



Marguerat, Daniel, ed.

Introduction au Nouveau Testament: Son histoire, son écriture, sa théologie

Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2008. Pp. 547. Paper. €40.00.
ISBN 9782830912890.

V. Henry T. Nguyen
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California

This introduction to the New Testament under the editorial direction of New Testament scholar Daniel Marguerat greatly fills a lacuna in French biblical studies. In the preface to his previous edition he states that, since A. George and P. Grelot's introduction in 1976–1977, no similar work has been produced in the French language. In fact, he states that, in comparison to the profusion of introductions produced in English, German, and Italian, *l'indigence* of the production of French counterparts has been *indécente*. With Marguerat's publication of the first edition of his introduction in 2000 and the rapid succession of the second (2001), third (2004), and now fourth edition (2008), this work clearly has made a place for itself in francophone biblical studies. This fourth edition continues to be a profitable handbook that provides its readers the essential elements needed to understand the New Testament writings in their literary and historical environment.

According to Marguerat, this introductory volume was designed to be a *manuel* for biblical scholars, students, and virtually anyone interested in rigorous learning of the New Testament literature. As a reference manual, it does not seek to be exhaustive but selects information that gives a coherent comprehension of the New Testament literature, while giving a comprehensive view of historical and literary problems posed by the writing of

each document of the New Testament. In particular, the book joins the historical methods of *la sémiotique* and *la narratologie* and approaches the New Testament from a historical-critical perspective with a focus on the literary and historical environment from which these documents emerged.

Although the amount of scholarly output by francophone scholars appears to have dwindled in past years, this work gathers together a notable list of contributors that reminds us of the quality of French biblical exegesis. Marguerat enlists a cast of scholars who teach or taught in various faculties of theology (Protestant or Catholic) throughout Europe to write chapters on the New Testament documents and related topics: *Marguerat*: from Jesus to the Gospels, the Synoptic problem, Gospel of Luke, Acts of the Apostles; *Corina Combet-Galland*: Gospel of Mark; *Eliau Cuvillier*: Gospel of Matthew, Apocalypse of John; *François Vouga*: Pauline chronology, the Pauline corpus, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon, Hebrews, and James; *Andreas Dettwiler*: Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians; *Yann Redalié*: Pastoral Epistles; *Jean Zumstein*: Gospel of John, Epistles of John; *Jacques Schlosser*: 1 and 2 Peter, Jude; *Jean-Daniel Kaestli*: the history of the New Testament canon; and *Roselyne Dupont-Roc*: textual criticism of the New Testament.

The bibliographies in this revised and expanded fourth edition have been updated, and accordingly the discussions have interacted with and integrated new developments in the field. This edition adds a new chapter, “De Jésus aux évangiles” (ch. 1), written by Marguerat, which discusses the period between the death of Jesus and the composition of the earliest Gospel, Mark. In this additional chapter, Marguerat orients readers to how the memory of the Jesus tradition was fixed and transmitted in the earliest Christian communities. As in the previous editions, the book concludes with a helpful glossary of technical terms and an index of names and topics. Unfortunately, there is no index of modern authors.

The twenty-nine chapters of the volume are divided into seven parts: (1) the Jesus tradition; (2) the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles; (3) the Pauline literature, consisting of Paul’s letters, the deutero-Pauline letters, the Pastoral Epistles, and, interestingly, Hebrews; (4) the Johannine tradition: Gospel, Epistles, and Apocalypse; (5) the Catholic Epistles; (6) the history of the New Testament canon; and (7) textual criticism. Each document is virtually treated in the same fashion by generally using the same rubrics; as a result, this volume consisting of several co-authors achieves a high degree of coherence. In each chapter on a particular document, the author begins with the document’s *présentation*: the literary genre; the structure of the work (and a justification for the chosen structure); and the contents according to the structural outline. Then consideration is given to the historical environment and circumstances in which the work

was produced (*milieu historique de production*). This section focuses on issues of authorship, provenance, dating, and destination and first recipients. The next section focuses on the work's *composition littéraire*: the ancient author's use of sources and the religious traditions that shaped his thinking. Attention is then given to the document's *visée théologique*, which is a welcome feature for a volume that is chiefly interested in the historical and literary dimensions of the New Testament corpus. The author discusses the work's theological outlook, usually within the framework of classical categories of theology (e.g., God, Christology, eschatology, and ecclesiology). The author then looks at recent trends and developments (*perspectives nouvelles*) in the study of that ancient document. Finally, there is a *bibliographie* that lists several commentaries, important studies that should be consulted (*à lire en priorité*), studies on the history of research, exhaustive bibliographies, and specific studies.

Marguerat has produced a fine introduction to the New Testament. It is difficult to find fault with the book, especially given that this "manual" does not aim to be an exhaustive work. There is, however, one minor issue worth mentioning, which perhaps should be taken as a suggestion for a future edition. In the volume there is no proper introduction to the Greco-Roman and Jewish world of the New Testament, a feature that has become quite normative in New Testament introductions. The authors are concerned about the various writings' literary and historical milieu but do not substantially describe the social, cultural, and political world of the New Testament. In the chapters preceding the discussion of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, there are chapters on the early Jesus tradition and the Synoptic Problem, and in the chapters preceding the Pauline epistles, there are chapters on Pauline chronology and the Pauline corpus. These chapters show that Marguerat is interested in presenting preliminary issues, which should be expanded to include the world of the New Testament.

Despite this small quibble, Marguerat's volume is a well-written manual that fulfills its aim. The presentation is consistent, which is often difficult to attain in volumes with several authors. There are useful charts, lists, and diagrams that illuminate the discussions (surprisingly, there is only one small map provided on 416). The authors introduce the material well and place a priority on being objective in their presentations. Finally, the authors commendably include in their bibliographies not only studies in French but also many in English and German.

In short, Marguerat's reference manual not only remains the standard New Testament introduction in French but also is a significant contribution to the existing introductory volumes to the New Testament. We can expect to see further editions of this valuable and accessible introduction to the New Testament literature for students.