

## My approach to transcription and translation of this correspondence

On a snowy winter day in the Harz mountains in 1686, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz initiated a correspondence with Antoine Arnauld “on grace, God’s concurrence with creatures, the nature of miracles, the cause of sin and the origin of evil, the immortality of the soul, ideas,” and much more. My aim in this volume has been to establish the French text of that correspondence and to translate it into English.

The Letters that constitute this correspondence consist of twenty-eight letters actually posted and nine preliminary studies for letters: thirty-seven in all. The documents that constitute the basis for establishing the text of these Letters are sixty-two manuscripts held in archives in Hanover, Utrecht, and elsewhere in Europe together with ten published texts independent of any extant manuscripts: seventy-two in all. Some of these are manuscripts by Leibniz or Arnauld or their intermediary Ernst; some are drafts or copies. The former are elements of the correspondence; the latter have value as witnesses to elements no longer extant.

The first stage in establishing the text was to establish it for those sixty-two manuscripts. The next stage was to establish it for the thirty-seven Letters on the basis of the seventy-two documents. I understand establishing the text of a Letter to consist in producing a text that comes as close as the documents warrant to the words that one of our three authors wrote. When the manuscript of the Letter itself figures among the sixty-two, or when, at any rate, only one document witnessing to those words is extant, the task is simple: establishing the text of the document is ipso facto establishing the text of the letter. When the manuscript of the Letter is no longer extant and more than one document witnesses to those words, establishing the text requires reconstruction grounded on what each document can tell us.

When a Letter falls into that second category, I enumerate in an appendix the variations among the documents in order to make available to the reader the evidence used in the reconstruction.

Ernst on one occasion, and Leibniz on many, added marginal comments and the like to a number of the letters. I transcribe these in footnotes to the text.

Leibniz later contemplated publishing the correspondence. That never came about, but on several of his drafts and one of his preliminary studies he inked in a number of changes he evidently would have made in the published version. In another appendix I transcribe these proposed changes. In further appendixes I translate the variants and the proposed changes.

Facing the French text I translate the correspondence into English. My aim in translating has been to give readers of English the best possible idea of what Leibniz, Arnauld, and Ernst intended as they wrote. A translation can go in two very different directions: it can convey the reader back to an author, or convey the author ahead to the reader. For example, a translation might teach us to hear Leibniz and Arnauld as they spoke in the seventeenth century or teach them to speak to us in the twenty-first. I chose the first option.

There are many aspects of the original text we might try to retain in exercising this option--an author's use of uppercase, underscoring, and double underscoring for emphasis, his choice between nouns and pronouns and between active and passive voice, his consistency in using his philosophical vocabulary, the literary qualities of his sentences, and many, many more. This translation's flavor derives from an attempt to retain as much of that as is consistent with common translating sense, for the sake of a text from which the reader might best make the imaginative leap to an author's own thoughts.

I discuss the details of my editorial practices in the Introduction.