *De trinitate* Lefèvre edited in 1510.⁷⁶

Clichtove was not the only one among Lefèvre's students to see *De fide orthodoxa* as part of the effort to publish Church Fathers rather than a serious attempt at compromise with the Faculty of Theology. Beatus's first independent patristic project in Strasbourg built on the same agenda. In 1512 Beatus published further sources of *De fide orthodoxa* in Strasbourg – works attributed to Gregory of Nyssa (although in fact by Nemesius of Emesa) – hoping that 'just as the famous University of Paris long ago favourably received the Damascene, they would not neglect the one from Nyssa, more ancient than the Damascene.'⁷⁷ Beatus echoed Clichtove's commentary by emphasising that this author conveyed theological doctrine without producing

pertractat desumpsisse. quod quemque ad legendum hoc authoris opus libentiusque amplectendum: acrius incitare debet.'

⁷² The reverse is true in Clichtove's arguments for the apostolic dating of ps.-Dionysius, see Josse Clichtove, *Quod opera Dionysio attributa, sint Dionysii Areopagite et non alterius* (1517) ed. Massaut, *Critique et tradition à la veille de la réforme en France*, 222.

⁷³ On both aspects see Rosemann, *Peter Lombard*.

⁷⁴ On Clichtove's *paisible commentaires*, see Massaut, *Critique et tradition à la veille de la réforme en France*, 31–35.

⁷⁵ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 182.

⁷⁶ Rice, 223. See Clichtove, *Theologia Damasceni*, 10v, 13v, 18v, 31v.

⁷⁷ 'sicut Damascenum celeberrima Parisiorum academia iam pridem favorabiliter suscepit, ita & Nyssenum, Damasceno antiquiorem, minimi neglectui haberet.' Hirstein, *Epistulae Beati Rhenani*, 278–80. The long prefatory epistles from the first edition are in Hirstein, 256–311, 332–41.

quarrels, which are ‘discussed with more pride than profit in learned gatherings.’⁷⁸ The same year Hummelberg wrote to Bade to recommend that he reprint Beatus’s edition in Paris, which he did in early 1513.⁷⁹ In his letter, Hummelberg argued that the edition fit perfectly into the emerging literature on Greek Fathers printed in Latin. He mentioned Clichtove’s recent commentary on *De fide orthodoxa*, printed by Henri Estienne, and the *Opera* of Origen edited by Jacques Merlin and published by Bade the same year.⁸⁰

As we have seen, many of Lefèvre’s collaborators were motivated by a strong antipathy toward scholastic theology in their publications. Greek Fathers in several ways appeared to be the antithesis of the *Sentences* since they favoured early rather than recent sources and used a less technical language. Against this background, we might see Clichtove’s unwillingness to integrate scholastic material – which he knew well from his studies at the Faculty – into his commentary on John of Damascus as a vote in favour of the emerging alternative culture of religious scholarship. One might even see this case in line with Ann Moss’s argument that humanists and scholastics in this period belonged to separate linguistic spheres, between which communication was difficult and compromise impossible.⁸¹ More fundamentally, however, Lefèvre and Clichtove were well aware that the *Sentences* could not simply be replaced by a different textbook. The Lombard’s *summa* had provided the structure of theological investigation for centuries. The presence of humanist allies in the Faculty of Theology or the books they published could not change the fact that the official course of studies required years of hearing and lecturing on this text.⁸²

2.c Collaboration and competence

As established, patristic editing in Lefèvre’s circle was characterised by opposition to the theology practiced by the Faculty of Theology. Despite this, members of that Faculty played important roles in these editorial projects. One edition that is well placed for investigating the many tasks involved in producing a patristic edition is the *Opera* of the fourth-century theologian Hilary of Poitiers published by Josse Bade in 1511. This edition furthermore

⁷⁸ Hirstein, *Epistvlae Beati Rhenani*, 281. ‘Discent hinc studiosi multa & scitu dignissima sine altercatione, sine rixa, de quibus saepenumero in comitiis eruditionum superbius quam utilis disputatur’

⁷⁹ Bade’s preface is in Hirstein, 376–81.

⁸⁰ Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MS Clm 4007, 27r.

⁸¹ Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn*, esp. 89–123.

⁸² See Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 16–22. On the very active study of the *Sentences* and its scholastic commentators in this period, see also Severin V. Kitanov, John T. Slotemaker, and Jeffrey C. Witt, ‘John Major’s (Mair’s) Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Scholastic Philosophy and Theology in the Early Sixteenth Century’, in *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 369–415.

illustrates the difficulty of disentangling individual contributions to such projects. The *Opera* of Hilary was the result of extensive collaborations, which are narrated in the introductory epistle by Robert Fortuné, a teacher of arts at Collège de Plessis. Fortuné stated that some texts were printed on the basis of an edition published in Milan by Leonard Pachel in 1489. In addition, Guillaume Parvy had found two previously unpublished works by Hilary in the Dominican monastery of Saint-Benigne in Dijon. A third unpublished work was also included in the edition, although we do not learn about its origin. After locating the manuscripts, Bade and his co-worker Jan Schilling transcribed and prepared the texts for publication.⁸³ As Anthony Grafton's research on correctors for early print suggests, their main task was to make the texts neat and attractive to the readers.⁸⁴ About Schilling's revision of the text, Fortuné remarked only that the corrector 'returned the text from dirt and decay.'⁸⁵ Bade's revisions were a little more intrusive. According to Fortuné, the manuscript containing Hilary's commentary on the Gospel of Matthew used ancient forms of spelling for composite words, such as *inmortalitas* instead of *immortalitas*. Although Fortuné and Bade suspected that the spelling used in the manuscript was more ancient and original than their own, Bade prioritised using the current standard spelling: 'Lest they offend the reader who is unaware of their antiquity, [Bade] exchanged them for current coinage, without however changing their meaning.'⁸⁶ Schilling, who was an experienced corrector, probably helped Bade see the texts through the press.

Since the dedicatory epistle for the edition was written by Fortuné, Rice assumes that he played the part of a general editor for the volume.⁸⁷ However, the epistle does not specify what role Fortuné played in the preparation and since we know that Bade and Schilling did the work of transcribing, correcting, and printing, one wonders what Fortuné might have contributed. The situation only gets more confounding if we consider a letter written by Guillaume Budé and described in an eighteenth-century French paraphrase, which concerns the preparation of

⁸³ In 1508, Schilling still worked for Henri Estienne, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 186.

⁸⁴ Grafton, *The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe*.

⁸⁵ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 242. 'redemit e situ ac squalore.' One manuscript that might reveal more about Schilling's methods is BHS Ms 77, pt. 1, which contains a text by Apponius copied and apparently prepared for publication (but not published) by Schilling and other associates of Lefèvre in 1506. On the possible involvement of Beatus in this project, see Bernard De Vregille, 'Autour du manuscrit 77 de Sélestat', in *500e anniversaire de la naissance de Beatus Rhenanus* (Sélestat: Amis de la Bibliothèque humaniste, 1985), 176–82.

⁸⁶ Rice 240: 'ne lectorem antiquitatis ignarum offenderent, ad presentem monetam tornavit, sententia tamen nulla mutata.' On Bade's unusual commitment to humanist orthography compared to his colleagues in Paris, see Way, 'Jehan de Mouveaux's "Primum Exemplar" A Model Copy Made for Henri Estienne's 1512 Edition of Eusebius' Chronicon', 83–84.

⁸⁷ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 238.

this edition.⁸⁸ In the letter, Budé asked the Benedictine Charles Fernand if he knew where one might find a more complete manuscript of Hilary's commentary on the Psalms or any other unpublished works by the same author.⁸⁹ Trithemius's *De scriptoris ecclesiasticis* listed various other titles by Hilary not included in Bade's edition, such as commentaries on Job and the Canticles, which explains why Budé searched for further titles.⁹⁰ Budé furthermore addressed his own involvement in the project: 'Perhaps you will not approve that an expert on law gets involved in editing works by the Doctors of the Church. Nevertheless, the edition is well on its way, and I am helped by very capable people.'⁹¹ Budé particularly mentioned the involvement of Lefèvre – '*bien capable de faire de semblables recherches.*' The paraphrase of this letter, however, says nothing about the role played by Fortuné.⁹²

I do not suggest that we should attribute the edition to Budé rather than Fortuné on the basis of this paraphrase, the original of which might well be irreparably lost.⁹³ The letter rather illustrates a more general point – namely, that projects such as this might not have had any leading 'editor.' If anyone played a co-ordinating role, it was most likely Bade, in whose workshop the edition was printed, and who, moreover, was personally involved in preparing texts. Rather than assume that Fortuné played the role of a general editor, I suggest, we should ask why he wrote the dedicatory epistle.

One plausible explanation why Fortuné was selected for this task was his personal connection to a suitable patron – namely, Yves de Mahyeuc. Mahyeuc was a bishop and, like Parvy, also a Dominican and confessor to a member of the royal family.⁹⁴ The way in which Fortuné signs off the preface suggests that Mahyeuc had been his student at Collège de

⁸⁸ Budé's letter was part of a collection of letters received by the humanist Charles Fernand. It was last seen by Dom Jean Colomb in 1765 at Saint-Vincent-du-Mans. Dom Colomb was then part of the team within the Congregation of Saint Maur writing the literary history of France. He described the manuscript in a short article arguing against accounts that claimed Charles Fernand to be blind. The letters are thus approached obliquely, which adds to the credibility of Dom Colomb's account. See Colomb, 'Mémoires', 445–52. I discuss the disappearance of this manuscript above in the introduction, section five.

⁸⁹ On Charles Fernand, see Le Gall, *Les moines au temps des réformes: France (1480–1560)*, passim.

⁹⁰ Trithemius's entry is reproduced at the end of the volume, see Hilary of Potiers, *Opera complura Sancti Hylarii Episcopi hac serie coimpressa. De trinitate... In evangelium Matthei. Lib. I.* (Paris: J. Bade, 1511).

⁹¹ Colomb, 'Mémoires', 450. 'Vous n'approuvez peut-être pas, dit-il encore, qu'un Juris-Consulte se mêle de donner les éditions des ouvrages des Docteurs de l'Eglise, néanmoins elle est fort avancée, & je suis aidé par de très habiles gens.' On Budé's later hesitance to infringe on the area of expertise of theologians in his own religious scholarship, see Chapter Six, section 3.c.

⁹² Colomb, 450.

⁹³ This is the conclusion drawn by Dom Colomb, see Colomb, 450.

⁹⁴ On Yves de Mayheuc and his homonymous uncle, see Augustin Pic and Georges Provost, eds., *Yves Mahyeuc, 1462–1541: Rennes en Renaissance* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

Plessis.⁹⁵ In addressing Mahyeuc, Fortuné declared the bishop to be an ‘imitator of ancient customs, since they are chaste and saintly, and a vigorous lover of old doctrine, since it is solid and irrefutable.’⁹⁶ We know that *Theologia vivificans* was part of the bishop’s library and according to Fortuné, Hilary was another of the worthiest early theologians.⁹⁷ That Fortuné wrote the preface because of his connection with Mahyeuc is suggested by Fortuné’s declaration that he spoke for the editorial collective:

And all ... requested with one voice and in complete agreement that we would dedicate the entire work to your veneration and we request that you permit the work to be published with the protection of your favour, so much that we strenuously pray that you will, revered father.⁹⁸

Another likely reason why Fortuné was invited to write the prefatory epistle was his theological learning. Fortuné had studied in the Faculty of Theology and was a *baccalarius formatus* in theology.⁹⁹ Fortuné had gone through an extensive programme of studies to reach this status, first attending lectures on the Bible and the *Sentences* during six years; thereafter lecturing on the Bible and participating in disputations for three years; at the end of this period passing a major disputation, the *tentativa*; and thereafter lecturing on the *Sentences* for one year.¹⁰⁰ Even if he had not proceeded to the doctoral degree, Fortuné’s formal accreditation in theology was impressive. It allowed him to speak authoritatively about Hilary’s doctrine and the sanctity of his life. The letter he wrote is one of the longest ones included in Rice’s collection of prefatory epistles and includes extensive citations from Jerome as well as Fortuné’s comments about Hilary’s Latin style.¹⁰¹ Fortuné’s theological learning and connections therefore was a valuable contribution to the edition.

⁹⁵ ‘Ex gymnasio tuo Plessaico Parisiis.’ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 242. I have not been able to find any records concerning Mahyeuc’s studies but on Fortuné’s regency in grammar and arts, see Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 389.

⁹⁶ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 238. ‘Hilarii opera... praesidium tuum... iustis rationibus conferimus, quod et morum antiquorum, quia casti et sancti sunt, praecipuus es imitator et doctrinae veteris, quia solida et irrefragabilis, strenuus amator.’

⁹⁷ Rice, 239. Two items from Yves de Mahyeuc’s library have been found, one of them being his copy of *Theologia vivificans*. See Sarah Toulouse, ‘À la recherche de la bibliothèque d’Yves Mahyeuc. Les dominicains de Rennes et leurs livres au XVI^e siècle’, in *Yves Mahyeuc, 1462–1541: Rennes en Renaissance*, ed. Augustin Pic and Georges Provost (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 151–57.

⁹⁸ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 242. ‘Omnesque qui symbolum contulere uno ore plenoque consensu commonuerunt ut venerationi tuae totum opus dicarem rogaremque patiaris sub tuae dexteritatis praesidio opus tantum emitti, quod ut facias, pater reverende obnix precamur.’

⁹⁹ Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ I summarise the account of Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 16–22.

¹⁰¹ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 238–43.

Extensive knowledge of theological sources was necessary for certain editorial tasks, such as adding Scriptural citations to the margins of a book. In a letter to Hummelberg from 1508, Beatus wrote that he had started preparing Ficino's *De Christiana religione* for publication. However, he hoped that Clichtove would take over the project and 'add marginal quotations from the sayings of Peter, Paul and the Evangelists as well as the predictions of the prophets, which I could not do since I don't have the Bible.'¹⁰² Clichtove did not add annotations to Ficino's book but edited various other theological works, including by writings by Hugh of St Victor (1506), Caesarius of Arles (1511), and Cyril of Alexandria. In several cases, Clichtove used his knowledge of theological sources to make additions to the texts that he prepared for publication. Most strikingly, he opted to 're-create' several books of Cyril's commentary on the Gospel of John. When Clichtove first edited the Latin translation of George of Trebizond in 1508, he had not managed to find books V–VIII.¹⁰³ Six years later the missing books had still not appeared. Clichtove settled on completing the commentary himself by drawing on the interpretations of Chrysostom and Augustine.¹⁰⁴

Clichtove's reconstruction of the commentary on the Gospel of John is revealing of the differences between his approach to editing and Erasmus's methods. As Jane Philipps showed, Erasmus for several years mistook Clichtove's reconstruction for Cyril's text and was puzzled by the close parallels between Cyril and Augustine.¹⁰⁵ Although Clichtove had declared his intervention in an added preface, Erasmus's oversight is easy to understand since paratextual markers are otherwise scarce. More fundamentally, the reconstruction made no sense from Erasmus's perspective. What good would it do to paste excerpts of Augustine into the gaps of Cyril's commentary? According to Clichtove's point of view, however, the reconstruction was a legitimate intervention for facilitating access to a patristic mode of reading Scripture.¹⁰⁶ The same motive explains why Clichtove added excerpts from the *glossa ordinaria* to a Victorine work on the allegorical interpretation of Scripture.¹⁰⁷ Clichtove did not hesitate to intervene

¹⁰² Beatus Rhenanus to Michael Hummelberg (May 1508) in Hirstein, *Epistulae Beati Rhenani*, 28. 'Apponet Petrii, Pauli et Evangelistarum dictis prophetarum quoque vaticiniis marginarias (ut dicitur) quotationes quod per me fieri nequit – bibliam nempe minime habeo.' [Spelling and punctuation modified.] I agree with Hirstein's figurative interpretation of 'habeo,' see Hirstein, 28, n. 21.

¹⁰³ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 182.

¹⁰⁴ Rice, 332.

¹⁰⁵ See Jane E. Phillips, 'Erasmus, Cyril, and the *Annotationes* on John', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 50, no. 2 (1988): 381–84.

¹⁰⁶ Clichtove narrates how he was convinced by anonymous friends to undertake the task of reconstructing the lost books for the sake of readers and to repair the work: 'Impellunt enim cotidiana adhortatione et contendunt nos debere ingenium hac in re periclitari, quae et fructum legentibus sit allatura et interrupto operi quantulumcumque consummationis speciem exhibitura.' Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 330–31.

¹⁰⁷ Jean Châtillon, ed., *Richard of Saint-Victor: Liber exceptionum: texte critique avec introduction, notes et tables* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958), 53–57. See also Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 388–91.

and tweak texts, drawing on his own theological learning, in order to make the editions useful guides to Scripture.

Although Clichtove went unusually far in manipulating the texts he edited, his interventions are broadly consistent with Lefèvre's emphasis on facilitating access to texts. In producing philosophical textbooks, Lefèvre's main aim was to expedite the reading and understanding of Aristotle's works. To do so, he acted on multiple levels: finding translations that were suited to contemporary students, providing summaries and paraphrases of the text that emphasised its main points and conclusions, and sometimes adding commentary that further clarified the points of the text.¹⁰⁸ The same concern with clarifying and explaining characterised the activities of the *officina stapulensis* when it came to patristic editions. By finding the best possible translations, revising them when necessary, and regularising orthography, textual correction ultimately served the pious reader.

This attitude towards editing – which is fundamentally different from that of the textual critic – frequently leads historians to dismiss the scholarship produced in Lefèvre's circle. A good example of this is D'Amico's study of Beatus as an editor and historian. D'Amico shows that it was only when Beatus began working with Erasmus in 1515 that he was introduced to complex textual problems and engaged closely with manuscripts.¹⁰⁹ In this area, Erasmus's editing was more innovative and influential than that of Lefèvre's circle as discussed above. D'Amico is, however, wrong to therefore dismiss Lefèvre's influence on Beatus. He characterises Lefèvre as a mystical philosopher who 'issue[ed] reprints of moral and philosophical treatises and translations of Greek texts.'¹¹⁰ This description of Lefèvre's editorial career entirely misses his engagement with patristic literature and, notably, the history of Christianity. D'Amico's failure to appreciate the wider theological purpose addressed by Lefèvre's editions brings him to conclude that Beatus's historical perspective on theology is entirely due to Erasmus's philological method and personal influence.¹¹¹ However, two out of the three examples that D'Amico provides of Beatus's 'Christian history' in his edition of

¹⁰⁸ Besides Lefèvre's many textbooks, the most striking testimony to this approach to books is an introductory textbook to books written for students by an associate of Collège de Cardinal Lemoine. This highly unusual textbook defines terms including book, translation, paraphrase, and author and discusses the relationship between them. See Nicolas Francus Vimacius, 'In decem communium libellus' in *In hac lucubratione hec sex continentur opuscula: Post auditas grammaticen & rhetoricen ad superiores liberales artes sectandas exhortatiuncula...* (Paris: J. Bade, 1508).

¹⁰⁹ D'Amico, *Theory and Practice in Renaissance Textual Criticism: Beatus Rhenanus between Conjecture and History*, 47–55.

¹¹⁰ D'Amico, 45, 52.

¹¹¹ D'Amico, 172.

Tertullian (1521) are in fact closely aligned with Lefèvre’s scholarship.¹¹² One is Beatus’s study of the sacraments in early Christianity – a project that is conceptually foreshadowed by Lefèvre’s tables comparing apostolic and contemporary liturgy in *Theologia vivificans*.¹¹³ The second example is Beatus’s account of the history of theology in his preface.¹¹⁴ Beatus briefly outlined the succession of apostolic, patristic, and scholastic theology. Apostolic theology, he suggested, was reverent and brevilouquent. Next came a period characterised by the rise of heretics and the corresponding advent of patristic doctrinal theology. Finally, around 1140, Peter the Lombard’s systematisation of doctrine produced academic theology, characterised by its obscure terminology. In subsequent editions Beatus added further material betraying his close familiarity with the Paris Faculty of Theology. He described how theologians had founded a guild preserving for themselves the right to teach theology and debating only among themselves following a specific set of rules and their internal terminology.¹¹⁵

Beatus’s narrative – what D’Amico calls ‘ecclesiastical history as antischolastic polemic’ – was Lefèvre’s legacy as much as that of Erasmus.¹¹⁶ A historicising perspective on theology does not depend entirely on the use of philological methods. As Nikolaus Staubach shows, already fourteenth-century proponents of the ‘Devotio Moderna’ worked with a hierarchical model of the theological tradition, in which recent writings were authoritative only in so far as they conveyed the doctrine from earlier authors and, ultimately, Scripture.¹¹⁷ This perspective is consistent with Lefèvre’s editorial programme which, as we have seen, included both apostolic and medieval authors, while consistently stressing that early Christianity provided the blueprint for how to read Scripture piously and peacefully. Rather than focusing on how to restore texts to their original state, Lefèvre and his collaborators thought about how to present them in a way that would compel their readers to join the quest for a pre-scholastic theological culture.

¹¹² The third example concerns the history of heretical sects, a topic that was more frequently discussed in the period after 1520, see chapter five below. D’Amico, 164–69.

¹¹³ cf. D’Amico, 157–64. The connection with *Theologia vivificans* is already made in Pierre Fraenkel, ‘Beatus Rhenanus, historien de la liturgie’, in *500e anniversaire de la naissance de Beatus Rhenanus* (Sélestat: Amis de la Bibliothèque humaniste, 1985), 250.

¹¹⁴ D’Amico, *Theory and Practice in Renaissance Textual Criticism: Beatus Rhenanus between Conjecture and History*, 151–57.

¹¹⁵ Texts reproduced in D’Amico, 152–53.

¹¹⁶ D’Amico suggests Erasmian inspiration on all points, see D’Amico, 153–55.

¹¹⁷ Staubach, ‘*Memores pristinae perfectionis*. The Importance of the Church Fathers for *Devotio moderna*’, 459–60.

3. Theological authorship

3.a Bovelles's theological career

Many of Lefèvre's students were absorbed into editorial projects. A smaller number wrote original works – including theological books. Bovelles, for example, did not take an active part in the editorial work discussed in the previous section but attempted to contribute to theological renewal by publishing his own writings.¹¹⁸ Symphorien Champier similarly wrote books mixing medical, Platonic, and theological topics.¹¹⁹ Varènes's dialogues often touched upon theology, and he wrote a series of homilies on the Canticles.¹²⁰ In these cases, the question of theological expertise was even more acute than with editors like Beatus and Hummelberg. What credentials did Bovelles, Champier, and Varènes have for interpreting theology?

The second part of this chapter will focus on Bovelles's theological authorship in the period after his studies in Paris and before the introduction of religious censorship in 1521. In this period, Bovelles worked in a different environment compared to Lefèvre and his collaborators. Shortly after receiving his master's degree, Bovelles became a canon in the Cathedral of St. Quentin and then in Noyon. Bovelles regularly resided with local bishops, as is evident from prefaces and colophons in which Bovelles thanked the bishops for their hospitality while he finished his books.¹²¹ Leaving Paris did therefore not mean abandoning the systems of patronage in which other members of Lefèvre's circle were entangled. For example, Charles de Genlis, the bishop of Noyon, was a nephew of Cardinal George d'Amboise – the same man who lent Clichtove a Latin translation of works by Cyril.¹²²

In the years after receiving his master's degree and teaching the courses described in the previous chapter, Bovelles moreover travelled widely. The earliest testimony of his theological studies originates from Bovelles's visit to Johannes Trithemius in Sponheim in 1503/4.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Oosterhoff claims without noting his source that Bovelles was the editor of Bonetus de Lattes's treatise on an astronomical ring in 1500, cf. Oosterhoff, 'Apprenticeship in the Renaissance University', 129. Writing to Lefèvre about this treatise in 1512, Bovelles specified that it had been published *tua cura*. See Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 27, n. 4.

¹¹⁹ Guido Giglioni, 'Symphorien Champier on Medicine, Theology, and Politics', in *Plotinus' Legacy*, ed. Stephen Gersh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 96–124.

¹²⁰ Varènes theological works are briefly discussed in Bedouelle, *Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d'Étaples: un guide de lecture*, 210–13.

¹²¹ Bovelles's Commentary on John was written in the house of François de Hallewin, bishop of Amiens, in 1511. In 1512–13, Bovelles wrote books while staying with Charles de Genlis, bishop of Noyon.

¹²² On Charles de Genlis, see Jean-Claude Margolin's edition and commentary on Bovelles's epitaph over the bishop (d. 1528) in Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles*, 50–51, 371–77. On the Amboise family's support of Lefèvre's circle and Clichtove in particular, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 182–85; Michael J. Kraus, 'Patronage and Reform in the France of the Prereforme: The Case of Clichtove', *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire*; Saskatoon 6, no. 1 (1 March 1971): 45–68.

¹²³ The visit is dated to 1503 in Victor, *Charles de Bovelles, 1479–1553*, 14.

During the encounter Trithemius showed Bovelles his *Steganographia*, which Bovelles publicly denounced as containing illicit demonic magic in 1509.¹²⁴ A letter by Trithemius from 1505, whose manuscript publication predates Bovelles's attack, depicts an amicable meeting focused on theological matters.¹²⁵ In the letter, Trithemius not only addressed Bovelles as a 'theologian' but also informs us that the two men discussed Scripture:

I remind you of your promise when you were in Sponheim for fourteen days last year to send us those very profound questions about Scripture – we recorded their titles in Sponheim – once you solved them. [...] I liked everything that you explained about Scripture because you are sound like the ancient doctors and a lucid enucleator of truth, neither overflowing through the multiplication of words nor recoiling by omitting necessary matters.¹²⁶

Trithemius's letter tells us that already at the time when Bovelles wrote his *Metaphisicum introductorium* (1504), he was working on theological problems. Furthermore, we learn that Trithemius viewed Bovelles's work as an imitation or continuation of the work of Church Fathers and thus as being continuous with the patristic revival that Lefèvre and other colleagues were undertaking in Paris. While in Sponheim, Bovelles moreover shared a treatise with his

¹²⁴ The letter from Bovelles to Germain de Ganay was published in Charles de Bovelles, *Quae hoc volumine continentur: Liber de intellectu; Liber de sensu; Liber de nihilo; Ars oppositorum; Liber de generatione; Liber de sapiente; Liber de duodecim numeris; Epistolae complures. Insuper mathematicum opus quadripartitum: De numeris perfectis; de mathematicis rosis; de geometricis corporibus; de geometricis supplementis* (Paris: H. Estienne, 1511), 172–73. Bovelles wrote a now lost *Apologia in Joannem Tritemium abbatem*, see Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles*, 5.

¹²⁵ An autograph copy of the letter is in BAV Pal. lat. 730, 55r–v. On Trithemius's correspondence see Klaus Arnold, 'Warum schrieben und sammelten Humanisten ihre Briefe? Beobachtungen zum Briefwechsel des Benediktinerabtes Johannes Trithemius (1462–1516)', in *Adel-Geistlichkeit-Militär. Festschrift für Eckardt Opitz*, Busch (Bochum, 1999), 19–32. Arnold does not discuss the possibility that some letters are forged, which is a distinct possibility since some address Libanius Gallus (also in connection to Bovelles), who is suspected to be one of Trithemius's inventions. See John Monfasani, 'Fernando of Cordova. A Biographical and Intellectual Profile', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 82, no. 6 (1992): 16, n. 81; Nikolaus Staubach, 'Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit: Die historiographischen Fiktionen des Johannes Trithemius im Lichte seines wissenschaftlichen Selbstverständnisses.', in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*, ed. Detlev Jasper, vol. 1, 6 vols (Hannover: Hahn, 1988); Paola Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic in the European Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Anthony Grafton, *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 56–78. Before solving this problem, it is impossible to tell how Trithemius's narrative about Bovelles's visit relates to the latter's attack.

¹²⁶ Johannes Trithemius, *Opera historica II*, 475: 'Memorem te facimus promissionis tuae nobis anno factae priore, cum in nostro nobiscum esse coenobio Spanhemensi per dies 14, ut quaestiones illas sacrae scripturae profundissimas, quarum capita dudum in Spanheim consignavimus, quam primus absolvas, nobisque ut pollicitus es transmittas. [...] Valde nos delectant omnia quae in literis explicaveris, quoniam veterum more doctorum solidus es & veritatis enucleator lucidus, neque verborum multiplicatione superfluous, neque deficientia in his quae fuerint necessaria recisus.'

host, most likely a draft of *Liber de intellectu* (1511).¹²⁷ Trithemius's letter is filled with praise of this treatise. He wrote that it 'contains a true Christian theology ... without the blemishes of the external tradition.'¹²⁸ He particularly praised the absence of pagan authors like Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian in Bovelles's writing. Trithemius preferred Bovelles's use of 'pedestrian and everyday similitudes' and a discourse that 'explains the matter, teaches its meaning, and brings the hidden to light.'¹²⁹

From Trithemius's perspective, even Bovelles's ostensibly 'philosophical' writings were clearly theological in nature. This illustrates the challenges of separating theology from philosophy in Bovelles's *oeuvre* – even when Bovelles himself categorised certain writings as philosophical and others as theological.¹³⁰ As Emmanuel Faye notes, the historiography has tended to swing from one extreme to the other.¹³¹ Ernst Cassirer's early attention to Bovelles as a modernising philosopher was followed by Joseph Victor's intellectual biography, which stressed Bovelles's theological and mystical interests.¹³² Reacting against this narrative, Faye argues that Bovelles was not only a theologian but also a philosopher concerned with distinctly human problems, such as the nature of human subjectivity, wisdom, and perfection. According to Faye, Bovelles even played a role in liberating philosophy from 'theological' views about the limitations of human knowledge.¹³³

This section could be said to bring the pendulum back in the opposite direction by again insisting on the religious nature of Bovelles's writings. More fundamentally, however, I aspire to reduce the 'swings' by rooting the discussion of Bovelles's work in a specific historical disciplinary context. Faye's approach to separating philosophy and theology is distinctly

¹²⁷ On similarities between Bovelles's use of Nicholas of Cusa in *De intellectu* and Trithemius's ditto in *Octo quaestiones*, see Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic in the European Renaissance*, 93–100.

¹²⁸ Trithemius, *Opera historica II*, 475. 'Ea quae de intellectu scripsisti & mihi complacuerunt & multis. Continent enim veram Christianorum theologiam, puram & absolutam, quae menti cognitionem & affectui confert summi boni desiderium, consistens in se pura, integra, & candida, sine cicatricibus exterarum traditionum.'

¹²⁹ Trithemius, *Opera historica II*, 475: 'sed pedestris & quotidianae similitudinis & nulla lucubratione redolens oratio necessaria est, quae rem explicet, sensum edisserat, & obscura manifestet.'

¹³⁰ In 1511, Bovelles's scriptural commentaries were published separately from the main volume of philosophical writings printed by Henri Estienne. This separation is cited in support of the argument that Bovelles clearly distinguished philosophy from theology in Emmanuel Faye, *Philosophie et perfection de l'homme: De la Renaissance à Descartes* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1998), 130. The force of this evidence is limited, however, by the necessary involvement of publishers in such decisions.

¹³¹ Faye, 130–32.

¹³² Ernst Cassirer, *Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Victor, *Charles de Bovelles, 1479–1553*. On the earlier German historiography, see also Mario Meliàdò, 'The Cusanian School: Charles de Bovelles, Giordano Bruno and the Fortune of a Modern Historiographical Narrative', in *Outsiders and Forerunners: Modern Reason and Historiographical Births of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Catherine König - Pralong, Mario Meliàdò, and Zornitsa Radeva (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 329–56.

¹³³ Faye, *Philosophie et perfection de l'homme*, 23–24, 86, 97.

ahistorical because he operates with newly minted interpretations of both terms. According to Faye, philosophy is a practice affirmative of human thought and capacity, whereas theology denies their significance with reference to the effects of sin. Another reader with a different definition of philosophy and theology might well reach a different conclusion about the predominance of one or the other in Bovelles's work. Some of Bovelles's sixteenth-century readers recognised that Bovelles mixed philosophy and theology in an unusual way. For example, an anonymous reader of *De intellectu* reacted strongly against Bovelles's treatment of angels.¹³⁴ On the titlepage of his copy, the annotator cited the theologian Johannes Eck: 'Eck's opinion of this book: To philosophise well without theology leads to remarkable errors.'¹³⁵ According to Eck, Bovelles had overstepped the boundary of his philosophical competence and embarked on topics for which a theological education was needed.

Eck's opinion reflected the majority view in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries: Philosophy relied on natural reason whereas theology departed from revelation; the two disciplines required different kinds of education and should be clearly distinguished. By contrast, Bovelles related to these disciplines in a way that was deeply shaped by the approach to metaphysics embraced by the teachers at Cardinal Lemoine. For Lefèvre, metaphysics was a pious pursuit aiming at knowledge of God. In line with this conviction, the more advanced philosophy courses taught in the College were distinctly Christian and explored how contemplative methods could be used to connect natural philosophy and theology using models including analogies and natural theology.¹³⁶ This conception of metaphysics is anything but secular or anti-theological, as Faye suggests. Fabrist metaphysics not only presupposes revealed knowledge, most notably concerning the Trinity, but God constitutes the central objective of philosophical investigation.

Whereas other students of Lefèvre acknowledged the importance of theological contemplation yet went on to engage in primarily textual or doctrinal work, Bovelles's writings from 1505–1511 reveal that he continued to regard contemplation as the foundation of his authorship.¹³⁷ In his philosophical letters, Bovelles narrated how contemplation was the

¹³⁴ Uppsala University Library, Copernicus 28. For references to Nicholas of Cusa, see fols. 3r and 8v. On the earlier misidentification of this annotator as Copernicus, see Pawel Czartoryski, 'Library of Copernicus', in *Science and History: Studies in Honor of Edward Rosen*, ed. Erna Hilfstein, Pawel Czartoryski, and Frank D. Grande (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1978), 379–80.

¹³⁵ 'Eckii sententia de isto libro. Optime philosophari sine Theologia est insigniter errare.' I have not been able to locate this sentence in the published works of Johannes Eck. Eck cited Bovelles in his own works, see for example Johannes Eck, *Chrysopassus* (Augsburg: J. Miller, 1514).

¹³⁶ See Chapter Two above.

¹³⁷ This paragraph summarises the argument of Christa Lundberg, 'The Making of a Philosopher: The Contemplative Letters of Charles de Bovelles', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 82, no. 2 (2021): 185–205.

starting point of his writing process – the origin of ideas developed in his treatises. He described contemplative experiences that he had during walks or ones inspired by ordinary objects like mathematical figures or purified alcohol. In a prefatory epistle from 1511, Bovelles celebrated how constant contemplation always offered him something new to write about, like an ever flowering tree, ‘For when you pick one fruit, another is reborn in the same place. In the same way, no work brought out into the public would be enough to exhaust the well supplied storerooms of the mind.’¹³⁸ Contemplation was also the outcome of his writing process, in the sense that Bovelles presented his letters and treatises as ‘spiritual nourishment.’ He shared these ‘philosophical letters’ with a network of correspondents, which was overwhelmingly monastic and ecclesiastical.

If we consider the religious topics of most of Bovelles’s writings, it is not surprising that his contemporaries found his ostensibly philosophical publications to be theological. The different reactions of Trithemius and Eck to his writings fit perfectly with a general pattern of the quarrel over theological expertise. Eck, a doctor of theology, criticised Bovelles for embarking on problems for which he did not have the requisite theological training. Trithemius, who defended a wider notion of Christian erudition, celebrated his quest to put philosophical training to theological use.¹³⁹

3.b Scriptural commentary

Bovelles had begun a productive career as a theological author without having set foot in the designated Faculty. It was only in 1511, however, that he published works in traditional theological genres, beginning with two short commentaries on the prologue of John’s Gospel and on the Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4).¹⁴⁰ That Bovelles wrote commentaries on Scripture might appear to signal the alignment of his practices with those of Lefèvre and other colleagues from Cardinal Lemoine. Fabrist textbooks generally featured genres like paraphrases and commentaries intended to facilitate access to Aristotle and other

¹³⁸ ‘Ex hac enim ubi fructum unum decerpseris: mox alter eius loco renascentur: Ita & locupletissima mentis cellaria: nullum quod in publicum prodit: opus exhaurire sufficit.’ Prefatory epistle to Charles de Genlis in Charles de Bovelles, *In hoc opere contenta: Commentarius in primordiale Evangelium divi Ioannis. Vita Remundi eremite. Philosophice aliquot Epistolae.*, 1st ed. (Paris: J. Bade, 1511), 2r.

¹³⁹ Rummel, ‘The Importance of Being Doctor’. On Trithemius’s notion of the *scriptor ecclesiasticus*, see section three in the introduction above.

¹⁴⁰ Bovelles, *Commentarius in primordiale Evangelium divi Ioannis*; Charles de Bovelles, *Dominica oratio terrinis Ecclesiastice Iherarchie ordinibus particulatim attributa et facili explanata commentario* (Paris: J. Petit, 1511). On these commentaries see Jean-Claude Margolin, ‘Bovelles et son commentaire du prologue johannique’, in *Histoire de l’exégèse au XVIe siècle: textes du colloque international tenu à Genève en 1976*, ed. Olivier Fatio and Pierre Fraenkel (Geneva: Droz, 1978), 229–55; Marie-Madeleine de La Garanderie, *Guillaume Budé, philosophe de la culture*, ed. Luigi-Alberto Sanchi (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010), 146–58.

authorities.¹⁴¹ The earliest theological editions by Lefèvre and his colleagues did not provide full commentary – this includes *Theologia vivificans*, which Lefèvre provided with *scholia*. However, this was changing by 1510. Lefèvre wrote a full commentary on Richard of St. Victor’s *De Trinitate*, published in 1510. In 1512, Clichtove’s added commentary to a second edition of John of Damascus’s *De fide orthodoxa*. Lefèvre’s commented edition of the epistles of Paul was published in 1512 – a major undertaking that must have been well underway by the time Bovelles wrote and published his commentaries.

Yet Bovelles’s approach to scriptural commentary was distinct from that of his former teachers. The choice of texts gives a first indication of his *modus operandi*. Whereas Lefèvre and Clichtove painstakingly added familiar commentary to entire books, Bovelles selected very short texts. Moreover, he chose texts that could be viewed as concentrates of Christian theology. The first was John’s prologue, which Bovelles suggested ‘explains the substance of both testaments.’¹⁴² According to Bovelles, the first fifteen lines provided the ‘ratio’ of the Old Testament and the next fifteen that of the New Testament.¹⁴³ For his second commentary, Bovelles divided the Lord’s prayer into ten fragments, nine of which are mapped upon nine levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy borrowed from ps.-Dionysius. The first line – *Pater noster qui es in caelis* – corresponded to the devotion of bishops, the second line to the devotion of priests, and so on. The tenth fragment – *Amen* – corresponded to the gathered voice of all ecclesiastical levels.¹⁴⁴ According to Bovelles’s interpretation, the two short texts that he chose illuminated two much wider topics: Scripture and the Church.

Bovelles’s dedicatory epistle in *Dominica oratio* helps explain his preference for focusing on brief passages of Scripture. Here, he suggested that a prayer with few words was more efficient than a longer one: ‘The more succinct in words, the more plentiful is the substance and spiritual juice nourishing our souls, like a certain efficacy when we are to be connected

¹⁴¹ On these genres see Lines, ‘Lefèvre and French Aristotelianism on the Eve of the Sixteenth Century’, 276–81; Oosterhoff, *Making Mathematical Culture*, 86–121.

¹⁴² Bovelles, *Commentarius in primordiale Evangelium divi Ioannis*, 3r. ‘Hic evangelicus sermo latius utriusque testamanti substantiam exponit.’

¹⁴³ Bovelles, 3r. A marginal note stated clearly ‘ratio veteris testamenti in evangelio impliciti.’ On the significance of Bovelles’s designation of the prologue as ‘primordial’, see Margolin, ‘Bovelles et son commentaire du prologue johannique’, 238.

¹⁴⁴ The more common way to divide the Lord’s prayer focuses on the seven petitions. Bovelles treats the ‘address’ (*Pater noster qui es in celis*) as one part and divides one of the petitions into two parts ([6.] *Et dimitte nobi debita nostra [7] Sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.*) One example of a commentary designed around the division into seven parts is Erasmus’s *Precatio Dominica in septem portiones distributa* (Basel: J. Froben, 1523). Like Bovelles’s work, Erasmus’s paraphrase teaches how to pray, see Hilmar M. Pabel, *Conversing with God: Prayer in Erasmus’ Pastoral Writing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 112–15. Possible sources of inspiration for Bovelles’s scheme of correspondences are medieval illustrations of the Apostles’s Creed that mapped each of the twelve articles of faith to an Apostle. See e.g. the fourteenth-century illustration in Bibliothèque Mazarine ms 924, 150v.

with God.’¹⁴⁵ According to Bovelles’s schema of how different levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy prayed, the highest level ‘standing nearest to God’ did so ‘almost silently.’¹⁴⁶ The hierarchical model of knowledge as a progress from discursive rationality to silent intuition was one that Bovelles shared with Lefèvre. In his preface to Bovelles’s *In artem oppositorum introductio* from 1501, Lefèvre contrasted the loquacity of Aristotle with the brevity of Paul, ps.-Dionysius, Cusanus and Victorinus.¹⁴⁷ Yet it speaks to Bovelles’s greater commitment to this model – and to the theology of ps.-Dionysius in general – that he alone made this a central theme of his theological writings.

The contrast between Bovelles’s and Lefèvre’s approaches to commentary are further illuminated by Bovelles’s letters from 1527. At this time, Bovelles openly criticised Lefèvre’s commentaries, saying that they were only ‘increasing the empty gravel of words and doing nothing for the meaning.’¹⁴⁸ He complained specifically that Lefèvre’s scholia in *Theologia vivificans* (1499) had not fulfilled the promise of uncovering the marrow of ps.-Dionysius.¹⁴⁹ He similarly found fault with Lefèvre’s commentaries on the Psalter (1509), Paul’s epistles (1512), and the Gospels (1522), emphasising that he was not alone in his view:

I heard this from many others ... complaining and suffering because they were not nourished but deceived by the great fodder of words in his commentaries, and even amazed that a man in this way, with so much effort, pointlessly worked towards a nauseating multiplication of words without delivering the elevated or mystical meaning of anything.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Bovelles, *Dominica oratio*, sig. a i. ‘quanto equidem verbis est succinctior: tanto substantia et alenti animas nostras spiritali succo quadam nos deo coniungendi efficacia: reperitur uberior.’

¹⁴⁶ Bovelles, sig. a viii. ‘Primus ordo propior deo astans: divinas virtutes, pene in silentio speculatur easque admiratur; Secundus easdem virtutes quas a priore et prestantiore didicit ordine: sanctis vocibus effert atque collaudat; Tertius vero inferiorum providentiam gerens orat...’

¹⁴⁷ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 96. For further references to writings on silence by Lefèvre and Alain de Varènes, see Bedouelle, *Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d’Étaples: un guide de lecture*, 174.

¹⁴⁸ Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles*, 20. ‘...augens inanem verborum glaream et nichil ad sensum faciens.’

¹⁴⁹ Bovelles, 18. ‘Dudum me id in stuporem convertit, qui miratus sum me (cum sperarem a Fabro enucleationem Dionysiane medulle) ossa prorsus intacta ab eo reperisse, nec aliud quam cruda verba, nichil altitudini aut profundi succi habentia, lectoribus ab eo propinari.’ On Bovelles’s use of the metaphor of marrow, see also Lundberg, ‘The Making of a Philosopher’, 192.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Quod ego (ne in meo solitus consistam iudicio) a multis etiam audivi, querentibus ac indolentibus se in ejus commentariis sola grandi verborum, non ali, sed falli farragine, mirantibus etiam huiusmodi virum, tanto labore, in sermonum fastidiosa multiplicatione et nullius alte aut mystice rei exhibitione perperam desudasse.’ Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles*, 18. My translation was helped by Margolin’s textual commentaries in *ibid.* 240–241.

From the perspective of Bovelles and his unnamed sources, Lefèvre's commentaries did not help the understanding of theology. In 1511 Bovelles and Lefèvre were still close, as we know from a traveller who met them together in St. Germain-des-Près.¹⁵¹ Bovelles's commentaries from this year were nevertheless already telling of his preference for the dense writing and mystical significance that he later accused Lefèvre of failing to produce.

The commentaries from 1511 moreover show the great influence of ps.-Dionysius in Bovelles's writings. The prologue of John, with its vivid imagery of 'word,' 'life,' 'light,' and 'darkness,' provided Bovelles with ample opportunity for applying ps.-Dionysius's methods of symbolic interpretation. To give one example, Bovelles embarked on the interpretation of the phrase 'in him was life' (John 1:4) by citing ps.-Dionysius's suggestion that 'life' can be understood in two ways, either absolutely ('divine Life') or in the everyday meaning of the life of animals and plants.¹⁵² Whereas the first sense was unproblematic to apply to God, the second required explanation. Bovelles suggested that we consider how the created universe consists of three things – essence, life, and cognition – in imitation of the Trinity. Of these, Bovelles claimed that essence correlated with the Father, life with the son, and cognition with the Holy Spirit. With Christ being, in a sense, the archetype of created life, one could rightly say with John that 'in him was life.'¹⁵³

Bovelles's commentary on the Lord's prayer was even more closely connected to the works of ps.-Dionysius. It could in fact equally well be described as a short commentary on *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. This is how Bovelles's *Dominica oratio* was read by the Carthusians in Cologne, who included the treatise as an *addendum* in their comprehensive edition of materials relating to ps.-Dionysius from 1536.¹⁵⁴ Bovelles's account focuses on how each rank of the hierarchy approaches God through prayer. The mode of prayer appropriate to the higher ranks reflect the first lines of the Lord's prayer, which praise and honour God. Intermediate between the higher and lower ranks are in Bovelles's system the 'ministers' and the corresponding line is '*Panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie.*' Bovelles mentions three traditional interpretations of the request for bread that capture the transition from divine

¹⁵¹ See the letter from Jerome of Pavia edited in Symphorien Champier, *Que in hoc opusculo habentur. Duellum epistolare: Gallie et Italie antiquitates summatim complectens. Tropheum Christianissime galliarum regis Francisci hujus nominis primi [by Hieronymis Papiensis]. Item complures illustrium virorum epistole ad dominum Symphorianum Camperium.* ([Lyon]: Deionta, 1519), sig. b6r.

¹⁵² See *The Divine Names*, Chapter Six, in Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, 103–5.

¹⁵³ Bovelles, *Commentarius in primordiale Evangelium divi Ioannis*, 10v–11v.

¹⁵⁴ *D. Dionysii Carthusiani ... super omnes S. Dionysii Areopagite libros commentaria* (Cologne: P. Quentel, 1536), f. 317v–326. The text is presented as an appendix to *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Bovelles is not named. An initial bearing the arms of Franciscus de Cranevald is used for *Dominica oratio*, however the exact role played by Cranevald in preparing the edition is unknown.

to human concerns: the eucharist, the necessities of life (food, drink, clothing, health) and that which is good for the soul (wisdom, knowledge, virtues).¹⁵⁵ The lower ranks reflect the last lines of the prayer, which asks for forgiveness of sins and protection from evil.¹⁵⁶ For Bovelles, the Lord's prayer thus reflects the descending quality of prayer as one moves down the ecclesiastical hierarchy

Bovelles's two commentaries are telling of what aspects of ps.-Dionysius's theology he appreciated. *Dominica oratio* substantially reworks the concept of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In this treatise, ps.-Dionysius was mainly concerned with sacraments, officials of the Church, and the Church's communication with God through liturgy.¹⁵⁷ Lefèvre's scholia to these passages included tables comparing the rituals described to contemporary practices. But unlike Lefèvre and Beatus, Bovelles had little interest in exploring the early Church from a historical perspective. Consistent with his focus on religious contemplation, Bovelles read the ecclesiastical hierarchy as a key to the human relationship to God. The focus on the mind's ascent to knowledge of God thus permeates both commentaries in which Bovelles used ps.-Dionysius's theories of divine names and hierarchical models to 'discover' the mystical meanings of some of the most well-known lines of Scripture. As we shall see in the next section, Bovelles was to develop this strategy in two more ambitious works on theology published in 1513 and 1515. It is in these works that the antischolastic implications of Bovelles's Dionysian theology become apparent.

3.c Systematic theology 1512–1515

The second stage of Bovelles's theological authorship looks very different from the first. In 1513 Bovelles published the first of two large in-folio volumes, the *Quaestiones theologicae*.¹⁵⁸ This title is evidently no Scriptural commentary and, as we shall see, barely cites the text of the Bible. A second volume – the *Conclusiones theologicae* – was published in 1515. Both works were printed by Josse Bade and the volumes are richly illustrated with Bovelles's signature woodcut diagrams.¹⁵⁹ These books have received almost no scholarly attention,

¹⁵⁵ Bovelles, *Dominica oratio*, sig. biii–ci. This interpretation is reminiscent of Augustine's interpretation; however, Augustine's third category, the spiritual interpretation, specifically refers to 'divine precepts.' See Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte* II.7.27 in *Corpus christianorum, series Latina* 35 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1954).

¹⁵⁶ See Bovelles's concluding summary in Bovelles, *Dominica oratio*, sig. d iii.

¹⁵⁷ Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, 27–48.

¹⁵⁸ Charles de Bovelles, *Quaestionum Theologicarum Libri septem* (Paris: J. Bade, 1513).

¹⁵⁹ On the diagrams in Bovelles's philosophical and mathematical treatises from 1511, see Inigo Bocken, 'The Pictorial Treatises of Charles de Bovelles', *Intellectual History Review* 21, no. 3 (September 2011): 341–52;

which is in part explained by their idiosyncratic character: Bovelles's theological writings neither fit into the paradigm of Renaissance philosophy, nor do they have much in common with Lefèvre's religious scholarship.¹⁶⁰ I shall suggest, however, that a useful *comparandus* is a classic work of humanist theology – namely, Paolo Cortesi's commentary on the *Sentences* first published in Rome in 1504.¹⁶¹ The dual aim of the work was to inspire scholastics to adopt humanist standards of eloquence and, no less important, humanists to study theology. Ann Moss aptly describes Cortesi's commentary as a 'résumé, a *summa* of opinions on Peter's subject matter' in Classical Latin style.¹⁶² In the most general terms, Cortesi like Bovelles sought to challenge the scholastic approach to theology.

One concrete link between Cortesi's book and Bovelles's *Quaestiones theologicae* is that Josse Bade published the two books within days of one another in the spring 1513. Several of Bovelles's friends and acquaintances were sympathetic to Italian humanist theology in general, and Cortesi in particular. I have already mentioned Beatus's enthusiasm for both Cortesi's *Sentences* and Ficino's *De Christiana religione*, the latter of which was printed in Paris in 1510.¹⁶³ Ficino's influence on French Renaissance writers is well documented. Symphorien Champier, in particular, frequently borrowed from Ficino's writings – not least when justifying why he, as a physician, ventured onto theological territory.¹⁶⁴ Judging from letters by Beatus and Konrad Peutinger, it appears that Cortesi played an equally important role as a model of humanist theology. A few months after Bade's edition, Beatus prepared another reproduction of Cortesi's *Sentences* in Strasbourg.¹⁶⁵ He asked Konrad Peutinger for a copy of the *editio princeps*.¹⁶⁶ Peutinger sent the copy with an accompanying letter that Beatus printed.¹⁶⁷ In the

Anne-Hélène Klinger-Dollé, *Le De sensu de Charles de Bovelles (1511) : conception philosophique des sens et figuration de la pensée ; suivi du texte latin du De sensu, traduit et annoté* (Geneva: Droz, 2016).

¹⁶⁰ An exception is Victor, *Charles de Bovelles, 1479–1553*, 125–53. Victor's account focuses on Bovelles's theories of the human understanding of God and the influence of the writings of ps.-Dionysius, Cusanus, and Ramon Lull.

¹⁶¹ Paolo Cortesi, *In quatuor Libros Sententiarum argutae Romanoque eloquio disputationes* (Paris: J. Bade, 1513). The edition was completed on 28 April, eight days after Bovelles's *Quaestiones theologicae*.

¹⁶² Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn*, 70. On Cortesi's project in the Roman context, see D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation*.

¹⁶³ Marsilio Ficino, *De religione christiana et fidei pietate opusculum* (Paris: B. Rembolt, 1510).

¹⁶⁴ Giglioni, 'Symphorien Champier on Medicine, Theology, and Politics', 103.

¹⁶⁵ E.g. Paolo Cortesi, *In Sententias* (Basel: J. Froben, August 1513). Considering the close connections between Beatus Rhenanus, Josse Bade, and Michael Hummelberg, it seems reasonable to assume that the decision to publish Cortesi so soon after Bade's edition was no coincidence.

¹⁶⁶ Peutinger specified in a letter to Konrad Mutianus that he had sent Beatus a copy of the Roman edition, see Konrad Peutinger, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Erich König (Munich: Beck, 1923), 213. On Mutianus's reading of Lefèvre's books, see Bedouelle, *Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d'Étaples: un guide de lecture*, 216–18. Peutinger's letter to Hummelberg from August 1513 confirms that 'Paulum Cortesium ... Beato Rhenano ut petivit transmisi.' Hummelberg also received a copy of Froben's *Sentences*, see Sebastiani, *Johann Froben, Printer of Basel*, 40.

¹⁶⁷ Hirstein, *Epistvlae Beati Rhenani*, 386–95.

letter, Peutinger argued that Cortesi's approach was consistent with that of the Church Fathers. If only the (scholastic) '*sophistae*' read ps.-Dionysius, Tertullian, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, Origen, Lactantius, Cyprian, Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Rufinus, and Pope Leo I, they would discover how far these writers were from using a barbaric Latin.¹⁶⁸ Like Trithemius in his letter to Bovelles, Peutinger enthusiastically welcomed contemporary authors who appeared to approach the theological style of the Fathers.

There are other similarities between Cortesi's *Sentences* and Bovelles's *Quaestiones theologicae*. The books are both structured in a way that recall the *Sentences* and, ultimately, the grand narratives of Christianity. Cortesi followed the four-part structure of the *Sentences*, with books devoted to the nature of God (I), the creation (II), the incarnation (III), and the sacraments (IV). Bovelles used the first three categories and added further books to provide a more elaborate version. His seven books began with treating God (I) and the creation (II), then paradise (III), the fall (IV), the deluge (V), the Old Testament (VI), the incarnation, and the concord between the Old and New Testament (VII).

Cortesi's commentary and Bovelles's *Quaestiones theologicae* furthermore both retain a certain connection to the scholastic theological tradition through the use of questions.¹⁶⁹ Scholastic counterparts like John Mair, whose commentary on the *Sentences* Bade had published in 1510, approached questions with a strict methodology of division, possible resolutions and arguments *pro* and *contra*.¹⁷⁰ By contrast, Cortesi and Bovelles discussed questions without such a rigid framework. They did so, however, in different ways: Cortesi essentially summarised the views of theological authorities, whereas Bovelles set out to answer the questions himself. In their attempts to renew theological genres, contemporary readers nevertheless saw the close connection suggested by Bade's dual publication. An inventory of Christophe de Longueil's library lists the two titles side by side.¹⁷¹ A Celestine catalogue from 1661 lists a volume containing '*Cortesi in sentent. cum Quaest. Bouilli*.'¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Hirstein, 390–92.

¹⁶⁹ Olga Weijers, 'L'enseignement du trivium a la faculté des arts de Paris: La "questio"', in *Manuels, programmes de cours et techniques d'enseignement dans les universités médiévales*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse (Louvain-La-Neuve: Institut d'études médiévales de l'Université catholique de Louvain, 1994), 57–74.

¹⁷⁰ On Mair's *Sentences* compared to Cortesi's work, see Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn*, 76–85. See also Kitanov, Slotemaker, and Witt, 'John Major's (Mair's) Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Scholastic Philosophy and Theology in the Early Sixteenth Century'.

¹⁷¹ Tobias Daniels, 'Die Bücher des Humanisten Christophe de Longueil. Das Römische Inventar von 1519', *Humanistica Lovaniensia. Journal of Neo-Latin Studies* 67, no. 1 (21 March 2018): 128. Daniels identifies this book with the Roman first edition but considering the predominance of Parisian books in Longueil's library it appears more likely that he owned Bade's edition.

¹⁷² Bibliothèque Mazarine Ms 4079, 24v.

Perhaps aware that a comparison between Cortesi's style and his own would not be in his favour, Bovelles declared in the preface to his *Quaestiones theologicae* that he did not prioritise eloquence.¹⁷³ Bovelles explained firstly that he wrote the book very quickly. This claim is supported by the dated colophons to individual books, which suggest that he composed texts covering eighty folios in about one month and a half while he was a guest in the home of the bishop of Noyon.¹⁷⁴ Bovelles evidently prided himself in writing quickly during short outbursts of creativity. Second, Bovelles declared that he chose an 'everyday, common, and unadorned style' because he wrote not 'for the few' but 'for all.'¹⁷⁵ Identifying 'the few' is easy in this case; Bovelles was *not* writing for the highly trained humanists capable of deciphering classicising Latin including the occasional Greek phrase. As to the identity of Bovelles's 'all,' we can conjecture that this indicated a wider Latinate reading public including educated monks and ecclesiastics. These were not only the men Bovelles encountered in his day to day activities as a canon in Picardy. They were also a significant section of Bovelles's correspondents.¹⁷⁶ In line with Trithemius's comments from 1505, Bovelles's preface suggested that this wider audience preferred 'pedestrian and everyday similitudes' to humanist display of learning.

Bovelles's method was distinct from that of Cortesi. The entire work is apparently written, as Bovelles declared in the preface, '*e mentis scrinio*,' drawing only on memory without reference to a library. He did not even cite Scripture. This reflects not only Bovelles's ideas about contemplative authorship discussed above, but also specifically negative attitudes to bookish knowledge expressed both before and after 1513.¹⁷⁷ As in the earlier commentaries, the only authority discussed at any length was ps.-Dionysius. In a letter to Lefèvre printed at the end of the volume, Bovelles explained how he derived his method from the Areopagite. The letter replied to Lefèvre's criticism of a section about eternity. In questions ninety and ninety-one of the first book, Bovelles discussed eternity in a way that suggested that it was finite – having a beginning and an end. In his defence, Bovelles argued that he had used a temporal analogy in keeping with ps.-Dionysius's methodology:

¹⁷³ Bovelles's Latin is neither typically scholastic nor humanist, see Jacques Chomarat, 'La langue de Bovelles', in *Mots et croyances: Présences du latin, II* (Geneva: Droz, 1995).

¹⁷⁴ The main part of the book was written in December 1512 and January 1513.

¹⁷⁵ Preface to Charles de Genlis: 'Nec miretur quisquam aut culpet stili levitatem. Nam aut pegaseo vecti aut Mercuriis talaribus properantes: opus istud non paucis sed omnibus: nimirum quotidiana, triviali, & incompta oratione edidimus. Qui vero & paucis scribunt & testudineo passu scribentes gradiuntur: hi impensiore negocio, depexendae & comandae orationi student.' in Bovelles, *Commentarius in primordiale Evangelium divi Ioannis*.

¹⁷⁶ On Bovelles's correspondents, see Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles*, lxx–xcvi; Lundberg, 'The Making of a Philosopher', 200–204.

¹⁷⁷ Lundberg, 'The Making of a Philosopher', 198–99.

As the divine Dionysius would have it, negations either coincide with affirmations or are more powerful than affirmation in God; or those things that are present in the lower regions should be asserted whereas those things that are in God should be subtracted. I think therefore that there is nothing wrong if we rise from the temporal line to the line of eternity – just as we move from the finite to the infinite and from a similitude to truth.¹⁷⁸

Bovelles further invoked what ps.-Dionysius called ‘dissimilar similitudes’ in *The Celestial Hierarchy* [141A] as another efficient tool for acquiring knowledge of the divine. Following this theoretical statement, Bovelles gave an example of how geometers used finite lines to reason about infinite ones.¹⁷⁹ Only at the very end of Bovelles’s letter, he added Scriptural testimony: ‘And so that we do not only pursue reasons and examples but also are strengthened by the authority of sacred scripture: We find sometimes in holy Scripture itself that it speaks about the beginning of eternity, as in Proverbs 8[:22] ... ‘*Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum...*’¹⁸⁰ If we consider the extreme paucity of Scriptural evidence in *Quaestiones theologicae* as a whole, Bovelles’s inclusion of them here appears to be a concession to the expectations of Lefèvre.

One precursor to Bovelles’s commitment to reasoning about theology without relying on Scripture was Ramon Lull. In Lull’s case, this strategy was explained by his aim of converting Jews and Muslims to Christianity by arguing convincingly for the doctrine of the trinity. In a set of two dialogues written by Bovelles and published together with *Quaestiones theologicae* in 1513, Bovelles set himself in scene as the ‘converter’ of a Jewish man in Rome. The premise of the dialogues is to explore the question whether ‘the trinity of persons of the divine substance could be discovered from the books of natural philosophy?’¹⁸¹ Bovelles’s point was not that the ancient philosophers might have known the trinity, since he thought that revelation was

¹⁷⁸ Bovelles, *Quaestionum Theologiarum Libri septem*, 79r. ‘Porro si ut divo Dionysio placet, in deo negationes aut affirmationibus coincidunt aut affirmationibus sunt potiores: aut ea qui per positionem inferioribus adsunt: econtratio sunt in deo per ablationem accipienda: nihil ut reor erit incommodi cum ex temporis linea ad aeternitatis lineam assurgimus: tanquam ex finito ad infinitum & ex quadam similitudine ad veritatem.’

¹⁷⁹ Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, I. 14.

¹⁸⁰ Bovelles, *Quaestionum Theologiarum Libri septem*, 79v. ‘Et ut non solum rationibus & exemplis insistamus: sed sacrae etiam scripturae autoritate firmemur: reperimus interdum ipsa sacra eloquia: de aeternitatis loqui initio: proverbiorum enim octavo: de divinae sapientiae (qui filius dei est) aeterno a proprie progressu haec ad litteram habentur: Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum...’

¹⁸¹ Bovelles, 53v. ‘etiam ex Philosophorum naturalisque scientiae libris, divinae substantiae personalis trinitas deprehendi?’

necessary to explain this insight.¹⁸² Instead, he suggested that having this belief, it might be possible to demonstrate it with rational argument. As he later wrote: ‘For starting from the light of faith, the Christian tradition carries the believing and faithful mind into clarity and happily guides it.’¹⁸³ This project indicates a second possible meaning of Bovelles’s claim that his book was not ‘for the few’ but ‘for all.’ By not assuming familiarity with or acceptance of Scripture, the first book in Bovelles’s *Quaestiones theologicae* would, at least in theory, appeal to non-Christian monotheists.

Lullist ideas about philosophical conversions cannot, however, explain why Bovelles’s book on the Old Testament does not engage more closely with the text of Scripture. The one hundred questions of Book VI build up to an outline of biblical history ‘from Abraham to Christ,’ mostly focused on material from Genesis and Exodus. Bovelles’s questions focus largely on finding mystical significance in everything from Old Testament circumcision to the reigns of Saul and David. He paid special attention to the meanings of

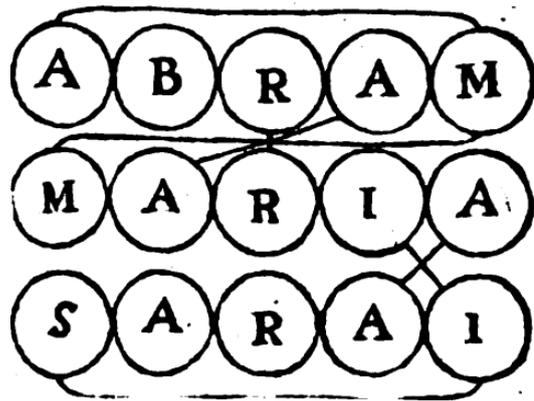


Figure 3.1 Diagram combining the names of Abraham and Sarai to Maria. Image from Bovelles, *Quaestiones theologicae* (Paris: J. Bade, 1515, 39r).

names and the interpretation of numbers of tribes, children, and generations. One case that prompted Bovelles to reflect on the nature of these interpretations concerned the names of Abraham and Sarai (renamed as Sarah in Gen. 17:15). Bovelles found that letters of their names form ‘MARIA’ when combined according to a schema that he illustrated with a woodcut (Fig. 3.1). Commenting on his finding, Bovelles wrote: ‘And although perhaps the Hebrew names do not have this [significance] or it is not drawn out from the force and nature of the names themselves, nevertheless it is not useless (*supervacaneus*) that this happens in the Latin words: they expressed praise of the virgin.’¹⁸⁴

While Bovelles’s comment does not make it entirely clear what he considers to be the source of the mystical meaning, if it is not inherent in the names, it tells us something important about

¹⁸² Bovelles’s states this principle in his next theological work from 1515. Preface to Jacques Olivier in Charles de Bovelles, *Theologiarum Conclusionum libri decem* (Paris: J. Bade, 1515), 1v. ‘Nemini autem (quod norim) ante divini verbi incarnationem: mysticus sacrae divinitatis numerus (quam trinitatem appellamus) illuxit.’

¹⁸³ Preface to Jacques Olivier in Bovelles, 1v. ‘Inchoans enim a lumine fidei Christiana traditio: in claritatem credulam fidelemque mentem devehit ac feliciter perducit.’

¹⁸⁴ Bovelles, *Quaestionum Theologiarum Libri septem*, 39r. ‘Et quamquam forte id in hebraeis nominibus ita non habeat: aut ex vi & natura ipsorum nominum non eliciatur: supervacaneum tamen non sit, id quod in latinis litteris accidit, in laudem virginis expressisse.’

how Bovelles approached Scripture. His interpretations were not primarily claims about the meaning of the text but reflections intended to nourish the faith of his readers. This concern is even more strongly emphasised in the second of Bovelles's large theological volumes from this period. *Theologicae conclusiones* was written soon after his *Quaestiones theologicae* and Bade published it in June 1515. Bovelles's approach in *Theologicae conclusiones* was largely consistent with the previous work, with the obvious distinction that he now used the format of 'conclusions.'¹⁸⁵ Bovelles also tweaked the structure of the book in a significant way: he presented ten books corresponding to ten articles of faith. He announced this arrangement in a short poem echoing the Apostles' Creed:

For you, reader, this book reveals that God is, and that he is one,
immense, eternal, three, and the creator of the world,
finally, having been born for our sake by the virgin, he suffered,
and rose again, whence he will come to judge the world.¹⁸⁶

As in the commentary on the Lord's prayer, Bovelles here presented his theological work as an aid for individuals to deepen their faith. Moreover, Bovelles directly addressed the question of how his approach to theology related to the scholastic tradition. Unlike Cortesi, Bovelles did not criticise scholastic theology for its terminology or presentation. He argued that the fundamental problem with this 'more popular (*vulgatior*) and common theology' was methodological. According to Bovelles, scholastic theology was too much like the 'human disciplines' because it relied on human rationality.¹⁸⁷ Bovelles followed Cusanus's critique against scholastic theology in *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* closely by arguing that logic was inept for theological investigation.¹⁸⁸ Bovelles asserted that 'theological theses cannot,

¹⁸⁵ Jacqueline Hamesse, 'Approche terminologique de certaines méthodes d'enseignement et de recherche à la fin du moyen âge. *Declarare, Recitare, Conclusio*', in *Vocabulary of Teaching and Research Between Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Olga Weijers, vol. 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 19–28.

¹⁸⁶ Bovelles, *Theologiarum Conclusionum libri decem*, 184v. 'Hoc opus esse deum reteggit tibi lector & unum / Immensum: aeternum: trinum: mundumque creantem / Tandem pro nobis natum de virgine: passum / Surrexisse: dein venturum ut iudicet orbem.' See also the 'Argumentum' which lists the ten articles on faith on *ibid.* 2r. In his edition of Paul's epistles from 1512, Lefevre had listed passages from Paul's letters linked to the articles of faith at the end of the initial section of 'canons' to the letters. See Lefèvre d'Étaples, *Epistole divi Pauli apostoli cum commentariis*, sig. i iii.

¹⁸⁷ Bovelles, *Theologiarum Conclusionum libri decem*, 9v. 'Vulgatior vero & magis communis theologia: ... ob varias nostrae mentis digressiones & ab uno in aliud discursiones: humanis disciplinis propior ac similior est.'

¹⁸⁸ See above n. 48. Another possible influence is Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, see below Chapter Four, section 3.b.

properly speaking, be proven or refuted through logic.¹⁸⁹ This was because the object of theology, God, is one to which logic did not apply.

The sole focus of Bovelles's own theology, he claimed, was to allow human beings to increase and improve their knowledge of God. He defined true theology as unmoving and stable contemplation of the highest being, in other words the *visio dei* or unmediated vision of God.¹⁹⁰ From this perspective, the task of theologians was to aid in this process – to guide their readers towards ecstasy in the same way that Iacobus guided Carolus in Alain de Varènes's dialogue.¹⁹¹ Bovelles invoked ps.-Dionysius's terminology for ascent through affirmative and negative theology.¹⁹² He also discussed how humans must first learn about nature and thereafter use analogies and 'assurrections,' as Bovelles calls the cognitive tool whereby a contemplator can leverage knowledge of nature to rise (*assurgere*) towards new insights about God.¹⁹³ Bovelles's methodological statement from 1515 thus confirms that he had come to see the metaphysical contemplation practiced at the Cardinal Lemoine as the most essential kind of theology. In this respect, it was Bovelles rather than Beatus who brought his former mentor's ideas to their logical conclusion. Compared to the scholastic tradition, Lefèvre's pious approach to metaphysics and theology entailed an increased emphasis on the affective dimension of knowledge. This is taken to extreme lengths in Bovelles's theological writings, in which the only relevant quality of knowledge is its effect on the mind – whether or not it brings the 'knower' closer to the beatific vision.

4. The end of an era

Already in *Theologia vivificans*, Lefèvre had expressed his hope of changing piety and the discipline of theology by publishing texts from the apostolic era. Over the next two decades, Lefèvre together with students and collaborators printed works by Church Fathers and mystics. They published their own Scriptural commentaries and theological treatises. Unlike the renovation of philosophical disciplines – which they undertook from the inside of the educational system – their attempt to influence theology was external to the institution. This strategy might appear naïve yet it was taken seriously by the Faculty of Theology, as is clear from the backlash in 1521, when religious censorship was established in Paris.

¹⁸⁹ Bovelles, *Theologiarum Conclusionum libri decem*, 10r. 'Theologice propositiones nequaquam proprie per logicam artem aut comprobari aut redargui possunt'

¹⁹⁰ Bovelles, 7v.

¹⁹¹ See above Chapter Two, n. 90.

¹⁹² Bovelles, *Theologiarum Conclusionum libri decem*, 7r-v.

¹⁹³ Bovelles, 9r.

In Spring 1521 the Paris Parlement decided that the Faculty of Theology would have the right to censor religious books printed in Paris. From this date, printers were required to seek permission from the Faculty before printing any books in French or Latin ‘concerning the Christian faith or the interpretation of sacred Scripture.’¹⁹⁴ As suggested by the timing, and confirmed by other documents from the Parlement, the interdiction was largely intended as a measure against the spread of Luther’s writings.¹⁹⁵ Yet the advent of censorship would also have an important impact on the contribution of Lefèvre and his colleagues to theology surveyed in this chapter.

James Farge recently urged against underestimating the effects of censorship on the intellectual climate of Paris after 1521. Although visitations of printers and booksellers were not systematically enforced until the 1540s, the serious consequences for those prosecuted had a deterring effect.¹⁹⁶ Simon de Colines, the printer of Lefèvre’s New Testament Commentary in 1522 and Henri Estienne’s successor, was one of the first to be targeted for failing to seek permission for an edition of which the Faculty disapproved. Lefèvre’s own situation changed quickly depending on whether royal benefactors were present in Paris to protect him. When this was not the case, as in 1525, Lefèvre had to flee the city.¹⁹⁷

The new censorial regime had an immediate impact on Bovelles. A book that he wrote to defend himself against charges of Lutheran sympathies was examined and rejected twice by the Faculty.¹⁹⁸ In 1524 Louis Feable – a former student at the Cardinal Lemoine who had become a doctor of theology – reported on a new theological manuscript by Bovelles.¹⁹⁹ Feable and the other doctors found most of the work to be acceptable. The only problem was that at the end of one book, Bovelles ‘preferred knowledge to prayer.’²⁰⁰ The record continues to state

¹⁹⁴ James K. Farge, ed., *Religion, Reformation, and Repression in the Reign of Francis I: Documents from the Parlement of Paris, 1515–1547* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015), 34. ‘... ne libros in vulgari aut Latino, fidem Christianam aut interpretationem sacre Scripture concernentes, imprimant, quin prius illi per Facultatem theologie aut illius deputatos visi fuerint, eis, quatenus bene diligenter ipsi illos, quando sibi presentabuntur, videant, nec vel aliquid pro illorum visitatione capiendo, alias dicta Curia nostra providebit, injungendo, inter cetera inhibuerit.’ On the Faculty’s censorship, see James K. Farge, ‘Early Censorship in Paris: A New Look at the Roles of the Parlement of Paris and of King Francis I’, *Renaissance and Reformation* 25, no. 2 (1996): 173–83; James K. Farge, ‘The Origins and Development of Censorship in France’, in *The Renaissance in the Streets, Schools, and Studies: Essays in Honour of Paul F. Grendler*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Nicholas Terpstra (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 233–55.

¹⁹⁵ Farge, *Religion, Reformation, and Repression in the Reign of Francis I*, 40–44.

¹⁹⁶ Farge, ‘The Origins and Development of Censorship in France’, 248–50.

¹⁹⁷ On Lefèvre’s episodes in exile, see Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d’Étaples et l’Intelligence des Écritures*, 103–35. Add here reference to Reid.

¹⁹⁸ Farge, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la faculté de théologie de l’Université de Paris*, 91, 92, 99, 124.

¹⁹⁹ On Feable see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 160–61.

²⁰⁰ Since the work does not survive, we lack the context of Bovelles’s statement. Possibly Feable referred to Bovelles’s desire to go beyond faith and establish knowledge as in the dialogues on the trinity (1513), as suggested by Faye, *Philosophie et perfection de l’homme*, 135, nn. 5–6.

that ‘this is the same as if he said, “Knowledge is preferred to love”.’ The Faculty admitted that some doctors of the church took this position but nevertheless forbade the book from being published.²⁰¹

A few years later Bovelles wrote to Feable’s former teacher at Cardinal Lemoine, Jean Lagrene, asking if he could help overturn the decision. Around the same time, he confided to another correspondent that Lagrene was probably too devoted to Lefèvre to appreciate and support Bovelles’s own writings.²⁰² According to Bovelles, neither Lefèvre nor the Faculty theologians understood his theological project. The censorship of the latter group was, according to Bovelles, not only repressive to him personally but a loss for the discipline. In another letter from the same year, he complained that the theologians themselves did not go into the real ‘sanctuary of theology’ (*adyta theologie*) and now they also hindered other authors from going there. Bovelles stated that the Faculty theologians ‘do not procreate (for they are sterile) and yet with hostile envy they either cut out the womb of those pregnant or suffocate the foetus in them and administer an abortion.’²⁰³

The order enforcing censorship prescribed that all theological works be examined; in practice, however, the records from the Faculty of Theology show that the doctors mainly censored contemporary contributions. Patristic and medieval authors were not re-examined. Concerning newly printed editions of works by St. Bruno and Bonaventure, the record notes: ‘after deliberation, it was concluded that considering the sanctity and doctrine of the authors, one should not presume that they wrote anything careless, and since these are not new works,

²⁰¹ Farge, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la faculté de théologie de l’Université de Paris*, 45–46. ‘magister noster Feable ... dixit nichil in toto opere suspectum invenisse preter hoc, quod ad finem unius librorum profert scientiam orationi; et quia idem est ac si diceretur “Noticia preferenda est amori,” quod quidam sancti doctores probabile reputant, non est facta magna vis. In hoc non permisit facultas ut emittatur liber.’ For the probable identification of this book as Bovelles’s unpublished *Tres libri de animae immortalitate*, see Faye, *Philosophie et perfection de l’homme*, 134–35, 139–40. Faye interprets the examination as an attack on Bovelles, initiated by Feable himself. However, we do not know on whose initiative he examined the book.

²⁰² Letter from 4 February 1527. See Faye, *Philosophie et perfection de l’homme*, 140. Faye was the first to lucidly discuss the details of Bovelles’s experience with the Faculty’s censorship. However, he goes too far in suggesting that Bovelles was the victim of a ‘Fabrist’ conspiracy. There is no evidence to support the thesis that Feable had remained in contact with Lefèvre’s circle in the 1520s. Furthermore, Bovelles’s point about Lagrene appears not social (i.e. that he would be *pro* Lfr against Bovelles) but intellectual – Bovelles doesn’t think that he will like the book (cf. Faye, 140–41.) Faye also suggests that Lagrene himself was a doctor of theology (p. 140), which is not the case. On Lagrenus, see rather Margolin’s biographical sketch in Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles*, lxxviii–xc.

²⁰³ Bovelles, *Lettres et poèmes de Charles de Bovelles*, 39. ‘theologi non theologis ... invident, et cum non intrent in adyta theologie, alios etiam intrare prohibent et ab ingressu deterrent. Non pariunt ipsi (steriles enim sunt) attamen inimico livore vel pregnantium alvos dissecant, vel in eis foetus prefocant aborsusque procurant. See also *ibid.* p. 18.

the Faculty agreed that they were printed for the edification of the Church.’²⁰⁴ Those editing and printing patristic texts were nevertheless sometimes affected. The case most intensely debated by the Faculty concerned Jacques Merlin’s edition of Origen’s writings. Even in that case, however, the greatest part of the controversy concerned not Origen but Merlin’s *Apologia* for Origen.²⁰⁵

The Faculty records further indicate that Parisian publishers of patristic works were sometimes forced to compromise. In 1524 the Faculty censored a draft preface to the *Opera* of Chrysostom because of its virulent criticism of scholastic theology. Written by the Parisian humanist Nicholas Bérault, the preface ‘disparaged and dishonoured scholastic theology and shamelessly slandered not only living doctors but also the dead.’²⁰⁶ Another preface written by Bérault for an edition of works by Athanasius attacked not only scholastic theologians ‘but even philosophy and particularly logic.’²⁰⁷ Bérault’s texts had to be revised before publication.

A more complex case concerns the printer Chevallon, whom the Faculty warned not to print the *Opera omnia* of Augustine according to the ‘arrangement’ of Erasmus. As the Faculty pointed out, Chevallon’s edition of Ambrose’s works from 1529 had relied on Erasmus’s edition and paratexts.²⁰⁸ Rather than fully complying with this order, Chevallon sought compromise. Later the same month, Chevallon appeared at the Faculty with a corrected text of Erasmus’s Augustine for the Faculty to review. The result of the Faculty’s investigation is not recorded but the book was printed in 1531. As noted by Farge, Erasmus’s name is not found on the title page, which could be a concession to the Faculty’s perspective.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, a prefatory epistle by Jacob Haemer emphasised the extensive corrections made to Erasmus’s text using superior manuscripts from Parisian monasteries.²¹⁰ This patriotic touch and emphasis

²⁰⁴ Farge, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la faculté de théologie de l’Université de Paris*, 18–19. ‘post deliberationem fuit conclusum quod, considerata auctorum sanctimonia et doctrina, non erat presumendum quod aliquid incaute scripsissent, et cum non essent nova opera, consentiebat facultas quod per impressionem ad ecclesie edificationem ederentur.’

²⁰⁵ I discuss this case in more detail in Chapter Five below.

²⁰⁶ Farge, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la faculté de théologie de l’Université de Paris*, 44–45. ‘detrahit et derogat scholastice theologie, et non tantum viventibus doctoribus sed et mortuis impudenter maledicit.’

²⁰⁷ Farge, 45. ‘sed etiam philosophiam, et presertim quoad logicam.’

²⁰⁸ Farge, 224. The Faculty’s formulation is the ‘dispositionem’ of Erasmus. For Chevallon’s slightly expanded reprint of Froben’s edition, see Ambrose, *Omnia opera* (Paris: C. Chevallon, 1529). The prefatory epistle by the printer addresses Guillaume Parvy. For the context of competition about Erasmian editions following the death of Johannes Froben in 1527, see Jimenes, *Charlotte Guillard. Une femme imprimeur à la Renaissance*, 173–76.

²⁰⁹ Farge, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la faculté de théologie de l’Université de Paris*, 224, n. 6.

²¹⁰ Augustine, *Omnium operum primus tomus* (Paris: C. Chevallon, 1531), sig. † ii. For a comparison between Chevallon’s edition and the one by Froben, see Pierre Petitmengin, ‘Éditions princeps et *Opera omnia* de saint Augustin’, in *Augustinus in der Neuzeit*, ed. Kurt Flasch and Dominique de Courcelles (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 40–41. See also George Folliet, ‘Les méthodes d’édition aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles à partir des éditions successives du “De correptione et gratia”’, in *Troisième centenaire de l’édition mauriste de saint Augustin*:

on correction, which some scholars interpret as a classic case of editorial publicity, might thus more specifically be due to the need for creating a certain distance between Chevallon and Erasmus.²¹¹

As these examples show, the Faculty of Theology after 1521 decisively curbed the anti-scholastic rhetoric that had circulated in print during the preceding decades. Their censorship particularly targeted recent writers, whom they suspected of having inspired or repeated Lutheran views. We shall return to some of the broader implications of the Faculty's increased attention to heresy and how this shaped their response to humanism and patristic scholarship in Chapter Five below. First, however, I shall discuss how the Faculty navigated these questions during the years when Lefèvre's colleagues edited the works of Hilary and Bovelles developed his contemplative theological methodology.

communications présentées au colloque des 19 et 20 avril 1990. (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1990), 71–102.

²¹¹ cf. Petitmengin, 'Le match Bâle-Paris au XVI^e siècle: éditions princeps, éditions revues des Pères latins', 18–19. On other problems for the Soleil d'Or workshop caused by their connection to Erasmus, see Jimenes, *Charlotte Guillard. Une femme imprimeur à la Renaissance*, 186–87.

CHAPTER FOUR: CELEBRATING THEOLOGY

1. Praising the Faculty of Theology

In February 1510 twenty-five theology students gathered for one of the final rituals before the doctoral disputations. Over four days, they met in theological colleges to receive the official ‘call to the license.’ Olivier de Lyon, an orator appointed by the University chancellor, was in charge of the ceremony. He addressed each student in turn, praising his learning, diligence, and character in front of a large audience. De Lyon ended by formally inviting the candidate to attend another ceremony at the chancellor’s residence, where he would receive the licentiate. It was a celebration of the accomplishments and qualities that made the candidates worthy future members of the Faculty of Theology.

The surviving graduation orations from 1510, 1512, and 1514 are previously untapped resources for considering the disciplinary culture of the Faculty of Theology.¹ The orations illuminate the Faculty’s perspective on theological competence – what capacities bestowed special honour on individual candidates for the doctorate – and what ideas about the history and social role of theology were celebrated. Composed during the pivotal years when Lefèvre’s circle was searching for alternative approaches to theology and when the Reuchlin affair had deepened the controversy between graduate theologians and secular scholars, these orations provide a rare insight into the changing Faculty.² Furthermore, they have the potential to counteract a source of bias against scholastics – namely, the efficacy of humanist rhetoric – since a distinctly humanist style of epideictic was used to praise of the candidates from the Faculty of Theology. Beyond eroding this particular source of bias, I shall argue that the

¹ Olivier de Lyon’s orations from 1510 survive in two manuscripts in the Biblioteca Apostolic Vaticana [BAV]: MSS Reg. lat. 701 and 1373. Louis de Lasseré’s orations from 1512 survive in three copies: British Library [BL] MS Harley 2536 and BNF MSS Latin 7812 and 7813. Some speeches by the unidentified orator of 1514 are found together with various sermons and letters in Metropolitan chapter MS 832 in Prague. This fascinating manuscript has been studied in Farkas Gábor Kiss, “‘O Pragensis Achademia!’” Ms. Prague, Metropolitan Chapter 832 and Its Relevance to the Efforts of Church Unification between Hungary, Paris and Prague in 1518’, *Archa Verbi. Yearbook for the Study Medieval Theology*. 9 (2012): 161–84. I am grateful to Dr. Kiss for sharing a digitised copy of the microfilm with me. Besides these six manuscripts I am not aware of any further surviving paranymph orations from the first half of the sixteenth century.

² Rummel, *The Case Against Johann Reuchlin*. On the role of this affair in radicalising Noël Beda against humanist approaches to theology, see James K. Farge, ‘Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition’, in *A Companion to Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 148.

speeches constitute a close parallel with a phenomenon observed by Nancy Siraisi in early modern faculties of medicine: aspects of humanistic culture shaped the development of the academic disciplines, giving rise to new conceptions of the history of the disciplines and the ways of celebrating it.³ The orations provide examples of how candidates combined humanist interests and theology and therefore provide an informative source of comparison with the case of Lefèvre and his colleagues charted in the previous chapters.

My interpretation will distinguish between three dimensions of the orations. As a record of a public ritual, the orations help situate the theologians' claims to social and political significance. Second, the speeches record ideas about theology and theologians that were formulated by De Lyon and his colleagues. One can deduce that they were not controversial in the Faculty, since the minutes of the Faculty meetings feature no protests against them.⁴ Third, written versions of the speeches in 1510 and 1512 survive in sumptuous dedicatory manuscripts, which point to the authors' pursuit of patronage. All three dimensions are, as we shall see, relevant to the question of what narratives the Faculty of Theology propagated, tolerated, and celebrated. This chapter shall therefore proceed from a discussion of the ceremony that called candidates to the license, next to the content of these orations in 1510–1514, and, last, to the trajectories of two known orators.

Olivier de Lyon and Louis de Lasseré were the appointed orators in 1510 and 1512, respectively. The two men shared certain characteristics that made them suitable for the task. First, they were both active at Collège de Navarre, which was one of the largest theological colleges. Navarre was the institutional affiliation of French fifteenth-century humanists such as Jean de Montreuil, Nicolas de Clamanges, and Jean Gerson.⁵ The College had a program of preparatory studies in grammar and rhetoric and even provided bursaries to support students in these subjects.⁶ De Lyon was *submagister* in grammar for several years, including in 1510, when he served as paranymph. By 1512, De Lyon was a bachelor in theology, and he received

³ See her discussion of the orations of Jean Le Vieil (1560) and those of Gabriel Naudé from the early 1600s: Nancy G. Siraisi, 'Oratory and Rhetoric in Renaissance Medicine', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 2 (2004): 198–99; Nancy G. Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 127–32.

⁴ There is no recorded criticism of the paranymphs in Clerval, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de théologie de Paris, 1505–1523*.

⁵ Gilbert Ouy, 'Le Collège de Navarre, berceau de l'Humanisme français', in *Enseignement et vie intellectuelle, IXe-XVIIe siècle*, vol. I (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1975), 275–99.

⁶ The popularity of this program is suggested by the grammarians' expansion into a new, larger building in 1514. On this expansion and an estimate for student numbers during the sixteenth century, see Marie-Madeleine Compère, 'Navarre', in *Les Collèges français 16e–18e siècle Répertoire 3 - Paris* (Paris: INRP, 2002), 280–82.

the doctorate in 1518.⁷ Lasseré had similarly become bachelor in theology before 1512. However, he did not take any higher degrees but instead devoted himself to the governance of Collège de Navarre, where he was *provisor* from 1508 until 1546. De Lyon and Lasseré were both deeply entrenched in the theological community and involved in the Navarrist approach to *studia humanitatis*. It is telling, I shall suggest, that at this time, the project of combining a humanist approach to languages with a theological education, like De Lyon did, seemed like a promising one, and Jacques Merlin's edition of Origen – announced during the paranymp ceremony in 1510 – was considered a praiseworthy sign of progress.

2. The ceremonial 'call to the license'

Before moving to the graduation orations, it is worth setting the scene in more detail, especially as concerns the function and audience of the *signeta* ceremony. As already mentioned, the licentiate ceremony was one of the very last steps of the long path towards a doctoral degree in theology at the University of Paris. The Faculties of Law and Medicine both had equivalent ceremonies.⁸ In the case of theological candidates, the students had already completed their masters in arts, their bachelor degree in theology, and various examining disputations. The lower age limit for this degree was thirty-five years, which reveals how long the doctoral training was. Having passed many hurdles, it was time for the candidate to receive the *licentia*, the papal permission to teach theology, which was bestowed by the chancellor of the University.⁹

In the days before the license ceremony, the chancellor sent an orator to invite the candidates. One Faculty member summarised the procedure as follows in his *Compendium universitatis parisiensis* (1517): '... on the day preceding the ceremony of the License the *Paranympus* delegated by the Chancellor invites in a polished speech the attendance of the candidates individually.'¹⁰ The designation of the orator as a 'paranymp' (groomsman) reflects the metaphorical understanding of the license as the candidate's wedding to his discipline. The paranymp played the role of a ceremonial master, delivering a large number

⁷ Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 36; Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 290–91.

⁸ Some later examples from the Faculty of medicine are discussed in Siraisi, 'Oratory and Rhetoric in Renaissance Medicine'.

⁹ Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 24–26.

¹⁰ Translation cited from Robert Goulet, *Compendium on the Magnificence, Dignity, and Excellence of the University of Paris in the Year of Grace 1517*, trans. Robert Belle Burke (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 1928), 60. On Goulet, see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 201–2.

of speeches. As we shall see in next section of this chapter, these speeches were no stock celebrations but strongly personalised comments on the students' characters and achievements, commenting on individual performance in disputations, academic specialisms, and piety. After being praised in this way, the student in turn thanked teachers and the Faculty.

The ceremony was divided over multiple days at different locations within Paris. The records from 1510 and 1512 suggest that the celebration migrated between four colleges: the two dominant theological colleges – Navarre and Sorbonne – and two monastic colleges, the Dominican Couvent de Jacobins and the Franciscan Couvent des Cordeliers. This arrangement is also supported by later evidence. On 18 January 1570, twenty-seven students from the Faculty of Theology came to Parlement to invite members to attend the paranymph's orations and outlined the schedule: Thursday at the Jacobins, Friday at the Cordeliers, at the Sorbonne on Saturday, and Navarre on Sunday.¹¹

The invitation from 1570 raises the question of who was present at the ceremonies in the early 1510s. Although Goulet's account from 1517 did not comment on this question, he suggested that other graduation ceremonies were well attended by the general public. When the University chancellor ranked and licensed the theological candidates, according to Goulet this event attracted 'nearly the whole population of Paris, not to mention the University, and a great multitude from elsewhere.'¹² Similarly, the ceremony where the 'Doctorate and the round magisterial biretta' were awarded attracted not only the members of the Faculty but also a variety of dignitaries, including bishops, sometimes the king, cardinals, royal counsellors, and magnates and nobles invited by the doctoral candidates.¹³ These comments suggest that the graduation ceremonies were open to members of the public.

Throughout the sixteenth century, controversies regularly arose from inappropriate orations or unfitting replies from students. As Farge discovered, one of the students praised by Lasseré in 1512 was criticised by the Faculty for failing to thank his teachers properly in his reply to the paranymph oration.¹⁴ In 1514 the doctoral candidate Jerome de Hangest was accused of having satirised the Faculty member Nicolas Le Clerc.¹⁵ The same year Nicolas Cappelley was

¹¹ Cited in César Égasse Du Boulay, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis ... à Carolo M. ad nostra tempora ordine chronologico complectens*, vol. 6 (Paris: F. Noel, 1673), 709. See also Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 25 n. 81.

¹² Translation cited from Goulet, *Compendium on the Magnificence, Dignity, and Excellence of the University of Paris in the Year of Grace 1517*, 59.

¹³ Goulet, 60.

¹⁴ Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*. Complaints about the 'ingratitude licetiandorum' were first raised at a Faculty meeting in February 1512. The affair can be followed in Clerval, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de théologie de Paris, 1505–1523*, 103–5.

¹⁵ Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 218.

accused of insulting his regent master Jean Girard in his response to the paronymph.¹⁶ In the Faculty of Medicine scandals followed paronymph ceremonies in 1517, 1520, and 1528.¹⁷ It was therefore not the case, as suggested in Crevier's *Histoire de l'Université de Paris* (1761), that the paronymph ceremony had been 'serious' in 1517 and later degenerated into one in which students made joking, scathing, and satirical comments.¹⁸ Already at Goulet's time, students used this public event to express discontent with their teachers. At one meeting in January 1514, the Faculty discussed how some students had made speeches that were 'scornful, satirical, biting, and alien to theological men' leading to 'scandal and the mockery of this Faculty.'¹⁹ The scandals caused by inappropriate behaviour by the paronymph or students highlight the social significance of the ritual. The praise they received, as well as their behaviour, needed to reflect that they were deserving of becoming full members of this important community.

Despite these occurrences in faculty registers and records, we only know the identity of a handful of orators in this period, and it is still unclear how they were selected. Olivier de Lyon's orations, particularly his acceptance speech for the position as paronymph, shed new light on this question. Marie-Louise Concasty notes that the Faculty of Medicine sometimes chose one of their graduating students as paronymph.²⁰ The orations of Lasseré and De Lyon, however, shows that the orator needed not be a student in the faculty he lauded. Lasseré had studied theology but also served as an orator for the Faculty of Law.²¹ De Lyon served as paronymph for each of the three higher faculties.²² His acceptance speech emphasised the difficulty of praising the learning of students far more advanced than himself.²³ Nevertheless, he continued, the orator's task was not to pass judgement on the candidates but to praise them eloquently. He praised the eloquence of previous paronymphs and admitted that others, who were more learned

¹⁶ Farge, 65.

¹⁷ Marie-Louise Concasty, *Commentaires de la Faculté de médecine de l'Université de Paris (1516–1560)* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1964), xvi–xvii.

¹⁸ Jean Baptiste Louis Crevier, *Histoire de l'Université de Paris: depuis son origine jusqu'en l'année 1600* (Paris: Desaint & Saillant, 1761), vols 6, 237–8. 'renfermoient communément ou des bouffonneries, ou des traits mordans & satyriques.'

¹⁹ Clerval, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de théologie de Paris, 1505–1523*, 142. 'Qui... irrisoria, satirica, mordacia et a viris theologis aliena posuerant in scandalum et derisum ipsius Facultatis.' For similar cases in 1524, see Farge, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la faculté de théologie de l'Université de Paris*, 13, 37–38.

²⁰ On some medical students who acted as paronymphs in that Faculty, see Concasty, *Commentaires de la Faculté de médecine de l'Université de Paris (1516–1560)*, xv.

²¹ BNF Latin 7812, 91–117.

²² De Lyon's orations from these faculties are found in BAV Reg. lat. 701.

²³ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 5v–6r: 'Ego inquam novitius atqye tyrunculus cuius humiles anguste tenuesque sunt vires: qui ex inscitie tenebris vix pedem promovi: presertim cum hoc declamandi genus ad alium quempiam & aetate & litteris & gravitate antiquiorem spectaret. sed imperantis reverendi patris Cancellarii tanta fuit auctoritas: ut reluctari nullatenus (etsi volui) potuerim.'

and venerable, could have taken on the task instead of him. To rid himself of the fear of criticism, De Lyon had turned to ancient literature, noting that even Virgil and Cicero were criticised by their contemporaries. Emboldened by their example, De Lyon had accepted the chancellor's invitation.²⁴

3. The Paranympth orations

3.a Humanist epideictic at the Faculty of Theology

De Lyon and Lasseré were both involved in organising the grammatical education at Navarre, which was currently in an expansive phase.²⁵ Lasseré had taught *humaniores litterae* before becoming provisor of the College in 1508.²⁶ De Lyon taught grammar for many years and assisted the principal of the grammarians, Jean Bolu, even after embarking on his own studies in theology.²⁷ De Lyon was particularly engaged in the project of effecting a humanist turn in the curriculum, as we see in an undated letter from Guillaume Budé addressed to him. Budé wrote that he was filled with joy upon hearing about educational reforms in the grammar school at Navarre and, in particular, De Lyon's effort to teach *litteris elegantioribus*. Budé wrote with encouragement, emphasising the importance of teaching ancient authors and grammarians.²⁸

This humanist revival at Navarre provides, I shall argue, a crucial context for the interpretation of De Lyon and Lasseré's orations. Farkas Gábor Kiss makes two relevant observations about the rhetoric of the paranympth orations from 1514. The first observation concerned the style of the speeches, which as Kiss points out is closely aligned with the epideictic ecclesiastical oratory studied by John O'Malley. The second point concerns particular influences: Kiss found echoes of Erasmus's *Adages* and the *Praise of Folly* in the graduation speeches, where the orator used irony and paradoxical praise.²⁹ Drawing on the orations from 1510 and 1512, I shall aim to expand and contextualise these observations.

²⁴ BAV Reg. lat. 701, 76r. This acceptance speech is not included in the copy BAV Reg. lat. 1373. On the relationship between these two manuscripts, see below section 4.a.

²⁵ There is little modern literature on this topic but Nathaël Istasse has promised a study of rhetorical teaching in Paris 1500–1530 in his forthcoming biography of Johannes Textor (see below n. 40). He discusses some of the sources in Nathaël Istasse, 'Pour une contribution à l'histoire de l'enseignement du latin à la Renaissance: les Progymnasmata primorum Navarriensis collegii grammaticorum Joannis Ravisii Textoris discipulorum (manuscrit, 1516)', *Camena*, no. 20 (2017): 8–11.

²⁶ Launoy, *Regii Navarrae gymnasii Parisiensis historia*, 1677, 1:676.

²⁷ Lyon was *submagister grammaticorum*, as he writes in the 'ex dono' in BAV Reg. lat. 1373. On Bolu, see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 50–51.

²⁸ Guillaume Budé, *Opera omnia, vol. 1: Lucubrationes* (Basel: N. Episcopus, 1557), 392–393.

²⁹ Kiss, "'O Pragensis Achademia!" Ms. Prague, Metropolitan Chapter 832', 163–64. Kiss discusses the graduation speeches together with various sermons found in the manuscript.

Like the paranymph orations from 1514, the earlier ones also fit well into the model of humanist epideictic oratory described by O'Malley. Unlike in scholastic 'thematic sermons,' there was no rigid division of the topic, or argumentative scheme. Instead, they relied on classical rhetorical models for structure and focalised a single, clear point of praise, supported by many *loci*.³⁰ The similarities with epideictic sermons are most striking not in the speeches to individual graduates but the many additional speeches belonging to the genre of the *laus disciplinae*. Nine paranymph orations in praise of theology survive from 1510–1514: four by De Lyon, three by Lasseré, and two by the unknown orator of 1514. From this sample, it is clear that there were no set topics: the paranymph chose which aspects of theology to praise and how. Some orations lack obvious connection to the context of graduation. For example, there are speeches on the positive impact of theology on society (1510), the soul's immortality (1512), and analogies between different kinds of theology and flat, concave, and convex mirrors (1514).³¹ However, most of the speeches were directly concerned with theology as a form of erudition and an academic discipline.

The speeches praising theology were used as an introduction before the paranymph called each candidate to the license in a personalised speech.³² The orator praised the students' hard work, learning, virtue, and a myriad of other merits. The orations vary in length, but the general range is between 600 and 900 words. These speeches followed, roughly, the *loci* recommended by classical rhetoric for such speeches. They might well have used guides such as Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*.³³ This manual suggested that encomia discuss the person's parental and geographical origins, upbringing, excellences of mind, body, and fortune, and provide favourable comparisons. This model, as we shall see further on, resulted in individualised speeches that not only provide interesting biographical information about the graduating students but also reveal the diversity of their characters.

One common feature of the general speeches in praise of theology and of the orations to particular graduates are the frequent references to Classical antiquity. De Lyon regularly employed one of the main figures of humanist sacred epideictic that O'Malley calls '*quanto*

³⁰ On what distinguished humanist epideictic from its scholastic counterpart, see John W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450–1521* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 50–76.

³¹ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 80–85; BNF Latin 7812, 31v–37; Prague, Metropolitan chapter 832, 1r–v. The latter theme betrays the influence of Cusanus, possibly via his Parisian followers in the circle of Lefèvre, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 342–48.

³² With very few exceptions, the candidates who received the license also received the doctorate and are included in Farge's register of graduates, see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*.

³³ Jean-Claude Margolin, 'La rhétorique d'Aphthonius et son influence au XVI^e siècle', in *Colloque sur la rhétorique: Calliope I*, ed. R. Chevallier (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1979), 239–69.

magis.' In short, the orator speaks about ancient culture before turning to consider how much better the Christian equivalent is.³⁴ For example, De Lyon showed how much glory and honour was associated with learning in antiquity to stress *how much more* we ought to honour theological study.³⁵ In the same spirit, De Lyon's oration about the candidate Nicolas Helm stated that he was 'far happier than those ancients – Anaxagoras, Byante, Democritus – who surrendered their riches and yet could never follow the true image of truth, which you found in the garden of theology.'³⁶ Most orations to candidates made comparisons between the candidate's qualities and ancient characters in this way. To mention only two out of very numerous examples, Lasseré claimed that Pierre Crockaert worked as hard at his studies as Pliny the younger and in De Lyon's speech to Jacobus Pasqueti, the latter was compared to Caesar's friend Labienus.³⁷ Lasseré also mentioned Old Testament figures in this context – for example comparing David Cranston with the David who defeated Goliath.³⁸ De Lyon, however, remained completely within the realm of classical antiquity.

The many classical anecdotes inform us not only about De Lyon's and Lasseré's humanist reading preferences but also indicate what strategies they might have used in composing the speeches. The orators probably used material from reference books such as Valerius Maximus's *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. We also have reason to believe that De Lyon and Lasseré kept their own commonplace books.³⁹ One of the most successful commonplace book authors of the early sixteenth century, Johannes Ravisius Textor (ca. 1493–1522), also taught humanities at Navarre. Textor was a former student of De Lyon and by 1512 like him an active student in the Faculty of Theology as well as the chaplain of Navarre.⁴⁰ Textor published several encyclopaedic tools with excerpts from ancient literature, including *Epithetorum opus* (1518) and *Officina* (1520).⁴¹ The latter work contained lists of ancients (real and fictional)

³⁴ See O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 57.

³⁵ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 107v.

³⁶ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 53r: '...ad eam tibi comparandam in hoc longe beatior illis antiquis – anaxagora, byante, democryte – qui sese opibus sequestrarunt et tamen veram veritatis ymaginem assequi nunquam potuere, qua in orto theologo abste inventa inimicas ac anxias abiicere voluptates que animam sibi vincunt, eterna preferre brevibus utila iocundis didicisti: proinde nichil gratum tibi est, nisi quod iuste, quod pie sit nichil auditu suave nisi quod animam teque meliorem reddit.'

³⁷ BNF Latin 7812, 13v–14; Reg. lat. 1373, 133v–134r.

³⁸ BNF Latin 7812, 27v.

³⁹ Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Ann Blair, 'The Rise of Note-Taking in Early Modern Europe', *Intellectual History Review* 20, no. 3 (September 2010): 303–16.

⁴⁰ Among those present to testify about Textor's studies in 1512 were Lasseré, Noël Beda, and Jacques Almain, see Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 126–27.

⁴¹ Walter J. Ong, 'Commonplace Rhapsody: Ravisius Textor, Zwinger and Shakespeare', in *Classical Influences on European Culture AD 1500–1700*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 91–126. Besides Textor's printed books, a manuscript relating to his teaching at Navarre in 1516 is discussed in Istasse, 'Pour une contribution à l'histoire de l'enseignement du latin à la Renaissance'.

sharing a specific virtue, vice, childhood experience, type of name, profession, cause of death etc. This is precisely the type of material De Lyon and Lasseré were using in their speeches. The Navarre grammarians' effort to teach *litteris elegantioribus* and engage with ancient authors, which Budé had praised in his letter to De Lyon, shone through in the speeches that De Lyon and Lasseré presented to the Faculty of Theology.

3.b The antiquity of theology

We saw in the previous section that De Lyon and Lasseré cited ancient authors for good anecdotes and embellishments to their speeches. I shall next suggest that their engagement with antiquity did more than just ornament the text. The paronymphs in 1510 and 1512 were both concerned with explaining how theology as a discipline had its origins in ancient learning.

In their introductory speeches, De Lyon and Lasseré both treated a topic that could be summarised as 'the zealous pursuit of truth throughout the ages.' The point of these orations was to admit and extoll the remarkable sacrifices that some ancient thinkers made in pursuit of knowledge. De Lyon cited stories of ancients who refused to be idle: Cato, Anaxagoras, Pliny, and Theophrastus. He also emphasised that rulers, such as Philip of Macedonia and Paulus Emilius, considered it important to find good tutors for their children. Last, he provided examples of harsh punishments against lies in ancient literature. He concluded that in their high evaluation of wisdom and truth, the ancients displayed some of the same foundations as those of Christian learned culture.⁴²

Lasseré similarly cited many examples of philosophers who had abandoned wives, riches, and status in order to pursue wisdom. He especially highlighted their travels and the stories of rulers who valued knowledge over their kingdoms. Thereafter, Lasseré moved on to extoll the secular erudition of patristic authors like Origen, Basil, and, especially, Jerome and Augustine. He stressed that they possessed one and the same inborn, unquenchable desire for learning that drive people to explore new lands, visit new peoples, and sail across seas. He ended by assuring the newly minted theologians that they were part of the same tradition.⁴³

In other orations, De Lyon and Lasseré both discussed ancient theology: aspects of classical learning that prefigured Christianity.⁴⁴ Lasseré argued that some ancient philosophers, for example Pherecydes of Syros and Plato, had a limited grasp of the soul's immortality. The druids, too, seemed to believe in the afterlife, since they sometimes lent each other money to

⁴² BAV Reg. lat, 105v–110v.

⁴³ BNF Latin 7812, 8–13.

⁴⁴ Walker, 'The Prisca Theologia in France'.

be repaid after death. However, Lasseré continued, the ancients generally drew the wrong conclusions from their limited understanding of the soul's immortality. For example, some who expected a bright afterlife chose suicide, which Lasseré denounced, following Augustine. He concluded that it was only with the advent of Christ that a proper understanding of the soul's immortality was gained and the martyrs showed the true implications of this doctrine.⁴⁵

De Lyon's treatment of ancient theology focused more generally on how pre-Christian philosophers thought about divinity. According to De Lyon, the post-deluge culture included a theology that was 'shadowy and profane, for the most part invented by human minds.'⁴⁶ He cited names frequently encountered in Renaissance literature on this topic: Zoroaster, Persian magicians, Chaldeans, Egyptian priests and Indian brahmans, Ethiopian 'gymnosophists,' druids, Mercurius Trismegistus, and Berosus.⁴⁷ These were all proponents of 'pseudoteology.' Nevertheless, De Lyon emphasised that their magic was less dangerous than the demonic witchcraft of Trithemius.⁴⁸ While it was ultimately fruitless, this kind of 'invented' theology helped De Lyon show that the human desire for understanding God was ancient and found in all cultures.

De Lyon continued by outlining the pre-history of revealed theology from the beginning, when Adam raised two inscribed columns in order to pass on the foundations to posterity. Next, De Lyon discussed how Moses published the divine law but kept the instruction for how to interpret the law – the cabalistic tradition – a secret, until Ezra published it. De Lyon here cited Giovanni Pico della Mirandola who had recently studied the cabala and concluded that 'it does not profess the mosaic religion as much as Christianity.'⁴⁹ With Christ's coming, however, any controversy between different interpretations of the law was dispelled. The Apostles spread the truth, and patristic authors succeeded them, until Alcuin founded the University of Paris. This was the endpoint of De Lyon's speech.

⁴⁵ BNF Latin 7812, 31v–37.

⁴⁶ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 37r–44v. 'umbratilem prophanam humano ingenio fere inventam'

⁴⁷ References to all these characters can be found in Walker, 'The Prisca Theologia in France'. De Lyon possibly encountered these names in the writings of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, see below n. 49.

⁴⁸ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 39r. This might be an echo of Charles de Bovelles's letter to Germain de Ganay criticising Trithemius, see Bovelles, *Quae hoc volumine continentur: Liber de intellectu; Liber de sensu; Liber de nihilo; Ars oppositorum; Liber de generatione; Liber de sapiente; Liber de duodecim numeris; Epistolae complures. Insuper mathematicum opus quadripartitum: De numeris perfectis; de mathematicis rosis; de geometricis corporibus; de geometricis supplementis*. Paris: H. Estienne, 1511, 172r–73. The letter was only published in early 1511 but De Lyon might have seen a manuscript copy. On the connection between De Lyon and the Ganay brothers, see below section 4.a.

⁴⁹ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 42v–43r. 'non tam mosaica quam christianam religionem ... profitetur.' De Lyon is citing from Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, ed. Francesco Borghesi, Michael Papio, and Massimo Riva (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 268.

Lasseré's third general oration similarly presented an overview of the history of theology from apostolic times.⁵⁰ The narrative and the wording used by Lasseré are to a large part lifted from *De studio divinae & humanae philosophiae* by Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533).⁵¹ In the chapter plagiarised by Lasseré, Pico discussed what role erudition should play in Christianity. He emphasised that the apostles were unlearned and mostly fishermen. Thereafter came Paul, trained in law, and ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, a philosopher, who brought a learned perspective to Christianity without, according to Pico, mixing the secular and the sacred.⁵² Next came the rise of heresies, which inspired the work of the Church Fathers.⁵³ Until this point, Lasseré followed precisely in Pico's footsteps. Next, however, Pico moved on to discuss Parisian theologians and their style of reasoning with questions and arguments. He raised concerns about the Parisian tendency to mix theology and Aristotelian philosophy and suggested that the Faculty's approach was not particularly effective in combatting heresy.⁵⁴ This section would clearly not fly in Lasseré's speech to the Faculty's graduating students. Instead of discussing the potential disadvantages of erudition, Lasseré instead continued by listing the most illustrious theologians of the University of Paris. These included Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, and more recent theologians such as Jean Gerson, Pierre d'Ailly, and Martin Le Maître.

De Lyon and Lasseré's orations in praise of theology confirm Nancy Siraisi's observation that one effect of humanist culture entering the traditional academic disciplines was a renewed attention to the discipline's history and self-image.⁵⁵ What particularly supports this argument is that in outlining the history of theology prior to the foundation of the University of Paris, the orators relied not on any internal tradition but on the narratives propagated by Italian humanists, with De Lyon drawing from Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Lasseré from Giovanni's nephew, Gianfrancesco. Next, however, we shall turn to the orators' description of something they themselves were familiar with – namely, the lives of students in the Faculty of Theology.

⁵⁰ BNF Latin 7812, 59v–66r.

⁵¹ Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *De morte Christi & propria cogitanda libri tres. Eiusdem de studio divinae & humanae philosophiae libri duo* (Bologna: B. Hectoris, 1497), Book I, ch. 3.

⁵² Pico della Mirandola, *De studio*, g2v.

⁵³ Pico della Mirandola, *De studio*, g3r.

⁵⁴ Pico della Mirandola, *De studio*, book I, ch. 3, esp. sig. g3r. On Pico's criticism of secular knowledge in *De studio*, see Charles B. Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico Della Mirandola (1469–1533) and His Critique of Aristotle* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 37–43.

⁵⁵ Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning*.

3.c *Vitae scholasticae*

In their written form, the paranymph speeches constitute collective biographies of the graduating classes of 1510 and 1512. James Farge's prosopography of the members of Faculty of Theology in 1500–1536 illuminated the graduates' geographic and social origins, religious affiliations, educational background, and their activity in Faculty deliberations, teaching, and publishing.⁵⁶ The graduation orations present important additional insight into the mentality of students graduating in these same years and allow us to address questions relating to scholastic education and culture. What virtues and skills were highly valued in this community? What intellectual specialisms were represented?

The brief biographies included in the graduation orations vary in the amount of detail but generally cover most of the *loci* recommended by rhetorical handbooks for speeches praising a person. As an example of the typical coverage, we can take De Lyon's speech dedicated to Nicolas Ensche. First, De Lyon mentioned his place of birth near Trier, which De Lyon located at 27 degrees from the Pillars of Hercules and 99 degrees from the equator.⁵⁷ According to De Lyon, Ensche had been born to destitute parents. He had nevertheless managed to reach the Collège de Reims, where he studied philosophy before eventually joining Collège de Montaigu.⁵⁸ We know from other sources that Ensche at the time of his graduation was a close collaborator of Noël Beda at Montaigu, where Jan Standonck in the previous decade had instituted a community for poor scholars.⁵⁹ This circumstance helps explain the focus on poverty in De Lyon's oration – a phenomenon encountered in orations to other students associated with Montaigu, including Gaspard Andree and Michael Guytard, both in 1512.⁶⁰ At Montaigu, De Lyon tells us, Ensche was constantly lecturing on philosophy and theology, interpreting sometimes Martin Le Maître's treatises *De fortitudine* and *De temperantia*, sometimes Gabriel of Auxerre [*sic*] and at other times [Robert] Holcot.⁶¹ Last in the

⁵⁶ Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 55–114.

⁵⁷ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 99r.

⁵⁸ Documents from the German Nation give a more positive view of Ensche's personal finances, cf. Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 155.

⁵⁹ Marie-Madeleine Compère, 'Montaigu', in *Les Collèges français 16e–18e siècle Répertoire 3 - Paris* (Paris: INRP, 2002), 262–74; Paul J.J.M. Bakker, 'The Statutes of the College de Montaigu: Prelude to a Future Edition', *History of Universities: Volume XXII/2 22* (2008): 76.

⁶⁰ BNF Latin 7812, 16r–17r, 55v–56r.

⁶¹ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 100r. 'ubi continuis lectionibus ingenium tuum ne torpesceret exercuisti modo philosophiam modo theologiam profitens, modo martinum *de fortitudine*; *de temperantia* modo gabrielem altissiodorensis alias olkot interpretans.' De Lyon presumably meant to refer to the scholastic theologian Guillaume of Auxerre and not 'Gabriel of Auxerre'.

biographical segment, De Lyon reported on the topics selected by Ensche for his recent disputations: the passion and poverty of Christ.⁶²

Associated with Montaigu and lecturing on scholastic theology, Ensche appears to have been a highly traditional candidate. In his graduating cohort, we also encounter men like Diogo de Gouveia – diplomat, later principal of Collège de Sainte-Barbe, and an early supporter of Ignatius of Loyola.⁶³ According to De Lyon’s speech to Gouveia, he had first been trained as an astrologer and served the Portuguese king in this capacity before being sent to Paris for further studies. After an eventful sea voyage, where Gouveia was nearly taken captive by pirates, he arrived in Paris. Like Ensche, he studied philosophy at Collège de Reims and, after another stint in Portugal, he returned to study theology.⁶⁴ According to De Lyon, Gouveia performed well in the final stage disputations while all the same remaining devoted to literature and good conduct and continuing to develop his knowledge of astrology.

Through these biographical narratives, the orators introduced and commended candidates to the University chancellor. The speeches generally highlighted the candidates’ piety, virtue, and industry. If we are to believe De Lyon and Lasseré, theology students worked day and night, filling their free time with extra reading, prayer, and writing. One candidate who particularly fit this bill was Noel Godefroy whom Lasseré characterised as ‘more solitary than a Carthusian.’⁶⁵ Lasseré further described the toll that hard work had taken on Godefroy’s body – stating that his eyelids were now drooping, his eyes retreating, his flesh contracted and pale like boxwood, and the ‘dignity’ of his forehead had been destroyed.⁶⁶ This description of Godefroy’s appearance is an unusually raw case of the orators’ tendency to remark on the physical appearance of the candidate standing before them – in one case even commenting on the physical expression of the candidate’s expected embarrassment.⁶⁷

The life stories of candidates and the paranymphs’ reports from their disputations illustrate one further aspect of their oratory style – namely, they based their praise of the candidates on argument and testimony. De Lyon and Lasseré clearly attended most disputations. Both also

⁶² BAV Reg. lat. 100v.

⁶³ Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 202–4.

⁶⁴ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 136r–140v.

⁶⁵ This is incidentally the same candidate mentioned above for studying an entire second cycle of philosophy after his MA. See above Chapter Two, section 4.b.

⁶⁶ BNF Latin 7812, 52v: ‘Nam labore assiduo, comite abstinentia laxantur gene, subintrant oculi, buxo pallidior caro contrahitur, frontis deperditur dignitas, ut te universum usque adeo iuverit libros heluari et indefessis animis chartis impalescere.’

⁶⁷ BNF Latin 7812, 86 r–v. On the preference for visual description and language in humanist epideictic, see O’Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 63.

reported about various candidates that they had heard preach.⁶⁸ In some cases, they referenced personal conversations with the candidate.⁶⁹ Additionally, they reported the opinions of others or described the audience's reaction to the preaching or teaching of the candidate.⁷⁰ In a few cases, the orators' testimony came from the candidate's students.⁷¹ Publications, such as philosophical textbooks, were also invoked as evidence of the candidate's skill.⁷² If a candidate had received a scholarship or honour from an ecclesiastical or royal benefactor, this was reported. Other stories must have ultimately originated with the candidates themselves, such as the not infrequent accounts of childhood poverty, the loss of parents, and illness. The detailed knowledge about each candidate conveyed in these speeches is witness to the strong social and intellectual connections between advanced students of theology. A decade of studying the same texts, debating one another, and gathering for religious and academic ceremonies created a strong community.

The orations demonstrate the diversity of academic specialties in the Faculty. We learn that one candidate was an avid reader of Thomas Aquinas,⁷³ that another lectured on the difficult writings of 'the subtle doctor' Duns Scotus,⁷⁴ while yet another was an expert on the work of Bonaventure.⁷⁵ According to De Lyon, Martial Mazurier was an avid student of Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory.⁷⁶ Such information is only given in a minority of cases and is not generalisable. But one essential aspect of theological education that is discussed in all orations is the candidate's performance in the late stage disputations before the license.⁷⁷ Disputation was central to scholastic Universities for several reasons. All levels of student examinations took this format, from the bachelor degree in arts until the doctorate in theology. Beyond providing a format for oral examination, this highly structured and collective mode of argumentation was also considered the superior method for finding the correct answer to a question.⁷⁸

As Olga Weijers points out, there are still many gaps in our understanding of how or to what extent disputation techniques changed in the early sixteenth-century universities. Humanists

⁶⁸ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 102v–103v.

⁶⁹ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 50v–51r.

⁷⁰ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 17v–18r.

⁷¹ BNF Latin 7812, 82v.

⁷² Prague, Metropolitan chapter 832, 6v.

⁷³ BAV Reg. lat. 85v; BNF Latin 7812, 29v–30r.

⁷⁴ BNF Latin 7812, 67v.

⁷⁵ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 33v.

⁷⁶ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 67v.

⁷⁷ See Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 22–26.

⁷⁸ A good overview of the use of disputation in medieval universities is Weijers, *In Search of the Truth*, 119–47.

raised various concerns about the disputation as a mode of truth-seeking, although perhaps not as unanimously as they criticised scholastic logic.⁷⁹ For example, both Juan Luis Vives and Guillaume Budé suggested that disputation was an important form of exercise albeit in need of modification – in particular as concerned the evidence that could be cited.⁸⁰ Other points of criticism already discussed above regarded the overly technical vocabulary used in scholastic disputation as well as the inherent orientation towards conflict. This perspective is summed up well by Erasmus, who hoped that ‘sober and sane discussion’ would replace ‘sophistical and subtle disputations’ in the theological faculties.⁸¹ It is, however, still unknown to what extent such criticism changed the practice of disputation. The problem is, in part, one of the paucity of sources. For the Faculty of Theology in Paris, only a few published examples of disputations survive. These include Jacques Almain’s *resumptiva*, argued in connection with the *vesperia* of his colleague Ludwig Ber.⁸² A third student from the same cohort, Marc de Grandval, published a version of his own *vesperia* the following year.⁸³ These disputations were published because they dealt with a highly controversial and topical issue: the pro-papal arguments of Thomas Cajetan. The published disputations detail the arguments about ecclesiastical authority put forward by Almain and Grandval. However, they say little about the nature of the discussion – whether it was ‘sane’ or ‘sophistical’, to use Erasmus’s terms. The paranymph orations, by contrast, are a rich source on the subject.

In the first place, the paranymph orations inform us about some of the topics treated in disputations. I already mentioned Ensche’s disputations on the passion and poverty of Christ. We also learn that the Cistercian monk Jean de Burrey during his *tentativa* discussed human perfection in relation to intellect, will, synderesis, charity, and merit.⁸⁴ Guillaume Amery’s *ordinaria* dealt with Revelation and the coming of Antichrist.⁸⁵ These examples highlight how

⁷⁹ Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning* (New York: Columbia university Press, 1992), 10.

⁸⁰ See Weijers, *In Search of the Truth*, 189–91. See also Béatrice Sayhi-Périgot, *Dialectique et littérature : les avatars de la dispute entre Moyen Age et Renaissance* (Paris: H. Champion, 2005).

⁸¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum*, ed. P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), Epistle 1111. Erasmus contrasts sophistical disputation with sober discussion (*pro sophisticis argutationibus nunc sobrias ac sanas inter theologos disputationes*).

⁸² A revised text was published as Jacques Almain, *Libellus de auctoritate ecclesie, seu sacrorum conciliorum eam representationum ... contra Thomam de Vio* (Paris: J. Granjon, 1512). On the version of Almain’s *resumptiva* published in 1518, see Jacques Almain, ‘Jacques Almain: Question at Vespers’, in *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts, Vol. 2*, ed. Jill Kraye, trans. Arthur Stephen McGrade (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 13–35.

⁸³ Marc de Grandval, *Codex vesperiarum de optima politica tam ecclesiastica quam civili* (Paris: J. Bade, 1513).

⁸⁴ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 31r.

⁸⁵ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 65r–v.

topics relating to New Testament texts and moral theology were selected alongside the conciliarist arguments of Almain and Grandval.

Almost all of the orations praise the candidates' sharp arguments and subtle responses – commonplaces that tell us little about what actually took place during the disputations. Some, however, describe revealing details. Lasseré's speech to David Cranston depicts well the aggressive vibe disliked by many humanists. He described Cranston's strong physical reaction to respondents during disputations: 'If you heard a feeble response, you showed your teeth, fumed, bit your lips, tore your beard. If not, you smoothed your brow and with your lips fixated, your brow unmoving, your gaze fastened, and soles unmoving, you praised the response.' Furthermore, Lasseré explained, Cranston would crush any weak responder like David vanquished Goliath.⁸⁶

This was, however, not the only way that disputations were portrayed in the paranymph orations. Commenting on Burrey's disputation, De Lyon said that 'those who heard you seemed to hear another Dionysius the Cistercian and besides these very rich teachings, you also had a certain sophistication (*urbanitas*) with many jokes and great charm.'⁸⁷ De Lyon's report about Amery's performance was similarly colourful: 'No one missed how you untangled the sense and hidden interpretations of Revelations like a divine interpreter of marvelous meanings. Those present even saw John himself revived, or William of Paris, returning from the interior of the earth to the heavens.'⁸⁸ In these two cases, De Lyon did not represent the disputation as a combative exchange, instead praising the candidates' solid knowledge and eloquence. These appear, in principle, like discussions of which Lefèvre and Erasmus would both approve.

3.d Scholastics and humanists in the student body

The paranymph orations from 1510 to 1512 demonstrate the coexistence of scholastic approaches to theology with other traditions that were more amenable to humanists. To further

⁸⁶ BNF Latin 7812, 27v. 'Si futilem responsionem audires ringebas, stomachabare, labra mordebas, barbam vellebas, si minus frontem exporrigebas, fixis labris immoto supercilio, confixis oculis, immotis vestigiis, responsionem laudabas, qui si respondentem per negationem assumpti erectum offendebas solerti probatione collisum confractumque reddebas ut aliter David....'

⁸⁷ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 31r: 'Qui te audiebant alterum dionisium cisterciensis audire videbantur habes preter hanc fecundissimam doctrinam facciam quandam urbanitatemque multis locis multa suavitate.' On the identity of Dionysius the Cistercian, see M. Brinzei and Christopher D. Schabel, 'Les Cisterciens de l'université. Le cas du commentaire des Sentences de Conrad d'Ebrach (†1399)', in *Les Cisterciens et la transmission des textes (XIIIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 453–86.

⁸⁸ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 65r–v: 'certamen quam brevissime finiveris in maiore ordinaria quem subtiliter antichristi adventum tractaveris; nemo est qui non norit ubi sensa abditasque apocalipsis interpretationes quasi divinus interpres mirificis sensibus enodabas admirantibus qui aderant ac si ioannem redivivum inspicerent aut guillermum parisiensem e terre visceribus ad superos redeuntem.'

explore the relationship between these different groups, I shall next discuss the orations dedicated to students of clear scholastic or humanistic leanings. The former group is best exemplified by students from the circle of John Mair (ca. 1467–1550). Mair was one of the most active teachers of nominalist philosophy and theology at the University of Paris in this period. He had studied theology with Jan Standonck and remained associated with Montaigu after receiving his license in theology in 1506.⁸⁹ Six years later, three of Mair's students received the license: the aforementioned David Cranston, Jacques Almain and Pierre Crockaert. Their successful trajectory at the Faculty of Theology is reflected in the ranking that teachers at the Faculty made of the candidates in the licentiate class. The official ranking of candidates in 1512 placed all three highly: Almain was ranked second in the class (after Ludwig Ber), Cranston fifth, and Crockaert sixth. Association with one of the leading scholastic theologians was clearly correlated with success in the Faculty of Theology.

The three candidates were also similar in that they had each published works in the scholastic tradition of philosophy. Cranston had published on logic and physics; Almain on logic, physics, and ethics; and Crockaert had written works on logic and Thomist philosophy. In this activity too they followed Mair, who published many books throughout his career. His early publications focused mainly on logic but he later published commentaries on the *Sentences* (from 1509 onwards), a Gospel commentary (1518), and a work on British history (1521). It seems likely that the three candidates presented to the University chancellor in 1512 would have followed in Mair's footsteps as prolific writers in the scholastic tradition, had not all three died in the years 1512–1515.⁹⁰

We have already seen that Lasseré's speech to Cranston thematised his combative performance in disputations. This portrait of Cranston resonates with how Mair himself depicted his student – namely, as a staunch defender of traditional scholastic method. In 1510, Mair made Cranston one of the interlocutors of a short dialogue published as a preface to his own commentary on the first book of the *Sentences*. In the dialogue, *Cranston* discussed with a humanist critic of Mair's method. *Cranston* defended the use of Aristotle and philosophical concepts in theology. Furthermore, he argued that for solving complex questions it is necessary

⁸⁹ See literature and bibliography in Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 304–11. Among the more recent literature on John Mair, see Alexander Broadie, *The Circle of John Mair: Logic and Logicians in Pre-Reformation Scotland* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); John Slotemaker and Jeffrey Witt, eds., *A Companion to the Theology of John Mair* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

⁹⁰ For their publications, see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*. Cranston died in 1512, Crockaert in 1514 and Almain in 1515.

to pay sustained attention to arguments *pro* and *contra* according to the scholastic method.⁹¹ It has been pointed out that Mair attended some classes in Greek and that he in part sympathised with Lefèvre's views. In 1528, Mair himself suggested that theologians had perhaps spent too much time on philosophy and that it was time to engage more closely with Scripture.⁹² The early dialogue ends openly, without clear sign that *Cranston* successfully convinced his opponent, but the following *Sentences* commentary makes Mair's own preference abundantly clear.

The awareness of Mair's circle as a bastion of scholastic traditionalism is reflected in Lasseré's orations to Almain and Crockaert. Lasseré's speech to Jacques Almain focused almost exclusively on his intellectual achievements. The orator praised Almain's capacious memory, his successful teaching at Collège de Coqueret, and the dialectical works written on sleepless nights.⁹³ In describing Almain's work, Lasseré emphasised his ability to resolve complex problems and explain the most obscure and difficult matters: 'nothing could be said more clearly or easily than in your Sorbonic disputation.'⁹⁴ In his speech to Crockaert, Lasseré thematised Crockaert's turn to Thomist philosophy following his entry into the Dominican order, praising his ability to explain both *vias* – the nominalist and the realist – and comparing him to Thomas as well as Durand de Saint-Pourçain.⁹⁵ Lasseré furthermore remarked that Crockaert did not write in frivolous genres like poetry, history, or satire but 'in subtle windings like Aristotle, and salutary warnings like Paul'.⁹⁶ Lasseré's speeches to theologians of the scholastic camp clearly incorporated praise sympathetic to their point of view.

The same is true of Lasseré's speeches to candidates with clear humanistic allegiances. Among the candidates celebrated in 1512 was Valerand de La Varanne, an accomplished poet. Lasseré especially praised La Varanne's patriotic *Carmen de expugnatione genuensi* from 1507.⁹⁷ His speech, however, opened with a more general defence of the liberal arts, arguing

⁹¹ Alexander Broadie, 'John Mair's *Dialogus de Materia Theologo Tractanda*: Introduction, Text, and Translation', in *Christian Humanism: Essays in Honour of Arjo Vanderjagt*, ed. Alasdair A. MacDonald, Z.R.W.M. von Martel, and Jan R. Veenstra (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 419–30.

⁹² On Mair's (limited) sympathy with humanists, see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 307. To my knowledge, there has been no study of whether Mair consulted Lefèvre's work on Scripture when composing his biblical commentaries published in 1528–1529.

⁹³ BNF Latin 7812, 87v.

⁹⁴ BNF Latin 7812, 88v–89r: 'ut nichil omnino dici possit duabus sorbonicis tuis apertius atque facilius.'

⁹⁵ BNF Latin 7812, 14v.

⁹⁶ BNF Latin 7812, 15v: 'decantas non carmina ut Empedocles, non dyalogos ut Plato, non hymnos ut Socrates, modos ut Epicharmus, ut Xenophon historias, ut Xenocrates satiras, sed argutissimos meandros ut Aristoteles, salutaria monita ut Paulus.'

⁹⁷ On this poem, see Sandra Provini, 'La poésie héroïque neo-latine en France pendant les premières guerres d'Italie', in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Upsaliensis* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 883–92. In the printed edition of this poem from 1507, La Varanne included shorter verses composed for various people, including Gillis van Delft, Lefèvre d'Étaples, and Geoffrey Boussard.

that ‘the theologian should know many things besides theology.’⁹⁸ In the speech, Lasseré presented various traditional arguments for why grammatical and rhetorical knowledge was relevant for the theologian. First, the *seculares scientiae* add ornamentation to divine letters. Second, liberal disciplines had been essential to authors like Lactantius and Augustine. Their erudition had allowed Lactantius to ‘tear down’ the superstitions of pagans, and Augustine to artfully erect the ‘city of God.’ Therefore, we should not adapt to the ears of those who ‘having finished their study of theology strive to dissuade people from the knowledge of liberal arts.’⁹⁹ Lasseré ended his speech to La Varanne with an exhortation for the *multiscius* to rise and rejoice – echoing the ideal of encyclopaedic knowledge embraced by many French Renaissance authors.¹⁰⁰

Valerand de La Varanne had no association with Cardinal Lemoine but probably knew Lefèvre through common friends at the Collège de Boncourt or from the Picard nation.¹⁰¹ In 1508, he published a poem in Lefèvre’s honour. The poem highlighted the religious implications of Lefèvre’s approach to philosophy, which La Varanne characterised as a kind of natural theology. By investigating the creation – in particular ‘its hidden corners’ (*abditae*) – Lefèvre was learning about God.¹⁰² La Varanne ended by encouraging Lefèvre’s educational reform.¹⁰³ Lefèvre’s approach to philosophy was also praised in one of De Lyon’s orations, highlighting again that theology students with humanistic interests were not averse to his ideas. This segment is found in De Lyon’s speech to Philippe Prevost, a collaborator of Lefèvre. Prevost had studied for his master’s degree at the Collège de Bons-Enfants but thereafter taught alongside Lefèvre at the Collège de Cardinal Lemoine, where he was also bursar in theology.¹⁰⁴ In 1503 Prevost received a friendly dedication by Clichtove in *Praxis numerandi*, designating him a ‘companion in the study of philosophy’ (*in philosophiae studio commilitonus*).¹⁰⁵ In

⁹⁸ BNF Latin 7812, 20v.

⁹⁹ BNF Latin 7812, 20v–21r: ‘Theologum oportet preter theologiam multa nosse. [...] Exurge igitur qui multiscius es et letare.’

¹⁰⁰ On ‘the encyclopaedic paradigm’ among French humanists in this period, see Olivier Pédeflous and Gilbert Tournoy, ‘Juan Luis Vives and His Dialogue “Sapiens”’, *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 62 (2013): 255–57. Encyclopaedism is also thematised in the speech to Jérôme de Hangest in Prague, Metropolitan chapter 832, 6r.

¹⁰¹ Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 243. A group of Lefèvre’s former students were staying at Boncourt ca. 1507 as we know from Bruno Amerbach, see above Chapter Two, section 4.a.

¹⁰² From *Carmen de expugnatione Genuensi...* (Paris: N. De Prat, 1507/8). Cited from Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 179–80. ‘Mens tua dum assurgit, caelos introspicis et quod / Daedala naturae dextera fingit opus. / Ut propius verum subscribam, doctus es ipse / Abditae naturae, doctus es ipse Deum.’

¹⁰³ Rice, 180. ‘Et nostram studiis auge melioribus urbem...’

¹⁰⁴ Prevost contributed verse to some of Lefèvre’s early Aristotelian editions, see Rice, 80, 103. Prevost was also the dedicatee of Nicolaus Francus Vimacius’s *Tres Hecatonomie de conceptibus* (Paris: Jean Barbier, 1509), published during the time of Prevost’s three-month stint as rector of the University.

¹⁰⁵ Rice, 110–12.

1510, Prevost was about to join Clichtove as a member of the Faculty of Theology. Reflecting on Prevost's path, De Lyon told this story as a passage from sophism to true philosophy:

... at the beginning you had been taught and shaped in those schools where you encountered sophistical fallacies and fallacious sophisms, where you tasted Aristotle, as they say, 'with the edge of your lips.' Having true philosophy fixed to your heart with great spikes, with regret you were led towards the most learned Lefèvre who – if I may use the words of Plautinus – set a ruler to Aristotle's books, and brought back home the peripatetic Aristotle, which had been obfuscated by certain labyrinths and puzzles... You applied yourself with so much effort that you emerged most skilled among those who stepped out of Lefèvre's shadow.¹⁰⁶

De Lyon's speech to Provost thus presented the Fabrist narrative about humanist philosophy sympathetically. He discussed the philological project of cleansing the text, and the approach that was more generally concerned with avoiding the tricky sophistical problems associated with certain branches of scholasticism. Moreover, he said, this approach to Aristotle uncovered the 'most concealed places of philosophy' – a line of praise fittingly borrowed from Francesco Pucci's letter about Angelo Poliziano's encyclopaedic *Miscellanies*.¹⁰⁷

Two further passages from De Lyon's orations contain close parallels to Lefèvre's ideas about the relationship between philosophy and theology. One is found in his oration to the otherwise little-known theologian Nicolas Lamy. Lamy had taught philosophy for many years at the Collège de Calvy and particularly studied natural philosophy and mathematics, including Archimedes's spheres, Democritus's atoms, and Pythagoras's numbers.¹⁰⁸ Like Bovelles and other members of Lefèvre's circle, Lamy paired his philosophical study with contemplative practices. Playing on the Platonist notion of the soul's celestial origin, De Lyon said:

¹⁰⁶ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 89r–v: Cum enim initio formatus institutusque fuisses in illis scholiis ubi sophisticis captionibus captiosisque sophismatibus intentus eras, ubi verum aristotelem primoribus ut aiunt labris tantum degustabas; veram philosophiam fixam cordi: habens etiam trabalibus clavis penitentia ductus es et ad eruditissimum stapulensem qui aristotelicos libros, ut plautino utar verbo, amussitavit peripatheticumque aristotelem mean[r]dis griphisque quibusdam obtenebratum postlimino revocavit, conversus reconditissimos philosophie locos et sanctius illud orarium [aerarium] unde nihil communi percussum moneta, nihil triviale, nihil conculcatum effertur. Sed quasi ex aphrica semper aliquid novi prodit, adiisti tanto adhibito labore: ut inter eos qui ex stapulensibus umbraculis doctissimi prodire tu peritissimus evaseris.

¹⁰⁷ De Lyon's praise of Lefèvre's philosophy is adapted from a letter from Francesco Pucci to Angelo Poliziano published in book VI of Poliziano's correspondence. See Angelo Poliziano, *Illustrium virorum epistolae*, ed. J. Bade (Lyon: N. Wolf for A. Koberger, 1499/1500), sig. f3v–f4v.

¹⁰⁸ Lamy was already dead in June 1513 when one of his students from Calvy sought to certify his studies, see Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 392–93.

Just as the infinite Father, God, gave you a soul from the eternal fires which we call stars and constellations, so it seems that you, always attending to the heavens and the celestial fatherland, are frequently raptured into heavens through contemplation.¹⁰⁹

According to De Lyon, Lamy's capacity for rapture and ecstasy made him a welcome visitor in reformed monasteries, where he would preach about God and the 'council' of the heavens. The same combination of devotion and erudition explained, according to De Lyon, why Lamy had been made prior of the Sorbonne.¹¹⁰

De Lyon's description of Lamy's contemplation echoes Lefèvre's views on the relationship between philosophical knowledge and religious insight – looking towards the 'blessed region' might invite divine illumination, as Lefèvre's dialogues about metaphysics made clear.¹¹¹ We unfortunately have no surviving writings by Lamy to corroborate that he shared their outlook. De Lyon himself, however, was clearly sympathetic to Lefèvre's views. In one of his orations on theology, De Lyon addressed the question of how theology related to philosophy:

... the theology that investigates the cause of causes is the highest form of philosophy; the theology that defines the obligations of virtues in their circumstances is the highest form of ethics; the theology that teaches indestructible truth is the highest form of logic... for what could the debates of philosophers of logic add to those two convincing precepts – the love of God and one's neighbour – upon which the law and the prophets depend.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 131v–132r: 'Atque tanquam infinibilis pater deus animum tibi ex sempiternis ignibus que nos sydera stellasque nuncupamus indiderit ad celos celestemque patriam semper intentum contemplationibus frequenter raptus in celo versari videris.'

¹¹⁰ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 132r: 'Quas ut licentius oportuniusque habere possis, religiones et conventus reformatissimos adiens cum ipsis religionis de summo deo de celesti curia sermonem facis: vel solus tecum raptus quasi in extasi rationaris. Hoc est exercitium tuum hec est animi oblectatio a studio et oratione in contemplationem rapi. et sic brevi fecisti ut religiosam animi devotionem litteraturamque non vulgarem, sed eminentissimam quod viaticum est senectutis tibi comparaveris. Quibus rationibus adducti socii sorbonici anno isto te in priorem suum elegerunt.' The ms says 'rationaris' but this should surely be *ratiocinaris*. Themes of rapture and ecstasy are not uncommon in the orations, for another example see Reg. lat. 1373, 32v–33.

¹¹¹ See above Chapter Two, section 2.a.

¹¹² BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 108v–109r. 'theologiam, inquam, que causam causarum discutiens, summa est philosophia; que virtutum officia suis circumstantiis diffiniens, summa est ethica; que veritatem docens incalunniabilem [*sic*] summa est logica; naucifaciens captiones meandros illasque sophisticas tendiculas et umbras que repente dispereunt et veluti fumus evanescent. Que enim disputationes philosophorum logicorum conferende sunt duobus illis preceptis, dilectionem <Dei> et proximi, persuadentibus ex quibus lex et prophete pendent.'

In sum, De Lyon's orations show that Lefèvre's vision of theologising philosophy gained support beyond his closest students and members of his college, even reaching students at the Faculty of Theology.

I shall end this subsection by making two points relating to the scholastic and humanist students at the Faculty of Theology. The first relates to the ranking of students. I have already mentioned the high rankings achieved by the students from John Mair's circle. Cranston, Almain, and Crockaert were among the top students at the Faculty, whereas Lamy ranked 19/29 and Prevost 26/29.¹¹³ While all these students were praised for their philosophical skill by the paranymphs, it is clear that the masters of the Faculty preferred Mair's students. Second, the orations have shed new light on Lefèvre's standing among members of the Faculty. While it remains true that relatively few students associated with Cardinal Lemoine studied theology, the list of exceptions has become longer. Besides Clichtove, Prevost, and Johannes Drouyn are close associates who studied at the Faculty. Furthermore, De Lyon and Varènes were other members of the Faculty who clearly sympathised with Lefèvre's renovation of philosophical studies. Their example indicates that many students saw no obvious contradiction between the academic study of theology and humanist learning.

3.e Announcing Merlin's *Origen*

One moment during the paranymph orations from 1510 is particularly foreboding for readers familiar with the later conflicts at the Faculty of Theology. In his speech to Jacques Merlin in 1510, De Lyon introduced Merlin's forthcoming edition of Origen: 'You promised us all that the *Opera* of Origen will appear in people's hands very soon, and that you will arrange that those writings that are scattered in various places are gathered into one bundle and can be sold or bought cheaply.'¹¹⁴ The edition was eventually printed during 1512 by Josse Bade.¹¹⁵ By then, it included not only texts by Origen but also Merlin's *Apologia* for Origen – a text that set him on a collision course with the more conservative members of the Faculty, and particularly enraged Noël Beda.

Merlin and Beda's conflict over the orthodoxy of Origen in the 1520s, which will be discussed in the next chapter, left Merlin without allies in the Faculty. De Lyon's

¹¹³ Cranston was ranked sixth in 1512, Almain was ranked second the same year, and Hangest was ranked first in 1514; in 1510, For the rankings, see the relevant entries in Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*.

¹¹⁴ BAV Reg. lat 1373, 77v: 'Non possum non sublimer afferre institutum tuum quo nobis omnibus spopondisti: Origenis opera prope diem in manus hominum ventura teque facturum ut que variis locis dispersa sunt in unum prope manipulum collecta distrahi vili prestinarive queant.'

¹¹⁵ Origen, *Opera*, ed. J. Merlin (Paris: J. Bade for himself and J. Petit, 1512), 4 vols.

announcement, however, provides a very different perspective on the forthcoming edition. De Lyon clearly states that the edition is made for theology students – *nobis omnibus* – who would profit from having access to all of Origen’s works at a low price. Merlin had previously been involved in editorial projects targeting the Faculty’s students. In 1508, Merlin edited two commentaries on the *Sentences* by Parisian theologians associated with the nominalist school: Pierre d’Ailly (ca. 1350–1421) and Durand de Saint-Pourçain (ca. 1275–1334).¹¹⁶ To the latter edition, Merlin added a letter addressing Louis Pinnelle, who was University chancellor at the time. Merlin suggested that Durand’s work was particularly useful for overwhelmed students and encouraged Pinnelle to recommend them Durand, as Jean Gerson had done at the time when he was chancellor: ‘Professors of theology and alumni ... and also the entire thankful troop of students throughout various regions would receive him [Durand] with both hands (as they say), if only you bestowed your blessing on him.’ They would listen to Pinnelle, Merlin continued, ‘for no one wishes to blunt the sharp arrows from the Parisian furnace, to which you contribute the two feathers, namely the license and the doctorate.’¹¹⁷

Shortly after receiving the license and the doctorate, Merlin wrote the preface to introduce Origen’s writings. Addressing Michel Boudet, the bishop of Langres, Merlin portrayed Origen as an ideal early theologian – someone his peers ought to imitate in the way that philosophers imitated Pythagoras or Plato, and historians Thucydides.¹¹⁸ He also wrote an apologia defending Origen against all charges of heterodoxy. Merlin dedicated this text to the *patres*, masters, and students at Navarre, and particularly mentioned the college’s provisor, Louis de Lasseré.¹¹⁹ The connection to Navarre runs even deeper than this dedication and the general academic orientation of the edition: as Paul Koetschau showed, the main text used by Merlin for the edition was a fourteenth-century manuscript with provenance marks from the Navarre library.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Pierre d’Ailly, *Questiones... super primum, tertium et quartum Sententiarum...* ed. J. Merlin (Paris: J. Barbier for J. Petit, n.d. [1508]); Durand de Saint-Pourçain, *Expectatissime ... in quattuor sententiarum libros quaestionum...* ed. J. Merlin (Paris: J. Bade for himself and J. Petit, 1508).

¹¹⁷ Merlin to Louis Pinelle in Durand de Saint-Pourçain, *Expectatissime ... in quattuor sententiarum libros quaestionum*, after the initial alphabetic index: ‘Ipsum [Durand] siquidem theologiae professores & professorum alumni: ipsum quoque universa studentium caterva per diversa orbis climata congratulabunda & ambabus (ut aiunt) manibus excipient modo te illi benedicentem praestiteris: cum peracutas fornacis parisiensis sagittas nemo retundat quibus pennas geminas (licentia scilicet & doctoratus semel subministraveris).’ See also the dedicatory poem by Louis Jacobi, another graduate of 1510, which celebrates Bade as a Parisian equivalent of Aldus Manutius, and congratulates Merlin for saving Durand’s writings from decay.

¹¹⁸ Origen, *Opera*, vol. 1, sig. a2.

¹¹⁹ Origen, *Opera*, vol. 3, sig. AAA1v.

¹²⁰ The manuscript BNF Latin 17348 was identified as the basis of Merlin’s edition by Paul Koetschau. See Origen, *De principiis.*, ed. Paul Koetschau (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913), XL. On the implications of this identification for the assessment of Merlin’s capability as a textual critic, see Max Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1979), 192–93.

At the same time, Merlin's edition was evidently also connected to Lefèvre's network of patristic publishing discussed in the previous chapter. Not unlike Lefèvre's edition of ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, Merlin's *Opera Origenis* bears traces of the meeting between Italian humanist patristic publishing and Parisian manuscripts. Merlin combined the Navarre manuscript with texts that had previously been printed in Italy.¹²¹ For example, Merlin used the Aldine edition of Origen's *Homilies* from 1503 and even borrowed phrases from that foreword for his own preface, as Max Schär demonstrated.¹²² Furthermore, Merlin and Lefèvre shared collaborators – besides Josse Bade, an important collaborator in preparing Origen's works for publication was the theologian and royal confessor, Guillaume Parvy.¹²³

Merlin's acquaintance with Parvy dated back to before the edition of Origen. Parvy had previously contributed a prefatory letter to Merlin's 1508-edition of Durand.¹²⁴ Now, Parvy received Josse Bade's dedication of the edition of Origen, which mentioned that 'we obtained a good part of those writings through your effort and generosity.'¹²⁵ Parvy had also assisted Bade in securing a royal privilege for the edition.¹²⁶ Parvy himself made even stronger claims about his involvement. In a presentation copy of the Origen edition printed on vellum for Louis XII, the confessor added a dedicatory note taking credit for the project.¹²⁷ Parvy's involvement thus helps us to see Merlin's edition in the context of a growing interest in early patristic texts in Paris after 1500. This project was by no means exclusive to the circle of Lefèvre. It also found a home within the Faculty of Theology, and especially at Navarre with its strong focus on the *studia humanitatis*.

The paranymph orations allow us to define this intellectual milieu more precisely. De Lyon and Lasseré, like Merlin, sought ways to bring humanist skills in the service of Parisian theology. On the most basic level, the two orators used their eloquence to praise the discipline and its Parisian practitioners. Further, I have suggested in this chapter that they did so in a way that pointed towards a possible synthesis between theology and humanism, especially by emphasising the continuity between ancient philosophy and theology and encouraging the ideal

¹²¹ On the texts and sources, see Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, 191–93.

¹²² Schär, 199, n. 175.

¹²³ On Parvy, see above chapter three, section 2.a and Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 367–73.

¹²⁴ See Guillaume Parvy's letters to Antonius de Furnus and the readers in Durand de Saint-Pourçain, *Expectatissime ... in quattuor sententiarum libros quaestionum...* (Paris: J. Bade for himself and J. Petit, 1508).

¹²⁵ Josse Bade to Guillaume Parvy in *Opera Origenis* (1512), vol. 4, 175v: 'Cum igitur bonam operum istorum partem tua cura & munificentia nacti sumus: quicquid eis imprimendis meruerim tui nominis dedico celsitudini.'

¹²⁶ Elizabeth Armstrong, *Before Copyright: The French Book-Privilege System 1498–1526* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 168–69.

¹²⁷ Joseph van Praet, *Catalogue des livres imprimés sur vélin de la bibliothèque du roi*, vol. 1 (Paris: de Bure, 1822), 261.

of a multiskilled (*multiscius*) theologian. Merlin's preface recommending Origen points in a similar direction: he provided an ancient model worthy of imitation by the theology students at his Faculty.

The difficulties of this project are highlighted by Noël Beda's later critique of the edition. This controversy will be discussed in detail in the next chapter but two aspects are relevant to the issues at hand. First, Merlin had perhaps imagined that the texts would be used by students at the Faculty of Theology but once they were in print, he had no control over their circulation. A few years later, the physician Symphorien Champier defended his own extensive use of Origen by arguing that the Church Father was sanctioned by the Paris Faculty of Theology – an allusion to Merlin's edition.¹²⁸ For Beda, these types of editions were damaging when studied by people without the requisite theological training. Relatedly, Merlin had not dealt seriously with the problem of potentially unorthodox passages in Origen's writings, beyond denying that there was anything heretical whatsoever in them.¹²⁹ Schär suggested that this puzzling approach reflected Merlin's awareness of Pico della Mirandola's trouble after defending Origen.¹³⁰ Whatever the reason behind Merlin's strategy, it suggests the difficulty of ancient revival in the context of theology. The idealisation of antiquity clashed with the dominant model of the discipline, which emphasised gradual progress in refining doctrine and eradicating heretical views. In 1510, however, these potentially problematic implications of patristic publishing were not yet discussed in the Faculty. De Lyon celebrated Merlin's promised edition alongside other candidates' achievements in the *Signeta* ceremony as part of a promised return to ancient authorities and eloquence.

4. Patrons and orators

The paranymph orations from 1510–1514 introduce us to a range of theologians with developed humanistic interests. Contrary to the findings of Ann Moss that Renaissance Paris was divided into two mutually incomprehensible linguistic worlds, one humanist and the other scholastic, these cases suggest that the situation was more fluid.¹³¹ Lefèvre and some of his collaborators – notably Beatus Rhenanus – clearly felt that a commitment to early patristic literature and

¹²⁸ See Symphorien Champier, *Symphonia Platonis cum Aristotele et Galeni cum Hippocrate* (Paris: J. Bade, 1516), 155r.

¹²⁹ On Merlin's failure to mark out heretical passages, see Daniel P. Walker, 'Origène en France', in *Courants religieux et humanisme a la fin due XVe et au début XVIe siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), 108–9.

¹³⁰ Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, 206.

¹³¹ Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn*.

language study was not compatible with the technical discourses practiced at the Faculty of Theology. But Valerand de La Varanne and Jacques Merlin viewed the situation differently. As I have already suggested, they fit better into Nancy Siraisi's model of how humanistic culture changed the academic study of medicine by encouraging the use of new genres and questions. One of the motors of this change, Siraisi argues, was the role of patronage. Siraisi suggests that patronage played a role in encouraging physicians to undertake humanist projects.¹³² In what follows, I shall explore the role of patronage in shaping the careers of the two orators, starting with the dedicatory copies of their orations from 1510 and 1512.

4.a The paranymphs' patrons

Three of the surviving manuscripts with paranymph orations from 1510–1512 were dedicatory copies for patrons. De Lyon and Lasseré both repurposed their speeches as books that featured illustrations, decorative initials, gilding, and dedicatory epistles. To begin with the case of De Lyon, the dedicatory copy of his paranymph orations is further evidence of his close ties to the humanist circles of Paris. De Lyon dedicated his orations to the chancellor of France, Jean de Ganay (ca. 1450–1512). Throughout an illustrious political career, Ganay had often supported local humanists. He received book dedications from, among others, Fausto Andrelini, Guillaume Budé, and Lefèvre.¹³³ I have cited above a letter from Budé to De Lyon, which reveals the orator's connection to this circle.¹³⁴

As we saw in the second chapter, Jean Molinier regarded Ganay as an important advisor to Collège de Cardinal Lemoine and the Picard nation. The foundation of that relationship was Ganay's appreciation of Lefèvre's approach to philosophy.¹³⁵ The prefatory material in the dedicatory copy clearly signals De Lyon's commitment to humanist literary values. He also included a preface presenting his task as a continuation of Classical oratory. According to De Lyon, ancient orators helped commit military deeds to memory. Similarly, he would add celebrity to a group of theologians, which he compared to a small but well-trained army capable

¹³² Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning*, 7–8.

¹³³ Rice, 'The Patrons of French Humanism, 1490–1520', 691–92. Jean and Germain de Ganay at times used their influence to help printers to obtain privileges, see Armstrong, *Before Copyright*, 75–76.

¹³⁴ See above n. 28. The letter is unfortunately undated.

¹³⁵ On the reasons why certain families patronised literature and scholars in this context, see Rice, 'The Patrons of French Humanism, 1490–1520'. On the potential ways this influenced scholarship, see Kraus, 'Patronage and Reform in the France of the Prereforme'; Natalie Zemon Davis, 'New Monarchs and Prudent Priests', *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire*; *Saskatoon* 6, no. 1 (1 March 1971): 69–73.

of crushing a popular mass.¹³⁶ De Lyon's dedicatory copy subtly reframed the traditional academic genre of graduation speeches. When introducing the speeches to Ganay, De Lyon referred to his work as a varied collection of 'deeds and customs.'¹³⁷ De Lyon furthermore stressed his commitment to purge his writing of blemishes and barbarism and pursue linguistic purity. Having not yet achieved perfection, De Lyon did not wish to have his book printed.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, he added, the smallest sign of approval on Ganay's part would fill him with contempt for any envious critics.¹³⁹ De Lyon's epistle thereby signalled his own alignment with humanist literary values and acknowledged Ganay's connoisseurship in this area.

De Lyon's paranymph orations survive in two manuscripts, which are both dedicated to Ganay. One manuscript contains orations for graduates in theology, medicine, and law. This was likely De Lyon's original gift to Ganay.¹⁴⁰ From this manuscript, a more luxurious copy was created. The second manuscript contains only the theological orations discussed in this chapter. The new version was copied in a legible humanist hand, which was corrected by De Lyon. The author also added an 'ex dono,' which he signed off as the 'submagister' of grammar at Navarre.¹⁴¹ An inventory number on the inside of the back plate confirms that the book became part of the Ganay library.¹⁴²

The decoration of the second manuscript was adapted to humanist tastes. The binding is a hitherto unrecognised product of the so-called 'Louis XII'-workshop.¹⁴³ Bound in brown

¹³⁶ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 5r–9r. This section was originally written for the University chancellor, Louis Pinelle, rather than Ganay. This is clear from De Lyon's address to a *Reverendus pater Cancellarius*. The theme of arms and letters was common in early modern academic oratory, see Katherine Elliot van Liere, 'Humanism and Scholasticism in Sixteenth-Century Academe: Five Student Orations from the University of Salamanca *', *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2000): 57–107.

¹³⁷ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, Preface to Jean de Ganay, 3v–4r: 'hunc libellum ... in quo strictim et in arctum quem maximo potui breviloquio multorum et facta & mores collegi: ubi ... varietas rerum contexta invisitur nominatim tibi dicavi.'

¹³⁸ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 4r–v: 'qui licet not sit eam in cude et officina tornatus: ut lectorem suum oblectare amenareve possit: nondum enim lingue vitiliginem omnino expurgavi: nondum omnem deteresi barbariem: nocturnas tamen caligines quas multas offendes: ut spero, immisa tue mentis limpidissima luce discuties et dum per ocium licebit: atticulatas tibi nostrarum vigilarum primicias nonnunquam si collubuerit lectitabis.'

¹³⁹ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 4v: 'obtestor oro quod opusculum si tantillum approbaveris: omnium invidiam calumpniantium et dicacitatem contempno.'

¹⁴⁰ BAV Reg. lat. 701.

¹⁴¹ BAV Reg. lat. 1373, 'Ex dono Oliverii de lyon submagistri grammaticorum regalis Collegii navarre 1509.' The signature is dated to 1509, meaning that it was written by De Lyon before easter 1510.

¹⁴² The number given is 34 (xxxiiii). This identifying trait of the library of Jean and Germain de Ganay was discovered by Sebastiano Gentile, who presents three other examples in Gentile, 'Giano Lascaris, Germain de Ganay e la "prisca theologia" in Francia', 75–76. BAV Reg. lat. 701 lacks an inventory number of this kind – however, this could have been lost with the original binding.

¹⁴³ On the atelier, see Jacques Guignard, 'L'Atelier des reliures Louis XII (Blois ou Paris?) et l'atelier de Simon Vostre', in *Studia bibliographica in honorem Herman de La Fontaine Verwey* (Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1966), 209–39; Jacques Guignard, 'Premières reliures parisiennes à décor doré : de l'atelier des reliures de Louis XII à l'atelier du Maître d'Estienne ou de Simon Vostre à Pierre Roffet', in *Humanisme actif. Mélanges d'art et de littérature offerts à Julien Cain* (Paris: Hermann, 1968); Jean-Marc Chatelain, 'Reliures Parisiennes de l'atelier

vellum, the front and back plates are cold-stamped with ornamental patterns arranged in frames. Parts of them bear a shimmering rest of oxidised silver.¹⁴⁴ However, the most striking similarity with other books from this workshop are the gilded and gauffered edges, which are engraved with the name and title of the dedicatee: ‘Ioannes de Ganeyo Cancellarius Francie.’ The ornamentation and gothic letter forms of this inscription indicate that the binding is a particularly close relative of a book in the Mazarine library – a Greek book printed in Paris in 1509, whose edges reveal that it belonged to ‘Magister Franciscus Tissardi.’¹⁴⁵ This similarity is tantalising since François Tissard (ca. 1460–1508) was a pioneer of Greek and Hebrew studies in Paris with whom De Lyon was acquainted.¹⁴⁶ Tissard addressed De Lyon in an edition of the Greek grammar of Chrysoloras’s *Erotemata* (1507) and praised him as learned in both Greek and Latin.¹⁴⁷ It is therefore likely that Tissard and De Lyon would have swapped notes on their favourite book binders.

De Lyon’s dedicatory copy to Ganay highlights the close connections between aristocratic patronage and humanist literary production. We have seen that De Lyon’s framing of the text in introductory paratexts as well as the decorative finish of the manuscript highlight his connections to the humanist community of Paris. De Lyon’s dedication to Ganay thus fits well with Siraisi’s theory and, moreover, with what we know about aristocratic patronage in this period.

By contrast, Lasseré’s case is less straightforward since it plays out in the two overlapping systems of ecclesiastical benefices and literary patronage. Lasseré dedicated his orations to Vaast Brioy, the dean of the cathedral in Tours, which was Lasseré’s home diocese.¹⁴⁸ He was appointed canon in that cathedral around the same time.¹⁴⁹ The causality between the book dedication and the appointment is not completely clear. In the dedicatory epistle, Lasseré referred to himself as a provisor of Navarre rather than canon. Yet, it would seem more

de Simon Vostre’, *Bulletin de Bibliophile*, no. 1 (1993): 99–111. For another previously unidentified binding by the atelier, see above Chapter Three, n. 70.

¹⁴⁴ Similar but not identical patterns are common among the *roulettes* depicted in Denise Gid, *Catalogue des reliures françaises estampées à froid 15e–16e siècle de la Bibliothèque Mazarine* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984). The decorative scheme corresponds to Gid’s 8 or 9.

¹⁴⁵ Mazarine Rés 14331 is a volume with writings by Plutarch in Greek accompanied by a Latin preface by Jerome Aleander and published by Gilles de Gourmont in 1509.

¹⁴⁶ Maillard and Flamand, *La France des Humanistes Hellénistes II*; Sophie Kessler Mesguich and Max Engammare, *Les études hébraïques en France, de François Tissard à Richard Simon (1508–1680)* (Geneva: Droz, 2013).

¹⁴⁷ François Tissard, ‘Ad dominum Oliverium Lugdunum distichon: *Doctus es, et doctos peto, quodque latinus haberit / Et quod graecus, amo, vel quod uterque, colo.*’ cited from Louis Delaruelle, *Répertoire analytique et chronologique de la correspondance de Guillaume Budé* (Paris: Édouard Cornély, 1907), 234, n. 4.

¹⁴⁸ The prefatory epistle is dated to 1513, see BL Harley 2536, 2v.

¹⁴⁹ Lasseré’s ecclesiastical benefices are discussed in Jimenes, *Charlotte Guillard. Une femme imprimeur à la Renaissance*, 87.

probable that the book was a gift thanking the dean for the appointment, rather than the other way around. Lasseré's gift is reminiscent of De Lyon's in that it was luxurious. Despite the loss of the original binding, the careful humanist script and the illuminated initials indicate that it was a high-grade book.¹⁵⁰ Unlike De Lyon, however, Lasseré did not conceal or reframe the academic context of the orations. His preface to Brioy's carefully explained the ceremonial context of the orations. Indeed, one function of the dedication was likely to underscore the learning and academic connections that the appointment of a Parisian graduate brought to the canon community in Tours.

The dedication copies of De Lyon's and Lasseré's orations support Siraisi's observation that patronage encouraged humanism within the academic disciplines. At the same time, they illustrate the importance of distinguishing between different types of patronage. In sixteenth-century France, we can observe at least two different routes: one closely related to the established system of ecclesiastical benefices and another freestanding network built around humanist credentials. The distinction between these two systems sheds light on divergences that we have observed throughout the previous section: De Lyon and Lasseré were both influenced by humanist rhetoric, but the former declared this allegiance more overtly. He sought a form of patronage that depended entirely on literary and intellectual connections, which is why humanist discourses played a key role. Lasseré, by contrast, participated in a system that relied on multiple factors, including place of origin, academic merits, and clerical status. As we shall see, a similar distinction can be identified in how they continued their academic careers after the tenure as paranymph.

4.b Orators in service of the Faculty of Theology

What we know of De Lyon's career indicates that his humanist interests and allegiances remained important, even as he worked towards his own doctorate in theology.¹⁵¹ During his studies, De Lyon contributed to two publications. First, he worked on Philip Beroaldo's commentary on Lucan's *Pharsalia* for Josse Bade. Second, he initiated a project to edit the writings of Jacques Almain after the theologian's death in 1515. These endeavours testify to De Lyon's attempt to balance between the worlds of humanism and theology. This balancing act seems to have been especially successful around the time when De Lyon received his own license in 1518. At this time, the new chancellor of the University, Geoffrey Boussard, decided

¹⁵⁰ BL Harley 2536.

¹⁵¹ The facts about De Lyon's life are drawn from Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*.

that De Lyon merited the highest ranking in his class ‘for his literature and good doctrine.’ In doing so, Boussard overruled the ranking of candidates that the regents had prepared. Candidates who had been ranked higher by the regents protested without effect.¹⁵² For De Lyon, this position ensured that he was first in line for the doctoral disputations and swiftly received the final degree. It was a reversal of the pattern noted earlier in this chapter: that the traditional scholastic skills of students like those of John Mair were most rewarded by this institution.

Why did Boussard decide to override the Faculty’s regents and promote De Lyon? The likely reason lies in Boussard’s own humanist allegiances.¹⁵³ Early in his career, Boussard had edited several patristic texts for print. Most importantly, he was responsible for a 1497 edition of Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* in the Latin translation of Rufinus – a volume to which Fausto Andrelini contributed verse.¹⁵⁴ Boussard also wrote the preface to Pierre Le Secourable’s edition of a collection of excerpts from Augustine on Paul’s epistles in 1499.¹⁵⁵ Boussard and Le Secourable are both known to have served as official orators on academic and ecclesiastical missions.¹⁵⁶ After spending several years in Italy and attending various church councils in 1511–12, Boussard returned to Paris as Chancellor of the University and engaged himself in monastic reform projects. In 1514, he was on the committee appointed by the Faculty of Theology to examine the case of Johann Reuchlin; according to Lefèvre d’Étaples, Boussard was one of Reuchlin’s few supporters.¹⁵⁷ However, he was part of a minority with little chance of swaying the Faculty’s decision. By contrast, promoting a student with humanist credentials lay within his power as chancellor of the University. Aside from the traditionalist majority, so well described by Farge, we can distinguish a network of theologians with humanist sympathies at work.

De Lyon’s death in 1522 meant that he was only active as a doctor of theology for a few years. During this period, however, he launched a promising career by becoming grand master

¹⁵² Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 26; Clerval, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de théologie de Paris, 1505–1523*, 233–36.

¹⁵³ On Boussard, see Thomas Sullivan, *Parisian Licentiates in Theology, AD 1373–1500. A Biographical Register: Vol. II. The Secular Clergy* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 105–8.

¹⁵⁴ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, tr. Rufinus Aquileiensis, ed. Geoffrey Boussard (Paris: P. Levet, 1497).

¹⁵⁵ Augustine, *In sacras Pauli epistolas nova et hactenus abscondita interpretatio*, ed. Petrus Secorabilis (Paris: U. Gering and B. Rembolt, 1499). On Le Secourable, see Sullivan, *Parisian Licentiates in Theology, AD 1373–1500. A Biographical Register*, 500–502.

¹⁵⁶ Geoffrey Boussard, *Oratio habita Bononie coram summo pontifice Julio II* (Paris: G. Eustace, 1507/8). According to Sullivan, orations by Le Secourable are preserved in a manuscript at the BNF, see Sullivan, 502.

¹⁵⁷ This is according to a letter from Lefèvre to Reuchlin, Herminjard, *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, 1:16. cf. Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris, pendant les premières guerres d’Italie (1494–1527)*, 649, n. 3.

of Navarre in 1519.¹⁵⁸ By 1521, De Lyon had joined Lasseré as a canon of Tours. He was also involved in the University's resistance against the Concordat of Bologna, an agreement between Francis I and the pope that expanded the king's right to appoint bishops and fill other ecclesiastical positions. Together with Noël Beda, De Lyon was sent to communicate with the king, the queen mother, and Jean de Ganay's successor as chancellor of France, Antoine du Prat. The conflict between the monarch and the University escalated when a number of students and teachers were imprisoned for their protests; now the University had to work for their release while continuing to resist the Concordat. An important part of their strategy was to send orators to key players, including De Lyon to Du Prat.¹⁵⁹

De Lyon's speech to Du Prat illustrates perfectly how humanist epideictic, with its appeal to patrons, could be put to political use.¹⁶⁰ Speaking in Du Prat's home one Sunday in January 1519, De Lyon praised the chancellor, especially his magnanimity, and asked him to act as the defender and patron of the University. The protesters had not expressed the view of the University, yet they deserved to be ridiculed rather than imprisoned.¹⁶¹ Instead, De Lyon urged Du Prat to defend the independence of the University and see to its financial well-being. Underinvestment could well cause the University to go under like the Athenian academy once did, and as the University of Bologna, according to De Lyon, had mostly done.¹⁶² Scattered with ancient references and a nod to Budé's *De asse*, De Lyon's oratory had not changed style since his tenure as paronymph.

Unlike De Lyon, Lasseré did not rise through the ranks within the Faculty of Theology. He did, however, remain deeply entrenched in College governance. He had already become provisor of Navarre in 1508, taking over the position from his uncle.¹⁶³ This helps explain why Lasseré never advanced from the bachelor degree in theology to the doctorate; the more advanced degree would have required him to abandon his position as provisor.¹⁶⁴ As provisor,

¹⁵⁸ The grand master was the leader of the theological community at Navarre, see Compère, 'Navarre', 290.

¹⁵⁹ The University's acts in this conflict is well summarised in Clerval, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de théologie de Paris, 1505–1523*, 246–48. On this shift in policy compared to the rule of Louis XII, see Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 253.

¹⁶⁰ Olivier de Lyon, *Oratio... ad sapientissimum & illustrissimum dominum Dominum [sic] Antonium a prato...habita Anno domini M. cccc.xviii. In domo praedicti domini Cancellarii. die domenica xxiii mensis Ianuarii*. (Paris: J Petit, n.d. [privilege from 1518]).

¹⁶¹ Olivier de Lyon, *Oratio*, sig. b3–b4.

¹⁶² Olivier de Lyon, *Oratio*, sig. c2.

¹⁶³ According to Compère, the provisor was first and foremost responsible for the finances of the College, especially for the endowment revenue. Compère, 'Navarre', 290.

¹⁶⁴ See Jimenes, *Charlotte Guillard. Une femme imprimeur à la Renaissance*, 87. In addition to Jimenes's discussion, consider also the cases of Jean Bolu and Nicolas Moujean who both delayed getting their doctorate for two decades while they were in charge of the grammar school and arts students at Navarre, respectively. Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 94, n. 26.

Lasseré spent much of his career administrating the finances of Navarre.¹⁶⁵ In addition, he appears to have taken a special interest in the organisation of arts studies in Paris. During a tenure as rector of the University in 1512, Lasseré introduced a new way of recording information about student qualifications in the arts: a register frequently referenced in this and other chapters.¹⁶⁶ Towards the end of his career, Lasseré was a vocal opponent against the suggestion to shorten the philosophy course by one year. Unfortunately, his statement on behalf of the faculties of medicine and theology in 1543 apparently does not survive.¹⁶⁷

In addition to his work with college and university governance, Lasseré was involved in various theological publications. Rémi Jimenes suggests that Lasseré played a role in connecting Navarre theologians with printers, especially the Soleil d'Or workshop. As Jimenes observes, many theologians from Navarre collaborated with Charlotte Guillard in the 1530s and 40s. In particular, they undertook several projects relating to Greek patristics. Jean de Gagny – a former student of Pierre Danès and a *bursarius* at Navarre – was a driving force behind these.¹⁶⁸ One of the strongest pieces of evidence for Lasseré's involvement in these projects is a letter addressed to him in the edition of Chrysostom's *Opera* in Latin translation printed in Paris in 1536. The letter by Jean Hucher, an editor in Guillard's workshop, introduces translations of Chrysostom's homilies on Paul's letter to the Ephesians by Godefroy Tilmann.¹⁶⁹ Hucher reports on the difficult process of finding translators for the homilies that had not yet been rendered into Latin. He also writes about a disagreement with Tilmann whether it was necessary to perfectly render Chrysostom's eloquent style. Exactly what role Lasseré played in relation to this project is not clear from the letter. However, Hucher clearly views the Navarre provisor as an ally supporting the publication of eloquent translations of Chrysostom's writings and addresses Lasseré as '*mi moecenas*.'¹⁷⁰

Lasseré's own theological contributions were of a less scholarly nature than the edition of Chrysostom's writings. In 1534, he convinced Josse Clichtove to publish his sermons and

¹⁶⁵ We have copies of account books created by Lasseré, see Compère, 'Navarre', 295–96.

¹⁶⁶ See above Chapter Two, section 4.b.

¹⁶⁷ That Lasseré gave such a speech is reported in two seventeenth-century histories: Du Boulay, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*, 1673, 6:381; Launoy, *Regii Navarrae gymnasii Parisiensis historia*, 1677, 1:272–73. Neither Du Boulay nor Launoy cites directly from the speech. Du Boulay's account remains the best introduction to the debates about shortening the course in arts, see Du Boulay, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*, 1673, 6:381–84, 392. Launoy had access to Lasseré's diary, see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 463.

¹⁶⁸ Jimenes, *Charlotte Guillard. Une femme imprimeur à la Renaissance*, 87–97.

¹⁶⁹ On Tilmann's role in this edition, see also the documents transcribed in Maillard et al., *La France des Humanistes. Hellénistes I*, 505–12.

¹⁷⁰ Chrysostom, *Opera* (Paris: C. Chevallon, 1536), vol. 4, 350v. Jimenes mentions the letter without reporting its contents, see Jimenes, *Charlotte Guillard. Une femme imprimeur à la Renaissance*, 90.

personally transcribed the manuscript.¹⁷¹ Lasseré also wrote a popular book on St Jerome, *Vie de Monseigneur Saint Hierosme* (1529), in which he presented Jerome's saintly life as an example for all. In a dedicatory epistle to Françoise de Tonnerre, prior of a reformed convent in Tours, Lasseré stressed his ambition of reaching beyond a Latinate readership. One remarkable aspect of this work is Lasseré's vernacular defence of the Paris Faculty of Theology. As noted by Jimenes, Lasseré's chapter on Jerome's battles against heresy segues into praise of the Parisian theologians. Lasseré produced a list of notable theologians remarkably similar to his speech in 1512, ranging from Thomas Aquinas to Jacques Almain.¹⁷² At this time, however, he abstained from praising any living theologians, citing the prohibition against praising the living in Ecclesiastes 11: 28.¹⁷³ Instead, Lasseré mentioned five recently deceased Parisian theologians who, like Jerome, had lived saintly lives and whom he considered worthy of canonisation: Jean Laurens, Martin Pichon, Jan Standonck, Jean Clerée, and Cancian Hue.¹⁷⁴ In the next chapter, Lasseré provided a general defence against charges that Paris theologians were vainglorious, arguing that the Faculty rewarded virtue, not ambition. He concluded that 'the Faculty of Theology is truly a mirror of knowledge, virtue, and example, without reproach or stain.'¹⁷⁵ From Lasseré's perspective in this work, the moral qualities of theologians were as important as their intellectual achievements, as the example of St Jerome showed.

Lasseré's praise of the Faculty in 1529, like De Lyon's oration to Du Prat, rehearsed themes from his paronymph orations. We thus see that the two paronymphs in strikingly different contexts continued to use their oratorical skill in the service of the Faculty of Theology. De Lyon had intervened in a tricky political situation to convince Du Prat to support the work of the University. Lasseré defended the Paris theologians before a very different audience: the pious reading public. Lasseré and De Lyon both retained close ties to printers and editors and both

¹⁷¹ Josse Clichtove, *Sermones*, ed. Louis de Lasseré (Paris: Y. Bonhomme, 1534).

¹⁷² Louis de Lasseré, *Vie de Monseigneur Saint Hierosme* (Paris: J. Bade, 1529), 99v: 'Et quand je considere les grans notables et saintz personaiges: que j'ay veu en icelle faculte depuis trentehuit ans en ca et veoy encores de present de plus en plus j'ay en admiration et reverence.' Lasseré mentioned the following Parisian theologians (ibid. 118r–v.): Thomas Aquinas; Saint Bonaventure; Hugh, Adam and Richard of Saint-Victor; Pierre Lomard; William of Auxerre; Albert the Great; Robert Holcot; Alexander of Hales, John Duns Scotus; Nicholas of Lyra; William of Ockham; Richard de Moyenville; François de Meyronnes; William of Auvergne; Gregory of Rimini; Henry of Ghent; de Huyta [?]; Denys the Cistercian, Nicolas Oresme; Pierre d'Ailly; Jean Gerson; Nicolas de Clamanges; Martin le Maitre; Jean Raulin; Jacques Almain.

¹⁷³ Lasseré, *Vie de Monseigneur Saint Hierosme*, 119v.

¹⁷⁴ Lasseré, *Vie de Monseigneur Saint Hierosme*, 119v–120r. On Jan Standonck and Jean Cleré, see Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris, pendant les premières guerres d'Italie (1494–1527)*. On Jean Laurens, Martin Pichon and Cancian Hue, see their respective entries in Sullivan, *Parisian Licentiates in Theology, AD 1373–1500. A Biographical Register*.

¹⁷⁵ Lasseré, *Vie de Monseigneur Saint Hierosme*, 123v–124. 'Pour lesquelles choses veritablement ladictie faculte de theologie est ung mirouer de science, vertu, & exemple, sans reproche et macule.'

contributed to editing works by members of the Faculty of Theology: Jacques Almain and Josse Clichtove. Moreover, they both clearly supported projects of publishing Greek Fathers in Latin for the use of theologians, like Geoffrey Boussard had done with Eusebius in 1497, Merlin with Origen in 1512, and Hucher with his many collaborators did in 1536. To sum up, there were substantial ways in which humanists contributed to the Faculty of Theology: the language skills increasingly cultivated in the Navarre grammar school and elsewhere served the Faculty's purposes through oratory and editorial work.

5. Conclusion

This investigation of the graduation speeches from the Faculty of Theology in 1510–1512 has provided a different perspective on the relationship between humanists and theologians than the confrontational narrative embraced by most recent studies. For example, Ann Moss argues broadly that humanists and scholastics in Paris and elsewhere belonged to separate linguistic spheres, between which little, if any, communication or compromise was possible.¹⁷⁶ James Farge argues, in particular, that the members of the Faculty of Theology shared a conservative mentality that put them at odds with humanist innovators and reformers.¹⁷⁷ Although these narratives fit well with the testimony of men like Beatus Rhenanus, for whom a humanistic education appeared incompatible with the culture of the Faculty, another perspective is needed to explain the role played by supporters of *studia humanitatis* within the Faculty of Theology in this period.

Drawing on the framework developed by Siraisi for studying the impact on humanist literary culture on academic medicine, this chapter charted how humanist epideictic oratory came to serve academic theology. We saw how the orators De Lyon and Lasseré engaged with the discipline's history, in particular the question of how theology related to ancient learning. This search for the ancient roots of theology also motivated certain editorial projects linked to members of the Faculty, including Merlin's edition of Origen that was announced during the *signeta* ceremony of 1510. I have suggested that Collège de Navarre was an important meeting point for humanists and theologians. Navarre had been the 'cradle' of humanism in fourteenth and fifteenth century France, as we learned from Gilbert Ouy.¹⁷⁸ In the early sixteenth century, Navarre's grammar school was again subject to renewed effort and improvement.

¹⁷⁶ Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn*.

¹⁷⁷ Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 33–37. Farge, *Le Parti conservateur au XVI^e siècle*.

¹⁷⁸ Ouy, 'Le Collège de Navarre, berceau de l'Humanisme français'.

The former grammar teacher Olivier de Lyon's short but successful career as a doctor of theology is perhaps the best example of the synthesis between humanist and theological credentials. This amicable ideal represents a striking counter-point to the ideas of Noël Beda and his battle against humanist involvement in theology, the study of Greek and the Greek Fathers, and Lefèvre's approach to philosophy.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE AGES OF HERESY

In the early 1520s, the Faculty of Theology intensified their attempts to denounce Martin Luther and to counteract the spread of his writings. They increased and refined their inquisitorial activity against heretics.¹ Not uncommonly charges of heresy were raised against the Faculty's own members, especially those involved in reforming the diocese of Meaux.² During 1520–1560, French courts convicted and executed about 450 men and women on the charge of heresy.³ In this unfolding crisis, Lefèvre and several of his collaborators fell under suspicion too.

This chapter charts how the rising concern with contemporary heresy changed the scholarly debates about theological competency in Paris. Earlier studies have suggested that the Faculty of Theology increasingly took the view that humanist approaches to theology had contributed to the revival of heresies. James Farge and Erika Rummel illuminated how this view grew in part out of real links between humanists and reformers – such as the central role played by Lefèvre in Meaux – and in part out of a concern with the humanists' methods of interpreting Scripture, which from the establishment's perspective risked reviving heresies or inciting new ones.⁴ This chapter shows how this scholarly debate entered a new polemical phase with the work of Noël Beda, the Faculty of Theology's leader, who vehemently criticised the emerging field of patristic scholarship.

Pioneering studies have begun to reveal complex intersections between patristic scholarship and the role of ancient and contemporary heresiology in Reformation era debates.⁵ Irena Backus and Philippe Büttgen suggest that the question of theological authority was central to how Catholics and Protestants developed divergent views of heresy. In very general terms, one side defined heresy as the violation of traditional dogma and institutions, and the other defined heresy as the contradiction of Scripture and apostolic tradition.⁶ Beyond the question of what

¹ Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 160–213.

² Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent*.

³ E. William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁴ Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*; Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance & Reformation*.

⁵ See Irena Backus, Philippe Büttgen, and Bernard Pouderon, eds., *L'argument hérésiologique. L'Église ancienne et les Réformes, XVIe–XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2012).

⁶ Backus, Büttgen, and Pouderon, 14–15.

constitutes heresy – clearly at the foundation a simple reversal of orthodoxy – one might hypothesise that the desire to decide more clearly, in the present, what is heretical and what is orthodox, also stretched into the study of the Christian past. That this applied to the Faculty of Theology can be seen from their *Determinatio* (1521) against Martin Luther, which began by listing heretics including Hermogenes, Philetus, and Hymnaeus, Ebion, Marcion, and Apelles, and Sabellius, Mani and Arius.⁷ Ancient heresy provided an important reference point against which to understand contemporary dissenters. Conversely, polemicists from all camps associated themselves with the Fathers who had combatted heretics, including Jerome, Augustine, and Irenaeus. The early Christian battles between orthodox believers and heretics contributed a central intertext that made sense of the current crisis.

This chapter focuses on two interlinked conflicts centred around the humanist revival of early Greek theology in Paris. The first is Beda's critique of Lefèvre's ideas about apostolic theology and the way in which they informed his scriptural exegesis. The second is Beda's procedure against Jacques Merlin, a doctor of theology who had published an *Apologia* for Origen in 1512. In both cases, Beda attacked what he considered to be an irresponsible, undiscerning study of ancient Greek theology during the 1510s. By investigating how Beda criticised the humanist study of early Christianity, this chapter illuminates how the Faculty of Theology and their contemporaries began to discover some of the logical – and indeed, in their eyes, dangerous – consequences of the revival of apostolic theology.

1. Noël Beda's anti-humanist polemic in 1519–1521

Noël Beda's career as an anti-humanist polemicist began in the period when he ascended to a leading position in the Faculty of Theology.⁸ While holding the revived office of syndic, Beda commanded a largely successful battle against Luther and other reformers. Some have even credited him with keeping France in the Catholic fold despite the widespread protestant sympathies in the decades after 1517.⁹ For Beda, the project of safeguarding the Catholic church was not only about opposing Luther. Part of the same battle was directed against

⁷ 'Nam cum adhuc in adolescentia sua Ecclesia Christi sponsa florere coepisset, surrexere viri mendaces & impii, qui a veritate excidentes fidem illius subvertere molirentur, quales fuerunt Hermogenes, Philetus, Hymnaeus, & post illos Ebion, Marcion, Apelles; deinde Sabellus, Manichaeus, Arrius.' in Du Boulay, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*, 1673, 6:117.

⁸ I have unfortunately not been able to consult the unpublished PhD thesis of Walter Frederick Bense, 'Noël Beda and the Humanist Reformation at Paris, 1504–1534' from Harvard University, 1967.

⁹ Farge, 'Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition'.

humanist approaches to theology, which according to Beda threatened the core project of the discipline: to determine doctrine and root out heresy.

While much of Beda's work employed the official channels of the Faculty, he also engaged in public debate with humanists through pamphlets. In 1519–1521, Beda repeatedly defended aspects of devotional praxis in Latin Christianity, which Lefèvre and Clichtove had questioned.¹⁰ In the late 1510s, Lefèvre argued that the cults of Mary Magdalene and St Anne needed to be re-aligned with what Scripture teaches us about them. In the first case, he argued that 'Mary Magdalene' was in fact a composite of three biblical characters. The cult of St Anne, moreover, featured a story about her three marriages, which Lefèvre had found was a later invention. Clichtove defended Lefèvre's argument about Mary Magdalene and made a similar kind of argument about the dating of these traditions, suggesting that a verse of *Exultet* was a later addition that should be removed.¹¹ Underlying these arguments was the view that it would be better to return to the liturgy and devotion of early Christianity, which was more aligned with the teachings of Scripture.

Beda identified this critical approach to cult and liturgy as an important threat.¹² As Farge notes, what was essentially at stake in these studies was the more general question of which aspects of faith were open to debate. For Beda, attempting to 'unmask' aspects of popular devotion fell outside the limits of what aspects of theology could be publicly questioned.¹³ In his replies to Lefèvre and Clichtove, Beda developed an increasingly precise argument about why the later tradition mattered. Sam Kennerley pinpoints this development precisely. Beda's defence of the traditional cult of Mary Magdalene failed to present a theory about doctrinal determination. The following year, however, Beda clarified this point. He now listed the authorities that functioned as sources of doctrine: Scripture, Apostolic tradition, declarations by popes, general councils, bishops, or canon law, and, finally, what the Church has decided virtually and implicitly through its practices.¹⁴ With this last point in particular, Beda intended

¹⁰ On the point that these debates are specifically concerned with Latin Christianity, see Walter Bense, 'Noël Beda's View of the Reformation', *Occasional Papers of the American Society for Reformation Research* 1 (1977): 94.

¹¹ On the arguments of Lefèvre and Clichtove, see Massaut, *Critique et tradition à la veille de la réforme en France*; Sheila Margaret Porrer, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Three Maries Debates* (Geneva: Droz, 2009); Sam Kennerley, 'Students of History, Masters of Tradition: Josse Clichtove, Noël Beda and the Limits of Historical Criticism', *Renaissance Studies* 35, no. 1 (2021): 61–80.

¹² Beda's three polemical publications from these years are: *Scholastica declaratio ... de unica Magdalena* (Paris: J. Bade, 1519); *Apologia pro filiabus et nepotibus beatae Annae* (Paris: J. Bade, 1520) against Lefèvre's writings on Anne; and *Restitutio duarum propositionum necessitatem peccati Adae...* (Paris: J. Bade, 1520).

¹³ Farge, 'Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition', 149–50.

¹⁴ Kennerley, 'Students of History, Masters of Tradition', 77. This is from Noël Beda, *Restitutio in integrum benedictionis Caerei Paschalis* (Paris: J. Bade, 1520), 21.

to close the question of the validity of beliefs about saints and liturgy that the Church had accrued over centuries.

Beda's blanket defence of the traditions of the Church in 1519–20 has led many to regard him as the spokesperson of Parisian conservatism. Sheila Porrer points out that Beda's pamphlets constituted a 'semi-official response by the Paris Faculty,' in so far as Beda drew on the Faculty's discussions of Lefèvre's and Clichtove's writings.¹⁵ In more general terms, Farge suggests that Beda's traditionalism represents a widespread mentality. Farge argues that most members at the Faculty of Theology opposed the ideas of humanists and reformers. The innovations that modern historians find attractive, he argues, were enough to immediately cause the 'conservative party' to reject them.¹⁶

If we return to Beda's list of authorities of those whom he believed should establish theological doctrine, however, we find that his position was unusual. For example, Beda's account differs substantially from the oath that Faculty members swore before academic disputations. In this oath participants promised to say nothing dissonant with Scripture, decisions by holy councils, and the determinations of the Faculty of Theology itself.¹⁷ This approach to theological authority was not only conservative compared to Beda's list but also reflected the Faculty's identity as an arbiter of doctrine independent from Papal power. Beda's conciliarist colleagues, including John Mair and his student Jacques Almain (d. 1515), who were conducting detailed investigations into the relationship between papal and conciliar authority, would hardly have subscribed to Beda's proposed list. They would likely have found Beda's interpretation of canon law in this context dubious. Beda had cited Gratian's *Decretals* on the legitimacy of customs as a legal source.¹⁸ However, he omitted the sections that strongly circumscribed its validity. Gratian emphasised that custom only held force where natural law and other ordinances were lacking.¹⁹ Beda, by contrast, suggested that the customs of the Church were in fact a kind of natural law, which reveals that he saw no real distinction between custom and other theological authorities.²⁰

¹⁵ Porrer, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Three Maries Debates*, 123.

¹⁶ See especially Farge, *Le Parti conservateur au XVIe siècle*; Farge, 'Text and Context of a Mentalité: The Parisian University Milieu in the Age of Erasmus'.

¹⁷ Farge 1985, 160.

¹⁸ Gratian, *Corpus iuris canonici: Decretum Magistri Gratiani*, ed. Emil Friedberg and Aemilius Ludwig Richter, vol. 1 (Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz, 1879) dist. 1, c.V. 'Custom is a kind of law (*ius*) introduced by usages and accepted as law when enacted law (*lex*) is lacking.'

¹⁹ See the distinctions introduced in Gratian, 1:dist. 8, 11, 12.

²⁰ Noël Beda, *Restitutio in integrum benedictionis Caerei Paschalis* (Paris: J. Bade, 1520), 21r: 'Et talis ecclesiae determinatio ad ius naturale utcunque reduci dicitur. Quia sicut consuetudo est altera natura: ita ius consuetudinarium, alterum naturale ius merito debet nuncupari. Nec minus ad sui observationem, quod sic est determinatum, oblicat: quam quod expressa iuris & particulari decisione definitum est.'

The arguments levelled by Beda against Lefèvre and Clichtove therefore did not represent the ‘traditional’ view of doctrinal authority within the Faculty of Theology. Only in a more restricted sense can we say that Beda represented traditionalism: his arguments were aimed against the notion that Christian religion should be practiced exactly as it had been in the early Church. In the years that followed, Beda developed these arguments into a full-blown attack on the apostolic ideal that had been so fundamental to Lefèvre’s theological work from *Theologia vivificans* onwards.

2. Beda’s *Annotationes* (1526) against apostolic theology

Annotationum in Jacobum Fabrum Stapulensem libri duo et in Desiderium Erasmum liber unus (hereafter *Annotationes*) presented Beda’s reactions to three major works of biblical humanism: Lefèvre’s commentary on Paul’s epistles (1512), his commentary on the Gospels (1522), and Erasmus’s New Testament paraphrases (1523–24). In the preface, Beda described his *Annotationes* as a private enterprise. While reading Lefèvre’s books, Beda had marked the passages that displeased him. He offered to send his notes to Lefèvre so that he could revise his work.²¹ Lefèvre, however, asked Beda to explain why each passage ought to be censored.²² Thus Beda began collecting and expanding his notes. Having articulated and compiled his criticism of Lefèvre’s work more fully, Beda decided to expand the work even further since he found that Erasmus made the same kind of errors in his work.²³ Beda’s preface clearly states that he wrote the section of Lefèvre first. Nevertheless, most research on the *Annotationes* so far has centred on Beda’s conflict with Erasmus rather than his disagreements with Lefèvre.²⁴

A second general point worth emphasising at the outset concerns the inquisitorial nature of the *Annotationes*. While Beda’s preface paints a compelling picture of a constructive critic, it does not convey the full context of the *Annotationes*’s composition. Beda began to investigate

²¹ ‘offerō... me missurum ad eum quos apud me commentarios eius haberem, quorum in marginibus fere omnia quae displicebant annotarem, ut illa ipse et videret et ubi opus haberent castigaret.’ Cited from edition in Mark Crane, ‘A Scholastic Response to Biblical Humanism: Noël Beda against Lefèvre d’Étaples and Erasmus (1526)’, *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 59 (2010): 68.

²² ‘optare se dicit rationes adiungam, propter quas loca illa nota censerem digna’, Crane, 68. Erasmus made a similar request to Beda in April 1525 (Ep 1571) after receiving a list of censored passages, see Erika Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics, 1515–1536*, vol. 2 (Nieuwkoop: Brill Hes & De Graaf, 1989), 30.

²³ Crane, ‘A Scholastic Response to Biblical Humanism’, 72.

²⁴ This is because the Erasmus specialist Erika Rummel is one of few historians to have read this book closely beyond the preface. See Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics, 1515–1536*, 2:29–59; Erika Rummel, ‘Why Noël Bédā Did Not Like Erasmus’ Paraphrases’, in *Holy Scripture Speaks*, ed. Hilmar Pabel and Mark Vessey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 265–78. For a brief account of Beda’s *Annotations* that pays close attention to Beda’s response to Lefèvre, see Bense, ‘Noël Beda’s View of the Reformation’, 96–102. Another important exception is Backus, ‘Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples: A Humanist or a Reformist View of Paul and His Theology?’

Erasmus's paraphrase of the Gospel of Luke in 1523, when the printer Konrad Resch sought a privilege from the Paris Parlement to publish this book – a request that the Faculty of Theology did not grant.²⁵ At the same time, Lefèvre came under increasing scrutiny for his activities in Meaux, where he was part of a circle propagating evangelical reform among the laity.²⁶ Among other projects, Lefèvre began to translate the Bible into French, publishing a first instalment in 1523. This was strongly opposed by the Faculty. That same year, the Faculty made repeated attempts to censor Lefèvre's commentary on the Gospels. Only Lefèvre's good standing in royal circles saved him from their scrutiny. King Francis I removed the case from the jurisdiction of the Faculty and the Parlement. Beda even attended the royal Grand Conseil together with Guillaume Amery to make their case that Lefèvre's commentaries were dangerous and 'favourable' to Luther.²⁷ However, it appears that nothing came of these repeated accusations.²⁸

Whereas the *Annotationes* shared a conceptual and political context with official Faculty censorship, Beda's text provides a level of vibrant detail and argumentation that the Faculty's brief *determinationes* against Luther or Erasmus do not. The *Annotationes* is therefore a crucial source for understanding the establishment response to the rise of humanist theology. Nevertheless, it is rarely read beyond the programmatic preface. A representative statement from Mark Crane, says that whereas the main text of the *Annotationes* 'can be tiresome reading, ... the preface does provide the most succinct and complete response to the criticism of scholastic theologians that had begun circulating in the wake of the Reuchlin Affair.'²⁹ Indeed, the preface concisely presents several core facets of Beda's views on theology and outlines his argument that the humanist approach to theology invites heresy: revival of old errors, ignorance of later developments in theology, and the inherent arrogance of undertaking to interpret Scripture without thorough preparation. However, it does not convey Beda's justification of scholasticism or his detailed critique of Lefèvre's exegetical method. To understand how Beda viewed the contrast between Lefèvre's approach and his own, we must read the text of the *Annotationes* itself.

²⁵ Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics, 1515–1536*, 2:30.

²⁶ A good recent summary of the reforming activities of the Meaux circle is Jonathan A. Reid, 'The Meaux Group and John Calvin', in *Calvin and the Early Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 61–67.

²⁷ Much has been written on the relationship between Luther and Lefèvre, see references in John C. Olin, *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 110, n.7. On Beda's tactics in this regard, see especially Richard M. Cameron, 'The Charges of Lutheranism Brought against Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1520–1529)', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 1970, 119–49.

²⁸ Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*, 171–72.

²⁹ Crane, 'A Scholastic Response to Biblical Humanism', 58. On the preface, see also Mark Crane, 'Competing Visions of Christian Reform: Noël Béda and Erasmus', *Erasmus Studies* 25, no. 1 (1 January 2005): 50–55.

2.a Authorities and *exempla*

One of Beda's most recurring objections to Lefèvre's scriptural commentaries is his failure to consult and follow relevant authorities, including the Church Fathers. Beda's critique on this point invites us to consider a real puzzle in Lefèvre's intellectual career. On the one hand, Lefèvre had been an important pioneer in making Paris a centre of patristic publishing. As we saw in Chapter Three above, he sought manuscripts in monastic libraries, liaised with publishers like Henri Estienne the elder and Josse Bade, and urged his students to contribute as editors and proof-readers. Lefèvre's commentaries, on the other hand, did not feature much patristic material. But why did he edit these texts, if he did not use them as guides in interpreting Scripture? How did Lefèvre's enthusiasm for the Church Fathers square with his biblicism?

Beda mentioned the patristic studies of Lefèvre and Erasmus in the preface to the *Annotationes*, where he contrasted their eagerness to read Church Fathers with their unwillingness to consult scholastic authorities. According to Beda, Erasmus and Lefèvre had:

... at their disposal the writings of the ancient doctors, like Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Basil, Hilary, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and others of that sort, but not those of the scholastics like Peter Lombard, William of Auxerre, Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Richard of Middletown, William of Ockham, Peter Paludanus, and others of that type.³⁰

Beda's list is accurate in so far as Erasmus and Lefèvre had been involved in editing many of the Church Fathers mentioned. Lefèvre's colleague Robert Fortuné edited works by Hilary in 1511 and Cyprian in 1512. As late as 1520, Lefèvre collaborated with Josse Bade for an edition of translated works by Basil.³¹ Erasmus had edited works by Jerome (1516), Cyprian (1520), and Hilary (1523); further editions followed in the years until Erasmus's death, including Chrysostom (1530) and Origen (1536).³² Neither Lefèvre nor Erasmus had engaged closely with any of the scholastic authors listed by Beda. The contrast set up between scholastic and patristic authors in the preface should not, however, be read as a concession from Beda that the humanists were well versed in the patristic tradition. According to Beda, the correct way of

³⁰ Translation cited from Crane, 'A Scholastic Response to Biblical Humanism', 62–63.

³¹ Rice, 'The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity'.

³² For an overview of Erasmus's patristic editions, see Arnoud Visser, 'Thirtieth Annual Erasmus Birthday Lecture: Erasmus, the Church Fathers and the Ideological Implications of Philology', *Erasmus Studies* 31, no. 1 (1 January 2011): 7–31.

studying the Church Fathers was found within the scholastic tradition. Beda found that the early medieval theologians, such as St Bernard, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure, had established the correct approach to reading the Church Fathers. They did so, Beda wrote, ‘with prayer and incessant reading of the writings (*originales*) by Dionysius, Cyprian, Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory and similar.’³³

This was not, according to Beda, how Lefèvre consulted patristic authorities. One case that illustrates Beda’s point concerned Lefèvre’s interpretation of Hebrews 7: 10–17. In the context of typological speculation (Christ/Melchizedek), Lefèvre suggested that Christ’s genealogy was largely unknown. This was because the account of his descent from Abraham at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew ends with Joseph, rather than Mary.³⁴ Beda protested in the strongest possible terms against this interpretation of the so-called *Liber generationis* in Matthew. Among other authorities, he cited Lefèvre’s own translation of *De fide orthodoxa* (1507) by John of Damascus. John of Damascus had argued that Mary’s genealogy was the same as that of Joseph, since they belonged to the same tribe and intermarriage between different tribes was forbidden.³⁵ Beda commented disparagingly: ‘If Lefèvre does not believe the Latin doctors ... he should at least listen to his Greek, the Damascene.’³⁶ Even though Lefèvre had translated and introduced the writings of John of Damascus, he failed to appreciate his doctrine.

This example furthermore introduces a second aspect of Beda’s critique of how Lefèvre related to the Church Fathers: his suspicion of Lefèvre’s preference for early Greek theologians. At several points in the *Annotationes*, he lambasted Lefèvre and Erasmus for being *graecizantes*.³⁷ At the same time, however, Beda cited John of Damascus or John Chrysostom in support of some of his own arguments.³⁸ This suggests that what Beda took issue with was not so much the Greek origin of certain Church Fathers but rather the way that Lefèvre and Erasmus related to these writings – in particular, their insistence on engaging with original

³³ Noël Beda, *Annotationum in Jacobum Fabrum Stapulensem libri duo et in Desiderium Erasmus liber unus, qui ordine tertius est* (Paris: J. Bade, 1526), 115. ‘orationibus & assidua lectione eorum quae originales beati ecclesiae doctores Dionysius, Cyprianus, Basilius, Chrysostomus, Ambrosius, Hieronymus, Augustinus, Gregorius & consimiles scripserunt.’

³⁴ Beda, 108v–10. John of Damascus, *Theologia Damasceni*, trans. by Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples (Paris: H. Estienne, 1507). On Lefèvre’s translation, see Backus, ‘John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*’; Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 161–63.

³⁵ Beda cites Lefèvre’s argumentum in John of Damascus, *Theologia Damasceni*, 94v and paraphrases the beginning of book IV, ch. 15.

³⁶ Beda, *Annotationes*, 109r–v. ‘si Latinis doctoribus (quia hoc in negotio reiicit eos) non credat Faber: audiat saltem graecum suum Damascenus....’

³⁷ See e.g. Beda, 113v, 153r. Beda’s preference for Latin theology is discussed in Bense, ‘Noël Beda’s View of the Reformation’.

³⁸ Beda, *Annotationes*, 152v, 182r.

language texts rather than the existing Latin translations. In the case of John of Damascus, it seemed to Beda that Lefèvre had spent his time translating rather than properly absorbing the author's teachings.

If Lefèvre had not studied John of Damascus for his doctrine, why had he put effort into translating the Greek Church Father? Lefèvre's own statements about his approach to theology suggest that he studied early Church Fathers, and those he mistakenly thought were early, in order to learn their exegetical method. Already in 1499, Lefèvre's principal interest in ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite was his method of extracting spiritual meaning from Scripture. We encounter a variant of this idea in the first work of biblical scholarship published by Lefèvre, a commented polyglot edition of the Psalter (1509). In the introductory preface, Lefèvre declared that he had begun to question the best way to read the Psalms, 'I went immediately for advice to our first leaders, I mean the Apostles, the Gospel writers, and the prophets, who first... opened the door of understanding of the letter of Sacred Scripture.'³⁹ In this case too, Lefèvre suggested that one should seek to read the Old Testament in the same way that interpreters of the New Testament era did.

In the preface to his Gospel commentaries (1522), Lefèvre put in even more general terms his ambition to follow the example of the very early Church:

... and would that the model of faith [*credendi forma*] be sought in that early Church which consecrated so many martyrs to Christ, which knew no rule save the Gospel, which had in short no goal save Christ, and which gave worship to no one save the Triune God.⁴⁰

Lefèvre regarded his work on Scripture as the continuation of a rigorous study of the early Church. From reading early writers such as ps.-Dionysius, Ignatius, and the ps.-Clementine corpus as well as Church historians, Lefèvre had concluded that the only relevant authority in the primitive Church was the Gospel.

We know from the records of the Faculty of Theology that they found Lefèvre's claim that the early Church 'knew no rule save the Gospel' to be one of the eleven principal problems in

³⁹ Translation from Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 298. On Lefèvre's view about the senses of Scripture, see *ibid*, 286f.

⁴⁰ Translation cited from Olin, *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola*, 113. The Latin text is found in Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 434–43.

his commentaries from 1522.⁴¹ No record of the Faculty's discussion of this proposition survives but Beda's *Annotationes* details the problem with Lefèvre's view of the early Church as well as the concept of imitating apostolic practices. To begin with Lefèvre's conception of the primitive Church, Beda argued that it was based on a misunderstanding of the nature of theological authority. Lefèvre had claimed that early Christians had 'no rule save the Gospel.' Beda pointed out that they did have other authorities, including the writings of Clement, Dionysius, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Irenaeus, and Hierotheus.⁴²

The irony of invoking apostolic authors against Lefèvre, the editor of so many texts about early Christianity, was not lost on Beda. To Beda, it seemed that Lefèvre had changed his mind about the early Church between editing *Theologia vivificans* and writing the preface to his Gospel commentaries. According to Beda, Lefèvre had previously admitted that early Christians had various other theological authorities besides the Gospel. He cited the preface to *Theologia vivificans*, in which Lefèvre suggested that the hagiography and teaching of apostles – including those of ps.-Dionysius – were 'next to Scripture in both dignity and authority.'⁴³ Beda also cited a scholium to the third chapter of *The Divine Names*, in which Lefèvre clarified ps.-Dionysius's hierarchy of theological authorities: first Scripture, next the writings of apostles and, last, Hierotheus. For Beda, these comments implied an admission that early Christians had 'rules of living' (*regulae vivendi*) besides Scripture. He concluded that 'although [Lefèvre] wrote correctly in his youth, as an old man he is clearly delirious.'⁴⁴

A key point that Beda misunderstood, however, was the exact way in which Lefèvre related to ps.-Dionysius's authority. As we saw in the first chapter of this dissertation, Lefèvre did not read ps.-Dionysius as a guide to any particular theological doctrine but as a guide to apostolic theology. For Lefèvre, the writings of ps.-Dionysius conveyed Paul's method of reading Scripture, with a focus on the spiritual sense. Ignatius, Lefèvre argued, exemplified the fervour and ecstasy of the age of martyrs.⁴⁵ By studying the theology and worship practices of early Christians, one could learn to imitate their superior piety and spirituality. In short, Lefèvre read ps.-Dionysius and other early Fathers not as sources of rules or doctrine but as *exempla* of apostolic piety.

⁴¹ Charles du Plessis d'Argentré, *Collectio judiciorum de novis erroribus*, vol. 2 (1521–1632) (Paris: A. Cailleau, 1728), xi.

⁴² Beda, *Annotationes*, 113v. 'Regulae vivendi' is a term frequently associated with monastic rules.

⁴³ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 61.

⁴⁴ Beda, *Annotationes*, 113r–v. 'cum prius iunior recte scripsisset, ut delirus senex plane desipuit.'

⁴⁵ Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 71–73.

2.b Imitation and inspiration

While Beda misconstrued Lefèvre's earlier interest in ps.-Dionysius and John of Damascus, he incisively identified Lefèvre's point about the imitation of apostolic hermeneutics. As I shall show next, Beda raised serious doubts about Lefèvre's ideas about spiritual meaning and the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the interpretation of Scripture. Spiritual meaning had remained Lefèvre's primary exegetical aim in the decades following *Theologia vivificans*. In the preface to Lefèvre's *Quincuplex psalterium* he specified that the apostolic mode of reading the Psalms entailed focusing on 'the intention of the prophet and of the Holy Spirit speaking in him.'⁴⁶ He developed this point further in his commentary on Paul's epistles (1512). Here, Lefèvre argued that anything of value in Paul's writings (or any human writings, for that matter) was a gift from God:

The fruits of minds deprived of divine favour are only brambles, thorns, and stones. And when these people take up the pen to write about either human or divine things, their works are full of such fruits. I except only those who proceed to their writing moved not by themselves but by God.⁴⁷

This view of inspired theological authorship informed Lefèvre's recommendations for readers: 'To those, therefore, who approach this reading piously, not Paul nor anyone else but Christ and his exceedingly good Spirit will be present so that the readers might grow in piety.'⁴⁸

According to Lefèvre, theological writing and reading thus both depend on the presence of the Spirit. Beda was strongly opposed to this way of characterising divine intervention. In his view, only the authors of the canonical Scriptures had been 'infused' by the Spirit and thereby granted a supernatural knowledge that they conveyed in writing. God's help – 'without whom man can do nothing right' – did not come through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ Beda argues in more detail against Lefèvre's view of inspiration in discussing the latter's interpretation of Romans 8:26. In this passage, Paul refers to the involvement of the Holy Spirit

⁴⁶ Translation from Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 298.

⁴⁷ Translation from Oberman, 302. See the full prefatory epistle in Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 295–302. See Beda, *Annotationes*, 1r. 'Mentium superno favore destitutarum foeturae tribuli sunt, sentes & lappae. Et ferme talibus omnia sunt plena: cum eorum qui circa humana, tum qui circa divina scripsere. Eos excipio qui non ex se, sed divino motu impulsu ad scribendum accessere.'

⁴⁸ Translation from Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 304.

⁴⁹ Beda, *Annotationes*, 1v. 'Nempe divino motu dumtaxat ad scribendum impulsu dici proprie debent, qui non quae humano studio didicerant (deo tamen adiutore, sine quo nil potest homo quod rectum sit) sed qui spiritu dei infundente noverunt modo supernaturali, transfuderunt in chartas: cuiusmodi solum existimo scripta, quae in sacro bibliae canone habet ecclesia.'

in prayer. Lefèvre argued that the verse specifically applied to people who, while praying, experience rapture beyond thought and understanding. In this state, Lefèvre suggested, the Holy Spirit supplies the prayer. A precondition for having this experience, however, is that one must already be inhabited by the Holy Spirit. According to Lefèvre, this was true of everyone who strove to imitate the way in which Christ lived on earth.⁵⁰ Augustine's interpretation, which Beda preferred, again suggested that the Holy Spirit 'helps and inspires' prayer without being present in the mind of the praying person.⁵¹

Beda pointed to a similar problem in Lefèvre's interpretation of I Cor. 2:15. Here, Lefèvre claimed that among 'spiritual men,' there are various degrees of accomplishment. Some simply perceive the gifts of the Holy Spirit whereas others are filled by the Holy Spirit.⁵² Again, Beda strongly protested the view that the Holy Spirit would be present in individual human beings. This was discordant with fundamental doctrines about the relationship between God and men. God gifts men grace and charity but certainly not the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Beda argued that Lefèvre's view was not concordant with an orthodox understanding of the Trinity, since the Holy Spirit could not abandon the Father and the Son to 'enter' an individual. That the Holy Spirit would invade the minds of men so that it was thinking, rather than they, was 'entirely against its divine nature.'⁵³ At the end of this refutation (*confutatio*), Beda cited several pages from Jean Gerson's *Centilogium de impulsibus* (ca. 1424), which he hoped would convince Lefèvre to take an orthodox view of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴

By refuting Lefèvre's understanding of inspiration, Beda attacked a fundamental tenet of the concept of apostolic revival. This is well illustrated by Beda's thought experiment of what the Faculty of Theology would be like if its members actually were like apostles:

Jacques wishes that all authors in the Faculty of Theology would be prophets or apostles. If God granted this, as we say, the books by Lefèvre and all the other men who wrote in this Faculty would belong to the sacred Bible and be part of it. All writings would be sacred text; there would be no commentary, no exposition, no postils. Everything would be divine law.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Lefèvre d'Étapes, *Epistole divi Pauli apostoli cum commentariis*, 69v. On *imitatio Christi* and *Christiformitas* in Lefèvre's Biblical commentaries, see Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étapes et l'Intelligence des Écritures*, 143–47.

⁵¹ Beda, *Annotationes*, 43v–44r.

⁵² Beda, 73v.

⁵³ Beda, 74r. 'quod spiritus ipse in homine intelligenet, non homo. Quod omnino divinae repugnat naturae.'

⁵⁴ Beda, 75r–76r.

⁵⁵ Beda, 142v. 'Iacobus cupit omnes in theologiae facultate scriptores prophetas esse aut apostolos. quem, ut dicimus, si audiret deus: ad sacram bibliam attinerent, & illius essent portio Fabri volumina caeterorumque

In the hypothetical scenario wherein the apostolic era is truly revived, Beda suggested, there would be no clear delineation of the sacred text and its study – a distinction that was central to the project of organised theology. Referring to his own experience as a theological writer, Beda declared that he was not motivated by any special divine impulse but by natural reason combined with faith.⁵⁶ Lefèvre had suggested that any theological writing that was not directly inspired by God was ‘only brambles, thorns, and stones.’ Yet, in Beda’s eyes, this was the type of theological work that had allowed the Church to slowly, over the centuries, eradicate heresy after heresy.

Lefèvre, by contrast, seemed to think that he was divinely inspired. According to Beda, ‘Lefèvre wished to be the equal of the prophets, the evangelists and apostles, and especially Paul.’⁵⁷ The scenario of a Faculty consisting of inspired theologians was not simply a counterfactual imagination but a generalisation of Beda’s view of Lefèvre and Erasmus. It was their scholarship that was collapsing the boundary between Scripture and commentary. Both men had meddled with the inspired text by suggesting alternative translations and textual emendations. The free format of their Biblical commentaries, in particular Erasmus’s paraphrases of the New Testament, similarly blurred the lines between Sacred text and its interpretation.⁵⁸ From Beda’s perspective, they apparently considered themselves part of the imagined inspired Faculty – arrogantly believing themselves to be part of an apostolic revival that could not happen.

2.c Philosophical failures

We have seen that Beda criticised Lefèvre’s lack of attention to theological authorities and his notion of divine inspiration. One further general component of his critique concerns Lefèvre’s lack of scholastic philosophy, which according to Beda leads to numerous problems in his interpretation of Scripture. It is hardly unexpected that Beda accuses Lefèvre of incompetence

omnium qui in ea facultate scripsere virorum: sacer textus omnia forent: nulli commentarii nullae expositiones, nullae postillae: omnia divinum ius essent.’

⁵⁶ Beda, 1v. ‘Ego pro viribus haec aut illa disserens putavi ad rei christianae usum conferre in commune cum caeteris quam habui & in hoc (quamvis nihil mihi conscius sim) absit tamen ut praesumam me ad hoc speciali & divino impulsu fuisse permotum. ex me siquidem ad scribendum accessi, hoc est ex naturali rationis dictamine, fide iuncta....’

⁵⁷ Beda, 114v–15. ‘Ecce par cupiuit esse Faber prophetis, evangelistis, ac apostolis & praesertim Paulo.’ See also *ibid.* 165v. Beda criticised Lefèvre for singling out Paul as an instrument of God, see Backus, ‘Jacques Lefèvre d’Étapes: A Humanist or a Reformist View of Paul and His Theology?’, 74–75.

⁵⁸ On Erasmus’s choice of this genre and its effect for his commentary, see Jean-François Cottier, ‘Erasmus’s Paraphrases: A “New Kind of Commentary”?’ in *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Judith Rice Henderson, vol. 21 (University of Toronto Press, 2012), 27–45.

in specifically scholastic skills – those taught by the actual Faculty of Theology. By the 1520s, the general characteristics of the ‘quarrel over competence’ between humanists and scholastics were well established.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Beda’s criticism not only engages closely with Lefèvre’s ways of including philosophical arguments in his commentaries but also attest to the common background of both men at the University of Paris. Unlike Erasmus, Beda and Lefèvre had both studied and taught arts in Paris and been deeply involved in College governance.⁶⁰ During Lefèvre’s last years at Cardinal Lemoine, Beda was a leading figure at Collège de Montaigu. In 1504, Beda took over from Jan Standonck as the principal of the college and also continued to teach students in arts philosophy.⁶¹

The *Annotationes* gives a rare insight into how teachers at the other colleges felt about Lefèvre’s unusual approach to philosophy and his use of tools such as mathematical analogies and diagrams. In one passage that demonstrates his familiarity with Lefèvre’s work, Beda marvelled at how little Lefèvre cared for logic in both philosophical and theological contexts:

Although he [Lefèvre] had crammed his mind to the brink with grammar, logic, physics, arithmetic, geometry, and other disciplines (which are of human understanding), after mastering these things he particularly used numbers, lines, figures, and other instruments of those disciplines for craft and marvellous inventions, even when he related or stirred up divine matters. This is proven by his drawings and calculations on the writings of Saint Dionysius and a certain Ramon Lull.⁶²

Numbers and diagrams could not, according to Beda, replace logic as a tool of investigation. By abandoning logic, Lefèvre had renounced the principal tool that allowed theologians to solve difficult problems. Without drawing on advanced logic of obligations, Beda argued, Lefèvre could never understand the intricacies of predestination. It therefore came as no

⁵⁹ Rummel, ‘The Importance of Being Doctor’; Rummel, ‘Why Noël Béda Did Not Like Erasmus’ Paraphrases’.

⁶⁰ Erasmus spent a few years in Paris but was never deeply emerged in the University, cf. Farge, ‘Fifteenth-Annual Bainton Lecture: Erasmus, the University of Paris, and the Profession of Theology’.

⁶¹ For evidence of Beda’s teaching in arts, see Farge, *Students and Teachers at the University of Paris*, 29, 90.

⁶² Beda, *Annotationes*, 153v. ‘Porro ipse cum mentem suam cumulatissime refertam grammatica, logica, physicis, arithmetica, geometricis, caeterisque (quae humani sunt sensus) disciplinis haberet: quarum magisterio, numeris, lineis, figuris, & aliis artium illarum instrumentis: prae caeteris, etiam edisserens aut agitans divina, miris artificio & inventionibus usus est. Quod probant per eum picta & numerata in scriptis B. Dionysii, & cuiusdam Raymundi Lulli.’ On Lefèvre’s use of diagrams in *Theologia vivificans*, see Chapter One above. Among Lefèvre’s three editions of works by Ramon Lull, the most diagrams and numbers are found in the earliest one: *Hic continentur libri Remundi pii eremite. Primo. Liber de laudibus betatissime virginis marie...* (Paris: J. Petit, 1499). Beda had earlier criticised the Fabrist manner of tabulating text and information, see Porrer, *Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples and the Three Marias Debates*, 112.

surprise to Beda that Lefèvre had a flawed understanding of predestination in his commentary to Romans 11. Beda declared: ‘I admit that this is a difficult problem, and I do not know if it could be solved by anyone unless they were first well educated in philosophy and thereafter had piously, vigilantly, and carefully traversed theology.’⁶³

By not training in theology, Lefèvre had further missed out on an advanced theory of meaning. Beda argued that Lefèvre read Romans 11 as if everything was said *simpliciter*. By contrast, the scholastic method could distinguish various modes of signification and thus reach a better understanding of the text.⁶⁴ Beyond possessing a superior method, Beda pointed out that the scholastic tradition had also provided a communal framework for the search for meaning. Peter Lombard’s collections of scriptural and patristic excerpts had allowed scholastic theologians to decide the meaning of each passage precisely. They had ‘harmonised apparent disharmonies, explained confusions, illuminated what was obscura, and laid out what was uneven into level paths.’⁶⁵ Beda gave the example of Bonaventure’s commentary on the *Sentences*, which clarified the true meaning of hope. When something remained unclear in Lombard’s presentation, it was explained by Bonaventure.⁶⁶ Through this collective process, understanding of theology improved.

At several points in the *Annotationes*, Beda attacked Lefèvre for lacking basic philosophical knowledge. One illustrative example is his tirade against Lefèvre’s suggestion that infused faith was an ‘image of truth’ (in the context of Matthew 21:21). According to Beda, Lefèvre’s interpretation betrays a deep ignorance of fundamental concepts of philosophy. First, truth is not a *habitus* that could be infused in a person. Second, truth does not come in degrees, therefore there is no sense in calling something an ‘image of truth.’⁶⁷ Beda furthermore criticised Lefèvre for misusing the ps.-Dionysian triad of purification, illumination, and perfection. When announcing his commentary to the Gospels, Lefèvre claimed that he only wished to correct misinterpretations of the text and he compared this to purification without illumination or perfection. Beda objected that in practice it is impossible to separate ‘the

⁶³ Beda, *Annotationes*, 60v. ‘Arduum fateor est negocium istud & nescio si pervium esse possit cuiquam: nisi in philosophia iuste prius eruditus, pie & vigilanter scholasticam & non perfunctorie percurret theologiam.’

⁶⁴ Beda, 61v. ‘Unde ergo absurditates istae locum in Iacobo invenerunt? quia scilicet in omnibus putat simpliciter loquendum, neque distinguendos censet varios in scripturae sacrae terminis acceptionum modus.’

⁶⁵ Beda, 17r. ‘apparentes discordias concordant, perplexa explicant, illustrant obscura & aspera ponunt in vias planas.’

⁶⁶ Beda, 17r.

⁶⁷ Beda, 141r. Cf. Beda’s own attempt at defining infused faith: ‘Quaeque enim infusa fides, cuicumque alteri eiusdem speciei (ut dicitur) specialissime omnino est & quamquam in se per intensionem suscipiat incrementum, id est augeatur, fitque in uno maior seu intensior, in altero remissior: quoniam tamen (ceu habet communis hominum conceptio) magnum & parvum non variat speciem, intensior fides dici non potest veritati Christi alia similior: neque res quaecumque in ratione imaginis, suscipit (ut dictum est) magis & minus.’

removal of error' from 'providing a better explanation.' One could not, as Lefèvre implied, remove darkness without providing light.⁶⁸

Beda further paid special attention to a kind of analogy that one often encounters in the writings of Lefèvre and his students – namely, those that describe divine action and human passivity. For example, Lefèvre had used the analogy of an eye receiving the sun to explain the relationship between human faith and divine justification, against which Beda protested wildly.⁶⁹ In the same vein, Beda criticised Lefèvre's view that humanity's good actions were caused by God like an 'act' operating on matter. This was a mistaken view of God's work on human beings and of the human mind. Beda remarked that if Lefèvre's view were true and humans were truly like inert matter, then neither morality nor theology could exist – Lefèvre 'is fighting against Scripture, not to speak of philosophy.'⁷⁰

The contrast could not be greater between the *Annotationes* and how theology students in 1510, including Olivier de Lyon and Valerand de La Varanne, had praised Lefèvre's philosophical acumen. According to Beda, even Josse Clichtove had recanted from his earlier defence of Lefèvre in the debates about Mary Magdalene. Beda claimed that Clichtove had written several books against Lefèvre, including *De veneratione sanctorum* (1523) and *Antilutherus* (1524). The second book, Beda suggested, was actually 'against his teacher Lefèvre under the name of Luther.'⁷¹ The story about how Clichtove had come to his senses – a pervasive view in later scholarship⁷² – led Beda to suggest that the two should not reverse roles: '[Clichtove] was once a disciple, yet now it would be fitting for Jacques to read the writings of this master and not be confused to learn from a theologian (whom he once had as an auditor in other disciplines) those things that belong to the divine profession.'⁷³

2.d The influence of Origen?

Considering how little Lefèvre studied or wrote about Origen, one remarkable aspect of Beda's polemic is his constant associations between Lefèvre's theological views and Origenist heresies. While he found Lefèvre's theological method to be flawed and prone to errors, the

⁶⁸ Beda, 114v.

⁶⁹ Beda, 14r.

⁷⁰ Beda, 101v. 'contra scripturas decertans nedum philosophiam.'

⁷¹ Beda, 72r. 'remittens ad I. C., qui adversus praeceptorem Fabrum sub Lutheranorum (ut prius diximus) nomine, libro sui Antilutheri tertio.'

⁷² See Massaut, *Josse Clichtove*.

⁷³ Beda, *Annotationes*, 69r–v. 'Discipuli quondam, nunc autem & quidem merito magistri scriptum legat Iacobus & non confundatur a theologo (quae caeteris in disciplinis olim auditorem habuit) discere: quae sunt divinae professionis.'

worst heresies seemed to come from the writings of Origen. This section shall explore how and why Beda associated Lefèvre with Origen – a topic which reveals the links between various conflicts in which Beda was involved in this period.

To begin, it is worth recapitulating the reasons why Beda found Origen so problematic. In Beda's view, the Church had long ago anathemised Origen's work: first Pope Gelasius had prescribed a selective reading of Origen, based on Jerome's critique, and second the Council of Constantinople in 553 had expressly forbidden the study of Origen's work.⁷⁴ Beda was therefore horrified to observe what he identified as a humanist revival of Origen. This trend had its clearest expression in the admiration that Erasmus openly confessed for Origen and in Jacques Merlin's *Apologia* for Origen from 1512. The *Apologia* did not provoke any immediate response from Beda. But after Beda became syndic at the Faculty, he began to suggest that the doctors should take official action against Merlin. In January 1522, Beda came to a Faculty meeting armed with dialogues written by Christian Maseeuw (1469–1546) against Merlin's *Apologia*. Beda sought permission to have the dialogues printed with his own additions and annotations.⁷⁵ Merlin fought back, asking that it should rather be a committee that investigated his *Apologia*. This was the beginning of a process that lasted for years. The Faculty discussed the question of Merlin's *Apologia* and the writings of Maseeuw and Beda at fifty-seven meetings without any concrete actions against Merlin.⁷⁶

The details of the original feud between Merlin and Beda are impossible to reconstruct as the principal texts are lost. Because of the stalled process between Merlin and Beda, Maseeuw's *Dialogues* and Beda's anti-Origenist polemic were never published. Some indication of their content is provided by Merlin's undated second *Apologia* (for his 1512-*Apologia*), which was described by Pierre-Daniel Huet before it was lost. In Merlin's reply to Beda, he disputed that Origen had been condemned as a heretic by a Church council and speculated on possible corruptions, or injected errors, in Origen's writings.⁷⁷ The latter indicates that the debate between Beda and Merlin played out along the traditional lines of the controversy between Jerome and Rufinus over the orthodoxy of Origen.⁷⁸ During his conflict

⁷⁴ For Beda's view on Origen, see Walker, 'Origène en France'; Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, 212–26.

⁷⁵ For an overview of the 'Affaire Merlin' in 1522–1523, see Clerval, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de théologie de Paris, 1505–1523*, 412–13; Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, 213–21.

⁷⁶ Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 327–28.

⁷⁷ Pierre Daniel Huet, 'Origeniana', in *Origenis Opera Omnia*, Patrologia Graeca 17 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857), col. 1180.

⁷⁸ On Jerome's debate with Rufinus, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

with Merlin, Beda had closely studied Origen's works and the patristic debates about their orthodoxy – material that he incorporated in the *Annotationes*.

Beda discussed Origen's influence at many points in Lefèvre's commentaries. He used speculative language, 'conjecturing' that a certain doctrine came from Origen's opinion,⁷⁹ suggesting that Lefèvre 'seemed' to follow Origen,⁸⁰ and claiming that another of Lefèvre's views 'should be approached' to that of Origen.⁸¹ One example is Lefèvre's exegesis of Matthew 5:33–37 about oaths.⁸² While Beda mentioned other heretical views on oaths and vows, notably those of the Manicheans and John Wycliff, he emphasised that Origen was the source of all erroneous interpretations. He ended his refutation by saying that it seemed 'Lefèvre preferred to follow the teaching of Origen in this matter... rather than the doctors who were approved by the Church.'⁸³ In another case, Beda claimed that Origen was the source of error within Lefèvre's view of the trinity. According to Beda, Lefèvre argued that the Son was lesser than the Father, 'which is nothing other than in one way or another approaching the blasphemy of Arius following Origen.'⁸⁴

Furthermore, Beda accused both Lefèvre and Erasmus of having been inspired by Origen to take Pelagian views on human sinfulness. Beda was not the first to detect a potential problem in Erasmus's exegesis of Romans 5. Martin Luther had already pointed to the same issue in 1520 and thereafter several Catholic theologians followed suit. Luther and Johannes Eck had both urged Erasmus to read Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings in particular.⁸⁵ Beda was part of a diverse group of theologians telling Erasmus that he did not sufficiently emphasise the sinful nature of human beings.⁸⁶ Beda detected a similar problem in Lefèvre's commentary on Romans from 1512. Interpreting Romans 5:12, Lefèvre claimed that what Adam had transmitted to posterity was death, rather than a sinful nature. One implication of this view was that Christ had fully repaired the consequences of Adam's sin by abolishing death. Beda argued

⁷⁹ note the cautious expressions in the examples above and, in addition: 'Istam Iacobi credulitatem ex absurdissima Origenis opiniatiōe prodire conicio.' (connection to Homily on Leviticus) in Beda, *Annotationes*, 110r.

⁸⁰ Beda, 127r.

⁸¹ Beda, 174r. 'quod non aliud est quam ad blasphemiam Arrii post Origenem utcumque proximare.'

⁸² Beda, 125v–27.

⁸³ Beda, 127r. 'Videat igitur Faber quam iuste maluerit in his Origenem sequi magistrum... quam probatos per ecclesiam doctores, qui a scripturarum sensu ne iota quidem unquam recedunt: sed omnem exosi curiositatem inseparabiliter illi pro viribus adhaerent.'

⁸⁴ Beda, 174r. 'quod non aliud est quam ad blasphemiam Arrii post Origenem utcumque proximare.'

⁸⁵ Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics, 1515–1536 (2 Vols.)*. On the charge of Pelagianism against Erasmus, see Robert Coogan, 'The Pharisee Against the Hellenist: Edward Lee Versus Erasmus', *Renaissance Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1986): 476–506.

⁸⁶ See also Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation*, 24, 34–35. On Beda's views on Origenist influence in Erasmus, see Walker, 'Origène en France'.

that this was a heretical and basically Pelagian position, probably the result of Origen's influence, and strongly recommended Augustine as an antidote.⁸⁷

Erasmus had openly declared his admiration for Origen. In a letter from 1518, Erasmus claimed that he learned more about Christian philosophy from a single page of Origen than from ten pages of Augustine.⁸⁸ For Beda, the roles were obviously reversed – he saw Augustine as the great antidote against Origenist heresy.⁸⁹ Noting the prevalence of Augustine in the *Annotationes*, Erika Rummel suggests that Beda might have intended to embarrass Erasmus, who was a member of the Augustinian order.⁹⁰ However, the same preference is seen in the two books against Lefèvre, who had no connection to the order. Beda himself provides a different explanation. In one of his *confutationes*, Beda admitted that Augustine had sometimes agreed with Origen's views. However, he had later come to realise his mistake. Indeed, Augustine had denounced his own early writings after realising their flaws.⁹¹ In other words, Augustine was a model for the turn from Origenist heresies to orthodoxy.

Unlike Erasmus, Lefèvre had not openly associated himself with Origen. He had not edited any of Origen's writings, much less commented on them.⁹² Granted, he had mentioned Origen now and then. For example, Lefèvre claimed Origen's *Hexapla* as a model for his *Quincuplex psalterium* (1509).⁹³ Lefèvre had also mentioned Origen alongside Cyprian, Hilary, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Nazianzen, John of Damascus as some of the most important guides to Scripture. This passage, however, is easily overlooked as it is found in the middle of Lefèvre's commentary to Aristotle's *Politics*.⁹⁴ In his work on the Three Marys, a treatise intimately known by Beda, Lefèvre had further cited Origen's testimony alongside that of other early Fathers in the Three Marys debate.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, these references could hardly have convinced Beda that Lefèvre was a follower of Origen.

⁸⁷ Beda, *Annotationes*, 22v–25v. On Lefèvre's and Erasmus's exegesis of Romans 5:12 and Beda's charge of Pelagianism, see Backus, 'Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples: A Humanist or a Reformist View of Paul and His Theology?', 81–85. Beda returned to the same charge against Lefèvre à propos Ephesians 2:11, see Beda, *Annotationes*, 99r. See also Beda's claims that Lefèvre was inspired by Origen in *Annotationes*, 38v–40r.

⁸⁸ Walker, 'Origène en France', 114.

⁸⁹ On Jerome and Augustine's critiques of Origen and Pelagius, see Peter Brown, 'The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West', *The Journal of Theological Studies* 21, no. 1 (1970): 56–72; Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo, 396–430* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁹⁰ Rummel, 'Why Noël Béda Did Not Like Erasmus' Paraphrases', 272.

⁹¹ Beda, *Annotationes*, 39r. 'Ille etenim Beatus doctor Augustinus, non modo recte cum aliis sanctia & ecclesia de Apostoli verbis sensit & scripsit variis locis: intelligentiae dono, gratia Dei accepto: verum & quod prius haud bene se scripsisse cognovit (omni posthabito saeculi pudore) plane retractans damnavit.... Eat igitur Iacobus & similiter faciat: ut eum in hoc post Augustinum laudemus.'

⁹² Josse Clichtove had edited Origen's *In Leviticum Homiliae XVI* in 1514 believing this to be a work by Cyril of Alexandria. See Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 336–38.

⁹³ Rice, 197.

⁹⁴ Aristotle, *Politicorum libro octo*, ed. Lefèvre d'Étaples (Paris: Henri Estienne, 1506), 123v–124r.

⁹⁵ Porrer, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Three Maries Debates*, 199–202.

The association between Lefèvre and Origen was forged instead through a series of connections little noted in the literature on Beda's polemical activity. Notably, Clichtove's preface to the second edition of Lefèvre's treatise on the Three Marys directly addressed the question of Origen's orthodoxy. Clichtove argued that although some found Origen's writings were 'not entirely consonant with the piety of the orthodox faith,'⁹⁶ this was nevertheless no reason to reject texts such as Origen's *Commentary on Matthew*.⁹⁷ Pope Gelasius and Jerome had approved of this and other parts of Origen's *oeuvre* – 'How presumptuous is it then, I might even say how shameless, for those people to dare to reject the testimonies drawn from Origen in this pamphlet as savouring of heresy?'⁹⁸ Clichtove's position on Origen in 1518 was thus sympathetic to Merlin's perspective, even if he prudently did not go as far as defending the entire corpus.

Merlin did not intervene in the Three Marys debate in 1518. His only surviving writing on this topic is a later sermon delivered in French, in which Merlin relayed the traditional story of how Mary Magdalene as a former prostitute became one of Christ's closest disciples.⁹⁹ However, Guillaume Parvy who collaborated with both Merlin and Lefèvre intervened on the latter's behalf at a crucial time, advising Francis I to hinder the Paris Parlement from processing against Lefèvre.¹⁰⁰ We also know that Clichtove was involved in trying to resolve the conflict between Merlin and Beda. In one of many failed attempts to resolve the conflict, Clichtove was selected to censor the books of Maseeuw and Beda before they were published. Merlin had himself asked for Clichtove to act as an arbiter, which indicates that he viewed Clichtove as an ally or, at the very least, as a neutral force at the Faculty.¹⁰¹

Beda's refrain that Lefèvre was an Origenist captures well how his perspective was shaped through several wider concerns that the ascendancy of Luther had brought to the agenda. This case intersected with Beda's ongoing conflict with Merlin about the theologian's defence of Origen, exemplified his suspicion against the approach of Lefèvre and Erasmus to the Greek Fathers, and strengthened his argument that humanist biblical scholarship posed a serious threat

⁹⁶ Translation cited from Porrer, 161.

⁹⁷ Origen's *In Matthaem homelias* is included in the third volume of Jacques Merlin's 1512 edition.

⁹⁸ Translation cited from Porrer, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étapes and the Three Maries Debates*, 163.

⁹⁹ BNF Français 13319, 112r–116v. The sermon is unfortunately not complete since the last pages are badly torn. It has not to my knowledge been discussed in the literature on the Three Marys affair. Aimé Maigret was criticised by the Faculty of Theology for supporting Lefèvre's interpretation in 1522, see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 293. Merlin's sermons are studied alongside those of other contemporary preachers in Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ: Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁰ Massaut, *Critique et tradition à la veille de la réforme en France*, 118.

¹⁰¹ Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 327.

to the Faculty of Theology and thereby to orthodoxy. The accusations that Lefèvre repeated Origen's heresies resonated with Beda's argument that Lefèvre failed to follow theological authorities and sound scholastic method. Like the archetypal heretic, Lefèvre was arrogant, thinking himself a new Paul. As in the *Determinatio* against Luther, which Beda had been involved in writing five years earlier, Beda's *Annotationes* against Lefèvre described not a new theological movement but an unfortunate re-kindling of heresies that the Church had suppressed long ago.

3. *Duodecim articuli* (1527) between polemic and scholarship

Beda's attack on Erasmus and Lefèvre did not go unanswered. Erasmus immediately sent his replies.¹⁰² Anonymous manuscripts in both French and Latin circulated in Paris that answered on Lefèvre's behalf.¹⁰³ These manuscripts used Beda's own technique against him. They extracted suspect propositions from the *Annotationes* and refuted them.¹⁰⁴ In the spring of 1527, twelve of the Latin propositions were anonymously printed with the title *Duodecim articuli*.¹⁰⁵ Four of the *articuli* are lifted from Erasmus's own reply to Beda.¹⁰⁶ However, the first eight are derived from the section in which Beda refutes Lefèvre's work. Anonymously authored and printed, this pamphlet was a virulent attack on Beda, designating him a heretic.

Beda himself did not know who the author of *Deoducim articuli* was and speculated that it may have been his old enemies Pierre Caroli or Louis de Berquin. Both Berquin and Caroli had been targeted during the Faculty of Theology's hunt for Lutheran heretics in 1523. Berquin was a nobleman whose collection of Lutheran books had been seized in May 1523. Caroli was a doctor of Theology whom the Faculty had accused of preaching heresies at Meaux.¹⁰⁷ Beda saw the pamphlet as being most likely a case of mudslinging from someone he had rightfully condemned of heresy.

¹⁰² See Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics, 1515–1536*, 2:29–46; Desiderius Erasmus, James Farge, and Clarence H. Miller, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Controversies, Volume 82* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

¹⁰³ On Lefèvre's preference for silence in religious conflicts, see Bedouelle, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures*, 120–35.

¹⁰⁴ See Beda's account in Noël Beda, *Apologia adversus clandestinos Lutheranos* (Paris: J. Bade, 1529). The preface where Beda gives his view of events is translated in Mark Crane, 'An English Translation of Noël Bédà's Apologia ... adversus clandestinos Lutheranos (1529)', *Opuscula: Short Texts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* 2, no. 6 (2012).

¹⁰⁵ One of two known surviving copies can be consulted in Bibliothèque Mazarine (4° 10844 A-3 [Res]).

¹⁰⁶ i.e. from Erasmus, *Prologus supputationis errorum in censuris Bedae* (Basel: Froben, 1526) and Erasmus, *Supputationes errorum in censuris Natalis Bedae* (Basel: Froben, 1527).

¹⁰⁷ On the Faculty's heresy hunting in 1523, see Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent*, 215–20.

Recent scholarship has supported Beda's assumption, although favouring a different candidate – namely, Merlin. The strongest piece of evidence that Merlin authored this response to the *Annotationes* derives from the record from the Parlement's meeting on 18 January 1527.¹⁰⁸ In the context of Beda's still ongoing process against Merlin's *Apologia* from 1512, Merlin's lawyer mentioned that his client was ready to 'bring before the court a large number of erroneous propositions, suspect in faith, drawn and extracted from the books of Beda.'¹⁰⁹ We thus know that Merlin had already gathered the kind of material printed in the pamphlet a few months later. Furthermore, the ongoing legal battle gave Merlin a clear motive for discrediting Beda, as his lawyer's comment makes clear.¹¹⁰ I would add, to the question of motive, that the many sections against Origen in the *Annotationes* might well have struck Merlin as being directed toward himself. By responding on Lefèvre's behalf, Merlin would simply have continued the proxy war initiated by Beda.

Mark Crane recently discovered new textual evidence for a connection between Merlin and *Duodecim articuli*. As Crane notes, the author of *Duodecim articuli* cited repeatedly from a collection of Conciliar documents and papal letters – the so-called *False decretals of Isidore* – including letters by Popes Clement I, Gregory I, and Gelasius.¹¹¹ These were texts with which Merlin was familiar, since he had edited *False decretals* in 1524. What Crane does not mention is that Merlin's decision to edit *False decretals* was intimately connected with his defence of Origen and that it was discussed in this context at a Faculty meeting shortly before the publication. This circumstance, I shall argue, sheds further light on the response to Beda's *Annotationes* and to the complex intermingling of scholarship and polemic in the lengthy process between Beda and Merlin. We shall therefore begin with the *False decretals* and thereafter return to *Duodecim articuli* and its alternative vision, compared to the *Annotationes*, of the role of ancient heresiology in the escalating conflict about humanism and heresy.

3.a Councils, popes, and heretics in *False decretals* (1524)

Like *Theologia vivificans*, Merlin's edition of *False Decretals* (1524) indicates the centrality of forged texts in early French humanism. This collection of documents was originally compiled (and many of them written) during the Carolingian renaissance, for reasons of

¹⁰⁸ Edited in Farge, *Le Parti conservateur au XVIe siècle*, 79–94.

¹⁰⁹ Farge, 90. 'lequel offre des a present mectre par devers le greffe grant nombre de propositions erronees, suspectes en la foy, tirees et extraictes des livres de Beda.'

¹¹⁰ Mark Crane, 'Defence of the Gospel or Personal Grudge? The Authorship of the *Duodecim articuli*', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 75, no. 3 (2013): 417–28.

¹¹¹ Crane, 424–26.

ecclesiastical politics that are still debated by historians.¹¹² For his edition, Merlin used a single manuscript from the slightly expanded twelfth-century recension.¹¹³ The pseudonym of the compiler, Isidore Mercator, had with time become associated with the better known Isidore of Seville. It was in the latter's name that Merlin presented this compilation as the first part of his two-volume edition of Conciliar documents. Rather than relying on Gratian's scholastic digest of canon law, readers could now go directly to the sources.

Merlin dedicated the volumes to Étienne Poncher, archbishop of Sens, and François Poncher, the bishop of Paris and Étienne's nephew. The Ponchers were habitual patrons of humanist scholarship, for example they supported Nicolas Bérault and Guillaume du Maine.¹¹⁴ Étienne Poncher was the dedicatee of the edition of Basil prepared by Josse Bade with the help of Lefèvre and his collaborators in 1520. For Merlin's 1524-edition, Étienne Poncher was able to contribute directly by providing an official lead-sealed copy of the proceedings of the Council of Basel in 1431.¹¹⁵ Étienne's interests in scholarship and his own role in ecclesiastical policy and diplomacy seemed to coincide.

Merlin's dedicatory preface revealed little about his own motivations for publishing *False Decretals*. He did not mention Origen. Nevertheless, the project of editing these texts was intimately linked to Merlin's defence of Origen. As already mentioned, Beda's main argument against Origen was that he had been condemned as a heretic by the Church. Two pieces of evidence were usually cited for this view: the *Decretum Gelasianum* and an anathema from the Council of Constantinople in 553. Merlin disputed the validity of both documents on different grounds. The first proposition of his lost second apologia (for the *Apologia for Origen*), written in 1522 stated: 'It is not certain and evident, nor without doubt, that any council condemned

¹¹² Clara Harder, *Pseudoisidor und das Papsttum: Funktion und Bedeutung des apostolischen Stuhls in den pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014); Karl Ubl and Daniel Ziemann, eds., *Fälschung als Mittel der Politik?: Pseudoisidor im Licht der neuen Forschung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015); Steffen Patzold, *Gefälschtes Recht aus dem Frühmittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Herstellung und Überlieferung der pseudoisidorischen Dekretalen* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2015).

¹¹³ On the type of manuscript used by Merlin, see Schafer Williams, *Codices Pseudo-Isidoriani: A Palaeographico-Historical Study* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1971), 98–99.

¹¹⁴ On these scholars, see their respective biographical notices in *Contemporaries of Erasmus*. Étienne and his nephew François were both active supporters of scholarship. Étienne was the dedicatee of Josse Bade's edition of Basil the Great's works in 1520, see Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles*, 419–21.

¹¹⁵ Merlin 1524, vol. 1: aaaiii: 'propero ... sacro sanctorum scilicet Conciliorum, orthodoxumque pontificum instituta, que partim dudum beatus Isidorus in unum comportaverat, partim tu reverendissime pater plumbo obfirmata publicanda dedisti, que mox in unum referre volumen non dissimulavi.' cf. *ibid.* vol. 2, f. 162r, where the proceedings from Basel are announced as: 'Decreta et acta concilii Basiliensis desumpta ex auctenticis exemplaribus plumbo eiusdem sacrosancti concilii firmata.' Beside the proceedings from the councils of Constance and Basel, Merlin added further papal letters at the end of the first volume. See *ibid.* vol. 1, part 2, ccxlvii.

Origen... as a known heretic.¹¹⁶ By editing *False decretals*, Merlin sought to back up this statement.

The first of the two documents, the *Decretum Gelasianum*, was part of *False Decretals*. This decree, ascribed to the late fifth-century Pope Gelasius, proclaimed that Jerome's judgement about Origen's writings should be followed: the treatises of which Jerome approved should be read, but others should be rejected along with their author.¹¹⁷ This was the view that Clichtove had followed in his partial defence of Origen in 1518.¹¹⁸ Merlin, however, questioned the validity of the *Decretum Gelasianum*. Already in his original *Apologia* from 1512, Merlin argued that the decree of the pope does not carry the force of a conciliar decision: 'this and similar pontifical sanctions are ... of no strength unless the approval of the universal Church is added to it.'¹¹⁹ Furthermore, he insisted that Jerome's opinion alone could not form the basis of censorship, invoking the legal principle that 'quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus debet approbari.'¹²⁰

Merlin's critique of the *Decretum Gelasianum* resonated with conciliarist ideas, which were very much in vogue at the Faculty of Theology in 1512.¹²¹ The limitations of papal authority were intensely discussed after the publication of Thomas Cajetan's anti-conciliarist *De comparatione auctoritatis papae et concilii* (1511).¹²² The Paris Faculty appointed Jacques Almain to respond to Cajetan in the Spring of 1512. Almain's reply drew on fifteenth-century thinkers like Jean Gerson and Nicholas of Cusa and, significantly, defended the canons of the

¹¹⁶ This is according to the summary in Huet, 'Origeniana', col. 1180. 'Non est certum et evidens, nec indubitatum, concilium aliquod damnasse Originem Adamantium Leonidis martyris silium, tanquam haeticum notorium et publicum.' Huet had seen a manuscript copy of the *Apologia* (1522) in the library of the Faculty of Theology (Sorbonne?) in Paris, see Huet, col. 1179.

¹¹⁷ Jacques Merlin, ed., *Tomus primus quator conciliorum generalium*, vol. 1 (Paris: J. Cornillau in aedibus Galliot du Pré, 1524), pt 2, 202v. 'Origenis nonnulla opuscula que vir beatissimus Hieronymus non repudiat legenda suscepimus; Reliqua autem omnia cum auctore suo dicimus esse renuenda.'

¹¹⁸ Clichtove cited Pope Gelasius in his preface to Lefèvre's treatise on Mary Magdalene, see text and translation Porrer, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Three Maries Debates*, 160–61.

¹¹⁹ This was noted in Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, 202. Jacques Merlin, 'Apologia', in *Opera Origenis*, vol. 3 (Paris: Josse Bade, 1512), AAAiiiv. 'talem et similes pontificium sanctiones arundineos baculos autumantes & nullius roboris nisi universalis ecclesiae superveniat approbatio.'

¹²⁰ On the history of this maxim, see Jasmin Hauck, 'Quod omnes tangit debet ab omnibus approbari – Eine Rechtsregel im Dialog der beiden Rechte', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Kanonistische Abteilung* 99, no. 1 (1 August 2013): 398–417; Gerald Christianson, 'Conciliarism and the Council of Basel', in *A Companion to the Council of Basel*, ed. Michiel Decaluwe, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 98–99.

¹²¹ On the Faculty's support for conciliarism, see also Farge 1985, 220–222. On the history of conciliarism, see Francis Oakley, *The Conciliarist Tradition: Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church, 1300–1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹²² Francis Oakley, 'Almain and Major: Conciliar Theory on the Eve of the Reformation', 1965, 19; Francis Oakley, 'Conciliarism in the Sixteenth Century: Jacques Almain Again', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte - Archive for Reformation History* 68 (1 December 1977): 111–32.

Councils of Constance and Basel.¹²³ The first Parisian edition of the proceedings of the Council of Basel were printed by Jean Petit the same year. An annotated copy by Almain's colleague Ludwig Ber testifies to a vivid interest in these documents.¹²⁴ This context helps explain why Merlin went further than Clichtove – rejecting the *Decretum Gelasianum* completely – in an attempt to save the entirety of Origen's *oeuvre*.

The second authority usually cited against Origen was an alleged condemnation from the Second Council of Constantinople (553). Beda invoked this condemnation in a Faculty meeting on 16 March 1523. He asked the Faculty to uphold the view of the Council held in Constantinople under Justinian and declare Origen as a heretic.¹²⁵ Here, for obvious reasons, conciliar theory would be of no use. In the original *Apologia*, Merlin had not mentioned the Constantinople Anathema against Origen. Max Schär suggests that Merlin, as an editor of conciliar documents, must have known the Anathema well and opted for ignoring it.¹²⁶ However, the *False Decretals* invite a different interpretation. To begin with the most essential point, the *False Decretals* do not include any Anathema against Origen. This text is only mentioned once, in the preface of ps.-Isidore, who claimed to have heard of such documents from Byzantine colleagues:

Some Easterners from our community of brothers testified that they had seen... other councils held in Constantinople, namely one under the emperor Justinian against the assailants of God – Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius – and another in the times of Pope Agathon and emperor Constantine against bishop Macarius and his disciple Stephen, and other bishops who sowed weeds instead of grain in the churches, mixed wine with water, and soon handed out a drink of stormy destruction, like wolves disguised themselves as sheep, and truth was repressed as a lie.¹²⁷

¹²³ Jacques Almain, 'A Book Concerning the Authority of the Church', in *Conciliarism and Papalism*, ed. J. H. Burns and Thomas Izbicki (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134–200.

¹²⁴ *Decreta et acta Concilii Basiliensis* (Paris: J. Petit, n.d. [ca. 1512]) Ludwig Ber's copy is in the municipal library of Lyon: SJ D 017/68. It would be a worthwhile project to study these annotations alongside the conciliarist argument that Almain contributed to Ber's doctoral disputation in 1512, see Almain, 'Jacques Almain: Question at Vespers'.

¹²⁵ Clerval, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de théologie de Paris, 1505–1523*, 348. 'In prefata congregatione requisivit honorandus magister noster syndicus, ut deliberaret predicta sacra Facultas, utrum in determinatione materie pro defensione Origenis standum sit firmiter decisionibus sacrorum conciliorum et maxime quinti Constantinopoli sub Justiniano imperatore celebratum est et conformiter ad illius concilii decreta de re ipsa sicut in aliis omnibus fieri solet judicandum.'

¹²⁶ Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, 205.

¹²⁷ Merlin, *Tomus primus quator conciliorum generalium*, 1: sig. e(v)v. 'Nobis autem quidam e consortio fratrum nostrorum orientales testati sunt se vidisse ... alia [concilia] Constantinopoli condita, unum videlicet sub Iustiniano imperatore contra dei impugnatores Origenem, Didimum, & Evagrium & aliud temporibus Agathonis

While the preface thus expressed a negative opinion of Origen and conveyed the rumour that he had been condemned by a council, the compiler did not claim to have seen proceedings from the fifth council of Constantinople, nor the original Anathema.

Merlin's two ways of dealing with this absence can be read either as a disingenuous effort to hide the potential existence of the Anathema or as an honest mistake.¹²⁸ Our editor first attempted to amend the text of ps.-Isidore's preface. In the text that Merlin submitted to the Faculty for approval, he had changed the sentence listing Origen alongside Didymus and Evagrius as heretics condemned in the time of Julian. He argued that 'because that phrase appeared inconsistent or unsuitable, the meaning had to be changed and it should be read this way: "impugnantes Dei originem, scilicet Didimum" etc.'¹²⁹ Merlin's move here relied on the fact that Origen's name in the accusative meant 'origin,' allowing him to interpret the text as 'those assailing the origin of God – namely, Didymus...' However, Beda protested against this argument and the seven men appointed to decide on the matter took his side. The published version therefore preserves the preface without Merlin's emendation.

A second editorial intervention highlights the absence of the Anathema in a more subtle way. Besides *False decretals*, Merlin's second volume promised to include the proceedings of four further general councils. Two of these were recent: the Council of Constance (1414–1418) and the Council of Basel (1431–1445).¹³⁰ The two last ones, however, appeared to map onto the councils described in ps.-Isidore's preface. The latter Constantinopolitan council was indeed the second one mentioned by ps.-Isidore, namely the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681). Among the documents from 680–681 were references to Justinian's condemnation

pape & Constantini imperatoris contra Macharium episcopum & Stephanum eius discipulum: ac reliquos episcopos, qui pro frumento zizania ecclesiis seminaverunt, vinum miscuerunt aque & proximo potum dederunt eversione turbida, & tanquam lupi agni simulabant mendacium & veritas ut mendacium refutabatur.'

¹²⁸ Schär argues that the decision from 553 was known in the Latin Middle Ages but this appears to have been through historians such as Evagrius rather than copies or translations of the actual document, see Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, 56.

¹²⁹ Farge, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la faculté de théologie de l'Université de Paris*, 64. 'debeat ita esse: "contra Dei impugnatores Origenem dum Didimum et Evagrium," quomodo asserebat dictus syndicus, vel sic. "contra Dei impugnatores Origenem, Didimum, et Evagrium," quod pretendebat dictus Merlin, dicens, ex quo illa clausula videbatur incongrua aut inepta, erat necessario mutanda sententia, et quod debebat ita dici: "impugnantes Dei originem, scilicet Didimum," etc.'

¹³⁰ Merlin announces that he has presented eight general councils alongside several synods, papal sanctions, and provincial councils in the colophon of Jacques Merlin, ed., *Secundus tomus conciliorum generalium: practica quinte synodi Constantinopolitane: sexta synodus Constantinopolitana: acta concilii Constantinensis. decreta concilii Basiliensis: approbatio actorum concilii Basiliensis.*, vol. 2, 2 vols (Paris: J. Cornillau in aedibus Galliot du Pré, 1524).

of Origen.¹³¹ Without the original anathema, however, these references carried little weight. Before this one, Merlin printed the proceedings of an ecclesiastical meeting held by Justinian and in which he condemned various heretics and their works but not Origen. These were documents from a smaller synod held by Justinian in 536 and not from the Second Council of Constantinople (553).¹³² These were certainly the documents upon which Merlin relied for his argument, relayed in the Faculty register, that ps.-Isidore's preface was inconsistent with the evidence.

Although Merlin was prohibited from removing Origen's name from ps.-Isidore's preface, he persisted in the view that no anathema existed. By 1527, Merlin's lawyer stated his client's position even more strongly than in the *Apologia* from 1522:

No authentic text mentioned the condemnation of Origen, and ecumenical councils celebrated shortly after Origen and even long after, which were condemning heretics, passed no judgement on Origen; and [Merlin claimed] that secret gatherings of reprobates were the only ones who may have pronounced something against Origen without regard to the rule of law and without understanding the case.¹³³

Merlin's defence of Origen in 1512 set him up not only for years of litigation with Beda but also for a project that was perhaps more difficult and innovative than printing a Church Father's writings. To exonerate Origen, Merlin had to return to the sources of canon law. This was an entirely different approach to the determination of doctrine than Beda's sweeping statements in his polemic against Clichtove. Drawing on conciliar theory, Merlin carefully distinguished between different kinds of ecclesiastical authorities. Only a decision of a general council could make it a doctrine that Origen was a heretic. Merlin went to search for such a document, returning empty-handed. While Merlin's strategy of throwing doubt on the existence of an original source for the Anathema did not sway Beda or the other members of the Faculty, it

¹³¹ Merlin, 2:ciiiiv. 'Suscipimus quoque & que in temporibus Iustiniani dive memorie in predicta a deo conservanda nostra felicissima civitate complosa est synodus contra dei impugnatores Origenem, Didimum, & Evagrium...'

¹³² Merlin did not date the Councils but referred to this as the 'quinta synodus Constantinopolitana' in the prefatory material to the second volume. See Merlin, 2:bbbbiiii. 'Quinta synodus Constantinopolitana non actionibus aut sessionibus, aliarum more ob difficultatem atque raritatem exemplarium distincta multos damnat hereticos, quos a re publica simul cum suis operibus Iustinianus imperator christianissimus abegit instrumento publico.'

¹³³ Farge, *Le Parti conservateur au XVIe siècle*, 81. [Merlin's lawyer:] '*nulla scriptura auctentica faisoit mencion de damnatione Origenis et concilia ecumenica celebrés paulo post Origenem et etiam multo post damnantes hereticos de Origene nullam judicionem fecerunt; et qu'il n'y avoit eu que conciliabulles et congregacions de gens reprovés que egissent aliquid in Origenem pretermisso ordine juris et sine cause cognitione.*'

was not a bad one. The authenticity and validity of the Anathema have continued to be questioned to this day. Pierre-Daniel Huet discussed the evidence concerning the Anathema in his *Origeniana* (1668).¹³⁴ Modern scholars suggest that the Anathema against Origen might have rather been discussed during a preparatory meeting, which would explain why it was not included in the official proceedings of the Council.¹³⁵ In his quest to prove Origen's innocence, moreover, Merlin created one of the first large editions of conciliar proceedings – a resource that he insisted would be of much use against contemporary heretics.

3.b From polemic to scholarship and back

In his preface to the 1524 edition of conciliar documents, Merlin vividly invoked the chaos that currently beset the church, drawing heavily on Revelations. He described with agony how sin and heresy currently popped up like the Hydra's heads, and offered his edition as an antidote:

I consider nothing more excellent in cutting this kind of regrowth ... than the weapons by which the orthodox fathers once crushed the errors of the uncircumcised... I offer from their repository... the institutes of the sacrosanct Councils and of orthodox popes... thinking that nothing could be more conducive to the commonwealth. For they show with such copious and catholic singularity what it takes to destroy the errors of mortals or to repair a world already almost entirely collapsed. Now anyone can easily have at hand [this book] with which they can slay heresies and heretics, bring down the aggrandised, exhaust the pleasure-seekers, excite the numb, drain the ambitious, and catch *the little foxes that destroy the ecclesiastical vineyard* [Cant. 2:15].¹³⁶

The explicit goal of Merlin's edition of *False decretals* was thus to provide the Church with ammunition against heretics. Unlike in his earlier editions of works by Pierre d'Ailly, Durand

¹³⁴ Huet, 'Origeniana', col. 1170.

¹³⁵ An accessible discussion of the history of these documents along with their translation is found in Richard Price, trans., *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 270–86.

¹³⁶ Merlin, *Tomus primus quator conciliorum generalium*, 1:aaaiir. 'Cunque prestantius existimem nichil ad prescindenda huiuscemodi renscentia (imo iam plane renata hydre capita) armis quibus dudum orthodoxi patres incircuncisorum errores contriverunt ... promptuaria eorum propero... sacro sanctorum scilicet Conciliorum, orthodoxumque pontificum instituta, quae partim dudum beatus Isidorus in unum comportaverat, partim tu reverendissime pater plumbo obfirmata publicanda dedisti, quae mox in unum referre volumen non dissimulavi, conducibilis rei publica nihil fore existimans, quippe cum tam copiose, tamque catholica singula, quae aut ad atterendos mortalium errores aut ad instaurandum iam prope collapsum orbem, prepreferant ut facile nunc quisque ad manum habeat unde hereses & hereticos iugulet, elatos deprimat, voluptatos defatiget, excitet torpentes, exinaniat ambitiosos, vulpes capiat parvulas, vineam ecclesiasticam demolientes.'

de Saint-Pourçain and Origen, Merlin was not primarily addressing members of the Faculty of Theology. The volumes were dedicated to two of the country's most powerful bishops, Étienne and François Poncher, both engaged in the fight against heresy. Merlin too was personally involved in the process. As the penitentiary of Paris, Merlin attended to heretics when they were about to be executed – a role that we know Merlin performed in cases in 1524 and 1526.¹³⁷ Merlin emphasised, however, that the task of persecuting heretics was a communal one and that much could be learned from how the early Church had dealt with such problems. Addressing the readers, he promised to ‘call these things back from the dust and darkness and bring them out into the current light... so that *a new generation might know them, and the sons who will rise may declare them to posterity* [Ps. 78:6] and imitate their ancestors in warding off the errors of their own age.’¹³⁸

With the polemical treatise against Beda's *Annotationes, Duodecim articuli* (1527), we encounter one attempt at using these purportedly early documents for contemporary purposes. We encounter references to papal letters inserted into a text that is reminiscent of the *Annotationes*. The author of *Duodecim articuli* mimicked Beda's method of criticising an opponent's work sentence by sentence, extracting doubtful propositions and interpreting them out of context. This was, of course, the strategy that the Faculty of Theology used against Luther in 1521. It was furthermore a strategy that lent itself to a quick multiplication of heresy charges; the *Annotationes* extracted and criticised propositions from the writings of Lefèvre and Erasmus, *Duodecim articuli* did the same to the *Annotationes*, and eventually Beda replied with *Apologia adversus clandestinos Lutheranos* (1529), which criticised sentences from *Duodecim articuli*. Like the *Annotationes*, furthermore, the anonymous *Duodecim articuli* also incorporated vicious attacks *ad hominem*. Arguably, the pamphlet went even further in this direction by presenting the twelve extracted articles as a heretical ‘Beda's creed.’ The pamphlet no longer keeps up the appearance – a key part of the Faculty's strategy – of being a calm and considered refutation of errors and mistakes.

As noted by Crane, documents from *False decretals* play an important role in the *ad hominem*-rhetoric of *Duodecim articuli*. They were used at times when the author addressed Beda and directly accused him of heresy. In one passage on ‘false teachers’ the author cited

¹³⁷ Ludovic Lalanne, ed., *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris sous le règne de François Premier (1515–1536)* (Paris: J. Renouard, 1854), 190, 291–92.

¹³⁸ Merlin, *Secundus tomus conciliorum generalium: practica quinte synodi Constantinopolitane: sexta synodus Constantinopolitana: acta concilii Constantinensis. decreta concilii Basiliensis: approbatio actorum concilii Basiliensis.*, 2:aaa1v. ‘e pulvere & tenebris revocandos & ad presentem lucem proferendos ... ut cognoscat generatio altera & filii, qui exurgent, enarrent posteritati & in propulsandis sui temporis erroribus parentes suos emulentur.’

several authorities from *False decretals*: Pope Clement I on those who defend false beliefs; Pope Gregory I on unfaithful people who only appear to be defending faith; and, last, Pope Gelasius's take on Paul's instruction to not associate with heretics.¹³⁹ Crane concludes that the passages from *False decretals* serve to 'bolster the author's criticisms by infusing them with the authority of early Christian leaders, and at the same time they present the model against which Beda is compared.'¹⁴⁰ Beda's enemies behind *Duodecim articuli* clearly took the early Church to be on their side.

The passages cited by Crane exemplify well the vague nature of the citations from *False decretals*. Beda's references to ancient heretics in the *Annotationes* had been specific, pointing to similarities between Lefèvre's commentaries and known heretics. The author of *Duodecim articuli* took the opposite approach: invoking citations of a completely general nature about the early heretics. In no case were the letters of popes used as authorities in doctrinal matters. The sections 'refuting' Beda's false beliefs drew primarily on Scripture. The author once invoked the articles of faith settled by the Council of Nicea, arguing that Beda had falsely implied that there were two separate Churches.¹⁴¹ The author further cited a letter from Pope Gregory to Secondino, warning against going against the decision of that council.¹⁴² Again, however, the pope was not the arbiter of doctrine but only an example of its implementation. This reflects the same conciliar attitude to the determination of doctrine that we encountered in Merlin's defence of Origen.

The *Duodecim articuli* thus offers one way of understanding how papal decrees and similar sources could be useful if they did not determine doctrine. The citations of papal letters in the pamphlet suggest that they were taken as a key to the moral failures underlying heresies. This idea was not foreign to Beda, who had argued that Lefèvre's arrogance was the root cause of his scholarly failures. By foregoing a proper theological education and refusing to listen to experts, Lefèvre made mistakes that aligned him with known heretics both ancient and recent. But *Duodecim articuli* went further in this direction of characterising the heretic through personal traits. The author aligned Beda with descriptions of heretics in letters by Pope Leo from *False decretals*: heretics were wavering, rather than steadfast, and they contradicted themselves.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Crane, 'Defence of the Gospel or Personal Grudge? The Authorship of the *Duodecim articuli*', 425–26.

¹⁴⁰ Crane, 426.

¹⁴¹ Anonymous, *De duodecim articuli* (sans lieu, sans date), 7.1, p. 22.

¹⁴² The letter is found in Merlin, *Secundus tomus conciliorum generalium: practica quinte synodi Constantinopolitane: sexta synodus Constantinopolitana: acta concilii Constantinensis. decreta concilii Basiliensis: approbatio actorum concilii Basiliensis.*, 2:138r.

¹⁴³ *De duodecim articuli*, 3.10 and 4.7. cf. Merlin, *Tomus primus quator conciliorum generalium*, 1:179r, 181r.

Besides *False Decretals*, the *Duodecim articuli* also cited another key text of ancient heresiology, namely Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*. Yet again, the citations did not concern any particular doctrine. Irenaeus was invoked for general points about the fight against heretics in the early Church, such as how the apostles went to great lengths to avoid heretics,¹⁴⁴ how heretics misinterpreted Scripture for their own purposes,¹⁴⁵ and how heretics bringing alien doctrines to the altar of God would burn by a celestial fire.¹⁴⁶ Erasmus's edition of Irenaeus, published the previous year in Basel, announced Irenaeus as an exemplary defender of orthodoxy. In his preface, Erasmus had highlighted that Irenaeus had fought heretics using Scripture alone.¹⁴⁷ This, apparently, was the path favoured by the author of *Duodecim articuli*.

Whether *Duodecim articuli* was written by Merlin alone or in collaboration with others, or by someone different altogether, it offers a fascinating perspective on how Beda's Parisian opponents viewed the relationship between ancient and contemporary heresy. For them, ancient heresiology was not useful to combat heresy because it contained a repository of forbidden doctrine. Instead, the writings of Fathers and Popes provided powerful moral *exempla*. In Merlin's case, this approach is explained by his desire to implement a narrower definition of ecclesiastical authority than Beda's sweeping traditionalism and yet to insist that the early Popes and Fathers had important lessons for contemporary society.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the intersections of religious polemic and scholarship in the years following the Faculty of Theology's *Determinatio* against Luther. Beda's critiques against Lefèvre and Merlin demonstrate the close links that he saw between the return to the sources of early Christian theology and the resuscitation of heresy. This chapter has brought out some similarities in outlook between Lefèvre and Merlin. Both propagated and facilitated a return to the earlier sources of theology: Church Fathers and, in Merlin's case, the sources of canon law. Furthermore, Lefèvre and Merlin both tended to read early theologians and ecclesiastical authorities not as sources of doctrine but as examples to be imitated. These similarities derive from a shared affinity with humanist literary preferences and modalities of reading.

¹⁴⁴ *De duodecim articuli*, 2.6.

¹⁴⁵ *De duodecim articuli*, 6.6.

¹⁴⁶ *De duodecim articuli*, 7.2.

¹⁴⁷ See Epistle 1738 in Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum*, ed. P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, vol. 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), 384.

In other respects, however, their ideas and strategies were remarkably different. Merlin's disagreements with Beda hinged on one focused problem, albeit one with important repercussions for discussions about theological and ecclesiastical authorities. With the *Apologia* from 1512, Merlin had locked himself into the difficult task of defending Origen's complete orthodoxy. I have suggested in this chapter that his battle was less quixotic than it has seemed to modern commentators. Merlin's main argument, that the Church had never issued an anathema against Origen, was not unreasonable. It hinged firstly on the view that the decree attributed to Pope Gelasius did not constitute a Church decision and secondly on the absence of direct evidence of an anathema. Under the pressure of Beda's insistence that the anathema existed, Merlin in 1524 produced the first substantial printed edition of conciliar canons and papal decrees, among which the anathema was nowhere to be found. In this way, the polemic between Beda and Merlin prompted a scholarly project that improved access to the sources of canon law. Furthermore, Merlin declared that the real value of this edition was that readers could take inspiration from how the popes of the earliest centuries had persecuted heretics. While defending Origen against all charges of heresy, Merlin was himself actively involved in the persecution of present-day heretics.

Lefèvre went much further than Merlin in his suggestion to recreate the theological culture of the earliest church. As Beda suggested in the *Annotationes*, Lefèvre seems to have thought that it was possible to recreate the way in which readers in apostolic times had approached Scripture. Beda raised serious concerns about this concept, arguing that Lefèvre was wrong to think that there was any meaningful way in which he could become like Paul or other apostles. Beda's arguments clearly intended to defend the *status quo* of the scholastic system, yet they were also reasonable objections against the programme Lefèvre had announced in *Theologia vivificans* and developed in his biblical commentaries. Lefèvre never replied to Beda's criticism and *Duodecim articuli*, the reply of Beda's Parisian opponents, did little to address these arguments. Beda's critique did not, however, hinder others from continuing to suggest a revival of the practices and theology of the early Church. As we shall see in the last chapter, Guillaume Budé developed a new variant of apostolic revivalism: the idea that early Christian theology and spirituality provided the only pathway for healing the wounds opened by the Reformation conflicts.

CHAPTER SIX: BETWEEN HELLENISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) is today known as a towering figure of the French Renaissance. Budé’s role in establishing the study of Greek in Paris is well explored, as is his defence of encyclopaedic study.¹ Furthermore, Budé’s own scholarly works on ancient law and economics are widely appreciated as contributions to the development of critical historical method.² However, one aspect of his work remains less understood: Budé’s contributions to religious scholarship.

This omission is telling of one dominant narrative about French humanism that emphasises the exceptionality of Budé. Whereas other scholars became drawn into the great religious debates of his era, Budé remained aloof. Single-mindedly focused on the propagation of Greek philology, Budé’s contributions lay entirely within the secular realm.³ This approach has moreover led scholars to emphasise the difference between Budé’s early scholarly activity and his later writings on religious philosophy. Some explain away Budé’s last book, *De transitu Hellenismi ad Christianismum* (1535), as an expression of the author’s death anxiety or an emotional response to the upsetting Reformation era conflicts in Paris, especially the *Affaire des Placards* in 1534.⁴ Donald R. Kelley goes the furthest in this direction by declaring *De transitu* to be a fearful ‘betrayal’ of Budé’s earlier work: the humanist abandoned his critical approach to sources for a mystical mode of reading.⁵

In this chapter, I aim to challenge the view that Budé’s appreciation for mystical spirituality contradicts his historical scholarship. I shall argue that Budé shared Lefèvre’s vivid interest in

¹ David O. McNeil, *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I* (Geneva: Droz, 1975); Luigi-Alberto Sanchi, ‘From a Thirsty Desert to the Rise of the Collège de France: Greek Studies in Paris, c.1490–1540’, in *Receptions of Hellenism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Natasha Constantinidou and Han Lamers (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

² Delaruelle, *Guillaume Budé*, 93–198; Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 53–80.

³ Delaruelle’s argument about Budé’s exceptional status was criticised in Augustin Renaudet’s and Lucien Febvre’s (co-ordinated) reviews of Delaruelle’s *Guillaume Budé* (1907): Lucien Febvre, ‘Guillaume Budé et les origines de l’humanisme français, à propos d’ouvrages récents’, *Revue de synthèse historique*, no. 15 (1907): 255–77; Augustin Renaudet, ‘Les débuts et les premiers livres de Guillaume Budé d’après un ouvrage récent’, *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 57, no. 2 (1908): 181–87. Nevertheless, the question of how Budé relates to the previous generation of Parisian humanists has not been addressed by scholarship.

⁴ The Reformation context is emphasised by Daniel Penham’s introduction in *Guillaume Budé, Le passage de l’hellenisme au christianisme*, trans. Marie-Madeleine de La Garanderie and Daniel Franklin Penham (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1993).

⁵ Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship*, 61–63.

the apostolic era, and that the promise of a Scriptural hermeneutics focused on the spiritual meaning was an important reason behind his philological investigations of early Greek theologians. Budé's knowledge of Greek theology was not only part and parcel of his encyclopaedic explorations of Classical culture; it also shaped his response to some of the problems frequently discussed in the early sixteenth century, such as the role of pagan literature in Christian culture, the humanist project of improving the language of theology, and the Reformation-era debates about the nature of apostolic Christianity. In order to investigate the links between Budé's philological practice, his understanding of the history of Christianity, and his own theological views, I shall begin by exploring his reading of the Dionysian corpus.

1. The Dionysian corpus in Budé's library

A great deal of books that once belonged to Budé have been identified through the presence of marginalia in his characteristic hand-writing.⁶ Among them is a manuscript copy of the Dionysian corpus in Greek.⁷ In this section, I shall discuss the origin of the manuscript and the annotations that testify to Budé's attentive reading. By examining this text, it will become apparent to what extent the scholarly context of his study of ps.-Dionysius was different from that of Lefèvre. In addition, it allows us to trace the beginnings of Budé's engagement with a corpus that would be central to his thinking about early Christianity and Greek theology.

Although Budé's engagement with the Dionysian corpus intensified during a later phase of his scholarly activity, the text was part of his working library around 1515. In *De asse* (1515), Budé commented on ps.-Dionysius's use of the word ἄκακος.⁸ This was not a unique occurrence. In May 1516, Budé mentioned ps.-Dionysius while offering feedback on Erasmus's translation of the Gospel of Luke.⁹ He protested against Erasmus's rendering of κατηχήθης (Luke I:4). Erasmus had translated it as *catachuminus institutus fueras*; Budé favoured a simpler *institutus es*, without reference to the specific concept of catechumen. Among several supporting citations, Budé claimed that ps.-Dionysius used the concept in a

⁶ No catalogue of Budé's library survives. A list of books annotated by Budé is found in Maillard et al., *La France des Humanistes. Hellenistes I*, 93–96. The list is not complete. On Budé's books in general, see Louise Katz, *Guillaume Budé et l'art de La Lecture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009); Luigi-Alberto Sanchi, 'La bibliothèque de Guillaume Budé', *Arts et Savoirs*, no. 10 (6 July 2018).

⁷ BNF MS Grec 447.

⁸ Luigi-Alberto Sanchi, 'Auteurs Cités, Sources de Budé et Éditions Modernes', in *L'as et Ses Fractions (1541)* (Geneva: Droz, 2018), cxxxiii. See also *De asse*, 35b in the same volume.

⁹ In Erasmus, *Novum instrumentum omne* (Basel: J. Froben, 1516).

wider sense than Erasmus's translation suggested.¹⁰ Already at this time, Budé consulted ps.-Dionysius as an authority on theological terminology.

Budé was, most likely, already in possession of the copy of the Dionysian corpus that is inscribed with his annotations: a manuscript now found at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.¹¹ The manuscript came from a *scriptorium* in Padua led by the Byzantine émigré Zacharias Calliergis (1473–1524) and has been dated to the first decade of the sixteenth century.¹² The workshop produced three surviving copies of the same text. At least two of them were in Paris in the sixteenth century. Besides Budé's copy, a second manuscript was later owned by the Royal lecturer in Hebrew Jean de Salignac (1505–1568).¹³ All three manuscripts are today found in Parisian libraries, raising the question of whether Calliergis, knowing that the French had an especially vivid interest in ps.-Dionysius, sold all three copies on the Parisian market.¹⁴

There is no record of when or how the manuscript became part of Budé's library. However, the most likely scenario is that the purchase was mediated by Janus Lascaris (1445–1534), an erudite diplomat and bookseller who regularly helped Budé acquire Italian books. Budé's relationship with Lascaris stemmed from 1495–1503, when Lascaris lived in Paris and offered Budé occasional lessons in Greek.¹⁵ When Lascaris took up the position as French ambassador in Venice in 1503, he left many of his own Greek books in Budé's care. He also bought books for Budé in Italy. In one surviving letter from 1510, Budé asked Lascaris to order the copying of some writings by Galen and to see that they were sent to Paris 'complete and corrected.'¹⁶

¹⁰ Guillaume Budé, *Opera omnia* (Basel: N. Episcopius, 1557), 366. La Garanderie's French translation renders this passage inexactly but see her useful notes in Desiderius Erasmus and Guillaume Budé, *La Correspondance d'Érasme et de Guillaume Budé*, trans. Marie-Madeleine de La Garanderie (Paris: J. Vrin, 1967), 56.

¹¹ Budé's references to the works of ps.-Dionysius could not be taken from a printed text since the earliest Greek edition was printed in 1516, see ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera* (Florence: F. Giunta, 1516).

¹² BNF MS Grec 447. For the dating of the paper, see Venetia Chatzopoulou, 'L'étude de la production manuscrite d'un copiste de la Renaissance au service de l'histoire des textes : le cas du crétois Zacharie Calliergis', *Revue d'Histoire des Textes* 7 (1 January 2012): 27, n. 97.

¹³ On the two other manuscripts, see Chatzopoulou, 26–27. In 1562, Guillaume Morel mentions that a manuscript similar to that of Budé was owned by Salignac, who owned multiple copies of the Dionysian corpus. On Salignac, see Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology 1500–1536*, 401–2. There is a page of epitaphs for Salignac, which appears to be printed by Morel, see BNF Dupuy 630, fol. 114.

¹⁴ The manuscript that belonged to Salignac might well be BNF MS Coislin 254, which has ample marginal notes in Latin and Greek but no ownership signature. According to the library note, it is bound in the arms of 'chancelier Séguier', presumably Pierre b. 1588. The third Calliergis-Dionysian corpus is BNF MS Suppl. Grec. 337. Calliergis claimed in 1509 that he planned to make Greek theology his own niche since this area of literature had been neglected by Aldus Manutius, see Deno John Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice: Studies in the Dissemination of Greek Learning from Byzantium to Western Europe*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), 212.

¹⁵ Börje Knös, *Un ambassadeur de l'hellénisme, Janus Lascaris, et la tradition gréco-byzantine dans l'humanisme français*, Collection d'histoire de l'humanisme (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1945), 84–85, 94–95.

¹⁶ Guillaume Budé, *Correspondance: Les lettres grecques—adjectis paucis e latinis*, trans. Guy Lavoie (Sherbrooke: Centre d'études de la Renaissance, 1977), 143.

Later correspondence confirms that Lascaris was a trusted buyer for Budé's personal library as well as for the royal collection that Budé supervised.¹⁷ Through Lascaris, then, Budé tapped into the Italian network of Greek copyists, printers, and scholars, including Calliergis.¹⁸ Lascaris was thus ideally positioned to mediate the sale of Calliergis's copies of the Dionysian corpus to Parisian buyers like Budé.

Once the manuscript had entered his library, Budé corrected and annotated it. As Anthony Grafton has pointed out, Budé's extensive marginalia can be seen, in part, as a collector's way of making his books personal and unique.¹⁹ It also served to integrate individual books in Budé's system of information management.²⁰ This is particularly true for textual corrections and added folio numbers and key words. Through such annotations, Budé constructed a working library that allowed him to conduct complex investigations into ancient culture and language. As we shall see, the Dionysian corpus was annotated in keeping with Budé's standard practices. It therefore allows us to reconstruct the scholarly context of his reading and to investigate the attention awarded to the text.

Budé's practice of textual correction has previously been studied with regard to his copy of Pliny's epistles. Leighton Reynolds showed that Budé created an impressive new text for his own use by combining a printed edition, manuscript copies of unedited letters, and textual variants added in his own hand from a manuscript owned by the Parisian Abbey of Saint-Victor.²¹ This hybrid object illustrates that Budé could go to great lengths to ensure the quality and correctness of his texts. It also confirms Budé's own claim (in a letter to Lascaris from 1510) that he liked correcting printed books using older ones.²²

Budé's copy of the Dionysian corpus tells a different story. The manuscript contains many corrections but these were not made through collation with the oldest and best manuscripts in Paris. Had Budé desired to correct his text meticulously, the obvious choice would have been to do so in the library of the Abbey of Saint-Denis.²³ The two Greek copies of the Dionysian

¹⁷ Budé, 153–54.

¹⁸ On the relationship between Lascaris and Calliergis, see Chatzopoulou, 'L'étude de la production manuscrite d'un copiste de la Renaissance au service de l'histoire des textes', 25–26; Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, 213–19. On Lascaris's support of the Byzantine community in Venice, see Knös, *Un ambassadeur de l'hellénisme*, 126–33.

¹⁹ Anthony Grafton, 'Is the History of Reading a Marginal Enterprise? Guillaume Budé and His Books', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 91, no. 2 (1997): 139–57.

²⁰ The best overview of Budé's system of information management is Luigi-Alberto Sanchi, *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé: L'oeuvre, ses sources, sa préparation* (Geneva: Droz, 2006), 39–63; 121–48.

²¹ L. D. Reynolds, 'The Younger Pliny', in *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 316–22.

²² Budé, *Les lettres grecques*, 143.

²³ BNF MS Grec 447 and BNF MS Grec 933.

corpus kept in the Abbey were in principle available to scholars. Lefèvre claimed to have worked in the Abbey library although he engaged more with the Latin than the Greek manuscripts.²⁴ The Greek copyist George Hermonymus of Sparta, who regularly worked for Budé, accessed one of these manuscript to copy the Greek text of the *Martyrdom of Dionysius* for several clients.²⁵ Hermonymus even left scribbles in the manuscript, suggesting that his work with the treasures of the Abbey library was not strictly supervised.²⁶ One might therefore have assumed that Budé, if he bothered to correct the text in his own manuscript, would have consulted this copy.

Comparison with the tenth-century manuscript in Saint-Denis does not indicate that Budé corrected his text using that particular copy, at least not systematically. His corrections simply do not correspond to these texts. There are signs that Budé compared his text with another one. For example, Budé's text belongs to a tradition that excludes two short passages in the prologue of the sixth-century theologian John of Scythopolis; Budé added both in the margin.²⁷ Since the longer version of the prologue is fairly common, this correction unfortunately does not help narrow down a source.

The comparison between Budé's corrections and the earlier Parisian versions was already conducted in Guillaume Morel's edition of the Dionysian corpus from 1561.²⁸ Compiled as an accompaniment to the edition, this list includes readings from six manuscripts that were in Paris at the time. This includes Budé's manuscript and those from the Abbey library.²⁹ Morel's

²⁴ See above Chapter One, section 3.

²⁵ During his years in Paris (ca. 1476–1508), Hermonymus copied over twenty manuscripts for Budé. Foundational research on this topic is Henri Omont, 'Georges Hermonyme de Sparte. Maître de grec à Paris et copiste de manuscrits, suivi d'une notice sur les collections de manuscrits Jean et Guillaume Budé et de notes sur leur famille', in *Extrait des Mémoires de la Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Île de France*, vol. 12 (Paris: Daupeley-Gouverneur, 1885). For an expanded and updated account, see Maria P. Kalatzi, *Hermonymos: A Study in Scribal, Literary and Teaching Activities in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries* (Athens: Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, 2009).

²⁶ Omont, 'Georges Hermonyme de Sparte. Maître de grec à Paris et copiste de manuscrits', 94. There is indirect evidence that Budé himself corrected a Greek manuscript for the Abbey; According to an eighteenth-century printed edition of the Greek mass sung in Saint-Denis, Budé had corrected one manuscript and even left a signed letter in the volume. This manuscript has not been identified in any modern library collection. See Henri Omont, 'La Messe grecque de Saint-Denis', in *Études d'histoire du Moyen Âge : dédiées à Gabriel Monod.*, ed. Ernest Lavisse (Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1896), 183, n. 4.

²⁷ BNF MS Grec 447 'Prologue' (before pagination begins). See Beate Regina Suchla, 'Die Überlieferung des Prologs des Johannes von Skythopolis zum griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum: ein weiterer Beitrag zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des CD', in *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse ; Jahrg. 1984, Nr. 4* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 184–87.

²⁸ Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Opera* (Paris: G. Morel, 1562). On Morel, see now Marie Barral-Baron and Judit Kecskeméti, eds., *Médecins des textes, médecins des âmes: Adrien Turnèbe & Guillaume Morel : les préfaces de deux imprimeurs érudits* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

²⁹ Morel only made this survey after printing the main text. See the appendix 'Guil. Morelius Lectori.' The list of manuscripts consulted is found on sig. h4v. Budé's copy is called 'B'; the older manuscript that formerly was kept in Saint-Denis (BNF MS Grec 437) is called 'M' after Henri de Mesmes, the new owner; the slightly later manuscript kept in Saint-Denis (BNF MS Grec 933) is called 'D' since it was still in the Abbey.

list highlighted the unusual readings proposed by Budé *sua manu*, which were frequently different from all other surveyed manuscripts.³⁰ While Budé's corrections testified to his linguistic genius, they were of little use in Morel's search for viable variants. As modern textual critics have noted, Calliergis's workshop in Padua had copied a late and somewhat corrupt text.³¹ We can surmise that Morel came to the conclusion that Budé's corrective genius did not make up for the bad quality of his text. Not yet halfway into the list, Morel essentially stopped including references to Budé's text and his corrections. In conclusion, Budé's corrections did not play any important role in the history of the text. This indicates that Budé's copy of Pliny is not necessarily a representative example of the humanist's working methods.

If Budé's text was mediocre, the manuscript had one great advantage: it included the scholia attributed to Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580–662). The scholia included in his manuscript combined annotations by John of Scythopolis from the early sixth century with the later and generally shorter additions by Maximus.³² This commentary guided the reader through the text, regularly clarifying obscure words. It also highlighted theological points, focusing especially on Christology, a matter of urgent importance in the sixth century. Moreover, it provided some references to Scripture and Church fathers, as well as Greek philosophy. Most importantly, it defended the authenticity and orthodoxy of ps.-Dionysius.³³

Budé paid close attention to the scholia. This is apparent from the fact that a majority of his non-correcting annotations in the manuscript are attached to the scholia rather than the primary text. When Budé filled the margins with key words, these were generally copied near the line where they occur in a scholium. In this way, Budé could easily find the scholiast's explication of a word in ps.-Dionysius along with synonyms or associated concepts. An illustrative example is *The Mystical Theology* 1.1, where ps.-Dionysius used two words for 'the uninitiated': ἀμύητος and ἀμύστος. On the same page, the scholiast clarified the relationship between the two terms, pointing out that the latter were 'less informed' than the former. Budé

³⁰ See for example Morel's notes to pages 2, 8, and, especially, 10 of the edition: 'Praeponit Budaeus... quod nulli codices alii aut interpretes habent.' See also notes to pages 31, 61, 85, 102, and 151.

³¹ On Budé's manuscript (=Pl), see ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Corpus Dionysiicum. De Divinis Nominibus.*, ed. Beate Regina Suchla (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), 96.

³² The scholia in BNF Grec 447 belongs to the group that Suchla calls Zweig II 1. This group combines scholia of John of Scythopolis, Maximus the Confessor, and Andreas von Kreta. See Beate Regina Suchla, *Ioannis Scythopolitani prologus et scholia in Dionysii Areopagiteae librum 'De divinis nominibus' cum additamentis interpretum aliorum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).

³³ On the scholia, see Beate Regina Suchla, *Die sogenannten Maximus-Scholien des Corpus Dionysiicum Areopagiticum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); Suchla, 'Die Überlieferung des Prologs des Johannes von Skythopolis zum griechischen Corpus Dionysiicum Areopagiticum: ein weiterer Beitrag zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des CD'; Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

copied these two words in the margin of the page next to the scholium. To give another example, he added a keyword to a linguistic comment about accents in the word πολύλογος. The scholiasts' attention to language made it a useful resource for Budé. The availability of scholia could help explain why the writings of ps.-Dionysius were so central to his sections on Christian words in the Greek dictionary that he later compiled, to which we shall return below.³⁴

Besides passages of linguistic interest, Budé also marked out passages such as the scholiast's distinction between 'proper' being, equivocal being, and that which is 'beyond being.'³⁵ This points to a more general interest in how the scholiast interpreted ps.-Dionysius. Thus *The Mystical Theology* is read through the perspective offered by the commentary. Budé directs us to scholia to understand ps.-Dionysius's statement that the mysteries of God's Word are 'simple and absolute' (ἀπλὰ καὶ ἀπόλυτα).³⁶ He also marks out the scholiast's explanation of what is meant by the 'affirmation on which everything else depends.'³⁷ This suggests that Budé's use of scholia went beyond gleaning information about words used by ps.-Dionysius: he relied on their interpretations. This matches Grafton's finding that Budé studied Homer with an eye to ancient and Late Antique interpreters; Budé's own allegorical readings of Homer were inspired by the scholiasts.³⁸ Similarly, Budé's reading of ps.-Dionysius was guided by John of Scythopolis and Maximus.

The scholia are especially important for explaining why Budé accepted the Dionysian corpus as an authentic product of apostolic theology, a view that motivates his use of ps.-Dionysius in the *Commentarii linguae graecae* (1529). Budé was not committed to identifying Dionysius with 'the Areopagite' in Acts 17. As a writer on ancient legal practice, he might well have been convinced by Lorenzo Valla's argument that this epithet would have belonged to a member of a legal council, not a philosopher.³⁹ Budé was nevertheless convinced that the Dionysian corpus originated in an apostolic context. In reading the Dionysian corpus, Budé paid close attention to the defence drawn up by John of Scythopolis, which focused on casual references to characters from the apostolic era. Most important were ps.-Dionysius's references

³⁴ Sanchi, *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé*, 87.

³⁵ BNF MS Grec 447, 214r.

³⁶ BNF MS Grec 447, 213r.

³⁷ BNF MS Grec 447, 216r.

³⁸ Anthony Grafton, 'Renaissance Readers of Homer's Ancient Readers', in *Homer's Ancient Readers: The Hermeneutics of Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes*, ed. Robert Lamberton and John J. Keaney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 149–72.

³⁹ John Monfasani, 'Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in Mid-Quattrocento Rome', in *Supplementum Festivum: Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. John Monfasani, James Hankins, and Frederick Purnell Jr. (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1987), 190–92.

to his teachers, Paul and Hierotheos. But the author also mentioned obscure characters like Justus, one of the contenders to replace Judas Iscariot as an apostle according to Acts 1:23, and cited Justus's views on divine peace. The scholiast argued that this citation confirmed the antiquity of the author and his contemporaneity with the Apostles.⁴⁰ Budé added a note in the margin and a pointing hand.⁴¹ One scholium that especially delighted Budé explained that a grammatical anomaly in the text was an Atticism befitting an Athenian author. Budé added not one but two pointing hands in the margin.⁴²

On the empty first page of the manuscript, Budé added further arguments for the antiquity of the Dionysian corpus. He listed recent authorities who cited ps.-Dionysius: John of Damascus (ca. 676–749), Arethus of Caesarea (ca. 860–939), and Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472).⁴³ Beyond these late references, Budé also sought hidden allusions to ps.-Dionysius in earlier Fathers. He found one in Gregory of Nazianzus's *Discourse on the nativity* and another in Jerome's *Against Jovinianus*, which presented an angelic hierarchy reminiscent of ps.-Dionysius.⁴⁴ As we shall see, Budé's attempt to read ps.-Dionysius in patristic context was much developed in the *Commentarii*.

The patristic intertexts that he identified came to play a role in the scholarly defence of the authenticity of ps.-Dionysius. Guillaume Morel's aforementioned edition from 1562 did not only cite Budé's corrections to the text but also added his patristic *testimonia* to the evidence in support of authenticity. In printing these *testimonia*, Morel made very clear that his source was Budé – thus indirectly adding Budé himself to the list of witnesses to the authority of ps.-Dionysius. Budé had not produced any edition, commentary, or even a longer work explicitly devoted to ps.-Dionysius. But the survival of his annotated manuscript allowed Morel to fashion Budé as a champion for ps.-Dionysius.

⁴⁰ Suchla, *Ioannis Scythopolitani prologus et scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae librum 'De divinis nominibus' cum additamentis interpretum aliorum*, 427. On the context of John's argument, see Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus*, 99–106.

⁴¹ BNF MS Grec 447, fol. 206r.

⁴² See also Sanchi, *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé*, 141, n. 10.

⁴³ On these references, see Sanchi, 139–42.

⁴⁴ Cf. Monfasani, 'Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in Mid-Quattrocento Rome', 192, n. 16.

2. Theological words in *Commentarii linguae graecae* (1529)

A remarkably large part of Budé's *Commentarii linguae graecae* (hereafter '*Commentarii*') from 1529 deals with Greek theology.⁴⁵ The *Commentarii* is a dictionary of Greek words, which also includes extensive examples of Greek prose and digressions on topics that Budé felt would be useful for contemporaries learning Greek. In sections on theological vocabulary, Budé cited concepts central to the Dionysian corpus. Moreover, he constructed a narrative about the development of Christian discourse in which ps.-Dionysius played a pivotal role. For Budé, he was not only the beginning of the patristic tradition; ps.-Dionysius was also the inheritor of words once used by the Greek *prisci theologi*. As such, he was at the heart of a crucial historical transformation with which Budé grappled.

Previous scholars have noted the references to ps.-Dionysius in the *Commentarii* but not attended to their full significance. Josef Bohatec's study of Budé's theology from 1950 employs the dictionary as an index to Budé's later monograph of religious philosophy, *De transitu*.⁴⁶ More recently, Luigi-Alberto Sanchi illuminated the encyclopaedic reach of the dictionary, including its theological sections. Sanchi observes that Budé's knowledge of theology went well beyond lexicography, since he cited a variety of Greek patristic authors on both linguistic and doctrinal points. He notes that ps.-Dionysius held a special status. Despite not being the most frequently cited patristic author – that honour goes to Gregory of Nazianus – ps.-Dionysius plays the role of an *auteur de référence*, who is cited at critical junctures.⁴⁷ In this subchapter, I aim to explain the centrality of ps.-Dionysius in the *Commentarii* by exploring Budé's ideas about the Greek theological tradition.

2.a The first theologian

On the first page in Budé's copy of the Dionysian corpus, he copied two passages about ps.-Dionysius from Bessarion's *In Calumniatorem Platonis*.⁴⁸ As I will show in this subchapter,

⁴⁵ The first edition was printed by Josse Bade in 1529. I follow the standard in scholarship on Budé by citing the second, expanded edition that was published after Budé's death: *Commentarii linguae graecae* (Basel: N. Episcopus, 1556). Budé did not revise the theological sections discussed in this section.

⁴⁶ Josef Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin: Studien zur Gedankenwelt des französischen Frühhumanismus* (Graz: H. Böhlau Nachf., 1950), 33, 36 et passim.

⁴⁷ Sanchi, *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé*, 87–92.

⁴⁸ On the history of this text, see John Monfasani, 'A Tale of Two Books: Bessarion's *In Calumniatorem Platonis* and George of Trebizond's *Comparatio Philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis*', *Renaissance Studies* 22, no. 1 (February 2008): 1–15. Budé referred to Bessarion's *In Calumniatorem Platonis* in the *Commentarii*, see cols. 240, 1367, 1552–53. Budé had access to multiple versions of this text, for he cites it in both Greek and Latin, and

the two passages captured well the way that Budé dealt with early Christian theology in the *Commentarii*. One of the two notes dealt with the question of ps.-Dionysius's authenticity and its implications. As we saw in the previous section, Budé accepted the apostolic dating of ps.-Dionysius. Moreover, he took at face value ps.-Dionysius's claims to have studied with Paul and Hierotheos. This meant that Budé could doubt the attribution of the Dionysian corpus to the Areopagite, while still maintaining that it was written by a student of Paul. The first quote from Bessarion alludes to an important consequence, namely that the Dionysian corpus should therefore be considered the earliest work of Christian theology after Paul:

See also [Bessarion's *In Calumniatorem Platonis*] IV. 3: For that most venerable man (he says) Dionysius the Areopagite, who was the first and greatest author of Christian theology, had no theological writers before him besides Paul the Apostle and Hierotheos the bishop of Athens, whom he employed as his teachers.⁴⁹

Budé's appreciation for this idea is perfectly illustrated by his dictionary entry on illumination (ἐλλάμπερος). Illumination, according to Budé, was an experience awarded to few people. Among the few were the Apostles and their followers, 'like the great Dionysius, who preferred the name of Dionysius the Areopagite. Whether he was the Areopagite or someone else, he had no little authority, for he was a disciple of Paul the Apostle together with Hierotheos.'⁵⁰ Beyond taking ps.-Dionysius's remarks about his teachers at face value, Budé also trusted that ps.-Dionysius based his comments on illumination in *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Divine Names* on personal experience. In next step, Budé suggested that ps.-Dionysius was useful for interpreting later theological authors. The concrete background of ps.-Dionysius's theology of illumination helped explain the way that other patristic authors used metaphors of light and splendour. In particular, Budé pointed to an account of angels by Gregory of Nazianzus that was reminiscent of ps.-Dionysius's account of illumination:

using the title of Bessarion's own Latin translation from 1466 as well as the title of the version printed by Aldus Manutius in 1503. See Sanchi, *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé*, 242.

⁴⁹ BNF MS Grec 447, note on unpaginated fly leaf: 'Vide etiam libro 4° cap. 3°: nam vir sanctissimus (inquit) Dionysius Areopagita, quem primus et summus christianae theologiae auctor fuit nemine[m] ante se habuit divinarum rerum [scri]ptorem, praeter ap[ostul]um paulum et hierotheum athenarum pontificum, quibus ipse praecceptoribus usus est.'

⁵⁰ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1233: 'ut magnus Dionysius, qui Dionysii Areopagitae nomen praeferunt: sive Areopagita fuit, sive alius non minoris auctoritatis, cum discipulus fuerit Pauli Apostoli una cum Hierotheo.'

Through these words [from ps.-Dionysius], moreover, we understand the metaphors (*verba translata*) of Gregory of Nazianzus in *Oration 28*, where he is speaking about the superior [angelic] ranks: ‘... He makes them shine with purest brilliance (ἐλλαμπομένας) or each with a different brilliance (ἕλλαμψιν) to match his nature’s rank. So strongly do they bear the shape and imprint of God’s beauty, that they become in their turn lights (φώτα), able to give light (φωτίζειν) to others...’ This and similar passages of the same author give credibility to the title of the aforementioned books.⁵¹

Budé claimed that Gregory’s metaphor of light spreading through the angelic ranks supported the authenticity of the Dionysian corpus. This resembles a classic argument about influence: by showing that a fourth-century writer appeared to be influenced by ps.-Dionysius, Budé strengthened the case that the latter was an early and authoritative Father. However, Budé’s argument here is subtly different. Since Gregory’s metaphors can only be properly understood with reference to ps.-Dionysius’s account of epistemic transfer in the angelic ranks, the latter must precede the former. The argument thus appeals to the intuition that metaphors must ultimately refer back to concrete, personal experience – in this case the illumination of Paul and his student.

The question of how concepts became part of patristic terminology is central to the *Commentarii*. As in the case of ἐλλάμπερος, Budé examined how other concepts became *verba theologica*. In ps.-Dionysius’s *Celestial Hierarchy*, ἀνακάθαρσις (clearing away) was used as a theological word, meaning the ‘explanation of the allegorical sense and hidden anagogy.’⁵² After citing Plutarch on the meaning of ἀνάτᾱσις in a military context, Budé added that ἀνατείνεσθαι was ‘also a theological word, meaning the same thing as ἀνάγεσθαι [being led up].’⁵³ A third example that illustrates this pursuit well is the entry for ὑποτυπῶω, meaning ‘to outline’ or ‘sketch.’⁵⁴ In that entry, Budé first discussed Classical usage, including how Aristotle and Galen used the word. He next provided Latin equivalents from Cicero and

⁵¹ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1234: ‘Ex his autem verbis illa verba translata intelligimus Gregorii περὶ θεολογίας [*Oration 28*], de ordinibus illis supernis loquentis: [...]. Qui locus & alii eiusdem auctoris fidem magnam astruunt titulo librorum supradictorum.’ The English translation of the fragment of Gregory of Nazianzus is here cited from Gregory of Nazianzus, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, trans. Frederick W. Norris and Lionel Wickham (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 244. The humanist reception of Gregory of Nazianzus in France is discussed in Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘Gregory Nazianzen in the Service of Humanist Social Reform’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1967): 455–64.

⁵² Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1170–1171: ‘ἀνακάθαρσις verbum theologicum, allegoriei sensus & reconditi anagogicam explicationem significat’

⁵³ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 972.50: ‘ἀνατείνεσθαι etiam verbum theologicum est, idem significans quod ἀνάγεσθαι.’

⁵⁴ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1052.49.

Quintilian. Following this exposé, he turned to consider the Christian concept of typological interpretation.⁵⁵ He especially reflected on ps.-Dionysius's lost (or fictitious) treatise *On Theological Representation* (Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις). According to ps.-Dionysius, this was a treatise on affirmative theology, focused on the Trinity and the Incarnation, that preceded his treatise on negative theology, *The Divine Names*.⁵⁶ Budé remarked that ps.-Dionysius was not the first to use the concept of ὑποτύπωσιν in a theological context; In the Second Letter to Timothy, Paul encouraged his correspondent to keep the apostle's instruction as 'the pattern (ὑποτύπωσιν) of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.'⁵⁷

Information about the different meanings of words in the pagan and Christian contexts was clearly useful to students of Greek, who were the primary audience of the *Commentarii*.⁵⁸ But what is interesting about Budé's treatment of these meanings is his attention to the historical moment of transition. Although he could not always determine what author introduced the theological meaning, this perspective is present in other entries besides ὑποτυπώω. Consider, for example, Budé's account of the Christian adoption of the concept ἀνάγω, in the sense of 'to lift or raise up, to bring up high (εἰς ὕψος ἄγω).'⁵⁹ Budé explained that this term was used in Greek religious language before Christianity. He cited Isocrates, who used the term to describe the way that Heracles was 'exalted by his father to the rank of a god.'⁶⁰ He next cited passages on anagogy in Gregory of Nazianzus, Arethes, and ps.-Dionysius. Citing a *locus classicus* on anagogy, Budé translates it into Latin: 'to the contemplation of divine matters into the sublime of elevated things, & those who draw out the highest meaning of scripture.'⁶¹ Budé added: 'they call mystical things ἀναγωγικά, for the orthodox theologians made the word theirs to use.'⁶²

Budé did not apply a single model for explaining the relationship between pagan and Christian words. On the one hand, it was sometimes important to make strong distinctions. This is evident from Budé's entry about θεουργία – a word frequently used by ps.-Dionysius but

⁵⁵ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1054.2.

⁵⁶ This is according to ps.-Dionysius's *The Mystical theology* 1032D–1033A where the treatise is summarised. It is also mentioned in *The Divine Names*, 585B and 593B. There is no evidence that this treatise ever existed.

⁵⁷ 2 Tim 1:13. Cited from New international version.

⁵⁸ See Budé's Greek postface to the *Commentarii*. French translation in Sanchi, *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé* Annex VII.

⁵⁹ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 521: 'Ἀνάγω tollo, subveho, εἰς ὕψος ἄγω.'

⁶⁰ Isocrates, *To Philip*, 134. English translation from Isocrates, *To Demonius. To Nicocles. Nicocles or the Cyprians. Panegyricus. To Philip. Archidamus*, trans. George Norlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928), 325.

⁶¹ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 521: 'Greg. [...] id est ad rerum divinarum contemplationem in sublime erectorum: & qui sensus altissimos e scriptura eliciunt.'

⁶² Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 521: 'Unde Ἀναγωγικά dicuntur mystica. hoc enim verbum theologi orthodoxi suum usu fecerunt.'

equally prominent in Neoplatonist writings. Augustine had called Porphyry’s notion of theurgy ‘a kind of magic.’ Budé therefore hastened to clarify that ps.-Dionysius used the concept in a different way than the Platonist.⁶³ On the other hand, Budé did not omit to emphasise continuity in other cases. One range of entries that emphasise conceptual continuity to a surprising degree are those that relate to human experiences of the divine: inspiration, possession, and ecstasy (θεοφορέω, κατάσχεσις, ἔνθεος, ἔκστασις). Here, Budé presented citations from ps.-Dionysius alongside pagan authors such as Pausanias, Arrian, and Plutarch, Themistius, and Aristotle without differentiating pagan and Christian usage.⁶⁴

The notion of continuity was fully spelled out in one entry on expressions relating to revelation. Budé remarked that words like ἐκφαντορικός (revealing) and ὑποφύτης (interpreter) were ‘typical of ancient theology, as are many other words that the Greek theologians got from him [scil. ps.-Dionysius], I believe, or from his contemporaries.’⁶⁵ To put it differently, Budé thought that ps.-Dionysius and other theologians of the apostolic era imported pagan religious words into Greek patristic discourse.

2.b The legacy of ancient theology

The concept of ancient theology was of great fascination to French Renaissance thinkers. As D. P. Walker showed, it exercised authors like Lefèvre and Symphorien Champier. In his survey, however, Walker failed to appreciate Budé’s engagement with this topic. The reading of *De transitu Hellenismi ad Christianismum* (1535) convinced him that Budé was a firm opponent to *prisca theologia*. However, the *Commentarii* paint a different picture.⁶⁶ While one could describe Budé’s approach as ‘cautious’ – an attitude that according to Walker was typical of treatments of *prisca theologia* in France – he embraced an apologetic approach to ancient theology inspired by Eusebius and Bessarion. Unlike the neoplatonist branch of Pletho and Ficino, Budé did not engage with the Orphic fragments and hymns, the Hermetic corpus, or

⁶³ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1143: ‘sed in laudabilem partem a Dionysio hoc vocabulum acceptum est.’ On ps.-Dionysius’s concept of theurgy, see Sarah Klitenic Wear and John M. Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 99–115; Gregory Shaw, ‘Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, no. 4 (1999): 573–99.

⁶⁴ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), cols. 662, 1216–17.

⁶⁵ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 262: ‘Sed superiora vocabula peculiaria sunt theologiae priscae, ut alia multa, quae theologi Graeci ab eo [scil. Dionysius] accepisse mihi videntur, aut ab aequalibus eius.’

⁶⁶ Walker, ‘The Prisca Theologia in France’.

Neoplatonist philosophy.⁶⁷ Instead, Budé's approach to ancient theology focused primarily on the argument that Plato prefigured Christianity in certain ways.⁶⁸

In the great Renaissance debate on the relative excellence of Plato and Aristotle, Budé came down firmly on the side of those who considered Aristotle to be a good scientist but misguided in his approach to 'eternal and celestial' matters.⁶⁹ In the *Commentarii*, we find extensive digressions about the ways in which Plato's ideas harmonise with Christianity. Among others, Budé discussed Plato's Sixth Letter, the idea of Plato's hidden doctrine related to his Seventh Letter, and a sentence on λόγος in *Epinomis* that possibly prefigured Christ.⁷⁰

The second note from Bessarion's *In Calumniatorem Platonis* that Budé wrote in his copy of the Dionysian corpus invoked ps.-Dionysius as a testimony to the agreement between Plato's *Parmenides* and Christian ideas about God:

Bessarion *Defense of Plato*, I. 7: What is more eminent than *Parmenides*? What has more wisdom? What is more divine? What speaks more clearly and fully about the highest simplicity and unity of the first being or, rather, God beyond all beings. And the prince of Christian theology, Dionysius the Areopagite, used not only its ideas but the very words in all of his writings.⁷¹

In the *Commentarii*, Budé lifted Bessarion's apologetic use of ps.-Dionysius into a wider historical context. Bessarion had invoked ps.-Dionysius as a testimony to the harmony of Plato's ideas with Christianity. Budé elaborated on this point, and in his typical fashion he focused on finding concrete evidence for how ps.-Dionysius had recycled words from ancient philosophers and theologians, as we have already seen above. He was especially attentive to places where ps.-Dionysius actively performed cultural mediation. In one instance cited in the

⁶⁷ Budé does not discuss later platonists in the *Commentarii*. However, it bears mentioning that the words relating to revelation that prompted Budé's comment about ancient theology occur in Neoplatonic writings. Εκφαντορικός, in particular, is an unusual form that occurs prominently in Proclus. Cf. LSJ, s.v. ἐκφαντορικός; revealing, τῆς ἀληθείας *Procl. Theol. Plat.* 6.12; and s. v. ὑποφήτης; suggester, interpreter, expounder, esp. of the divine will or judgement, e.g. priest who declares an oracle, [...] cf. Porph. ap. *Iamb. Myst.* 5.1. Budé elsewhere rejected Plotinus and Proclus for failing to endorse Christianity, see Marie-Madeleine de La Garanderie, *Christianisme et lettres profanes: Essai sur l'humanisme français (1515–1535) et sur la pensée de Guillaume Budé*, second revised edition (Paris: H. Champion, 1995), 331.

⁶⁸ Walker, 'The Prisca Theologia in France'. Walker emphasised Bessarion's influence on Symphorien Champier.

⁶⁹ For Budé's assessment of Aristotle, see his 1520 letter to Pierre Lamy in Budé, *Les lettres greques*, 126.

⁷⁰ All of these texts are of dubious authorship.

⁷¹ BNF Grec 447, Budé's writing on unpaginated fly leaf: 'Bessarion libro primo capite 7^o defensionis Platonis. Quid toto *Parmenide* sublimius? quid sapientius? quid divinius? quid de summa simplicitate, unitateque primi entis, vel potius supra omnia entia dei plenius atque explicatius? et cuius non modo sententiis [ut] verum etiam verbis ipsis, princeps christianae theologiae, Dionysius Areopagita in suis ~~libris~~ omnibus operibus usus est.'

Commentarii, ps.-Dionysius explained that Platonic ideas have a theological counterpart: Exemplars (παραδείγματα), understood as ‘determining principles,’ are equivalent to the predetermination that God’s will imposes on created beings (προορισμός and ἀφορισμός).⁷² Ps.-Dionysius’s role as a cultural mediator made him useful for an exploration of pagan and Christian Greek words.

The wider implications of ps.-Dionysius’s use of Plato’s words are clearly stated in an entry about the unusual expression διαπορθμεῖον. Budé said that ps.-Dionysius’s use of this word would have surprised him unless Plato had used a similar term in the *Symposium*.⁷³

Just like Plato said that a demon is like a messenger (διαπορθμεῖον) between gods and human beings and an interpreter of entreaties and of mysteries, so Dionysius called the pope a διὰ πορθμευτήν, as one could say that he prepares, transmits, carries, and transports human prayers to God, and he brings divine matters to human beings, and through him it becomes known above and below.⁷⁴

In this entry, Budé highlighted both conceptual and verbal echoes of Plato in the Dionysian corpus. But beyond saying something about Plato in particular, Budé built a more general case for the usefulness of ancient culture for Christians:

There are many expressions of this kind in this author [*scil.* Dionysius], which are unclear to us since they were fetched from the most hidden places of antiquity, almost like philosophies that were imported from Egypt.⁷⁵

Budé’s comment recalls a *locus classicus* for the Christian use of pagan materials. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine compared the use of Platonist ideas in Christian theology with the rightful use that Israelites made of riches that they stole from Egypt during their flight.⁷⁶

⁷² Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 989: ‘Αφορίζειν & προορίζειν verba sunt theologica. Dionysius περὶ τοῦ ὄντος, de ideis loquens: [cit. from *The Divine Names* 824C.] Id est in naturam substantiarum designavit & produxit.’ In *De transitu*, 171 (ii.44), Budé refers to ps.-Dionysius’s use of προορισμούς in his discussion of free will.

⁷³ Plato, *Lysis. Symposium. Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925), 202E.

⁷⁴ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 321: ‘Ut enim Plato daemonem ait esse internuncium inter deos & homines, & interpretem voluntatum & arcanorum: sic Dionysius διὰ πορθμευτήν pontificem facit, quasi conciliatorem, transmissorem portitoremque & transportatorem humanarum precationum ad Deum, divinarumque rerum ad homines deportatorem, per quem commemoratus ultro citroque datur.’

⁷⁵ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 321: ‘Multae sunt huiusmodi voces apud eum auctorem, nobis ob id obscurae, quod ex abstrusis antiquitatis locis repetitae sunt, quasique ex Aegypto philosophiae importatae.’

⁷⁶ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), bk. II.40.

Budé compactly echoed the idea that Christian authors were right to use pre-existing terminology if it is in harmony with Christian faith: Indeed, if one follows Augustine on this point, the theologians will make better use of these words than the philosophers ever did.⁷⁷ Budé added a second layer to this idea: occasionally the writings of early theologians are obscure to us since they use words from lesser-known aspects of Antiquity. The implication is that study of ancient literature – including any ‘hidden places’ – is necessary in order to fully grasp the Greek patristic tradition.

2.c Defending eloquence

Budé’s comments about ps.-Dionysius in the *Commentarii* betray his ongoing interrogation of to what extent Christian authors should draw on pagan literature. As La Garanderie has shown, the relationship between sacred and profane literature occupied Budé throughout many of his writings.⁷⁸ However, it is only in the *Commentarii* that he deals in detail with the question of how Greek theology motivates the study of ancient culture. We have already looked at his argument that understanding an author like ps.-Dionysius is facilitated by familiarity with ‘hidden places of antiquity.’ Next, we shall turn to Budé’s arguments that humanists should avoid overstating the gap between pagan and Christian culture and, last, his ideas about what Latin theologians have to learn from Greek patristic writings. As we shall see, Budé’s comments on these topics reacted to contemporary debates about the value of humanistic study and how theological eloquence is best achieved.

Bessarion’s defence of Plato had not put an end to the idea that Plato inspired heretical views. One of Budé’s theological digressions in the *Commentarii* dealt with the criticism against Plato in *A Cure for Pagan Maladies* by Theodoret of Cyrus (393–457 CE). In 1519, a recent Latin translation by Zanobi Acciaiuoli had been printed in Paris, with the translator presenting the work as an antidote against the Platonist revival. Zenobi’s preface emphasised the risks posed by the wide availability of Plato’s writings in print; the translator even claimed that even the architect of much of the Platonist movement, Marsilio Ficino, had admitted to the danger of falling into heresy by reading Plato.⁷⁹ According to Zenobi, Ficino had often told him that the theologian Anthony of Florence (1389–1459) had saved a young Ficino by

⁷⁷ Budé returns to this idea in *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1430: ‘Res vero ipsae sanctae & sententiae consecratae, exornari ab iis debent, quibus Aegyptiorum opibus potiri contingit...’

⁷⁸ Budé returned to the theme of the relationship between the profane and the sacred in writings like *De asse* (1515), *De studio* (1532) and *De transitu* (1535). See La Garanderie, *Christianisme et lettres profanes*, 285–377.

⁷⁹ Theodoret of Cyrus, *De curatione Graecarum affectionum*, tr. Zenobius Acciaolus (Paris: H. Estienne, 1519).

supplying the necessary antidote: Thomas of Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles*.⁸⁰ Theodoret could, Zenobi suggested, provide a similar antidote.⁸¹

Budé found Theodoret's critique against Plato to be misguided for several reasons. In the digression, he criticised Theodoret's interpretation of Plato's Sixth Letter as being wrong and overly uncharitable. In this letter, (ps.-)Plato asked his correspondent to swear by 'the God that is Ruler of all that is and that shall be, and swear by the Lord and Father of the Ruler and Cause, Whom, if we are real philosophers, we shall all know truly so far as men well-fortuned can.'⁸² For many readers, this passage seemed to reveal that Plato had some knowledge of monotheism. Eusebius used as an example of how Plato drew on the Hebrew notion of God.⁸³ By contrast, Theodoret disputed that the passage was monotheistic. He argued that Plato's wording in fact implied that there were several current and future Gods.⁸⁴ Siding with Eusebius, Budé set out to show that Theodoret's interpretation relied on a misunderstanding of the Greek text of the letter.⁸⁵

Beyond disputing Theodoret's interpretation, Budé highlighted the danger that such denunciations posed to the cause of humanism. By denying that anything in Plato could be of use to a Christian – even the clearly monotheistic Sixth Letter – Theodoret seemed to deny the possible contributions of pagan literature to orthodoxy, piety, and the investigation of truth.⁸⁶ Moreover, Theodoret (and Zenobi) played into the hands of those who opposed the study of philosophy:

Thus it is our own fault that knowledge of early literature is generally considered to distract us [from orthodoxy] if we think that the aim of this activity is not shared with

⁸⁰ The veracity of this account has been debated, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1956), 171, 200–212.

⁸¹ In spite of its title, *De curatione* belongs to the apologetic tradition is certainly not a one-sided critique of Greek philosophy. Nevertheless, certain sections contain harsh criticism of Plato. See Theodoret of Cyrus, *A Cure for Pagan Maladies*, trans. Thomas Halton (New York: Newman Press, 2013), 196–202, 236–39, 262–63.

⁸² Translation cited from Plato, *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929), 323D.

⁸³ Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, trans. Edwin Hamilton Gifford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), bk. XI, 16. On Eusebius's understanding of the relationship between Greek culture and Christianity, see Timothy David Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 178–86.

⁸⁴ Theodoret, *De Graecarum affectionum curatione: Heilung der griechischen Krankheiten*, trans. Clemens Scholten (Leiden: Brill, 2015), bk. II, 70–75.

⁸⁵ Budé further discussed this letter in the *Commentarii* (1556), col. 243.

⁸⁶ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1369: 'Qua sententia ut in prisca theologia nihil dici ὀρθοδοξό τερον [sic] potuit de Patre deque Filio omnium productore & creatore: nec illicium germanae beaticisque philosophiae ab externa philosophia – quae quidem Servatoris adventum praecesserit – referri potest ad verae philosophiae studium aut suavius aut magis admirandum ab hominibus salutaris doctrinae studiosis. Cum alioqui ab eodem auctore seligi possint ad piarum virtutum cultum amoremque alendum: nec vero ad veritatis investigationem consecrandam, ab ulli antiquorum cieri & informari perinde animus potest, ut mea est opinio.'

that divine philosopher and with those philosophers of our own party who once taught that the encyclopaedia serves orthodoxy.⁸⁷

This passage makes clear that Budé considered the question of, to use his term, a shared goal (*scopus idem*) to be central to the public perception of humanist studies. Instead of producing strained interpretations of Plato to denounce his works as un-Christian at every point, Budé recommended siding with Christian authors (*philosophi nostrarum partium*) who thought that philosophy had something to contribute to theology and piety.⁸⁸

Budé's *Commentarii* clearly reaches in this direction. If early Greek theologians drew on Plato (as the case of ps.-Dionysius suggested), this implied that there were conceptual affinities between philosophy and religion, and that the former could aid the understanding of the latter. In another digression, he argued that this continuity explained the superior eloquence of Greek theology. According to Budé, piety and elegance became united when 'Greek philosophy transformed itself into faith in God and withdrew from the semblances of Gods.'⁸⁹ In this matter, Budé again sided with ps.-Dionysius, who had argued that Christianity was the logical conclusion of Greek philosophy. Philosophy understood as 'the knowledge of beings' was already, ps.-Dionysius had argued, what Paul called the 'wisdom of God' (cf. 1 Cor 1:21–24, 2:7).⁹⁰

Budé's idea about the continuity between philosophy and theology formed the basis of another intervention in humanist debates. Budé argued that early Greek theology helped indicate the solution to one of the great conundrums of Christian humanism: how Latin eloquence and religion could be optimally combined. In the recently published *Ciceronianus* (1528), Erasmus had suggested that Christians should seek to write Latin as Cicero would have done if he was embedded in sixteenth-century Christian culture and nourished on Scripture.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), 1369–1370: 'Unde tamen priscarum literarum eruditio avocare & avertere vulgo existimatur, culpa utique nostra, qui scopum huius instituti non eundem fortasse cum divino illo philosopho intuemur, atque etiam cum iis nostrarum partium philosophis, qui encyclopaediam olim servire orthodoxiae docuerunt.'

⁸⁸ Budé does not specify what authors he means. Eusebius appears to be the primary reference, since Budé sides with him against Theodoret in this digression.

⁸⁹ Budé, *Commentarii* (1556), col. 1429: 'Cur haec aetas tam male atque ingrate de literarum bonarum nomine mereri atque existimatione pergit? Cur [haec aetas]... Latinam linguam ... literarumque elegantiam ea accessione cohonestare, augustioremque reddere negligit & desperat? ut nullo iam dissidio versari eloquentia cum pietate possit, cum philosophia olim Graeca in fidem se Dei contulerit, a deorumque simulachris iamdiu desciverit?'

⁹⁰ See the seventh letter of ps.-Dionysius, which claims that philosophy, understood as 'knowledge of beings' is identical with Paul's 'wisdom of God.' Budé marks the passage with the key word φιλοσοφία. See BNF MS Grec 447, fol. 220v.

⁹¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *The Ciceronian: A Dialogue on the Ideal Latin Style*, trans. Betty I. Knott (University of Toronto Press, 1986), esp. 392, 400, 447–448. On the ways that Budé's digression responds to *Ciceronianus*, see

The digression from which I have just cited presents Budé's reply. Budé did not share the view that Scripture ought to be the sole source of Christian eloquence. He insisted that the literary and philosophical tradition was the secret ingredient in Greek theology, and that Latin authors should emulate this model. By doing so, they would do for Latin theology what Cicero had done for Latin philosophy.⁹² Budé thus drew a different conclusion from Cicero's example than Erasmus had done: It was the process of translating Greek philosophers that allowed Cicero to greatly enrich the Latin vocabulary.⁹³

While Budé never officially claimed the title of Ciceronian translator of Greek theology, this concept casts a new light on the theological sections of the *Commentarii* as well as his later writings of religious philosophy. The *Commentarii* not only translated and exemplified Greek theological concepts; It also highlighted the continuity between the pagan and the Christian traditions – between philosophy and theology. Building on the observations of Bessarion, Budé paid attention to the Platonic echoes in ps.-Dionysius's writings. Key concepts in ps.-Dionysius's theology like illumination, revelation, and anagogical interpretation were thus shown to have similarities with this earlier tradition. In this way, ps.-Dionysius came to perfectly illustrate Budé's narrative about continuity in the transition from *prisca theologia* to patristic theology, or, to reference the title of his last book: the passage from Hellenism to Christianity.⁹⁴

Sanchi, *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé*, 108–9. Budé's views on Greek and Latin style are derived from Poliziano according to Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: Textual Criticism and Exegesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 72–73.

⁹² Budé, *Commentarii*, cols. 1428–29: 'Ut enim in ipsa philosophia multa verba Graecorum, sic sorites satis Latino semone tribus est. Quod si hoc in philosophia Ciceronis aetate licuit, cur hodie in theologia non licebit?'

⁹³ By contrast, Erasmus emphasises that Latin theologians already have access to suitable terminology imported from Hebrew and Greek, see Erasmus, *The Ciceronian*, 391 (english trans. by B. Knott): 'Some of these were words imported at the same time as the things they signified. A few were Hebrew in origin, many were Greek, since the philosophy of Christ first came to us from Palestine, Asia Minor, and Greece. I mean words like hosanna, amen, ecclesia, apostle, bishop, catholic, orthodox, heretic, schism, charisma, dogma, chrism, Christ, baptize, Paraclete, evangel, evangelize, evangelist, proselyte, catechumen, exorcism, Eucharist, symbol, anathema. Others of these word were brought into use by the early teachers of the Christian religion to facilitate discussion of such transcendent themes, words like *homousios* which we translate into Latin as *consubstantialis* "consubstantial," and *fides*, *gratia*, *Mediator* "faith, grace, Mediator," etcetera, which were either unknown to speakers of Latin before or used in a different sense.'

⁹⁴ Budé's notebooks might further illuminate the shift of thinking between *Commentarii* and *De transitu*, see Jean-François Maillard, 'De la philologie à la philosophie: Les carnets inédits de Guillaume Budé', in *Les origines du Collège de France (1500–1560)*, ed. Antonio Alvar, Marc Fumaroli, and Marianne Lion-Violet (Paris: Collège de France, 1998), 19–42.

3. De transitu Hellenismi ad Christianismum (1535)

Budé's fullest statement about theology and the religious conflicts in his time was *On the Passage from Hellenism to Christianity* [hereafter *De transitu*], which appeared in 1535.⁹⁵ The book is structured around the opposition between Hellenism – a word that Budé defines and redefines along the way – and Christianity. He did not emphasise the continuity between *prisca theologia* and patristic theology, as he did in *Commentarii*. Instead, Budé explored the difference between literary and sacred pursuits, the historical shift from pagan to Christian philosophy, and the personal transformation of those who decide to give up what Paul called the 'wisdom of the world' to pursue a life in accordance with the Gospels. He also responded to the writings of Protestant reformers, the *Affaire des Placards* (1534), contemporary religious publishing and other current topics. *De transitu* was, in short, Budé's statement about what it meant for him to be Christian in the sixteenth century.

One central theme in *De transitu* is early Christian faith and the ways that later generations should take the believers and martyrs of the first three hundred years of Christianity as an example. This historical dimension has been largely neglected by earlier scholarship, which has tended to focus on Budé's theological ideas, his defence of non-Christian literature, and the Parisian political context.⁹⁶ In part, this oversight is explained by the circumstance that Budé wrote other books that are more historical. His scholarly work on ancient law and economics are recognised as milestones in the development of critical historical method.⁹⁷ By contrast, *De transitu* is thoroughly essayistic, personal, and political. It does not aspire to be a history of the church or patristic theology. Yet, it is precisely for this reason that it provides excellent material for thinking about the polemical and moral use of history.⁹⁸ As we shall see, *De transitu* is a thoughtful early critique of the reformers' ideas about early Christianity and an expression of Budé's own long involvement with Greek theology.

⁹⁵ I have used the text edited by Penham and Garanderie and will reference the text using their division into paragraphs.

⁹⁶ For a theological analysis of *De transitu*, see Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*. On Budé's defence of pagan literature, see La Garanderie, *Christianisme et lettres profanes*.

⁹⁷ Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship*. For the religio-political context of *De transitu*, see the translators' introductions and notes in Budé, *Le passage de l'hellénisme au christianisme*. It would be possible and worthwhile to further reconstruct various debates in which Budé participated.

⁹⁸ On the uses of history in confessional polemic, see Pontien Polman, *L'élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVI^e siècle* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1932); Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation, 1378–1615* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Katherine Elliot Van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan, *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

3.a Apostolic faith

Budé recognised that the idea of a return to early Christianity was one of the principal attractions of Luther and other reformers.⁹⁹ Yet he found their claims preposterous – how could they believe that they were the first generation to have access to theological truths that were absolutely essential to salvation?¹⁰⁰ Budé was therefore committed to accounting for the superiority of apostolic religion, while maintaining that the foundation of that religion was still to be found within the contemporary church. His *De transitu* thereby illustrates how the apostolic revival that Lefèvre had earlier propagated could be integrated in a distinctly Catholic concept of reform.

In reflecting on early Christianity, Budé took the martyrs as his starting-point. In line with Eusebius's narrative in the *Ecclesiastical History*, Budé characterised the first three hundred years of Christianity as an age of widespread persecution. He deemed it a 'heroic age,' during which people were willing to give up their social standing, possessions, and even their lives for their faith.¹⁰¹ Budé's fascination with martyrs, however, lay not in their suffering and death. He emphasised that the lesson to be drawn from apostolic Christianity is not that one should seek martyrdom.¹⁰² Instead, one should emulate the underlying strength of faith that led the believers of the first centuries to live and die by the Gospels.

At the heart of *De transitu* is therefore the quest for the faith of martyrs – faith that, Budé concluded, must be absolute in certainty.¹⁰³ To define certain faith, Budé developed an analogy with mathematics, which, like religious belief, is concerned with something beyond the sensory realm. Geometers 'know' theorems and complex figures by deriving them from previously known axioms. In a similar way, Budé suggested, Christians needed to derive certain faith from

⁹⁹ Budé, *De transitu*, II: 52.

¹⁰⁰ Budé, *De transitu*, II: 72

¹⁰¹ Budé, *De transitu*, I: 27; I: 40 et passim. On persecution in the writings of Eusebius, see Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 148–63.

¹⁰² Budé, *De transitu*, III: 75. Budé did not discuss any contemporary martyrs. He was familiar with the fate of Louis de Berquin (d. 1529). However, in the aftermath of *Affaire des Placards*, there were good reasons not to publicly discuss protestant martyrs. Of course, Budé does not discuss 'false martyrs' who are willing to die for heretical beliefs – this is a major shortcoming of his theory of certain faith. It is unclear whether Budé was aware of More's imprisonment when writing *De transitu*. On martyrdom in the Reformation, see David El Kenz, *Les bûchers du roi: la culture protestante des martyrs (1523–1572)* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 1997); Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Frank Lestringant, *Lumière des martyrs: Essai sur le martyre au siècle des Réformes*, vol. 53 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004); Nikki Shepardson, *Burning Zeal: The Rhetoric of Martyrdom and the Protestant Community in Reformation France, 1520–1570* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2007).

¹⁰³ Budé, *De transitu*, I: 40: '... ita ipsis viderentur axiomata fide digna, ut praenotiones illae quae vocantur, iis qui mathematicis argumentationibus studere instituerunt... Probe enim beati illi animi intellexerunt, morte Christi filii Dei, elatum esse imperium et principatum praesulis Tartarei, quod quidem ad filios Dei pertinet, qui regnum Dei verbo et voluntate flagitant et expetunt.'

a single axiom.¹⁰⁴ This axiom upon which everything else rested was the death of Christ on the cross. This axiom was what Paul described when he claimed to know nothing ‘except Jesus Christ and him crucified’ (1 Cor. 1:22).¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, the axiom needed to be permanently present; otherwise, faith would vacillate. Here Budé switched to another analogy: to achieve apostolic faith, one must internalise the cross so as to create ‘not a sketch but an engraving’ in the mind.¹⁰⁶ By incising the cross on the mind, it was possible to instil a conviction, Budé wrote, which was even more certain than the geometers’ belief in their imaginary lines.¹⁰⁷ Only in this way could human beings become capable of truly living in accordance with the Gospel.

How had the early Christians achieved such remarkable interior transformation? Budé admitted that proximity was one factor: there were still direct witnesses who had seen and heard Christ and divinely inspired disciples who taught the people.¹⁰⁸ More specifically, however, he argued that the method for achieving certain faith was found in the writings of Paul, whom God had designated as his ‘chosen vessel’ according to Acts 8:15. After Paul’s rapture into the heavens, Budé explained, the apostle brought back divine wisdom: he ‘poured out oracles for us, and recounted divine plans – in so far as it was allowed for him to share them with the people.’¹⁰⁹ Budé called Paul ‘the Plato of theosophers’ and the ‘under-teacher of wisdom’ (*hypodidasculus sapientiae*).¹¹⁰ He cited John Chrysostom, who wrote that God spoke ‘secret marvels’ through the Apostle, which were ‘even greater than what he [God] had announced

¹⁰⁴ Budé, *De transitu*, I: 119; III: 8; III: 18–19. This explicit connection between the question of certain faith and scientific certainty lends credibility to Schreiner’s project of relating the sixteenth-century theological discussion of certainty with wider scientific and cultural debates. See Susan Elizabeth Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? : The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Bohatec calls Budé a ‘forerunner of Descartes’ which is too blunt, see Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 63.

¹⁰⁵ On the significance of this passage, see La Garanderie, Introduction, XLVIII; Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 53. Budé also cited Paul’s saying that Christ [was his] rock (see *De transitu* III:81–83) and that we must follow Christ in suffering (*De transitu* I: 37). Surprisingly, Budé does not discuss the classic formula about faith from Hebrews 11: 1.

¹⁰⁶ Budé, *De transitu*, III: 81. See also *ibid.* III: 104: ‘necesse est ... Christum ipsum crucifixum, divi Pauli delicias, in sinu circumferre.’

¹⁰⁷ In *De transitu*, II: 3, Budé emphasises that *theoria* does not examine ‘lineas imaginarias, non formas quadamtenus opinabiles ut geometria ... sed divinam ipsam maiestatem pro objecto et subiecto commentationis habet naturarum omnium certissimo...’

¹⁰⁸ Budé, *De transitu*, I: 27. It bears clarifying here that Budé considered grace to be a necessary condition for [certain] faith, cf. *De transitu* II: 11.

¹⁰⁹ Budé, *De transitu*, II: 22: ‘nobis oracula fudisse, divinaque consilia enarravisse, ea demum quae in vulgus promulgare ac prodere, quatenusque licuit.’

¹¹⁰ Budé, *De transitu*, II: 27; II: 46.

himself.¹¹¹ This celestial wisdom that Budé attributed to Paul was something he called *philothēoria*.¹¹²

Budé described *philothēoria* as a mystical discipline that could reconfigure the human mind by inscribing it with the cross. In practice, *philothēoria* is best understood to be a method of reading Scripture.¹¹³ Budé argued that most readers failed to approach the Bible in such a way that it had any lasting impact. This explained why they could read or hear lessons from the Gospel regularly without overcoming their preference for profane social norms.¹¹⁴ A different mode of reading is necessary, Budé argued, to ‘receive the word of God in the mind.’¹¹⁵ Two principles of this reading are recurrent in *De transitu*. The first is that one’s reading of Scripture should always be centred on Christ. Budé described the cross as the source of ‘the first and last principle of philosophy, and the height of the meditation that leads to *theoria*.’¹¹⁶ The second principle of this way of reading was that it must go beyond the literal (historical) sense of the text:

For when we only read and hear the story of the Gospel and the fabric of Christ’s work, we are immediately satisfied, and we do not exert ourselves to recollect what they mean, what is announced to us, or to what the things that were read and chanted apply.¹¹⁷

By contrast, the philothēorist made full use of all four senses of Scripture: history, allegory, tropology, and anagoge.¹¹⁸ The most important sense was the last one, which he regularly phrased as ‘what the Greeks call “anagoge” or ἀνάγσις.’¹¹⁹ In line with this concept, Budé described a process of ascent for someone starting to study Scripture. They needed to begin

¹¹¹ Latin as cited by Budé in *De transitu*, II: 1. On Chrysostom’s praise of Paul, see David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of His Theology and Preaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Budé’s view of Paul is similar to that of Lefèvre, cf. Backus, ‘Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples: A Humanist or a Reformist View of Paul and His Theology?’

¹¹² The term is rare but φιλοθέωρος was used, for example, by Aristotle. See Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 56.

¹¹³ On the ‘mystical’ character of *philothēoria*, see Bohatec, 56–70.

¹¹⁴ Budé, *De transitu*, I: 95.

¹¹⁵ Budé, *De transitu*, III: 108: ‘ut verbum dei in praecordia admissum.’ This is reminiscent of the study guides by followers of the ‘Devotio Moderna’ and those of Erasmus, which recommends reading in a specific way to internalise material, see Staubach, ‘*Memores pristinae perfectionis*. The Importance of the Church Fathers for *Devotio moderna*’, 444.

¹¹⁶ Budé, *De transitu*, II: 10: ‘ratio prima et ultima philosophiae, commentationisque summa pertinentis ad theoriam...’

¹¹⁷ Budé, *De transitu*, III: 7: ‘Nam historiam tantum evangelicam, et theurgiae Christi contextum recitantes aut audientes, illicet acquiescimus, nec quid iis significetur, quid nobis denuncietur, quo pertineant quae lecta sunt et decantata, recordari curamus et contendimus.’ See also *De transitu*, III: 108–9.

¹¹⁸ Budé, *De transitu*, III: 120–121.

¹¹⁹ Budé, *De transitu*, III: 121: ‘Sublime autem attollitur commentatio per eam quam anagogen Graeci et ἀνάγσις vocant, quasi theoriae quoddam auguraculum.’

with the stories of divine works (*historia theurgicae*), whereafter it was possible to enjoy a mystical understanding and be ‘gradually uplifted to anagogical and spiritual understanding.’¹²⁰

Budé’s view of apostolic hermeneutics is remarkably similar to how Lefèvre insisted on the importance of the spiritual sense and contemplative ascent.¹²¹ Unlike in Lefèvre’s earlier writings, however, Budé addressed the question of how one could propagate apostolic revival without claiming that the church had completely lost touch with its origins. Budé strongly supported the thesis of continuity within the church. However, he admitted that the church had failed to transmit the teachings of Paul and early Greek theologians. ‘If the *summi mori censores* had passed on the authority and majesty [of the celestial discipline] ... to their successors, there would have been a far better, more illustrious, and salutary deal for humankind during many centuries.’¹²² But in spite of this admittedly serious failure, *philothoria* was preserved within the church and could be revived within its existing structure.

Budé’s notion of *philothoria* is reminiscent of earlier movements that outlined programs of spiritual reform based on apostolic Christianity, like the ‘Devotio Moderna,’ founded in the fourteenth-century. The *devoti* emphasised personal affective transformation, particularly through devotional reading.¹²³ Budé’s view of apostolic spirituality has much in common with both Lefèvre and Erasmus, in particular in the focus on the reading of Scripture. Like Erasmus, moreover, Budé chose not to speak of a ‘theology’ but designated a new term reminiscent of Erasmus’s *philosophia Christi*.¹²⁴ The religious program of *De transitu* can thus be seen as particular version of a widely available intellectual heritage associated with Biblical humanism. What distinguishes *philothoria* from these other approaches is Budé’s strong emphasis on importance of Greek culture and theology.

¹²⁰ Budé, *De transitu*, III: 109: ‘unde sensim evehetur ad intelligentiam anagogicam et spiritualem...’

¹²¹ See above Chapter Five, section 2.b.

¹²² Budé, *De transitu*, III: 103: ‘Coelestis sapientiae disciplina, scripturaque auctoritate... cuius auctoritatem et maiestatem, rituumque eius normalem disciplinam, si summi morum censores, maiorum vestigiis admoniti, sartam ac tectam per manus deinceps posteris tradidissent, longe melius utique, praeclarior, et salubrior cum genere humano tot iam saeculis actum esset.’

¹²³ Staubach, ‘*Memores pristinae perfectionis*. The Importance of the Church Fathers for *Devotio moderna*’.

¹²⁴ On Erasmus’s *philosophia Christi* see Margaret Mann Phillips, ‘La “Philosophia Christi” reflétée dans les “Adages” d’Erasmus’, in *Courants Religieux et Humanisme à la fin du XVe et au début du XVIe siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), 53–71; Juliusz Domański, *La philosophie, théorie ou manière de vivre? Les controverses de l’antiquité à la renaissance* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1996), 114–19; John Monfasani, ‘Twenty-Fifth Annual Margaret Mann Phillips Lecture: Erasmus and the Philosophers’, *Erasmus Of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 32, no. 1 (2012): 47–68. On the differences between *Devotio moderna* and *Philosophia Christi*, see Staubach, ‘*Memores pristinae perfectionis*. The Importance of the Church Fathers for *Devotio moderna*’, 441–60.

3.b The Greek fathers

The two major modern interpreters of *De transitu* have diverging approaches to patristic influence on this work. In *Budé und Calvin* (1950), Jozef Bohatec emphasises the similarities between Budé's theological ideas and those of ps.-Dionysius and other Greek theologians. For example, he argues that Budé's ideas about reading Scripture with the aim of anagoge, contemplation, and ascent recalls the strategies of mystical interpretation outlined by ps.-Dionysius. Beyond the general orientation of *De transitu*, Bohatec cites two forms of evidence of influence. First, he notes that Budé used many Greek concepts in *De transitu* that he had earlier included in *Commentarii* with citations from ps.-Dionysius to exemplify their usage. This would indicate that Budé's understanding of the Greek concepts was shaped by this source. Second, Bohatec finds that a particular passage about the incarnation 'undeniably' betrays the influence of ps.-Dionysius; Budé envisaged Christ as a mediator between God and humankind, and the liberator of humans from the grip of evil.¹²⁵

Against Bohatec's view, Marie-Madelaine de la Garanderie upholds the methodological principle that Budé's works must be read separately, holistically, and with attention to chronology.¹²⁶ Budé's discussions of words in *Commentarii* (1529) cannot explain their meaning in *De transitu*, published six years later. This point effectively dismisses the majority of Bohatec's evidence for the presence of ps.-Dionysius's ideas in *De transitu*. La Garanderie further remarks that the paucity of explicit references to ps.-Dionysius seems to suggest that Budé did not regard the Dionysian corpus as authentic – a theory which I shall discuss below.¹²⁷ La Garanderie's main point, however, is that the question of Budé's influences is much less interesting than the project of tracing the general development of his views and concepts: Budé's version of Christian mysticism, and his 'philosophy of culture.'¹²⁸

Neither approach deals in a satisfactory way with the role played by Greek theology in *De transitu*. Bohatec's method of proving patristic influence is clearly vulnerable to La Garanderie's critique. But by putting the question of influence aside, La Garanderie fails to

¹²⁵ See Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 33–34. Bohatec considers Budé's understanding of Christ in *De transitu* I: 30–32 to be undeniable proof of the influence of ps.-Dionysius's *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* V, 3 and II, 3. 12. I do not find this similarity convincing.

¹²⁶ La Garanderie, *Christianisme et lettres profanes*, 381–82.

¹²⁷ La Garanderie's Introduction to *De transitu*, xxx.

¹²⁸ Marie-Madeleine de La Garanderie, 'Guillaume Budé, A Philosopher of Culture', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19, no. 3 (1988): 383. La Garanderie does notice patristic influence but only on the particular question of the relationship between Hellenism and Christianity. Her reading of this theme is consistently focused on the same three texts: the epilogue to *De asse* (1515), *De studio literarum recte et commode instituendo* (1523), and *De transitu* (1535).

illuminate the complex ways in which Greek theology constitutes the ideal, inspiration, and source of legitimacy for Budé as an author of religious works.

There is no need to prove that Budé drew on Greek theology; this is clear from the way that Budé shaped his investigation. As we saw in the previous section, Budé argued in *De transitu* that he strove to understand Christianity as it had been practiced in the times of Paul and in the following three hundred years. To retrieve this theology, he drew on Paul but also introduced concepts that he attributed to Greek theology. Rather than discussing specific theologians, Budé presented an aggregate picture of the early Christian tradition. He did not discuss the development of concepts, as he had done in *Commentarii*. On the contrary, he sought to characterise an epoch that was idealised as the most fulfilled era of Christianity – one permeated with contemplative, anagogical, and mystical spirituality.

The idea that Greek theologians formed an intellectually homogenous group is implied by Budé's tendency to refer to them as a group. In this way, Budé introduces the term *oeconomia* as the Greek term for the life of Christ.¹²⁹ He similarly explains that *πεπεισμένους* is a Greek term for 'the persuaded' (III: 117) and that *anagoge* and *ἀνάγξις* (III: 121) were words used by Greek theologians. Indices compiled by Maurice Lebel list a large number of Greek citations, as well as eighty-two Latin neologisms formed from Greek words in *De transitu*.¹³⁰ As Lebel points out, Budé's Latinised neologisms point to his desire to truly integrate Greek words into Latin vocabulary.¹³¹ In this respect, Budé's *De transitu* aligns perfectly with the idea for importing Greek theological eloquence that he discussed in *Commentarii*. By writing about *philothoria* and theurgy, Budé did something reminiscent of the Ciceronian transfer of Greek philosophical discourse into Latin. This was furthermore one of the points that Budé stressed in his preface to Francis I from 1535 – namely, that theology would profit using a more elegant language.¹³² Budé's preference for Greek theology remained closely tied to the language and its literature.

One recurring element of *De transitu* that has puzzled readers are the extensive sections in which Budé interprets Homer in a Christianising, allegorical way. These sections have been

¹²⁹ Budé, *De transitu*, I: 19: 'Oeconomia autem a Graecis theologis dicta est verbi Dei vita, in corpore mortali existentis, cum theurgia mirifica totaque illa salutis hominum peragenda divina provincia, quam ipse libens 'servaturam' appellaverim, ab eo administrata secundum mandata praescriptaque Dei patris, a divinis quondam vatibus mundo praenunciata.'

¹³⁰ See Guillaume Budé, *De transitu Hellenismi ad Christianismum*, trans. Maurice Lebel (Sherbrooke: Éditions Paulines, 1973), 267–70, 298–306.

¹³¹ See Lebel's note in Budé, 298.

¹³² Budé, *De transitu*, Preface 11: 'Est autem haec ita moribus fortasse magis quam natura comparata, ut a lautitia ac nitore abhorrere, non etiam ut hoc tempore munditiam aversari atque odisse videatur, duntaxat severam et sacrosanctam. Ac tametsi pullata diu fuit ipsa et horridula; in toga tamen talis fuit, non in pallio quoque.'

taken as indication that Budé sought a kernel of *prisca theologia* in Greek mythology, or as a sign that Budé's reading habits were completely transformed by mysticism towards the end of his life.¹³³ But as Anthony Grafton demonstrates, Budé's allegorical interpretations of passages from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were inspired by late antique Homeric criticism.¹³⁴ This finding, I would suggest, strengthens the argument that Budé viewed allegorical interpretation as an important part of Greek culture. Budé came to this conclusion not only by reading ps.-Dionysius or Chrysostom but also through ps.-Plutarch and the Homeric A and b-scholia. In light of this wider context, I would suggest that we read the Homeric allegories in *De transitu* as a playful exploration of the principles of interpretation that Budé derived from Greek literature and scholarship.

Budé's approach to Greek theology changed in one important way between his *Commentarii* and *De transitu*. By 1535 Budé no longer emphasised the continuity between *prisca theologia* and patristic theology. Although he ventured to call compare Paul with Plato and insist that literary studies prepared the mind well for theology, the notion of a continuous tradition of ancient wisdom is conspicuously absent in this study of the passage from Hellenism to Christianity. Budé instead stressed that pagan and Christian philosophy were divided by an unbridgeable gap. This shift reflects Budé's intensified engagement with Paul alongside a change of patristic preferences. When discussing the relationship between Christianity and worldly culture in *De transitu*, Budé frequently referenced Chrysostom's writings on the Pauline epistles.¹³⁵ To give a few examples, Budé referenced Chrysostom's views when discussing the unworthiness of pagan philosophy (*De transitu* I: 17), Satan's influence on the world (II: 8), the difficulty of convincing people to live in accordance with the Gospel (II: 43), and the uselessness of worldly elegance (II: 184).¹³⁶ Chrysostom seems to have inspired a new appreciation for the stark contrast between Christianity and pagan culture that Paul embraced – a contrast that ps.-Dionysius had sought to downplay.¹³⁷

¹³³ For the suggestion that Budé seeks a Christian kernel, see La Garanderie, 'Guillaume Budé, A Philosopher of Culture', 385–86. Kelley suggests a 'mystical turn' at the end of Budé's life, cf. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship*, 61–63.

¹³⁴ Grafton, 'Renaissance Readers of Homer's Ancient Readers', 164–72.

¹³⁵ These texts are not cited in the *Commentarii* according to the index by Sanchi, cf. Sanchi, *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé*.

¹³⁶ Several Parisian colleagues of Budé, including his friend Germain de Brie, worked intensely on translating the works of Chrysostom after ca. 1527. See Sam Kennerley, 'Friendship, Philology and Deceit in the Margins of a Greek Manuscript of John Chrysostom Copied for Erasmus: Reconstructing the Story of MS Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Gud. Gr. 2o 10', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 4 December 2019. On the important edition of new Latin translation of Chrysostom printed by Claude Chevallon in 1536, see above Chapter Four, section 4.b.

¹³⁷ See section 2.c above.

Budé's new appreciation of the Pauline view of pagan culture helps explain why ps.-Dionysius, with his Platonising expressions, is not equally present in *De transitu* compared to *Commentarii*. There is, however, no sign that Budé changed his mind about the apostolic dating of ps.-Dionysius, as La Garanderie suggests. Furthermore, the paucity of direct references to the Dionysian corpus do not reflect a wholesale rejection of the author. Budé's whole point, as I have argued, was to represent an amalgamate of Greek theology. Consequently, no single patristic author is at the centre of *De transitu*. As Bohatec recognised, *De transitu* is largely in agreement with ps.-Dionysius as concerns the depiction of Paul as an inspired teacher and the importance of symbolical and mystical modes of reading Scripture.¹³⁸ Budé's quest to introduce a Hellenised, spiritualised religion depended on other means of persuasion than his more critical historical works.¹³⁹

3.c A religious scholar?

To end this chapter, it seems appropriate to return to pondering in what ways we can think of Budé as a religious scholar. So far I have aimed to elucidate the nature of Budé's contributions to patristic scholarship as well as debates about early Christianity. I shall now summarise the three key aspects of Budé's contributions, while also attempting to go beyond the perspective offered by Budé's published writings and manuscript annotations. By investigating how his work was used by other scholars and how he was regarded by his correspondents, we can corroborate Budé's position as a kind of religious expert.¹⁴⁰

I have argued that Budé's encyclopaedic studies of ancient culture included Greek theology. Patristic texts were part of his library, and, as we saw in the case of ps.-Dionysius, Budé corrected theological texts and attempted to clarify their history. As a philologist, Budé had an impact on French patristic scholarship in the later sixteenth century. Morel's edition of the Dionysian corpus from 1561 used Budé's manuscript in spite of the low quality of the text; apparently in order to add Budé as one of the authorities supporting ps.-Dionysius's authenticity. Philippe Montanus used codices corrected by Budé for an edition of Chrysostom's

¹³⁸ Budé's understanding of Paul is closer to Lefèvre than to Erasmus, which is presumably due to this shared influence. On the differences between Erasmus and Lefèvre on this point, see Payne, 'Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples as Interpreters of Paul'.

¹³⁹ On the polemical use of Church history, see above n. 98. On early modern citation practices, see Dan Edelstein, Robert Morrissey, and Glenn Roe, 'To Quote or Not to Quote: Citation Strategies in the *Encyclopédie*', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 2 (2013): 213–36. On pre-modern citational practices in historical writings, see Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁰ The surviving letters are generally those published during Budé's lifetime. Unfortunately, they provide very uneven coverage of Budé's biography. We have few letters written prior to 1516, when Budé's correspondence with Erasmus began.

Opera published in 1543.¹⁴¹ Another example of a scholar who developed Budé's approach further was the abbot Jacques de Billy (1535–1581).¹⁴² De Billy's work on Gregory of Nazianzus was guided by several suggestions made by Budé in *Commentarii*. Among others, De Billy gathered additional evidence for Budé's thesis that Gregory was inspired by ps.-Dionysius.¹⁴³ Budé's study of Greek theology was thus referenced by later patristic scholars.

Contemporary scholars working on religious projects had consulted Budé even before the publication of the *Commentarii*. In 1520, Juan Luis Vives asked for advice on his first project of 'religious philosophy.'¹⁴⁴ Budé advised the younger scholar to choose a well delimited project on an unusual topic. Vives appears not to have heeded Budé's advice, since he undertook to write a commentary on Augustine's *City of God*, which Johann Froben published in 1522. The edition sold badly and failed to bring Vives the glory and financial support he needed.¹⁴⁵ Another scholar who sought Budé's advice was Johannes Cochlaeus.¹⁴⁶ The contact was mediated by the Italian Hellenist Jerome Aleander (1480–1542), who knew Budé from a stint in Paris between 1508 and 1514, when Aleander had lectured, published, and began his search for ecclesiastical patronage.¹⁴⁷ By 1520 Aleander was in papal service and he was selected to handle Luther's excommunication. At this time, he was introduced to Cochlaeus, who sought to publish his first work against Luther, *De gratia sacramentorum*.¹⁴⁸ In early 1521, when Cochlaeus and Aleander were both at the Diet of Worms, Cochlaeus's draft was sent to Budé, who examined it with approval.¹⁴⁹ The treatise was eventually published in late 1522.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴¹ Maillard et al., *La France des Humanistes. Hellénistes I*, 326.

¹⁴² Irena Backus, *La patristique et les guerres de religion en France : étude de l'activité littéraire de Jacques de Billy (1535-1581) O.S.B., d'après le MS. Sens 167 et les sources imprimées* (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1993).

¹⁴³ Jacques de Billy, *Sacrarum observationum libri duo* (Paris: G. Chaudière, 1585).

¹⁴⁴ Gilbert Tournoy, ed., *La correspondance de Guillaume Budé et Juan Luis Vives*, trans. Monique Mund-Dopchie (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015).

¹⁴⁵ See John C. Olin, *Six Essays on Erasmus* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 39. For a more positive evaluation of Vives's edition and commentary, see Arnoud Visser, 'Juan Luis Vives and the Organisation of Patristic Knowledge', in *Confessionalisation and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Nicholas Hardy and Dmitri Levitin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 95–115.

¹⁴⁶ On Cochlaeus, see Monique Samuel-Scheyder, *Johannes Cochlaeus: humaniste et adversaire de Luther* (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1993); David V. N. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents: Catholic Controversialists, 1518–1525* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1991). The letter from Budé is not discussed in either book.

¹⁴⁷ Bietenholz and Deutscher, *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, s.v. Girolamo ALEANDRO.

¹⁴⁸ Samuel-Scheyder, *Johannes Cochlaeus*, 388. Cochlaeus went to see Aleander in April 1521.

¹⁴⁹ Guillaume Budé, *Opera omnia* (Basel: N. Episcopius, 1557), vol. 1, 313–14. A slightly different version of a paragraph from this letter appears among the papers of Aleander in MS Vat. lat. 6199, f. 22. It is not entirely clear whether Budé sent Aleander a separate letter similar to that addressing Cochlaeus on the very same day, as claimed by McNeil, *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I*, 115–16. It seems more likely that Cochlaeus forwarded the relevant section about Luther to Aleander.

¹⁵⁰ Johannes Cochlaeus, *De gratia sacramentorum liber unus... adversus assertionem mart. Lutheri* (Strasbourg, J. Grüninger, 1522).

An important early adversary of Luther, Cochlaeus brings us to a second aspect of Budé's involvement in religious studies – namely, his role in the Reformation debates. Budé's letter to Cochlaeus from 1521 contains his earliest surviving statements on Luther. Budé criticised Luther for abandoning erudite conversation and instead seeking fame by performing theatre for the crowds. In another letter from the same year, addressed to Battista Flisco, Budé offered further thoughts on the current controversy. Budé was restrained in his critique of Luther and even admitted that he initially sympathised with some of the reformer's ambitions. He had however quickly become disillusioned with Luther's claim to return to a truer and more pristine form of religion.¹⁵¹ Budé did not explain exactly what had caused his disillusionment but the chronology matches that of Cochlaeus, who had agreed with Luther until his more controversial writings such as *To the Christian Nobility* and *The Babylonian Captivity* appeared.¹⁵²

The letters to Cochlaeus and Flisco were published in Budé's second epistolary collection from 1522. There is a telling difference between the printed letters and a copy preserved among the papers of Aleander. Whereas the letter in Aleander's collection explicitly refers to *Martinus ille*, Luther's name is excluded from the edited letters.¹⁵³ Included in a substantive volume of letters, they were not positioned to contribute to debate and polemic. If they served any specific purpose relating to the Reformation, it was to set Budé's own record straight.¹⁵⁴

In *De transitu*, Budé took a bleak view of current religious debate. As in the earlier letters, he critiqued reformers for agitating the people. Budé also admitted that the official response of the Faculty of Theology had not been effective. Their strategies of censorship only served to further frustrate and derail the conversation.¹⁵⁵ Neither side of the discussion based their argument on thorough knowledge of Scripture and careful argument.¹⁵⁶ Instead, Budé observed Biblical commentaries being published with excessive and fruitless discussion of the most controversial topics, such as free will.¹⁵⁷ Many authors did little more than compile 'rhapsodies of Scriptural commonplaces.'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ Letter to Baptista Flisco in *Epistolae posteriores* (Paris: J. Bade, 1522), 64r. *Opera omnia* vol. I, 349–351. On the dating, see Delaruelle, *Répertoire analytique et chronologique de la correspondance de Guillaume Budé*, 185, n. 1.

¹⁵² Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 123.

¹⁵³ BAV MS Vat. lat. 6199, f. 22.

¹⁵⁴ On the literary forms, including open letters, employed by Catholic controversialists in this period, see Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents*, 190–201.

¹⁵⁵ Budé, *De transitu*, II: 96

¹⁵⁶ On the impossibility of resolving the conflict, see Budé, *De transitu*, II: 99: '... optarim votis etiam conceptis, literarum saltem honoris causa (ut nihil hic aliud dicam) hominumque illorum gratia, egregie doctorum, in diem ut trisecularem lis haec comperendinaretur, quae aut temporum iniquitate, aut aliam ob causam dirimi coactis omnibus decuriis iudicium legitimorum nequit.'

¹⁵⁷ Budé, *De transitu*, II: 34.

¹⁵⁸ Budé, *De transitu*, II: 80–81.

Budé's tendency to criticise both sides of the conflict inspired La Garanderie to read *De transitu* as a series of journalistic observations and reflections.¹⁵⁹ However, reformers including Philip Melanchthon and Jean Calvin recognised that Budé's account was far from neutral. In a letter sent a few months after *De transitu* appeared, Melanchthon expressed his disappointment in a letter to the Classicist Joachim Camerarius. He feared that Budé's book would hurt their cause and fuel the growing hostility of Francis I. Melanchthon mentioned to Camerarius that he had already smoothed over some issues raised by Budé in the new revised edition of his theological manual, the *Loci communes*.¹⁶⁰ Calvin also promptly responded to Budé's critique in the *Institutio Christianae religionis* (1536) in a dedicatory epistle addressing the French king.¹⁶¹ Budé's view was considered important for the perception of the Reformed movement.¹⁶²

To Melanchthon and Calvin, it mattered little that Budé was not a professional theologian. Budé was ambivalent about this designation. On the one hand, he followed closely Erasmus's conflicts with the Faculty of Theology and defended his friend and correspondent. In 1519, Budé wrote pointedly about 'those who call themselves theologians yet know not even Latin and desire that no Greek should be used.'¹⁶³ In a letter from 1524, Budé lamented the persecution of Hellenists at the Faculty of Theology. He pointed to the absurdity that they would call themselves 'theologians,' whereas this title was refused to those who knew Greek, like Erasmus.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, Budé did not claim to be a theologian. In an epistolary discussion about style with Erasmus in 1516, Budé emphasised the differing communicational conditions provided by his own layman status and Erasmus's theological *gravitas*.¹⁶⁵ Budé was even defensive about being involved in a project to edit the writings of Hilary.¹⁶⁶ In *De transitu*, Budé repeatedly expressed his hesitation to discuss theological topics. After embarking on a digression on free will, Budé explained that he got onto the topic by accident, and that he had

¹⁵⁹ On parts of *De transitu* as forms of journalistic literature, see La Garanderie, Introduction to *De transitu*, XL.

¹⁶⁰ Melanchthon, *Opera omnia*, vol. 2 edited by Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider (1835), Letter nr 1321, col. 936: 'Budaei transitum Hellenismi ad Christianismum, et Sadoleti commentarios in Romanos vidisse te spero: sane tragice invehitur uterque in nostros, sed sinamus sibi quenque canere. Ego nunc in meis locis multa mitigavi, et de plerisque tecum coram loqui cupio, sed desino.'

¹⁶¹ Prefatory epistle in Jean Calvin, *Christianae religionis institutio* (Basel: T. Platterum & B. Lasium, 1536). On how Calvin addressed Budé's criticism, see Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*, 127–41.

¹⁶² The question of reformed and Catholic 'traits' in Budé's thought has been frequently discussed by scholars, e.g. Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin*; McNeil, *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I*.

¹⁶³ Guillaume Budé, *Institution du prince*. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. Ms. 5103, 35r.

¹⁶⁴ Budé, *Les lettres grecques*, 131.

¹⁶⁵ Erasmus and Budé, *La Correspondance d'Érasme et de Guillaume Budé*, 85–86. See also Erasmus's reply on p. 113.

¹⁶⁶ On his doubts about posing as a patristic editor in 1510, see above Chapter Three, section 2.c.

not intended to infringe on the theologians' area of expertise.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, when discussing problems in the contemporary church, Budé remarked that he was not sure whether to express his concerns.¹⁶⁸ Caution did not prevent Budé from giving his views on free will and abuses in the church. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that he lacked the formal qualifications or the ecclesiastical position that lent authority in this arena. In this way, Budé navigated between the two extremes of either completely accepting the authority of graduates from the Faculty of Theology or suggesting that degrees did not matter.

This brings us to a third dimension of Budé's career as a religious scholar: his attempt to draw theological lessons from Greek literature. Budé had long argued that philology in general, and the study of Greek in particular, had much to contribute to theology. In making this argument, he emphasised that the importance of Greek went beyond the project of textual criticism, which Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus pioneered for the New Testament. In *Institution du prince* (1519), Budé explained that the meaning of Scripture was hidden in such a way that it must be unlocked either through divine inspiration or through a combination of great knowledge of literature (*bonnes lettres*) and intelligence (*bon entendement*). Since Budé found little sign of inspiration in his own times – in this respect he agreed with Beda's criticism of Lefèvre's apostolic revival – only the latter alternative remained.¹⁶⁹ Against the methods of contemporary theologians, Budé held up the examples of Fathers with sound foundation in the Greek encyclopaedia: Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Hilary, Jerome, and Augustine.¹⁷⁰ They had possessed the knowledge of classical literature which, according to Budé, provided the keys to the truly enigmatic meaning of Scripture.¹⁷¹

Not long after the publication of *Institution du prince*, Budé wrote several letters about his reading of Scripture and his preference for the contemplative life. One exchange of this kind was with Germain de Brie, the former secretary of Jean de Ganay who had embarked on an

¹⁶⁷ Budé, *De transitu*, II:58–59

¹⁶⁸ Budé, *De transitu*, I: 64.

¹⁶⁹ Guillaume Budé, *Institution du prince*. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. MS 5103, 35r: 'car la parole de dieu dont parle salomon ou lieu allegue, est cachee et enfermee soubz une clef a quatre ressorts, et en fait chascun ouverture selon sa capacite, mais elle ne peult bien faire sans science inspiree qui est une chose non usitee pour le present, ou sanz grande science des bonnes lettres avec le bon entendement, quelque chose que disent aucuns de ceulx qui se nomment theologiens, et ne scavent pas la langue latine, et cuydent quil nen soit nulle grecque pource que de leur temps on nen parloit point.' For a similar passage about interpreting symbols in *De philologia*, see La Garanderie, 'Guillaume Budé, A Philosopher of Culture', 386. On Beda's later criticism of Lefèvre's ideas about inspiration, see above Chapter Five, section 2.b.

¹⁷⁰ Budé, *Institution du prince*. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. MS 5103, 35r: 'ne jamais la saincte escripture ne se entendra parfaitement par ceux qui ne sont suffidamment fondez es sciences des gentilz, comme estoit basile et gregoire deux grandes et grosses colonnes de leglise grecque, saint hilaire, saint hierome, saint augustin, et les autres anciens theologiens.'

¹⁷¹ See above n. 169.

ecclesiastical career.¹⁷² Another contact with whom Budé reflected on the relationship between study and religion was Pierre Lamy. Already at this time, Budé wrote with admiration about withdrawal from ‘the wisdom of the world’ and the ultimate aim of achieving ‘what the Greeks called mystical contemplation.’¹⁷³ Budé was well aware that his own lifestyle – involving a large family and work at court – did not offer the same focus as that of his friends who were theologians, canons, or friars. Nevertheless, he insisted that the sojourns at his country house in Marly offered opportunities for contemplation. In *De transitu*, Budé further developed his notion of a humanist contemplative life. Hesitant to claim the title of ‘theologian,’ Budé offered *philothoria* as an alternative form of religious study. Like Erasmus’s *philosophia Christi*, it designated a kind of religious expertise that was separate from the profession licensed by the Universities: an essentially private study of Scripture and its highest meanings. Focused on the mysteries of Scripture, the *philothorist* nurtured faith and accomplished interior transformation – an antithesis of the warring factions of the Reformation.

To conclude, Budé’s correspondence and the reception of his writings confirm that he was an important figure for the developing field of religious studies outside the institutional framework and methodology of the University theologians. I have especially emphasised the ways in which Budé’s engagement in such questions went beyond his humanist allegiance to the study of Greek language and pagan literature. To read Budé’s work on religious texts and problems as an elaborate plot for justifying the study of pagan culture is not only reductive but fundamentally misrepresents Budé’s serious studies of the Church Fathers. Even more misguided is the view that Budé’s theological ideas were in conflict with his historical work. I have argued that it was precisely Budé’s studies of Greek theologians and scholars that convinced him that the early Church promoted a mystical approach to Scripture. We see this close connection between Budé’s philological investigations and his ideas about apostolic theology most clearly in the *Commentarii*, where Budé praised anagogical interpretation while historicising its terminology. By recognising Budé’s engagement with patristic theology, we not only gain a fuller appreciation of his wide-ranging scholarly pursuits; we can also better understand Budé as part of the intellectual culture of Paris, and thereby modify the persistent narrative of his exceptionalism. In his pursuit to study and promote early Greek theology, Budé succeeded Lefèvre by bringing new methods to the study of ps.-Dionysius and other early

¹⁷² Budé, *Les lettres grecques*, 50–61.

¹⁷³ Budé, 125.

Fathers and defending the ideal of apostolic theology in the polemical new era of the Reformation.

CONCLUSION

My thesis set out to investigate the new ideas about theological competence that developed in early sixteenth-century Paris: how and why did Lefèvre and his colleagues begin to question the value of the course of studies offered by the Faculty of Theology? What alternatives did they promote, and why? I have argued that modern historians have failed to address these questions adequately because they have adopted a dichotomous model that is misleading. They pit scholastics from the Faculty against humanists from the Republic of Letters. I suggest that we should focus less on high-profile cases, such as the conflicts of Reuchlin and Erasmus with the Faculty, and instead turn to local contexts and debates. By making this shift, we are better able to distinguish between two separate questions: first, how did ideas about a form of Christian erudition different from the scholastic tradition take root in this period? and second, in what ways did humanism influence the study of theology? I have argued that this distinction allows us to better understand the transformation of views about theological competence in this period and the role it played in the broader development of sixteenth-century religious scholarship.

The first major task of my thesis was to show how Lefèvre developed a new conception of theology based on his understanding of the apostolic era. In the first chapter, I argued that Lefèvre's ideas about theological competence derived from the ideal of the early Christian church. The idea of imitating the earliest members of the Church had been a constant in Christian reform movements from early monasticism to the fourteenth-century lay spiritual movements like the 'Devotio Moderna.' By applying this familiar idea to the University context, however, Lefèvre explored a different dimension of apostolic life – namely, what constituted theology in the earliest Church. We have seen that this fundamentally anachronistic thought experiment guided Lefèvre's study of early Christian texts. He studied closely the scholarly community of the early Church as it was portrayed in ps.-Dionysius's writings. He noted, in particular, which translation of Scripture was used by ps.-Dionysius, how Paul taught his disciples to interpret Scripture, and the ways in which early theologians interacted with one another. It was in dialogue with apostolic texts that Lefèvre shaped his conception of pious theology.

For Lefèvre, apostolic theology was more than a theoretical ideal – it was a practical aim that he pursued as an educator and an editor. The second and third chapters of this study showed

how Lefèvre engaged in religious studies together with his students and colleagues at the university and thereby created a theological community beyond the Faculty of Theology. I argued that Lefèvre incorporated a religious perspective into his teaching of arts at Cardinal Lemoine and that he recommended a specific programme of theological practices and readings. As an editor, Lefèvre selected texts that he thought would provide an understanding of Scripture that was pious, peaceful, and contemplative. In both areas, Lefèvre's agenda sought to counteract the scholastic curriculum and – as he once wrote – ‘shape souls for piety.’¹ This illustrates that the conflict over theological competence, as it played out in Paris, was an educational initiative as much as it was a scholarly one. I have argued that Lefèvre's model proved remarkably attractive to the students at Cardinal Lemoine, in particular among those seeking careers within the Church or the emerging field of patristic editorial work.

Lefèvre's case furthermore illustrates the important yet limited role played by humanism in his reevaluation of theological competence. Lefèvre's religious scholarship resonates with humanist ideas about returning to ancient sources, in this case the earliest Christian authors. Yet we have seen that Lefèvre's editorial methods hardly can be described as humanist or critical. Among his students were some with strong humanist allegiances, such as Beatus, and others who disdained the pursuit of eloquence, such as Bovelles. In spite of their differences, Beatus and Bovelles shared a strong antipathy toward scholastic theology. The importance of distinguishing the critique of scholastic theology from humanism is further illuminated, from the opposite side, by the important role played by experts in the *studia humanitatis* within the Faculty of Theology. In the fourth chapter, I argued that many graduating candidates sought ways to apply their humanist skills to the traditional theological education. We have furthermore seen that many theologians contributed to the revival of patristic literature by searching for manuscripts and writing introductions to editions. These cases confirm that humanist interests did not automatically create anti-scholastic attitudes.

The apparent compatibility between humanist rhetoric and scholastic theology helps to explain why the Faculty did not initially act against the calls of Lefèvre and others to restructure the discipline of theology so that it would resemble an earlier, patristic model. It was only in connection with the Faculty's heated reaction against Luther after 1520 that the conflict between supporters of patristic revival and the scholastic theologians began to emerge. The fifth chapter explored the increasingly polemical debates about apostolic theology and the early patristic authorities. I showed that Beda responded in detail to Lefèvre's vision which he

¹ Cited in Chapter Two, n. 59.

characterised – maliciously but not incorrectly – as a desire ‘that all authors in the Faculty of Theology [become] prophets or apostles.’² Beda’s critique revealed real weaknesses of both the feasibility and the desirability of striving to imitate the apostles. It is indicative of the growing awareness of these problems that Budé, as we saw in the sixth chapter, promoted a concept of apostolic theology in a different way than Lefèvre. Writing in 1535, Budé cautiously refrained from using the term ‘theology’ and focused on how individuals could achieve the certain faith of the early martyrs. In a context in which reformers increasingly claimed to represent the practices of the early Church, the theological establishment rejected the premise that imitating apostolic practices was a viable option. As a consequence, the more radical dimension of Lefèvre’s calls for ‘pious knowledge’ – the suggestion to change the Faculty’s curriculum – was rejected.

Instead of replacing scholastic theology, Lefèvre’s model took a place beside it and was fuelled by the continued growth of humanist educational practices. The *studia humanitatis* kept winning ground in the colleges of Paris and students increasingly were learning Greek. Despite the Faculty’s turn to censorship and greater inquisitorial activity, the project of exploring early Christian sources continued to motivate innovations in scholarly ideas and practices. Merlin’s research into the late antique sources of canon law and Budé’s work on Greek theological terminology are two examples explored in my thesis. Parisian printers, moreover, continued to engage scholars in preparing editions of Church Fathers. Lefèvre’s focus on the early patristic tradition thus proved seminal to the later development of sixteenth-century religious scholarship.

This finding casts a new light on Lefèvre’s legacy. Historians have generally viewed Lefèvre’s approach to Scripture and his advocacy of lay access to the Gospels as his central achievement. But by seeing Lefèvre’s ‘evangelicism’ or ‘biblicism’ as a close parallel to the reformed doctrine of *sola scriptura*, they neglect the more fundamental concept behind his hermeneutic: the idea of deriving a method of interpretation from the earliest Fathers. This concept stemmed, in turn, from a reorientation in how to relate to patristic authorities. As we have seen, Lefèvre read the Fathers not as sources of doctrine but as *exempla* to imitate. The evident influence that Lefèvre had over his contemporaries speaks to the strength of the amalgamate that he constructed between the pious imitation of the apostles and the scholarly examination of ancient sources.

² Cited in Chapter Five, n. 55.

Lefèvre's role in introducing a new model of religious scholarship in Paris should also inspire us to take a more nuanced view of the ways in which humanist practices and ideas began to reshape the discipline of theology. It has all too often been assumed that it was the application of textual criticism to Scripture and the Fathers that created a historicising perspective on the tradition of theology. As I have argued, this is not true of the way in which Lefèvre came to promote early theology as a more pious alternative to scholasticism. Furthermore, philology alone was not the driving force in this changing perspective, as the examples of the specialists in *studia humanitatis* within the Faculty of Theology and the other scholars discussed in this thesis show. Merlin notably drew on conciliar legal theory in his defence of Origen, and Lefèvre and Budé approached apostolic theology with a fervent interest in doctrines about anagogical interpretation and a significant blind spot for the problems relating to the traditional dating of ps.-Dionysius's writings.

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