

## REVIVAL OF SYNOPTIC SOURCE-CRITICISM

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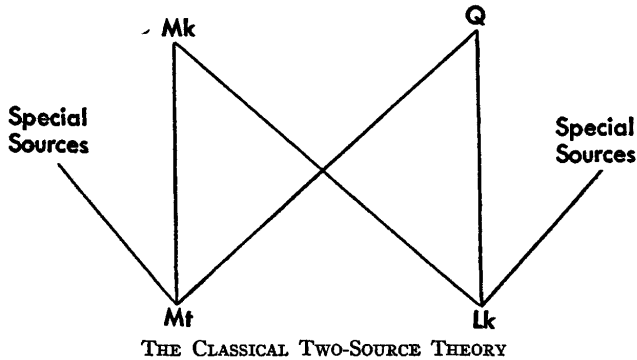
AFTER a long lull which stretched from the end of the first World War until the present, the last few years have seen renewed activity in the field of Synoptic Source-Criticism.<sup>1</sup> Activity had almost ceased in this sector of New Testament studies because of the general conviction that the Two-Source theory had uncovered the ultimate documents from which these Gospels derived.<sup>2</sup> Scholars had the feeling that, if any attempt to get behind those sources to an earlier stage of Gospel tradition were to have any hope of success, it must proceed according to the Form-Critical method which had been successfully exploited since 1919 by Dibelius, Bultmann, and their followers. Recently, however, a series of books and articles has appeared which, though they differ in much else, commonly challenge this general conviction. Judging by the unanimously respectful and often favorable comment which it has called forth both here and abroad, this tendency may well have reached a zenith in the recent work of L. Vaganay.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As explained by Dodd, *History and the Gospel* (London, 1938) p. 78, Source-Criticism is the line of gospel investigation which deals with the written documents (our Gospels) and seeks to establish their proximate documentary sources. Form-Criticism, on the other hand, seeks to reconstruct the oral tradition which lies behind the proximate written sources.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. W. G. Kümmel, "New Testament Research and Teaching in Present-Day Germany," *New Testament Studies* 1 (1955) 231: "Literary criticism has also come to be less important in research since certain results such as the two-document hypothesis . . . are generally accepted."

<sup>3</sup> The list of recent Synoptic work includes:

1) Before the Vaganay hypothesis: J. Chapman, *Matthew, Mark and Luke* (London, 1937); C. Butler, *The Originality of St. Matthew* (Cambridge, 1951); L. Cerfaux, *La voix vivante de l'évangile au début de l'église* (Tournai, 1946); *idem*, "La probité des souvenirs évangéliques," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 4 (1927) 13-28; *idem*, "A propos des sources du troisième évangile: Proto-Luc ou proto-Matthieu?," *ibid.* 12 (1935) 5-27; *idem*, "La mission de Galilée dans la tradition synoptique," *ibid.* 27 (1951) 369-89 (these three articles have been reprinted in *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux* 1 [Gembloux, 1954] 369-87, 389-414, 425-69); *idem*, "Luc (Evangile de)," *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément* 5 (1953) 545-94 (in collaboration with J. Cambier); P. Benoit, *L'Evangile selon s. Matthieu* (Bible de Jérusalem; Paris, 1953); W. L. Knox, *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels 1: Saint Mark*,



Circumstances, therefore, indicate that it might be wise briefly to expose this new solution to a problem which has long been with us, together with some of the more thoughtful reactions which it has called forth. It may well be that such a study will shed light on the hopes for survival and development which this new movement possesses.

Vaganay's hypothesis—he does not claim more—is a direct and sustained attack on the radical form of the Two-Source theory, i.e., the theory which explains the Synoptic texts by placing the canonical Gospel of Mark at the base of the triple tradition, while deriving the double tradition from Q.<sup>4</sup> In this form of the theory the latter elastic

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ed. H. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1953); Pierson Parker, *The Gospel before Mark* (Chicago, 1953).

2) The works of Vaganay: "L'Absence du sermon sur la montagne chez Marc. Essai de critique littéraire," *Revue biblique* 58 (1951) 5–46; "La question synoptique," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 28 (1952) 238–56 (this article, which is substantially reproduced in Vaganay's article on Mt, *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément* 5 [1953] 940–56, presents in clear form the seven stages of the hypothesis which Vaganay develops more fully in his book); *Le problème synoptique: Une hypothèse de travail* (Tournai, 1954); "Existe-t-il chez Marc quelques traces du sermon sur la montagne?", *New Testament Studies* 1 (1955) 192–200; and his answer to Levie, *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 31 (1955) 343–56.

3) Levie's evaluation: J. Levie, S.J., "L'Évangile araméen de s. Matthieu, est-il la source de l'évangile de s. Marc?", *Nouvelle revue théologique* 76 (1954) 689–715, 812–43 (reprinted as *Cahiers de la Nouvelle revue théologique* 11 [Tournai and Paris, 1954]); "La complexité du problème synoptique," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 31 (1955) 619–36 (his reply to Vaganay's criticism of his first article).

<sup>4</sup> The "triple tradition" consists of the material which is common to all three Gospels; the "double tradition," as commonly understood, consists of the material common only to Mt and Lk. In reality, it would be more accurate to speak of "double traditions," since there is also material common only to Mt-Mk and some only to Mk-Lk; owing, however, to the peculiar importance of the material found only in Mt and Lk, the name is generally reserved simply for this particular double tradition.

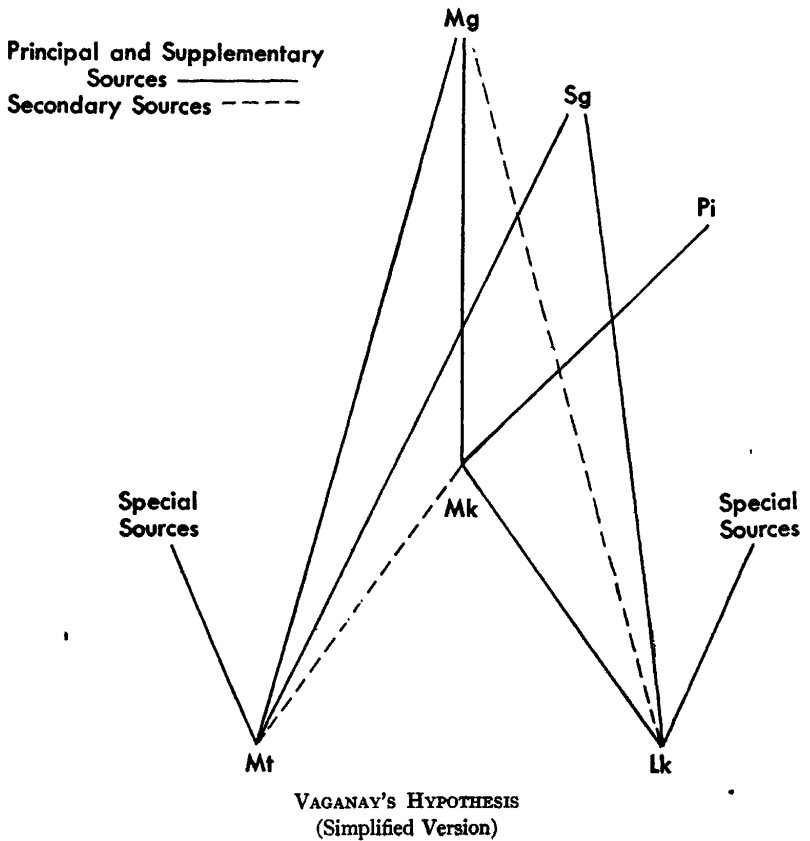
and enigmatic document is envisioned as having been roughly the same in size and content as the 250 verses which make up the Mt-Lk double tradition. It was not a gospel, therefore, since it contained no passion story. Indeed it contained practically no narrative material at all. It was in the nature of a collection of sayings in which the *dicta Jesu* were joined together in a rather haphazard manner, since the individual elements which made up the collection were ordered generally by verbal rather than conceptual logic. While scholars very often rely on Mt for reconstructing the text of this alleged Synoptic source, it is generally agreed by the adherents of this theory that the general outline and inner structure of Q has been better preserved by the Lucan version of the double tradition.

#### VAGANAY'S WORKING HYPOTHESIS

To replace this form of the Two-Source theory which he criticizes as an overly simple explanation of an extremely complicated problem, Vaganay proposes two quite different sources to explain the Synoptic riddle. The first and the more important by far of these sources is denoted by the symbol Mg. As the symbol indicates, this document was a Greek translation of a gospel which had originally been written in Aramaic. This original work, according to early Church writers of whom Papias is the earliest and most important, was composed by the Apostle Matthew and was the first gospel written. In Vaganay's eyes, it is Mg, the Greek translation of this gospel, which was the proximate reason for the striking agreement of the Synoptics in the triple and in that section of the double tradition which lies outside the limits of Lk's Perea section (9:51—18:14) and its Matthean parallels. Basing himself on internal evidence, Vaganay reconstructs this source as follows.<sup>5</sup> Like the Gospel of Mark, Mg began with the ministry of the Baptist and ended with the traditional passion-resurrection accounts. However, the greater part of this gospel was devoted to the ministry

<sup>5</sup> M—Mg is the third of Vaganay's seven steps in the formation of our canonical Gospels. For the details of his reconstruction of this source, see his *Problème synoptique*, pp. 51–100. Vaganay dates the composition of the Aramaic gospel about 50 A.D. and the appearance of Mg about 55–60 A.D. Since it is customary in this material to use symbols to denote documents, we here give the symbols employed by Vaganay: M = the first Aramaic gospel; Mg = Greek translation(s) of M; S = supplementary source (sayings-collection); Sg = Greek translation(s) of S; Mt, Mk, Lk = the canonical Gospels and their composers; Pi = Mk's memories of Peter's oral Roman catechesis, a source postulated for Mk by Vaganay.

of Jesus which was developed according to an easily identifiable and traditionally Jewish plan. This narrative was divided into five sections (books) which were based in turn on the five great discourses of our Lord. The internal order of each of these five books was as follows: first there is a subsection which is generally a narrative which introduces, illustrates, or prepares the way for a certain theme; then this theme is taken up and fully developed in the following sermon. A natural consequence of this is that each reader, to the extent that this structure impinges on his attention, will read the sermons in the light of the narratives and vice versa. As a result, the ministry of Jesus was seen in Mg as the gradual unfolding of the mystery of the kingdom of



heaven, as a series of invitations in which the Messiah urges the Jewish people to enter into the kingdom which had been promised them and on whose coming they had pinned their hopes. Now it is obvious that the only canonical Gospel which clearly reproduces this fivefold structure of the ministry narrative is Mt. Vaganay argues that it is precisely because this particular Gospel was more faithful than its fellows in this and in other ways to the original Aramaic source of Mg that, from the second century on, it too was naturally attributed to the Apostle Matthew.

The second proximate source postulated by Vaganay for the Synoptic texts was another Greek translation (Sg), a version this time of an original Aramaic sayings-collection.<sup>6</sup> From the very first, so Vaganay thinks, this document was conceived and edited to serve as a supplement to the original Aramaic gospel which stands behind Mg and therefore reflected the fivefold structure of that gospel in the order in which its sayings were arranged. However, because of its nature as a collection of sayings which were uttered at different times and in different places, this source was more than usually susceptible to addition and change. The present state of the double tradition suggests that, while working, Mt and Lk had slightly different editions of Sg under their eyes. Vaganay believes that this was the document from which Lk's Pereaean section and its parallels were derived.

As Vaganay conceives the formation of the Synoptic Gospels, the original Aramaic gospel "fixed" the still earlier and more fluid evangelical tradition, but it was Mg, its faithful though by no means literal translation, which was responsible for the *concordia mirabilis* of the Greek Synoptics. As an analysis of its contents reveals, this first gospel embodied a catechesis, that of the Church of Jerusalem, in a stylized and highly schematic form.<sup>7</sup> While early writers have attributed this work to Matthew, our knowledge of the Jerusalem commu-

<sup>6</sup> The author of the Aramaic original is unknown. In all likelihood, however, it was composed by a man in the Apostolic milieu and perhaps by the Apostle Matthew. Vaganay dates it about 55-65 A.D. For the details of Vaganay's development of this source, the fourth step in his hypothesis, see his *Problème synoptique*, pp. 101-51.

<sup>7</sup> Vaganay explains the term "schematic" as follows (*Problème synoptique*, p. 67): "Nous entendons par schématisation . . . non pas seulement une certaine indigence de vocabulaire, caractérisée par la répétition fréquente des mêmes termes, mais plutôt l'allure stylisée du développement, c'est-à-dire, une rédaction réduite à ses éléments essentiels."

nity, derived mostly from Acts, inclines us to think that this Apostle's role was editorial and hence secondary, and that the initial formation of the catechesis was predominantly the work of Peter, the ultimate authority in that Church.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, if the Vaganay hypothesis be true, the main part of the Synoptic tradition can be traced back through Mg and Aramaic Matthew to the Prince of the Apostles, a fact which undoubtedly would enhance its historical worth. It follows equally that our Synoptic Gospels are in substance nothing more or less than later editions of Mg, adapted to suit the varying needs of different communities. The obvious differences between them, in plan, emphasis, details, etc., are due in the main to various omissions, transpositions, and additions to Mg, much, but by no means all, of which Vaganay sets to the account of the later evangelists.

As for the time-order in which our Gospels arose, Vaganay agrees with the majority of scholars today that the oldest canonical Gospel is Mk. He agrees also that *prima facie* it is not easy to insert this Gospel into the sketch of the formation of the Synoptics which his hypothesis provides. Vaganay is fully aware of the literary unity of the second Gospel, the vivid disorder of its descriptive passages, the theological naiveté of its narratives, its archaic forms, etc., factors which have persuaded scholars that, of the three Synoptics, Mk was the least likely to have depended on an extended literary source.<sup>9</sup> But he is equally convinced, as we shall see, that important elements in the Synoptic tradition can find no satisfactory explanation unless it be admitted that Mk depended closely on Mg. His resolution of this antinomy is ingenious and quite plausible in the light of present knowledge both of Mk's career and of conditions in the early Church. Vaganay postulates that Mk was controlled in writing by his verbal memories of Mg, which faithfully reproduced the Jerusalem catechesis of Peter. However, we know that Mk was also with Peter in Rome, where he served the Apostle in a subordinate capacity. It is surely to

<sup>8</sup> Vaganay, *Problème synoptique*, pp. 99, 160. The suggestion that Peter formed the catechesis contained in M had previously been made by Lagrange and Cladder; cf. J. Levie, S.J., "L'Évangile araméen de s. Matthieu," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 76 (1954) 693-94. For the reasons which criticism provides for attributing M to the Apostle Matthew, cf. Vaganay, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-85.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Vaganay's discussion of "l'énigme" of Mk, *Problème synoptique*, pp. 181-86.

be presumed, therefore, that he also possessed a clear memory of Peter's Roman teaching, which, if we are to judge by his Gospel, was both vivid and picturesque.<sup>10</sup> The blending of these two related but distinct sources accounts in Vaganay's mind for the originality of the second Gospel, despite the fact that it was fundamentally dependent on the "oral text" of Mg.<sup>11</sup>

But if the greater part of Mk is explained by that evangelist's faithful reproduction of a primitive "oral text," Vaganay judges that Mt and Lk, on the contrary, were strictly literary productions which depended on written sources. In the Synoptic part of his Gospel, Mt depended on Mg as his primary, and on Sg as a supplementary, source. When the Synoptic texts demand it, Vaganay will admit a dependence of Mt on Mk but he tends to reduce this to a minimum. On the other hand, Lk's major sources were Mk and Mg, while Sg (as for Mt) was the supplementary source.<sup>12</sup> Such, in brief, is the new solution to our problem which has inspired the recent flurry of discussion about the Synoptic problem and has given new life to Source-Criticism.

#### REASONS FOR THE PRIORITY OF MG

Vaganay has been led to form this hypothesis by careful analysis of the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>12a</sup> He is confident that, despite surface appearances, attention to the details of the text will reveal traces of the five-fold structure described above not only in Mt but also in Mk and Lk.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Vaganay's discussion of Mk's dependence on Pi, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-59.

<sup>11</sup> The phrase is Vaganay's, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>12</sup> Vaganay himself classifies the Lucan sources as follows (*op. cit.*, p. 313): Mk is the principal source, Mg is secondary, and Sg is complementary. He adds, however, that it is impossible to decide in many cases whether Lk drew directly on Mk or Mg. Apparently the reason for this perplexity is the strong similarity between Mg and Mk. It should be noted, too, that the term "complémentaire" in Vaganay's classification of sources denotes a different kind rather than a lesser degree of dependence, as compared with "sécondaire"; indeed, Vaganay is not always perfectly consistent in his use of the latter term, as may be seen from his classification (*op. cit.*, p. 243) of Mg as Mt's principal source and both Sg and Mk as Mt's secondary sources.

<sup>12a</sup> We restrict ourselves in this article to the reasons which Vaganay alleges for his fundamental and revolutionary supposition, viz., that Mg rather than Mk is the literary source of the triple tradition. Our reason for this is the capital importance of this point in his hypothesis; naturally, therefore, discussion of the Vaganay hypothesis has focused on it.

This fact has been obscured in the second Gospel mainly by Mk's omission of the Sermon on the Mount,<sup>13</sup> while Lk's dependence on this schema becomes clearer once we grasp the fact that, true to his practice of sticking to one source over a relatively extended number of verses, this evangelist has embodied all the material he drew from Sg into one bloc (his Perea section), which he inserted as a single, continuous unit into the fivefold structure.<sup>14</sup> Now since Mt is the only canonical writer to which the formation of this structure could be plausibly attributed and since, in Vaganay's judgment and that of the majority of scholars, Mk and Lk are demonstrably independent of Mt, this common structure could only have come from a source from which all three derive, i.e., Mg.<sup>15</sup> This chain of reasoning is cogent enough; what difficulty remains is attached to the links out of which it is composed. As we shall see, it is with these links and their interpretation that other scholars have taken issue.

The second argument for a common source for all three Gospels is based on the negative and positive agreements of Mt-Lk against Mk. We shall propose this argument in the words of Msgr. Cerfaux:

In the passages where they [the Synoptics] agree, it is evident on close inspection that Mt and Lk agree against Mk in a certain number of details. They either add something to Mk or replace one trait by another [positive agreements] or they both omit a certain trait (generally a Marcan picturesque detail) [negative agreements]. The *regularity and extent* of the phenomenon demand an explanation; the most simple explanation and the one to which we should have recourse, were it a question of textual criticism, is to postulate an earlier document which already contained the anomalies which Mt and Lk share in common against Mk.<sup>16</sup>

The earlier document which Vaganay postulates to explain this phenomenon is, of course, Mg.

<sup>13</sup> The significance of the two articles by Vaganay in *Revue biblique* and *New Testament Studies* (cf. *supra* n. 3) is that they attempt to prove from internal evidence that Mk knew this sermon and omitted it because inclusion would have run counter to his purpose in writing; cf. also *Problème synoptique*, pp. 161-62.

<sup>14</sup> Vaganay, *Problème synoptique*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>15</sup> Of the various commentators on Vaganay whom we have consulted, Léon-Dufour has most stressed the importance of this element in Vaganay's argumentation; cf. his "Autour de la question synoptique," *Recherches de science religieuse* 42 (1954) 549-84. As he wisely says (*art. cit.*, p. 560), the mutual independence of Mt and Lk is the critical foundation of Vaganay's entire hypothesis and permits him to advance beyond the position of Dom Butler (Mk and Lk depend on Mt) to his own solution.

<sup>16</sup> L. Cerfaux, "Le problème synoptique: A propos d'un livre récent," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 76 (1954) 497 (stress and bracketed phrases added).



Vaganay appeals in the third place to the way in which early Church writers described the formation of our Gospels. Certainly his hypothesis stresses—some may feel that it overstresses—Mk's dependence on Peter to which Papias gave testimony. As far as the first Gospel is concerned, Vaganay claims that "the examination of the texts of Mt-Mk-Lk not only permits the confirmation of the data of external criticism on the priority of the Aramaic gospel of the Apostle Matthew (M), but also the establishing of the fact that it is the basis of the three Synoptics."<sup>17</sup> That is, of course, if our reading of the texts persuades us to accept the Vaganay hypothesis. Indeed, if they could accept Vaganay's conclusion that Mt is the canonical Gospel which best reflects the fundamental structure, schematic nature, and Aramaic basis of the first gospel, Catholics would rejoice that for the first time internal criticism had witnessed to the existence of this Aramaic gospel and had given clear definition and real meaning to the "substantial identity" between these two works which the early Church writers presumed. So it is no wonder that one of his most shrewd, yet sympathetic critics claims that "M. Vaganay will have the credit of having established by internal criticism the affirmation of external criticism."

We can therefore summarize as follows the conclusions which have led Vaganay to form his hypothesis. Internal criticism reveals a common structure between all three Gospels which cannot be explained if we posit any of our three Gospels as an ultimate Synoptic source. Second, internal criticism exposes a large number of agreements, both positive and negative, of Mt-Lk against Mk, which occur so regularly that they cannot be attributed to chance but which would find a fitting explanation if these evangelists depended on a gospel other than Mk. Finally, the hypothesis to which these observations have given rise can be squared without great difficulty with the data of external criticism. The rest of our discussion will therefore necessarily be centered on the reaction of other scholars to these reasons as well as to the nature of the sources which Vaganay has postulated.

#### THE FIRST REACTION: MSGR. CERFAUX

Fittingly enough, Msgr. Cerfaux of Louvain, who contributed the preface to *Le problème synoptique*, was among the first scholars of

<sup>17</sup> *Problème synoptique*, p. 56.

major rank to discuss the Vaganay hypothesis.<sup>18</sup> As his cooperation in the venture suggests, Cerfaux judges that, taken *in toto*, the hypothesis is "very solid," though not yet of course established. It can receive that accolade only when Vaganay has produced the more ambitious book he has in view, in which he will strive to confirm his hypothesis by an analysis of the entire Synoptic tradition. Cerfaux appears to lay particular stress on the second of the arguments cited above, viz., the negative and positive agreements of Mt-Lk against Mk. He is impressed by the nature but especially by the number of these agreements. Accepting as established the twenty-four agreements which Vaganay found in the episode (Mk 9:14-29) of the cure of the epileptic boy, Cerfaux marvels at the very large number of such agreements which extrapolation from this pericope would postulate for the entire Synoptic tradition. It is difficult, if not impossible, he feels, to attribute all these omissions common to Mt and Lk to chance, as the Two-Source theory is compelled to do. Therefore Cerfaux joins Vaganay in postulating another common source for Mt and Lk which was similar to Mk but yet distinct from it. This source would be schematic in nature, "a more ancient gospel based on the five discourses of Christ." Therefore, with regard to the existence of Mg and to a certain extent with regard to its nature, Cerfaux and Vaganay are as one.

In the second place, Cerfaux agrees that Vaganay is on strong ground when he relates this common source postulated by the analysis of the triple tradition to the Aramaic gospel of Matthew; for the impersonal, schematic, Semitic nature of the postulated source points of itself to the "Hebrew Logia" which second-century writers attributed to that Apostle. Cerfaux finds Vaganay's solution of the Marcan enigma daring enough, but he notes that here too Vaganay has strengthened his position by linking Mg closely to the catechesis of the Church of Jerusalem. This point is made clear by a moment's consideration of the *Sitz im Leben* out of which, according to Vaganay, this first source arose. According to him, Mg was written primarily as an *aide-mémoire* for preachers. Now a work written for this precise purpose would tend necessarily to shorten and simplify the traditional narratives, to restrict itself to essentials, and hence to omit the vivid and personal details which, we presume, were a feature of the first eye-witness

<sup>18</sup> L. Cerfaux, "Le problème synoptique," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 76 (1954) 494-505.

accounts of the gospel incidents. In other words, we can easily imagine exactly such a source as Vaganay's analysis of the triple tradition suggests arising in the Jerusalem milieu portrayed in Acts and elsewhere. Nor is this all. Granted the existence of this *aide-mémoire*—which is strongly suggested by the Petrine and Pauline sermons in Acts and by Dodd's analysis of the Marcan Gospel as well as by the probabilities inherent in the historical situation in Jerusalem—we naturally presume that the first Christian missionaries in the act of preaching enlivened their sermons by inserting into the schematic structure of the *aide-mémoire* the small, picturesque details of secondary importance which they retained in their own memories. Therefore, reflection on the relationship which existed between *aide-mémoire* and preachers in the early Christian catechesis inclines us to attribute to all Christian preachers the exact double activity to which Vaganay has recourse in order to explain the peculiar quality of the second Gospel. When kept in general terms, this picture of Mark is certainly conceivable. However, when we turn to the details of the Marcan gospel, this activity is harder to visualize. As we shall see, it is precisely this picture of Mark composing complexes as that of the cures of Jairus' daughter and the woman with the issue of blood (Mk 5:21-43) in the Vaganay manner which has appeared to other scholars to be psychologically impossible.

These considerations naturally lead us to Cerfaux's verdicts on Mg and Sg, the sources which Vaganay postulated in order to explain the triple and double traditions respectively. Cerfaux feels that Sg offers a plausible but not the only possible explanation of the texts in question; indeed, he is inclined to doubt that a document such as Sg ever existed. The difference between these scholars here is "minimal," as Cerfaux avers, but interesting, since apparently it is rooted in the different way each of these men envisages the fundamental source, Mg. It may be well to recall at this point that every discussion of a Greek translation or translations of Aramaic Matthew must begin with Eusebius' citation of Papias' laconic statement: "Matthew wrote the Logia in the Hebrew tongue. Each one, however, interpreted them to the best of his ability" (*H.E.* 3, 39, 16). Commenting on this datum of tradition, Vaganay always speaks of Mg in the plural. He argues that Papias was talking about the written, though not neces-

sarily literal, translations of the entire Aramaic gospel of Matthew which were in circulation in his day. When, however, he treats the common source of the triple tradition postulated by a careful analysis of Mt-Mk-Lk, he tends to visualize, like everybody else, a single translation with definite contours, a systematic résumé of the Petrine Jerusalem catechesis with a determined content arranged in a definite order. Vaganay is careful to inform us that multiple copies of this translation did undoubtedly exist, and he stresses the fact that we need not presume that each of our evangelists worked on identical forms of Mg. Indeed, he wisely attributes many of the smaller changes in the Synoptic texts to this factor instead of placing the entire responsibility for all the minuscule variants on the shoulders of the writing evangelists. Nevertheless, the dominant impression left on this reader by Vaganay's description of Mg was that of a single document with definite characteristics existing in a rather fixed state. Indeed, it is the fixed state of Mg which together with the absence of the double tradition texts in Mk has led Vaganay to postulate the second source, Sg.

As we have seen, both Cerfaux and Vaganay attribute the composition of Aramaic Matthew to the same *Sitz im Leben*, catechetical work in the Jerusalem community. However, while both scholars agree that the work was basically an *aide-mémoire* rather than a literary work in the full sense of the term, Cerfaux seems to attribute greater weight to the influence which its use by preachers would have on this *aide-mémoire* than Vaganay apparently envisages. As documents placed in the service of oral tradition, Aramaic Matthew and its various translations would certainly have imposed that stability on the antecedent oral tradition which only writing can impart. But they would have been also subjected to a reverse influence, since their use in oral recitation presumably would not have left the original documents unmarked. A consideration of the milieu out of which Aramaic Matthew and its translations arose would lead us to suspect that these documents existed in a state of relative instability. This mass of documents all ultimately originating from the Aramaic work of Matthew and all bearing in varying degrees the mark of their origin is what Cerfaux designates by the symbol Mg. In his own words, Mg stands for

all this "Matthean" documentation, . . . i.e., either a Greek gospel which issued from Aramaic Matthew or rather the totality of these translations, still imperfect and unstable, to which the testimony of Papias alludes. Vaganay believes that he can distinguish between a Greek translation of Aramaic Matthew and a second Synoptic source, complementary to Aramaic Matthew and translated into Greek (Sg). Our symbol, therefore, is equivalent to Mg + Sg in the system of Vaganay.<sup>19</sup>

The Mg of Msgr. Cerfaux lies, therefore, between the flux of oral tradition and the fixed document(s) of Vaganay. Mg is written documentation and, if we interpret Cerfaux aright, all the documents which go to form it reflect in varying degrees the basic fivefold structure of Jesus' ministry. The value of Cerfaux's suggestion lies in the fact that it reminds us that what we have in all probability to deal with in establishing the basis of the Synoptic tradition is neither merely oral tradition nor a completely fixed document but something in between these two poles, viz., the organic growth of a definite document in a milieu in which oral tradition rather than literature was still dominant. As he sees it, the essential lines of Mg had been fixed but the document was still not fully formed when some of the evangelists drew upon it. Rather the Synoptic texts indicate that these men contacted it at different moments in its evolution, Mk using it before it had received the accretions which Vaganay attributes to Sg, Mt and Lk contacting it afterwards. Cerfaux's Mg is certainly not as amenable a tool for critical work as the Vaganay source. However, it has the advantage of stressing a point to which the latter scholar would probably assent, i.e., the dominance of oral tradition in the milieu in which Mg was formed, and it relieves him of the embarrassment of Sg.

#### ANOTHER RECONSTRUCTION OF MG: LÉON-DUFOUR

The idea of a "more fluid" Mg as the basic source of the Synoptic tradition has been further developed by Léon-Dufour.<sup>20</sup> Like Cerfaux, this scholar has been convinced of the existence of Mg by the multitude of positive and negative agreements of Mt-Lk against Mk. Like-

<sup>19</sup> L. Cerfaux, "Luc (Evangile de)," *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément* 5 (1953) 565.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. X. Léon-Dufour, "Autour de la question synoptique," *Recherches de science religieuse* 42 (1954) 549-84. See also his revision of J. Huby, S.J., *L'Evangile et les évangiles* (Verbum salutis 11; Paris, 1954) pp. 58-89, where he discusses the literary formation of the Gospels.

wise, he finds that the nature, extent, and order of Sg produce so many difficulties that it is necessary to conceive of Mg as "an ensemble of imperfect translations of Aramaic Matthew." He would therefore explain the entire Synoptic tradition by Mg and, in a subordinate position, by Mk. So far Léon-Dufour agrees in the main with Cerfaux. But when he attempts to reconstruct Mg, he breaks new ground.

Léon-Dufour first examines the basis for any reconstruction of Mg and seriously calls into question the fivefold structure of the ministry narrative in Mg, which is the basic pillar of the Vaganay reconstruction. Even if this narrative is so divided in canonical Mt—Léon-Dufour is not at all sure of this—it would not follow necessarily that Mg possessed this structure. First, he says, the fivefold structure in Mt is ultimately based on the five great speeches of our Lord, each of which terminates with the identical formula, "when Jesus had finished these words, etc." Now, according to Vaganay, only one of these concluding formulae (Mt 7:28a :: Lk 7:1) goes back to Mg; Vaganay attributes the others to Mt. If this be the case, Léon-Dufour asks, may we not attribute the fivefold structure to this evangelist rather than to Mg? Again, this writer compares the five speeches found in canonical Mt with the five sermons which Vaganay reconstructs and assigns to Mg. He notes, first, that there is a quantitative disproportion between the third and fourth sermons in Mk and hence in Mg and "the majestic sermons at the beginning and end" of the reconstituted Mg. Nor is this all. There is a correspondence in quality in our Mt between the narratives and the sermons which follow on them. This, too, seems to be lacking in the Mg of Vaganay. Finally, Léon-Dufour is loath to accept Vaganay's dictum that Mk reproduced the Mg order of pericopes more faithfully than Mt. Obviously recalling the fact that tradition had connected the first rather than the second Gospel with the Apostle Matthew, he asks whether we should not assume that Mt is the Gospel from which the order of pericopes in Mg should be reconstituted.

Thus far the negative side of Léon-Dufour's position. Positively he suggests that Mg may have been structured as follows. The entire gospel may well have been divided into two sections, the first of which preceded and the second of which followed Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. The first section, judging from the Synoptic texts,

was didactic in nature and included the first three Matthean sermons (Sermon on the Mount, the parabolic and apostolic discourses). The second half of the gospel was, however, kerygmatic in nature and was conceived as a preparation for and under the sign of the coming passion. This section was dominated by the eschatological discourse. If this was its form, this original gospel reflected the two major concerns of the primitive Christian community: the proclamation of the salvation wrought by God in Jesus (*kērygma*) and the restatement of Jesus' own words as a guide for community behavior (*didachē*). It seems to this writer that such a conception of the original gospel is certainly possible.

As Léon-Dufour sees it, Mt started from such a gospel as a basis and stressed the catechetical and didactic aspect of Mg by transforming the sayings of our Lord on scandal and fraternal correction into the ecclesiastical discourse of chapter 18 and by terminating each one of our Lord's major sermons by the same formula. With the same work before him, Mk preferred to stress the kerygmatic aspect of Jesus' life. For this reason he omitted the Sermon on the Mount; and since he necessarily had to give an example of Jesus' personal preaching before describing the subordinate ministry of the Apostles, he inverted the second and third sermons of his source, placing the parabolic before the apostolic sermon. In this fashion Léon-Dufour would begin to explain a part at least of the Synoptic problem.

The present writer does not wish to give the impression that the work of Vaganay and the articles of Cerfaux and Léon-Dufour are on the same level. To do so would be manifestly unjust to Vaganay. He has presented us with a fully developed working hypothesis for the Synoptic problem, in which each feature of the entire Synoptic tradition finds its explanation. The other essays do not purport to give more than the thoughtful reactions of their authors to this hypothesis. The value of their contributions to our study lies in this, that, while accepting Vaganay's fundamental thesis (Mg, not Mk, is the basic source of the Synoptic tradition), both of these scholars feel a certain malaise with regard to some secondary features in Vaganay's work. Nor should their positive suggestions as to the nature of Mg be equated with Vaganay's working hypothesis. They represent quite obviously an earlier stage of Synoptic study, in that they express intuitions, based

on an investigation of the Gospel texts, which may later develop into full-blown hypotheses but which have not yet reached that happy state. Nevertheless, both their objections and their positive suggestions possess real value even in this early stage. For they stress an important aspect in our problem, the influence of oral tradition at the stage of the formation of the Gospel tradition which is under discussion here.

Léon-Dufour is of the belief that the influence of oral tradition at this particular point of time, i.e., while our evangelists were actually composing their works, has been needlessly obscured because scholars have handled the principles which underlie Synoptic study in a spirit of routine, without carefully examining them before applying them to the texts. These principles are two in number: the principle of a common written source and the principle of literary retouches. The first principle explains all the agreements between the Synoptics by attributing them to written documentation which was drawn on by the Synoptic evangelists. This principle accepted, scholars have been inclined to consider all the minuscule differences between the Synoptic texts as due to literary retouches of the writing evangelists. Léon-Dufour calls our attention to the fact that this all too common deduction exceeds the premises on which it is based. For the agreements between the Synoptics prove their dependence on substantially identical documentation, whereas the attribution of all the variants to the writing evangelists presupposes that they had under their eyes one or several documents which were strictly identical. Moreover, the state of the Synoptic texts does not recommend this latter supposition any more than logic does. In Léon-Dufour's judgment, the work of Gaechter has shown that the Synoptic texts present microscopic differences which suggest that a mechanical memory was at work, which repeats and alters forms unconsciously. In other words, many of these differences suggest oral tradition as their source rather than conscious literary remolding. Therefore, he feels that we must admit a period of oral tradition between primitive writings such as Mg and our Gospels; without it, these microscopic changes cannot be explained. As a consequence, Léon-Dufour would deny that the Synoptic writers had at hand the same identical written sources. He feels rather that all three Synoptics depend on a common written documentation which had



been modified to a greater or lesser degree by oral tradition before it had reached them. Therefore, in summary, these men, Cerfaux and Léon-Dufour, are at one with Vaganay in his vital and revolutionary assertion: it is Mg and not Mk which is the source of the triple tradition in the Synoptics. However, Mg, as conceived by the latter scholars, is closer to the flux of oral tradition than the rather literary document which Vaganay has reconstructed. We shall see the significance of this difference later when we come across scholars who are critically more orthodox but who, while defending the Two-Source theory, see the need of postulating a relatively fixed oral tradition, which immediately influenced the later evangelists, in order to explain some of the data of the triple tradition. Perhaps it is here in the middle position between Vaganay and the strict defenders of the Two-Source theory that the best hope for progress lies.

#### REACTION OF DEFENDERS OF MODIFIED TWO-SOURCE THEORY

But while the Vaganay hypothesis has been welcomed by several noted Catholic scholars, it has also called forth a sharp reaction from another and equally respected group of Catholic exegetes.<sup>21</sup> We shall not be surprised at this when we recall that from 1890 on there had been a gradual but growing tendency in Catholic as well as non-Catholic circles to accept the general principles of the Two-Source theory. These Catholic scholars are just as respectful and attentive to the data of external criticism as is Vaganay himself, and therefore reject with him the radical form of the Two-Source theory as obviously unacceptable. But they feel that the mass of evidence produced by internal criticism points so unwaveringly to the conclusion that Mk and another document were the sources of the Synoptic tradition that any attempt to gainsay this "established position" is unrealistic.

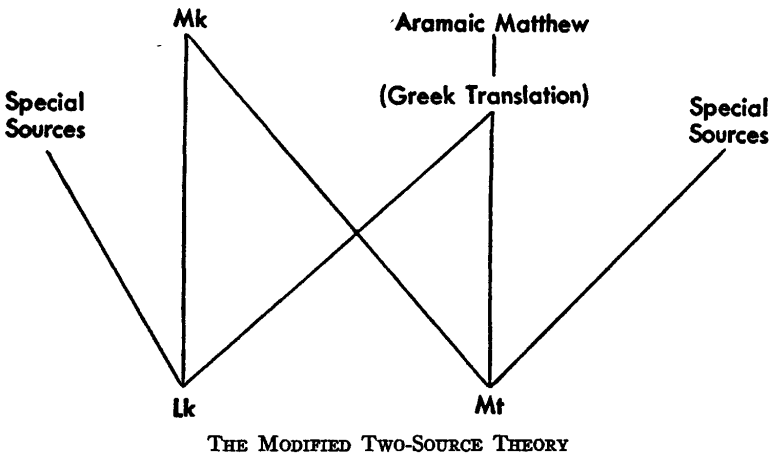
Indeed, it is more than unrealistic to their mind. If we may take Fr. Levie as a spokesman for this group for a moment, these men are so

<sup>21</sup> J. Levie, S. J., "L'Évangile araméen de s. Matthieu, est-il la source de l'évangile de s. Marc?", *Nouvelle revue théologique* 76 (1954) 689-715, 812-43; *idem*, "La complexité du problème synoptique," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 31 (1955) 619-36; J. Schmid, "Neue Synoptiker-Literatur," *Theologische Revue* 52 (1956) 52-62; A. Wikenhauser, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Freiburg, 1956) p. 417; and see B. Rigaux's summary of the proceedings at the seventh *Semaine biblique* (Louvain), "Mise au point pratique des débats sur le problème synoptique," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 31 (1955) 658-64.

convinced of the solidity of their position and of the rich fruit which it has yielded in the past in terms of better understanding of the Gospels that a general acceptance of Vaganay's position would signify to them regress rather than progress in Synoptic study. Indeed, the very excellence of the Vaganay presentation makes this danger more pressing. The structure of the hypothesis is so closely knit, its logic is so compelling, it appears *prima facie* to confirm the "traditional Catholic opinion" so appositely that its easy and uncritical acceptance is foreseeable in some Catholic circles. Should such acceptance be general, it could easily restrict the liberty of Catholic exegetes who wished to maintain the "classic" position. It was precisely to compel critical examination of the Vaganay hypothesis and so to ward off a threat to a position which he feels holds the best hopes for progress in understanding our Gospels that Levie took pen in hand.

In order clearly to delineate the nature of the disagreement between these men and Vaganay, as well as to suggest the basis of the "classic" position, we shall follow Levie's example, chronicling the rise of Catholic Two-Source theories. During the period from 1890 until 1912, careful analysis of the triple tradition had uncovered a very large number of texts where Mt-Mk-Lk spoke as one. The nature and number of these agreements, especially when compared with the manner in which Mt and Lk differed from Mk while treating common themes, suggested as the best, indeed the only, explanation of these phenomena the postulate that Mk was the literary source of Mt and Lk with regard to this section of their Gospels. Similar considerations traced the Mt-Lk double tradition to a Greek literary document other than Mk. At this juncture the Biblical Commission took notice of the development and interposed a firm but prudent defense of the traditional order of the Synoptic Gospels, maintaining besides the fundamental influence of the Aramaic gospel of Matthew on the canonical Gospel which bore that Apostle's name.

Enlightened by the intervention of 1912, the Catholic critics reexamined the premises of their position in order to see how their critical findings could be set in conformity with this decree. Since early tradition has connected Mark closely with the Roman ministry of the Prince of the Apostles, they concluded that external as well as internal criticism set the second Gospel outside the orbit of the influence of



Aramaic Matthew. An influence of Aramaic Matthew on Mt via Mk was therefore out of the question. On the other hand, much of Mt's *Sondergut* reflected interests which could hardly be supposed to have predominated at the time of the composition of the very first of the gospel accounts. Where, therefore, could they find in Mt reflections of the influence exercised on it by the Aramaic gospel, an influence which had been of such a magnitude as to lead the second-century writers to equilate the canonical Gospel with the earlier work and to crown it with the name of Matthew?

This chain of reasoning led these men to consider the possibility that the double tradition, the only large section of Mt which had not been excluded from consideration, had ultimately been drawn from the Aramaic gospel of Matthew. Closer examination of the texts of this tradition, far from discouraging, seemed to confirm this supposition. While it was certainly true that doctrinal pericopes predominated in the tradition, the fact remained that it contained narrative material as well. This fact had caused difficulties as long as the tradition was presumed to derive from a collection of sayings, but it fitted well with the new possibility. Moreover, the double tradition began with a narrative of the ministry of John, the traditional *point de départ* of all the ancient accounts of Jesus, as can be seen from Acts and the Gospel of Mk. Thirdly, analysis revealed that the non-Marcan passages cropped up in the same relative positions in the Gospels of Mt and Lk. All this

evidence indicated that the common source of the double tradition could quite plausibly have been an early gospel. Now the only early gospel which is historically conceivable in this situation, granted the canonical work in question and the testimony of the second century about the logia, was the Aramaic gospel of Matthew. Therefore, taking the texts of the double tradition as an irreducible minimum, this group of scholars has striven to recover from the other non-Marcan sections of Mt pericopes which because of archaisms, Aramaisms, or other similarities with the material of the double tradition could conceivably have derived from the same source. We should note that these men, or at least Levie, do not seek to *reconstruct* Aramaic Matthew from this material; they feel that such an attempt is chimerical in the present state of our knowledge. They attempt a more humble task, to strive to justify by internal criticism the relationship between canonical and Aramaic Matthew which was taken for granted by the early writers and which was insisted on by the decree of 1912.

As these scholars see it, therefore, the Synoptic tradition is ultimately based on two Apostolic testimonies, that of Peter, which is preserved in Mk, and that of Matthew, which is substantially reproduced in the canonical Gospel which bears his name; whereas Vaganay would derive by far the greatest portion of that tradition from a single Apostle, Peter, through the media of Aramaic Matthew and Mg. Both sides of the controversy vie with each other in reverence for the data of ancient tradition and the decree of the Biblical Commission. The question, therefore, is purely one of literary and historical criticism, and it can be solved only by means of external and internal criticism. Moreover, Levie insists—and his point is surely valid—that anyone who wishes to weigh the respective merits of Vaganay and the Two-Source theory must resign himself to considering the mass of material ranged on both sides. It will not be enough to consider Vaganay's arguments absolutely; they must be related to the evidence which has convinced so many of the solidity of the "classic" theory. Only if Vaganay's arguments retain their validity after this' confrontation would it be prudent to abandon the hypothesis in possession and to start over again *ab ovo*. It is precisely because they believe that the Vaganay hypothesis cannot stand this test that Catholic defenders of the Two-Source theory reply to Vaganay with a firm *non constat*.

## THE DIVISION OF MT INTO FIVE BOOKS

The defenders of the Two-Source theory strike at the root of Vaganay's reconstruction of Mg by denying that the author of canonical Mt intended to divide the ministry of Jesus into five books. They maintain on the contrary that a comparison of the first two Gospels shows an essential similitude in the order of pericopes in Mt and Mk throughout two continuous sections of the Matthean Gospel, viz., Mt 3:1—4:22 (Mk 1:1-20) and Mt 12:1—25:46 (Mk 2:23—13:37). True to their general principle that Mk is the source of Mt-Lk in the triple tradition, these men hold that in these sections Mt has followed the pericope-order of the second Gospel, inserting material from his second source (Aramaic Matthew) as he saw fit. However, these two sections are separated from each other by a third, viz., Mk 4:23—11:30, in which the Marcan pericope-order has been completely abandoned. Here it seems that Mt has been organizing his traditional material on his own. Now it is the contention of Vaganay's opponents that within this very section there are visible traces of an order which in the circumstances should be attributed to Mt. Unfortunately for Vaganay, however, this clearly discernible order does not coincide with the five-book structure; it rather goes against it.

We should recall here that the second unit in the Vaganay five-book structure includes chapters 8—10 of Matthew, chapters 8 and 9 being considered a preparation for the description of the Christian apostolate given in the discourse in chapter 10. Now exegetes commonly admit that the probability which any proposed plan for a literary work enjoys is in direct proportion to the formal indications of structure found in the text itself. However, it is the contention of Levie and his colleagues that, far from supporting the Vaganay structure, the formal indications of the Matthean text would join chapters 8 and 9 with the preceding section rather than with chapter 10. Therefore, despite its plausibility, the Vaganay divisions do not reflect the structure which *Matthew* intended.

These scholars rest their argument on a clear example of Semitic *inclusio* which marks off the section 4:23—9:35 from the chapters which precede and follow it. As is always the case with this figure, the beginning and end of the enclosed section are marked by a formula, which while not being absolutely the same is expressed on both occa-

sions in strikingly similar terms (4:23; 9:35). In this formula Jesus is presented to the reader as a teacher and wonderworker. Consideration of the material which is enclosed between the two formulae shows the relationship between content and formula. The Sermon on the Mount (cc. 5-7) follows directly on the first occurrence of the formula. Next comes a section (cc. 8-9:34) where miracle crowds on miracle, a triple series of three miracles. Thereupon Mt repeats his formula and the *inclusio* is complete.

This structure strongly suggests that the evangelist intended that his readers combine these five chapters in order to receive a unit impression. If this section is so interpreted, the chapters present a synthetic view, apt for catechetical purposes, of the two complementary aspects which Jesus revealed during His ministry in Galilee, viz., His doctrine and His thaumaturgic activity. The following section appears to confirm this analysis. First comes an obviously transitional pericope (9:36-38), in which Mt gives the reason why the Apostles were called to collaborate in Jesus' ministry, which leads naturally into the apostolic discourse in chapter 10. Now that the entire picture of the ministry has been given, Mt summarizes the various reactions to the ministry of Jesus and the Twelve, that of the Baptist, of the proud cities which reject Him, and of the humble of heart who welcome Him and His message (c. 11). With his independent section neatly rounded off, Mt returns in chapter 12 to the pericope-order of Mk. It appears to this reader that those who support the five-book structure must take this *inclusio* seriously and show clearly how it has been assumed into the higher synthesis which they favor. Otherwise, they run the risk that it will be interpreted as Levie and his colleagues have done, as denying the possibility that the evangelist intended the five-book structure. We shall return to this point in our last section.

Assuming that this figure of *inclusio* cannot be so assumed, the defenders of the Two-Source theory draw their conclusions. First, the five-book structure which was proposed with an appearance of plausibility for Mt does not represent the intention of its author. It follows, therefore, that Vaganay's attempt to uncover traces of the same structure in Mk and Lk was misguided. It need hardly be added that, whatever the structure of Aramaic Matthew and its translation was, it did not divide Jesus' ministry into these five sections. In this way the

defenders of the Two Sources eliminate to their satisfaction the first reason for the Vaganay hypothesis.

#### THE MT-LK AGREEMENTS AGAINST MK

The defenders of the Two-Source theory readily admit the existence of these agreements, which had already been noted and discounted in their explanation of the Synoptic relationship. Naturally, therefore, their effort when confronted by Vaganay's argumentation is first to impugn the significance attributed to them, viz., that the number and nature of these agreements is such that their presence in the Synoptic text cannot be explained ultimately by independent editorial work of Mt and Lk on the text of Mk, but demand the existence of a common schematic source for all three Synoptics. In this endeavor these scholars first note that Vaganay's argument draws its force from the negative rather than the positive agreements. The latter are few in number on Vaganay's own admission—Levie will admit the presence of about twenty—and hence can easily be discounted.

A more important point about all these agreements is noted by Levie in his analysis of the pericope about the cure of the epileptic child (Mk 9:14–29), namely, that they tend to occur in patches. For example, in the pericope referred to above Vaganay uncovers twenty-four negative agreements of Mt-Lk against Mk. But five of these agreements are occasioned by the omission of three consecutive Marcan verses (9:14b–16) by Mt and Lk; five more are due to the omission of five more consecutive verses in the same pericope (9:20c–25a). In other words, a defender of the Two-Source theory does not have to explain ten separate coincidental omissions by Mt and Lk here; he need explain only two. Applying the same technique to Vaganay's positive agreements, these scholars seem confident that they can reduce the agreements to the point where they can be explained either by coincidence or by the other "solutions" traditional in their school, textual criticism, harmonizations, etc. In any case, when so reduced, these agreements appear negligible in the face of the mass of the agreements, Mt-Mk-Lk, and Mt-Mk, Mk-Lk, which tend to establish that the second Gospel and no other document was the literary source of Mt and Lk in the triple tradition. Several scholars who tend to the Two-

Source theory, however, including the present writer, do not feel that this phenomenon can be dismissed so easily.

But these scholars are not content with a passive defense of their own explanation of these agreements. They pass to the offensive by considering the striking similarity, one which extended to the minutiae of the gospel text, which must have existed between Mg and Mk. This extreme similarity, they feel, is demanded not merely by Vaganay's argumentation on the present point but by the whole tenor of his hypothesis. For it is undeniable that at first glance the *concordantia* of the Synoptics in the triple tradition seems to be explained satisfactorily by the postulate that Mk was the literary source of Mt and Lk. Now if, as Vaganay suggests, this effect was really obtained by the fact that Mt reproduced Mg, using Mk occasionally, while Lk used Mk for the most part, recurring to Mg especially when he joined Mt in a common omission of an element of the Marcan text, it seems natural to suppose that, taken all in all, Mk and Mg were quite similar indeed. But if this be the case, a psychological problem seems to arise. Why should Mk have written at all if the end-product of his labor was practically to reproduce a document which he already had in his hands? Why should he have gone to the trouble of inserting all over Mg those vivid touches which, however picturesque they may have been, added nothing of importance to his source? Moreover, a second riddle arises when we consider how gauche a writer Mk is generally considered to have been. He has gone about this task, a task which it is hard to motivate plausibly, with such skill that scholars who have criticized his style on other counts have written with appreciation of the spontaneity of his narratives. When examined from this angle, Vaganay's picture of Mk at work seems to bear the mark of a rather artificial construction. Mk's spontaneity and the briefer, more schematic narratives of his fellow evangelists are more plausibly explained, from a psychological point of view at least, if we presume that Mk was the original from which the other two accounts of the triple tradition were derived.

Nor is the activity which Vaganay postulates for Mt and Lk any easier to visualize. We know that Lk—we can presume somewhat the same for Mt—possessed a wider documentation about the gospel facts than that which we can construct today. It seems strange under those circumstances that these evangelists should employ as literary



sources *two* documents so strikingly similar even to details as Mg and Mk appear to have been according to the Vaganay hypothesis. Surely, one of these documents would have been sufficient for their purposes. Rather than make this supposition, it seems easier to have Mt and Lk independently omit the same elements of the Marcan text, first because both evangelists could recognize their relative lack of importance, and second because each writer was constrained to contract the triple tradition narratives as much as possible in order to make room for the other material he wished to record. In other words, if the only alternative explanations for these agreements are Vaganay's two documents, Mg and Mk, or the Two-Source "solution," the present writer would be inclined to choose the latter. There is an air of implausibility about Vaganay's explanation here which his undeniable ingenuity cannot overcome.

#### EXTERNAL CRITICISM AND THE VAGANAY HYPOTHESIS

With regard to the third reason for the Vaganay hypothesis, namely, that it fits better with the data of external criticism, Schmid makes the most pertinent comments which this writer has come across. He admits freely that the Two-Source theory, which restricts the influence of Aramaic Matthew essentially to the material of the double tradition, does sparse justice to the dictum of Papias which seems to regard canonical Mt as a mere translation of its Hebraic original. It can be presented in a way which preserves the substantial identity of the two works, but is this all that Papias really meant? It is clear that here Vaganay's hypothesis seems preferable. But is Vaganay's hypothesis really preferable or is this appearance only? Here Schmid gathers some admissions from various parts of Vaganay's book. Mk has been far more faithful than Mt in preserving the archaic expressions which were part of the text of Mg. Mk preserved the order of Mg better than Mt in that he retained the parabolic discourse in the relative position which it held in the earlier document, and in more besides. Moreover, Mt has introduced into his Gospel the material from the source Sg, whereas Mk preserved the Mg text, save for the omission of the Sermon on the Mount and the introduction of picturesque elements from his memory of Peter's Roman catechesis. If this be true, can we really accept Vaganay's dictum that "in many respects Mt is the best representative

of the primitive Aramaic gospel"? And if not, how can we explain the fact that the first rather than the second canonical Gospel was honored by the name of Matthew? As for Papias' dictum about Mark the interpreter of Peter, Schmid points out that Vaganay gives far more to Peter than the ancient tradition did, inasmuch as he attributes to the Prince of the Apostles not only Mk but the entire triple tradition.

With this evidence before him, Schmid draws the conclusion which seems to give the most realistic valuation of this ancient tradition. He believes that a sober and responsible literary critical method which takes its *point de départ* from the actual state of the texts does not permit us to agree fully with the testimony of the second-century writers about Mt and Mk.<sup>22</sup> It has always seemed to the present writer that those men were interested above all else in the broader question of relating the Gospels they knew to Apostolic testimony rather than in the minutiae of literary criticism. This they were undoubtedly competent to do and so the general lines of the relations which they set up between Mt and the Aramaic gospel of the Apostle, between Mk and Peter, between Lk and Paul are worthy of our respect. This also seems to have been the mind of the Biblical Commission when, interpreting that tradition, it insisted on nothing beyond "substantial identity" between the two gospels attributed to Matthew, the canonical and the Aramaic gospel which has unfortunately been lost. But it has also seemed probable to this writer that these men who came from a far more bookish community than that which produced the Gospels conceived the writing of the Gospels as a more literary enterprise than it really was. They appear to have telescoped the entire process, linking the last work with its source or inspirer, caring little for the intermediate stages. If this be the case, while this tradition is precious in that it forces us to reckon with the Aramaic gospel of Matthew, with the catechesis of Peter, and with the inspiration of Paul, it does not cast light on the further relationships which undoubtedly bind our Synoptics together. Consequently, we must admit with Schmid that "it is unprofitable to accept the tradition without examination," and hence that, apart from the points mentioned above, it is not immediately helpful to us in our present task.

<sup>22</sup> J. Schmid, "Neue Synoptiker-Literatur," *Theologische Revue* 52 (1956) 62.

## OTHER VOICES

It may be helpful, before assessing these different approaches to a Synoptic solution, to touch on facets of the problem which have been stressed recently by scholars who have been completely uninfluenced by the preoccupations of this particular discussion. This survey possesses a piquant interest of its own in that while these findings have been brought to light by men who accept the Two-Source theory, they suggest modifications in that hypothesis which may help to satisfy some of the "felt needs" stated so cogently by writers of the opposite tendency.

First, Mark has sometimes been presented by scholars who give him the honor of creating the gospel form as a completely natural writer. Free from the constricting effect of literary sources, he set down in an unhampered way—*accurate sed non ordinate*—the Petrine oral catechesis. The reasons for such a judgment are known to all: the testimony of Papias (Eus., *H.E.* 3,39,14–15), the impression of disorder which a first glance at the Gospel leaves, and, of course, the vivid narratives so characteristic of this evangelist. But in his excellent and sober commentary on this Gospel, which resumes and applies to Mark the findings of the Source- and Form-Criticism of the past generation, Dr. Taylor reminds us more than once that this picture of Mark simply does not explain the facts.<sup>28</sup> Analysis of the Marcan material shows that it is not at all uniform in nature. It contains pericopes, such as 1:16–20, which to all appearances rest ultimately upon the reminiscences of an eye-witness, i.e., Peter, but there is much else besides. Taylor lists, in addition to miracle-stories, stories about Jesus, and Marcan constructions—all of which are traceable either directly or at a short remove to the testimony of Peter—pronouncement-stories, sayings, and parables which do not reflect peculiarly Petrine reminiscence but the general tradition of the primitive Church. Besides these elements, there are also the summary statements which play an important part in the Marcan structure. These also may have been traditional in origin but they appear to have been tailored by Mark to the needs of the task in hand. All in all, Taylor informs us that the Papias tradition stands but does not tell us the full story. Far from being "the pupil

<sup>28</sup> V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London, 1952).

listening to his master, note-book in hand," setting down Peter's words as he spoke them, Mark faced the much more difficult task of blending the Petrine tradition with material garnered from other authentic sources.

Dr. Dodd thinks that he has uncovered in part how Mark resolved the task he set himself. In an article written years ago but reprinted recently in his collection of essays, *New Testament Studies*, Dodd examined the Marcan generalizing summaries mentioned above.<sup>24</sup> Excising them from the present text and reading them in order, he found that they gave "a perspicuous outline of the Galilean ministry forming a framework into which the separate pictures are set."<sup>25</sup> This outline was closely related to the forms of the primitive kerygma preserved in the sermons of Peter and Paul in Acts, though the Marcan outline is somewhat more elaborate. Dodd next noted the relationship which exists between the separate narratives and the outline, and he found that the narratives fitted the outline very badly indeed. Faced with this fact, Dodd argues as follows:

Now if you have in hand a set of pictures, and desire to frame them, you construct a frame to fit the pictures; but if you have in hand a set of pictures *and a frame*, not designed to fit one another, you must fit them as best you can, and the result may be something of a botch. Thus it seems likely that in addition to materials in *pericope* form, Mark had an outline, itself also traditional, to which he attempted to work, with incomplete success.<sup>26</sup>

Working on this hypothesis, Dodd conceives Mark as receiving from tradition three kinds of material: (1) isolated independent pericopes; (2) larger complexes of various kinds: continuous narratives, originally independent pericopes strung upon an itinerary, and pericopes connected by unity of theme; (3) the traditional outline, fragments of which remain in the present Gospel. It seems to this writer that there is much in common between Dodd's reconstruction and the hypothesis of Mg, at least if we conceive that document in the Cerfaux-Dufour manner. As in the work of the Vaganay tendency, Mark is here closely linked to the catechesis of the Palestinian community, which was undoubtedly formed by Peter. The evangelist is pictured,

<sup>24</sup> C. H. Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative," in *New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1953) pp. 1-11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

too, as an editor working on previous materials rather than as a court stenographer. However, though Dodd admits that the Marcan outline was more fully developed than the schema found in Acts, he does not appear to envisage a work as elaborate as that postulated for Mg by any form of the Vaganay tendency.

In a third book, a posthumous publication on the sources of St. Mark, Wilfred Knox raised his voice against the excesses of the Form-Critical School.<sup>27</sup> He insisted that the Synoptic authors, including Mark, did not merely compile anecdotes which had been preserved and modified by oral tradition but worked from written sources. Like Eduard Meyer before him, he finds a "Twelve-Source" and uncovers several other documents which Mark assumed into his Gospel, a "book of parables," a "book of localized miracles," etc. In his zeal to rout the Form-Critics, Knox appears to have gone to the opposite extreme and to have Mark depend exclusively on written sources. In doing this, he is forced to deny any value to the testimony of Papias, as Schmid wisely notes. Granting, then, that the book exaggerates, it nevertheless reinforces a truth which had been previously established by Albertz and others, viz., that the second evangelist depended in part on written sources. So it seems that Mark the evangelist did not differ so much from his fellow Synopticians after all. Besides this fundamental fact, there is more in this book which reechoes the statements made by scholars who oppose the Two-Source theory. Knox will admit that his suggestions lack the "attractive simplicity" of the classic solution, but he continues (and here Vaganay's warning against the insidious charm of simple solutions is quietly but forcefully repeated): "I can only record my conviction that in dealing with the primitive Church we must recognize that everything we know of its history and outlook suggests that the single and simple explanation is likely to be the furthest from the truth."<sup>28</sup>

The final item in our dossier on the Synoptic question is a penetrating study of the Matthean passion-account from the pen of Dr. N. A. Dahl of Oslo.<sup>29</sup> At the outset of his study Dahl notes that this section

<sup>27</sup> W. L. Knox, *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels 1: Saint Mark*, ed. H. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1953).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> N. A. Dahl, "Die Passionsgeschichte bei Matthäus," *New Testament Studies* 2 (1955) 17-32.

of the first Gospel is an apt starting point for a discussion of Synoptic problems because of the security and ease with which the literary relationship between Mt and Mk can be decided here. Dahl's view of this relationship is conventional; he believes that Mt depended literally on Mk and that it is highly improbable that any other written sources influenced Mt here. What should stir our interest, however, is that, after these statements of impeccable critical orthodoxy, Dahl proceeds to say that, precisely because the literary dependence of Mt is so marked in this account, it is important to note that this factor fails to explain all the problems presented by the Matthean text. He enumerates some of these unresolved difficulties, mention of which will certainly recall some of the best pages written by scholars of the Vaganay tendency. (1) Some of the pericopes which are peculiar to Mt and clearly inserted into the Marcan framework certainly contain material which apparently antedates Mk and which seems to have come to Mt by way of oral tradition, e.g., the story of the death of Judas (Mt 27:3-10). (2) There are places in the Synoptic passion-narratives where Mt and Lk agree both positively and negatively against Mk. (3) Although as a rule Mt's Greek is more polished than Mk's, several Matthean texts are more strongly tinged with Semitic idiom than their Marcan parallels, e.g., the preservation of Semitic name-forms (*Mariam*), loan-words (*Rabbi*, *Korbanas*), and Semitic turns of phrase (26:51). (4) On one or two occasions historical criticism would lead us to believe that it was Mt rather than Mk who preserved the earlier form of historical tradition; e.g., the red cloak of Mt (27:28) is historically more probable than Mk's purple (15:17). It is the sum total of all these minute differences, Dahl correctly says, which has led observers to judge that the Matthean account is more "Jewish" in character than that of Mk and to suppose that it "stands closer than Mk does to the Palestinian milieu whence the Gospels originated."<sup>30</sup>

Before indicating the way in which Dahl would explain these difficulties, let us pause for a moment over his observations on the Mt-Lk agreements against Mk, which are peculiarly pertinent in view of the importance attributed to them by Vaganay and others. The facts observed again parallel those noted in the writings of the Vaganay tendency. These agreements are both positive and negative and tend

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

to occur in patches, as Levie had also noted. The positive agreements are few in number and are concerned with verbal changes rather than with content. Therefore they are relatively unimportant. It is probable, thinks Dahl, that the negative agreements were caused by independent decisions of Mt and Lk to omit the same elements in the Marcan text. But why, he asks as Vaganay had, did these evangelists independently omit identical elements? Dahl is not satisfied with the stock explanations of the Two-Source theory, i.e., the influence of chance or of later scribal intervention in the form of harmonizations, etc. He agrees with Vaganay that the solution seems to lie in the fact that Mt and Lk independently confronted the Marcan account with another text. But what was this other text? It is in his answer to this that Dahl turns to a different solution than that chosen by the French scholar.

Dahl's choice of solutions is, of course, limited by his adherence to the Two-Source theory. Because of this commitment, he rejects—correctly, in the opinion of this writer—the logical possibility which immediately presents itself, viz., that Mk depended on Mt rather than vice versa. The phenomena uncovered, though undoubtedly significant, do not override the mass of evidence which points to the priority of Mk. They present, however, a real difficulty which scholars of the Two-Source persuasion must take more seriously than they have up to now. Nor does Dahl suppose, as Vaganay on the contrary emphatically does, that a second *written* source can be seriously considered. The nature of the elements in question leads him to attribute the decisive influence here to oral tradition rather than to a document.

He maintains—and it is here that Dahl is most suggestive—that it is unrealistic to assume, as literary critics in the nineteenth century seemed to do, that the Marcan Gospel was the only source of information about the events of the passion known to the communities of which Mt and Lk were members. If we refuse to fix our gaze exclusively on literary considerations and strive rather to reconstruct by a careful use of sources the total picture of the milieu to which the later evangelists belonged and in which they worked, we shall see the Marcan Gospel for what it really is, an element—a highly particularized and strictly “fixed” element at that—which was an important unit in the much broader stream of tradition which told of the same events. If we try to take a step further and visualize what this stream of tradition was

like, we shall find that it contained a far more ample account of the words and deeds of Jesus than is to be found in any one of the Gospels which have been preserved to us (Jn 21:25). It is likely that this account was handed on in a relatively fixed form, though its text would hardly be as impatient of modification as a written source would be. From its nature, this oral tradition would hold to the elements of the story which would be of common interest; in other words, the essentials would probably be preserved, although accidental elements would be subject to change. It would tend to reduce the individuality of the original event and of the first eye-witness accounts to the stereotyped forms demanded by the "laws" which govern *Kleinliteratur*. This tendency, however, would not prevail to the extent that it has in other traditions; for the core of this tradition was historical, and so the generalizing tendency would be counteracted by the tenacity of historical memory, to say nothing of the influence of the authorities in the community, who would strive to see to it that the crucial facts on which their faith was founded should be recorded and transmitted accurately.<sup>31</sup>

The suggestion of Dahl is that something like what we have described is the "other text" which Mt and Lk had in their minds besides the Marcan text which lay on the desk before them. Surely, this picture is intrinsically possible. It would seem that, as members of the Christian Church, the later evangelists were immersed in, and carried along by, this broad stream of tradition. They met it at every turn in their lives, in daily contacts with their fellow Christians, at divine service, when they listened to the proclamation of the gospel (*kērygma*), in the catechetical schools, to name only the most obvious places. Dahl suggests that this tradition was the treasury whence Mt and Lk drew a part, at least, of the pericopes which are peculiarly their own. He thinks also that the reason why Mt and Lk independently omitted certain sections of the Marcan material could have been because these elements were characteristic only of this particular form of the gospel tradition (e.g., the second cock-cry in Mk, or the way in which that evangelist ordered the passion events according to days) and hence were unable to resist the influence of the broader stream of tradition.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Dahl is not responsible for the further development here of the notion of oral tradition.



Again, it would be unfair to imply that this suggestion of Dahl possesses the same value as the Vaganay hypothesis. Like the vistas presented by Cerfaux and Léon-Dufour, it does not profess to have solved the problems under discussion here; it rather indicates a possibility which further work must assay. But again, even in its present form, it seems to the writer that this particular suggestion is pregnant with possibilities. As Dahl indicates, there are other factors in the Synoptic texts which point in this direction. He refers to a Danish work, which has examined the other cases of Mt-Lk agreements in the triple tradition, as confirming his position. More interesting yet is the point he makes about the agreements between the passion accounts in Mt and Jn. He states that these contacts are more important and significant than those which link Mt and Lk. Now what is to our purpose here is that the nature of these Mt-Lk contacts excludes any direct literary influence of Mt on the fourth Gospel. The texts suggest, on the contrary, that the pre-Matthean and the pre-Johannine traditions were somehow related. Again we are faced with the common, broader tradition. It is surely significant in this connection that Dodd, in an independent study on the relationship between Johannine *Herrenworte* and their Synoptic parallels, came to the following conclusion:

So far, therefore, as the dominical sayings here examined are concerned, the question raised at the outset seems to be answered, with as high a degree of probability as the conditions of the problem admit, in the sense that John is to be regarded as transmitting independently a special form of the *common oral tradition*, and *not as dependent upon the Synoptic Gospels*.<sup>32</sup>

It seems to this writer that, when we link this tendency to that represented by Cerfaux and Léon-Dufour, we have chanced upon a common factor: the influence of oral tradition immediately before the writing of our canonical Gospels—despite the undoubted differences which lie between these scholars and Dahl. Moreover, consideration of this factor and further work along this line may help us to modify the Two-Source theory in a way which its defenders may find easier to accept.

<sup>32</sup> C. H. Dodd, "Some Johannine 'Herrenworte' with Parallels in the Synoptic Gospels," *New Testament Studies* 2 (1955) 86.

## CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this survey of some of the recent literature on the Synoptic problem, an attempt to assay the opposing viewpoints is indicated. In that way the reader may be helped to judge what modifications, if any, in prevailing theory seem prudent. Concretely, we shall see how the three reasons proposed by Vaganay to justify his denial of Marcan priority in the triple tradition have resisted the earnest consideration they have evoked.

First, let us examine the third reason, the relations set up between the Vaganay hypothesis and the data of external tradition. After every point has been evaluated, it seems to the writer that the Vaganay hypothesis does come closer than even the modified form of the Two-Source theory to the goal of satisfying the traditional data. But, in agreement with Schmid, the writer is not inclined to overrate the probative power of this superiority. Both hypotheses, the modified Two-Source and that of Vaganay, fulfil in their way the essential demands of the tradition: the existence and influence of Aramaic Matthew and the influence of Peter on Mk; both fail to satisfy fully all that the second-century writers seem to call for. We have cited Schmid on the failings of Vaganay here; we should point out for fairness' sake that the Two-Source attempt to get back to Matthew by means of the double tradition is not easily realizable. If we grant that Mt and Lk were using the Aramaic gospel in the way envisaged by Levie and others, it would seem that we should have some traces of the influence of Aramaic Matthew in the passion accounts of Mt and Lk. But so far this writer has not been able to uncover any such effects in the passion texts. The additions and modifications in Mt and Lk give no indication that they come from a common written source. Indeed, it may be wiser not to demand too much from this tradition. Rather than strive to get guidance from it on the minutiae of internal criticism, it might be better to receive gratefully the general guidance it imparts and let the matter so rest.

The situation is not the same, however, with the argument of the fivefold structure. The writer is not convinced by the arguments of the defenders of the Two Sources that the presence of the *inclusio* in 4:23—9:35 rules out the five-book structure for *canonical* Mt. An examination of the material so enclosed suggests that this section has

been related by Mt to texts which lie beyond it, e.g., to 4:14 and to 11:5-6. It therefore seems probable that Mt has assumed this section into a higher unity. Nor is this contrary to Mt's practice elsewhere in the Gospel. On several occasions in the Gospel the figure of *inclusio* has marked off material into closed units which were then clearly used by Mt as subordinate elements of a greater whole, viz., 5:3-10 in the Sermon on the Mount. Facts such as these suggest that these *inclusiones* were not the ultimate ordering principles in the Matthean Gospel but represent principles of order which antedate the final organization of Matthean material into the canonical Gospel. Although the *inclusiones* of Mt have not been studied sufficiently to permit an apodictic solution to our problem, consideration of the facts apparently forbids us to exclude a relationship of cc. 8-9 to c. 10 here, which the general structure of the Gospel seems to suggest. But, while admitting this structure for the ministry of Jesus in canonical Mt, the arguments cited from Léon-Dufour seem definitely to exclude its extension to Mg. Therefore, for this writer, this argument of Vaganay does not carry the significance he wishes it to have.

It is quite other with Vaganay's second argument concerning the positive and negative agreements of Mt-Lk against Mk. It seems to the writer that the French scholar is right in asserting that we must look beyond Mk in order to find another text which will explain this phenomenon. On the other hand, the psychological considerations offered by Levie and Schmid seem to preclude a satisfactory solution in terms of Vaganay's conception of Mg. The answer may come from written documentation, the Mg which Cerfaux and Léon-Dufour envisage (which would not be open to the psychological arguments, at least to the extent that the Vaganay Mg is), or it may be that oral tradition is the answer. But whatever answer further work may bring forth, it seems safe to say that it will modify the over-literary view of the Two-Source theory which dominates the manuals today.