

THE CONDEMNATION OF VERNACULAR BIBLE READING
BY THE PARISIAN THEOLOGIANS (1523-31)

Could the Bible be considered as spiritual milk for infants and hence feed the vulgar masses? Or was it rather to be regarded as hardy nourishment for those mature in faith, such as theologians or clerics? These questions were broached by French humanists and Parisian theologians in an important debate during the third decade of the sixteenth century. We shall consider four aspects of this discussion. First, we will examine the 'controversial' Bible translations of Erasmus and especially Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, and deal with the initial opposing measures to them taken by the Parisian theologians in 1523. Next, we will provide a summary of the work *De tralatione bibliae* written in 1525 by Pierre Cousturier, otherwise known as Petrus Sutor. Following that, we will describe the events surrounding the official condemnation of Lefèvre's French translations of the Bible in the years 1525-26. We will conclude our study with the censure of Erasmus' *Paraphrases* by the Parisian theologians and their leader Noël Beda (1527-31)¹. Throughout our discussion of

* I want to thank William 'Wolf' Diedrich and Prof. Martin Stone for their invaluable assistance in translating this text.

1. For a general introduction to the topic, see: F.M. HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne: A Bibliographical Study of Books in French Censured by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris, 1520-1551* (Travaux d'humanisme et renaissance, 172), Genève, Droz, 1979, pp. 13-35, 73-82; J.K. FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France: The Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500-1543* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, 32), Leiden, Brill, 1985, pp. 169-219. Also relevant are: P. AQUILON, *Paris et la Bible française 1516-1585*, in *Censures: De la Bible aux larmes d'Éros. Le livre et la censure en France*, Paris, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1987, 12-22; A. LABARRE, *La censure de la Bible en France au XVI^e siècle*, in B.E. SCHWARZBACH (ed.), *La Bible imprimée dans l'Europe moderne* (Études et recherches), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, 1999, 400-407. The *Regestum conclusionum sacrae facultatis theologiae in universitate Parisiensi* 1 (1505-1533), henceforth abbreviated as RCFT 1, had been published in: *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de Théologie de Paris*. Tome 1: *De 1505-1523*, ed. J.-A. CLERVAL, Paris, Gabalda, 1917; *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Faculté de Théologie de l'Université de Paris de janvier 1524 à novembre 1533*, ed. J.K. FARGE (Textes et documents sur l'histoire des universités), Paris, Aux amateurs de livres, 1990. The conclusions of the Faculty have also been published in [DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, CAROLUS,] *Collectio judiciorum de novis erroribus ... Censoria etiam judicia insignium academiarum ...* T. II: *In quo exquisita monumenta ab anno 1521 usque ad annum 1632 continentur* la Caroli Du Plessis d'Argentré, Lutetiae Parisiorum: apud Andream Cailleau ..., 1728, 2, xx, 548, 384 p.; in f°, and in BULAEUS, Caesar Egassius, *Historia Universitatis*

these four points, we will not only focus upon the humanists' positions but also, and particularly, pay attention to the ideas of the Parisian theologians and their leader Noël Bédard².

I. THE BIBLE TRANSLATIONS OF ERASMUS AND LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES AND THE FIRST MEASURES TAKEN BY THE PARISIAN THEOLOGIANS (1523)³

In France biblical humanism took on a distinctive form that is referred to as *évangélisme*. As the rest of Europe, this reform movement sought the renewal of the Church's life, based upon the reading of Scripture by both lay people and theologians (the latter using rhetorics and language skills to understand Scripture). The reform movement primarily took root in the diocese of Meaux, since it was under the guidance of bishop

Parisiensis... T. VI: Ab Anno 1500 ad an. 1600/-, Parisiis: apud Petrum de Bresche ... et Iacobum de Laize-de-Bresche..., 1673, [6], 981, [21] p.; in f°.

2. A lot of recent research has focussed upon the positions of Noël Bédard and the Parisian theologians in order to ascertain whether they can be labelled as 'conservatives', 'reactionaries', or 'reformers'. See: W.F. BENSE, *Noël Bédard's View of the Reformation*, in *Occasional Papers of the American Society for Reformation Research* 1 (1977) 93-107; J.K. FARGE, *Texts and Context of a Mentalité: The Parisian University Milieu in the Age of Erasmus*, in E. RUMMEL (ed.), *Editing Texts From the Age of Erasmus. Papers Given at the Thirtieth Annual Conference on Editorial Problems. University of Toronto, 4-5 November 1994*, Toronto – Buffalo – London, University of Toronto Press, 1996, 3-24; Ch. G. NAUERT, "A Remarkably Supercilious and Touchy Lot": *Erasmus on the Scholastic Theologians*, in *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 22 (2002) 37-56; E. RUMMEL, *Why Noël Bédard Did Not Like Erasmus' Paraphrases*, in H.M. PABEL – M. VESSEY (eds.), *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' Paraphrases on the New Testament* (Erasmus Studies, 14), Toronto – Buffalo – London, University of Toronto Press, 2002, 265-278; M. CRANE, *Competing Visions of Christian Reform: Noël Bédard and Erasmus*, in *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 25 (2005) 39-57. Also: P. CARON, *Noël Bédard* [1898]. Précédé de A. LAIMÉ, *Le diabolique docteur et les saints érudits* (Le Miroir des Humanistes, 3), Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2005. On the close cooperation between the Faculty of Theology and the *Parlement de Paris* to deal with the biblical humanists, see: J.K. FARGE, *Early Censorship in Paris: A New Look at the Roles of the Parlement of Paris and of King Francis I*, in *Renaissance and Reformation. Renaissance et Réforme* 25=NS 13 (1989) 173-183, pp. 174, 177-179; Id., *Le parti conservateur au XVI^e siècle: Université et Parlement de Paris à l'époque de la Renaissance et de la Réforme* [Documents et inédits du Collège de France], Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1992).

3. For an analysis of this episode, see: M. CAMERON, *The Charges of Lutheranism Brought against Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, in *The Harvard Theological Review* 63 (1970) 119-149, pp. 121-129; HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* (n. 1), pp. 24-25; FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), pp. 177-178; M. VEISSIÈRE, *L'évêque Guillaume Briçonnet (1470-1534): Contribution à la connaissance de la Réforme catholique à la veille du Concile de Trente*, Provins, Société d'histoire et d'archéologie, 1986, pp. 238-243, 251-254; AQUILON, *Paris et la Bible française* (n. 1), pp. 12-16. Also: CARON, *Noël Bédard* (n. 2), pp. 118-119; G. BEDOUELLE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures* (Travaux d'humanisme et renaissance, 152), Genève, Droz, 1976, pp. 90-104, 121-126.

Guillaume Briçonnet. The bishop was all too happy to employ the services of the biblical humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, whom he attracted to Meaux in the spring of 1521, and whom he named in 1523 his vicar general *in spiritualibus*. In the churches of the diocese the readings of the Scriptures during the mass were given in the vernacular and were usually followed by an exhortation on behalf of the parish priest⁴.

Lefèvre, willing to help the preachers of the diocese to improve their sermons, published at the end of 1521, or probably in the beginning of 1522, his Latin *Commentarii initiatorii in quatuor evangelia* or *Introductory commentaries on the four Gospels*. In the preface, Lefèvre elaborates on the theme "Verbum Dei sufficit", which lays at the basis of his biblical work of these years. In the corpus of his *Commentarii*, Lefèvre inserted the Gospels according to the Latin Vulgate translation, gave subsequently some short *Adnotationes circa litteram*, emendations on the basis of the Greek 'original', and published then a more profound commentary with a strong christological and pastoral emphasis⁵.

Lefèvre d'Étaples devoted himself also to a French translation of the New Testament, which he published in successive volumes, the first of which – consisting of the four Gospels – appeared in June 1523, accompanied by a royal privilege⁶. Out of respect for the tradition, and possibly

4. "Nunc in tota diocesi nostra, festis diebus et maxime die dominica legitur populo et epistola et evangelium lingua vernacula et si paræcus aliquid exhortationis habet, ad epistolam aut evangelium, aut ad utrumque adjicit" (J. Lefèvre d'Étaples to G. Farel, 6 July 1524, in *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*. Tome 1: 1512-1526, ed. A.-L. HERMINIARD, Genève – Paris, Georg, 1866, n° 103, pp. 219-228, esp. 221).

5. BEDOUELLE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures* (n. 3), pp. 99-100, 152-172 (text, translation and analysis of the preface). Also: VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 222-224; G. BEDOUELLE, *Les "paraphrases" pédagogiques de Lefèvre d'Étaples*, in V. FERRER – A. MANTERO (eds.), *Les paraphrases bibliques aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*. Actes du Colloque de Bordeaux des 22, 23 et 24 septembre 2004, Genève, Droz, 2006, 37-43, esp. p. 40.

6. Still important for the study of Lefèvre's translation, is: A. LAUNE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et la traduction française de la Bible*, in *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 32 (1895) 56-72. See also: BEDOUELLE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures* (n. 3), pp. 112-120; P.-M. BOGAERT – J.-F. GILMONT, *De Lefèvre d'Étaples à la fin du XVI^e siècle*, in P.-M. BOGAERT (ed.), *Les Bibles en français: Histoire illustrée du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1991, 47-106, esp. pp. 54-55. Also: VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), p. 381; G. BEDOUELLE – B. ROUSSEL (eds.), *Le temps des Réformes et la Bible* (Bible de tous les temps, 5), Paris, Beauchesne, 1989, pp. 148, 444, 464, 534. For a bibliography of Lefèvre's and other French bibles, see: B.T. CHAMBERS, *Bibliography of French Bibles: Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century French-Language Editions of the Scriptures* (Travaux d'humanisme et renaissance, 192), Genève, Droz, 1983. A facsimile of Lefèvre's 1523 New Testament has been edited: J. LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *Le Nouveau Testament*. Fac-simile de la première édition Simon de Colines, 1523, ed. M.A. SCREECH (Classiques de la Renaissance en France), 2 vols., East Ardsley, S.R. Publishers; New York, Johnson Reprint Corp.; Paris – Den Haag, Mouton, 1970.

also because of the sensitivity of the Parisian theologians and the *Parlement de Paris*, Lefèvre's translation was for the most part based upon the Vulgate. Nevertheless, one or another of Lefèvre's assistants (the young Robert Estienne?) had, against the will of their master, replaced some Vulgate biblical passages with translations from Erasmus' Latin-Greek version of the New Testament. Only in an appendix, in a list of *errata*, was the Vulgate-version inserted for the passages concerned⁷.

Under the leadership of Noël Beda, the Parisian theologians endeavored to reform the Church on the basis of the orthodox faith as it was defined by their illustrious scholastic predecessors, and a spiritual life characterized by a strict obedience and discipline. In this matter, the Faculty had the *Parlement de Paris* on its side. Faced with the reality of Luther, the Faculty was very suspicious of the humanists' criticism of the Church and their self-declared competence to comment the Holy Scriptures. Moreover they had their doubts about lay people reading and interpreting the Bible by themselves. In the early days of June 1523, the Faculty examined Lefèvre's *Commentarii initiatorii in quatuor evangelia* and, as a consequence, the *Parlement* ordered that all exemplars present in Simon de Colines' bookshop be seized⁸. A royal intervention, however, removed Lefèvre d'Étaples' case from the *Parlement's* jurisdiction and entrusted it to the *Grand Conseil*⁹. The king's *démarche* did not prevent the Faculty from officially condemning eleven errors, taken from Lefèvre's *Commentarii initiatorii*. Among them the Faculty listed the humanist's proposition that the primitive Church had no rule but the Gospel¹⁰.

In the same month of August 1523, the Faculty began a debate about whether or not the new Latin versions of the Bible (translated on the basis

7. In earlier works of scholarship, we still find the view that Lefèvre himself has 'corrected' some passages of the Vulgate on the basis of Erasmus' New Testament, for instance, LAUNE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et la traduction française de la bible* (n. 6), p. 65. AQUILON, *Paris et la Bible française* (n. 1), p. 15 takes over this opinion and adds that Lefèvre or perhaps Simon de Colines added the list containing the *errata*. The opinion that it was not Lefèvre himself but (one of) his assistants who, against the will of their master, had inserted some translations from Erasmus' Latin-Greek New Testament, is found in BOGAERT – GILMONT, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et le seizième siècle* (n. 6), pp. 54-55. Comp. LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *Le Nouveau Testament*, ed. SCREECH, vol. 1 (n. 6), f. Cii^o-Civv^o.

8. The matter was a.o. debated on 6 June, 16 June, 19 June, 27 June, 13 July, 24 July, 30 July, 14 August 1523. Comp. FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), pp. 174, 255-256.

9. "Deinde proposito per dominum syndicum quod die sabbato XI^a hujus mensis fuerant Curie supreme presentate littere patentes domini nostri regis, per quas causa que pendet in ipsa Curia occasione requeste et porrecte pro commentariis in euangeliis Jacobi Fabri ad magnum regis consilium evocabatur ... unde plurimum impediretur executio declarationis veritatis et errorum extirpatio" (RCFT 1, 13 July 1523, f. 100r, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. CLERVAL [n. 1], p. 369).

10. BULAEUS, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis* (n. 1), p. 183.

of Hebrew and Greek) were permissible. A parallel discussion concerned translations of the Bible in the vernacular¹¹. More moderate voices in the Parisian Theological Faculty (among whom the Flemish theologian Josse Clichtove) were silenced¹², and on the 22nd of August, 1523 it was decided during a solemn congregation of the Faculty that the new Bible versions that were translated in Latin on the basis of Greek and Hebrew must be forbidden. This decision was aimed explicitly at Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples who both had revised parts of the Scripture on the basis of the Greek 'source text'¹³. A similar ban was declared on translations of the Bible in the vernacular¹⁴. However, the Theological Faculty did not dare at this juncture to proclaim a condemnation through an official *Determination*. Its reticence in this regard had to do with the fact that the humanist-minded king had the intention to invite Erasmus to come to his court, and therefore showed disturbed about a possible condemnation of the humanist scholar by the Theological Faculty¹⁵. Moreover, Lefèvre's Bible translations were issued with the expressed support of the Court and especially of Marguerite d'Angoulême, the king's sister¹⁶. It was thus

11. This matter was debated on 11 August, 12 August, 14 August, 17 August, 18 August, 19 August, 22 August, (25 September,) 25 August, 23 October, (26 October, 3 November,) 1 December 1523.

12. "... the approximately one hundred Paris theologians who could be assembled on important business shared Beda's conviction ... the few with Erasmian sympathies found little encouragement" (FARGE, *The Parisian University Milieu in the Age of Erasmus* [n. 2], p. 8).

13. "Deinde auditis omnibus conclusit sacra Facultas organo domini decani Boussart, quod non sunt utiles Ecclesie nove traductiones bible, que de greco vel hebreo in latinum fiunt, verbi causa per Erasmum et Jacobum Fabrum, sed pernitiore propter optimas nec id quidem paucas que adducte sunt a magistris rationes et ideo nullomodo permittende aut tollerande sed per Ecclesie prelatos omni via ab Ecclesia elimande" (RCFT 1, 22 August 1523, f. 105v-106r, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. CLERVAL [n. 1], p. 380).

14. "Consimiliter judicavit eadem Facultas de traductione ejusdem bible de latino in vulgare [sic!], quod scilicet sunt omnino prohibende nec ferende ..." (RCFT 1, 22 August 1523, f. 106r, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. CLERVAL [n. 1], p. 380).

15. On 3 November the Faculty took notice of the king's concerns through the mediation of Guillaume Petit, bishop of Troyes and confessor of the king. Francis I had the intention to entice Erasmus to France and therefore wished to be kept informed about the errors the theologians believed they had discerned in the humanist's works. See, among others: "... adjungebat [Guillaume Petit] ipsum dominum nostrum regem sic sibi dixisse: 'Audiui quod theologi Parisienses volunt damnare libros Erasmi, quem ego volo accersire ad me, de quo in tendo eis [theologis] scribere'" (RCTF 1, 3 November 1523, f. 116r, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. CLERVAL [n. 1], p. 401-402). Also: FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), pp. 256-257; comp. VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 242-243. On the role of the king as protector of humanisme and *évangélisme*: FARGE, *Early Censorship* (n. 2), p. 174.

16. "... presentement il a pleu a la bonte divine inciter les nobles cueurs et chrestiens desirs des plus haultes et puissantes dames et princesses du royaume de rechef faire imprimer le nouveau testament pour leur edification et consolation, et de ceulx du royaume:

again with a royal privilege and notwithstanding the judgment of the theologians that in the Autumn of 1523 the subsequent volumes of Lefèvre's French New Testament were published¹⁷. However, the translator did become more earnestly concerned with basing himself exclusively on the Vulgate (which was presumably the result of the theologians' pressure). The Gospels (already edited in June), like the Epistles of Paul (October), were preceded by an "épître exhortatoire" in which Lefèvre pleaded for the laity's right to read the Bible in the vernacular. Like Erasmus, he considered the vernacular reading of the Scripture as a preparation for and a deepening of the sermons in the church¹⁸.

The Parisian theologians also pursued other reform-minded clerics and theologians of the Meaux circle¹⁹. On 26 November 1523, Martial Mazurier and Pierre Caroli were condemned for what they had been preaching in the churches of the diocese²⁰. On 2 December 1523, an official *Determination* was proclaimed condemning 41 of the propositions the two preachers had defended in their sermons²¹. One of the condemned

affin quil ne soit seulement de nom dit royaume treschrestien: mais aussi de faict" (J. LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Related Texts*, ed. E.F. RICE, JR., New York – London, Columbia University Press, 1972, n° 138, pp. 457-468, esp. 457-458; also: J. LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *Le Nouveau Testament*, ed. SCREECH, vol. 2 [n. 6], f. A.iir^o-A.iiv^o). Comp. BEDOUELLE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures* (n. 3), pp. 113, 123-125.

17. The Epistles of Paul and the Catholic or Apostolic Epistles were published on 17 October, the Acts of the Apostles on 31 October, and the Book of Revelation on 6 November 1523.

18. See a.o. in the "épître exhortatoire" to the Gospels: "Et affin que ung chacun qui a congnoissance de la langue gallicane et non point du latin soit plus dispose a recevoir ceste presente grace, ... vous sont ordonnees en langue vulgaire par la grace diceluy [Jesuchrist] les evangiles selon le latin qui se list communement par tout sans riens y adiouster ou diminuer. Affin que les simples membres du corps de Jesuchrist, ayans ce en leur langue, puissent estre aussi certains de la verite evangelique comme ceulx qui lont en latin" (LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, ed. RICE [n. 16], n° 137, pp. 449-456, esp. 450; also: LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *Le Nouveau Testament*, ed. SCREECH, vol. 1 [n. 6], f. a.iir^o-a.iiv^o; a short analysis in VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* [n. 3], pp. 238-240). In the preface to the Epistles: "Qui est ce doncques celuy qui nestimera estre chose deue et convenante a salut d'avoir ce nouveau testament en langue vulgaire? ... Il est doncques tresexpedient de le avoir, les lire et le porter sur soy en reverence, le avoir en son cueur et le ouyr non une fois, mais ordinairement es chapitres de Jesuchrist, qui sont les eglises ou tout le peuple tant simple comme scavant se doit assembler a ouyr et honorer la sainte parole de dieu" (LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, ed. RICE [n. 16], n° 138, pp. 457-468, esp. 465; also: LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *Le Nouveau Testament*, ed. SCREECH, vol. 2 [n. 6], f. a.iir^o-a.iiir^o). Comp. BEDOUELLE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures* [n. 3], pp. 223-227).

19. On this episod, see also: VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 254-258.

20. *Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 1 (n. 1), p. xix has as a date 14 November 1523, which is judged incorrect by M. Veissière.

21. *Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 1 (n. 1), pp. xiv-xx.

propositions concerned the exhortation (carried out for the most part by Mazurier) to all Christians, and then primarily to the clergy, to apply themselves seriously to the study of the Scriptures. Another proposition that the Parisian theologians condemned stated that the common people were permitted to gather together and to entertain discussions about the Bible and its problematic passages. The Parisians stressed that it was explicitly forbidden for the laity to talk about anything having to do with the Bible or other points of the faith during informal meetings or so-called ‘conventicles’²². Strictly speaking, the *Determination* did not tackle the issue of Bible translations in the vernacular²³, but it was indeed a further step in this direction.

On the basis of the ungoing discussion, it is not difficult to reconstruct how the theologians of Paris actually thought: because Luther claimed to support his new teachings on the pure reading of the Bible and he himself also had commenced the translation of the Bible into German, the link between heresy and vernacular Bible reading was clearly established in their mind. The humanists who also pleaded for the lay-Bible were thought of as paving the way for Lutheranism. The Parisian theologians found retrospective support for their position by looking to their illustrious predecessors who, in their time, had to deal with the medieval heresies of Cathars, Waldensians, Hussites and heterodox Beguines. It was claimed that these theologians of Paris also had made a connection between, on the one hand, brands of heterodox ideas, and, on the other, the free reading of the Bible by the laity and the discussion about it in conventicles²⁴.

While still involved in the reform movement in Meaux, and having not yet been formally condemned, Lefèvre issued in February 1524 a French translation of the Psalms²⁵. This book too was introduced by an “épître exhortatoire”, in which Lefèvre defended his translation project

22. “Propositio prima. Omnes Christiani & maxime Clerici sunt inducendi ad studium scripturae sanctae, quia aliae doctrinae sunt humanae & parum fructuosae. Censura. Haec Propositio secundum primam partem, laicos quoscumque innuens ad studium sacrae scripturae & difficultatum ejusdem esse inducendos, sicut & Clericos, ex errore pauperum de Lugduno decerpitur. Quantum ad secundam partem, quae etiam innuit omnem doctrinam praeter nudam litteram biblicam pure humanam esse & inutilem, temere & arroganter ad praedictorum haeticorum errores conformiter asserta est. Propositio secunda. Licitum est simplici populo simul diebus festis aut aliis convenire, ut de Biblia & ejus difficultatibus conferat. Propositio tertia. Licitum eidem populo de fide Catholica disputare, & sacram scripturam exponere cum sit Christianus. Censura. Utraque harum Propositionum temerarie & falso asseritur, ac errores instaurat Valdensium & Boemorum. Neque ferenda sunt idiotarum conventicula, aut illorum de arduis fidei disputationes, cum jure damnentur” (*Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D’ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 1 [n. 1], p. xvii).

23. This is stressed in: AQUILON, *Paris et la Bible française* (n. 1), p. 15.

24. Comp. CAMERON, *Charges of Lutheranism* (n. 3), p. 123.

25. LAUNE, *Lefèvre d’Étaples et la traduction française de la Bible* (n. 6), p. 67.

as a trial to unlock the Psalms to lay people²⁶. During the course of the year 1525, the French humanist also produced yet another publication, his so called *Epistres et Evangiles pour les cinquante et deux semaines de l'an* ...²⁷. As the title indicates, the work was a French translation of the Epistle and the Gospel readings for every Sunday and feast-day of the Church year, and for a very limited number of feast-days for saints that had a clear basis in Scripture. The Bible texts themselves were taken from Lefèvre's previously published French translations of the New Testament. Each of the pericopes was followed by an *exhortation*, a paraphrase that stays very close to the Bible text, and has also an eye for the practical application of the biblical message on the life of the intended audience. The work was the written result of a series of homilies that, from 1521 onwards, were drafted by Lefèvre and a number of his assistants. It was primarily intended as a help for the *curés* and *vicaires* who lacked the abilities to draft a good homily themselves, but it could also be read by lay people at home (or in church).

II. PIERRE COUSTURIER'S PLEA AGAINST TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE IN THE VERNACULAR (1525)

The Parisian theologians themselves meanwhile persisted in their opposition to these new Latin versions of the Bible that were different from the Vulgate, and against Bible translations in the vernacular. Because the humanists had the support of the king, it was unfeasible that the Parisian

26. "... nous avons mys ledict saint livre en langaige vulgaire, affin que ceulx et celles qui parlent et entendent ce langaige puissent plus devotement et par meilleure affection prier dieu, et qu'ilz entendent aucunement ce qu'ilz prient, comme ilz font en plusieurs nations. Et avec ce les simples clerchez en conferant et lisant ver pour ver auront plus facilement l'intelligence de ce qu'ilz lisent en latin" (LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES, *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, ed. RICE [n. 16], n° 139, pp. 468-470, esp. 469). As regards this passage Bogaert and Gilmont observe: "Le féminin explicite (*ceulx et celles*) n'est pas anodin dans le contexte du XVI^e siècle" (BOGAERT – GILMONT, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et le seizième siècle* [n. 6], p. 55). A short analysis of the preface on the Psalms in: VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 288-289.

27. J. LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES *et al.*, *Épistres & Évangiles pour les cinquante & deux semaines de l'an*. Fac-similé de la première édition Simon Du Bois, ed. M.A. SCREECH (Travaux d'humanisme et renaissance, 63), Genève, Droz, 1964; J. LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES *et al.*, *Epistres et Evangiles pour les cinquante et deux dimanches de l'an*. Texte de l'édition Pierre de Vingle, ed. G. BEDOUELLE – F. GIACONE, Leiden, Brill, 1976. Also: H. MEYLAN, *Lefèvre d'Étaples, les thèmes théologiques des Épîtres et Évangiles des 52 dimanches*, in A. STEGMANN (ed.), *L'humanisme français au début de la Renaissance. Colloque International de Tours (XIV^e stage)* (De Pétrarque à Descartes, 29), Paris, Vrin, 1973, 185-192; VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 307-311.

theologians, as a body, would issue an official condemnation. The strategy therefore was to grant an individual *magister* the permission to pronounce ‘his’ theological judgment, and even to defend it in a publication. It was according to this policy that the Carthusian, Pierre Cousturier alias Petrus Sutor, received ‘permission’ from the Faculty to publish a book against the new Bible translations²⁸. His work, *De tralatione bibliae*, appeared at the beginning of 1525²⁹ and voiced, *de facto*, the judgment of the Parisian Theological Faculty³⁰. In Sutor’s opinion, the Bible was synonymous with the Latin Vulgate, which he defended as a “vera ac fidelis”, “probata atque auctentica” et “sufficiens” version. The Vulgate was the veritable basis for the formulation of the faith. The Parisian theologians considered it sacrilegious to assert that this text could possibly be subject to corruption and hence must be emended in the light of the Hebrew and Greek originals. This would inevitably undermine the faith that was based upon and reflected in the text of the Vulgate³¹. In addition, the translation of the Bible in the vernacular was also considered as a particularly controversial undertaking. The whole twenty second and last chapter of Sutor’s book was dedicated to the question of the translation of the Bible in the vernacular, and was thus aimed at attacking Lefèvre and Erasmus³². The work can also be considered the first theological treatise of the Early Modern Period that rejected, in a systematic way, the reading of the Bible in the vernacular. In the second part of our article we will briefly consider Sutor’s thought.

In *De tralatione bibliae*, Sutor supported that reading the Bible (and also of commentaries, *annotationes*, paraphrases ...) was completely

28. RCFT 1, 30 August 1524, f. 149r, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. FARGE (n. 1), n° 43A, p. 50. Also: FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), pp. 179, 187.

29. Petrus SUTOR, *De tralatione bibliae, et novarum reprobatione interpretationum ...* -, Parisiis: apud Ioannem Parvum [=Petit], 1525, Av, Ci, [1] f.; in -f°. For an analysis of Sutor’s work and particularly of his stance about Bible translations in the vernacular, see my article: W. FRANÇOIS, *Petrus Sutor et son plaidoyer contre les traductions de la Bible en langue populaire (1525)*, in *ETL* 82 (2006) 139-163. Also: H. HOLECZEK, *Humanistische Bibelphilologie als Reformproblem bei Erasmus von Rotterdam, Thomas More und William Tyndale* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 9), Leiden, Brill, 1975, pp. 203-223 and E. RUMMEL, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*. Vol. II: 1523-1536 (Bibliotheca humanistica & reformatorica, 45), Nieuwkoop, De Graaf, 1989, pp. 61-67.

30. Erasmus was also of the opinion that Sutor expressed, in a semi-official way, the standpoint of the Paris Theological Faculty (D. Erasmus to W. Pirckheimer, 26 August 1525, in *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*. Vol. 6: 1525-1527, ed. P.S. ALLEN – H.M. ALLEN, Oxford, Clarendon, 1926, n° 1603, pp. 155 l. 33 – 156 l. 35). Also Sutor’s dedication to the Parisian theologians points in the same direction (SUTOR, *De tralatione Bibliae* [n. 29], f. Aiiir-v).

31. See among others: SUTOR, *De tralatione Bibliae* (n. 29), f. Aiiir-v, XLVIR, XLIXr, LIIV-LIIIV.

32. *Ibid.*, f. XCIIIr – CIV.

unnecessary for the lay people's salvation, was anything but advantageous, and even was probably harmful³³. It was enough for them to know the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments and the Ecclesiastical Commandments. To underpin his position, Sutor unscrupulously identified the lay people with the dogs and the swine to whom it was not allowed to give that which is holy, according to Christ's word in Mt 7,6 and Chrysostom's interpretation of this word³⁴. We are before a classic biblical passage that opponents of the translation of the Bible into the vernacular regularly quoted, which clearly betrayed a very dubious ecclesiology. Another biblical passage that Sutor quoted in order to support his stance, was Lk 4,20: "And he [Jesus] closed the book, and gave it back to the minister, and sat down". As H. Holeczek has noticed rightly, Sutor has elevated the simple representation of a specific scene to an exemplary act gaining general validity: Christ entrusted the Scriptures to the *ministri*; hence it is the clergy that receives the right to dispose of them³⁵. Simple lay people, illiterate and consumed by their day-to-day worries, were intellectually and spiritually incapable of understanding the Scriptures. They always read the Bible superficially, i.e. according to its words, and were not capable of piercing through the outside shell ("cortex") of the Scriptures in order to get to the inner, spiritual (i.e. allegorical) sense. Hence, the laity could seize several histories of the Old Testament as a sanctioning of polygamy, adultery and idolatry. And, what is still worse, by limiting themselves to the literal words only, lay people ran the risk of falling into errors and even heresies³⁶.

Next to the difficulty and obscurity of the Scriptures themselves, Sutor dealt with the different vices that vernacular Bible reading evoked among lay people. It incited them to an improper curiosity ("curiositas") regarding

33. *Ibid.*, f. XCIIIr: "Dicet quispiam, ut ydiotae et mulierculae, quae latine nesciunt sacram scripturam nosse possint, sicque scriptura ipsa plenius divulgatur, et ab omnibus intelligatur, quae pro salute omnium tradita est. Bella scilicet responsio, quasi vero notitia totius bibliae sit omnibus necessaria ad salutem, aut etiam ad omnes pertineat sacrae scripturae mysteria nosse, vel denique possint literae divinae sine periculo passim ab omnibus tractari. Haec enim falsa".

34. *Ibid.*, f. XCIIIv: "... Cum igitur in republica sint quam plurimi canes, hoc est impugnatores veritatis, vel ad vomitum peccatorum reversi, sint et quamplurimi porci id est contemptores, aut in luto viciorum versantes, sint denique plerique indigni quibus talia proponantur, non sunt passim committenda sacrae scripturae mysteria, ne sordidis actibus ea conculcent, vel non intelligentes contemnunt, vel male intelligentes erroris occasionem inde hauriant".

35. *Ibid.*, f. XCIIIv. Comp. HOLECZEK, *Humanistische Bibelphilologie* (n. 29), p. 208.

36. SUTOR, *De translatione bibliae* (n. 29), f. XCVr – XCVr, among others f. XCVv: "Non enim dicere possis per se rudem populum intelligere posse scripturam ipsam aliter quam verba sonent ... si inquam non in verbis, non in cortice literae est evangelium, quomodo simplex populus poterit intelligere, qui nec possit quidem capere ut verba sonant".

things that were none of their business and to a contempt of ecclesiastical traditions, such as Lenten Fast, annual confession etc. that were not explicitly found in the Bible. It further provoked a lack of care (“incuria”) for the natural duties belonging to their lay status. Reading the Bible in their own language exposed people to an arrogance (“arrogantia”) of thinking they could take part in debating the mysteries of faith contained in Scripture, even at the occasion of illegal conventicles. Finally, simple men and women threatened to be guilty of a lack of reverence for the divine book itself (“irreverentia divinatorum”), which they preserved in their humble abodes³⁷.

The knowledge of the Bible was best reserved for people who had the time and space for study, who led a spiritual life, and who preferably were disposed toward contemplation. They alone were able to pierce the Bible’s literal layer and grasp its deeper allegorical sense³⁸. This was undoubtedly Sutor’s most central argument.

Sutor was willing to make a small exception with regard to the “devotuli”, by which he perhaps meant groups such as the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, who had their origins in the spirituality of the Modern Devotion. There were provisions made for them to be granted a book with pericopes containing the Epistles and Gospels of the mass, and provided with a sound commentary on these pericopes as well³⁹.

Sutor argued that Bible translations, like those that had been recently published, had to be avoided (it looks as if Sutor refers to both new Latin versions of the Bible and vernacular translations). The Church would do better to keep to the Latin Vulgate. The “termini” in the Vulgate had been permanently fixed by the Fathers after profound assessment, and signified the Catholic faith in a perfect way. These fixed theological-technical formulations should never be altered by recently-devised arguments and new translations; not least because they were often the vehicle for erroneous teachings. Sutor supported this plea by referring to some Old Testament passages that, literally speaking, required respect for the boundary markers or “termini” between the territories of different owners. Sutor for his part interpreted the Old Testament quotations “secundum mysticum sensum” or according to the allegorical sense⁴⁰:

37. *Ibid.*, f. xcvir – xcviiv.

38. *Ibid.*, f. xcviiv – xcviiv.

39. *Ibid.*, f. xcviiv – xcixr, a.o. f. xcixr: “Et nihilominus vt votis eius plenius respondeatur, dicimus epistolas et euangelia quae in ecclesia palam decantari et a praedicatoribus proponi, exponique solent, cum decenti, fidelique explanatione in vernaculam linguam transfundi posse”.

40. *Ibid.*, f. xcixv – civ, a.o. f. xcixv: “Hortamur denique omnes in communi ut antiqua tritaque sequantur vestigia, maiorum traditionibus acquiescant. Et demum occasione



Title page of SUTOR, *De tralatione Bibliae*
(Maurits Sabbe Library – Faculty of Theology K.U.Leuven
P 279.133.0/F° SUTO Tral 1525)

“termini” were then to be understood as fixed theological-technical formulations⁴¹.

In the subtext, one can see that Sutor held on to the conviction that the Scriptures were actually a source of dogmas which could only be deduced by professional theologians through the application of a certain technique, and subsequently were proclaimed by the doctrinal authority of the Church. Sutor identified this dogmatic sense of the Scriptures for the most part with its allegorical meaning. Due to its revelatory character, the Bible actually was not translatable into the vernacular⁴².

At the same time Sutor was publishing his book, the Parisian theologians had also begun to conduct an inquiry into Erasmus' *Annotationes* and especially into his *Paraphrases* of the New Testament, which we will discuss a little further. Sutor's book and the initial inquiry into Erasmus' works led to a comprehensive correspondence between the humanist and Beda, which lasted more than a year⁴³. Of course, the issue of vernacular Bible translations was at stake in the correspondence, each of the antagonists defending his proper position. Erasmus also wrote a reply to Sutor's *De tralatione bibliae* under the title *Apologia adversus Petri Sutoris debacchationem* (August 1525)⁴⁴, which then in turn provoked a retort from Sutor, and so on⁴⁵.

novarum tralationum, insanarumque inventionum terminos a patribus positos nulla ex parte transferant”.

41. HOLECZEK, *Humanistische Bibelphilologie* (n. 29), p. 218: “... theologische Fachausdrücke ...”.

42. Comp. *ibid.*, p. 218.

43. For an analysis of this correspondence, see: A. RENAUDET, *Études Érasmiennes (1521-1529)*, Paris, 1939, pp. 241-247, 254-256, 259-260, 262-263; M.P. GILMORE, *Valla, Érasme, et Bédier à propos du Nouveau Testament*, in STEGMANN (ed.), *L'humanisme français au début de la Renaissance* (n. 27), 177-179; FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), pp. 187-190; RUMMEL, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics*, vol. 2 (n. 29), pp. 29-33; NAUERT, “A Remarkably Supercilious and Touchy Lot” (n. 2), pp. 45-49; CRANE, *Competing Visions of Christian Reform* (n. 2), pp. 44-50.

44. See: Desiderius ERASMUS ROTERODAMUS, *Apologia adversus debacchationes Petri Sutoris*, in *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Opera Omnia... T. IX: Qui apologiarum partem primam complectitur/[a Ioanne Clerico]*, Lugduni Batavorum: Cura et impensis Petri Vander Aa, 1706, [3 f.], 1248 col.; in f° (anast., London, Gregg Press, 1962), c. 737-804; henceforth abbreviated as LB, 9. For a discussion about that book: HOLECZEK, *Humanistische Bibelphilologie* (n. 29), pp. 224-235; RUMMEL, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, vol. 2, pp. 67-69. Also: C.R. THOMPSON, *Scripture for the Ploughboy and Some Others*, in D.B.J. RANDALL – G.W. WILLIAMS (eds.), *Studies in the Continental Background of Renaissance English Literature: Essays Presented to John L. Lievsay*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1977, 3-28, esp. pp. 16-17, 25. In addition to Thompson's article, we can identify the quotation “... arator aliquid e Psalmo decantet ad stivam” as a paraphrase of Hieronymus, *Ep. XLVI. Paulae et Eustochiae ad Marcellam*, ed. I. HILBERG (CSEL, 54²), Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996, pp. 342 l. 17 – 343 l. 2.

45. RUMMEL, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, vol. 2 (n. 29), pp. 69-73.

III. TOWARD AN OFFICIAL CONDEMNATION OF LEFÈVRE'S FRENCH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE (1525-26)⁴⁶

At the time Sutor's book was published, early 1525, the political and spiritual climate in France had shifted profoundly and the Parisian theologians along with their uncompromising posture toward the Lutherans and humanists gained some wind in their sails. King Francis I, the patron of the humanists, was detained in Madrid by the Emperor Charles, after his defeat in Pavia. In enforcing a hard-line approach to the Lutherans, the Faculty received more support than ever from the *Parlement de Paris*. Also the queen mother Louise of Savoy, regent during the king's absence, gave full support to both the Faculty and the Parlement in the struggle against heresy. She ratified the establishment of a special inquisitorial tribunal composed of two cleric-councillors from the Parlement and two doctors from the Theological Faculty, the *juges délégués*, who became involved in the prosecution of several supposed 'heretics'.

In the second half of the year 1525, trials were held against diverse protagonists of the Meaux circle. The theologians proceeded against Pierre Caroli who had resumed his reform-minded preachings in Paris. They blamed him, amongst others, because he wanted to give every person free access to the Bible, and also preferred to base the doctrine and the practices of the faith on Scripture alone, without taking all too much into consideration the traditions of the Church⁴⁷. Martial Mazurier also had resumed his reform-minded preachings in Meaux, with the support of bishop Briçonnet. It led to a long and dragging trial at the end of the Summer of 1525, in which also Briçonnet became implicated⁴⁸. One of the questions

46. For an analysis of this episod, also: CAMERON, *Charges of Lutheranism* (n. 3), pp. 130-135; HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* (n. 1), pp. 25-27, 77-82; FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), pp. 181-185, 257-259; VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 293-368. Also: BEDOUELLE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures* (n. 3), pp. 103-120, 126-132.

47. The full story in: VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 294-302. The propositions censured in: *Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 (n. 1), pp. 26-30. Also: CARON, *Noël Béda* (n. 2), pp. 108-112, 124-129; R. DOUCET, *Étude sur le Gouvernement de François I^{er} dans ses rapports avec le Parlement de Paris (1525-1527)* [= vol. 2] (Publications de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger, II^e Série: t. I), Alger, J. Carbonel – Paris, E. Champion, 1926, pp. 175-176.

48. For an account of the Briçonnet-trial and the events that gave cause for it, see: M. VEISSIÈRE, *Le procès de Guillaume Briçonnet au Parlement de Paris en 1525*, in *BSHPF* 130 (1984) 5-28. This article is a complement and a revision of S. BERGER, *Le procès de Guillaume Briçonnet au Parlement de Paris, en 1525: Lettre à M. le baron F. de Schickler*, in *BSHPF* 44 (1895) 7-22. Also: VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 329-345; DOUCET, *Étude sur le Gouvernement*, vol. 2 (n. 47), pp. 177-187; FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), pp. 183-184, 237-240. A partial edition of the sources, a.o. in: BULAEUS,

at stake was, again, whether lay people had to right to the read the Bible and, hence, whether it was legitimate to translate it in the vernacular. In his final plea before the *Parlement de Paris*, on the 1st of September 1525, *le procureur du roi* Lizet aligned himself with the ‘contras’ and condemned vernacular bibles, which, in his view, were made to mislead the common people “les idiotz lisans et entendans *secundum superficiem litter[a]*”⁴⁹.

While the Briçonnet-trial was still in progress, and in reply to the particular question whether it was expedient to have printed the French translation of “Meresotte’s” (= Pierre Gringore) *Horae beatae Virginis*, the Parisian Theological Faculty proclaimed, at the end of August 1525, an official condemnation of Bible translations in the vernacular⁵⁰. The *Parlement de Paris* took over the *determinatio* in its own registers, and, hence, gave official approbation and legal force to it⁵¹. The sentence can be viewed as the very first official prohibition on Bible translations in the vernacular that was issued in France in the Modern Period⁵². It is clear that it would not remain without consequences for Lefèvre d’Étaples and for his Bible translations on which the reform movement in Meaux was largely based...

Two months after the condemnation of vernacular bibles, on November 6th, 1525, there followed a condemnation of 48 propositions taken from the *Epistres et Evangiles pour les cinquante et deux semaines de lan*, a number of them dealing with the sufficiency of Scripture and the worthlessness of human traditions⁵³. It was not yet known at that point that

Historia Universitatis Parisiensis (n. 1), vol. 6; FARGE, *Le parti conservateur au XVI^e siècle* (n. 2), pp. 67-78; M. VEISSIÈRE, *Le procès de Guillaume Briçonnet au Parlement de Paris en 1525. II – Quelques textes*, in *BSHPF* 132 (1986) 543-560.

49. Comp. VEISSIÈRE, *Le procès de Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 48), pp. 14-15; ID., *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 341-342.

50. “... neque expediens est, neque utile Reipublicae Christianae, imo *visa hujus temporis conditione*, prorsus pernitiosum, non solum illam translationem Horarum, sed etiam alias *translationes Bibliae*, aut partium ejus, *prout jam passim fieri videntur*, admitti; et quod *illae quae jam emissae sunt*, supprimi magis deberent, quam tolerari” (*Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D’ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 [n. 1], p. 7^{*}).

51. “... et sera la *determinatio* de ladicte faculté de theologie enregistree ès registres de ladicte court, afin qu’elle puisse estre veue lorsque aucuns libraires ou imprimeurs voudront requerir leur estre permis imprimer aucuns livres ... et seront faites defenses à tous imprimeurs de ne exposer, ne imprimer aucun des livres de la sainte escriture en langage françois sans permission de ladite cour” (quoted in HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* [n. 1], pp. 25-26 n. 16, p. 77 and FARGE [ed.], *Procès-verbaux de la Faculté de Paris* [n. 1], pp. 105-106 n. 63).

52. Comp. HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* (n. 1), p. 78.

53. RCTF 1, 6 November 1525, f. 182v, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. FARGE, n° 126 A, pp. 116-117; *Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D’ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 (n. 1), pp. 35-40, esp. 40: “... quia continue inculcat nihil populo esse praedicandum

Lefèvre was the primary author of the text. The tenacity the theologians showed in targeting the *Epistres et Evangiles* made it clear that not only lay Bibles themselves but also and above all the annotations that go along with them, were distrusted as vehicles for Reformation-oriented heresies. It was decided that bishop Briçonnet should be, again, interrogated on the 29th of December about the book concerned. Nothing is known about the outcome of this particular interrogation; it is beyond any doubt, however, that Briçonnet took pains to attest his orthodoxy. Eventually, he was condemned to pay the costs of the trials that had been engaged against diverse of his diocesans⁵⁴.

On the 5th of February, 1526, the *Parlement* repeated the measures that it already had proclaimed at the end of August⁵⁵, and stipulated that anyone who possessed French translations of books of the Old and New Testament, or furthermore, a book with the Gospels and Epistles of Sundays and feast-days “with certain exhorting commentaries in French”, must deliver these works within eight days to the authorities. The decree once again emphasized the danger of having free and open discussions about the Scriptures and other matters of the faith during conventicles⁵⁶.

praeter Evangelium, ... ipse liber ... merito venit exurendus cum omnibus similibus et qui illum composuerunt, aut legi, seu praedicari populo fecerunt: eundem publice ad scandali reparationem debent execrari et damnare et praecipue errores praenotatos”. Comp. HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* (n. 1), p. 80; VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 311-312.

54. VEISSIÈRE, *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 351-359.

55. FARGE, *Early Censorship in Paris* (n. 2), p. 178.

56. “Et pour ce que plusieurs personnes, au moyen de ce qu’ils lisent les livres de la Sainte Escripiture translatez de latin en françoys, sont inventeurs de plusieurs hérésies, font conventicules, disputent et traitent de la foy catholique, contemnent les commandemens et ministres de l’Église, se divertissent du train commun des vrays fidèles et du devoir deu aux sacremens, prédications et services de l’Église, et suivent [=sement?] grandes erreurs dont viennent et pourroient advenir plusieurs scandales, maux et inconveniens en ce royaume ... il sera enjoint de par le Roy et ladite Cour à tous ceux qui ont en possession les livres des cantiques du Pseautier, [Apocalypse,] les Évangiles, Epistres de saint Paul et autres livres du vieil et nouveau Testament, conteneuz en la sainte Bible, qui ont esté de nouveau translatez de latin en françoys et imprimez, et aussi un livre imprimé contenant aucunes evangiles et epistres du dimanche et autres solemnitez de l’année avec certaines oraisons [=exortations] en françoys, qu’ils en vuydent leurs mains et les [mectent et] apportent dans huit jours après la publication de ce présent arrest ... pour estre sequestrez et gardez sous la main de justice par manière de provision et jusques à ce que autrement il en sera ordonné. Et seront faictes inhibitions et défences à tous imprimeurs doresnavant de non imprimer aucuns des livres dessusdicts en françois, et si aucuns en ont, de ne les exposer en vente, mais de les apporter audit greffe sur peine de confiscation de leurs biens et de bannissement de ce royaume”. For the text, see: Paris, *Archives Nationales X^{1A} 1529*, f. 107r-v, quoted in LABARRE, *La censure de la Bible* (n. 1), p. 403. Comp. HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* (n. 1), pp. 26-27, 80. Also: FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), p. 179; VEISSIÈRE, *Le procès de Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 47), pp. 22-23; ID., *Guillaume Briçonnet* (n. 3), pp. 313, 363-364; DOUCET, *Étude sur le Gouvernement*, vol. 2 (n. 47), p. 189.

Obviously in the wake of the Briçonnet-trial and with a view to the dissolution of the Meaux circle, the Parliament of Paris had issued, on 3 October 1525, several arrest warrants against members of the group. Lefèvre d'Étaples for his part was summoned to appear before the Parliament of Paris. Thereupon, Lefèvre, accompanied by some reform-minded allies in the movement, had eloped to Strasbourg, where he could carry on his work translating the Old Testament. He continued the translation work even after he had received the task of caring for the castle library in Blois, and continued it still after he had retired in Nérac. As a result of the successive condemnations of the Paris Faculty of Theology and the *Parlement*, no more French translations of the Bible were printed in Paris between the years 1526 and 1565⁵⁷. Lefèvre was thus forced to find more secure locations where he could publish his Bible translations⁵⁸. Various editions of his vernacular Bibles (or parts of it) were issued in Antwerp, primarily (though not exclusively) by Martin Lempereur or Merten de Keyser. Lempereur was a Frenchman who, in 1525, perhaps at the urging of Lefèvre, had left behind the sphere of influence of the Parisian theologians and had emigrated to the more 'liberal' Low Countries. His Old Testament was published, in several parts, from 1528 on. Of key importance was the edition of the first complete French Bible in folio that Lempereur published on the 10th of December, 1530. It featured on its title page a "cum gratia et privilegio". The official permission to print this Bible was granted in the Emperor's name after receiving explicit consent from the inquisitor and book censor Nicolas Coppin and other Louvain theologians. This Bible thus acquired the aura of being the (semi-)official French Bible version for the Low Countries. One has to be alive to the irony of this situation. The Parisian theologians forbade Lefèvre's translations of the New Testament, in spite of the fact that they were based upon the Vulgate. The Louvain masters for their part explicitly approved

57. FARGE, *Early Censorship in Paris* (n. 1), p. 179; AQUILON, *Paris et la Bible française* (n. 1), pp 18, 22 n. 20.

58. HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* (n. 1), pp. 8, 14, 78-82; BEDOUELLE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et l'Intelligence des Écritures* (n. 3), pp. 114-116; BOGAERT – GILMONT, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et le seizième siècle* (n. 6), pp. 56-65. Also: P.-M. BOGAERT, *Les versions françaises de la Bible au XVI^e siècle*, in [P.M.G. LEVY (ed.),] *Les religions facteurs de paix, facteurs de guerres* (Les cahiers du CRESUP, 2), Louvain-la-Neuve, UCL. Centre de recherche sur la paix, 1979, pp. 33-43; P. ARBLASTER, 'Totius Mundi Emporium': Antwerp as a Centre for Vernacular Bible Translations 1523-1545, in A.-J. GELDERBLOM – J.L. DE JONG – M. VAN VAECK (eds.), *The Low Countries as a Crossroads of Religious Beliefs* (Intersections, 3), Leiden – Boston, Brill, 2004, 9-31, esp. pp. 19-20. And: BEDOUELLE – ROUSSEL (eds.), *Le temps des Réformes et la Bible* (n. 6), pp. 148, 444-445, 464-465, 534-535. For a bibliographical description of the Antwerp editions, see: CHAMBERS, *Bibliography of French Bibles* (n. 6).



Title page of LEFÈVRE, *La sainte Bible en francoys*, printed in 1530 by LEMPEREUR (Amsterdam UB, Ned. Inc. 366).

Lefèvre's Bible, even though its text has distanced from the Vulgate and was emended on the basis of Erasmus' New Testament and Sancte Pagninus' Latin translations of the Hebrew Old Testament. In 1534 Lempereur edited a revised version of the Bible, again "cum gratia et privilegio"⁵⁹. In 1541 Antoine des Gois, another Antwerp printer, reprinted the Bible in two forms: one for the publisher Anthonis vander Haghen mentioning on the titlepage the publisher's name and the date of 1541, and another with the original titlepage of 1534 and hence mentioning the name of Martin Lempereur. In 1548, still in Antwerp, a brother-in-law of Anthonis vander Haghen, Jan van der Loe, published a new edition of the 1534 Bible. This time, no "cum gratia et privilegio" had been granted, for the version had been prohibited by the 1546 Louvain Index. Van der Loe's edition however was particularly destined for export purposes. Lefèvre's New Testament for its part, had, from 1525 on, about twenty Antwerp editions⁶⁰.

IV. THE CENSURE OF ERASMUS' *PARAPHRASES* BY THE PARISIAN THEOLOGIANS AND THEIR LEADER NOËL BEDA (1527-31)

Back in Paris, Lefèvre's Bible translation was condemned, the Meaux circle dismantled, and bishop Briçonnet disciplined. The humanists' protector, king Francis I, was still detained in Madrid. The Parisian theologians were now free to gang up on Erasmus. They had not only objections against the humanist's new Latin version of the New Testament, but they were particularly suspicious about his paraphrases and commentaries of

59. In the second edition of this Bible, edited in 1534, the text was even more adapted to the Hebrew and Greek originals, although greater use was made of the Latin Vulgate-revision that Robert Estienne had published in 1532. The edition of 1534 saw the addition of marginal notes that indicated the variances between the Vulgate and the 'original' Hebrew and Greek texts. A preface was included, which was entitled *Le contenu de l'écriture*. This was a profession of faith based on the Scriptures. It was an adaptation of the *Summa totius Scripturae* taken from Estienne's Bible version and dealing with topics cherished by the reformers. Nonetheless, the edition was still published with the explicit consent of the inquisitor and the Louvain theologians. The more general issue, however, remains whether the books' censors had closely examined and approved the Bible editions, since the evidence we have seems to require us to answer negatively ... Bogaert and Gilmont suggest that the role of Lempereur and Estienne in the redaction of the Bible of 1534 was greater, and that of Lefèvre's was more limited than was assumed until now (LAUNE, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et la traduction française de la Bible* [n. 6], pp. 65-67; Id., *Des secours dont Lefèvre d'Étaples s'est servi pour sa traduction française de l'Ancien Testament*, in *BSHPF* 50 [1901] 595-607; BOGAERT – GILMONT, *Lefèvre d'Étaples et le seizième siècle* [n. 6], pp. 59, 62-65).

60. On the French Bible editions printed in the Low Countries, see particularly the on line bibliography: www.bibliasacra.nl, next to the articles of Betty Chambers and Gwendlyn Verbraak in this volume.

the Bible, which were viewed as containing several erroneous statements and, hence, as precursors for the wider reception of Luther and his heresies. The theologians adopted the stance of their illustrious predecessors at the Faculty, who were admired for having gradually elucidated the orthodox faith and having dealt efficiently with problems of biblical interpretation, while eliminating errors. With that the *Parisienses* defended the absolute reliability of the Latin Vulgate Bible. In the fourth and final part of our article, we will recall the events that led the Parisian theologians to condemn Erasmus's works⁶¹. Already at the end of 1523, Noël Bédà had personally and discretely begun to formulate critical annotations with respect to Erasmus' *Paraphrases* of the New Testament, after the king had restrained the Faculty from producing an official condemnation of the humanist's biblical works⁶². In January 1524, Bédà began making extracts from Erasmus' *Paraphrases on the Gospel of Luke*, in response to a request the Paris printer Konrad Resch had submitted to the *Parlement* in order to obtain an official permission to reprint the book. Bédà and the Faculty issued a negative advise and Resch dropped the editing project. Bédà continued examining other volumes of the humanist's *Paraphrases*.

In the spring of 1526, Bédà gained the formal permission from the Faculty to publish his *Annotationes* against Erasmus' work, together with these against Lefèvre d'Étaples' commentaries on the New Testament⁶³. Bédà's *Annotationes* took the form of a very censure, in which the author

61. For an account of this phase of the controversy between Erasmus and the Parisian theologians: HIGMAN, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* (n. 1), pp. 27-30; FARGE, *Orthodoxy and Reform* (n. 1), pp. 176-177, 186-196, 260-262; RUMMEL, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, vol. 2 (n. 29), pp. 33-49; FARGE, *Erasmus, the University of Paris, and the Profession of Theology*, in *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 19 (1999) 18-46, pp. 29-39; comp. ID., *The Parisian University Milieu in the Age of Erasmus* (n. 2), pp. 6-12. Also: CARON, *Noël Bédà* (n. 2), pp. 133-155; AQUILON, *Paris et la Bible française* (n. 1), pp. 16-17.

62. See: RUMMEL, *Why Noël Bédà Did Not Like Erasmus' Paraphrases* (n. 2).

63. RCTF 1, 16 May 1526, f. 191r-v, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. FARGE (n. 1), n° 152 A-B, pp. 136-138. The book had first been edited by Josse Bade in Paris. We however refer to an edition published the same year in Cologne: BEDA, *Natalis, Annotationum ... in Jacobum Fabrum Stapulensem libri duo. Et in Desiderium Erasmus Roterodanum liber unus..-/-*, [in colophon: Coloniae: ex officina literaria ... Petri Quentell], 1526, [12], CCXCII p.; in -4°. An analysis of the content of Bédà's *Annotationes* in: CAMERON, *Charges of Lutheranism* (n. 3), pp. 136-147; N. BALLEY, *Paraphrastes perversus depravator: les censures de Noël Bédà contre les Paraphrases d'Érasme sur les quatre évangiles*, in FERRER – MANTERO (eds.), *Les paraphrases bibliques aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles* (n. 5), pp. 93-111. A short analysis of the *Annotationes*' preface, which can be considered as "the most programmatic statement Bédà ever makes against humanists' application of their critical method to the text of the Bible", in: CRANE, *Competing Visions of Christian Reform* (n. 2), pp. 50-57, and already in: BENSE, *Bédà's View of the Reformation* (n. 2), pp. 96-99.

also included several propositions in favor of Bible reading in the vernacular written by both Lefèvre and Erasmus. As a reply to Lefèvre's *commentarii initiatorii* on John 15, Beda affirmed that the words of the Gospel should not be read nor discussed by simple men and women. He recalled that Lefèvre's vernacular Psalter and New Testament editions, intended to be used in the diocese of Meaux, had given rise to errors and blasphemies, and therefore had to be seized by a just order of the *Parlement*. He also pointed to the treatises that famous men had written against Bible translations in the vernacular. In addition he simply denied that vernacular Bible reading, let alone discussing the Scripture's content, might be necessary for the laypeople's strive for moral perfection. To underpin the latter statement he referred to the Church Fathers Jerome and Augustine, to Saint Francis and Saint Simplicianus⁶⁴. Further in his book, Beda also censured seven propositions taken from Erasmus' preface to the *Paraphrases* on Matthew. In this work, the humanist had even established the laity's right to read the Scriptures and, hence, the need for vernacular Bible translations⁶⁵. As a retort to Erasmus' plea, Beda referred to previous writings of his own hand, next to the decrees of Innocent III, which he considered as clear interdictions of vernacular Bible reading⁶⁶. With regard to Erasmus' paraphrase to Mark 1,1, Beda not only condemned the humanist's plea for Bible reading in the vernacular but particularly his alleged incitation to simple and illiterate people to gather together and discuss the Scriptures' content, without any mediation of preachers and doctors. To support his censure, Beda particularly referred to the decretal *Quicumque*, issued by Alexander IV (1254-1261) and included in the *Liber Sextus* of Bonifatius VIII (1298). It judged worth of excommunication those laypeople discussing "publice vel privatim" the Catholic faith⁶⁷. The sale of Beda's *Annotationes* eventually was halted

64. BEDA, *Annotationes* (n. 63), f. 224r-v: "... ut in vernaculum sacrum evangelium versum, caeteraque divinae scripturae, omnibus idiotis ac virorum ac mulierum singulis communicentur, quo illas legant, de eis disputent et conferant quasi ad perfectionem acquirendam sit id illis necessarium, expediens aut conducens".

65. On Erasmus' propositions that gave cause for the censure, see my article: W. FRANÇOIS, *La condamnation par les théologiens parisiens du plaidoyer d'Érasme pour la traduction de la Bible dans la langue vulgaire (1527-1531)*, in *Augustiniana* 55 (2005) 357-405, pp. 357-377.

66. BEDA, *Annotationes* (n. 63), f. 236r-v: "Quanto studio hic conetur Erasmus convincere licitum pulchrum decens ac simplicium saluti tum virorum tum mulierum expediens esse ut cuilibet sexui, aetati, et statui vulgari lingua sacrae omnes communicentur literae ... at istud quam rei Christianae sit noxium, non est per me aperiendum ...". Beda undoubtedly had the decree *Cum ex iniuncto* in mind (cf. *infra*, p. xxx).

67. BEDA, *Annotationes* (n. 63), f. 265v: "Videat Erasmus quam schismaticum sit idiotis, quasi gloriae dare qui de sacris literis disputando adversus illarum professores congređi praesumant, quod plane vitio debet illis verti, non cuilibet, sed quod uti superbum

by the order of Francis I, who was released from Madrid and returned to France in the spring of 1526. As before, the king was actively dedicating himself to the cause of the biblical humanists⁶⁸. Erasmus, who, in an early stage already, was made aware of the contents of Beda's work, made publishing some defenses or apologies of his own positions⁶⁹.

September 1527 marked the beginning of what James K. Farge has called, "the omnibus examination most feared by Erasmus"⁷⁰. The result was that on the 16th of December, 1527, an official condemnation was promulgated of 112 propositions taken from Erasmus' *Paraphrases* of the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul and from his defenses to Noël Beda. Among the condemned propositions, five were out of his preface to the *Paraphrases* on Matthew (whereas Beda had excerpted seven)⁷¹. As could be expected, the Parisian *Determinatio* stated that the reading of the Bible by commoners, apart from any church-authorized explanation, could easily lead people to wander into errors and heresies. The danger was never greater than when these people proceeded to discuss biblical items with one another (particularly in secret conventicles)⁷². To underpin their position, the Parisian theologians referred, among others, to the difficulties their predecessors had encountered with medieval Cathars, Albigensians, heterodox beguines and begards (also called *turelupini*) etc.⁷³. The decree

et seditiosum reique christianae non parum noxium excommunicationis commereatur censuram", with a quotation of *Sexti Decretal. Lib. V. Tit. II. De Haereticis*, c. II §2, in *Corpus Iuris Canonici*. Part 2: *Decretalium Collectiones*, ed. E.L. RICHTER – E. FRIEDBERG, Leipzig, Tauchnitz, 1881, c. 1070.

68. FARGE, *Early Censorship in Paris* (n. 2), pp. 174, 179.

69. For a concise commentary on these apologies, see: RUMMEL, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, vol. 2 (n. 29), pp. 37-43.

70. FARGE, *Erasmus, the University of Paris* (n. 61), p. 36; ID., *The Parisian University Milieu in the Age of Erasmus* (n. 2), p. 10. See: RCTF 1, 14 September 1527, f. 210r-210v, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. FARGE (n. 1), n° 209 B-C, pp. 177-178: "Item ordinavit prefata facultas quod, die lune XXIII mensis hujus septembris, vocaretur facultas per juramentum apud collegium Sorbone deliberatura super his que facta sunt per multiples deputatos facultatis in examine *Annotationum* magistri nostri Bede, *Elenchi* Erasmi et *Parafrasum* ejusdem, necnon libellorum ad hoc pertinentium, et quoad libellum missum per dominum nostrum regem ad universitatem". RCTF 1, 23 September 1527, f. 210v, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. FARGE (n. 1), n° 210 A, p. 178. Further: RCTF 1, 24 September 1527, f. 210v-211r, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. FARGE (n. 1), n° 211 A, p. 178.

71. The text of the censure is to be found in: *Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 (n. 1), pp. 60-62.

72. See a.o. in the text of the second censure: "Recte perpensa multorum hujus temporis impudenti temeritate, indignum facimus [=facinus] existimandum est quod idiotae et simplices suo judicio sacras Litteras legant in suam linguam conversas et de illis differant, aut disceptantes de earum difficultatibus tractent ..." (*Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 [n. 1], p. 61).

73. See the first censure: "... quanti tamen sit periculi permittere passim lectionem earum in linguam vulgarem traductarum, absque ulla explicatione idiotis et simplicibus eis

Cum ex iniuncto, which was written in 1199 by Pope Innocent III precisely in order to deal with secret conventicles and illegitimate preachings held by the Waldensians, and which was inserted in the Decretals of Pope Gregory IX, was interpreted by the Parisians as a formal prohibition on Bible reading in the vernacular⁷⁴. This was, however, an over-simplification. Departing from Paul's words in 1 Cor 3,2 and Heb 5,12-14 – Paul, however, was not the author of the latter letter, although this was believed to be the case in the sixteenth century –, from the interpretation of these words given by several Church Fathers⁷⁵, and obviously also on the basis

abulentibus, nec eas pie et humiliter legentibus, quales nunc plurimi reperiuntur satis indicarunt Valdenses, Albigenses ac Turelupini, qui inde occasione sumpta multos errores disseminarunt” (*Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 [n. 1], pp. 60-61).

74. See the fourth censure: “Cum Sedis Apostolicae decreto multorum talium Librorum lectio Laicis jam dudum interdicta sit, et eruditis in Lege Domini apud Hebraeos, gravium Auctorum sententia, prohibita fuerit lectio dicatorum Librorum, atque primi capituli Genesis ante annum aetatis tricesimum, praedicta propositio temerarie et impudenter assertitur, quandoquidem eadem causa subest inhibendi talium Librorum lectionem, quae suberat quando Decretum Innocentii tertii super hoc constitutum est: cujus fragmentum refertur de haeret. in authentica cum ex iniuncto” (*Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 [n. 1], p. 61). The text of *Cum ex iniuncto*: *Die Register Innocenz' III*. 2. Band. 2: *Pontifikatsjahr, 1199/1200 Texte*, ed. O. HAGENEDER – W. MALECZEK – A.A. STRNAD (Publikationen des Österreichischen Kulturinstituts in Rom, II. Abteilung: Quellen, I. Reiche), Rome – Vienna, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979, n° 132, pp. 271-275. Further: *Decretales Gregorii IX Lib. V. Tit. VII. De Haereticis*, c. XII, ed. RICHTER – FRIEDBERG (CIC, 2) (n. 67), c. 784-787. For a discussion on the original meaning of the text: L.E. BOYLE, *Innocent III and Vernacular Versions of Scripture*, in K. WALSH – D. WOOD (eds.), *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley* (Studies in Church History. Subsidia, 4), Oxford, Blackwell, 1985, 97-107.

75. The words “milk” and “hardy nourishment”, used by Paul in 1 Cor 3,2 (“lac” and “esca”) and Heb 5,12-14 (“lac” and “solidus cibus”), found huge resonance in the works of the Church Fathers as metaphors for the diverse levels of difficulty in the doctrine of faith. The Fathers currently identified the Apostle's “milk” with the sermons through which the Church passes a comprehensible and digestible message to the rude and common people. This had to be distinguished from the “hardy nourishment”, the more difficult parts of the faith that could only be grasped by more mature in the faith. Some Church Fathers also drew the Scripture into this scheme. Priests and preachers had to provide the faithful with milk, which they, allegorically speaking, drew from the twin breasts as praised in the Song of Songs and which were interpreted symbolically as the Old and the New Testament. Paul's “hardy nourishment” was often identified with Scripture, at least with its obscure parts, that were only accessible for the more advanced in the faith. The latter had to prepare the food (even to bray it with their teeth) before presenting it to the common people. People however had the possibilities to grow and gradually become more accustomed with the “hardy nourishment” (a.o. Rufinus, *De benedictionibus patriarchum*, I, 10, ed. M. SIMONETTI [CCSL, 20], Turnhout, Brepols, 1961, pp. 198 l. 34 – 199 l. 54; I, 11 [CCSL, 20], p. 202 l. 99-104; Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica Canticorum* II, iv, 2, ed. D. HURST [CCSL, 119B], Turnhout, Brepols, 1983, p. 246 l. 97-110; III, iv, 5 [CCSL, 119B], p. 251 l. 257-270; III, iv, 10 [CCSL, 119B], pp. 257 l. 523 – 258 l. 555; III, vii, 3 [CCSL, 119B], p. 320 l. 185-204; Caesarius Arelatensis, *Sermo* IV, 4, ed. G. MORIN [CCSL, 103], Turnhout, Brepols, 1953, pp. 24-25; also Augustinus, *Tract. in Ioh XLVIII*, 1,

of their quotation in *Cum ex iniuncto*⁷⁶, the *Parisienses* held that simple people were like babies who needed milk and were unable to imbibe and digest solid food. This nourishing food was identified with the reading of the Bible and was only destined for the grown-ups in the faith⁷⁷. The biblical humanists, by contrast, conceived these biblical metaphors precisely as an admonition to the laity to read the Bible, which in humanist eyes could function as milk for the innocents⁷⁸. Lay people should better listen carefully to the lessons in the church and hear the explanations by the

ed. A. MAYER [CCSL, 36], Turnhout, Brepols, 1954, p. 413 l. 1-12). Some Church fathers, however, included the historical or literally understandable passages of the Scripture to the easily comprehensible parts of the faith (See a.o. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, Liber I, xxi, ed. M. ADRIAEN [CCSL, 143], Turnhout, Brepols, 1979, pp. 40 l. 1 – 41 l. 40). Some Bible books were pre-eminently to be understood according to its spiritual meaning and, hence, exclusively reserved to the little circle of “perfecti”. This was particularly the case with the Song of Songs, as Bernard of Clairvaux had clearly stated (Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, 1, ed. J. LECLERCQ – C.H. TALBOT – H.M. ROCHAIS [S. Bernardi Opera, 1], Rome, Ed. Cistercienses, 1957, pp. 3-8; but already Origenes sec. translationem Rufini, *Commentar. in Cant. Cant.*, Prologus, ed. W.A. BAEHRENS [GCS, 8=33], Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1925, p. 62 l. 1-12). It is clear that rather ‘conservative’ scholastic theologians found in the Church fathers’ texts starting points to defend that the Bible had to be kept from the lay people’s hands and eyes. On the Father’s reference to “milk” and “hardy nourishment”, see H.-J. SPITZ, *Die Metaphorik des geistigen Schriftsinns: Ein Beitrag zur allegorischen Bibelauslegung des ersten christlichen Jahrtausends* (Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 12), München, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972, pp. 158-167. The work has to be complemented by a search in a database as CLCLT, which yields still more references.

76. *Register Papst Innocenz III*, ed. HAGENEDER – MALECZEK – STRNAD (n. 74), pp. 272 l. 40 – 273 l. 1; *Decretales Gregorii IX Lib. V. Tit. VII. De Haereticis*, c. XII, ed. RICHTER – FRIEDBERG (CIC, 2) (n. 67), c. 785.

77. In the third censure: “Testantur sacra eloquia simplices esse tanquam parvulos, quibus, autore Paulo, lacte opus sit, non enim solidam adhuc escam ferre possunt. Perfectorum siquidem solidus est cibus eorum, qui pro ipsa consuetudine exercitatos habent sensus ad discretionem boni et mali. Quapropter non est medium aptum huiusmodi simplicibus quod indiscriminatim quosvis sacros Libros legant in linguam vernaculam translatos ...” (*Collectio judiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D’ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 [n. 1], p. 61).

78. Among the Church fathers, it was Origen who applied Paul’s concepts “milk” and “hardy nourishment” to the Bible, which has both a literal meaning (“sensus litteralis”) adapted to the simple people’s limited possibilities of comprehension, and a spiritual meaning (“sensus spiritualis”) designed for the advanced reader. According to Origen’s biblical optimism, everybody could take advantage of reading the Bible: Scripture offered at the same time milk for the weak and hardy nourishment for the advanced, for God’s Word adapted itself to everybody’s possibilities of comprehension (See a.o. Origenes sec. translationem Rufini, *In Matth.*, Tom. XII, 31, ed. E. KLOSTERMANN – E. BENZ [GCS, 10=40¹], Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1935, p. 138 l. 6-17; *In Exodum Homilia*, VII, 8, ed. W.A. BAEHRENS [GCS, 6=29], Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1920, p. 215 l. 6-8; particularly *In Numeros Homilia*, XXVII, 1, ed. W.A. BAEHRENS [GCS, 7=30], Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1921, pp. 255 l. 24 – 258 l. 4). Read more in: SPITZ, *Die Metaphorik des geistigen Schriftsinns* (n. 75), pp. 159-161. Evidently, humanists found in Origen’s reasoning support for their plea to open the Bible for all readers.

preachers⁷⁹. Just like Petrus Sutor, the Parisian theologians admitted that, at best, lay people could have access to pericope books, including the Epistle and Gospel readings from Sundays and feast-days, and provided with an appropriate commentary⁸⁰.

The Parisian condemnation was only effectively published in July 1531. That Erasmus attached a great deal of importance to it is evinced by the fact that at the beginning of 1532, he published his reply *Ad censuras Facultatis Theologiae Parisiensis*⁸¹. Erasmus made use of several tactics that were very familiar to him: he made some slight concessions to his Parisian opponents and used their arguments in order to fit them into his own way of thinking. With regard to the content of these arguments, however, he reiterated that the laity had the right to feed their own religious life through the reading of the Scriptures (at least of the New Testament), to be provided with good commentaries, preferably supplied with an animating voice by competent preachers⁸². Thus, he did not want to be depicted as the promoter of the free Bible study that took place in secret conventicles⁸³. Another familiar tactic was that Erasmus relativized the bearing of his contested works by drawing attention to their literary form. He did this also with the preface to the paraphrases on Matthew: he stated that it was an occasional writing and, hence, that its theological impact must not be exaggerated⁸⁴. However, Erasmus' apology made little impression to the Paris masters. They quickly ceased their efforts to

79. In the second censure: "Nec tamen prohibetur per hoc eis [idiotis et simplicibus] conferre inter se de iis, quae in concionibus publicis audiverunt ..." and in the third: "... sed convenientissimum eis medium Ecclesia constituit, auditionem verbi Dei, et frequentationem praedicationum" (*Collectio iudiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 [n. 1], p. 61).

80. See the third censure: "Neque eis obiter interdicat usum nonnullorum sacrorum Librorum, qui cum explicatione convenienti aedificationi morum sint accommodati: si sic tamen tales Libri ab ipsis legantur pie ac sobrie, citra supercilium et arrogantiam, ut non inde contemnunt praedicationes, aut a crebra verbi Dei auditione retrahantur" (*Collectio iudiciorum*, ed. DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, vol. 2, pt. 2 [n. 1], p. 61). Comp. SUTOR, *De tralatione bibliae* (n. 29), f. XCIX.

81. ERASMUS, *Ad censuras Lutetiae vulgatas sub nomine Facultatis Theologiae Parisiensis* [LB, 9], c. 813-928, esp. c. 813 E – 820 A and c. 870 F – 875 F. For an analysis of the text, see my article: FRANÇOIS, *La condamnation par les théologiens parisiens* (n. 65), pp. 388-398. A short commentary also in: RUMMEL, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, vol. 2 (n. 29), pp. 51-55 and THOMPSON, *Scripture for the Ploughboy* (n. 44), pp. 26-27.

82. See the response to the first censure (ERASMUS, *Ad censuras Facultatis Theologiae Parisiensis* [LB, 9] [n. 81], c. 871 B-E), and this to the third censure (*Ibid.*, c. 872 D-E).

83. See the response to the second censure (ERASMUS, *Ad censuras Facultatis Theologiae Parisiensis* [LB, 9] [n. 81], c. 872 B).

84. See the response to the first censure (ERASMUS, *Ad censuras Facultatis Theologiae Parisiensis* [LB, 9] [n. 77], c. 871 F).

extract suspicious propositions out of it. In May of 1532, the apology as a whole was struck with a doctrinal condemnation⁸⁵.

V. CONCLUSION

In short, it appears from our discussion that the Parisian Theological Faculty, led with the strong and steady hand of its leader, Noël Beda, repudiated the reading of the Bible in the vernacular as it was promoted by partisans of humanism and Reformation. According to the Parisians, the heresy of Lutheranism had demonstrated that a free reading of the Bible and heterodox interpretations were bedfellows. The humanists were discredited and labeled as precursors of Lutheranism. The Parisian theologians presented themselves as the guardians of Tradition, and recalled that their distinguished predecessors in the late Middle Ages had already issued a similar prohibition on Bible translation in the vernacular, for they had clearly seen its connection with the heresies of Cathars, Waldensians, Hussites, heterodox beguines and others. The theologians also considered canon law (the decretal *Cum ex iniuncto*) to be on their side. Whether Noël Beda and his Parisian colleagues might be labeled ‘conservatives’ or even ‘reactionaries’, remains beyond the scope of this article⁸⁶. In any case, in Europe, the Parisian theologians, together with e.g. the Church leaders of Spain and England, belonged to the partisans of the strict line who did not yield to the predilection for the bare word of the Bible, which was so typical of late medieval and early modern spirituality. One must be aware, however, that the position of the prestigious Parisian Faculty was not binding on theologians elsewhere in Europe. The Louvain *magistri* e.g. neither propagated Bible reading in the vernacular (as humanists and reformers did) nor prohibited it (as the *Parisienses* did). Their theoretical-theological stance was more ambiguous, although in practice they tolerated vernacular bibles and only wanted to censure editions that included ‘heterodox’ paratextual elements (as prologues, summaries above chapters, marginal glosses ...)⁸⁷. The reason seems to

85. “... fuit conclusum et dictum quod liber non est declaratio veritatis sed involutor et errorum defensio; et propterea, cum sit pernitiosus plurimum iudicio doctrinali, censuit facultas quod sit omnino suprimendus et a manibus fidelium deponendus” (RCTF 1, 2 May 1532, f. 249v-250r, quoted in *Registre des procès-verbaux*, ed. FARGE [n. 1], n° 342 A, pp. 263-264).

86. We can agree with Noëlle Balley who concludes on Noël Beda: “Cet homme en colère vaut mieux que sa réputation – et en même temps, il la mérite” (BALLEY, *Les censures de Beda contre les Paraphrases d’Érasme* [n. 63], p. 111).

87. See my article: W. FRANÇOIS, *Vernacular Bible Reading and Censorship in Early Sixteenth Century: The Position of the Louvain Theologians*, in A.A. DEN HOLLANDER –

be that in the Low Countries late medieval Church reform movements did not end up in heterodoxy, but were channeled within the Modern Devotion and remained in the Church. Hence vernacular bibles were mostly regarded as non-heretical and they found their way not only to the (semi-)religious communities originating from the spirituality of the Modern Devotion, but also to literate lay people 'within the world'. This 'Netherlandish' policy of tolerance explains why, on behalf of the Louvain theologians, Lefèvre d'Étaples' Bible of 1530 was granted official permission to be printed in Antwerp, whereas the editions were strictly forbidden in Paris. The Parisian rejection of the people's Bible, however, would exert a profound influence on the theological debate in the thirties and forties. At the Council of Trent, almost twenty years after the Parisian censure of 1527, opponents of Bible translations in the vernacular would refer explicitly to the latter document, deriving from it their principal arguments⁸⁸.

Faculty of Theology
K.U.Leuven
St.-Michielsstraat 6
B-3000 Leuven
Belgium

Wim FRANÇOIS

M. LAMBERIGTS (eds.), *Lay Bibles in Europe: 1450-1800* (BETL, 198), Leuven, Peeters, 2006, 69-96.

88. BEDOUELLE – ROUSSEL (eds.), *Le temps des Réformes et la Bible* (n. 6), p. 534. Also: F. CAVALLERA, *La Bible en langue vulgaire au Concile de Trente (IVe Session)*, in *Mélanges E. Podécharde: Études de sciences religieuses offertes pour son éméritat au doyen honoraire de la Faculté de Théologie de Lyon*, Lyon, Facultés Catholiques, 1945, 37-56, esp. pp. 45-54.

