Lefèvre d’Etaples’ (1450–1536) humanist editions of Aristotle’s works marked a new period in the history of French Aristotelian philosophy. That subject has now been well studied. The interest that he and his circle of humanist reformers took in systematically editing and commenting twelfth century monastic works on meditation and contemplation, however, has been less well studied. Lefèvre and his associates began editing twelfth-century monastic works as part of their effort to reinvigorate French monasticism and spiritual life, over and against a perceived degeneration in late medieval devotional practices. This editorial and commentatorial activity coincided with Lefèvre’s departure from the University of Paris and arrival at the monastery at Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where he had been summoned by its abbot, Guillaume Briçonnet, who would become Bishop of Meaux in 1516. Lefèvre had just made his third trip to Italy in 1508, where he sought to further learn about Italian humanist innovations in the editing and commenting of ancient and medieval texts. Having left the liberal arts college where he taught at the University of Paris, the Collège Cardinal Lemoine, Lefèvre and his circle began implementing monastic reforms at Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where he had settled in 1507.

Between the years 1506 and 1517, Lefèvre and his associates edited and commented monastic mystical works dating from the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They took particular interest in editing twelfth-century spiritual works: among other texts, they published seven treatises by Hugh of Saint-Victor (1096?–1141) in 1506; a Cistercian edition of Bernard of Clairvaux’s (1090–1153) writings in

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1 Lefèvre published his five-fold Psalter, the *Quincuplex Psalterium*, in 1509; in 1510 he traveled to the Rhineland, where he stayed with the Brothers of the Common Life and discovered a number of mystical works that he published on returning to France. In 1512, he published the first commentary on all of Saint Paul’s Epistles.
1508; Richard of Saint Victor’s (d. 1173) *Trinity* and selections from his other works in 1510 and 1517. Josse Clichtove wrote in his preface to a 1506 edition of Hugh of Saint Victor’s works that Victorine theology offered particularly important insights into biblical hermeneutics. We know, then, that Lefèvre and his circle valued Victorine thought for its methods of explaining how Old Testament narratives can be interpreted as foreshadowing the New Testament. But from their commentaries, particularly on Richard of Saint Victor’s work titled the *Trinity*, we also see that they valued Victorine spiritual thought for the way it integrates of logical discourse into meditative and contemplative practice.2

*Meditation and the Limits of Rational Inquiry*

Both Hugh of Saint Victor and Lefèvre d’Etaples consider meditation to be a simultaneously cognitive and spiritual activity. Logical (aristotelico-boethian) dialectical discourse serves, in this view, as an important although limited instrument for spiritual apprehension. For both authors, rational thought and meditation serve to elucidate Scriptural mysteries. The long list of logical works that Lefèvre edited alongside medieval mystical texts makes it clear enough: for Lefèvre and his associates, dialectic was a fundamental tool for spiritual life. Like Anselm and Hugh of Saint Victor before him, Richard of Saint Victor (Hugh’s disciple) also considers meditation a form rational inquiry and investigation. However, each of these authors also draws on Pseudo-Dionysian theories of divine emanation because it allowed them to situate, or resituate logical discourse within a mystical, Neo-