

Gould, Thomas (1657-1734) Catholic priest and missionary to Huguenots was born in Cork. He arrived in France about 1678, settled in Poitiers and studied theology at the Irish Jesuit College. He quickly came to the notice of the local bishop, Hardouin Fortin de la Hoguette who appointed him chaplain to the Ursulines in Thouars in 1681 or 1682. Thouars was home to a community devoted to the conversion of Huguenot gentlewomen and Gould became involved in its activities. His zeal won him the admiration of the duke de la Trémoille who made him a canon and treasurer of the Sainte-Chapelle at Thouars. It also brought him to the notice of the chancellor and the solicitor general. To such an extent that in about 1687 Gould was appointed *missionnaire du roi pour le Poitou*. His irenic, scripture-based conversion tactics were directed mostly at upper class Huguenots and gained many converts. Gould recognised the importance of integrating new converts not only into the doctrine but also into the social and cultural fabric of Catholicism. Though he tacitly approved of force as a means of conversion he himself preferred to rely on persuasion, good example and practical inducements. He did not always receive the co-operation of local Catholic clergy. Critical of their educational standards, he complained that badly educated clergy were bound to alienate new converts. After his death a family member was commissioned to continue his missionary work.

While his practical approach to conversion work won him the admiration of church and crown it also excited the enmity of some of his stricter coreligionists. In 1705 he published *Lettre d'un missionnaire a un gentilhomme du Bas Poitou, touchant la veritable croyance de l'Eglise Catholique contre les dogmes qui luy sont faussement imputez dans les Escrits des Ministres* in which he defended himself against charges of heresy, stoutly criticising the superstition of certain Catholic

preachers. Pierre Rival wrote a response, which was translated into English and published in London in 1724. In his work, Gould based his arguments almost exclusively on scripture and followed Bossuet's example of citing non-Catholic theologians. The 1705 text was revised and republished in 1709 as *La Veritable croyance de l'Eglise catholique et les preuves de tous les points de sa doctrine, fondées sur l'écriture saints*. It enjoyed great success. To the 1720 edition of the work he appended a new text entitled *Les Preuves de la Doctrine de l'Eglise, fondées sur l'Écriture sainte. Pour servir de response a un libelle intitulé, Antidote, contre la lettre d'un missionnaire touchant la croyance de l'Eglise Romaine*. In this he responded to criticism of his orthodoxy. In 1724 he published, with the help of a government subvention, a text on the eucharist entitled *Traité du Saint Sacrifice de la Messe, avec l'explication des Ceremonies qui s'y observent, et la maniere d'y assister dévotement, selon l'esprit de la primitive Eglise. Adressé a une Dame de Qualité nouvellement convertie*. All his works enjoyed great popularity and were widely circulated to new converts. In 1727, the French crown assumed the publication costs of his *Entretiens ou l'on explique la doctrine de l'Eglise catholique par la sainte Ecriture*. In this work, Gould drew heavily on his knowledge of the Anglican establishments in Ireland and England. His last work appeared in 1733 entitled *Recueil des operations que font les protestans aux catholiques sur quelques articles de foi controverses*. He was also the author of *Abrégé des psaumes de David...* Apart from his published work, his regular reports to Paris on the progress of his missionary activities provide a unique insight into the religious policies of the French *ancien régime*.