

Preaching in exile: Huguenot sermons in the Dutch Refuge, 1685-1700

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Pieter Teding van Berkhout, a burgomaster in the town of Delft, was a man who seriously disliked getting wet. Seeing the menacing thunderstorms on the morning of 25 August 1687, he decided to stay at his country estate and spend his time doing something he did like: reading sermons. As he picked up a recent volume published by Pierre du Bosc, a Huguenot minister from Caen who had moved to Rotterdam in 1685, he was especially touched by a sermon entitled *Le fondement et le sceau de Dieu*, in which Du Bosc exhorted the faithful to forsake their sinful lives and convert themselves to Christ. Van Berkhout even copied out a key passage in his journal: “The true means to be firm in the profession of the Holy Gospel, is to leave behind sin and live a good life”¹. Clearly the sermons Huguenot ministers preached in exile were not only heard in church but also circulated as printed texts that could make a vivid impression upon readers.

Indeed, it is striking how many refugee ministers had their sermons printed in the Dutch Republic: between 1685 and 1700 over a 100 sermons written by Huguenot clergymen rolled off the presses in the major Dutch towns. When we consider the migration pattern of French ministers after the Revocation this concentration of published sermons seems hardly surprising, as the Dutch Republic was their main destination: of the estimated 680 ministers that chose exile, 405 moved to the Dutch Republic. This was an obvious choice, because in the Dutch provinces they found a vast network of Walloon churches, which had been established in the late sixteenth century by French-speaking Protestants fleeing religious persecution in the Southern Netherlands. Moreover, as a result of the Revocation around 35,000 Huguenot refugees had swelled the ranks of the Walloon churches, which were in serious need of ministers².

¹ Pieter Teding van Berkhout, *Journal de mes occupations*, 25 August 1687, Koninklijke Bibliotheek The Hague, Ms. 129 D 16, n.f.; Pierre du Bosc, *Sermons sur divers Textes de l'Écriture Sainte*, Rotterdam, Reinier Leers, 1687, p. 480-481: “Le vray moyen d'estre fermes dans la profession du Saint Evangile, c'est de se retirer du peché pour bien vivre.” On Teding van Berkhout and his journal, see: Jeroen Blaak, *Literacy in Everyday Life: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Dutch Diaries*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 113-187.

² Hans Bots, « Les pasteurs français au Refuge dans les Provinces-Unies: Un groupe socio-professionnel tout particulier, 1680-1710 », in Jens Häselser and Antony McKenna (eds.), *La Vie intellectuelle aux Refuges protestants: Actes de la Table ronde de Münster du 25 juillet 1995*, Paris, Champion, 1999, p. 9-18. See for a general overview of the Dutch Refuge: Willem Frijhoff, « Uncertain Brotherhood: The Huguenots in the Dutch Republic », in Bertrand van Ruymbeke and Randy J. Sparks (eds.), *Memory and Identity: The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, p. 128-171.

Still, the stream of Huguenot sermons printed in the Dutch Republic after 1685 stood in marked contrast to the output before the Revocation. Many ministers had never published a single sermon during their ministry in France, while in exile they suddenly decided to commit their homilies to print. Jean Guillebert for example had never printed a sermon during his long ministry in the Protestant church of Caen, which lasted from 1666 until 1685, yet once installed as *pasteur ordinaire* in the Walloon church of Haarlem he promptly published a series of six sermons held in exile³. The same was true for Élie Benoist, who had started preaching in Alençon in 1665, but only published his first sermons after reaching the town of Delft in 1685⁴. Similarly Abel Rotolp de la Devèze had been a minister at Castres since 1652, but his first sermons did not appear on the market until 1690, when he published a volume comprising no less than fifteen sermons preached in the Walloon church of The Hague⁵. The Dieppe-based minister Antoine le Page, finally, waited until 1686 before he committed any of his sermons to print, when he became a *pasteur extraordinaire* in Rotterdam⁶. The only exceptions to this pattern appear to be Jean Claude and Pierre du Bosc, both of whom published a handful of sermons before the Revocation, and continued to do so in the Dutch Republic⁷.

The question, then, is why Huguenot ministers felt a sudden urge to publish their sermons once they were in exile, while many had neglected to print any during their long ministry in France. To answer this question we must of course consider the content of exile sermons, asking what was so novel and urgent about these texts. Yet sermons never were abstract entities floating in conceptual space; rather, printed sermons were highly communicative texts that took shape within a specific context, and that were part of a well-conceived publishing strategy to target Protestant audiences.

³ Jean Guillebert, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture Sainte*, Amsterdam, Henri Desbordes, 1687. See for his career: Eugène and Émile Haag, *La France protestante, ou vies des protestants français, qui se sont fait un nom dans l'histoire depuis les premiers temps de la Réformation jusqu'à la reconnaissance du principe de la liberté des cultes par l'Assemblée nationale* (hereafter *FP*), vol. V, Paris, Cherbuliez, 1855, p. 390; Sophronyme Beaujour, *Essai sur l'histoire de l'église réformée de Caen*, Caen, Le Blanc-Hardel, 1877, p. 335-336.

⁴ On Benoist, see: *FP*, vol. II, 1847, p. 173-174; Paul Pascal, *Élie Benoist et l'Église Réformée d'Alençon, d'après des documents inédits*, Paris, Fischbacher, 1892, p. 8-26, 83-108. We have two collections of printed sermons: Élie Benoist, *Sermons sur divers sujets*, Delft, Henry Krooneveld, 1698; and Élie Benoist, *Jesus-Christ Dieu et homme, ou sermons sur le III. et IV. verset du I. chapitre de l'Épître de St. Paul aux Hebreux*, Delft, Henry Krooneveld, 1698.

⁵ *FP*, vol. IX, 1859, p. 9-10; Abel Rotolp de la Devèze, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture Sainte, prononcez à La Haye*, Utrecht, Van Zyll, 1690, p. 59-89.

⁶ *FP*, vol. VI, 1856, p. 556; R. Garetta (ed.), *La seconde partie de l'Histoire de l'Église réformée de Dieppe, 1660-1685*, vol. I, Rouen, Société rouennaise des bibliophiles, 1902, p. 13, 160-164, 190-195.

⁷ See for full bibliographies: *FP*, vol. III, 1852 p. 477-480 (Jean Claude); *FP*, vol. IX, 1859, p. 381 (Pierre du Bosc). Their pre-Revocation sermons are amply discussed in François Chevalier, *Prêcher sous l'Édit de Nantes: La prédication réformée au XVIIe siècle en France*, Geneva, Labor et Fides, 1994.

We must therefore also ask what sort of people these refugee ministers were, what influence the religious and political climate had on their publishing strategies, and how they interacted with believers. For it is only by studying religious ideas as well as practices that we can understand the importance of printed sermons within the Huguenot *Refuge*.

The Dangers of Print

As self-evident as it may seem to us today, to many seventeenth-century Huguenot ministers it was almost counter-intuitive to make their sermons available to a larger public. It was mostly their reputation that was at stake. Calvin himself had always been weary of publishing his sermons, because he believed printed sermons were a far cry from those he delivered in the cathedral of Geneva. The latter were simple homilies destined to edify his own flock, unsuited for publication because of the popular language he used; printed sermons by contrast were refined texts, which he had painstakingly corrected and improved to better instruct a broad and intelligent reading public⁸. As a result most of Calvin's sermons were not published on his own initiative but penned down in church by stenographers in the pay of publishing houses. Publishers regularly justified this practice by appealing to the spiritual needs of believers, especially those Protestants living under the cross in France. In 1554 the Genevan publisher Jean Girard explained that "I asked him [Calvin], charged also by several honest believers, that he would allow that his sermons as noted down from his mouth would be published. (...) But how many difficulties did he not make, preferring to print some small commentary when opportunity presented itself, rather than fill pages with such long sermons"⁹.

Calvin's unease also pervaded the ranks of seventeenth-century French ministers. Jean Claude for example published some of his most successful sermons well before the Revocation, but he always made sure to edit them and even asked friends to comment upon his drafts. After his death in 1687 his son Isaac published five volumes of manuscript treatises and letters he had found among his father's papers, though not before cautioning readers that these were still unpolished texts, which his father had not yet deemed suitable for publication. "His principle was that a man can never

⁸ Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 23-24; Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: Biographie*, Paris, J.-C. Lattès, 1995, p. 295-298.

⁹ Cited in Cottret, *Calvin*, p. 295: "Je l'ai prié, étant requis aussi de plusieurs bons fidèles, qu'il souffrît que ses sermons comme ils ont été recueillis de sa bouche fussent publiés. (...) Or combien qu'il en ait fait difficulté, aimant mieux faire imprimer, quand l'opportunité s'y adonnerait, quelque bref commentaire que de remplir le papier de si longs propos."

reflect enough on what he writes, & that when you're being published for all to read, he cannot present himself with too much chastity, or with too much wisdom. That's what forced him to often go over his Productions again, & to retouch them with severity," Isaac explained¹⁰.

Claude's colleague Pierre du Bosc was just as reluctant to publish his sermons without first "retouching" them. When he had a sermon on the doctrine of grace printed in 1662, he warned readers that he had never intended it for publication, but only "to serve the particular edification of my flock". The reason he now digressed from standard practice was to refute accusations of heresy levelled against him by the Jesuits of Caen, who claimed that Du Bosc had denied the efficacy of good works to obtain God's grace. To show that his sermon had been entirely innocent he therefore decided "to put it on paper entirely the way I pronounced it from the Pulpit". Under normal circumstances Du Bosc would clearly have preferred to edit his sermon before publication¹¹.

Besides concerns over the status of these texts, some minister also felt uneasy about publishing their sermons because they feared that these would serve as a substitute for preaching in church. In England this attitude had been widespread among Elizabethan preachers, many of whom had refused to publish their sermons for fear of seeing their audiences whittle away. It was not until the 1620s that they caved in to the growing popular demand for spiritual guidance, but even then they habitually warned their readers not to neglect church services¹². Huguenot ministers nourished similar fears: in 1687 Jean Guillebert devoted an entire sermon to the need to attend church services, published under the title *La nécessité de fréquenter les Saintes Assemblées*. He firmly rebuked those believers who argued that going to church was quite unnecessary, because they claimed that you could also pray the Lord and read sermons in the privacy of your own home. "To what end, they say, should I parade my devotion in public? (...) What need is there to leave my

¹⁰ Isaac Claude (ed.), *Les œuvres posthumes de Mr. Claude*, vol. I, Amsterdam, Pierre Savouret, 1688, preface: "Son principe étoit qu'un homme ne peut jamais trop réfléchir sur ce qu'il écrit, & que quand il est question de paroître aux yeux de tous, on ne sauroit s'y présenter ni avec trop de chasteté, ni avec trop de sagesse. C'est ce qui l'obligeoit à repasser souvent sur ses Productions, & à les retoucher avec sévérité." See for details on Jean Claude's life: A.B.R.D.L.D.P. [Abel Rotolp de la Devèze], *Abregé de la vie de Mr. Claude*, Amsterdam, Pierre Savouret, 1687; *FP*, vol. III, 1852 p. 473-477.

¹¹ Pierre du Bosc, *La doctrine de la grace, ou Sermon sur ces paroles de Saint Paul en son Épître aux Éphes. Ch. 2 v. 8, Car vous estes sauvez par Grace*, Geneva, Jean Antoine and Samuel de Tournes, 1662, preface: "Je le donne sur le papier tout tel que je l'ai prononcé en Chaire."

¹² Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 117-130.

study & my house to pay Him my homage elsewhere? Should I not be strongly persuaded that wherever in the world I invoke Him, He will most certainly lend an ear to my wishes?"¹³

Although Guillebert was the first to concede that praying and reading sermons at home were legitimate ways to communicate with God, he argued that true Christians did not hide their faith, but openly professed it in church: "in what place, I ask you, can we best make a frank and public profession of our Saviour than in sacred Congregations?"¹⁴ For to truly absorb God's Word it was not sufficient to simply read a sermon, the Holy Spirit first had to open up your heart – and Guillebert very much doubted that individual reading could achieve that goal. It was only as a community that the faithful worshipped the Lord ardently enough to invoke the Holy Spirit¹⁵. Moreover, private reading and worship risked "schism and division", because believers might develop their own opinions that strayed from the path of orthodoxy, whereas a church service led by their minister guaranteed a "union of spirits"¹⁶.

Yet even if Huguenot ministers believed that despite these drawbacks their sermons merited publication, the opportunities to vent their ideas from the pulpit or in print were rapidly deteriorating in the decades leading up to the Revocation. To begin with, sermons often put ministers at loggerheads with the Catholic clergy: as long as they governed their tongue they had little to fear, but once they started disputing Catholic doctrines local priests often pushed magistrates to have them convicted on charges of heresy. The career of Pierre du Bosc is a case in point. He was first caught up in a dispute in 1660, when he published a sermon given at Caen, entitled *Les larmes de St. Pierre*. In this sermon Du Bosc exhorted a handful of "new Catholics" to leave the Church of Rome and repent, just as Peter had fled the house of high priest Caiaphas and shed his tears when realising he had renounced Christ¹⁷. This was too much for the Catholics of Caen to swallow, and they consequently reported Du Bosc to the authorities. He narrowly escaped

¹³ Jean Guillebert, *La nécessité de fréquenter les Saintes Assemblées, ou sermon sur ces paroles de l'Épître aux Ebreux Chap. 10 vers. 25, Ne délaissant point nôtre mutuelle Assemblée, comme quelques-uns ont de coûtume, mais nous admonestans l'un l'autre*, Amsterdam, Henri Desbordes, 1687, p. 40-41: "A quoi bon, disent-ils, faire parade de ma devotion en public ? (...) Quel besoin est-il de sortir de ma cabinet & de ma maison pour lui rendre mes hommages ? Ne dois-je pas être fortement persuadé qu'en quelqu'endroit du monde que je l'invoque il prêtera tres-assûrément l'oreille à mes vœux ?"

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 28: "Et en quel lieu je vous prie peut-on mieux faire une profession franche & publique du Sauveur que dans les saintes Assemblées ?"

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 25-41.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁷ Pierre du Bosc, *Les larmes de Saint Pierre, ou Sermon sur ces paroles de l'Évangile selon S. Luc, ch. 22 v. 62, Alors Pierre estant sorty dehors, pleura amerement*, Geneva, Jean Antoine and Samuel de Tournes, 1660, p. 40-41.

punishment, because he was on good terms with the governor of Normandy, the duke of Longueville, who persuaded the judges to drop the case¹⁸.

The following year Du Bosc again sparked controversy because he had imprudently denounced the Catholic doctrine of good works in a sermon on God's grace. "The salvation of man does not come from himself," Du Bosc had argued, "it cannot be gained by the merit of his works & his virtues, but must be attributed entirely to the Grace of the Lord, who grants it to us purely out of his merciful Goodness"¹⁹. A group of incensed Jesuits maintained that he had mocked their religion, and in April 1664 they finally got their way: Du Bosc was banished to Châlons-sur-Marne, where he would remain until late October, when Louis XIV allowed him to return to Caen²⁰.

But still Du Bosc refused to remain silent. On a visit to Paris in February 1670 he held two sermons in the church of Charenton, published shortly afterwards under the title *Censure et condamnation des tièdes*. Preaching on a text from the Book of Revelations, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth", Du Bosc firmly separated the true believers from the damned. Religion was like waging a battle, he argued: between truth and error there was no middle way, so people should not try to remain neutral (or "lukewarm") in the confessional onslaught, but side with the armies of the Gospel²¹. And of course it was no mystery to Du Bosc or his audience on whose side the truth was marching. Nor was this message lost on the archbishop of Paris, who immediately proceeded to Versailles with good hopes of having Du Bosc arrested on accusations of heresy. This time it was De Ruvigny, deputy-general of Protestant affairs at court, who persuaded Louis XIV to let Du Bosc return home unpunished²².

Examples of Huguenot ministers who found themselves in trouble because of their sermons can easily be multiplied. In 1671 angry Catholics threatened to have Jean Guillebert removed from

¹⁸ Philippe le Gendre, *La vie de Pierre Du Bosc, Ministre du Saint Evangile, enrichie de Lettres, Harangues, Dissertations & autres Pièces importantes, qui regardent ou la Theologie, ou les affaires des Églises Reformées de France, dont il avoit été long-tems chargé*, Rotterdam, Reinier Leers, 1694, p. 16-17.

¹⁹ Du Bosc, *Doctrine de la grace*, p. 5: "Le salut des hommes ne vient point d'eux, (...) ne se gaigne point par le merite de leurs travaux & de leurs vertus; Mais qu'il faut le rapporter tout entier à la Grace du Seigneur, qui nous l'accorde par un pur effect de sa misericordieuse Bonté."

²⁰ Le Gendre, *Vie de Pierre Du Bosc*, p. 31-44; Beaujour, *L'église réformée de Caen*, p. 237-238.

²¹ Pierre du Bosc, *La censure et la condamnation des tièdes, en deux sermons sur ces paroles de Iesus-Christ dans l'Apocalypse, Ch. III vers. 15 & 16, le connois tes oeuvres, c'est que tu n'es ni froid ni bouillant: à la mienne volonté que tu fusses froid ou bouillant; ainsi, d'autant que tu es tiède, & n'es ni froid ni bouillant, je te vomirai de ma bouche*, Charenton, Étienne Lucas, 1670.

²² Le Gendre, *Vie de Pierre Du Bosc*, p. 74; Beaujour, *L'église réformée de Caen*, p. 241-242.

Caen because he had preached that transubstantiation was a “pedantic term” (*un terme de pédant*)²³. A similar fate befell Élie Benoist in 1678 when he held a controversial sermon to strengthen a nobleman in his Protestant beliefs. At the behest of the Jesuit father De la Rue, who had arrived in Alençon in 1677, the man was about to convert to Catholicism, prompting Benoist to use his Sunday sermon to stave off the imminent apostasy. In his sermon he discussed fourteen points of doctrinal difference between the Protestant and Catholic confessions, arguing that over the course of the centuries the Church of Rome had perverted the pure doctrines formulated by the church fathers. And with apparent success, because after service the nobleman promised to reconsider his conversion. Robbed of his cause célèbre, an angry De la Rue pleaded with intendant De Morangis to have Benoist punished for lèse-majesté, only to be rebuked by him: De Morangis told the Jesuit that the Protestant clergy were allowed to preach their Calvinist doctrines as they saw fit²⁴.

Preaching came under even closer surveillance in May 1683, when a royal edict stipulated that Protestant churches should henceforth reserve front row pews for Catholic clergymen, who were enjoined to attend services “to hear what the Ministers say in their Sermons, so as to be able not only to refute them when necessary, but also to prevent them by their presence to advance something contrary to the respect they owe to the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Religion, and to the prejudice of the State”²⁵. The result of this legislation was that Catholic clergymen, often working in tandem with local authorities, now had legal cause to have Protestant churches closed down whenever a sermon displeased them, a task they took up with undisguised enthusiasm. It also made Huguenot ministers more circumspect in their preaching, because they knew that putting a theological toe out of line could spell the demolition of their church.

Finally, the printing and selling of sermons became ever more tightly regulated as French authorities were actively pursuing Protestant publishers and booksellers. Article 21 of the Edict of Nantes had already forbidden Huguenots to print any defamatory books, and urged civil magistrates

²³ Jacques Alfred Galland, *Essai sur l'histoire du protestantisme à Caen et en Basse-Normandie de l'Édit de Nantes à la Révolution, 1598-1791*, Paris, Grassart, 1898, p. 188.

²⁴ Pascal, *Élie Benoist*, p. 61-63; Jacques George de Chauffepié, *Nouveau dictionnaire historique et critique, pour servir de supplément ou de continuation au dictionnaire historique et critique, de Mr. Pierre Bayle*, vol. I, Amsterdam and The Hague, Zacherias Chatelain et al., 1750, p. 229-230.

²⁵ Léon Pilatte (ed.), *Recueil des Édits, Déclarations et Arrests concernant la Religion P. Réformée, 1662-1751, précédés de l'Édit de Nantes*, Paris, Fischbacher, 1885, p. 138: “Pour y entendre ce que les Ministres disent dans leurs Prêches, afin, non seulement de les pouvoir refuter s'il est besoin, mais aussi de les empêcher par leur présence, d'avancer aucune chose contraire au respect dû à la Religion Catholique, Apostolique et Romaine, et préjudiciable à l'État.”

and theologians to verify the content of Protestant publications²⁶. Some took this task very serious indeed: already in 1601 Protestant booksellers in Rouen and Bordeaux complained to Henry IV that magistrates had raided their bookshops and confiscated books. The king quickly forbade these raids, but it was clear that Huguenots had to watch their step²⁷. In 1666 Louis XIV finally introduced formal censorship, as he stipulated that books discussing the Protestant faith could only be published after the approbation of two ministers and the magistrate²⁸.

The possibilities for Protestants to publish and sell their books further deteriorated in the lead-up to the Revocation. In Paris the lieutenant-general of the police Nicolas de la Reynie and his trusted chief inspector Nicolas Delamare used the existing legislation as a pretext to investigate all the major Protestant booksellers in the capital, whom they suspected of importing and selling prohibited books²⁹. Their prime target was bookseller Étienne Lucas, who had his bookstore and adjacent print shop in the Rue Chartier, just east of the Louvre. Delamare raided his shop in January 1684, and again on 21 May 1685, when he confiscated 3 copies of Pierre Jurieu's *Préservatif contre le changement de Religion*, as well as a virulent denunciation of religious persecution in France written by the same, *Les derniers efforts de l'innocence affligé*. Delamare also discovered 6 copies of Jean Claude's *Réponse au livre de Monsieur l'Évesque de Meaux*, in which the Charenton minister had argued that the Church of Rome blindly dictated its supposed truths to all Christians³⁰. The Dutch bookseller Hortemel was deemed just as dangerous, because of his many contacts in Holland supplying him with all sorts of prohibited publications. "His shop and his back room, two rooms, two cabinets and an attic were found entirely stacked with books, the majority of which are printed in Holland, and are almost all heretical books," De la Reynie reported to Versailles³¹.

²⁶ Pilatte, *Recueil des Édits*, p. xvi.

²⁷ Élie Benoist, *Histoire de l'Édit de Nantes, contenant les choses les plus remarquables qui se sont passées en France avant & après sa publication, à l'occasion de la diversité des Religions*, vol. I, Delft, Adriaan Beman, p. 378.

²⁸ Élie Benoist, *Recueil d'Édits, Déclarations, Arrêts, Requête, Mémoires, & autres Pièces authentiques, Pour servir de preuve aux faits rapportez dans le second Volume de la troisième Partie de l'Histoire de l'Édit de Nantes*, in Benoist, *Histoire de l'Édit de Nantes*, vol. V, p. 17.

²⁹ Orentin Douen, *La révocation de l'Édit de Nantes à Paris d'après des documents inédits*, vol. II, Paris, Fischbacher, 1894, p. 126-133; Pierre Clément, *La police sous Louis XIV*, Paris, Didier, 1866; Henri-Jean Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle*, vol. II, Paris, Droz, 1969, p. 695-698.

³⁰ Delamare to De la Reynie, Paris, 22 May 1685, BNF Paris, Ms. Français 7050, ff. 23r-27v.

³¹ De la Reynie to Michel le Tellier, Paris, 22 May 1685, BNF Paris, Ms. Français 7050, f. 37r: "Sa boutique et son arrière boutique, deux chambres, deux cabinets et un grenier se sont trouvés remplis de livres dont la plus grande partie sont des impressions d'Hollande et presque tous livres herétiques." See for Hortemels contacts: Martin, *Livre à Paris*, vol. II, p. 726.

The lengthy memoir De la Reynie sent off to court, joined with a petition of the Catholic clergy, eventually resulted in a royal declaration issued on 25 August 1685, which forbade Protestant ministers to discuss Catholic doctrine in their sermons or put their ideas into print, on pains of disposition, banishment and the destruction of their church. Booksellers found guilty of selling such books or sermons risked a fine of 1500 *livres* and the closure of their bookshop³². The Parlement of Paris subsequently asked the archbishop of Paris to compile an Index of “heretical books”, the end result of which was a list that went on for 35 pages and comprised over 500 titles, including the sermons and recent polemical pamphlets by Jean Claude and Pierre Jurieu, but also the older sermons of Charles Drelincourt, Jean Daillé, and Pierre du Moulin³³. In all likelihood Huguenot ministers therefore abandoned plans to publish their sermons, because they knew it could spell the end of their career, or worse: the demolition of their church. Yet once they had gone into exile these restrictions no longer applied since Dutch authorities – even though they were not entirely averse to censorship – generally allowed them to publish sermons and controversial treatises that they could never have printed in France³⁴.

The Message from the Pulpit

In contrast to the restrictions French authorities put on the preaching and printing of Protestant sermons, Huguenot ministers undoubtedly found the Dutch Republic a “Mecca of authors”, but more important was that once in exile they also felt a greater need to publish their sermons. Refugees had some worrying questions to ask their ministers, who felt it their duty to reassure them in their sermons. They essentially preached a message of purpose, reassurance and hope: purpose, because the refugees wanted to know why God had destroyed their communities in France; reassurance, because they needed confirmation that leaving behind their homes and family had been the right to do; and hope, because they longed to hear that God would ultimately deliver them, and that a return to France was possible.

³² Pilatte, *Recueil des Édits*, p. 224-226; a handwritten summary of this declaration by De la Reynie can be found among his papers, BNF Paris, Ms. Français 7050, f. 124r

³³ *Mandement de Monseigneur l'Archevesque de Paris sur la condamnation des Livres contenus dans le Catalogue suivant*, Paris, F. Muguet, 1685.

³⁴ G.C. Gibbs, « The role of the Dutch Republic as the intellectual entrepôt of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries », *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 86:3, 1971, p. 323-349; Simon Groenveld, « The Mecca of Authors? States Assemblies and Censorship in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic », in A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse (eds.), *Too Mighty to be Free: Censorship and the Press in Britain and the Netherlands*, Zutphen, Walburg Pers, 1987, p. 63-86; Martin, *Livre à Paris*, vol. II, p. 739-753.

To explain why the Revocation occurred, ministers argued that it was not because God had deserted them. On the contrary, God had forcibly intervened: seeing how French Protestants had been corrupted by many vices, He decided to punish them by destroying their churches. In essence the Revocation was nothing less but a wake-up call for Huguenots to better their lives. Jean Claude was probably the first to argue this point in a sermon held on 21 November 1685, a day of thanksgiving and fasting organised by the States of Holland, and destined to pray the Lord that He would persuade Louis XIV to halt persecution in France.³⁵ Preaching on Ecclesiastes 7:14 (“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider”), Claude asked the question that probably was on everyone’s mind: “How come then that it seems as if He has poured out over all of us the fire of His indignation, without sparing His sanctuaries, nor His assemblies, nor the shepherds, nor His flocks, nor the Ministry of His Gospel, nor even the profession of His truth?”³⁶ The answer was simple enough: God wanted to punish them for their sins. Claude told the refugees to see beyond Catholic persecution, which, he argued, was merely a “secondary cause” of the Lord’s providence, an “impure channel” through which He sent his afflictions – the true root of all adversity was their own misconduct and God’s swift retribution³⁷.

In 1686 his colleague Joseph Asimont, who had fled his home town of Bergerac and settled in Amsterdam, took a similar line in two sermons dedicated to the pensionary of Holland, Caspar Fagel. Asimont compared the Huguenots to the Pharisees, whom John the Baptist had denounced as “vipers” because they cared more for ostentatious piety than admit that they were sinners who must repent (Matthew 3:7-8). The Huguenots had fallen into the same trap, Asimont argued. Believing that faith in Christ was sufficient to reach heaven, they had forsaken their spiritual duties: ministers had neglected to convince “new Catholics” to return to the true religion, while adultery, superstition and extravagance had reigned among their flock³⁸. To the question “what has caused our plight?” he therefore gave an unequivocal answer: “Our sins, for which He wants to chastise us”³⁹.

³⁵ Jean Claude, *Recueil de sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte, prononcez par Jean Claude, Ministre dans l'Église Réformée de Paris*, Geneva, Samuel de Tournes, 1693, p. 486-532. The States of Holland had already decided to hold this day just before the Revocation: resolution States of Holland 12 October 1685, National Archives (NA) The Hague, States of Holland 5363, f. 516r-v.

³⁶ Claude, *Recueil de sermons*, p. 519: “D’où vient donc que dans cette occasion il semble qu’il a répandu sur nous tous le feu de son indignation, sans épargner ni ses sanctuaires, ni ses assemblées, ni les bergers, ni les troupeaux, ni le Ministère de sa parole, ni la profession même de sa vérité ?”

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 500-503, 518-522.

³⁸ Joseph Asimont, *L'École de la Pénitence, ou divers sermons d'exhortation à se repentir, prononcés en divers temps dans l'Église Française de la Haye*, The Hague, Meindert Uytwerf, 1686, p. 1-50, 72-80.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41: “Qui a excité cette colère ? Ce sont nos pechez, dont il nous veut châtier.”

Yet refugee ministers were no fools. They knew that explaining the Revocation as a punishment from God was not much of a consolation to the refugees who had made it into exile. As a corollary to divine retribution they therefore adapted the doctrine of predestination to explain why in spite of widespread apostasy in France, a minority of Huguenots had remained steadfast in their faith and fled into exile. As Calvin had explained in the 1559 edition of his *Institutes*, predestination meant that “God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction”⁴⁰. A similar fate had also befallen French Protestants, refugee ministers observed: although the Revocation was a punishment they justly deserved, God still destined a happy few to be saved. In fact God deliberately unleashed Catholic persecution knowing that only the truly devout would persevere in their faith, while the fainthearted would convert to Catholicism. Those Huguenots who had travelled to the Dutch Republic were thus God’s chosen people, a community of refugee-elect.

Abel Rotolp de la Devèze nicely summed up this argument in a sermon held at The Hague in 1688, in which he compared the Revocation to Christ cleaning out the granary and burning the chaff: “God has used secondary causes to expose the solid piety of his true children who are his wheat, & to discover the lightness of the Hypocrites whom the wind of temptation has swept away”⁴¹. In another sermon he presented his audience with the troubling image of a rotten tree cut down and thrown into the fire by the Lord, but he reassured readers that “God will by His grace secretly preserve some roots from the remains of this tree, which he will bless, & which will one day sprout from the bosom of the earth”⁴². Virtually the same imagery was used by Jean Claude, who jubilated that the Lord “had still left some grapes, as seeds, and elected residue of his grace”⁴³. These sorts of messages were undoubtedly reassuring to refugees in exile, because they offered a religious explanation for the Revocation and bound them together as a community of the elect.

⁴⁰ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, Edinburgh, Calvin Translation Society, 1846, Bk. III, xxi, p. 7. See also: Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and predestination in Reformed theology from Calvin to Perkins*, Durham, Labyrinth Press, 1986; Cottret, *Calvin*, p. 326-329.

⁴¹ De la Devèze, *Sermons sur divers textes*, p. 248: “Dieu s’est servi des causes secondes pour exposer aux yeux du Ciel, & de la Terre la piété solide de ses véritables enfans qui sont son froment, & pour decouvrir la legereté des Hypocrites que le vent de la tentation a emportez.”

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 88: “Dieu conservera par sa grace sous le débris ce cet arbre, quelques secretes racines, sur lesquelles il répandra sa benediction, & qui sortiront un jour du sein de la terre.”

⁴³ Claude, *Recueil de sermons*, p. 521: “Mais il a laissé encore des grapes, des épics, un résidu selon l’élection de sa grace.”

But if refugee ministers were printing more sermons than ever before to console the refugees, they also did so to target another audience: the *nouveaux convertis* in France, who under pressure of the dragoons had signed their abjuration. In virtually every Huguenot sermon that rolled off the Dutch presses they harshly condemned the apostasy of French Protestants, and called upon them to “leave Babylon” – a message clearly meant not for consumption in the Walloon church, but for converts in France. One of the most vocal ministers was Jean Guillebert. In a series of sermons held in Haarlem and published in 1687, he consistently followed a two-pronged strategy: on the one hand he threatened the *nouveaux convertis* with divine punishment for their crime, on the other he assured them that God would prove merciful if they chose exile⁴⁴.

Emblematic of his approach was a sermon that appeared under the ominous title *Le malheur des apostats*. Preaching on Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, Guillebert likened their condition to that of the Huguenots: both had started out as zealous Christians, but once persecution took its toll they abandoned their faith. For this cowardice God would surely punish them, because wilfully abjuring one’s faith was the worst of sins⁴⁵. Nevertheless, Guillebert remained optimistic. He conceded that most Huguenots had only converted out of fear, not because they were convinced Catholics, so he ardently prayed that they would come to their senses and depart into exile to redeem themselves. “We regard them not as dead, but rather as poor and injured people who, suffering from a cruel wound, have been temporarily knocked down & worn out by the violence of a fatal persecution,” Guillebert argued. “Since they still preserve within them the principle of life, there is reason to believe that eventually, by the grace of the Lord they will regain their former strengths”⁴⁶.

To convince the *nouveaux convertis* to leave, refugee ministers also went to great lengths to refute their arguments for staying in France. On top of their agenda was the practice of Nicodemism, the hiding of one’s true faith behind a façade of Catholic conformity. The term had gained currency in the sixteenth century when Calvin had spoken out against the hypocrisy of French Protestants, most

⁴⁴ Guillebert’s sermons were first published separately, but then reprinted in a single volume in July 1687, preceded by a dedication to Michiel ten Hove (1640-1689), pensionary of Haarlem: Guillebert, *Sermons sur divers textes*.

⁴⁵ Jean Guillebert, *Le Malheur des Apostats, ou sermon sur ces paroles de l’Épître aux Ébreux Chap. 10 vers. 26, Car si nous pechons volontairement après avoir reçu la connoissance de la vérité, il ne reste plus de sacrifice pour les pechez*, Amsterdam, Henri Desbordes, 1687, p. 5-29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53: “Nous les regardons, non comme des personnes mortes, mais plutôt comme de pauvres blessez qui étans atteints d’une cruelle playe en leur corps ont été renversez & abatus pour un tems par la violence d’une persecution funeste. Mais comme ils ont encore en eux le principe de la vie, il y a sujet de croire qu’enfin avec la grace du Seigneur, ils reprendront leurs premieres forces.”

notably in his 1544 treatise *Excuse à Messieurs les Nicodemites*. Quoting the biblical story of Nicodemus, a Pharisee who only dared visit Jesus at night, Calvin denounced Nicodemites as meek Protestants who betrayed their religion by going to mass, but nonetheless claimed that their conscience remained loyal to God. According to Calvin true Christians should not knowingly conform to teachings they knew to be false (simulation), nor should they keep silent about their own; rather, they must shun the Church of Rome and proudly profess the truth of the Gospel. The only solution was exile, or if they stayed behind, avoiding Catholic ceremonies and worshipping the Lord in private. The latter solution was plainly at odds with Calvin's plea to profess the Gospel at all times, but as long as Protestants avoided going to mass, Calvin proved quite willing to condone the practice of dissimulation – hiding one's beliefs from others, and worshipping God out of sight⁴⁷.

Huguenot refugee ministers, however, chose to ignore the ambivalence inherent in Calvin's thought, as they focused almost exclusively on the necessity to profess the Gospel and leave France. Jean Guillebert's sermon *La nécessité de fréquenter les saintes Assemblées*, ostensibly aimed at the refugees in Haarlem, thus took on an entire different meaning: in fact he also condemned the *nouveaux convertis*, who alleged that God would see through their religious sham and take note of their private devotions. According to Guillebert this was Protestantism for the fainthearted because true Christians must profess their faith in public⁴⁸. In 1686 Jean Claude also warned against the dangers of Nicodemism in a sermon entitled *La récompense du fidèle, et la condamnation des apostats*. He chose as his text Matthew 10:32-33, in which Jesus promises to acknowledge his faithful followers before God in Heaven, but threatens to renounce those who had refused to profess the Gospel on earth. Claude therefore concluded that Christ "wants us to openly profess our religion, & that the words coming from our lips are the faithful interpreters of the movements of our hearts"⁴⁹. True believers were unable to restrain their burning zeal, and would even shout their beliefs from the rooftops when threatened by persecution.

⁴⁷ Carlos M.N. Eire, « Prelude to Sedition? Calvin's Attack on Nicodemism and Religious Compromise », *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 76, 1985, p. 120-145; Cottret, *Calvin*, p. 275-280; Thierry Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome ni Genève: Des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVIe siècle*, Paris, Champion, 1997, p. 60-69.

⁴⁸ Guillebert, *Les Saintes Assemblées*, p. 25-41.

⁴⁹ Jean Claude, *La Récompense du fidèle, et la condamnation des apostats, ou Sermon sur saint Matth. chap. 10. vers. 32-33. Avec la dernière exhortation que feu M. Claude fit à Charenton* (Rotterdam, 1688), p. 3-5: "Il veut que nous en fassions une profession ouverte, & que les paroles de nos bouches soyent des fidèles interprètes des mouvemens de nos cœurs."

Ministers also recycled the biblical story of the apostle Peter, who thrice renounced Christ in the home of the Jewish high priest Caiaphas, but when the rooster crowed realised his mistake and left, weeping bitterly. To refugee ministers the parallels were obvious: they argued that Peter's fall and subsequent repentance were a sure sign that God would have mercy on the *nouveaux convertis*, if only they saw the error of their abjuration, asked forgiveness, and left France. This was the argument put forward for instance by Samuel de Brais, erstwhile minister in the Normandy towns of Condé-sur-Noireau and Alençon, but who after the Revocation had taken up a position in the Walloon church of Haarlem⁵⁰. In a sermon published in 1693, De Brais explicitly told the *nouveaux convertis* to follow into the apostle's footsteps, by making sincere amends for their abjuration and then leaving France.⁵¹ "His [Peter's] departure from the court of Caiaphas shows us that it's not sufficient for us to genuinely repent, to recognise the sins & the errors that we had the misfortune to get involved in," he said. On the contrary, it demonstrated "that we must promptly leave, to follow the rules of a more godly & more Christian life"⁵².

A second objection to exile that refugee ministers were at pains to refute was the often-heard complaint that Protestants leaving France were bound to suffer material losses, because they had to leave behind their homes and part of their possessions. In exile they would probably be poor, but if they remained and converted to Catholicism they could enjoy the possession of their goods. Refugee ministers harshly condemned this attitude. In a sermon preached in December 1686, Samuel de Brais thundered that true Christians should not care for worldly goods, but only for the Word of God. Only false religions such as Catholicism tried to gain converts by promising them riches and fame – a stab at the infamous *Caisse des Économats*, which financially rewarded Protestant converts to the Church of Rome, and was therefore nicknamed the *Caisse des Conversions*⁵³.

⁵⁰ Pascal, *Élie Benoist*, p. 69-70; Galland, *Protestantisme en Basse-Normandie*, p. 198-199.

⁵¹ Samuel de Brais, *Le tableau de la repentance, ou sermon sur les versets 60. 61. & 62. du chapitre XXII. de l'Évangile de N.S.I.C. selon S. Luc*, Rotterdam, Abraham Acher, 1693.

⁵² Ibid., p. 58: "Sa sortie de la cour de Caïphe nous marque que ce n'est pas assez pour nous repentir véritablement, de reconnoître les pechez & les erreurs où nous aurions eu le malheur de nous engager, (...) mais qu'il en faut promptement sortir, pour suivre les règles d'une vie plus sainte & plus chrétienne."

⁵³ S.D.B. [Samuel de Brais] *L'oubly de son Peuple, ou sermon sur ces paroles du Pseaume XLV vers. 11 & 12, Écoute fille & considere; encline ton oreille & oublie ton peuple & la maison de ton Pere. Et le Roi mettra ton affection en ta beauté*, Amsterdam, Henri Desbordes, 1687, p. 3-5. On the *Caisse des Économats*, see: Élisabeth Labrousse, *Une foi, une loi, un roi? Essai sur la Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes*, Geneva, Labor et Fides, 1985, p. 159-163; Orestin Douen, « La fondateur de la Caisse des Conversions », *BSHPF*, 30, 1881, p. 145-160.

De Brais explained that to follow Christ or to enter Heaven one did not need to be rich. On the contrary, Jesus' simple lifestyle showed that true faith was not expressed by opulent displays of religion, but by the humble piety of the poor⁵⁴. In other words, poverty in exile was to be preferred over riches in France. "We wouldn't see you as miserable Nicodemites, remaining in error against your proper knowledge, and in fear of having to renounce the advantages of this world," De Brais told them, "if you would all give yourself over to God; & than undoubtedly the fear of losing some goods, which you shall have to lose anyway [at your death], (...) wouldn't have caused these fateful Apostasies"⁵⁵.

In Rotterdam his colleague Pierre Jurieu wholeheartedly agreed. Having served as a professor of theology at the academy of Sedan until its forced closure in 1681, Jurieu left for the Dutch Republic to become a minister in the Walloon church at Rotterdam⁵⁶. In the spring of 1686 he gave a sermon on a key text from Paul's letter to the Romans: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Jurieu drew an obvious parallel between this passage and the plight of the *nouveaux convertis*, telling them that suffering for their beliefs was preferable to conforming to the Church of Rome because God would surely reward them for their steadfastness⁵⁷. Unfortunately many failed to live up to Paul's expectations: they attached more value to the fame and riches they possessed on earth, than to their conscience and future redemption⁵⁸. "You avoid the afflictions of the present time, but you commit yourselves to the afflictions of times to come. You guarantee yourselves against exile, but you throw yourselves into eternal exile in the sight of your Lord," he warned⁵⁹.

Jean Claude discussed the issue of attachment to property versus the glory to be found in exile in much the same vein. As he neatly summed up the reasons why people had foolishly converted to

⁵⁴ [De Brais] *L'oubly de son Peuple*, p. 25-38.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 32: "On ne vous verroit pas malheureux Nicodemites, demeurer dans l'erreur contre vos propres lumières, dans la crainte que vous avez de renoncer aux avantages du monde, si vous vous donniez tous à Dieu, & sans doute que la fraideur de perdre un peu plutôt des biens qu'il faut pourtant perdre enfin, (...) n'aueroient pas causé ces funestes Apostasies."

⁵⁶ F.R.J. Knetsch, *Pierre Jurieu: Theoloog en politikus der Refuge*, Kampen, Kok, 1967.

⁵⁷ Pierre Jurieu, *La balance du sanctuaire, où sont pesées les Afflictions presentes de l'Église avec les avantages qui luy en reviennent: Pour la consolation de tant de personnes qui sont pénétrées de douleur par la Persécution présente que souffre l'Église: Sermon sur le 18. verset du 8. Chapitre de l'Épistre aux Romains, Tout bien conté, j'estime que les afflictions du temps présent ne sont pas à contrepeser avec la gloire qui est à venir*, The Hague, Abraham Troyel, 1686.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 74-112.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 94: "Vous évités les afflictions du temps présent, & vous vous engagés dans les afflictions du temps à venir. Vous vous garantissez de l'exil, mais vous vous tombés dans un exil éternel de devant la face de vostre Dieu."

Catholicism, he condemned above all the “chameleonic” Nicodemites, who only went to mass out of fear to lose their possessions. “Because the external [public] profession of the Gospel often runs the risk of losing their goods on earth, they try to reach a compromise with God,” Claude explained: “They will readily promise that they shall render Him their heart, provided that God leaves them free to use their bodies & their exterior appearance as they see fit”⁶⁰. Needless to say, Claude firmly denounced bargaining with the Almighty. In matters of faith there was no middle road: you were either a proud Protestant or a wayward apostate, not something in between.

The uses of exile sermons in France

Exile sermons thus had multiple audiences. Although at first sight they only appear to address the refugees in exile, they were also aimed at the *nouveaux convertis* in France. Of course scholars of the *Refuge* have long recognised that refugee ministers used Dutch presses to address their former brethren in France, but they have only situated this point of contact in the many “pastoral letters” Huguenot ministers sent off France. Most of these letters were incidental exhortations written to encourage their former communities to leave, although between 1686 and 1695 Pierre Jurieu also addressed regular letters to the *nouveaux convertis*, telling them time and again to escape France, or at the very least avoid going to mass⁶¹. It is striking, however, that the many Huguenot sermons published in the Dutch Republic carried precisely the same message as these pastoral letters, because in both types of spiritual literature refugee ministers denounced the practice of Nicodemism and the attachment to worldly possessions, calling upon Protestants to go into exile⁶².

Huguenot sermons printed in the Dutch Republic were thus part of a well-conceived media strategy by refugee ministers to reach the Huguenots in France. This becomes even more apparent in the introductions ministers often prefixed to their sermons. Samuel de Brais for example stated that his sermons “mainly aim to lift our Brothers in France from the state in which the most cruel

⁶⁰ Claude, *Récompense du fidèle*, p. 50-51: “Mais parce que la profession extérieure de l’Évangile les expose souvent à perdre ces biens de la terre, ils tachent de composer avec Dieu, ils promettent volontiers qu’ils luy donneroyent leur cœur pourvû que Dieu les laissât dans la liberté de faire tel usage qu’ils voudroyent de leurs corps & de leur extérieur.”

⁶¹ [Pierre Jurieu] *Lettres pastorales adressées aux fideles de France, qui gemissent sous la captivité de Babylon*, Rotterdam, Abraham Acher, 1686-1695. See also: Knetsch, *Pierre Jurieu*, p. 219-243; Élisabeth Labrousse, « Les Pastorales de Pierre Jurieu » in Élisabeth Labrousse (ed.), *Conscience et conviction: Études sur le XVIIe siècle*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 1996, p. 230-237.

⁶² On the themes discussed in the pastoral letters, see: Laetitia Cherdon, « La dénonciation du nicodémisme à l’époque de la Révocation de l’Édit de Nantes », *BSHPPF*, 153, 2007, p. 47-65.

persecution that has ever been has plunged them”⁶³. Similarly Abel Rotolp de la Devèze explained that he had published his sermons because “I believed that I should also contribute to the consolation of those who are dispersed in places where they rarely hear French preachers, and even more to the salvation of so many Faithful who are absolutely deprived of this happiness in their Fatherland”⁶⁴.

On the receiving end, local authorities in France soon discovered that sermons and other spiritual books written by refugee ministers were freely circulating among the *nouveaux convertis*. Sermons were sold under the cloak by converted booksellers: in Paris, a spy reported to the police that Protestant bookseller Étienne Lucas was secretly selling Jurieu’s sermon *La balance du sanctuaire* as well as Jean Claude’s pamphlet *Les Plaintes des Protestans, cruellement opprimez dans le Royaume de France*⁶⁵. Likewise the Normandy intendant Feydeau de Brou was appalled when he discovered a set of forbidden books in a double-bottomed case sent from Amsterdam by the Huguenot bookseller Pierre Savouret to his colleague Louis Cabut jr. in Rouen, because it included the posthumous works of Jean Claude and Pierre Jurieu’s *La Politique de la Clergé de France*⁶⁶.

Yet if refugee ministers hoped their sermons would encourage converted Protestants to leave France, they were mistaken. It appears that *nouveaux convertis* used these sermon volumes to achieve precisely the opposite goal, organising private devotions or illicit church services rather than follow their ministers into exile. Élie Benoist reported in his *Histoire de l’Édit de Nantes* that all over France – especially in the Languedoc, Cevennes and Poitou, but also in Normandy – converted Protestants were assembling in secret, praying together and reading out sermons⁶⁷. In the town of Caen, for example, a group of *nouveaux convertis* was arrested for holding an improvised service on Christmas morning 1689 at the house of Jacques Simon, who had led them in psalm-singing and had read a sermon out loud⁶⁸. In an ironical way, then, Huguenot sermons printed in

⁶³ De Brais, *Tableau de la repentance*, preface: “Le principal but tend à relever nos Freres de France de l’état ou la plus cruelle persecution qui fut jamais”.

⁶⁴ De la Devèze, *Sermons sur divers textes*, preface: “J’ay cru que je devois contribuer, à mon tour, à la consolation de ceux qui sont dispensez dans des lieux où ils n’entendent que rarement des predicateurs François, plus encore au salut de tant de Fidels qui sont privez absolument de ce bonheur dans leur Patrie.”

⁶⁵ Seignelay to De la Reynie, Versailles, December 1686, BNF Paris, Ms. Français 7050, f. 246r.

⁶⁶ Feydeau de Brou, Inventory of confiscated books at Louis Cabut jr., Rouen, 4 July 1688, AN Paris, G7/492/482. I owe this reference to Amélie Lecoq. On booksellers and publishers in Rouen, see: Jean-Dominique Mellot, *L’édition rouennaise et ses marchés (vers 1600-vers 1730): Dynamisme provincial et centralisme parisien*, Paris, École des Chartres, 1998.

⁶⁷ Benoist, *Histoire de l’Édit de Nantes*, vol. V, p. 989-990.

⁶⁸ Interview of Simon Jacques, Caen, 30 January 1690, AN Paris, TT 237/2, ff. 117-119.

exile probably strengthened the *nouveaux convertis* in their conviction that they could keep alive their faith under the cross, rather than make them decide to go into exile.

Moreover, some refugee ministers took a decidedly ambivalent stance on whether it was permitted to stay in France. Although in his printed sermons Jurieu told the *nouveaux convertis* to leave, in his pastoral letters he stayed closer to Calvin's teachings, praising the illegal assemblies "in the wilderness" (*dans le Désert*), as long as Protestants did not go to mass⁶⁹. Other ministers even returned to France in order to preach the Gospel and thus kept alive Protestant faith under the cross. In the Dutch Republic they received help from a secret council headed by Élie Benoist and Pierre Jurieu, who secured funding from the States of Holland for those ministers returning to France, and gave them advice on how to keep a low profile once they were on hostile territory: they were told to avoid the well-policed towns and host only small gatherings⁷⁰.

The aim of this council, however, was not necessarily to encourage Protestants to remain in France. Rather, it was hoped that undercover ministers would tell the *nouveaux convertis* to return to the true faith and leave the kingdom. According to the Sieur de Tillières, a spy in the pay of the French ambassador to The Hague, the count of D'Avaux, the whole point was "to lift up those who have fallen, and to support those who could, and animate all to return to the state in which they had previously been, and to show them a door to leave"⁷¹. Yet to the dismay of Benoist, ministers under the cross seemed more interested in sustaining Protestantism in France than telling people to leave, as they organised massive gatherings and stayed abroad for many years, "exposing themselves and their audiences to cruel massacres, and to divers tortures"⁷². Probably the most famous among them was Claude Brousson, a lay minister who had decided to return to France, where he toured the

⁶⁹ Knetsch, *Pierre Jurieu*, p. 223-231; Chrystel Bernat, « Une foi au secret? Captivité, hommage à Dieu et clandestinité protestante (1685-1791) », *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 228, 2011, p. 199-202.

⁷⁰ Élie Benoist, Suite de l'Histoire de l'Édit de Nantes, Bibliothèque de Genève (BGE) Geneva, MS Court 50, ff. 149v-150r. See for example the annual subsidy of 400 guilders to Claude Brousson: resolution States of Holland, 19 August 1695, NA The Hague, Gecommitteerde Raden to the States of Holland 3045, f. 279v-280r.

⁷¹ Tillières to D'Avaux, Haarlem, 22 December 1685, AAE Paris, Hollande 144, ff. 160r-160v: "De relever ceux qui sont tombez, et de soutenir ceux qui pourroient tomber, et animer le tout a se remettre dans l'estat ou ils estoient et leur représenter une porte pour sortir." Italics mine. On Tillières, see: Jacques Solé, « La diplomatie de Louis XIV et les protestants français réfugiés aux Provinces-Unies (1678-1688) », *BSPHF*, 115, 1969, p. 641-644; Brian E. Strayer and Walter C. Utt, « Un 'faux frère': Le sieur de Tillières et les réfugiés huguenots aux Provinces-Unies, 1685-1688 », *BSPHF*, 150, 2004, p. 507-516.

⁷² Élie Benoist, Suite de l'Histoire de l'Édit de Nantes, BGE Geneva, MS Court 50, f. 150r: "Exposoient eux et leur Auditeurs à de cruels massacres, et à divers supplices."

countryside holding sermons until he was arrested and executed in 1698⁷³.

Conclusion

In sum, the sudden output of Huguenot sermons after 1685 can be attributed to four major factors. First, the attitude of ministers played a crucial role: they were generally reluctant to publish their sermons because they believed orally delivered sermons first needed careful editing before a wider audience could appreciate them. Second, the severe restrictions that the French state had put on the preaching and printing of Protestant sermons forced ministers to be on their guard, because overstepping these boundaries could entail their destitution and even the closure of their church. In the Dutch Republic by contrast they were free to commit their exhortations to print. Third, refugee ministers saw an urgent need to address their flocks in exile, giving the refugees a sense of purpose and hope: they reassured them that fleeing France had been the right decision, and that as God's elect they would certainly live to see the re-establishment of His church. Fourth, exile sermons also addressed the *nouveaux convertis* in France, who were told to "leave Babylon" if they wanted to escape divine punishment.

This last reason probably contributed most to the outpouring of Huguenot exile sermons. As we have seen, refugee ministers in the Dutch Republic did not simply print their homilies for the benefit of Protestant refugees, but also as part of a larger strategy to target the *nouveaux convertis* in France. Ministers time and again pointed out the crime of conforming to the Church of Rome and urged the remaining Huguenots to go into exile, which was exactly the same message conveyed in their pastoral letters. Yet if refugee ministers were hoping to encourage the *nouveaux convertis* to leave the French kingdom, they were sorely disappointed: ironically, exile sermons seem to have to strengthened rather than weakened Nicodemism in France.

⁷³ Walter C. Utt and Brian E. Strayer, *The Bellicose Dove: Claude Brousson and Protestant Resistance to Louis XIV, 1647-1698*, Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2003; Hubert Bost, « Claude Brousson et le Désert des huguenots: Une poétique de l'épreuve » in Hubert Bost (ed.), *Ces Messieurs de la R.P.R.: Histoires et écritures de huguenots, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles*, Paris, Champion, 2001, p. 237-265.

Résumé

Beaucoup des pasteurs huguenots du XVIIe siècle n'ont commencé à faire publier leurs sermons qu'en exil, surtout aux Provinces-Unies. Les raisons en étaient multiples : il fallait d'abord retoucher un sermon prononcé en chaire avant de le rendre public, chose pas facile sous le régime louis quatorzien, parce que les autorités pourchassaient vigoureusement les sermons perçus comme blasphématoires contre la religion catholique. En exil les pasteurs voulaient aussi consoler les réfugiés, mais en imprimant leurs sermons ils s'adressaient surtout aux nouveaux convertis, qu'ils exhortaient à partir en exil. Or, il apparaît que ces sermons imprimés avait l'effet tout contraire : les huguenots restés en France les utilisaient pour renforcer leur foi sous la croix au lieu de "quitter la Babylone".

Summary

Many seventeenth-century Huguenot ministers only started publishing their sermons once in exile, especially in the Dutch Republic. Several reasons explain this shift: first of all, they wanted to edit orally delivered sermons before making them public. Yet during the reign of Louis XIV this proved difficult, because French authorities actively hunted down sermons they deemed disrespectful towards the Catholic faith. Ministers also wanted to console the refugees, but their printed sermons addressed above all the *nouveaux convertis*, whom they exhorted to go into exile. Yet it appears that printed sermons had exactly the opposite effect: those Protestants who had stayed in France used them to strengthen their faith under the cross rather than "leave Babylon".

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