

BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Banks, *The Versatility of Paul: Artisan Missioner, Community Developer, Pastoral Educator* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2022). ix + 122 pp. \$9.99 Kindle. \$15.99 paper. ISBN 978621835007

Robert Banks, a native of Sydney, Australia, received his Ph.D. in New Testament at Cambridge University. He has taught at the Australian National University, MacQuarrie University, and Fuller Theological Seminary. He has written over twenty books including *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition*, *Paul's Idea of Community* (three editions), *Lessons from Reel Life: Movies, Meaning and Myth-Making*, and *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology* (editor). This book was adapted from Banks' lectureship in the Annual William Menzies Lectureship at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines, in 2021.

In *The Versatility of Paul*, Banks' thesis is that Paul's apostleship included all five of the gifts mentioned in Eph. 4:11—apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher—not just apostle. (He believes that pastor and teacher are two separate gifts rather than one gift of teaching pastor.) Thus, he sees Paul as a generalist, not as a specialist. Words such as “flexibility,” “elasticity,” and “versatility” appear throughout the book. In this book, Banks explores Paul as an apostle, teacher, and pastor. Much of the basis for his thesis comes from the book of Acts, the accuracy of which is presupposed. The New Perspective on Paul is not mentioned in the book, nor is it the perspective from which the book was written. The authenticity of all the thirteen letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament is accepted.

In Part I (“Artisan Missioner”) Banks gives two chapters: “Cross-cultural Innovator” and “Flexible Response Planner.” In “Cross-cultural Innovator” Banks shows how Paul had multiple purposes for his missionary journeys: evangelizing areas where the gospel had never reached, planting churches, revisiting those churches and individual converts, and developing links between the churches he founded. Banks calls Paul “the first missionary,” but not a full-time missionary as we might think of today. Paul supported himself by making tents, probably using that vocation as a means of evangelism. In his basic evangelistic strategy, Paul varied his presentation according to his audience, and in doing so, “Paul became the first genuinely multi-cultural Christian” (p.17).

In terms of his pastoral practice, “. . . Paul lives his life and shares his message from *inside* rather than just *alongside* the non-Jewish cultures in which he spent time” (p. 18, italics original), again an indication of Paul’s flexibility. He was able to “become all things to all people” to win some.

The second chapter, “Flexible Response Planner,” focuses on Paul’s missionary journeys. Paul didn’t have a grand scheme for his journeys. Rather, he was led by the Spirit. But this leading came in many different ways such as a word from the Spirit, an inner conviction, and other seemingly less “spiritual” ways.

Part 2 is “Community Developer.” Chapter 3, “Mutual Ministry Advocate,” expresses Paul’s method of building small urban communities in the areas around the Mediterranean. The word that could summarize the method is “relationships.” The people in these communities related to one another as family, expressing agape love to one another. In terms of ministry, it was mutual as the church functioned as a body and as each person used their gifts for mutual edification. This also involved caring for each other’s welfare, whether it was physical, material, or spiritual.

In Chapter 4, “Distinctive Lifestyle Exemplar,” Banks shows how Paul instructs the members of the Pauline communities to live with “dual citizenship”—the earthly citizenship and the heavenly citizenship (Phil. 3:20). Although Paul uses the horizontal analogy of the already/not yet, he primary writes from the perspective of the vertical dimension of the “living in two times” (two citizenships) (p. 55). He shows how these interact in terms of both those within the community and those outside. The death and resurrection of Christ gave birth to a new humanity where the old human divisions no longer applied.

The setting for Paul’s teaching was often his place of work. Workspaces were also living spaces, so those people Paul lived with those with whom he worked. It was a perfect setting for sharing the gospel. Paul was not hostile to the Roman government. In fact, he used his Roman citizenship to his advantage. But the formation of Christian communities that accorded the same status to all—rich and poor, slave and free, male and female, old and young—was a tacit affront to Roman society with all its hierarchy, the privilege for the wealthy, slavery, and the exploitation of the poor. When the two citizenships conflict, Christians must live in alignment with their heavenly citizenship. Paul’s teaching on the two citizenship says that in some sense, believers are “already in heaven” (p. 56). Central to Christian behavior is the imitation of Christ.

Paul’s versatility is shown in the way he conducted his life and in the way he instructed his converts about their behavior. Their conduct was based on their understanding of the Jewish Scriptures, the teaching

of Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The context determines what would be the proper action, which means that sometimes Paul's admonitions seem contradictory. But they were proper actions to be lived out in different contexts.

The setting of Paul's ministry, other than the initial preaching in the synagogue, was normally the household. When Paul rented the Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus, it was not for edifying the church, but for sharing the gospel with unbelievers.

Part 3 of *The Versatility of Paul* is entitled "Pastoral Educator." In chapter 5, "Life-Shaped Theologian," Banks brings out the relationship between theology and experience for Paul. Although revelation was primary for Paul, his theology was also "informed, deepened, and enhanced by significant aspects of his own life journey" (p.75). His teaching must not be taken as propositions apart from his personal mission and experience. His theology was missional theology. "We should see Paul as the missionary and pastor who does theology, instead of the theologian who engages in missional and pastoral work" (p. 77). We see Paul's life and feelings most clearly in 2 Corinthians which should receive more attention when studying Paul's theology.

One aspect of Paul's life that impacted how he perceived his theology was suffering. As he experienced the death of Christ in his sufferings, so he also experienced the life of Christ.

Paul's response to the situations of the churches was deeply emotional, and not just theological. His life was the prism through which he understood the revelation of God. His life gave him metaphors by which he saw the Christian life. For example, we have Paul's use of "walk" to describe the Christian life. Paul on his journeys, walked approximately 12,000 kilometers (7,450 miles). This was an apt analogy for the Christian life. Banks says:

Like the wise men in the Old Testament, Paul found God speaking to him through experiences of the most ordinary kind. This reminds us that encounters with God that have theological consequences are not confined to so-called "religious" experiences. Any activity or aspect of life may become a prism through which God reveals something of himself. (87)

Banks says that in response to Paul's pattern, we need to get away from the seminary model of education and adopt "a more down-to-earth approach Paul modeled with people like Timothy and Titus" (89).

Chapter 6 is entitled "Learning-Oriented Teacher." There he says that Paul taught through stories as well as ideas, conversation as well as instruction, experience as well as knowledge, emotions as well as

thoughts, imagination as well as information, and practice as well as reflection. Paul shows us that there is a lot more to learning and teaching than just the communication of data and facts. His is a holistic approach that encompasses all the above aspects.

Banks' conclusion is entitled "Leader or Servant?" This chapter stresses Paul's servanthood in ministry. "...he was more concerned that his converts 'imitate' him as he imitated Christ, rather than 'obey' him" (p. 106). The ultimate authority was the gospel itself. Rather than being called a "servant leader," Paul should be called a "leading servant."

The Versatility of Paul, while not stressing Paul's theology, gives us a good presentation of Paul's life and values. I found very little that I would disagree with other than minor details. Although it is a short book (122 pages), it is a concise yet detailed introduction to the life and ministry of Paul from a noted New Testament scholar. I would highly recommend it for a college or seminary course on the Apostle Paul.

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L. William Oliverio, Jr., *Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Late Modern World: Essays on the Condition of Our Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022). xiv + 252 pp. \$50.00 hardcover; \$35.00 paper; \$35.00 eBook.

L. William Oliverio, Jr., associate professor of public theology at Northwest University, Kirkland, Washington, and co-editor of *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, has, over the last decade, established himself as one of the more important voices in ongoing discourse regarding Pentecostal hermeneutics. This volume is a compilation of twelve essays previously published in 2009–2020, which have here been lightly revised for this project (ix–x). These essays build upon and advance the hermeneutical project begun in Oliverio's published PhD dissertation, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), completed at Marquette University in 2009. Much like the earlier monograph, the present set of essays represents focused and deeply thoughtful philosophical-theological engagement with its subject matter.

The book divides into three parts, each of which consists of four chapters. Part One, "Historical-Constructive Hermeneutics," consists of