

Lefèvre d'Étaples, Jacques

Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1450/1460–1536), also known as Jacobus Faber Stapulensis, was a significant authority among humanists in Western Europe. Although he lived a secluded life, he was one of the most influential figures in French humanism. He had a great impact on Renaissance biblical scholarship because of his prodigious work as editor, commentator, translator, and reformer. He was born in the middle of the 15th century in Étaples (Picardy). He studied at the University of Paris from 1474 to 1480 and later lectured in the faculty of arts at the college of Cardinal Lemoine until 1508. During three journeys to Italy (1491/92, 1500, 1507) he came into contact with leading Italian humanists.

In the development of his own philological, philosophical, theological, and biblical program of Christian education he was especially influenced by Hermolaus Barbarus, Marsilio Ficino, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Like Barbarus, he considered philology (that is, grammar and rhetoric) the neces-

sary basis for all studies. Therefore, he edited and commented on many of Aristotle's works as a useful tool for theology. But Aristotelian thought did not dominate Lefèvre's editorial output as he was inspired by Ficino to embrace mystical theology. This led him to edit several mystical texts; the most noteworthy of his editions include the writings of Nicholas of Cusa and Pseudo-Dionysius. Ultimately, however, Lefèvre's main focus became exegesis. He followed Mirandola who argued that contemplating the divine word was the real aim of all intellectual and spiritual efforts. Therefore Lefèvre edited and commented on the Psalms, with editions appearing in 1509 and 1513 (the latter edition influenced Luther), the Pauline Epistles in 1512, and the Gospels in 1522.

After 1508, Lefèvre worked at the Abbey Saint-Germain-des-Prés under the patronage of Abbot Guillaume Briçonnet. When Briçonnet became bishop of Meaux, he made Lefèvre his vicar-general *in spiritualibus*. Lefèvre then continued his devotion to Christian studies by producing a commentary on the Gospels (1525) and translating the Bible into French (1530). The French NT of Pierre-Robert Olivétan is based on Lefèvre's translation. When the circle of Meaux (Pierre Caroli, Guillaume Farel, Gérard Roussel, François Vatable) was suspected of and censured by the Sorbonne for sympathizing with Reformation theology, Lefèvre fled to Strasbourg in October 1525. From 1526–30 he lived under the protection of Francis I at Blois; thereafter until his death in 1536, he resided at the court of Margaret of Navarre in Nérac.

Lefèvre's biblical studies focused on spiritual more than on philological questions because he thought that the true literal sense coincides with the spiritual one, which has Christ at the core. Lefèvre, who only had rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew, generally accepted the Vg. as a basis for his translation of the OT. He followed patristic tradition in his christological interpretation of the Psalms and other biblical books. In his two major exegetical debates on Heb 2:7 with Desiderius Erasmus (1515) and the three Marias (1518), christological concerns dominated his interpretations rather than historical or philological matters. His ideal of a christocentric biblical erudition inspired a whole generation of scholars, but it was later overtaken by Reformation theology and eventually condemned by Roman Catholic theologians, especially Noël Bédé.

Bibliography. Primary: ■ Lefèvre d'Étaples, J., *Quincuplex Psalterium: Facsimilé de l'édition de 1513* (THR 170; Geneva 1979). ■ Rice, E. F. (ed.), *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Related Texts* (New York/London 1972).

Secondary: ■ Bedouelle, G., *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'intelligence des Écritures* (THR 152; Geneva 1976). ■ Bedouelle, G., *Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d'Étaples: Un guide de lecture* (THR 171; Geneva 1979). ■ Masur-Matusevich, Y., *Le siècle d'or de la mystique française – un autre regard: Étude de la littéra-*

ture spirituelle de Jean Gerson (1363–1429) à Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1450?–1537) (Paris 2004). [Bibliography] ■ Pernot, J.-F., *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1450?–1536): Actes du colloque d'Étaples les 7 et 8 novembre 1992* (Colloques, congrès et conférences sur la Renaissance 5; Paris 1995). ■ Porrer, S. M., *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Three Maries Debates* (THR 451; Geneva 2009). ■ Schönau, C., "Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples und die Reformation" (PhD diss.; University of Göttingen, 2016).

Ulli Roth

See also → Humanism; → Nicolas of Cusa;
→ Pico Della Mirandola, Giovanni;