The Paradoxes of Preaching in Print:
Seeing and Believing in the Sermons of Jacques Abbadie
Ruth Whelan

The printed sermon is a paradox, even an oxymoron, for preaching is by definition an oral and an aural medium. Yet, the second half of the seventeenth century witnessed a boom in the publication of sermons in French in a market already dominated by religious publications, which totalled some 41% of all books published in Paris between 1666 and 1700.[1] For Roman Catholics, the mid-century heralded a shift not just in the quantity but also in the kind of sermons published. In the first half of the century, the relatively small number of sermons published were in Latin, whereas in the second half of the century, the larger number published, often in multiple editions, were in French.[2] The shift is not so obvious in the printed sermons of Reformed pastors, as these were routinely published in French between the Edict of Nantes (1598), which authorized publication by Protestants in France, and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), which prohibited it. But printed sermons by French Reformed pastors also appeared in surprisingly high numbers, with a peak between 1660 and 1680. According to one estimate, Protestant ministers published 356 volumes containing a total of 1,100 sermons — and some of them went into several editions, which is an indication of their popular appeal.[3] Obviously, seventeenth-century Christians of all denominations liked reading sermons; yet it would be a mistake to assume that piety was the sole reason for the boom.

In the still essentially oral culture of seventeenth-century France, sermons were not just a form of religious instruction; in the hands of gifted preachers, they became a form of public oratory. In the latter half of the century, especially in Paris people flocked to hear the renowned Roman Catholic preachers — for example, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Mascaron — who held the faithful spellbound for well over an hour at a time. Thus, the vogue of the printed sermon in the second half of the century may partly be explained by the popularity of pulpit eloquence, which made preaching a social institution and transformed sermons into a literary genre as important at the time as poetry or theatre.[4] Preaching was central to Reformed worship, as is well known, and French Protestants were also sensitive to the pleasures of sacred eloquence. However, pastors were actually required to avoid any oratorical display in their preaching, a requirement that led Françoise Chevalier to argue that in the French Protestant community, printed sermons 'répondent à l'attente des fidèles, pour lesquels la lecture vient approfondir et prolonger la méditation entamée lors du culte'.[5] Of course, printed preaching disseminated the message to a wider public, enabling the faithful to engage in 'acoustic reading'[6] of sermons that they had already

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[1] Henri-Jean Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle*, 2 vols (Genève: Droz, 1999), II, p. 775; this is necessarily a conservative estimate, as it is based on the holdings of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and does not take into account French books published in other cities, whether in France or elsewhere in Europe.

[2] Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société*, II, 788-89.

[3] Françoise Chevalier, *Prêcher sous l'Édit de Nantes. La prédication réformée au XVIIe siècle en France* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1994), p. 10; Marianne Carbonnier-Burkard, 'Enquête dans la littérature de piété réformée francophone à l'époque moderne', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme français*, 150 (2004), 107-125 (p. 117).

[4] Henri-Jean Martin, 'Pour une histoire de la lecture', in *Le livre français sous l'Ancien Régime* (Nantes: Promodis, 1987), pp. 227-246 (p. 256); and *Livre, pouvoirs et société*, p. 789.

[5] Chevalier, *Prêcher sous l'Édit de Nantes*, p. 10.

[6] I borrow the expression 'lecture acoustique' from Martin, 'Pour une histoire de la lecture', p. 231.

heard or would have liked to have heard. However, as recent research has shown, pastors also had reasons other than edification for publishing their sermons, namely self-promotion for the purposes of self-advancement. In fact, pastors who publish in this period are modelling themselves according to the emerging social identity of the writer.[7] Inevitably, this had an impact not only on what they published but also on how they conceptualized and formulated what they decided to publish, including their preaching. The printed sermons of Jacques Abbadie are a case in point.[8]

In 1733, a mere six years after Abbadie's death in 1727, the journalist Pierre Cartier de Saint Philippe ranked him among the first-rate preachers of the Reformed tradition, a view that seems to be based on the reputation Abbadie had acquired some thirty years previously when he preached in the United Provinces.[9] Yet, by comparison with other reputed French Reformed pastors, who published anything from forty to two hundred and twenty sermons,[10] Abbadie published only sixteen of his, seven in two collections (the first in 1681 and the second in 1686), and the remaining nine as separate publications.[11] The sermons published in the collected volumes may be categorized as 'ordinary sermons', according to the definition elaborated by the French Reformed Churches, that is to say, expository sermons designed to interpret Scripture for the faithful attending one of the weekly services.[12] As for the nine Abbadie published separately, these were occasional sermons, defined as 'sujets extraordinaires', which also involved expounding Scripture but usually to mark some important event in the life of the church or the nation.[13] Pastors were allowed greater freedom when it came to extraordinary sermons, but in their weekly

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[7] Nicolas Schapira, 'Carrières de pasteur, carrières d'écrivain au XVIIᵉ siècle: le cas de Jacques Couët-du-Vivier', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme français*, 150 (2004), 257-281.

[8] For Abbadie's biography, see Ruth Whelan, 'The Dean of Killaloe: Jacques Abbadie (1656-1727)', *Lias*, 14 (1987), 101-18; and 'Abbadie, Jacques (*bap.* 1654?, *d.* 1727)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), available online at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1. Some of the ideas in the following pages are developed in my chapter 'Comment faire voir les vérités évangéliques ? Le "tableau" dans les sermons de Jacques Abbadie', awaiting publication in *L'Éloquence de la chaire entre écriture et oralité*, ed. by Cinthia Meli and Amy Henneveld (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2017)

[9] Jean de La Placette, *Avis sur la manière de prêcher*, ed. Cartier de Saint Philippe (Rotterdam: Abraham Acher, 1733), pp. ix-x, editor's note; for the editor's biography, see http://dictionnaire-journalistes.gazettes18e.fr/journaliste/142-pierre-cartier-de-saint-philippe, accessed 25 May 2015; for Abbadie's biography, see Ruth Whelan, 'The Dean of Killaloe: Jacques Abbadie (1656-1727)', *Lias*, 14 (1987), 101-18, available on line at http://webdoc.ubn.kun.nl/tijd/l/lias/; and 'Abbadie, Jacques (*bap.* 1654?, *d.* 1727)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), available online at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1.

[10] For example, Charles Drelincourt published forty sermons; Pierre Dumoulin published one hundred and twenty; Jean Mestrezat published two hundred and twenty, see Françoise Chevalier, *La Prédication protestante à Charenton* (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Paris: Université de la Sorbonne, 1984), pp. 14-15.

[11] The first edition of the 1686 collection of three sermons is held in Archbishop Marsh's Library, Dublin and the second edition (1697) in the Library, Trinity College Dublin; however, most of Abbadie's sermons are now available in on-line digital repositories.

[12] With the exception of one sermon preached for New Year 1686, probably at Court, in the presence of Mary II, then princess of Orange, 'La nouvelle créature' (2 Co 5: 17), published later that year in the collection *Les Caractères du chrétien et du christianisme; marqués dans trois sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture, avec des réflexions sur les afflictions de l'Église* (La Haye: Abraham Troyel, 1686), pp. 181-280 (reference to the New Year, p. 186-87).

[13] On these distinctions see Ruth Whelan, '"The foolishness of preaching": rhetoric and truth in Huguenot pulpit oratory', in *De l'humanisme aux Lumières, Bayle et le protestantisme*, ed. M. Magdelaine, M.-C. Pitassi, R. Whelan, A. McKenna (Paris: Universitas; Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1996) pp. 289-300 (p. 291).

preaching they were enjoined by the *Discipline ecclésiastique* to avoid all unnecessary rhetorical embellishment ('amplifications non nécessaires') and to confine themselves to the plain style believed to be that of both the Holy Spirit and Scripture.[14] This so-called Calvinist model of preaching is meant to persuade by subject matter rather than form or style; the signifier is subject to the signified in sermons that are always to be instructive and never purely ornamental. Yet, from his earliest published sermons (and thus presumably his preaching)[15], Abbadie chose to ignore these constraints and instead freely incorporated the forbidden *amplificatio* into his preaching, for reasons that we will now explore.

In some important respects, however, his preaching conforms to the Calvinist model. For both his 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' sermons, Abbadie chooses as his subject matter a biblical verse or pericope from one of the two Testaments, which he cites in full at the outset. And he uses all means at his disposal to explicate his chosen text. He translates it afresh from the Hebrew or the Greek, commenting on the grammar or syntax in order to explicate in French the meaning of the words in the original languages. He contextualises his chosen text, replacing it in the overall movement of the gospel, epistle, psalm or book from which he has taken it, or in the time in which it was written. He also likes, at times, to interpret his text according to the traditional levels of meaning, whether literal, allegorical, mystical or moral, which he occasionally expounds at length. Finally, as a pastor responsible for the instruction and guidance of the faithful, he never neglects to apply the biblical text to their lives, pointing out how and to what extent the Scripture as preached could reassure, comfort or challenge those listening (or reading). Thus, the printed sermons reveal Abbadie at work, explicating and expounding Scripture, actualising its authority by his preaching with the intention of drawing his hearers (or readers) into conformity with it. Didactic his sermons certainly are, in as much as they seek to elucidate, demonstrate and persuade biblical truths.

Yet at other moments, in the same sermons (and not just in the 'sujets extraordinaires'), Abbadie seems to be carried away by his own undoubted oratorical gifts, freely indulging not only in the forbidden *amplificatio* but also in other figures and tropes typical of epideictic discourse. In these moments, his preaching — an essentially oral and aural medium (*fides ex auditu*) — becomes at the same time intensely visual (*fides de visu*), with the aim of making his hearers (and readers) see what is actually invisible. Here is one example among many, a sermon from the collection published in 1681, on the topic of Abraham's sacrifice.[16] From the exordium, the association between preaching, hearing and seeing is exploited:

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[14] Jean Aymon, *Tous les synodes nationaux des Églises réformées de France*, 2 vols (La Haye: Charles Delo, 1710), II, p. 637, synode national des Églises réformées de France, tenu à Charenton du 26 décembre 1644 au 26 janvier 1645; Isaac d'Huisseau (éd.), *La Discipline des Églises réformées de France* (Genève et se vendant à Saumur: René Péan et Jean Lesnier, 1666), ch. 1, art. xii, p. 33.

[15] French Reformed ministers were required to preach without notes, which has led some commentators to believe they did not write out their sermons. None of Abbadie's sermons survives in manuscript, as far as I know, so it is impossible to tell how he actually prepared for preaching. However, in the Epistle Dedicatory to *Caractères*, he states that he is publishing his New Year sermon as he had first written it, not as he had preached it, having cut parts of it during the oral presentation for fear of running out of time. This implies that he wrote out his sermons in advance and may even have preached from a script rather than from memory; it also suggests that although the oral sermon may have been shorter, it was essentially unchanged from the written, published version.

[16] 'Le sacrifice d'Abraham (Gn 22: 10)', *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture* (Leyde: David des Planques, 1681), pp. 84-121.

> Le méchant fait une œuvre qui le trompe. C'est une maxime du Sage que nous vous expliquâmes dimanche dernier.[17] Le juste fait quelquefois une œuvre qui le trompe. C'est une vérité que nous devons vous mettre devant les yeux aujourd'hui. […] C'est, Mes Frères, une vérité que le sacrifice d'Abraham confirme excellemment. On y trouve un spectacle d'horreur en apparence; et on y voit un saint spectacle en effet.[18]

The lexical field associated with sight and seeing recurs throughout the sermon, inclining hearers (or readers) to see what they are hearing (or acoustically reading) from the mouth of the preacher. Moreover, as the term 'spectacle' implies, this intensely visual preaching is also theatrical; it can take the form of a monologue, wherein the soul (of the hearers or even the preacher) speaks to itself, using the intimate 'tu', or of a spectacular *prosopopoeia* presenting Abraham — arm raised to sacrifice Isaac — speaking his inner conflict before the faithful.[19] Throughout this sermon and all his others, Abbadie leaves no trope or figure unturned, and exploits all the aspects of *amplificatio* noted by Quintilian, in order to develop the meaning of the biblical text.[20] Moreover, he seems to be aware that this practice of pulpit eloquence transgresses the boundaries set by the *Discipline ecclésiastique*. Before he launches into the highly dramatic *prosopopoeia* noted above, he requests permission from his public — 'Permettez-nous de faire parler un moment le cœur de ce patriarche devant vous' — and then authorizes himself to proceed with this unusual (for a Calvinist preacher) amplification of Abraham's dilemma.[21]

Abbadie is equally unconstrained when it comes to the use of images in his preaching: metaphors, similes and descriptions abound. However, they are not merely ornamental, but rather shape the very structure of a preaching style that is deliberately visual, even painterly. Sometimes he concentrates on one or more metaphors in a given pericope and develops them in order to explicate their meaning. On other occasions, he constructs a series of biblical images in a *gradatio* with the aim of 'showing' ('montrer') the faithful some theological or moral truth, that is to say, making them see something that they are in fact hearing. But he also invents new images, such as God-as-Book, which he emphasizes both by means of *gradatio* and anaphoric apostrophe:

> Livre de l'éternité, qui as instruit nos pères et qui instruiras notre postérité, Livre immuable que les hommes et les démons ne pourront jamais fermer devant nous; Livre toujours ouvert aux yeux de notre esprit qui ne peut nous être arraché par la violence, ni consumé par le feu; Livre qui nous instruit dans les déserts et dans les solitudes, dans l'horreur des prisons et dans l'obscurité des cachots; Livre divin et céleste qui ne relève ni de l'empire des puissances corruptibles ni de la tyrannie des inquisitions; Livre qu'on ne peut ni cacher ni défendre, que nous portons dans notre cœur par l'espérance et que nous allons chercher dans le ciel par la foi; Livre assuré et infaillible qui nous instruiras lorsqu'on aura fait taire toutes les voix, et tous les docteurs qui nous instruisaient; Livre d'éternité, que tu nous instruis bien de ce que tu es et de ce que nous sommes! Esprit glorieux et infini, que nous trouvons d'instruction et de lumière dans ta sainte contemplation![22]

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[17] Solomon, the presumed author of the book of Proverbs, here Pr 11: 18; the sermon referred to is published in the same collection, pp. 46-83.

[18] Abbadie, 'Sacrifice d'Abraham', p. 84.

[19] 'Le sacrifice d'Abraham', pp. 93-96, 117.

[20] Quintilien, *Institution oratoire*, VIII, 4; Stéphane Macé, 'L'amplification, ou l'âme de la rhétorique. Présentation générale', *Exercices de rhétorique* [En ligne], 4 (2014), pp. 3, 6 ; mis en ligne le 02 décembre 2014; URL: http://rhetorique.revues.org/351; DOI: 10.4000/rhetorique.364; accessed 6 December 2014.

[21] 'Le sacrifice d'Abraham', p. 93; and he recalls the permission in closing the figure, p. 96: 'C'est ainsi qu'il nous est permis de supposer que le cœur d'Abraham parlait […]'.

[22] 'L'Adoration spirituelle (Jn 4: 24)', *Caractères*, pp. 35, 38-39.

Coming from the pen of a Protestant pastor, deeply embedded in the so-called religion of the Book, the metaphor is verging on caricature. However, it is more important to note that Abbadie develops it according to the requirements for amplification, both *amplificatio verborum* and *amplificatio rerum per comparationem*.[23] The lexical repetition and reduplication catch the attention of the faithful while the multiplication of the similarities between vehicle (book) and tenor (God) amplifies the analogy, transforming it into a comparison that is organised rhetorically with the objective of 'placing something in front of the eyes' (*ante oculos ponere*), to quote an expression from Antiquity.[24] By moving from small to big, from what is familiar (Psalm Book, Bible or New Testament that the faithful are holding) to what is unknown (God), the comparison mediates between sensible and invisible phenomena. By using lexical and oratorical patterns to fix the attention of those who listen (or read acoustically) and emphasize what is being said, the preacher causes hearers to see.

In Abbadie's intensely visual preaching, an image or amplified comparison can sometimes turn into what he himself designates a 'tableau'; here is one example among many, taken from a sermon entitled 'Le chemin qui conduit à Dieu', the fourth and final sermon in the collection published in 1681. The preacher is commenting on a verse in the Gospel of John, where Jesus describes himself as the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 4: 6).[25] After the exordium and a few lexical comments, Abbadie launches into an *amplificatio* centring on this verse, of which this is a very short extract:

> Mais, avant que de jeter les yeux sur ce chemin spirituel, il faut les arrêter un peu plus longtemps sur l'abîme dans lequel nous nous trouvons. Quelqu'un a fort bien comparé le monde à une terre environnée de feu, et dont les issues conduisent à un lac de souffre. Elle est couverte d'une épaisse obscurité. Les malheureux habitants de ce lieu marchent en aveugles, et remplis de vaines espérances, abandonnés à une joie insensée, et à des plaisirs indiscrets, ils vont se précipiter, sans le savoir, dans ces abîmes de feu et de souffre. Il y en a seulement quelques-uns qui trouvent un chemin étroit qui est le seul qui conduise au salut. Là ils trouvent une lumière qui les éclaire, et des rafraîchissements qui les soutiennent; et sortis d'un si triste séjour, ils commencent à frémir par l'idée du danger et des malheurs qu'ils évitent. Vous reconnaissez-vous, Mes Frères? C'est là notre véritable tableau.

There is nothing new about the metaphors and comparisons invoked here to refer to the human condition ('l'abîme de ce monde', 'le lac de souffre', 'le chemin étroit'). But they are integrated into a description that is a moving picture, presented both in relief and in colour (red and black), with stark contrasts between light and dark; the picture is also rendered dramatic by means of antitheses, ternary rhythms, verbs in the present indicative, and *pathos* especially at the end ('frémir'). It is, of course, a technically perfect example of *hypotyposis*, which according to Quintilian is a figure that draws a word-picture so vividly that those who hear it think they are actually seeing it.[26] That is the point, as is obvious from the preacher's appeal to the *eyes* of the faithful which opens the 'tableau'. Visual as it is, however, the word-picture remains resolutely didactic, as is obvious from both the pejorative epithets in ternary

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[23] Macé, 'L'amplification', p. 7, 13.

[24] Florent Libral, 'Entre similitudes et métaphores. Amplification et optique dans la prédication en France (v. 1600-1670)', *Exercices de rhétorique* [En ligne], 4 (2014), pp. 3-4, p. 16, n. 16, mis en ligne le 02 décembre 2014. URL: http://rhetorique.revues.org/351; DOI: 10.4000/rhetorique.351, accessed 6 December 2014.

[25] 'Le chemin qui conduit à Dieu', *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture*, pp. 151-202 (pp. 129-30).

[26] See Yves Le Bozec, 'L'hypotypose: un essai de définition formelle', *L'information grammaticale*, 92 (2002), 3-7.

rhythm ('vaines', 'insensée', 'indiscrets') and the closing *percontatio* with its interrogative reproach to the faithful. While at times this amplification of a biblical metaphor adopts a certain Attic brevity reminiscent of Pascal, it is obviously not constructed in the plain style required by the *Discipline ecclésiastique*, whose strictures on amplification it evidentially transgresses. How is Abbadie's taste for spectacular pulpit oratory to be explained?

The 'tableau' is one element in a lexical field related to painting and the visual, which occurs frequently in Abbadie's preaching but is not clearly defined. At times, he uses the terms 'tableau', portrait and emblem interchangeably, which is significant. His use points up the moral dimension of the 'tableau', which, like the emblem, is a visual representation that teaches some truth or rule of conduct; it is didactic. In addition, if the 'tableau' is like the portrait, then it is a kind of *ekphrasis*, that is, a description of scenes, persons or events that aims to make the listener see the subject.[27] In other words, the 'tableau' is a speaking picture that is rhetorically constructed, employing as necessary any or all of the figures of discourse (and not just *hypotyposis*), but particularly favouring the tropes, those figures associated with imagery. Thus, the 'tableau' is a *translatio*, it is a rhetorical construct that makes the invisible visible by means of imagery that can be animated by *prosopopoeia* and *percontatio*, or any other figures of discourse. Yet it is not exactly the same as the portrait. In Abbadie's preaching the portrait is an *ethopoeia*, a description of moral, spiritual or psychological characteristics, which means that it has to be like the subject being portrayed, especially if the subject actually exists or existed. In a funeral oration delivered in 1683, he observes that his portrait of the deceased is 'assez fidèle et ressemblant' because it eschews 'le vide' (that is, the *vanitas*), of oratorical display. His comment underlines an ambiguity inherent in *ekphrasis*, of which he is obviously aware.

In any case, Abbadie's frequently expressed desire to 'faire voir', or 'mettre devant les yeux' the subject of his sermons, is fundamentally ambiguous. It is obviously not a case of perceiving with the sense of sight but rather of hearing in such a way as to visualise the subject of the preaching in the imagination. Thus, the people hearing or reading see and do not see. Similarly, *ekphrasis*, as speaking picture, represents something that is seen and not seen by the mind's eye. Yet, when Abbadie distinguishes the portrait from the 'tableau', he is in reality distinguishing two kinds of rhetoric, one based on 'le vrai' and the other on 'le vraisemblable'. Even if the portrait is only '*assez* fidèle et ressemblant', it is a representation of a subject whom the faithful could have, may well have, actually seen in real life; whereas, the 'tableau' is purely figurative and is constrained only by the need to resemble what is real. It can cause the faithful to see by appealing to what only seems to be true. Its aim is to speak what is true by means of the evocative power of fictiveness.[28] That is, of course, why the French Reformed Churches required the plain style for preaching. They considered instruction to be its primary objective and were suspicious of the way figurative discourse could distract the faithful from the truths being preached by satisfying their aesthetic sensibility while possibly leaving them in ignorance.[29] It is a suspicion as old

[27] Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), p. 2.

[28] Fictive but not necessarily fictitious, see Paul Ricœur, *La métaphore vive* (1975) (Paris: Seuil, 1997), pp. 18, 266-267, and especially pp. 310-321, 'Vers le concept de "vérité métaphorique"'.

[29] See the critique of one of Abbadie's sermons, published anonymously, *Considérations sur le sermon de Monsieur Abbadie, prononcé à Dublin dans l'église paroissiale de St Patrick, le 14 mai 1704* (Dublin: Jean Brocas, 1704), p. 4.

as Plato,[30] as we know, and shared by many, whether Protestant or Catholic, who reflected on sacred eloquence in seventeenth-century France.

However, Abbadie theorises the connection between truth, image and preaching differently in his sermons and particularly in the first sermon in the collection published in The Hague in 1686. As a Protestant preacher, given to figurative discourse, Abbadie could not avoid reflecting theologically on image and imagery. This is the case, not only because Calvinism is fundamentally iconoclastic, but also because pulpit oratory based on 'le vraisemblable'(*to eikos*) is connected via etymology to the Greek word *eikôn*,[31] from which the word 'icon' is derived. Thus, Abbadie introduces certain distinctions into his reflection on imagery and figurative discourse, which are prompted, at least in part, by a biblical paradox. Representing God in images is expressly outlawed by the Decalogue (Ex 20: 1-4; Dt 5: 6-9), yet Scripture abounds in anthropomorphisms, metaphors and comparisons designed to make the invisible God perceptible. In his view, there is a fundamental ontological difference between graven and figurative images of God: the former being material, the latter immaterial. On the one hand, it is the material images of the divine that are problematic because, 'l'habitude de voir [étant] plus facile et plus forte que celle de raisonner', material images are in danger of reducing the signified to the sign, the spiritual to the material, thereby prompting idolatry.[32] On the other, 'immaterial images' are not only defendable, in his opinion, they are actually desirable in a sermon and must, in fact, be included. Two of the reasons elaborated by Abbadie over a period of thirty years are worth mentioning.

The first is theological. Abbadie adopts Calvin's idea of revelation as divine accommodation, observing that, by gracious 'condescension', God 'se révèle sous des images qui nous sont proportionnées'[33]. Thus, in the Bible, the prophets, psalmists, gospel writers and apostles all use images, often in great abundance — as does Jesus — in order to make God known to human beings. There is nothing original about this argument, as it is used repeatedly in the debate over sacred eloquence in France in the latter half of the seventeenth-century.[34] Nonetheless, revelatory as they are, anthropomorphisms and other 'immaterial images' are also ambiguous in as much as they have recourse to 'le vraisemblable' and fictiveness in order to represent God. And like all images, whether material or immaterial, they are in danger of confusing the representation of God with the reality of God. They have the potential to undermine the mystery of God by leading people to 'see' God *only* in term of the image. In this way, 'icons', even immaterial ones, can become idols.[35]

The risks and ambiguities involved in figurative discourse stimulate Abbadie to adopt a double strategy to justify their use. Firstly, he employs a negative theology that enables him to use images of God while undermining them at the same time. In

[30] Plato, *Gorgias*, § 461-480, in *Complete Works*, ed. by H. N. Fowler, W. R. M. Lamb, R. G. Bury, P. Shorey, 12 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: W. Heineman, 1967-1979), V, 306-77.

[31] Barbara Cassin, '"To eikos", ou comment le vrai-semblable est la mesure du vrai', http://robert.bvdep.com/public/vep/Pages_HTML/$EIDOLON1.HTM; Gérard Simon, 'eidôlon', http://robert.bvdep.com/public/vep/Pages_HTML/EIDOLON.HTM.

[32] Abbadie, 'Adoration spirituelle', *Caractères du chrétien*, pp. 31-33.

[33] Jean Calvin, *Institution de la religion chrétienne* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1955-1958) I, 13, 1; Abbadie, 'Adoration spirituelle', pp. 18, 33; Olivier Millet, *Calvin et la dynamique de la parole* (Paris: Champion, 1992), pp. 247-256; André Gounelle, *Parler de Dieu* (Paris: Van Dieren, 2004), p. 67.

[34] Ruth Whelan, 'Sin, style and sensibility, or the controversy over rhetoric and preaching in the 1690s', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 320 (1994), 145-61.

[35] Abbadie, 'Adoration spirituelle', pp. 16, 31; Gounelle, *Parler de Dieu*, p. 68.

other words, he points up the dissimilarity between the image and the invisible God, as no image 'est proportionnée à l'excellence de Dieu'.[36] This is a kind of rhetorical iconoclasm that prompts Abbadie to observe, 'Non, le bras de Dieu n'a point produit ce que nous voyons, car Dieu n'a point de bras', and to continue in the same way with the eyes, ears, throne, and so on. When anthropomorphisms and images are employed in this manner, they are able to represent a transcendence that lies beyond their power to convey, '[que] l'on connaît et que l'on ne connaît pas'.[37] Secondly, the inadequacy of the image to convey transcendence paradoxically prompts Abbadie to argue that images actually have a heuristic function, and that more rather than fewer are required to reveal God. His comment here is based on his epistemology. Immaterial images (*ekphrasis*) appeal not to the senses but to the imagination, to the mind's eye. According to Abbadie,

> l'imagination et l'esprit ont une espèce d'infinité dans leurs actes, qui consiste en ce que n'étant pas satisfaites de leurs premières images, ils emploient de nouvelles et celles-ci ne suffisant pas, d'autres à l'infini […] on peut dire que ce progrès éternel de ces deux facultés qui montent d'objet en objet pour y trouver de nouvelles images capable de représenter la Divinité, a quelque rapport avec les perfections de cet Esprit infini, qui ne peuvent jamais être épuisées.[38]

According to this observation, images become tools for discovering the infinite God. But they only achieve this objective if they are used in abundance; the infinite can only be approached by means of an infinity of images, which are constantly called into question and constantly reinvented. In other words, inventing 'immaterial' images of God and revealing God are not opposed: they coincide. The tropes typical of epideictic discourse may appeal to aesthetic sensibilities, but they also reveal, instruct, move and persuade.[39] Heuristic fictiveness not only authorises preachers to invent these speaking pictures and images, but also requires them to use such imagery abundantly in their sermons and develop it rhetorically according to the requirements for *amplificatio*. In a word, Abbadie's theory of the image and its role in homiletics prompts him to move beyond the plain style and ignore the strictures on epideictic discourse enunciated by the synods of the French Reformed Churches.

Why would a pastor, especially one at the beginning of his ministry, deliberately ignore the regulations of his church? Abbadie's first collection of sermons, containing the spectacular *prosopopoeia* of Abraham mentioned above, was published in 1681, when he was about twenty-seven years old, some two years after he began serving the French Church in Berlin. He clearly had no doubts, even then, about the effectiveness of his preaching. In fact, comments he made in his later publications suggest that he believed that imagistic discourse was better suited to the aim of preaching, namely that of drawing the faithful into conversion, renewal or change (*metanoia*). His painterly preaching takes both this aim and the presence of all too human listeners into account. Although Abbadie's epistemology can at times be complex,[40] he shares the dualistic understanding of human nature, which was commonplace at the time. As he observes 'L'esprit de l'homme, [étant] renfermé dans

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[36] Abbadie, 'Adoration spirituelle', pp. 18, 30 ; Libral, 'Entre similitudes et métaphores', p. 8.

[37] Abbadie, 'Adoration spirituelle', pp. 19-22.

[38] Abbadie, 'Adoration spirituelle', pp. 30-31.

[39] See Ricœur, *Métaphore vive*, pp. 310-11.

[40] See Ruth Whelan, 'Le Dieu d'Abraham et le Dieu des philosophes: épistémologie et apologétique chez Jacques Abbadie', in *Apologétique 1680-1740: sauvetage ou naufrage de la théologie?*, ed. by M.-C. Pitassi (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1991), pp. 59-71 (pp. 67-68).

un tabernacle d'argile […]; [il] est contraint de suivre les lois de la matière à laquelle il se trouve attaché'.[41] Consequently, hearers or readers of sermons perceive the truths being preached, or indeed the world around them, by this composite means of perception (mind *and* body). The Incarnation proves, according to Abbadie, that God takes human epistemology into consideration in the process of revelation, because Jesus Christ as *imago Dei* indicates that 'Dieu conduit les hommes comme par degrés à sa connaissance. Il les rappelle […] des sens à l'imagination, et […] de l'imagination à l'esprit'.[42] Preachers should therefore do likewise, ensuring that their sermons are both heard (*fides ex auditu*) and seen (*fides de visu*). However, preachers also have to take into account the fact that the person listening to them is 'une créature, capable de vertu et de bonheur et qui se trouve dans un état de corruption et de misère'.[43] And in that fallen state, that *contrariété* (to borrow a term from Pascal), 'l'empire de l'imagination sur la nature déchue impose le recours à une rhétorique de l'imagination pour faire accéder au salut', as Gérard Ferreyrolles has argued.[44]

Thus Abbadie's second reason for defending the use of 'immaterial images' in preaching is anthropological. However, in my opinion, he takes this argument even further than Pascal, precisely because preaching is an oral medium. As fallen human subjects, the faithful listening to the sermon are 'blind' (see the extract above from the 'tableau'); they 'détournent les yeux volontairement' from the way of salvation; they 'se font un bandeau des considérations humaines pour ne pas l'apercevoir […] car l'éternité non plus que le soleil ne se regarde point fixement'.[45] As the *percontatio* ('Vous reconnaissez-vous, Mes Frères ?') noted above indicates, the 'tableau' is a corrective lens, it *amplifies* what is important, thereby making it difficult for the faithful not to hear or 'see' what they would rather avoid hearing or 'seeing'.[46] In stark contrast to Montaigne, who dismisses *amplificatio* as 'un art piperesse et mensongere',[47] Abbadie welcomes it for its demystifying and heuristic properties. The 'tableau' is a mirror that forces those hearing (or reading) a sermon to consider their human condition without flinching; it is a mirror that restores sight *ex auditu* to the blind, thereby prompting them to seek the author of their salvation and admit that they are lost unless and until they do so. It is also mirror as anamorphosis, which, in reflecting back to the faithful a distorted or amplified image of themselves, is designed to make them receptive to that other, more authentic, image, the *imago Dei*, which they are called to become. From Abbadie's point of view, painterly preaching, with its imagistic amplification, indisputably fulfils the objective of all sacred eloquence, namely that of drawing believer and unbeliever alike into the metamorphic processes of the gospel that he feels called to preach.

It is clear that in his published sermons, Abbadie calls into question the pertinence of the Calvinist model of preaching and that he does so for very well thought out reasons. But there is another dimension to this preaching that needs to be emphasized by way of conclusion, namely that its painterly rhetoric is more usual in Roman Catholic preaching in the latter half of the seventeenth-century than in the

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[41] Abbadie, 'Adoration spirituelle', pp. 19-22.

[42] Abbadie, 'Adoration spirituelle', pp. 33-34.

[43] Abbadie, *Art de connaître soi-même, ou la recherche des sources de la morale* (1692) (La Haye: Jean Neaulme, 1750), p. 37.

[44] Gérard Ferreyrolles, *Les Reines du monde: l'imagination et la coutume chez Pascal* (Genève, Paris : Champion, 1995), p. 538

[45] Abbadie, *La mort du juste* (Londres: B. Griffin, pour la veuve Péan, 1693) p. 19.

[46] I am developing here an insight expressed in Libral, 'Entre similitudes et métaphores', p. 11.

[47] Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, I, 51 'De la vanité des paroles', ed. by Pierre Villey, 3 vols (Paris, PUF Quadrige, 1988), I, p. 305; Macé, 'L'amplification', p. 3.

French Reformed pulpit. In this respect, Abbadie's printed sermons call into question recent assertions about confessionalization (understood as the development of self-enclosed even polarized confessional communities and identities) in France, which is said to have advanced 'across France as a whole over the seventeenth-century'.[48] Abbadie's preaching provide us with another 'means of observation' of a complex process, whereby the 'barricades' progressively 'erected around each church group' from the time of the Protestant Reformation are actually seen to be porous.[49] The criticism that his preaching style provoked indicates that the forces manning those barricades were still in operation even in the Huguenot Diaspora. Yet the fact that Abbadie probably developed his preaching style by going to hear some of the great Catholic preachers, when he was a trainee pastor (*proposan*t) attached in the late 1670s to the Charenton Temple, just outside Paris, points to cross-confessional interaction, certainly among the educated elites.

Moreover, while that preaching style is the undoubted fruit of considered personal reflection (rhetorical, theological, anthropological), it is also the result of cultural assimilation to what was considered a high, even a worldly style.[50] Whether in the pulpit or in print, the sermons of Jacques Abbadie express his desire to make the faithful see not only gospel truths but also his considerable talent at preaching them.[51] The two impetuses are not mutually exclusive, a fact the printing history of those sermons serves to confirm. Over the course of Abbadie's lifetime, his sermons were published in the capital and other cities of five European countries, and some of them went into more than one edition.[52] The first editions are usually dedicated to a member of the nobility in the different countries where Abbadie either worked as a pastor (Germany, England, Ireland) or occasionally preached (Holland). The printed sermon is designed to disseminate the preaching of gospel truths to a wider public, especially after the Revocation (1685), when French pastors had been forced to emigrate and all French Protestant Churches had been razed to the ground. But the dedicatory epistle is a career strategy invoking the patronage of the powerful dedicatee and serving as 'une légitimation de l'adoption d'une position d'auteur', as Nicolas Schapira has argued.[53] In early modern society, preaching promoted not only piety but also the preacher; and printed sermons could be a springboard of social

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[48] Philip Benedict, 'Confessionalization in France? Critical reflections and new evidence', in *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World, 1559-1685*, ed. by Raymond A. Mentzer and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: University Press, 2002), pp. 44-61 (p. 60).

[49] Gregory Hanlon, *Confession and Community in Seventeenth-century France: Catholic and Protestant Coexistence in Aquitaine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 193-94: 'In the course of the seventeenth century wider segments of the population, but especially the social élites, *became* either Catholic or Protestant, inasmuch as they actively patterned more of their behaviour on the central doctrines of their respective creeds. […] I have nevertheless noted the effect that coexistence had in blunting the most distinctive characteristics of confession, and in the meshing and confusion of attitudes and practices.'

[50] See Jean de La Bruyère, 'De la chaire', § 8-11, *Les Caractères*, ed. by Antoine Adam (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), pp. 361-62.

[51] A similar conclusion about French Protestant devotional literature is reached by Véronique Ferrer, *Exercices de l'âme fidèle. La Littérature de piété en prose dans le milieu réformé francophone (1524-1685)* (Genève: Droz, 2014), p. 299.

[52] In England (London) and Ireland (Dublin), Holland (Amsterdam, Leiden, Rotterdam, The Hague), Germany (Berlin, Cologne-sur-la-Sprée) Switzerland (Geneva) — not in order of publication.

[53] Schapira, 'Carrières de pasteur', p. 269.

establishment or ecclesiastical ascent.[54] Such were the paradoxes of preaching in print.

Maynooth University

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[54] Clerical office in this period could be a 'springboard profession' according to Luise Schorn-Schütte; see 'The "new clergies" in Europe: Protestant Pastors and Catholic Reform Clergy after the Reformation, in *The Impact of the European Reformation; Princes, Clergy and People*, ed. by Bridget Heal and Ole Peter Grell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 103-124.