

Wenham, John. *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991. 319 pp. \$19.99.

Although the title is a conscious adaptation of John A. T. Robinson's well-known *Redating the New Testament*, the subtitle more accurately indicates its contents. Wenham presents a comprehensive reevaluation of the internal and external evidence concerning the writing of the three synoptic Gospels.

Wenham examines the internal evidence in five progressive steps. He first presents evidence that Luke knew Mark's Gospel; second, that 52 pericopes of Luke and Mark have a common origin, while 14 others cover the same ground, but show no signs of common origin; third, that Luke keeps to the sense of Mark in the truly parallel passages; fourth, that because of how he treats Mark, Luke may be presumed to keep the sense of his other sources, and this means that the difference of sense between the Q-material of Matthew and of Luke makes dependence on Q or large-scale borrowing from Matthew improbable; and finally, that Matthew's relationship to Mark can be satisfactorily explained on the lines of patristic tradition that Matthew was written first. These steps are argued in detail, with frequent examples from the Greek text, and with critical interaction with the secondary literature.

The bulk of the rest of the book is devoted to a detailed examination of the patristic testimony concerning the writing of the Gospels. It finishes with two chapters in which Wenham outlines how, in the light of what is known of ancient literary methods, the Gospels might have been produced. The early Christian converts learned an orally transmitted tradition about Jesus and his teachings. Matthew, by trade a professional "pen pusher" (112), quite naturally took notes of Jesus' teaching. He wrote his Gospel first—whether in Aramaic, Hebrew, or Greek, it is impossible to ascertain. Mark, as Peter's assistant, wrote down Peter's reminiscences after Peter had left Rome. He had Matthew's Gospel available to him and followed the outline of events from that Gospel. He wrote from memory of Peter's preaching and his own knowledge of the oral tradition. The Gospel of Matthew was only referred to as Mark made revisions to his already-completed manuscript before publication. Luke, the physician and companion of Paul, wrote his Gospel after the other two were published and followed a similar procedure.

Wenham dates the three Gospels on the basis of 2 Cor 8:18, which he reads as a reference to Luke and his published Gospel. This gives a date of about A.D. 56. He thinks that Mark was written about A.D. 55, and that Matthew should be dated to the 40s, or even late 30s.

Wenham has provided an original and comprehensive treatment of the synoptic problem. His work is well documented, clearly expressed, and encompasses a great variety of disparate detail into a comprehensive new paradigm of Gospel origins. But in achieving this, he has espoused many positions that run counter to those of a significant number of scholars. For example, he strongly supports O'Callaghan's identification of the fifteen letters found on the Qumran fragment 7Q5 with Mark 6:52f, despite noting that nine letters are absent from Mark and one of the other letters is different.

Perhaps a more crucial example of his tendency to run counter to modern scholarship is the basis on which the dating of the Gospels is made. To argue that "the brother whose praise is in the gospel" (2 Cor 8:18) must be Luke and that the "praise in the gospel" refers to the written Gospel is to put more weight on the text that it can usefully bear. Wenham himself acknowledges that the term "gospel" did not take on the meaning of written Gospel until nearly a century later. Perhaps Wenham's reading has been widely ignored by modern exegetes, but still falls short of providing a basis on which to date the Gospel of Luke.

The dating of Mark is equally insecure. Because Wenham follows the tradition that Mark was Peter's interpreter and wrote his Gospel in Rome from Petrine materials, he must locate Peter in Rome earlier than many non-Catholics. He does this by accepting Peter as Bishop of Rome for some 25 years. On this subject the NT is silent, but Wenham goes to great pains to show that it is *possible* to place Peter in Rome and still harmonize with NT details. Wenham concedes that Rome was part of Peter's responsibility, which included the whole of the Jewish mission, but that Peter still acted as an overseer. Wenham has Peter absent from Rome when Paul wrote the letter to the Romans, as well as several other periods mentioned in the NT. This reconstruction as the basis for the date of the Gospel is tenuous at best.

Another problem of the book is the audience to which it is addressed. The parallel passages of Greek text presuppose language proficiency; the documentation in the notes also presupposes a scholarly audience. However, other aspects of the book would not appeal to a scholarly audience. That it is written from an avowedly conservative position need not offend the scholars but on occasion Wenham goes out of his way to underline his conservatism, and even appears to take delight in attacking his less conservative audience. Many would find his reconciliation of Mark 10:46 with Luke 18:35 unconvincing. Mark states the healing took place as Jesus was going out of Jericho, while Luke places it when Jesus approached Jericho. Wenham explains that at the time of Jesus there were two settlements at Jericho: the traditional town and the one around Herod's winter palace. Thus the healing took place as Jesus left one of the settlements and was approaching the other (210-211). His attempts to harmonize the genealogies of Matthew and Luke (212-216) would also fail to convince many. Wenham's conservatism also extends to a rather uncritical acceptance of patristic references to the activities of the apostles, despite the fact, acknowledged in several places, that most of these are quite late. This ambiguity with regard to the potential reading audience extends even to the advertising on the cover. It is unlikely that scholars would respond warmly to the suggestion that "It is a book no New Testament scholar will be able to neglect." Scholars tend to prefer to make up their own minds about which are the important books in their fields!

These criticisms do not suggest that the book is without value. The notes contain not only the expected range of references, but also rather entertaining items, such as the recounting of the lawsuit brought by Florence Deeks against H. G. Wells, claiming that he had plagiarized his *Outline of History* from an unpublished manuscript of hers (251-252). Some of the

criticism of modern scholarship made by Wenham is quite pertinent. He rightly draws the reader's attention to the practices of scribal writing in the ancient world and the attendant difficulties of achieving some of the more involved literary relationships among the Synoptic Gospels (198-216).

In sum, this book will probably appeal to evangelicals with the facility to read Greek, who no doubt will cheer on one of their own as he takes on the scholarly establishment. The scholarly establishment itself may be intrigued by the comprehensive manner in which this new solution to the Synoptic problem is worked out, but is unlikely to adopt the book as one which "no New Testament scholar will be able to neglect."

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SOFTWARE REVIEW

TheWord Advanced Study System 3.0. Irving, TX: Wordsoft, Word Inc., 1992. \$99.99. Add-ons: Old Testament Hebrew Text, \$129; Greek New Testament Text, \$99.99.

TheWord Advanced Study System is a Bible-study software program that runs under DOS. It shares some features common to other Bible study software, such as: search using logical operators, with the possibility of performing both *ad hoc* and repeated searches; the scope of search limited to a chapter, a book, a combination of book and chapter, the Old or New Testament, or the entire Bible; jumping from one chapter or book to another; a text editor where study notes or comments can be saved and attached to any word or verse reference in the Bible—a symbol placed next to a word or verse indicates that a comment is inherently tagged to it.

However, a raft of other features makes *TheWord* a unique Bible software. It departs from the other Bible-study software with its dazzling color graphic interface. Windows and icons are particular to this program. As a window-oriented program with a graphic interface, *TheWord* has introduced a new way to relate computer technology to Bible study. Ten windows can be opened at a time; all are resizable, movable, and iconizable, thus adding flexibility, versatility, and workability. The frequently used commands—including search, print, navigation, and window management—are located around each window in a nice combination of button, bars and icons, providing a user-friendly environment.

The study tools that come with *TheWord* enhance the program. Even though the built-in text editor is very simple, it allows entering notes including Hebrew and Greek characters (with accents and vowels). The search feature is original and very efficient.

Printing has always been a frustrating experience with Bible software packages that support Greek and Hebrew characters. Printer selection has often been very restricted. *TheWord* changes that trend by providing a compatibility with more than 500 dot-matrix and laser printers. Printing is still