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**APPLICATION FOR CANDIDATURE FOR THE DEGREE OF**  
**DOCTOR OF LETTERS**

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***Jean de La Taille, Saül le furieux et La Famine, ou Les Gabeonites, tragédies (critical edition), Paris, STFM, 1968 and 1998, lxxix+184 pp.***

### ***Details of works proposed for submission***

(1) *La Justice de Dieu: «Les Tragiques» d'Agrippa d'Aubigné et la Réforme protestante en France au XVIe siècle*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2005, 567 pp.

Agrippa d'Aubigné was a militant Protestant poet of the period of the Wars of Religion in France in the second half of the XVIth century. His immense epic poem *Les Tragiques* is centred on the ghastly events of that struggle, to which he gives a Protestant religious interpretation. My study is an exegesis of the poem in which I endeavour to prove my hypothesis that the poet is wrestling in this text with the problem of evil in the context of religious persecution and civil war and that the poem is thus an essay in theodicy addressed to his persecuted correligionaries, the central theme being the justice of God, which he views in an apocalyptic perspective. The work is saturated with biblical thought, themes, allusions, and expressions, and it becomes essential, to achieve an understanding of what is recognised as a very difficult text, to identify these biblical sources and, from an examination of contemporary theological writings, to find what religious interpretation was given to them by the Protestant theologians of the time. It emerges from this study that the structure of the work appears to be determined by the phases through which the justice of God was seen to be exercised in the world by various biblical writers as interpreted by Calvin and his contemporaries but modified according to the apocalyptic outlook adopted by the Protestants as their sufferings became unbearable and they sought reassurance in the belief that they would be vindicated at the Last Judgement.

Although there have been a good many studies of d'Aubigné published in recent years, I believe that this book provides a significant contribution to our knowledge of d'Aubigné and the religious thought of the French Protestants of the XVIth century, firstly through the method adopted, whereby the text, as a whole and in its detail, is examined in the context of its biblical sources and their contemporary theological and political interpretation, and secondly through the conclusions reached about the structure of that thought itself. To enable the study to be carried out by this method, two preliminary chapters were undertaken, the first on the idea of the justice of God in the biblical sources themselves, and the second (which I believe contains original material) on its place in the thought of the Protestant theologians of the

time. In addition, a biblical index to the work totalling some 50 pages of double columns, which enables the biblical allusions, ideas or expressions to be identified in the detail of the text, has been included as an appendix to the book. This index was built up in the course of the research and will be of considerable value to others wishing to conduct research on this aspect of d'Aubigné's writing,

A copy of the table of contents of the printed volume is attached for information.

(2) Jean de La Taille, *Saül le furieux; La Famine, ou Les Gabeonites, tragédies* (critical edition), Paris, STFM, 1968 and 1998, lxxix+183 pp.

This critical edition, undertaken after the publication of my book on early French tragedy and in some ways the fruit of the methods learned in that research, constitutes a first step into the close interpretation of XVIth century literature based on biblical texts. In a lengthy introduction, which examines all the basic literary characteristics of these biblical plays (the first of which is the most dramatic work of its time), I have been able to show that, contrary to what some other scholars have held, when examined in the light of Calvin's religious interpretations of the biblical stories, La Taille is in fact making two politico-religious statements addressed as remonstrances to the King, whom he is accusing of disobeying God's commands in his dealings with the Protestant minority and of threatening the welfare of the nation by provoking God's anger. (Where d'Aubigné's work draws on virtually all the books of the Bible, thus making its interpretation exceedingly complex, La Taille concentrates on one story in each play and derives a moral and political lesson directly from it following Calvin's exegesis.) This book is now the standard edition of these plays in France and was set as one of the basic texts in the programme of the Agrégation de Lettres in France in 1998-99.

Elliott FORSYTH

# LA JUSTICE DE DIEU.

*LES TRAGIQUES*  
D'AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNÉ ET  
LA RÉFORME PROTESTANTE EN  
FRANCE AU XVI<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE



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Jean de La Taille

Tragédies

Saül le furieux

La Famine ou les Gabéonites



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