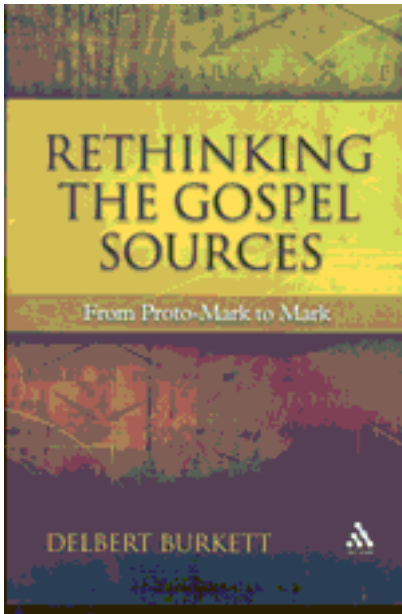


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Burkett, Delbert

Rethinking the Gospel Sources: From Proto-Mark to Mark

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In *Rethinking the Gospel Sources: From Proto-Mark to Mark*, Delbert Burkett provides the most detailed argument for a multistaged development of the Gospel of Mark yet to appear in English. His argument is clearly presented and well illustrated with many synoptic charts and displays of literary details drawn from the Synoptics. Some of these charts illustrate identities and differences in the order of content and wording among the Synoptics. Others provide lists of words and phrases Burkett believes are characteristic of the authors of Matthew and Mark. The latter charts also highlight repeated linguistic details in Mark or Matthew that are comparatively scarce in the other two Synoptics or even entirely absent from them. Still other charts illustrate the many examples of alternating agreement of wording in Mark, now with Matthew and now with Luke. Like the multiple-stage hypotheses of the French scholars M. É. Boismard and Philippe Rolland, Burkett's distinctive reconstruction of Synoptic Gospel sources sometimes draws upon and, at least partially, agrees at times with work done by advocates of other source hypotheses.

For example, like some recent source-critical work on Mark by Helmut Koester, as well as by advocates of the Two Gospel (neo-Griesbach) hypothesis, Burkett argues that canonical Mark could not have been a source for canonical Matthew or Luke. He

supports this conclusion with an impressive demonstration that Mark contains a layer of redactional material, either rarely found or not found at all, in either Matthew or Luke. Unlike advocates of the Two Gospel hypothesis, however, Burkett goes on to argue that a similar layer of unique and distinctive redactional material is also present in Matthew, so that he argues, in a similar way, that canonical Matthew could not have been a source for either Mark or Luke. Burkett claims that a similar distinctive or unique layer of material could also be demonstrated to be present in Luke, so that canonical Luke could not have been a source for either Matthew or Mark, but Burkett does not provide his evidence for this particular conclusion in this book.

Having concluded that none of the Synoptic Gospels in their canonical forms could have directly provided source material for any of the other Synoptic Evangelists, Burkett proceeds to reconstruct the several sources he believes did provide source material, either directly or indirectly, for the author of canonical Mark. According to Burkett, these sources included Proto-Mark, Proto-Mark A, Proto-Mark B, along with elements drawn from some shorter sources Burkett simply labels A, B, and C.

In reconstructing these sources, Burkett pays first attention to shared content and wording in the same order among all three of the Synoptic Gospels, thereby reconstructing a minimal core of content and structure for his earliest reconstructable version of Proto-Mark. Next he considers two of the three pairs of Synoptic Gospels, Matthew-Mark (where the agreements in order and wording provide the core for his reconstruction of Proto-Mark A) and Mark-Luke (where the agreements in order and wording provide the core of his reconstruction of Proto-Mark B). By focusing in detail on only these two pairs of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew-Mark and Mark-Luke), Burkett proceeds in a manner here akin to the argument of Frans Neiryck, who does the same in his defense of the priority of canonical Mark, a position that Burkett seeks here to falsify.

Burkett also agrees with advocates of the Two Gospel (neo-Griesbach) hypothesis in seeing evidence of conflation in canonical Mark, but unlike the most recent advocates of the Two Gospel hypothesis, Burkett explains the evidence of conflation in canonical Mark as the result of that author blending texts from Proto-Mark A with texts from Proto-Mark B, rather than blending texts drawn from canonical Matthew and canonical Luke. In this manner, Burkett's argumentation shares an element with an early follower of Griesbach, Johann Daniel Schulze, who believed it more likely that Mark combined the Urtexts of Matthew and Luke, rather than texts from those Gospels as they now stand in the canon.

Although, on Burkett's hypothesis, the A material was utilized by the author-editor of Proto-Mark A, Burkett also provides evidence that some of A was also utilized,

independently of Proto-Mark A, by the author of canonical Luke. Similarly, although the B material was utilized by the author-editor of Proto-Mark B, some of it was also used, independently of Proto-Mark B, by Matthew. Finally, Burkett argues that his source C was utilized independently by all three of the authors of the canonical Gospels.

Burkett continues to use the term Q to refer to the bulk of the material shared by Matthew and Luke, apart from a Markan parallel, thus sharing something with those who advocate the Q hypothesis. And when referring to the unique material in Matthew and Luke, Burkett uses the terms M and L, once popularized even in the Four Source hypothesis of B. H. Streeter, who sought to dispense once and for all with “that phantom Ur-Marcus,” which Burkett has resurrected here in no less than a threefold form. However, since Burkett is here concentrating on the development of the Gospel of Mark, he does not reconstruct in this volume the exact content of any of these three sources, Q, M, or L. In Burkett’s reconstruction, these sources have little or no relevance for reconstructing the developing text of Mark, the focus of this volume, as indicated by its title. One hopes Burkett will turn his attention to these other tasks as necessary elements for defending his comprehensive explanation of the development of all three of the Synoptics in subsequent work, equal in care and detail to this monograph.

Although advocates of the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis (Markan priority without Q, Matthean dependence on Mark, and Luke’s dependence upon both Mark and Matthew) and the classically formulated Two Document Hypothesis (the priority of Mark and Q and the independent use of these two sources and other source material by Matthew and Luke) will find less in Burkett that is compatible with their positions, advocates of all source hypotheses will find an abundance of data in this book, carefully collected and handsomely displayed. Advocates of some other source hypotheses will also likely share some of Burkett’s penultimate, but not final, conclusions, and on the basis of evidence similar to that he has presented.

In sum, the book is a fine addition to the advanced literature on the Synoptic Problem in the twenty-first century. It will be particularly welcomed by those who share Burkett’s view that Occam’s razor has now been given its due for over two hundred years and that, since all the simpler solutions to the Synoptic Problem have yet to prove convincing to all of the experts in the field, it is time to turn scholarly attention to more complex reconstructions of the literary history of the Synoptics, like this one offered by Burkett.