

BOOK REVIEWS

Paul: Missionary of Jesus by Paul Barnett. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xvi + 240 pp. \$16.00.

Barnett, former Anglican Bishop of North Sydney, is lecturer at Moore Theological College (Sydney, Australia) and teaching fellow in biblical studies at Regent College (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada). He has authored at least seventeen books since 1973, including *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT, 1997), *Jesus and the Logic of History* (1997), *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity* (1999), *First Corinthians* (2000), *Romans* (2003), *Is the New Testament History?* (rev. ed., 2004), and *The Shepherd-King: Reading John Today* (2005). He is currently finishing a trilogy entitled “After Jesus”: (1) *The Birth of Christianity: The First Twenty Years* (2005), (2) *Paul: Missionary of Jesus* (2008), and (3) *Finding the Historical Christ* (forthcoming).

The title of this second book in Barnett’s trilogy expresses the book’s thesis: Paul was a missionary of Jesus. This might appear to be a tame thesis, but it is a polemic against a view common among liberal Protestants. This liberal view, propagated by influential scholars such as Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), William Wrede (1859–1906), and Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), claims that Paul became the second founder of Christianity by hijacking and altering Jesus’ teaching and mission. Barnett, “with apologies to Malachi,” summarizes this view as “Jesus have I loved and Paul I have hated” (p. 11). Barnett boldly challenges this view, and he convincingly demonstrates that Paul was true to Jesus’ intentions, continuing and extending Jesus’ teaching and mission.

People place a wall between Jesus and Paul for at least four reasons: (1) they fail to address how chronologically close Paul was to Jesus; (2) they incorrectly speculate that Paul was influenced more by Hellenism than a Palestinian ideology; and they draw wrong conclusions about Paul’s (3) relative silence about the details of Jesus’ life and (4) relatively infrequent references to Jesus’ teachings (pp. 15–22).

After introducing this controversy in chapters 1–2, Barnett proceeds in chapters 3–12 to study Paul’s life chronologically from his birth in about A.D. 5 to the end of his decade of missionary work in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia in about A.D. 57 (see chronologies on pp. 5, 136–37). Paul was born in Tarsus as a Roman citizen, nurtured in a conservative Jewish home, and educated in Jerusalem before becoming an eminent Pharisee with a scholarly grasp of the

Greek Old Testament; he was the Lord's "chosen instrument" (chap. 3). His teacher, Gamaliel, previously advised that Jews not persecute Christians (Acts 5:33–39), but Paul later acted contrary to this advice because after a large number of sacrificing priests became Christians (Acts 6:7), Stephen attacked the temple itself (chap. 4). Paul was both converted and called on the Damascus road (chap. 5). During Paul's so-called "unknown" years in the Levant (ca. 34–47), his basic theological convictions did not change, but his methodology for reaching Gentiles probably did, namely, he would not limit his preaching to the synagogues (chap. 6).

Paul was a true missionary of Jesus (chap. 7): "The risen Christ was proclaiming the light to Israel and the Gentiles *through* Paul" (p. 114); "Jesus of Nazareth had a two-stage Israel-to-nations agenda," and "Paul pursued the same order in his 'Jews first, and *also* Greeks' policy" (p. 116). Since Paul's Damascus event radically ended his previous work as a Pharisee and changed his view of the law, Terence L. Donaldson is wrong that Paul "practiced circumcision beforehand as a form of universal proselytism," and E. P. Sanders is wrong that Paul's "ministry to Gentiles post-Damascus was a kind of ongoing 'covenantal nomism'" (p. 133) (chap. 8). Paul's greatest challenge during his flurry of mission work from about 47 to 57 was dealing with Jewish opponents from Jerusalem who so fervently believed that Gentile Christians should be circumcised that they traveled where Paul did to counter his message; his major letters such as Galatians and Romans reflect this, and he may have collected the offering for poor Christians in Jerusalem partly to improve his relationship with the Jerusalem church (chap. 9).

Evidence that Paul was a true missionary of Jesus includes his difficult dealings with the church in Corinth (chap. 10) and his pastoral, apologetic, and polemical letter to the Romans, which is his comprehensive response to the Jewish-Christian countermission (chap. 11). Paul was remarkable for at least six achievements: gospel herald to the Greco-Roman world, exemplary missionary, iconic convert, missionary theologian, savior from Proto-Ebionism, and fulfiller of Jesus' vision (chap. 12).

While Barnett overwhelmingly succeeds at proving his thesis, a few comments such as the following are questionable: (1) Romans 15:7 "is likely [Paul's] key text in Romans." (p. 101). This seems to presuppose that Jew-Gentile unity is the theme of the letter. (2) "The verbal elements common between Matthew, Mark, and Luke relating to Gentile mission are entirely missing in the Gospel of John (p. 109). This contradicts Andreas J. Köstenberger's outstanding works on John and missions (see, for example, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]). (3) Romans 6–8 teaches that "God delivers

Gentiles and Jews by faith in Christ from the power of sin, and he empowers them by the Holy Spirit *to fulfill the just requirement of the law*” (p. 187, emphasis added). My understanding is that Christ fulfilled the law in the place of Christians, not that the Spirit empowers Christians to fulfill it. Another relatively minor shortcoming is that Barnett does not clearly delineate his view on whether Paul was imprisoned twice at the end of his life and how the pastoral epistles fit into his timeline.

Paul: Missionary of Jesus is written in a clear, engaging manner that would not overwhelm a serious layperson. For example, he avoids technical jargon and voluminous footnotes. Barnett is to be commended for tackling a complicated issue in a concise, simple way without being simplistic. He skillfully corroborates primary sources (Paul’s letters) with a contemporaneous secondary source (Luke’s historically reliable Acts). The book’s progression is logical, and summary paragraphs appear all along the way to underscore the main points relevant for advancing the book’s thesis. Paul was indeed a missionary theologian, an instrument chosen by Jesus himself to herald the gospel before the Gentiles and kings and Jews (Acts 9:15).

Andrew David Naselli

The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism, by Garth Rosell. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. 268 pp. \$19.99.

The Surprising Work of God is a very sympathetic treatment of mid-twentieth century American evangelical history written by the son of one of the men who helped to shape the early movement. Garth M. Rosell, professor of Church History at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is the son of Merv Rosell, a Youth for Christ evangelist who was a contemporary and close colleague of Billy Graham. In fact, Garth’s closeness to the story gives this book its most important quality as an insider’s look at the history that it tells. While the main thrust of the work centers on Harold John Ockenga (1905–1985) and Billy Graham (b. 1918), Rosell weaves in the stories of numerous other key figures. Among these is his own father, whose personal papers were richly accessed in this chronicling of the birth of what started out as the *new evangelicalism*.

The book originated as a promise to Audrey Williamson Ockenga, the widow of Harold John, to use the vast legacy of her husband’s personal papers, today housed at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

It tells the story of Ockenga's guiding influence in the birth of modern evangelicalism. The movement sought to reclaim much of what that generation of reluctant fundamentalists (Ockenga, Graham, Carl Henry, Edward John Carnell, et al.) deemed had been too easily abandoned in the aftermath of fundamentalism's conflict with modernism. They felt fundamentalism had "circled the wagons" and retreated into itself, failing to engage its culture or effectively reach its world for Christ. These younger men, many of whom received advanced training from secular or old guard Protestant institutions, hoped to reclaim the intellectual high ground that they believed their fundamentalist forbearers had abdicated.

Ockenga, raised in a Methodist Episcopal home, rose to prominence in Presbyterian fundamentalism. He was heavily influenced by both J. Gresham Machen, his separatist mentor, and Clarence MacCartney, a conservative pastor who stayed in the Presbyterian denomination but continued to agitate for a return to conservative orthodoxy. Eventually, Ockenga would become co-pastor of the prestigious Park Street (Congregational) Church of Boston. From this pulpit he would initiate his national ministry that included guiding the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals (1942), the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary (1947) of Pasadena, California, and the launching of the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* (1956). It was hoped that this periodical would compete for readership with the older, liberal-oriented *Christian Century*. Also important to the story is the intersection at Boston between the young pastor and a rising Youth for Christ evangelist—Billy Graham. Graham and Ockenga would form a partnership in many of their national endeavors. Both men believed that fundamentalism was a failed strategy, having abandoned the culture through a posture of separatism. They sought to remedy that mistake by intellectual engagement and dialogue. In charting this course, they were joined by a host of other young *new evangelicals* who rallied to their cause and birthed a *via media* between old liberalism and strident fundamentalism.

As a history of mid-twentieth century evangelicalism, Rosell's work is informative and engaging. Sometimes he recounts well-known events with personal insights gained from growing up in the midst of the situations as they were unfolding. It is this closeness that gives the work both its most endearing quality and its only real weakness. As a near firsthand record of the story, it is interesting and enlightening. The work, however, lacks any real critical analysis of the stories which it covers. Rosell occasionally mentions some of the criticism Ockenga, Graham, or others received from a fundamentalist contemporary, but he omits any serious engagement with this part of the story. Ironically, he references *The Tragedy of Compromise* by Ernest Pickering (Bob Jones University Press, 1994), but he does not really employ any of the period opponents of the new evangelical strategy. Perhaps Rosell's lack of

critical interaction stems from the example of his father, which he recounts in some detail. When Billy Graham diversified his platform to include men who were not evangelicals, John R. Rice, a fellow evangelist who published the national paper *The Sword of the Lord*, led in criticism of Graham. The senior Rosell, who was on Rice's board, "persistently refused to become a party to the criticism" (p. 159) and requested that he be dropped from the cooperating board of *The Sword of the Lord*. Oddly, Rosell notes in his bibliography Iain Murray's important work *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of the Crucial Change in the Years 1950–2000* (Banner of Truth, 2000), but does not interact with Murray's assessment of the negative legacy of Billy Graham's *modus operandi*. The story is told with lamentation for the divisions without any apparent sympathy or even appreciation for the causes of this division. Nevertheless, *The Surprising Work of God* is a helpful history of an important chapter in twentieth century American evangelicalism. It deserves a careful read by those interested in understanding the contemporary landscape of twenty-first century conservative Christianity.

Jeffrey P. Straub