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0521424933 - An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism

Leon Vaganay

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This book is a thoroughly updated and revised edition of Léon Vaganay's *Initiation à la critique textuelle du Nouveau Testament*, which was first published in 1934. It presents a general survey of the study of New Testament documents presented in a non-technical fashion, and assuming no prior knowledge of the subject by the reader. The book provides a wide overview, rather than a step-by-step introduction, and describes the tools and skills necessary for assessing the significance of manuscript variation in the New Testament.

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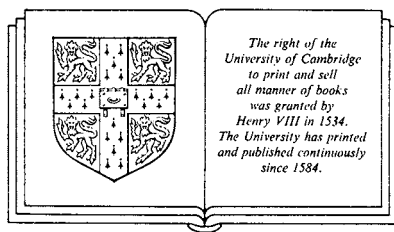
AN INTRODUCTION
TO NEW TESTAMENT
TEXTUAL CRITICISM

*Second edition revised and updated
by*

*Christian-Bernard AMPHOUX
Director of Research, CNRS (Montpellier)*

Translated into English by Jenny Heimerdinger, MA

*English edition amplified and updated by Christian-Bernard Amphoux
and Jenny Heimerdinger*



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In memory of my tutor, Jean Duplacy
C.-B.A.

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Foreword to the English translation

Christian Amphoux is employed by the French research body CNRS and is based at the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Montpellier, where he set up the 'Centre de documentation sur les manuscrits de la Bible' in 1984. In 1988 I was privileged to be present at a ceremony held at that institution to mark its change of name to that of the 'Centre Jean Duplacy pour l'étude des manuscrits de la Bible', in memory of the well-known Roman Catholic scholar from Dijon, who had died in 1983, and whose pupil Amphoux had been.

This was more than an ecumenical gesture. It reflected a continuity in textual criticism in France. This continuum is reflected in the present book. Vaganay's *Initiation* appeared in 1934. Duplacy had intended to revise that work but his untimely death prevented this happening. Instead, Christian Amphoux, whose institute has inherited the Duplacy library, eagerly undertook the revision, and it was a happy thought that when he published the work in 1986 it was dedicated to his former tutor. Another ecumenical link is that Amphoux, like Duplacy before him, continues to teach for the Faculté de théologie catholique at Lyons, and that faculty has been a partner in the Montpellier 'Centre' since 1988.

The publication of Vaganay–Amphoux generated a spin-off designed for more popular consumption that appeared in the distinguished monthly magazine *Le Monde de la Bible*. In its January–February 1987 issue it published a lengthy article by Amphoux, 'La Transmission des Évangiles'. In these two publications Francophone students and the interested general public were introduced to the study of textual criticism, to manuscripts, to early translations and to the history of the text. Those whose appetite had been whetted or curiosity aroused by text-critical notes in the *Bible de Jérusalem* and other modern versions or indeed by the critical apparatus of a Greek New Testament now found in the second edition of Vaganay's *Initiation* an easily assimilated and up-to-date assessment of the significance of manuscript variation in the New Testament.

Of course Vaganay–Amphoux's aim to instruct and to inform is not

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now restricted to readers of French. This translation should open up to a wider audience the latest teaching in France on the subject of the textual criticism of the New Testament. This introduction is indeed an initiation as the French title suggests. The approach is systematic and the author assumes no previous acquaintance with the subject matter. Both author and reviser are conscious of their didactic role as they seek to encourage their readers to see the significance of a subject that all too often, but needlessly, can alienate potential students because of the frequently technical nature of much of the academic discussion in the area.

For those who wish to continue their study in this field, advanced textbooks, some offering more controversial approaches, are available, and these are referred to in the present volume. But the book in hand is a cautious and careful guide for beginners. Issues that are in dispute are carefully explained, and the authors' obvious bias against the 'textus receptus' and their highly critical assessment of many pioneer textual critics are readily recognisable as prejudiced – although these prejudices are widely shared.

Textual criticism is both a science and an art. The first two chapters are in a sense a description of the 'science' of textual criticism. Verifiable scholarship involves the classifying and collating of the manuscripts. In assessing the results of such 'scientific' work we turn to the 'art' of the subject, and inevitably this is where expert opinions often differ. When we move from the first two chapters which are largely descriptive to chapter 3 we enter into more controversial issues. Readers previously unfamiliar with French scholarship in this subject may perhaps be surprised by some of Amphoux's emphases here. Unlike many textual critics Amphoux is agnostic about finding the original text. Not for him the goal of restoring the wording of the autograph copies. His main concern is to chart the history of the text, attempting to get back to the great recensions and behind these to an early (but not necessarily original) form of the text. His high regard for the so-called 'Western' text, the significance of which is often denigrated by many textual critics, and his belief in its being a representation of a pre-recensional form of the text may surprise many. But this is a point of view that has had adherents in the French tradition, not least Duplacy himself. It is, incidentally, very significant just how frequently the views and works of Duplacy occur in this book.

Idiosyncratic views such as the above are not promoted in a doctrinaire or biased way, but it should be noted that this approach and his suggested way forward at the end of chapter 4 are not universally

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followed. Even Amphoux is as aware as anyone that the creation of watertight compartments of text types is not practical, and he stresses quite rightly the great admixture in much of the New Testament textual tradition. His eclecticism and openness are refreshing and commendable.

The essence of Vaganay's original and even from time to time his tone of voice has been preserved; the subject has been brought up to date by a contemporary practitioner; the book is now available and adapted for English readers. Armed with this *Initiation's* introduction to the sources, methodology and history of textual criticism, it is to be hoped that readers will seek to apply the science and art of textual criticism in the practical way of assessing variants in their reading of a critical edition of the New Testament. If this happens then the value of the original, the revision and now the translation will be fully justified.

It is of particular satisfaction to the undersigned, as I know it is also to Professor Amphoux himself, that this translation has been prepared by Mrs Jenny Heimerdinger, who has been a student of textual criticism under our tuition successively.

J. K. Elliott
University of Leeds

Translator's preface

This English translation of the second edition of Léon Vaganay's *Initiation à la critique textuelle du Nouveau Testament*, revised and updated by Christian-Bernard Amphoux, carries some further modifications made by the reviser and the translator, with the agreement of Les Editions du Cerf. These modifications concern, in particular, the first chapter, where the type of text has been added to the description of the manuscripts, and the Bibliography, which has been considerably amplified and re-arranged. Much help and advice has been gratefully received from Professor J. N. Birdsall whose extensive knowledge and soundness of scholarship have been greatly appreciated in the revisions he proposed on reading the French original. Dr. J. K. Elliott's skilful expertise has been equally valuable. Many thanks are due to him for writing the Foreword to this English edition; and for his patient and thorough reading of the translation and for the amendments he suggested. His encouragement throughout has been highly valued.

Jenny Heimerdinger

Foreword to the first French edition

In every collection of books there are some which get more or less put on one side. If there is one subject which is more austere than any other, even in a library like the 'Bibliothèque catholique des sciences religieuses', it is surely textual criticism. The most cultured minds do not always derive great pleasure from delving into the intricacies of this science. Some professional exegetes happily make do with a mere passing knowledge of it. It is something left to bookworms! Textual criticism is a stern character to whom much homage is paid but with whom close dealings are not often sought. But it also has a habit of paying back those who neglect it: their work always bears the stamp of lazy imprecision. 'Latin without tears' or 'Simple steps in Greek' may be all right but 'Textual criticism made easy' is an impossible challenge and we make no claim to have carried it out.

It has to be said that certain factors have not made the task any easier. There has been the unavoidable necessity of restricting the book to a limited length and of making it available to a wide public. To be honest, there are no gleanings for the specialist in this popularised work other than a few rather unusual ideas which it will amuse him to criticise. A theologian, or even a student of theology, would be right to reject it in favour of that rare species, a good manual. In any case, this work has no ambitions to be that kind of book. We have avoided discussions of too technical a nature and have provided more of a bird's-eye view. We have only given a more detailed account at those places where the information could be useful for future workers in the field. The informed layperson who wishes to have a glimpse of everything without getting stung in the process will probably be the least dissatisfied. He, at least, will not be able to hold it against us that we have presented the topic in a less dull way than usual. He will though, unfortunately, find plenty of things to try his patience. But being well taught himself, he will bear with us kindly as we teach the novices.

The worst problem of all is that there is no subject which dates so quickly as does textual criticism. By the time this work is published

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valuable new documents may well have come to light. Long before the edition has been sold out, the information will be out of date. The truth of it is that textual criticism is only in the early stages. Whether it be in the area of sources, method or history, the ground is still being cleared. There is just one small comfort for the critic: it is a child's first words which are the most enchanting. His stammerings and stutterings are full of promise, his unformed speech full of hope.

L. V.
Lyons, November 1933

Preface to the second French edition

It is never easy to write a book introducing a subject: it needs to be as complete and as simple as possible all at once. The job is harder still when there is no general work on the subject already, but only a host of smaller works on points of detail which far from cover the whole area, even taken together. Previous attempts by scholars to write an introduction have tended to focus on certain topics (as, for example, Metzger 1968 and Aland – Aland 1982).

In France, Jean Duplacy had gathered together over a period of twenty years or so a good deal of the material necessary for a general introduction to the textual criticism of the New Testament which would have constituted the foundation of a new handbook on the subject. But his work, though extensive, was never completed. Meanwhile, the need for such a handbook continued to be felt, and so when I was approached by Les Editions du Cerf, I agreed to revise and update the *Introduction* by Léon Vaganay.

There were two reasons behind my choice. First, fifty years after its first publication, this book is still the most clear-sighted survey of the subject. There was no point in looking for anything more elaborate which would have required considerable re-working. Secondly, information concerning textual criticism is so diverse and so extensive that it would have been impossible for me to write a completely new book within a reasonable length of time.

I have, therefore, taken up Vaganay's *Introduction*: I have added to it and, in the end, have written or re-written about half of it. I have tried to respect the length and the style of the first edition. But some parts are entirely new. In the chapter on sources, I have taken account of the new discoveries and also of the greater interest that exists today in the manuscripts of the early versions. In the chapter on method, room had to be made for the most recent studies, especially those of E. C. Colwell and J. Duplacy. I have naturally brought the chapter on the history of the printed text up to date. Vaganay's last chapter, which examined some individual variation units, never seemed to me to be very useful

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and so I have not included it. The most thorough revision, however, concerns the third chapter, on the history of the manuscript text. In the first part of the chapter, I have drawn extensively on my research, initially carried out in collaboration with Duplacy, on the history of the text before AD 200, with the result that I cannot promise that the views expressed there would still be those of Vaganay. There is nonetheless a strong underlying link between my contribution to the book and the work of Vaganay. Vaganay was searching for the original text of the New Testament, which he sensed to be closer to the 'Western' text than to the Alexandrian type. I believe that the research and discoveries made over the last fifty years have confirmed and refined this intuition and I try to take account of that. Furthermore, I was trained in this field by Jean Duplacy who was himself a student of Vaganay. It is, therefore, not surprising that I should generally find myself in close agreement with their ideas.

The current edition is chiefly designed for two kinds of public: on the one hand, all those who have an interest in the Bible and wish to know more about the circumstances in which the text was copied and fixed. On the other hand, it is for students of theology, both those tackling the New Testament for the first time at university level as well as more advanced students who need to know how to make the best use of a critical apparatus for their work in exegesis. In addition, certain pages may be of use to student linguists. These are essentially the people for whom the first edition, too, was written.

In the course of my work, I have drawn on the comments and the advice of certain friends who possess a variety of skills. Amongst them, I would like to mention Maurice Houis concerning questions of oral tradition; Joseph Trinquet, Bernard Outtier, Samir Arbache and Alain Desreumaux concerning the manuscripts of some of the early versions; Gilles Firmin concerning the early editions of the New Testament; Jean Irigoien, Julien Leroy and my colleagues from the 'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes' concerning questions of codicology; J. Paramelle who suggested some final corrections after reading the proofs. I express my gratitude to all. But I would in no way want to forget my students, both in Montpellier and in Lyons, who have helped me by their questions and their papers to understand certain points which Vaganay had left in the dark.

C.-B.A.

Montpellier, September 1985

Abbreviations

<i>Anal. Boll.</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i> (Brussels)
<i>ANTF</i>	<i>Arbeiten zur Neutestamentlichen Textforschung</i> (Berlin/New York)
<i>BETL</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologiarum Lovaniensium</i> (Leuven)
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i> (Rome)
<i>BRJL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> (Manchester)
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> (Washington, D.C.)
<i>CCG</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca</i> (Turnhout)
<i>CCL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> (Turnhout)
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> (Louvain)
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , (Vienna)
<i>DBS</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément</i> (Paris)
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i> (Leuven)
<i>ETR</i>	<i>Études Théologiques et Religieuses</i> (Montpellier)
<i>GCS</i>	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i> (Berlin)
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i> (Cambridge, Mass.)
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> (Atlanta, Ga.)
<i>JNST</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> (Sheffield)
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> (Oxford)
<i>LOAPL</i>	<i>Langues Orientales Anciennes, Philologie et Linguistique</i> (Paris)
<i>Nov T</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i> (Leiden)
<i>NRT</i>	<i>Nouvelle Revue Théologique</i> (Tournai)
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i> (Cambridge)
<i>OC</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i> (Rome)
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> (162 vols.), ed. J. P. Migne, 1857–66, Paris.
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> (217 vols.), ed. J. P. Migne, 1844–55, Paris.

Abbreviations

<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> (Turnhout)
<i>PS</i>	<i>Patrologia Syriaca</i> (Paris)
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i> (Jerusalem)
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</i> (Strasbourg)
<i>RHT</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire des Textes</i> (Paris)
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i> (Abilene, Tex.)
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Revue des Sciences Religieuses</i> (Strasbourg)
<i>RTL</i>	<i>Revue Théologique de Louvain</i> (Louvain-la-Neuve)
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> (Paris)
<i>S & D</i>	<i>Studies and Documents</i> (Salt Lake City)
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i> (Berlin)
<i>TRNE</i>	<i>Theological Review of the Near East</i> (Beirut)
<i>TQ</i>	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i> (Tübingen)
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> (Berlin/New York)
<i>TU</i>	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur</i> (Berlin)
<i>TextS</i>	<i>Texts and Studies</i> (Cambridge)
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vetera Christianorum</i> (Bari)
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> (Berlin)

Note on the bibliographical references. The Bibliography is divided into seven sections; to assist the reader in following up references, the section number is given as a Roman numeral after each reference by author and date, except when the section is number VII. In the case of section VI, the abbreviation for the manuscript is given as well, where this will assist the reader in finding the manuscript referred to.