

future was remarkably rich and attractive. His teaching and demonstration of the Kingdom of God clearly gave expression to the longings of his people for release from their trials, and may be seen as a contribution to the wider search for new cultural and social forms of life in a united Mediterranean world.

Professor Kee asks what we can learn from sources outside the New Testament (Jewish and Roman writings), from early Christian writings outside the Gospels (the rest of the New Testament and the apocryphal Gospels and Acts), from our oldest Gospel source (the sayings collection Q), from our oldest gospel (Mark), and from the other Gospels. Clearly he does not yield (nor do I) to those who now tempt scholars to abandon Q and renounce the priority of Mark. But if the intention is to display the range of contemporary opinion, readers ought perhaps to be warned that an earlier reliance on source criticism is now somewhat undermined by uncertainty about the sources and by an ever-debatable attempt to trace the editorial and social history of every episode and saying. What the author does say, however, about the sayings tradition, the achievement of Mark, and the variant perspectives of Matthew, Luke and John is lucid and good.

Thus instructed, the reader may come with heightened interest to Dr Perkins' book which begins with teaching and learning in antiquity: the philosopher-teachers of Greek city-states; the sages and wisdom teachers of hellenistic Judaism; the scribes, pharisees, and rabbis devoted to Torah; the prophets and visionaries. Jesus is classed as a charismatic teacher and prophet. His style of teaching is described (proverbs and parables, legal sayings and prophetic images) and its adaptation within the community is explored. Finally characteristic themes are set out: justice and solidarity, wealth, forgiveness, prayer, and love of enemies.

These four books provide much information set within a method of historical enquiry that is regarded by most competent authorities as essential for interpretation. Since the history is at least part of our own western heritage, it is not beyond our modern awareness to profit from.

KENNETH GRAYSTON

**REDATING MATTHEW, MARK AND LUKE: A FRESH ASSAULT ON THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM**, BY John Wenham, *Hodder and Stoughton*, 1991, xxviii + 319 pp. £9.95.

John Wenham is perhaps best known for the lifeline provided to the despairing theology student by his excellent *Elements of NT Greek*. But his mastery of the sources and his frequent reference to little-known but important recent literature show that the synoptic problem is no new interest to him. The issue of redating is not the most central issue in the book, but rather a consequence of the author's views on the interconnection of the synoptic gospels. The author's thesis is founded on two piers: the conviction that the literary evidence shows the connection between the synoptic gospels to be oral rather than written, and the conviction that the external evidence of early Church writers about the

authorship of the gospels is reliable.

It has long been standard orthodoxy in the study of the gospels that the verbal connections between the gospels, in both content and order, are so close that they presuppose either the sharing of written, documentary sources, or at least quasi-written sources, in the nature of a tradition learnt *verbatim* by heart; Wenham opposes this. The extent of the parallels is, however, so great, that it is far easier to show connection than to disprove it. In which direction the influence goes is often a most vexed question, and constitutes the usual battlefield of the synoptic problem: it is a matter of deducing a plausible set of interests and methods in an author to account for changes perceived, and showing that one set of interests and methods provides a better explanation than another. But to say that no such set can be constructed is far harder and more sweeping. Here perhaps Wenham's own courtesy is his worst enemy: he repeatedly makes such gentle claims as 'this does not suggest that Luke is based on the text of Mark' (p. 36), 'it is by no means obvious that there is a literary connection between the two passages' (p. 65). Nor do the statistics so constantly used—'an editorial process involving 5,000 deliberate changes is unconvincing'—carry the weight imposed on them, since each case needs to be argued on its own.

The second pier supporting this edifice is similarly unreliable. With admirable impartiality Wenham quotes authorities on either side exhaustively reviewing their evidence. One more opinion will scarcely settle the matter. To the present reviewer, however, it does seem that a selection is made from a mass of self-contradictory and casual historical assertions by the early Fathers which happens to accord with an author's particular point of view. The ancient writers do not seem to have demanded the rigour of evidence which a modern historian would require before stating or confirming an event as historical. Not all the historical assertions of any author or group of authors among them can be integrated into any convincing picture; a selection must be made. The vital question is what the criterion of selection should be. Should it be an imaginative picture composed by a modern author from a jig-saw puzzle (not to say crazy-paving) of assertions of the early Fathers, or is the only safe criterion the demands of the gospel texts? If the latter, then the evidence of the early Fathers must be treated as strictly posterior to, and only confirmatory of, the conclusions reached from a study of the gospel texts.

Mr Wenham's book is closely and clearly argued, with a mass of detailed evidence. But a preliminary examination does not suggest that his plea will be universally accepted.

HENRY WANSBROUGH

**A PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY** by J. Deotis Roberts. *SCM Press*, 1991- Pp. x + 182. £9-95.

In introducing this work, the author observes that 'it is written with those in mind who have little or no direct exposure to the study of philosophy, but who will not be able to read widely in theological literature without upgrading their philosophical knowledge' (p. 2).<sup>1</sup> I think it