

# HOMILETICA ET HOMILIAE

—THE HERITAGE OF REFORMED PREACHING—

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## JEAN CLAUDE (1619-1687): HUGUENOT PASTOR AND THEOLOGIAN

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IN THE FIRST half of the seventeenth century, the great defender of Protestant orthodoxy in France was Pierre Du Moulin.<sup>1</sup> Pierre Du Moulin was one of the greatest of the Huguenot Preachers.<sup>2</sup> In the beginning of the seventeenth century, he was pastor at Charenton near Paris, which was the most important Huguenot Church in France.<sup>3</sup> Then, he was a professor for many years at Sedan.<sup>4</sup> In the second half of the seventeenth century, the leadership of Du Moulin divided among three, as Émile Léonard has noted.<sup>5</sup> The professor was Pierre Jurieu, who taught at Sedan until it was closed by Louis XIV in 1681. The preacher was Pierre Du Bosc, who was recognized as one of the greatest Protestant preachers of the seventeenth century. The pastor was Jean Claude, who served as pastor of the Church of Charenton and through it the rest of the French Churches through the difficult closing years of the era of the Edict of Nantes.<sup>6</sup>

Wherever anyone reads of Jean Claude in the writings of his contemporaries, one finds nothing but the highest respect for this man. In spite

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<sup>1</sup> On Pierre Du Moulin, see Lucien Rimbault, *Pierre Du Moulin (1568-1658): Un Pasteur Classique à l'Âge Classique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> On Du Moulin's preaching, see Alexandre Vinet, *Histoire de la prédication parmi les réformées de France au dix-septième siècle*. Paris, 1860.

<sup>3</sup> See Jacques Pannier, *L'Église Réformée de Paris sous Henri IV* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honore Champion, 1911).

<sup>4</sup> On the Academy of Sedan, see Charles Peyran, *Histoire de l'ancienne Académie réformée de Sedan*, (Strasbourg, 1846).

<sup>5</sup> Émile Léonard, *Histoire Générale du Protestantisme*, 3 vols. (Quadrige: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), 2:341.

<sup>6</sup> For the history of the Reformed Church in France and the Edict of Nantes, there are many histories available. In English, see particularly, Guillaume de Félice, *History of the Protestants of France*, tr. by Henry Lobdell (New York: Edward Walker, 1851) and George Rothrock, *The Huguenots: A Biography of a Minority* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979).

of his opposition to the *Formula Consensus Helvetica*,<sup>7</sup> he was highly regarded by and a friend of Francis Turretin.<sup>8</sup> Even his greatest opponent, the Roman Catholic apologist Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet<sup>9</sup> is purported to have described Claude as having said all and best of what could be said for a bad cause. We can also see his fame from the fact that many of his works were translated into English.<sup>10</sup> Though he may not be well-known today, Claude was well-known and highly respected in his own time. In this essay we wish to show some of the reasons why. We shall do this by considering first his life, then his theological works, and finally his preaching and particularly his sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:14.

## 1. Claude's Life

Most of the biographical information on Claude is found in a biographical essay by Abel-Rodolphe de Ladevèze, which was written in French but translated into English and published in London in 1688. This same work was also published as an appendix to the English translation of Claude's discussion of his conference with Bossuet. Many of the works of Claude also have a biographical introduction. There is also the essay in *La France Protestante*, which has a relatively complete bibliography of Claude's work.<sup>11</sup>

Jean Claude was born in the home of a minister, François Claude, in Le Sauvetat in southwestern France in 1619. His father made sure that his son received a good education, and in his later teens, Jean made his way to Montaubon to study at the Academy there. Montaubon was one of the strongest Protestant cities, and it contained one of the four academies established after the Edict of Nantes for the training of ministers.<sup>12</sup> Upon his graduation, Jean was ordained, at age 26, and François had the privilege of ordaining his own son. Jean served his first charge in La Treyne or Treine, but he served there only one year.

In 1647, Claude became a minister in the strongly Protestant city of Saint-Afrique, in south central France near Montpellier. While there, in 1648, he married Elizabeth Malebranche, and she gave him a son, Isaac, who was born in 1653. Isaac also became a minister and was ordained by his father.

<sup>7</sup> See J. C. W. Augustus, ed. *Corpus Librorum Symbolicum qui in Ecclesia Reformatorum auctoritatem publicam obtinuerunt* (Elberfeld: Heinrich Bueschler, 1827), 443-459.

<sup>8</sup> See Eugene de Budé, *Vie de François Turretini, théologien Genevois (1623-1687)* (Lausanne: George Bridel, 1871), 219 and Gerrit Kizer, *François Turretini: Sa Vie et Ses Œuvres et Le Consensus* (Kampen: J. A. Bos Boekhandel, 1900), 215. Kizer discusses Claude's interaction with Turretin throughout the book.

<sup>9</sup> On Bossuet, see H. L. Sidney Lear, *Bossuet and His Contemporaries* (London: Rivingtons, 1874); Ella Katherine Sanders, *Jacques Bénigne Bossuet: A Study* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921); and Earnest Edwin Reynolds, *Bossuet: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1963).

<sup>10</sup> On this book and the others mentioned in the history of Claude's life, see below in the section on Claude's works for bibliographic information.

<sup>11</sup> Eugène et Émile Haag, *La France Protestante* (Paris: Joël Cherbuliez, 1846-1858), 3:473-479.

<sup>12</sup> On the city of Montaubon as a Huguenot city, see Mary LaFon, *Histoire d'une Ville Protestante* (Paris: Aymot, 1862). On the academy, see Daniel Bourchenin, *Étude sur les Académies Protestantes en France au XVIe et XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Grassart, 1882), 129-136.

In 1655, he was called along with several other pastors to fill vacancies in the large and influential Church at Nîmes.<sup>13</sup> His ministry seems to have been very successful. He did not teach at the academy there, but he did tutor some of the students privately, particularly on homiletics and exegesis. It is reported by several historians that many excellent preachers came out of this private schooling. The most famous event of Claude's ministry at Nîmes was his last one. The governor of the province (Languedoc), Prince Armand Bourbon de Condé<sup>14</sup> along with others sought a reunion of the two religions in his province. The Huguenot Provincial Synod met on May 9, 1661 to consider the question. Jean Claude was Moderator of the Synod. The Synod voted unanimously to reject the proposed reunion. They responded through Claude that it would be easier to reconcile light and darkness or Christ and Belial than to reconcile their two religions.<sup>15</sup> The result of this rejection of the proposed union was that Claude was banished from the province and forbidden to practice his ministry there.<sup>16</sup>

Upon his banishment, Claude made his way to Paris in order to get the sentence removed. He spent six months attempting to get the sentence lifted, but he was unable to do so. However, at this time, Claude first entered into the national scene of France by his opposition to Pierre Nicole and/or Antoine Arnauld's book on the perpetuity of the faith of the Catholic Church touching the Eucharist. Nicole and Arnaud were Jansenists, Augustinian in their doctrine of election but otherwise Roman Catholic, and they were anxious to distance themselves from the Calvinists. Claude's response was short, a mere 30 pages, but it caused quite a sensation. It was also not the best way to get the Court of Louis XIV to overturn his sentence of banishment.<sup>17</sup>

Being unable to return to his charge in Upper Languedoc, Claude made his way to the city of Montaubon. He was not there long before he was elected and installed as minister in the city. Claude later confessed that these were the happiest years of his life. He served there from 1661-1665. In 1665, Claude was preparing his second response to Arnauld and Nicole's work on the Eucharist. The Bishop of Montaubon asked to see the work, and Claude, who had a cordial relationship with the Bishop, did not think anything of it. However, shortly after that time, orders from the Court came for him to be banished from that city. It is unclear exactly why he was banished, and the Court records list various

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<sup>13</sup> On the Reformed Church of Nîmes, see A. Borrel, *Histoire de l'Église Réformée de Nîmes* (Toulouse: Société des Livres Religieux, 1856). He discusses the period of Claude's ministry on pp. 225-245. He also notes that Claude was assigned to teach theology, but Haag and Ladevèze say that he only taught private classes.

<sup>14</sup> The Prince de Condé was the next successor to the throne outside of the immediate royal family. Their ancestors were Protestants and had battled for Huguenot freedom in the wars of religion in the sixteenth century.

<sup>15</sup> So much for the tolerant spirit of the French renaissance humanist Protestants!

<sup>16</sup> Ladevèze, p. 6, claims that it was not merely his action at this Synod but also his general success in the area that led to his banishment.

<sup>17</sup> Ladevèze's comment is intriguing: "Monsieur Claude understood very well that this was but an ill way to make his court for his restoration to the Church of Nîmes, but he did not stand wavering, what course to take, he saw that he was going to enter the lists with a writer of mighty name, he hoped that God would give him the grace to maintain his cause" (p. 9).

spurious reasons as the cause.<sup>18</sup> Claude's work against Arnauld and Nicole seems to have played a part in it.

Claude made his way to Paris once again in an attempt to get the sentence lifted. He was once again unsuccessful. However, Montaubon's loss was Paris' gain. He was called as pastor of the most important Huguenot Church in France, the Church at Charenton. According to the Edict of Nantes, the Protestants were not permitted to hold assemblies within the city limits of Paris. Henry IV permitted them to have a Church a few miles outside of Paris in Charenton. This Church was the center of the Huguenot's spiritual resistance to the Catholic onslaught. It had been pastored by such great men as Pierre Du Moulin, Jean Mestrezat, and Jean Dailé (who was still ministering when Claude arrived). From this position, Claude became the leading Protestant pastor in France and engaged in polemics, foiled Roman Catholic plots, and counseled the Churches throughout France, in addition to his pastoral duties at the Church in Charenton.<sup>19</sup>

His first years were busy with polemic. Father Nouët responded to Claude's work on the Eucharist against Arnauld and Nicole. He accused him of not going to Scripture for his views. Claude was happy to oblige in his response by discussing John 6 extensively. He also engaged in polemics with Nicole over the legitimacy of the Reformation.

In 1678, two important events occurred in Claude's life. The first was that his son, Isaac, passed his exams at Sedan and was ordained to the ministry by Claude himself. The second was his conference with Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, the great Catholic apologist. The Huguenot noble lady, Mlle. de Duras, requested that Claude hold this conference on the topic of the authority of the Church. Unbeknownst to Claude, she was about to convert and was looking for a pretext for converting to Roman Catholicism. Bossuet later wrote on this conference, and Claude responded. Thus, we have a lasting record of the conference and Claude's defense of the Protestant view of the Church.

In 1681, Claude was called to be professor of theology at the University of Groningen by the rulers of that city. Claude did not accept this call and chose instead to remain with his flock in the much more difficult circumstances of France. The first half of the decade of the 1680s was very difficult for the Huguenots. Louis XIV had taken more and more measures to repress the Huguenots, but he finally sent soldiers into the Protestant towns to force conversions.<sup>20</sup> Claude with many others continued to argue the Huguenot case and plead with the King to restore their former privileges. All of this was to no avail, and it eventually led to the entire revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The date for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was set in such an ambiguous way that it seemed to allow for one more Sunday service. The

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<sup>18</sup> See Haag, *La France Protestante*, 3:474-475. He lists several reasons he found in the archives in Paris.

<sup>19</sup> See below in the works section. To see an example of Claude's powerful argumentation against the plots of the Roman Catholics, see below in the discussion of his book *The Complaints of the Protestants of France*.

<sup>20</sup> See Claude's *Complaints of the Protestants of France* for more explanation.

Bishops were planning to have some in the Church at Charenton abjure in the midst of the service and cause a general chaos. Many of the common people thought that the time of the revocation was a last bit of mercy given to them. Claude, however, feared the Roman Catholics, even when they brought gifts. He cancelled the service. The Bishops were furious, and they secured Claude's immediate banishment. The sixty year old Pastor was given 24 hours to depart from the kingdom. The King's own valet actually took him to the border. From there, Claude made his way to The Hague in the Netherlands.

In spite of his severe grief over the suppression of the Protestantism in France and his own banishment, he was happy to be able to practice his religion freely in the quiet shelter of the Netherlands in the very town where his son Isaac was serving as minister. Prince William and Princess Mary received him with greatest appreciation, and Prince William gave him a pension. He was able to spend his last year in quiet study and fellowship with friends and those seeking counsel. After preaching on Christmas, 1686, he became sick. He died on January 13, 1687 at the age of sixty-six years old.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. Claude's Works

Here I will only highlight some of Claude's most important works and provide a brief description. For a fuller list, see the article *La France Protestante*. The first major work was a response to the book by Nicole and Arnauld mentioned above on the perpetuity of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist. He wrote his first response in 1661. His second response was written in 1665. Before Arnauld and Nicole could respond again, Père Nouët, wrote in support of Arnauld and Nicole against Claude. Claude responded in 1668 to Nouët's book. In 1669, Arnauld and Nicole responded for themselves, and Claude wrote his final response in 1671. This work was published in three volumes and then later published in English in one volume in 1684 under the title *The Catholic Doctrine of the Eucharist*. In this final edition, he responds first to their method, then goes on to speak of the view of the Eucharist in the "schismatic" Churches such as the Greek, Russian, Armenian, and others. Finally, he concludes by explaining the change that took place in the Latin Church on this issue. His work in response to Nouët is quite different, following the different content matter of that work. In this work entitled *Traité de l'Eucharistie*, Claude responds to the doctrine of the physical presence of Christ's body and transubstantiation from sense experience, reason, and from Scripture.

In 1671, Pierre Nicole wrote another attack on the Calvinists. This work was entitled *Prejugez Legitimes contre les Calvinistes*. This was an attack on the legitimacy of the Reformation and thus of the whole Protestant Church. Claude also wrote a response to this work in 1673 entitled *La Défense de la Reformation*. This book was translated into English and published under the title *A Defence of the Reformation* in 1683. It was

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<sup>21</sup> For a moving account of his last days, see the biography of Ladevèze.

republished in English in two volumes in 1815. The first book deals with the necessity of examining the state of religion in the Church, the second with the justice of the Reformation, the third with their obligation to separate, and the fourth with their right to hold separate assemblies. According to Pierre Bayle, this was the best work that had been written on the subject.<sup>22</sup>

Even though Claude was very busy defending the Protestant doctrine against the Roman Catholics, he did not forget the common people's need for edification. In 1676, he published *The Parable of the Virgins, Explained in Five Sermons*. This work was republished in 1693 with three other sermons and again in 1821 with the five sermons only. He also published individual sermons on Ephesians 4:30 (1666, 1670), Proverbs 16:6-7 (1676), the 53<sup>rd</sup> section of the catechism (1683), and, of course, on Ecclesiastes 7:14 (1686). An edition of his sermons on various texts was also published in 1713 and 1724.

Claude also wrote another book primarily intended for the laity entitled *Self-Examination in order to Receive Holy Communion Properly*. In this book, Claude begins by laying out the necessity of self-examination. Then, in the main body of the work he lays out several rules for self-examination. He explains how we should examine ourselves in relation to our attitude towards sins committed, temptations, various stages of life, and so on. He then concludes with an application of the whole designed to show the communicant how to make a good use of self-examination by humbling himself, fleeing to Christ, and seeking to amend his life. There are two prayers appended to the book, one for before communion and one for after communion. This book was published multiple times beginning in 1682 and then again in 1683, 1685, 1730, 1771, and 1882. This work was also translated into English and published in London in 1683 and then again in 1732.

In 1678, as noted above, Claude held a famous conference with Bossuet on the subject of the authority of the church. The meeting was very cordial, and, for a while, they wrote nothing publicly about the conference. In 1682, Bossuet published an account of the conference, which was published in English in 1684. This brought a response from Claude in the following year. The first part of Claude's answer was published in English in 1687 and the second in 1688, and in that same year the two were published together with Ladavèze's biography. This book provides us with Claude's defense of the Protestant view of the Church.

Following Claude's exile, he wrote *The Complaints of the Protestants Cruelly Oppressed in the Kingdom of France* (1686). Here is an excellent example of Claude's force and power in argumentation. This work is a riveting read. He explains the various ways Louis XIV and the Roman Catholic Clergy began to persecute the Huguenots. He then goes on to explain the final persecution in the quartering of the soldiers in the homes of the Huguenots and the evils they committed against the French Protestants. Finally, he argues that the king had no right to revoke the Edict of Nantes; and he answers the objections of the opponents, includ-

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<sup>22</sup> See Haag, *La France Protestante* 3:478.

ing the objection that there was no persecution. This work was published in French in 1686, 1707, and 1713. Claude himself had the work immediately translated into English and it was published in that language in 1686, 1702, 1707, 1708, and then again in 1893.

Finally, Jean's son, Isaac, published several of his father's previously unpublished French and Latin works in his *Posthumous Works* (5 vols.).<sup>23</sup> This multi-volume work seems to have been published twice. The first printing was from 1688-1689 and then there was another printing in 1690. The first volume contains two works. The first is his *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*. This work was translated into English in 1779 by Robert Robinson. Charles Simeon added notes to it and had the work republished in the 1840s, and this last edition went through several printings. We shall discuss this work more fully below. The other part of the first volume is a response to a work of the Bishop of Grenoble on the Eucharist. Volumes 2-4 demonstrate Claude's value as a systematic theologian. His theology follows similar lines to that of Saumur with some modifications.<sup>24</sup> Volumes 2-3 contain a thorough discussion of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Volume 4 contains treatises on blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, justification, the fall of the angels, election and reprobation, the state of innocence, and a commentary on the first three chapters of Romans. Volume 5 is a collection of Claude's correspondence.

### 3. Claude's Preaching & Sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:14

According to Alexandre Vinet, the nineteenth century preacher and theologian, the greatest French preachers were found among the Catholics. Bossuet has long been recognized as a great orator, and numerous works have been published discussing his sermons. However, Vinet also points out that the Reformed, taken collectively, were much richer. He opines that there has perhaps never been an era that has had so many men whose preaching is worthy of study.<sup>25</sup> Vinet's opinion may be confirmed by a consideration of the numerous publications of Huguenot sermons throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Please note that this entire set is available for free on Google Books.

<sup>24</sup> See particularly *Œuvres Posthumes* 2:27-40 (cf. 4:433-492), 289-312, 3:105-113 (cf. 4:163-171), 130-201. These sections treat of the nature of election, the legal covenant, the imputation of Christ's active obedience, and the extent of the atonement respectively.

<sup>25</sup> Alexandre Vinet, *Histoire de la Prédication parmi les Réformés de France au Dix-Septième Siècle*, 2-3. Vinet goes on to discuss many of the most prominent Huguenot preachers. On French Reformed preaching in the seventeenth century, see also Françoise Chevalier, *Prêcher sous l'Édit de Nantes, la prédication réformée au XVIIe siècle en France* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994) and Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church 4: The Age of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 409-448.

<sup>26</sup> Here are a few that are translated into English. Most of them are available on Google Books. Jean Daillé, *An Exposition of Philippians*, tr. by James Sherman (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1843). Note that Old has a significant discussion of Daillé's sermons in the work cited in the previous footnote. Pierre Du Bosc, *Protestantism, being a Series of Discourses on a Portion of the Epistle to the Ephesians*, tr. by J. B. Law (London: A. Hall, Virtue, & Co., 1853). Jacques Saurin, *Sermons*, 2 vols., tr. by Robert Robinson, Henry Hunter, and Joseph Sutcliffe, ed. by Samuel Burder (Princeton, NJ: D. A. Borrenstein, 1827). Daniel de Superville,

Claude himself did not publish nearly as many sermons as his colleague, Jean Daillé, but he did leave to us a manual of preaching.<sup>27</sup> This manual provides us with the theory behind the many Huguenot sermons in print. Old gives a good summary of this work when he writes, "It is a presentation of the Protestant plain style of preaching.... Seen against its environment the essay might be called an apology for the simple approach of biblical exposition which normally took place in the worship services of French Protestantism."<sup>28</sup> Consequently, by examining this work, we can get a sense of French Protestant preaching as a whole.

We should note here that Claude's work on preaching contradicts many common but false conceptions concerning Reformed Orthodox preaching. Reformed Orthodox preaching is commonly viewed as scholastic and dry, dealing with theological topics rather than texts. This view is specifically repudiated by Claude. He states, "Observations should not be proposed in scholastic style, nor in common-place guise. They should be seasoned with a sweet urbanity accommodated to the capacities of the people."<sup>29</sup> At the very beginning of the essay, Claude had warned that "[i]t ought to be remembered that the greatest part of the hearers are simple people, whose profit, however, must be aimed at in preaching; but it is impossible to edify them, unless you be very clear."<sup>30</sup> Claude then goes on to recommend that everything in the sermon must be clear, organized, and simple.<sup>31</sup> On the other side, he warns that preachers should not lower their language too much and counsels, "Endeavor to think clearly, and try also to think nobly. Let your observations be replete with beauty as well as propriety, the fruits of a fine fancy under the direction of a sober judgment."<sup>32</sup> In all of this, the preacher must recognize that he is speaking to common people and that the aim is edification. Anyone who reads the sermons of the French Reformed preachers cannot fail to see that there is a simplicity, clarity, and force that is well-suited to the common person.

Some may object to this characterization of the seventeenth century Reformed Orthodox preaching by suggesting that Claude's method is only characteristic of the French Reformed and not of the rest of the Reformed Orthodox of the period.<sup>33</sup> There are several things we can say in

*Sermons*, tr. by John Allen (London: Burton and Briggs, 1816). For other sermons printed see Alexandre Vinet, *Histoire de la Prédication*.

<sup>27</sup> See above for bibliographic information.

<sup>28</sup> *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 4:445. See this whole lengthy paragraph where he gives a good description of Claude's book on preaching. He also provides some other biographical information in his few pages on Claude.

<sup>29</sup> Jean Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, with Notes and Illustrations and One Hundred Sermon Skeletons* by Charles Simeon (London: James Cornish, 1844), 56.

<sup>30</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> See Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, p. 7, "The mind of man loves to be conducted in a smooth and easy way; all must not be proved at once; but, supposing principles, which are true and plain, and which you, when it is necessary, are capable of proving and supporting, you must be content with using them to prove what you have in hand."

<sup>32</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 57. See also p. 5. "On the one hand then, you are not philosophize too much, and refine your subject out of sight; nor, on the other, to abase yourself to the language and thoughts of the dregs of the people."

<sup>33</sup> I have in mind Armstrong's thesis that the Huguenots were more influenced by the Renaissance and humanism rather than scholasticism. See Brian Armstrong, *Calvinism and*

response. First, we should note that Claude also used the scholastic method. His systematic theological writings very much evidence the scholastic method.<sup>34</sup> Second, Claude was concerned not only that scholasticism be left out of the pulpit but also that any display of human learning whatsoever be minimized. For example, he emphasized that there should not be extensive quotations of the Church Fathers. According to Claude, “This farrago is only a vain ostentation of learning; and very often they who fill their sermons with such quotations, know them only by relation of others.”<sup>35</sup> On the other side, following his usual balance, he adds, “However, I would not blame a man who should use them discretely. A quotation not common, and properly made, has a very good effect.”<sup>36</sup> We must remember that this advice comes from a man who had the greatest familiarity with these writings and used them in polemics with the Roman Catholics. Third and finally, consider the preaching of Francis Turretin.<sup>37</sup> His sermons are very similar to Claude’s and Dailé’s, and Turretin was clearly a scholastic theologian.

We now turn to an examination of Claude’s sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:14 in light of his *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*. The first thing that we should note is the context of the sermon. The fast was in part taking place to mourn what had occurred in France.<sup>38</sup> A mere month before the sermon was given, the Edict of Nantes had been revoked, and many of the Huguenots were now taking refuge in the Netherlands. Based on the recent experience of the Huguenots and of Claude himself, he understood very well that “our times are divided in two.”<sup>39</sup>

One of the surprising things about the sermon is that there is little attention to the context of the text of Ecclesiastes 7. We might be tempted to think that seventeenth century preachers simply drew out a text as a proof text without any consideration of its historical or grammatical context. This would be an overly hasty conclusion. First, Claude makes clear that someone should not even think about writing a sermon until he has thoroughly examined the text in the original languages.<sup>40</sup> Second, Claude explains how to do this in his section on the connection of the text with its context.<sup>41</sup> Third, Claude makes clear why he does not mention the connection of this text with its context. He writes, “The con-

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*the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers). For an example of the problems of his thesis, see Richard Muller, “Divine Covenants, Absolute and Conditional: John Cameron and the Early Orthodox Development of Reformed Covenant Theology,” in *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, 17 (2006), 11-56.

<sup>34</sup> See his *Oeuvres Posthumes*, Vol. 2-4.

<sup>35</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 8.

<sup>36</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Turretini, François, *Sermons sur divers passages de l’Ecriture Sainte* (Geneva, 1676) and *Recueil de Sermons sur divers textes de l’Ecriture Sainte* (Geneva, 1686).

<sup>38</sup> See Jean Claude, *Sermon sur le vers. xiv. du Chapit. vii de L’Ecclesiaste* (London, 1686), 4, “But we are also gathered together no less in order to lament the sad ravages that one of the most important sections of our mystical Zion has suffered and continues to suffer.” Also see the translation of this sermon by Charles Telfer which follows this essay, 207. All subsequent references to the translated sermon will be in square brackets [ ].

<sup>39</sup> Claude, *Sermon sur le vers. xiv. du Chapit. vii de L’Ecclesiaste* Claude, 6 [208-209].

<sup>40</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 18-19.

<sup>41</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 8-9.

nection is a part which must be very little insisted on, because the hearers almost always pass it over, and receive but little instruction from it."<sup>42</sup>

In this sermon, we also see Claude's principles for a selection of a text. For Claude, a sermon text should consist of one complete thought in Scripture. It is important, Claude notes, that a preacher should not take too small of a text. The reason is that "We must digress from the subject to find something to say; flourishes of wit and imagination must be displayed which are not of the genius of the pulpit; and in one word, it will make the hearers think, that self is more preached than Jesus Christ."<sup>43</sup> On the other side, we must not take too long of a portion of Scripture. Claude states:

Preaching is not only intended to give the sense of scripture, but also of theology in general, and, in short, to explain the whole of religion, which cannot be done, if too much matter be taken; so that, I think the manner commonly used in our churches is the most reasonable, and the most conformable to the ends of preaching. Everybody can read scripture with notes and comments to obtain simply the sense; but we cannot instruct, solve difficulties, unfold mysteries, penetrate into the ways of divine wisdom, establish truth, refute error, comfort, correct, and censure, fill the hearers with an admiration of the wonderful works and ways of God, inflame their souls with zeal, powerfully incline them to piety and holiness, which are the ends of preaching, unless we go farther than barely enabling them to understand Scripture.<sup>44</sup>

This statement encapsulates Claude's view of the purpose of preaching. It is to explain a text of Scripture bringing out its meaning, application, wonder, and glory to the hearers.

We next turn to the division of his sermon. In this particular sermon, the points of the sermon are not found in the text itself. Claude provides a variety of ways to divide the text. He does not believe that every text can fit into an exact rule. Rather, "it is always necessary to consult good sense, and never to be so conducted by general rules as not attend to particular circumstances."<sup>45</sup> In this case, his division consists of two points. The first is the explanation and the second is the application. This is similar to the way he believes that Hebrews 12:6 (Prov. 3:11-12) should be handled.<sup>46</sup>

According to Claude, there are two ways to handle a text. There is the way of explanation when the meaning of the text itself has some difficulty or by way of observation, when the meaning of the text is fairly clear and well-known. In this sermon, the way of explanation is employed. Claude explains each part of the verse and brings out its force. In the process, he deals with the matter of providence, since it is important for the proper understanding of the text that we understand that God is

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<sup>42</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 13.

<sup>46</sup> See Claude, *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 35.

the ultimate cause of what takes place. Otherwise, we cannot profit properly from the “day of adversity.”<sup>47</sup>

This brings us to the second point, which is the application. The principal fruit that Claude wants his hearers to draw from this text is the need for careful self-examination in the time of adversity. This is particularly noteworthy because of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. There is no sound of railing or bitterness towards Louis XIV. Instead, Claude emphasizes repentance. “Let us recognize in it with humility our sins. It is very necessary to say that they have been great and enormous since they have brought on such terrible punishments.”<sup>48</sup> The enormity of their difficulties leads Claude to think of the enormity of his sin and the sins of his people. What should they do? “For our part we do our duty which consists in humbling ourselves, amending our ways.”<sup>49</sup> However, this humbling of ourselves should not lead us to despair. Rather, it should lead us to Jesus Christ. “If our sins are great, the blood of Jesus Christ is a price still greater. And there will be propitiation and grace for us in virtue of his death and his intercession. If our enemies are powerful, God is still more powerful than they are.”<sup>50</sup> This, then, is the great goal of all the afflictions of this life—to lead us to salvation in Jesus Christ.

Claude provides for us here a great example of the beauty and power of classic Huguenot preaching. This sermon is very similar to the other Huguenot sermons that have been published from this era. They all seek to be true to the text and to draw out its doctrine and application for their congregations with all of their energy. These sermons are still profitable for today. The method, if not the length, can easily be imitated by anyone who desires to preach the Scriptures to our world today.

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<sup>47</sup> See Claude, *Sermon sur le vers. xiv. du Chapit. vii de L'Ecclesiaste*, 11 [208. passim].

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 24. Note also Claude, *Self-Examination*, 142-143. “Yet let us not turn away our eyes, as we are used to do from disagreeable sights; but contrariwise, let us fix them well in our sight and meditations, and draw from them all that it is possible to affrighten and confound us.... There must be an entire, and a sincere repentance, which wholly takes up the heart, and penetrates the conscience, if we would have it delightful to God.”

<sup>49</sup> Claude, *Sermon sur le vers. xiv. du Chapit. vii de L'Ecclesiaste*, 26 [219].

<sup>50</sup> Claude, *Sermon sur le vers. xiv. du Chapit. vii de L'Ecclesiaste.*, 29 [220]. This is also how Claude explains the goal of this humbling of ourselves in *Self-Examination*, 143. “After these motions, a hearty and ardent recourse to the divine mercies must succeed by the ineffable price of the blood of our Redeemer, and to this effect, remember the gracious words that God speaks by his Prophet unto us....” He goes on in that book to quote several comforting passages of Scripture.