

RBL 06/26/2000

**Rosenblatt, Marie-Eloise.**  
***Paul the Accused: His Portrait in the Acts of the Apostles***

Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament

Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995. Pp. xviii + 118, Paperback, \$8.95, ISBN 0814657508.

Mark D. Given  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Zacchaeus Studies provide overviews of particular aspects of Scripture and theology for both ecclesiastic and academic contexts. Rosenblatt's study, based on her 1987 dissertation at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, is an able contribution to this series.

The first chapter provides a word study of *witness* and an introduction to "the accusation theme" in Acts. These two subjects are connected by Rosenblatt's observation that "most of the vocabulary about the giving of witness has a link with Jerusalem," and that "many of the accusations leveled against Paul come from his enemies based in Jerusalem" (p. 2). Much of the chapter develops this linkage in relation to Luke's use of the literary strategy of *doubling*, specifically with regard to Peter and Paul. Their likeness in terms of "witnessing functions" tends to legitimate Paul, but Rosenblatt also detects several interesting ways in which Luke appears to contrast the characters and strategies of the two figures when under fire.

The next three chapters discuss the accusations against Paul as he journeys from Philippi to Corinth prior to the Jerusalem council, and from Miletus to Rome afterwards. "Accusations and death threats accompany the early work of Paul. His problematic history makes him an outsider to many groups" (p. 41). And yet, "by the time he appears in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, he has undergone an ecclesial transformation" (p. 41). Luke has "recontextualized" Paul's biography in a revisionist history of the Gentile mission so that harmony replaces polarization between Peter and Paul. Also, Rosenblatt believes that Luke uses Paul's travels to show the Christian mission moving from a "religious" to a "secular social" and "political context," although the spheres are inseparably interlocked. Throughout this process, Paul's missionary appeal gradually loses its power as he faces a rising tide of hostility as well as more and more powerful audiences. Yet, "this shift in degree of power held by Paul's audience illustrates Luke's

theological agenda. The more powerful the audience, the wider the range of Paul's message. It is necessary for Paul's audience to assume a secular character because that conveys Luke's convictions about the destiny of the gospel message, meant to be proclaimed to the furthest reaches of the earth" (p. 81).

Rosenblatt claims that her work subverts two widely assumed views about Luke's purpose: 1) that politically Luke is trying to make a good impression on Roman authorities by presenting Paul the accused as a representative law-abiding Christian; 2) that theologically Luke intends to demonstrate how God's revelation is passing from Judaism to the church by means of a "rejection-affiliation" model of evangelization. In place of the first assumption, Rosenblatt argues for a pastoral purpose of providing Christians a model for their own inevitable encounters with the authorities. In evaluating this view one might question whether these views are mutually exclusive. Surely Luke could have intended to prepare Christians to make a good impression on Roman authorities precisely through the influence of the Pauline model. Regarding the second assumption, she simply acknowledges her debt to other assumptions deriving mainly from David Daube and W. D. Davies (pp. xiii-xiv), to the effect that Paul never experienced any substantive break with his Jewish heritage. Her own study ignores evidence that might challenge such assumptions, and her own conclusions concerning Luke's intended audience and purpose may militate against them. For example, Rosenblatt claims that it is Luke's particular genius to offer Paul as a model to a diverse community that includes "members of residential families, missionary teachers, believers with Jewish backgrounds, converts from hellenistic mystery religions, those sympathetic to the Jewish religion, Greek speakers and Aramaic speakers, those comfortable with cosmopolitan and culturally diverse atmosphere, and those who found their identity in loyalty to the land of Israel" (p. 94). And yet Paul is not universally acceptable to this diverse community according to Acts (one of Rosenblatt's own observations), especially among its most conservative Jewish elements (e.g., 15:5; 21:20-21); and he is certainly not acceptable to non-Christian Jews. The conclusion that in Acts Paul "lives, works, and dies a loyal Jew . . . passionately attached to Jerusalem--his spiritual home" (p. 96) does not appear to agree with Acts' dialogical clash of opinion about Paul's orthodoxy, which Rosenblatt's study otherwise illustrates so well.

Rosenblatt's style is attractive and her explanations lucid. Her study should indeed prove useful in a variety of ecclesiastic and introductory academic settings. (2/96)