



The Man Nobody Knows

Bruce Barton , Richard M. Fried (Introduction)

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Bruce Barton's 1925 effort to reconfigure Jesus for the Roaring Twenties turned into one of the great best-sellers of the century. In *The Man Nobody Knows*, Barton depicted Christ as a man's man, not the meek, effeminate figure he had encountered in Sunday School. No Puritan or Prohibitionist, this Jesus turned water into wine and was "the most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem." Here was the world's first advertising man, whose parables sparkled as models for modern jingle writers. (Barton had co-founded the celebrated advertising firm of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborne.) Here was Christ, the world's greatest business executive, who "picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world." When in the 1950s Barton felt compelled to revise his often-reprinted book for a new generation, he blurred its focus. In this new edition, the historian Richard Fried revives the primary source in Barton's original language. Mr. Fried explores the book's rich insights into the culture of the 1920s, revealing not only the union of religion and business but changing attitudes toward consumption and leisure, sexuality and the roles of men and women.

The Man Nobody Knows Details

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From Reader Review The Man Nobody Knows for online ebook

Jim Tucker says

An inspiring historical reference to "leadership" is found in the remarkable book *The Man Nobody Knows* By Bruce Barton. One reason why this book is remarkable is that the word leadership was not in common use in 1924, when the book was first published. Furthermore, the book is written by a well-known advertising executive; and the book is about Jesus.

Bruce Fairchild Barton, a descendent of John Davenport (founder of Yale University) established one of the most prominent advertising firms in the U.S. He is credited with creating the "Betty Crocker" brand for General Mills, as well as such common brand names as "General Electric" and "General Motors." Barton also served two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, but he is remembered most for having authored *The Man Nobody Knows*. The book was highly controversial when it was first published. There were those who believed that it was inappropriate to present Jesus Christ as the role model for the modern businessman. With that background, and as an example of Barton's belief about leadership, the following quotation is taken from his depiction of Jesus's battle with Satan in the Wilderness. "For forty days and nights the incessant fight went on, but once settled, it was settled forever. In the calm of that wilderness there came the majestic conviction which is the very soul of leadership--the faith that his spirit was linked with the Eternal, that god had sent him into the world to do a work which no one else could do, which--if he neglected it--would never be done. Magnify this temptation scene as greatly as you will; say that god spoke more clearly to him than to any who has ever lived. It is true. But to every man of vision the clear Voice speaks; there is no great leadership where there is no mystic. Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside themselves was superior to circumstance" (Barton, 1924, p. 17-18).

Jody says

Fantastic book. It was loaned to me by a friend and I read the whole thing in one sitting. Not only do I want to buy my own copy, but I'm tempted to buy copies for several friends. This is one of my favorites; it's inspiring and thought-provoking and something different from my usual catalog of books.

Theo says

Surprisingly enjoyable? I didn't think it would be good - I expected to be laughing derisively throughout - but it really wasn't /so/ off the mark that I couldn't like it. Barton had a few interesting points to make. I don't think I really agree with him on his interpretation (he seems to be reaching a few times) but hey, his idea of Jesus' personality was a fun change from what I normally hear from religion.

Of course, take it all with a grain of salt: I've never read the Bible.

Henry Sturcke says

Barton was one of the giants of the fledgling advertising industry when he wrote this portrait of Jesus to

counteract what he experienced as a sentimentalized distortion of the presentation in the four Gospels. His take on Jesus is well-summarized by setting a quotation from the Gospel of Luke at the beginning of the book: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's *business*?" The result can be imagined by the chapter titles: The Executive; The Outdoor Man; The Sociable Man; His Method; His Advertisements; The Founder of Modern Business; and The Master.

Some readers may conclude, as I did, that Barton's Jesus is a much a distortion as the Sunday School picture he reacts to, nevertheless, an interesting counter-balance.

Joe Rodeck says

A look at Jesus Christ as a macho man with strong executive ability.

Although there is a rough draft quality & incomplete feel to it, there are gems to be found.

Parables as advertising? Many Christian reviewers are offended. But why not? A picture says a thousand words.

There are references to great American politicians, inventors, and businessmen. Lincoln lovers especially will be pleased.

A Man Nobody Knows will be more cordial to readers familiar with the Gospels, as others just won't know the references.

But this is a daring and provocative book for everyone.

Lauren says

Quickly looked over this book after I had read about it in a article regarding business. It was a popular title in its day. Reminded me of The Jefferson Bible. One man's version of the story of Jesus in the New Testament. It was OK.

Kerrie says

According to Barton, Jesus was the greatest businessman who ever lived, who had "picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world." Jesus was the supreme executive, molding the disparate apostles into a well-oiled staff, a great outdoorsman fishing on the Sea of Galilee and socializer (today we'd say networker) as "the most popular dinner guest in Jerusalem."

But Jesus as personal advertiser, in the form of his parables and those attention-grabbing miracles, is where he really shone. Barton asks "Can you imagine the next day's issue of the *Capernaum News*--if there had been one?"

PALSIED MAN HEALED
JESUS OF NAZARETH CLAIMS RIGHT TO
FORGIVE SINS
PROMINENT SCRIBES OBJECT
"BLASPHEMOUS," SAYS LEADING CITIZEN.
"BUT ANYWAY I CAN WALK," HEALED MAN
RETORTS.

Barton was ridiculed for this take on Jesus when this was published back in the 1920s, but his book is still in print so who's laughing now? When I feel like having a laugh, I'll track this one down - but it sounds like it's no more ridiculous than the original source material.

The information and quotes about this book were taken from the book .

Peter says

A commendable attempt to rescue a muscular Christianity from an anti-bourgeois clergy, by a shameless self-promoter. The marketing skill shows in the highly readable prose and the easy to follow story telling. An inspiration for my nascent novel, in which I attempt to do the opposite (i.e., rescue anti-bourgeois Christianity from the muscular capitalists).

Ancient Weaver says

Guarenteed to be one of the weirdest biographies of Jesus you will ever read.

The Man Nobody Knows was written in 1925 by a man in the advertising business who claimed (among other things) that Jesus was the founder of modern business, that he was a success due to a strong "personal magnetism," that he was a tough guy and a lady's man instead of some kind of "sissified" (spiritually minded?) girly-man, and that he was a blue-eyed (Anglo-Saxon?) sales dynamo with superior organizational techniques.

Only an ad man could and would write something this factually absurd and historically inaccurate. Good book for a laugh and not much else.

Rick Vanmeter says

I've kept this book in my library ever since my freshman year in Bible college. That was 44 years ago. When I read it then, I was not very impressed with it. But as time has progressed, I found myself reading particular chapters for various reasons. Now that it's 2012, I wanted to read the book one last time before I put it into the archives. A new appreciation for its message came over me. In a culture that has largely kicked Jesus

Christ to the curb, Barton's book was surprisingly refreshing--even 87 years after its first publication. Today we now know less about who Jesus is than when this book was written. That's a sad commentary; but it also points to the necessity of this book and others like it to bring the message of Jesus Christ to the 21st century.

David Owen says

I love reading people's opinions and readings of the Saviour. As the author himself notes, we see far more of ourselves in the Saviour than we probably see the Saviour but that too is revelatory and interesting.

Joseph Kumar says

Almost done. Radical.

Nothing religious. Gives a deeper and different insight to what you come across in your Church and Faith formation classes. A realistic and stronger view of the man that is Jesus.

JOHN HARP says

Here is a fine book that sets a good picture of Christ in a different perspective than you might have pictured in any of your studies before.

Many view based on paintings made down thru time because its natural for any beloved to want a picture in third mind. But hits obvious that Christ didn't care for you to have su h an image but instead Christ wanted you to see the father thru himself which is more important. For many have portrayed an incorrect perception. But it's obvious here that Christ thru his works portrayed the true picture that lasts down thru the ages. So why did God say make no graven images before me?

Michael David says

It uses quite a bit of literary freedom with the Bible, but it has its good points and quite effectively transposes Jesus as a modern man everyone should look up to. This is no Dostoevsky's **Idiot**, however.

Joshua says

This book was written during the 1920s by Bruce Barton (no relation to me), who was an ad salesman. It's a very interesting take on the life of Jesus from the perspective of Jesus as an organization and advertising mastermind. His image of Jesus is an outdoorsy, bronzed muscled man, who ended up sounding like a cross between the Brawny Paper Towel Man and Teddy Roosevelt. There are some characterizations and interpretations of stories from the New Testament that I definitely didn't agree with, but it's a short thought provoking read.

