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Terence C. Cave

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TERENCE C. CAVE



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FOR MY MOTHER AND FATHER

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PREFACE

One of the fundamental religious trends of the sixteenth century, whether one is considering the ‘pre-Reformation’, the Reformation itself, or the Catholic revival, is the attempt to rediscover an inner, personal value for a religion which had become too concerned with externals on the one hand and with an abstruse, impersonal theology on the other. Towards the end of the century, this ‘inwardness’ is manifested in the increasing popularity of vernacular devotional literature: and it is the first object of this study to show to what extent the contemporary rise of the religious lyric in France may be seen as part of the same historical and literary development.¹

Until the emergence of specialist studies of the ‘baroque’ period in France, the existence of the substantial quantity of religious poetry which appeared during and after the wars of religion was acknowledged only with some embarrassment. Overshadowed by Ronsard’s *Discours*, by d’Aubigné’s *Tragiques*, by Du Bartas and to a lesser extent by the religious drama, the lyric poets were often given summary treatment; little attempt was made to consider the poetry of prayer and meditation as an organically coherent *genre*.² However, Henri Bremond demonstrated that such poetry could be placed in the context of the devotional revival; and his sympathetic and perceptive reading of La Ceppède, to mention only one poet among many, has formed the basis of much of the recent work on this period.

Since Bremond, and since Professor Boase’s pioneer work on Sponde, the attempt to reassess the literature of the post-Pléiade era in positive terms has attracted the attention and energies of numerous scholars in

¹ See the conclusion of my article, ‘The Protestant devotional tradition: Simon Goulart’s *Trente tableaux de la mort*’, *FS*, 21 (1967), pp. 1 ff. This article establishes one of the starting-points of the present study; I am most grateful to the Editorial Board of *French Studies* for allowing me to reproduce parts of it here (in particular the first two sections, which are placed in a wider context in chs. 1 and 2 below).

² See for example R. Lebègue, *La Poésie française de 1560 à 1630*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1951); M. Raymond, *L’Influence de Ronsard sur la poésie française, 1550–1585* (Geneva, 1965) (*THR*, 73), 2nd ed., chs. 13–15, 26; J. Vianey, *Le Pétrarquisme en France* (Montpellier, 1909), ch. 4, especially pp. 293–4, 297–303. The view that most of the successes in the field of religious poetry must be attributed to Protestants (Du Bartas, d’Aubigné, Sponde) is maintained (with some regret) by A. Müller, in *La Poésie religieuse catholique de Marot à Malherbe* (Paris, 1950).

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Europe, North America and Australia. As a result of this activity, a certain amount of religious poetry is now readily accessible;¹ furthermore, the impact of the Counter-Reformation has been recognised as one of the most significant factors determining the general literary character of the period.² Nevertheless, the consideration of Sponde, La Ceppède and their contemporaries as ‘metaphysical’, ‘baroque’, or (more recently) ‘mannerist’ poets has tended from the outset to focus attention on problems of terminology.³ Furthermore, the inclination to derive general historical concepts largely from the internal analysis of literary works has produced a dangerous area of abstraction; I have been disturbed, in my reading of the ‘second generation’ of critics, by the assumption that the word ‘baroque’ (and to a lesser extent its satellite terms) now has an agreed content and corresponds to a historical and stylistic fact. For the same reason, there has been a certain inbreeding of literary analysis and evaluation: since Sponde and La Ceppède are held to illustrate the baroque, their work continues to be assessed in terms of ‘baroque characteristics’.⁴

¹ For Sponde, see the editions of Professor A. M. Boase; for Chassignet, see the selection by A.-M. Schmidt in *Poètes du xvi^e siècle* (Paris, 1959) (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), or A. Müller, *Le Mespris de la vie et consolation contre la mort. Choix de sonnets* (Geneva, 1953) (*TLF*), together with the same author’s *Un Poète religieux du xvi^e siècle: J.-B. Chassignet, 1578?–1635?* (Paris, 1951); for La Ceppède, see Professor J. Rousset’s photographic edition of the *Théorèmes* (Geneva, 1966) (*THR*, 80), which supersedes the selection of F. Ruchon in *Essai sur la vie et l’œuvre de Jean de La Ceppède* (Geneva, 1953) (*THR*, 8). See also Rousset’s *Anthologie de la poésie baroque française*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1961). Boase’s anthology, *The Poetry of France*, vol. 1, 1400–1600 (London, 1964), contains two well-chosen sonnets by Favre (p. 191).

² See for example I. Buffum, *Agrippa d’Aubigné’s Les Tragiques* (Paris, 1951), pp. 83–8; J. Rousset, *Anthologie*, vol. 1, pp. 18–19, and *La Littérature de l’âge baroque en France* (Paris, 1954), pp. 236–40; O. de Mourgues, *Metaphysical, Baroque and Précieux Poetry* (Oxford, 1953), ch. 6 (especially sect. 1); Boase, *The Poetry of France*, vol. 1, *Introduction*, pp. xcix ff. A recent article by F. L. Lawrence, ‘La Ceppède’s *Théorèmes* and Ignatian Meditation’, *CL*, 17 (1965), pp. 133 ff., makes a number of important points, but suffers from lack of reference to a complete edition of the *Théorèmes*, and from the consideration of Loyola as a principal source of La Ceppède’s technique.

³ See for example the studies by Rousset, Buffum and de Mourgues mentioned above; Buffum’s *Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou* (Yale, 1957); a group of articles on the baroque published in *L’Esprit créateur*, 1 (1961), no. 2 and a similar group on mannerism in *EC*, 6 (1966), no. 4; and of course the work of Boase, including ‘The Definition of Mannerism’, in *Proceedings of the IIIrd Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association* (The Hague, 1962), pp. 143 ff. (see also *The Poetry of France, Introduction*, p. xcvi). Owing to the proliferation of such studies, it would be impossible, and irrelevant, to attempt anything approaching an *état présent* study here.

⁴ Some of the articles in the first volume of *L’Esprit créateur* mentioned above seem to me to represent these tendencies; see for example Jesse Zeldin, ‘*Les Tragiques* and the

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It seems advisable, therefore, to develop the study of this period through the isolation of areas of literature which have a close inner coherence both thematically and historically; and the coincidence of the devotional revival with the popularity of religious poetry provides a convenient way of delineating one such area.¹ The validity of this pattern has already been established for English poetry by Louis Martz, who, in his *Poetry of Meditation*, considers close parallels between techniques of meditation in contemporary translations of devotional treatises and the work of poets such as Southwell, Crashaw, Donne and Herbert.² Since most of the handbooks which Martz mentions had appeared in French editions some years earlier, there are clearly grounds for a comparative study of the French and English poets in devotional terms. Yet the special conditions of French poetry and of French religious history in the later sixteenth century demand an independent treatment, in the first instance at least: I have therefore made very few allusions to non-French poetry.

In delimiting the materials of this study, I have preferred to talk of a 'devotional poetry' rather than of a 'poetry of meditation', since the term devotion is more specifically religious: I have not followed Martz in his wider discussion of meditative poetry, for the affinity which links, say, Donne and Eliot has no counterpart in France. In the second place, as 'devotion' implies the private religious attitudes of meditation and prayer, the term will exclude a great deal of 'moral' poetry along the lines of Pibrac's *Quatrains*, of partisan poetry in the vein of the *Discours* and the *Tragiques*, and of epic, dramatic and 'scientific' poetry. I shall therefore be considering primarily 'lyric' poetry, a poetry of self-examination and prayer; but since the modes of medita-

Baroque', pp. 67 ff., or Ilona Coombs, 'Baroque Elements in Jean de Sponde's *Stances de la mort*', pp. 86 ff. See also V.-L. Tapié, *Baroque et classicisme* (Paris, 1957), where Sponde and Théophile are described together as poets who 'n'avaient point mis de frein à leur imagination, ni au plaisir de leur fantaisie' (p. 25); such a distorted judgement of Sponde suggests that the term baroque has created a barrier between the critic and the poetic text.

¹ Others could no doubt be found, for example in the realm of prose style (one or two suggestions on this topic are made below, chs. 2, 3 and 7).

² L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (Yale, 1962). See also Rosemond Tuve, *A Reading of George Herbert* (London, 1952), for Herbert's relation to the devotional and liturgical traditions (including some important observations on the ways in which Counter-Reformation devotional 'styles' were anticipated by the Middle Ages); Miss Tuve's critical approach is also relevant to the present study.

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tion and sermon are often inseparable, Sponde's *Sonnets de la mort* and similar material may, I think, legitimately be considered under this heading. In order to illustrate the methods and matter of devotion, and thus to provide a context for this poetry, I have drawn on both medieval and sixteenth-century prose; but as the medieval tradition is to a large extent subsumed in the treatises of the Counter-Reformation, greater emphasis will be laid on the latter. Translations into French of foreign and Latin works will be used in nearly every case, since the whole argument depends on the movement of devotion into vernacular *media*; furthermore, verse paraphrase, both of Biblical texts and of medieval hymns, will be taken into account as an essential factor in this movement, although a full study of this vast field could clearly not be undertaken.

If one is to deal with such a rich period of literature, it is essential to be selective, particularly as the majority of primary sources are not easily accessible. I have omitted at least one important group of themes—those associated with the description and praise of Creation—on the grounds that it was not possible to do justice to such a wide-ranging topic without seriously disturbing the balance and unity of the book; similarly, there are many more minor poets of this period whose work could have been included, but who seemed superfluous to the demonstration of my thesis. At the same time, I have included a substantial number of quotations (often of whole poems), and have added an Appendix containing supplementary illustrations too long to include in the text, since much of this poetry is likely to be unfamiliar to the reader.

The dates I have chosen to limit the period are intended only as an approximate indication and are somewhat arbitrary. Most literary historians agree in placing the beginning of the vogue of religious lyrics in the 1570s: Jacques de Billy's *Sonnets spirituels* were first published in 1573, in 1574 appeared the Geneva *Poèmes chrestiens*, and from 1575, the works of Desportes were beginning to include religious poems. Several important devotional works were published in the years immediately preceding the accession of Henri III, so that 1570 seems to represent a significant moment in the rise of vernacular devotional literature; nevertheless, some account will be given of works published prior to this date. The terminal date, 1613, is more specific in that it

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marks the appearance of the first complete volume of La Ceppède's *Théorèmes*. By this time, the character of the various modes of devotional poetry was fully established, while the naturalisation into French of the devotional tradition had reached its first climax in the *Introduction à la vie dévote* of St François de Sales. This period of forty years, though organically related to developments both before and after, thus allows one to examine the beginnings and establishment of an independent devotional poetry.

The structure of the present study is based on the attempt to combine historical documentation with internal analysis and evaluation. The first chapter provides a broad historical sketch of the devotional revival; the second indicates certain relevant aspects of devotional themes and techniques as they appear in the handbooks themselves; and the third attempts to establish, in a historical perspective, the grounds for believing that the growth of the religious lyric is intimately linked with the devotional revival. The remaining four chapters are concerned almost exclusively with poetry. The material has been distributed according to thematic and formal criteria, since I felt that a purely chronological analysis would have resulted in excessive fragmentation; considerable emphasis has nevertheless been placed on the evolution of poetic attitudes and techniques. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the themes of affliction and death, chapters 6 and 7 with meditation on the life of Christ. This division is justified on the grounds of emotional unity: the mood of penitential self-abasement which arises from the consideration of man's unredeemed nature is resolved in the contemplation of the Redemption. As we shall see later, the same pattern is used by many of the devotional masters, and it reflects the contrast between the Old Testament and the New. Within this broad thematic framework, the material has been grouped in terms of forms rather than of themes: the distinction between the devotional sonnet on the one hand and more expansive forms such as the psalm-like *stances* on the other is an essential one, since it is often the sign of a fundamental difference in poetic temperament. However, I have not excluded more specific thematic groupings, such as that suggested, for example, by the poetry of the Eucharist. Above all, the work of leading poets such as Desportes, Favre, Sponde, La Ceppède and César de Nostredame has been allowed to dominate the shape of individual chapters.

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My aim is therefore threefold. In the first place, I have tried to show how far the devotional poets were able to create a valid and independent mode of poetic expression; in the second place, I have sought to indicate a pattern of themes, language and technique which is central to the devotional literature of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as a whole; and finally, I hope to have shed new light on the work of poets already familiar—Sponde, Desportes, Chassignet, La Ceppède—and of others, like Favre and César de Nostredame, who deserve more attention than they have yet received.

A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

The scope and purposes of this book have made it impossible to account for the variants of a text in more than a small proportion of cases, especially as there is an almost total lack of modern variant editions even of such central poets as Desportes and Bertaut. I have referred to modern editions where possible, for reasons of accessibility, even where the presentation of the text is far from satisfactory (Michiels's Desportes, Chenevière's Bertaut). In the case of Desportes, this has resulted in a degree of inconsistency, since the prose prayers and meditations and many of the paraphrases are not included by Michiels: for these texts I have used one of the earliest contemporary editions in which all the religious work of Desportes appears.

When I have quoted from editions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I have retained the spelling and punctuation of the original and only corrected misprints where the true reading is in no possible doubt. In one or two cases, I have added punctuation suggestions in square brackets to clarify the sense, but I have been as economical as possible in this respect. Where there were *lacunae* in the original, I have also supplied a conjectural reading in square brackets. Consonantal 'i' and 'u' have throughout been rendered as 'j' and 'v' respectively, and all ampersands and abbreviations resolved. The arrangement of sonnets and extracts from sonnets has been standardised without separation of quatrains or tercets.

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This book originated as a doctoral thesis. The definition of my subject, and most of the preparation of the thesis itself, was supervised by Professor I. D. McFarlane, of the University of St Andrews, to whom I should like to express my warmest thanks for his scholarly advice and criticism throughout this stage. I am similarly indebted to Professor A. J. Steele, of Edinburgh University, for his close reading of the completed thesis and of the version revised for publication. Both have contributed more to the fabric of this book than could possibly be acknowledged.

I am most grateful to Dr O. de Mourgues, Dr G. Castor, and M. M. Jeanneret, of Cambridge University, for the comments and suggestions which they supplied at important stages in the preparation of the manuscript. M. Jeanneret has further enriched my book by making available to me, in conversation and by correspondence, his close knowledge of fields related to my own; and since the title of his forthcoming book was not available to me when I compiled my footnotes, I am glad to be able to announce it here: *Poésie et tradition biblique au seizième siècle*.

Dr H. G. Hall and Professor D. G. Charlton, of the University of Warwick, were kind enough to read and comment on portions of the final draft; and many other friends and colleagues have from the earliest stages given me their help and encouragement.

I am grateful to the Trustees of the Jebb Studentship at Cambridge University, to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and to the Universities of St Andrews and Warwick for making available to me scholarships and grants which enabled me to conduct my research, both in England and in France, unhampered by financial problems.

Finally, I should like to thank my wife Helen for helping me with proofs and Index, and for her patience and tactful encouragement throughout the revision and final preparation of the book.

T. C. C.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used, both in the text and in the Bibliography:

<i>Ann. hist. soc.</i>	<i>Annales d'histoire sociale</i>
<i>BHR</i>	<i>Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance</i>
<i>BSHPF</i>	<i>Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français</i>
<i>CAEF</i>	<i>Cahiers de l'association internationale des études françaises</i>
<i>CL</i>	<i>Comparative Literature</i>
<i>DSS</i>	<i>Dix-septième siècle</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>L'Esprit créateur</i>
<i>FS</i>	<i>French Studies</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JWI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg Institute</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue des bibliothèques</i>
<i>RHLF</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France</i>
<i>RLC</i>	<i>Revue de littérature comparée</i>
<i>RSH</i>	<i>Revue des sciences humaines</i>
<i>RSS</i>	<i>Revue du seizième siècle</i>
<i>SF</i>	<i>Studi francesi</i>
<i>STFM</i>	<i>Société des textes français modernes</i>
<i>THR</i>	<i>Travaux d'humanisme et renaissance</i>
<i>TLF</i>	<i>Textes littéraires français</i>
<i>ZFSL</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur</i>