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 Hogueutte 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 missionaire 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 missionaire 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’escriture 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’Ecriture sainte. Pour servir de réponse a un libelle intitulé, Antidote, contre la lettre d’un missionaire 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_.