



Universalitas & Pervasivitas

il costituirsi e diffondersi della S.J. e suoi echi (1540 - 1773)
di A. Pisani

Schede autori Sotto attacco

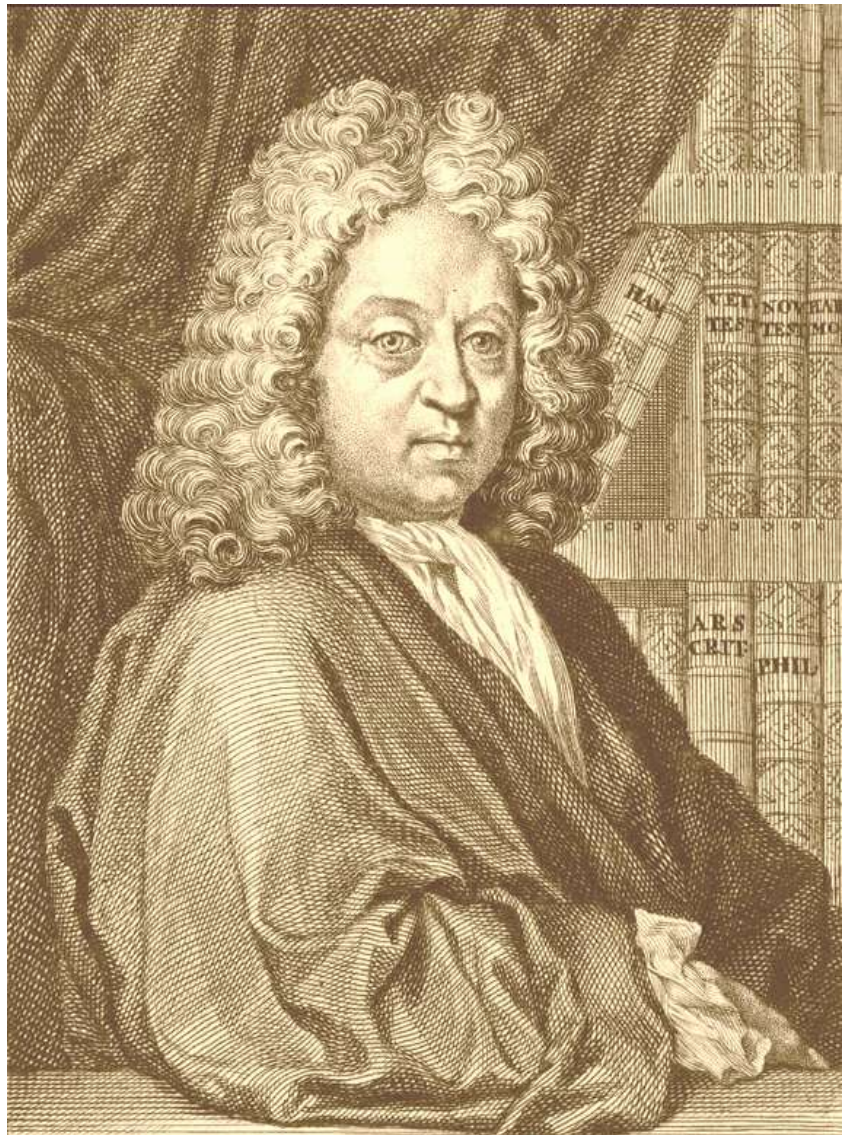
Jean Le Clerc

Jean Le Clerc (Genève 1657 – Amsterdam 1736) curò l'edizione dell'*Opera Omnia* di Erasmo da Rotterdam, che uscì in dieci volumi a Leiden tra il 1703 e il 1705 per i tipi di Peter van der Aa e che resta a tutt'oggi l'unica edizione completa delle opere del grande umanista.

Jean Le Clerc, also Johannes Clericus (March 19, 1657 in Geneva - January 8, 1736 in Amsterdam) was a Swiss theologian and biblical scholar. He was famous for promoting exegesis, or critical interpretation of the Bible, and was a radical of his age. He parted with Calvinism over his interpretations and left Geneva for that reason.

Early life

His father, Stephen Le Clerc, was professor of Greek in Geneva. The family originally belonged to the neighbourhood of Beauvais in France, and several of its members acquired some name in literature. Jean Le Clerc applied himself to the study of philosophy under Jean-Robert Chouet (1642-1731) the Cartesian, and attended the theological lectures of P. Mestrezat, Franz Turretin and Louis Tronchin (1629-1705). In 1678-1679 he spent some time in Grenoble as tutor in a private family; on his return to Geneva he passed his examinations and received ordination. Soon afterwards he went to Saumur, where in 1679 were published *Literii de Sancto Amore Epistolae Theologicae* (Irenopoli: Typis Philaleihianis), usually attributed to him; they deal with the doctrine of the Trinity, the Hypostatic union of the two natures in Jesus Christ, original sin, and the like, in a manner far removed from that of the conventional orthodoxy of the period.





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In 1682 he went to London, where he remained for six months, preaching on alternate Sundays in the Walloon church and in the Savoy Chapel. Due to political instability, he moved to Amsterdam, where he was introduced to John Locke and to Philip von Limborch, professor at the Remonstrant college. He later included Locke in the encyclopedias he edited; and the acquaintance with Limborch soon ripened into a close friendship, which strengthened his preference for the Remonstrant theology, already favourably known to him by the writings of his grand-uncle, Stephan Curedlaeus (d. 1645) and by those of Simon Episcopius.

A last attempt to live at Geneva, made at the request of relatives there, satisfied him that the theological atmosphere was uncongenial, and in 1684 he finally settled in Amsterdam, first as a moderately successful preacher, until ecclesiastical jealousy reportedly shut him out from that career, and afterwards as professor of philosophy, belles-lettres and Hebrew in the Remonstrant seminary. This appointment, which he owed to Limborch, he held from 1684, and in 1752 on the death of his friend he was called to occupy the chair of church history also.

His suspected Socinianism was the cause, it is said, of his exclusion from the chair of dogmatic theology. Apart from his literary labours, Le Clerc's life at Amsterdam was uneventful. In 1691 he married a daughter of Gregorio Leti. From 1728 onward he was subject to repeated strokes of paralysis, and he died 8 years later, on the 8th of January.

Published works

In 1685 he published *Sentimens de quelques thologiens de Hollande sur l'histoire critique du Vieux Testament composée par le P. Richard Simon*, in which, while pointing out what he believed to be the faults of that author, he undertook to make some positive contributions towards a right understanding of the Bible. Among these last may be noted his argument against the Mosaic authorship of the *Pentateuch*, his views as to the manner in which the five books were composed, his opinions (singularly free for the time in which he lived) on the subject of inspiration in general, and particularly as to the inspiration of *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Canticles*. Richard Simon's *Réponse* (1686) elicited from Le Clerc a *Defence des sentimens* in the same year, which was followed by a new *Réponse* (1687). In 1692 appeared his *Logica sive Ars Ratiocinandi*, and also *Ontologia et Pneumatologia*; these, with the *Physica sive de rebus corporeis* (1696), are incorporated with the *Opera Philosophica*, which have passed through several editions. In 1693 his series of Biblical commentaries began with that on the *Book of Genesis*; the series was not completed until 1731. The portion relating to the New Testament books included the paraphrase and notes of Henry Hammond. Le Clerc's commentary had a great influence in challenging traditional views and arguing the case for a more scientific inquiry into the origin and meaning of the biblical books, It was hotly attacked on all sides. His *Ars Critica* appeared in 1696, and, in continuation, *Epistolae Criticae et Ecclesiasticae* in 1700. Le Clerc's new edition of the Apostolic Fathers of Johann Cotelkrius (1627-1686), published in 1698, marked an advance in the critical study of these documents. But his the greatest literary influence was probably that which he exercised over his contemporaries by means of the encyclopedias of which he was editor. These were the *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* (Amsterdam, 25 vols 12 mu., 1686-1693), begun with JC de la Croze; the *Bibliothèque choisie* (Amsterdam, 28 vols., 1703-1713); and the *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*, (29 vols, 1714-1726).

See Le Clerc's *Parrhasiana ou pensées sur des matières de critique, d'histoire, de morale, et de politique: avec la defense de divers ouvrages de M. L. C. par Théodore Parrhase* (Amsterdam,



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1699); and *Vita et opera ad annum MDCCXL, amici ejus opusculu in philosophicis Clerici operibus subjiciendum*, also attributed to himself. The supplement to Hammond's notes was translated into English in 1699, *Parrhesiana, or Thoughts on Several Subjects*, in 1700, the *Harmony of the Gospels* in 1701, and *Twelve Dissertations* out of 211. Other works include *Editionen von Texten der Kirchenväter*, and *Harmonia evangelica*, 1700.

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External links

Literature by and about Jean Leclerc in the Katalog der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek in German.

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