

## Preface

Claudine Moine is not totally unknown to readers in the English language. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, published in 1967, consecrated a short biographical note to her (vol. IX, p. 1006). The entire text of her writings, however, has only been available up to the present in the French language. But thanks to the great care with which Father Gerard Carroll has applied himself to this first translation into another language, English-speaking people will now be able to have direct access to this treasure.

It might be difficult to appreciate the remarkable value of the original text in translation. Despite some traces of the preclassical era in the use of the present participle, to give one example, the language of Claudine Moine carries with it all the characteristics of the great classical period in France: clarity, sobriety and exactitude of expression, without an overstudied style or affectation. However, the present translation succeeds admirably in capturing the style of expression. But it is not simply the style of the work that is striking; the content is even more exceptional. There are many authors who have described their spiritual journey from a life of sin or indifference to that state of union with God we normally refer to as ‘spiritual marriage’; but when Claudine takes up the pen in 1652 on the behest of her confessor, she has already spent four years in this last state. When she ceases writing she has spent seven years in it. For her the spiritual journey continues; changes manifest themselves. And the description of the later states is of the greatest interest.

Moreover, the visions she recounts are nearly all intellectual; to characterise them amounts in effect to an exposition of Christian doctrine. This already suggests that for her the essentials of the mystical life are to be found elsewhere, that is in living and acting under the movement of the spirit. She tries hard to describe the nature of this experience, which she seems to have discovered in herself suddenly, without reference to any other previous experiences of that kind. This explains the prudent course she adopts in writing: a certain fear of being wrong allows her to persist, despite everything, in the profound confidence she has of being on the right road.

One of the more frequent expressions in her writings is ‘the movement that drives me’ or ‘the instinct that directs me’. This concept is entirely biblical. Thus Simeon comes to the Temple ‘prompted by the Spirit’ (Luke 4:1-2; Matt. 4:1), and Paul on his way to Jerusalem is ‘a prisoner already in spirit’ (Acts 20:22). Another time the spirit prevented Paul and his companions from crossing the frontier into Bithynia (Acts 16:7-8).

## You Looked At Me

The agent of spiritual progress for Claudine is the Eucharist, whose action is 'transforming'. And when this word takes on its full force for her, her 'soul acts hardly any more except from the motive of love'.

Briefly, the presentation which Claudine gives of her personal experience makes it possible for us to see in it a spiritual theology inspired by the Bible. Her spirituality is no longer taken from the experience of the great mystics of the sixteenth century, although she never disparages them in any way.

While Claudine Moine brings us back in her spirituality to the origins of Christianity, she is also very relevant for today. She found herself in the situation of having to earn her living by the work of her hands. She led a very normal existence (although celibate) in the world and lived out her exceptional experiences in the midst of the many domestics who worked for the important people of this world, without causing anyone to comment on her.

She also bore witness to the fact that the gifts of God can blossom and bear fruit well beyond our wildest imagination in the most humble of circumstances.

Despite the exceptional character of the favours she received, she never considered herself as commissioned with a message. Her writings, however, relating - as far as one can say this - the mystical life in its pure state, bear a testimony. They are edifying and stimulating, and they can help every one of us, without any risk of leading us astray, because they bring us back always to the essentials, so much so that one could entitle them: 'If you only knew what God is offering' (John 4:10).

Jean Guennou

## Acknowledgements

A work of this kind is never completed without expertise and generous help from people whose names I now wish to acknowledge here. It is my pleasant duty to express my indebtedness first to Father Jean Guennou for his very fine edition of the French text, and also my thanks to him for the many conversations we have had together about its translation into English. The principal task of an editor being to facilitate the reading of the text, the work already accomplished by him on this seventeenth-century French manuscript made my task as translator more easy when I came to prepare this present English edition of the writings of Claudine Moine.

Destined for the general reader and not exclusively for the experts, the editing of this text posed a problem for Father Guennou, in so far as the manuscript consisted of an ensemble of four separate accounts of which only the fourth carried a title: 'De l'Oraison'. He therefore found it necessary to add titles and subtitles throughout the text. He also subdivided the generally long paragraphs of the manuscript in accordance with present usage, and, with every possible fidelity to the sense indicated in the manuscript itself, modernised the orthography and punctuation. This present edition retains the titles and subtitles supplied by Father Guennou. I have treated as an integral part of the text the expletive words indicated by the symbols <> in the French edition. In addition to retaining the square brackets [ ] employed by Father Guennou to restore words left blank in the manuscript, usually of proper names, I have introduced more square brackets in order to insert certain words and phrases I considered necessary to supply apparently missing words and furnish a more accurate reading of the text.

To this acknowledgement I now add my expression of gratitude to Adrian Brink, David Game, Mrs Linda Yeatman, and Richard Burnell, of James Clarke & Co. Ltd for their generous offer to publish this present edition and for the meticulous care with which it has been printed. In particular I extend my indebtedness and thanks to Mrs Jenny Knight for her dedicated commitment to the preparation of this manuscript for publication. I also thank Father Guennou for providing the frontispiece, and the Bibliothèque Nationale for permission to reproduce the two Seventeenth-century engravings. Finally, I am conscious of my good fortune in having friends notable for their interest in Claudine; in particular I think of Father François Brune, Father Georges Montabert, Father Theophane Cooney, Mr and Mrs Michael Crowe, Mrs Daphne Rae and Mr Enda Gearty, whose encouragement sustained me in my endeavours as a translator to put the heart of this text into your hands and render its soul visible to your eyes.

Gerard Carroll





Seventeenth-century engraving of the interior of the church of St Louis during a sermon preached in the presence of the King, the Queen, and the whole Court.