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Book review on Brad H. Young's, *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles*

Brad H. Young, with contributions by Cheryl Anne Brown and Burton Visotzky, *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles*. Baker Publishing Group, 1995. Pp. 184. Price \$24. ISBN 9780801048210.

Paul the Jewish Theologian is the product of Brad H. Young's research and the influence of other theological scholars, among them also David Flusser and Dr. R. Steven Notley. In search of theological scholars and their expertise in their special field, Young was able to publish a work that created a new picture of Paul the Jewish theologian and his pharisaic background. The author Bradford Humes Young pursued his Doctor of Philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem under the mentorship of David Flusser, who shaped Young's understanding of Pauline theology and his writings. His Gospel research with his co-founders of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Studies, Flusser and Dr. Robert L. Lindsey, have built the building blocks of Young's book *Paul the Jewish Theologian*. Currently, Young practices as a professor of Biblical Literature in Judeo Christian Studies at the Graduate Department of Oral Roberts University (ORU) and is considered as founder and president of the Gospel Research Foundation, Inc.

In his book *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles*, Young untangles the misunderstandings of the Apostle Paul by the church and uses sequences of the New Testament to provide a whole new picture of the apostle to better

understand his teachings. Among other things, he discusses Paul's origin as a Pharisee, his free interpretation of the Torah and his generally open-minded attitude towards everyone, whether believing or not.

In the introduction, Young tries to skip the old picture of Paul and allow the reader to see and interpret Paul the way Young does. In the early days, Paul has often been referred to as the "second founder of Christianity" (p. 1) whereas nowadays he is seen as "Gnostic" (p. 1) and as a "Hellenistic Jew who departed radically from his Judaism" (p. 1). Young sees this rejection of Paul's Judaism by the church as an unwitting adoption of anti-Semitism which echoes the teachings of Marcion. He not only got misunderstood by the church and has been rejected by the synagogue, but he was seen as an evil Pharisee who separated from his religion, Judaism, to become a Christian. Disregarding these accusations, Apostle Paul should rather be seen as a "Pharisee living among the Christians, Jews, and pagan Gentiles" (p. 4) who is living his task of a "bridge-builder". Although his theology is based on Torah-true Judaism, Paul's free interpretation and liberal attitude make him fight to win acceptance for non-Jews among Christian believers and he "argues against the requirement of circumcision for non-Jews coming to faith in the Messiah". Furthermore, Young argues that if we see Paul as a Pharisee, how he saw himself, "many of his teachings concerning grace and law are better understood" (p. 4), and he could become a valuable source for the study of Pharicism. As further proof of Paul's true intentions and origin, Young reminds us that "there is no evidence anywhere in the New Testament that he [Paul] departed from his firm convictions as a Pharisee" (p. 1) but rather that he is a Jewish theologian who anchored his beliefs in the Hebrew Bible. In further explanations of Paul's teachings, the author states that Paul sought to "call the pagan nations to a faith in the one God of Israel by preaching the message of Jesus the Messiah" (p.3).

The second chapter, "Paul the Jewish Theologian", which is by far the longest chapter, deals with the detailed analysis of Paul's faith, his relationship to religions and their scriptures, and challenges and decisions that made him the apostle who, while often misunderstood, still plays an important role in the New Testament. It is well known that Paul was Jewish, and also that he was a theologian, but Young now wants to find out if Paul was also a Jewish theologian. Although Paul always saw himself as a Pharisee, he had no problems crossing over into different cultural areas and interfaith relationships. This served not only his cultural education but above all "to assume a leading role in an international outreach to the multiethnic peoples" (p. 7). Furthermore, it can be stated that Paul was born in Tarsus, but lived and studied in Jerusalem, which had a clear influence on his background. In the first sub-topic of the second chapter, "A Pharisee among the Christians" the author relies on Paul's own words, that he is a Hebrew of the Hebrews rather than a Hellenistic Jew, a Gnostic believer, a Stoic philosopher, Greek, or whatever else he is said to be. In "Paul and Jerusalem", Young makes clear that Paul and his family have had connections to the holy city, whether it would be the social structure, the religious institutions, the political organization, or the centers of learning in the city; his family seemed to have some influence in Jerusalem. This influence and insider knowledge helped Paul through his custody in the Roman prison and judicial proceedings in Acts 23:6-10. He relied on his Pharisean friends who supported him and freed him out of custody. To further explain the relationship between "Paul and Torah" analyzes Paul's usage of the Bible and the Torah rigorously. From the teachings of the Torah, Paul derives all authority, while he counts the Bible not only as proof for the messianic mission of Jesus but also as Paul's primary source of faith and practice. Like other Pharisees, Paul not only accepted the Written Law but also Oral Traditions, and "became all things to all people so that he might win them for the Lord" (p. 20,

Cor 9:19-23). This, however, did not mean that he rejected the law as he gets often accused of, but he rather "upholds the teachings of the Torah". Young's last statement points out that the accusations about Paul, that he would be "Law-free" must be wrong and presents Paul's true relationship to the Hebrew Scriptures: "Paul viewed the Torah as giving divine revelation for holy living. Paul learned the teachings of Torah in order to understand the mystery of God and to revere him by entering into a life of obedience. The apostle loved the Hebrew Scriptures and lived his life in accordance with the moral and spiritual values expressed in them" (p. 22). The "Law or Torah?" passage states that Paul's view of the Bible and its interpretation from the perspective of a Pharisee happened because he was guided in Jerusalem by Pharisaic leaders, including Gamaliel. His Jewish view of the Torah, which was linked to his rabbinic-Pharisaic thinking, can be explained by the Greek term *nomos*, by which Paul links the reference to the Torah to Jewish. By falsely assuming that Paul translated *nomos* with the word "law" only, the apostle was misunderstood and deprived of some of his other views, not all of which were related to law. "When Paul writes, "The law of the Spirit of life," in Rom 8:2, he is referring to the higher meaning of Torah [...] Tora means both the "law of the Spirit" and the "law of sin and death" (p. 23).

"Paul's Conceptual Approach" is multiple times getting described by Young as circular and interactive rather than linear like in a Hebrew mind. Young argues that "Paul views history as moving toward the goal of God's final redemptive plan [and that] he views God through the prism of perplexing curiosity, which inspires wonders" (p. 25). This view is typical for Jewish faith which begins with the nature of God. Paul rather sees everything in a bigger picture instead of the individual parts and does not mind to leave some questions unanswered and inconsistencies unresolved. Before his experience on his way to Damascus, Paul only thought of

the Torah which he then realizes cannot be defined simply by the term *law*. Now, “the term *Torah* expresses the highest dimension of Jewish experience because it reveals the nature of God to his people [...] with its preeminent purpose is found in Jesus the Messiah” (pp. 26-27). Young uses the words of Hans J. Schoeps to analyze Paul’s character: “Paul was a dynamic personality, on whom thoughts rained so that he was driven ceaselessly from one to the other. Moreover, his thought was penetrating, leading us to well-nigh unfathomable depths. Often he merely suggests and instead of a whole chain of thought will give us flashes of ideas” (p. 26). In “Replacement or Engraftment?” Young examines the question out of Paul’s sight, whether God has rejected his people. The apostle argues with Rom 11:29 “The gifts and call of God are irrevocable”, meaning that God would never break his promise to his people to reach out to the Gentiles. Paul was a rather emotional instead of rational theologian who argued that “the great mystery of God’s higher purposes begins with the irrevocable divine call made to the Jewish people” (p. 28) who were, according to Paul, the true Israel. Although he was aware that many of the faithful Israelites had rejected Jesus, he believed that God would not violate his word. He knew that this rejection could lead to the foundation of Christian anti-judaism and church’s arrogant attitude to God’s people Israel which Paul tried to avoid. Instead, the Apostle thinks of the Israelites as an olive tree who did not get replaced by the Gentiles, “but the Gentile nations have been grafted into the olive tree” (p. 31). This engraftment happened because of Paul’s goal of unrestricted love “to pursue the objective of God-like love in his relationship with all people” (p. 30). Through his sensitivity to all people’s backgrounds, which has often thrown him into a false (“Law-free”) light, the apostle could get the Gentiles to reject idolatry and come into a personal relationship with God and the “wild branch has been grafted into the olive tree” (p. 32). Fitting to Paul’s rather from Eastern mentality driven emotional than systematic theology, he does not further

explain the great “Mystery” which involves the grafting of the Israelites and non-Jews. However, the mystery involves the fact that “a hardening has come upon part of Israel” (p. 32), and the inseparable bond between the church and the synagogue in the final drama of redemption. What he does explain is that the Gentiles are true Israelites whether they accept Jesus or not and that the people of Israel have not been rejected or replaced. Nevertheless, he leaves the divine mystery unexplained and compares it to God's way which is "unsearchable and incomprehensible for the human mind (Rom 11:33-36). The apostle only describes the divine mystery with the words in Rom 11:25-26: "Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved". The next passage deals with the differences between Marcion and Jesus. Through Jesus' teachings, life, and suffering, Jesus brought a new significance as the Jewish Messiah to the Torah after Paul's experience on his way to Damascus. This did not mean that the Torah got replaced by Jesus, but Paul rather saw Jesus as "the culmination of the divine redemptive purpose" (p. 33). Paul is known as a disciple of Jesus while Marcion was known as a “heretic” follower of Paul who often “distorted the original thrust of Paul’s writings” (p. 33). Although Marcion loved Paul, he hated the Bible and saw Jesus as the revealer of hidden truths. He also diminished between the God of Israel, who was the evil deity of creation, and a true God of light who had nothing in common with the God of Israel from the Bible. While Paul often refers to prophets from the Bible, talks about God’s promises to Israel, and mentions Moses several times, Marcion rejected all other apostolic teachings and had his roots in anti-Judaism and hatred of Jewish people. Jesus is the differentiating factor to understand the differences between Paul’s and Marcion’s understandings. Due to Paul’s constant references to other apostles and his reaching out to the pagan world, he became the “bridge

builder” as we know him today. The “Jerusalem Council” helped to solve the issue between Jews and new non-Jewish believers, which was necessary since the new non-Jewish world brought social and theological problems. On the one hand, it was socially difficult for non-Jews and Jews to interact with each other, on the other hand, from a theological point of view, the “Jewish believers had to determine whether the non-Jews would be required to convert to Judaism in order to follow Jesus” (p. 36). While Paul tried to make compromises for both sides, Peter was harsher in the enforcement of the law and "would hope that the new believers from pagan backgrounds would adopt more of the Jewish religious observance" (p. 39). This included three of the most important commandments: idolatry, shedding of blood or murder, and unchastity and at the same time the fear of the one true God. The conversion to Judaism had three requirements: circumcision, the ritual immersion in baptism, and to offer a sacrifice in the temple. The case between Cornelius and Peter about circumcision escalated and has been brought before the Council of Jerusalem which is described in Acts 15:1: "But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" According to this, if non-Jews have not been circumcised, they are still considered pagan Gentiles, whereas God-fearers have not converted to Judaism. Since the Jerusalem council did not encourage non-Jews to become circumcised but have rejected "all idolatrous practices and have become devoted to the one true God of Israel, they were welcomed into the synagogue. "The non-Jews from a pagan background would be viewed more like God fearers than like converts to Judaism" (p. 38). The last passage of chapter two brings us a better idea of "Paul's conceptual approach: a Jewish way of thinking" which will help to guide us through the rest of the book. As earlier mentioned, Paul's teachings pursue a conceptual approach that interactively connects all the terms, like in circular thought processes rather than linear. The

center of all his thought processes is Jesus' life and thinking of how he is presented in the Torah. The Torah is also part of the center due to Paul's Pharisean background. From this center deriving, Paul puts all other theological motifs or terms which are all concepts concerning God's relationship to people. To easier express his Jewish theology, Paul often uses contrasts in the form of antonyms, and a dualism like antithetical parallelism. Through this approaches Paul would be connected much closer to the Essenes of the Dead Sea Scrolls than to the Gnostics. However, there are essential differences between the apostle and the Essenes. According to the Essenes, "God has predetermined who will be saved and who will be damned" (p. 41) which would never be acceptable in Paul's universal view of God's love. This brings up another difference since Paul's growing relationship with the Gentiles would have never been approved by the Essenes. Coming back to Jesus as the epicenter of Paul's conceptual approach, some differences between Jesus and the apostle can be found. While Jesus gets seen as provincial who spoke to his people, the Jews, living in Israel in Hebrew or Aramaic, Paul went international teaching in Greek to the Gentiles. Besides, through his educational background in oral tradition and Hebrew literature, Jesus had a far superior understanding of the Torah. Paul's focus on the content of the Torah, however, was Jesus the Messiah. A common feature that cannot be denied is that both had a very high view of the Torah.

The third chapter is talking about the "Pentecost, the Nations of the World, and the Apostle Paul". Besides Passover and Tabernacle, Pentecost is one of the three pilgrim festivals to Jerusalem. Paul's mission for the Pentecost was to go out of Jerusalem and bring the whole world, "every nation under heaven" (p. 50) back for the Pentecost, a sacred festival for Christians and Jews. "In Acts, Paul fulfilled his task by taking the message of God's kingdom to the imperial capital, Rome" (p. 51). Although Pentecost is celebrated by both, Christians and Jews, it

has different meanings. For Christians, Pentecost means divine empowerment for service and “commemorates the occasion when the Holy Spirit empowered early followers of Jesus to serve God with renewed vigor and dedication to his teachings” (p. 51). For Jews, Pentecost is the “time in which God gave us our Torah” (p. 53) while the revealing of the Torah often is described as “tongues of fire” in seventy different languages, which is symbolic for all nations where all nations were bound together in faith which is one of Paul’s main goals. Young also provides a more archaeological insight into the festival of the Pentecost. Archaeological finds from the monumental stairway leading to a large platform, which was most likely used as a place to study the Torah, and the discovery of forty-eight immersion baths used for mass baptism during Pentecost gives reasonable support about the site of the miracle of the Pentecost. The author suggests that “the house” (of the Lord) was the temple. 2 Chron 5:14 describes the house of the Lord during Pentecost: “The house, the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God”.

The fourth chapter deals with “Judaism and Christianity: Diverse Perspectives on Torah”. Paul, Jesus, and Marcion all had different perspectives on the Torah. Whereas for both Jesus and Paul the significance of Torah derived from Judaism, Marcion “denied the validity of the Hebrew Bible for Christian faith and practice” (p. 62). Although Marcion’s dualism which taught that Jesus abolished the Jewish law and brought grace can be seen as a heretic, it is still sometimes embraced and tolerated. Judaism, on the contrary, sees the receiving of Torah as a “supernatural event of utmost import” (p. 62) when God revealed his will on Mount Sinai to Israel. Christianity views the Torah through ecclesiastical history while struggling to define itself apart from its Jewish roots which helped Marcion’s idea to gain supporters. Mat 5:17 is a tool to

help understand the misinterpretations which lead to Marcion's anti-Jewish teaching through trying to "change the meaning of Jesus' teachings and to convert Paul's message into an anti-Jewish gospel" (p. 63): "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." When the three words *law*, *abolish*, and *fulfill* get misunderstood, a person cancels Torah. The good is then "seen as emanating from Christianity, while the bad is portrayed wrongly as coming from Judaism" (p. 65). Rightly translated and interpreted, abolish should mean to obstruct through wrong interpretation, and "fulfill refers to the proper understanding of the text, which leads to a lifestyle of holiness dedicated to God" (p. 66). The Hebrew word *torah* means "shoot an arrow" or "teach". Torah aims for true and straight teaching of God's will which goes beyond the scrolls of the holy writings. Young summarizes the differences between Jesus and Paul, and Marcion with the word *Torah*. Knowing that "the foundation of Christian belief is based upon the Jewish concept of God as revealed in Torah, our perspective of Torah will determine our faith in God. Marcion disvalued the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures and presented Paul as a teacher of a new gospel which leads people away from the message of the Torah and started a rebellion against the God of Israel.

Chapter five is all about "The Torah: Roots of Grace and Faith in Paul's message". It begins with the different views of Christians about God in the Old Testament and the New, stating that His character changed in the Old Testament from a God of legalism and law into the God of grace and love in the New Testament. In the first sub-topic "Law and grace in the Bible" Young gives Exod 34:6f. and Ps 103:8 as a reference to show that God was full of mercy and grace in both testaments, that the God of the OT is the same God of the New: "The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love ...'" (Exod 34:6f.). Nevertheless, we should keep in mind

that also not the New Testament is exclusively a book of grace and mercy. The Lord of creation whom everyone on earth should be obedient is described in both Testaments. "Grace in Judaism" opens up about the "misrepresentation of Torah preaching a save-yourself-by-your-own-good-works gospel" (p. 72) and declares that Judaism during the late Second Temple Period was not a salvation-by-works religion. Their religion rather believed that through His goodness and willingness, God would accept all sinners who repent, but with the knowledge that "election and ultimately salvation cannot be earned, but depend on God's grace" (pp. 72-73). As already mentioned, "God's Grace for Sinners" is for those who repent. Young also catches up again the thought about circumcision and the Jerusalem council about the strongly doubted passage by Paul in Acts 15:1: "Unless you are circumcised according to the customs of Moses, you cannot be saved". Despite many voices that agree with this statement, "Paul maintained that Torah provides an indispensable guide for a moral life that Christians must follow. One is not saved by observance by the law, and non-Jews are not required to convert to Judaism in order to be good Christians" (p. 74). Therefore, Gentiles do not have to be circumcised and are only responsible for the law's moral demands which are embodied with Noah and his children. In "Works of the Sin", Young makes clear that this does not mean that believers should continue to sin for the overabundance of God's grace. The problem is that although the law is good, many people have a problem obeying it. Therefore, Paul demanded all his communities to obey a high moral standard and warns: "Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh" (p. 75). He was teaching the commandment to stay in appliance with the law. In "Faith's Rewards", the author shows what Paul taught about faith, to attain the righteousness of God. Since righteousness has its roots in Torah and involves the redemptive work of God, the terms faith, righteousness, and Torah belong together for Paul. Not only for him but also for other Jewish interpreters like Rashi,

the term “righteousness” can mean benefit or merit. Genesis 15:6 shows how Abraham’s faith can be seen as his future reward and benefit: “our father Abraham inherited both this world and the world beyond only as a reward for the faith with which he believed”. “Faith and Righteousness in the Dead Sea Scrolls” refers to the *Miqsat Maaseh Torah*, “A Summary of the Precepts of the Torah” which is possibly an epistle from the Dead Sea community to Pharisean leaders. In the end, Young concludes that “The concept of righteousness is linked to salvation and redemption in the end time” (p. 78). The next passage “Faith in the Teacher of Righteousness” deals with God’s famous answer to prophet Habakkuk “but the righteous shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4) in which God expresses that believers will be saved by faith which is accompanied by works. Additionally, Young lets us know that “the Dead Sea community believed that faith, works of Torah, and having righteousness accounted to the believer all fit together” (p. 79) and that Pauline theology closely parallels Jewish thought from the first century. “Paul and his Interpreters” presents us with the challenges of how we often get influenced by the opinions of other religious pioneers like Martin Luther. He interprets Paul through poor translation and makes us believe that Torah canceled faith the same way that faith canceled Torah. Luther often translated the word *righteousness* with the German word *Gerechtigkeit* which means *justification* which shows that the roots of Christianity are in a misunderstood Judaism during the time of Jesus. Martin Luther may have made significant positive contributions to Christian theology but we should acknowledge that “his approach to faith and works was radically influenced by his own time” (p. 80). Another scholar, F. C. Baur, who misinterpreted Torah argued that “the New Testament developed as a series of debates surrounding a thesis and a corresponding antithesis” (p. 81). Looking at Paul’s meaning of righteousness, Young lets us know that for Paul, “justification by faith united Jews and Gentiles

in a rich cultural diversity that paved the way for a righteous lifestyle” (p. 81) and that the believer is to become a “slave of righteousness” for obedience (Rom 6:17). Hence, Paul’s view argues that righteousness is much more than a static state of justification but rather a dynamic experience, which sees Luther’s view as unsatisfactory. The life of righteousness is “the power of God to live righteous lives of obedience [and] God’s power is released through faith in Jesus” (p. 82). The last sub-topic of the fifth chapter, “Paul’s Culture and Faith Experience”, gives us an idea of how to correct the misleading interpretations of Paul’s writings in translating them with a sensitivity to Paul’s cultural context. *Righteousness* would be better translated with “life of righteousness” or “ways of righteous living” rather than with *justification* which leads to misunderstandings as in Luther’s case. Young states that “For Paul, the way of righteousness is indeed God’s highest salvation, because it is the liberation of the flesh into the life of the spirit” (p. 83). We leave the fifth chapter with the knowledge that Paul’s ideas of grace and faith derive from the Torah, while grace comes from God who opens the doors into his dynamics of everyday life. We also learned that faith leads to righteousness which is so much more than simply justification but also lets us receive empowerment from the Holy Spirit.

“Torah: The Dead Letter or the Living World”, the name of the sixth chapter, is about like what the Torah gets seen from Paul, as it is often misunderstood by Christians as being “a dead husband” as in Romans 7:1-6. Young believed that “Paul was speaking about dying to the sinfulness of the flesh rather than to the sacredness of Torah” (p. 87). One of the reasons why Christians misunderstand the meaning of the Torah is due to a mistranslation of the Greek text of Romans 10:4 which originally says: “For Messiah [i.e., Christ] is the aim [or goal] of Torah [or law]...” whereas we often read “For Christ is the end of law...”. Paul answers to this verse in Romans 3:31 with: “Do we then make void the law [Torah] through faith? Certainly not! On the

contrary we establish the law [Torah]." For further understanding of Paul's meanings, Young brings us closer to the halakic concept with which Paul was working when he said: "When a person dies, he is free from the law and the commandments" (p. 88). Paul is writing to those who know the law (Rom 7:1) and are familiar with the practice of halakah. In the sub-topic "A Slave to Sin or God" Young tries to further explain the problematic misinterpretation of Christians about Paul's meanings. Many Christian interpreters still believe that Paul was saying if he dies to Torah, he is free to do whatever he pleases, which is, as we already learned, not true at all. Rabbis also discussed the problem of "fleshly desires" which they referred to as "evil inclination". The famous Rabbi Simeon ben Pazzi teaches about being "a slave to sin or God" and claims "A person, as long as he lives is a servant to two masters: the servant of his creator and of his [evil] inclination" (p. 89). This is similar to Paul's teaching in Romans 6 as Paul says that "an individual is either a servant of sin to obey the flesh or a servant of righteousness to obey God" (p. 89). Pazzi is referring to Jesus' teaching of the two masters as money or God. Flusser and Shmuel Safrai, two professors at the Jewish Studies Hebrew University in Jerusalem, commented to ben Pazzi's teaching: "According to Rabbi Shimeon ben Pazzi, man, while he is alive, is the slave of his inclination, but after his death, his only master is God." (p. 90). This interpretation gets closer to Paul's idea who tries to say that "a person dies to his or her evil inclination, in order that he or she may become a servant of God alone. The sinful flesh dies so that the person may become a servant of righteousness (Rom 6). Hence the individual is free to live a life pleasing to God" (p. 90). Paul also goes further and explains again who is demanded to keep all the law (moral law and commandments), the circumcised ones, which does however not suggest that he thought of the Torah as a legalistic system. Young reminds us that only God's grace alone can save someone from eternal punishment, not the thought that keeping the law.

Also, Paul is the opinion that "faith without works has no meaning. Through grace, the believer is given the power to live a holy life pleasing to God and thus to fulfill Torah" (p. 90), as stated in Romans 3:31. Coming back to the marriage analogy of Romans 7:1-6, Christians often misinterpret that if one has died in Jesus, the Torah and its teaching become invalid. This is not what Paul is trying to say here, he is the opinion that Torah should not be identified with sin. Paul explains: "The individual dies to his flesh. The sinful flesh dies in order that the person may live and serve God alone" (p. 91). People have to stop seeing Torah as the problem or the solution, sin is the problem, but it does not cancel the law. Torah is what reveals the sin but also reveals the sacred and the profane. Just as Jesus is revealed in Torah, Torah reveals the divine plan for all peoples. However, it also reveals the sinfulness of humankind. Young argues that "each person is free to respond negatively or positively to the message of Torah. It is the individual's response that determines whether Torah is the 'law of sin and death' or the 'Spirit of life in Jesus Christ' (Rom 8:2)" (p. 92). To conclude, Paul did not compare Torah to the body of a dead man, he used it as a metaphor so people could gain a deeper insight into the Holy Scripture. He speaks of the "death of the flesh that becomes the seed of the resurrection life (p. 92). In Paul's understanding, when we die, we will stop to try to obey God through our power, but we will be able to walk in the new life of the Spirit. After dying for the sinful flesh, we will be able to live for God in our best selves.

In the seventh chapter "The Transcendence of Torah in Paul's Teachings" Young differentiates once again the teachings of Jesus and Paul, and Marcion. Marcion was the leader of an anti-Judaist movement who saw the Torah as the dark teachings of the Creator God. He hated the Hebrew Scriptures and although he was a follower of Paul and believed that the apostle "enabled men and women to discover God's grace" (p. 96), he opposed Jesus's and Paul's

Judaism and saw Moses as the bringer of condemnation. Although Marcion got excommunicated from the church, he has still Christian followers who feel uncomfortable with the Jewish roots and believe that Paul preached against the Jewish law. A reason why Marcion's thoughts are still circulating is that Marcion's disciples changed the words of Jesus into "Think not that I have come to *fulfill* the law but to *destroy* it..." (p. 98). Even though such a radical change of words would not be accepted by modern Christians, it is still being interpreted that Jesus meant that the law is fulfilled and therefore Torah becomes invalid. However, in Paul's times, the Torah was seen as a powerful force of goodness and was compared to light. According to Paul, "Torah possesses a mysterious transcendence that reaches beyond finite human comprehension to the very essence of the divine nature and God's will for humankind" (p. 95). After the incident on his way to Damascus, Torah and Jesus became the core of his theology which before consisted of the five books of Moses. Jesus had like Paul a very high view of Torah, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. Paul's messages often get misinterpreted and Young tries to explain what Paul is really trying to say with Romans 3:31: "Do we then overthrow the law [Torah] by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law [Torah]". With "uphold" Paul means to "place [Torah] on a firmer footing" which can be done by proper interpretation. Since Judaism is not a salvation-by-works religion, rabbis preached that "each individual must obey God's law, but he or she is saved by God's unmerited grace – not by works" (p. 100). Therefore, the Jerusalem council decided that no person can achieve salvation through circumcision (by obeying the law) but that the moral standards and ethics of the Jewish way of life cannot be rejected. This explains why non-Jews are not to become circumcised and to obey all the commandments but expected to live ethical and moral lives and abandoning idolatrous practices. Jesus and Paul both compared Torah to light. Rabbis compared Moses to light and Jesus compared the disciples' good works to

light. It is believed that Moses got empowered by the Holy Spirit and taught the seventy elders. They received a portion of the divine Spirit because Moses passed on the light/fire. At the end of this chapter Young concludes again the way from sin to righteousness, that a slave of sin when he or she becomes obedient has been set free from sin to become a slave of righteousness which Paul describes as "righteousness of God". Finally, "the light of Torah can be seen in the good works of Jesus' disciples [and] in Paul's epistles" (p. 103).

In the eighth chapter, "Love as the Foundation of Christian Ministry: The Model of 1 Corinthians 13" Young helps us to interpret Paul's love chapter. It is known for its all-consuming theme, its loft imagery, and its beautiful style and is therefore sometimes read at weddings nowadays. Young first talks about "Prophecy and the Holy Spirit" and mentions that some circles have taught that with the death of the prophets, the prophetic utterance and the supernatural work of the Spirit had passed away. As a result, people needed to rely on uncertain guidance which they called the daughter voice (*bat kol*) or echo from heaven. The term *prophecy* was seen as a "gift of the Spirit that was designed to deliver God's message. Hence, guidance and encouragement for the community were given through prophetic utterance by the power of the Spirit" (p. 107). Especially the Christian movement was guided and manifested by the Spirit which is described in Acts. They still celebrate the day when the Spirit was given, Pentecost, which indicated that the days of the Messiah had come. "Giftings of the Spirit at Corinth" deals with the use and abuse of spiritual manifestations. Paul gives a hint at Hebrew Scriptures in Corinthians when he writes "For now we see in a mirror [glass lens] dimly, but then face to face" (p. 108). He uses love to guide the direction of ministry excellently. In this quote from Corinthians, the terms *mirror*, *dimly*, and *face to face* require further explanation. Corinthians 1:13 talks about Moses and the other prophets. While all the other prophets were directed by the

Holy Spirit, Moses was the first and greatest of the prophets and was the only one who communicated with God on a more intimate level as seen in Num 12:6-8: "Not so my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech;". "Dark speech" has the same Greek word for translation as "dimly" which can mean that prophecy is not always crystal clear. "Mouth to mouth" and "face to face" are both metaphorically idioms that mean the same, here it means that through Moses' close and personal communication he has a clearer word of prophecy. Hence, in Corinthians, Paul is talking about Moses and prophecy. The term *mirror* refers to "prophetic utterance and the giving of the Holy Spirit (p. 110) as seen in one of Paul's writings "All the other prophets beheld prophetic visions through a blurred mirror [lens] ... But Moses beheld [prophetic visions] through a polished mirror [lens]" (p. 110). Therefore, Moses was the only prophet who receives the clear prophetic message of the Holy Spirit through a clear lens while the other prophets see it through a dirty, clouded lens. Nevertheless, Paul sees humans in the working of the Holy Spirit as the problem because they are rather getting motivated through self-interests than selfless love. The three chapters of 1 Cor 12-14 must be studied together since love, as the fruit of the Spirit must guide the other manifestations to complete spiritual restoration. "As for prophecies, they will pass a way... but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away" (1 Cor 13:8-10). This means that when the perfect prophecy comes guided through love (apocalyptic coming of the messiah and complete spiritual restoration), there will be no need for imperfect spiritual manifestations because then God will be talking to humans face to face without dirty mirrors, dark speeches, or imperfect lenses. That is the reason why Paul teaches "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts" (1 Cor 14:1) because "Love is the bridge between the empowerment of the Spirit and the help one gives to people with serious human needs" (p. 112), hence pure selfless

love. Young rounds the chapter up with the words “Without love the most powerful spiritual manifestations are entire meaningless” (p. 112) to remind us of the importance of love.

The ninth chapter is about “The essence of Paul’s Jewish Faith” which has been summarized in Deut 6:4: “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one”. Although Paul tries to express his faith, Christians still often misunderstand Jewish faith and practice as a salvation-by-works religion instead of an active faith which is accompanied by corresponding actions. Without appreciating the root that supports them, Christians are cutting themselves off the olive tree. Young expresses the problem in his own words: “Faith in Jesus should not contradict the faith of Jesus” (p. 115). *Shema Yisrael* (“Hear, O Israel”) was an all-pervading doctrine for the leaders of the early church. In the Jewish belief, the concept of God and the concept of the kingdom of heaven (*malchut shamayim*) are closely related. It was further believed that by praying *Shema Yisrael*, a person was putting faith in the one and only God, rejecting the thought of several gods. The Shema is made of three Scripture sections, Deut 6:4-9, 11:12-22, and Num 15:37-42. While New Testament teachings are all about the nature of God, which is rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish backgrounds add the significance of God’s oneness to Christian faith. God’s oneness is often affirmed in the New Testament, for example when Jesus got tempted by Satan and answered with Deut 6:13: “You shall worship the LORD God, and him only shall you serve”. In a part of the Shema, in Deut 6:4, the New Testament witness to the divine nature and the Jewish concept of God converge. Although the Jewish concept of God is often referred to in the Scriptures, it is best captured in Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of heaven in which heaven refers to God himself and the kingdom means sovereignty. This rabbinic teaching of the kingdom of heaven and Jesus’ message of God’s reign connects the church and the synagogue. The resurrection was another theme of Jewish thought

and a foundation pillar of pharisaic belief which has different ideas in different religions. Greco-Romans believed that the body was the prison of the soul, which means that spirit is eternal, and evil matter only temporarily. Gnostics believed that the individual required a special revelation knowledge to escape from the material universe and it was only the spirit that mattered. Since Jews believe that God was the creator of the whole world, including our bodies as temples for our soul, Pharisees were talking about a literal resurrection of the physical bodies and a reunion with the spirit after death. According to Paul, both, body and soul would be judged together. The parable of Rabbi about two watchmen, one lame and one blind, explains the reason for their belief. However, Paul gave more weight to the physical body than the soul since the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. After the death and re-creation of body and spirit, it will result in a celestial body. Paul explains this in a metaphor of a grain of wheat which Rabbi Meir used to explain the procedure to Queen Cleopatra. The resurrection was such an important part of Paul's teachings since he believed that "Jesus the Messiah will deliver the kingdom unto the Father. The resurrection of Jesus releases the force of God's sovereignty in the present" (p. 128). Young concludes that for Paul, "the kingdom represented a dynamic power that brought healing and wholeness [and that] acknowledging God's sovereignty breaks the power of evil in a person's life and leads the individual on to the path of righteousness" (p. 129).

The tenth chapter summarizes "The seven Pillars of Paul's Jewish Theology". First, Paul was a Pharisee who never converted from one religion to another which can be seen in his teachings on resurrection and circumcision. Secondly, Paul sees Torah as a spiritual revealing of God's higher plan, he always sees it positively. The only problem he has is with humans, their sinful flesh, never the Torah. This is because of his immense desire to please God and live a life of how it is written in Torah. The third pillar is that although both share a positive view on

Torah, Paul's mission is different from Jesus's. Paul worked more internationally and among pagan Gentiles while Jesus worked with his Jewish people. The fourth pillar expresses Paul's urgency for healing love to be the character of Christians to others. He believes that "God's presence is experienced through the Holy Spirit's empowerment to bring healing and help to people in need" (p. 137). His fifth pillar expresses that God's grace is revealed through the Messiah, Jesus. Sinful people won't inherit the kingdom of God but can be forgiven and restored to fellowship with God. Seeing Jesus' resurrection as the first fruit is Paul's sixth pillar that Young analyzed. In Jewish thought, God reconciles the physical body and the spirit together. Paul's seventh and last pillar is his belief that "Jesus is coming again to complete the work of redemption. Paul orders that everything needs to be prepared for that day, and also taught the engraftment of non-Jewish Christian believers. He demands the church to abolish their arrogance against Jews and added the Gentiles into the olive tree.

Since Young's book *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles* focuses on Paul after his experience with the Holy Spirit on the way to Damascus, I have chosen the book *Ein Mann namens Saulus* ("A Man Named Saul") by Gerald Messadié, which first tells more about the life of Paul. Gérald Messadié was a French writer and historian who was born in Cairo in 1931 and came to Paris at the age of 19 where he died in 2018 at the age of 87. He studied Far Eastern languages and history and published his first novel at the age of 20. With his novel *Ein Mensch namens Jesus* ("A Man Named Jesus") he finally achieved his international breakthrough in 1989. After this success, he dedicated himself to the story of Saul to achieve similar successes. He is also considered to be the foundation stone for books about Jesus' work and life from a historical perspective. Many authors followed his example and presented Jesus from the historical perspective of the gospels. In 638 pages, the novel tells the

story of Saul, who became Paul. The book shows how Saul was already at that time considered very controversial. However, Messadié is not only concerned with Saul himself, but also with the world in which he lived. He reflects the epoch as a colorful world full of wonder and skepticism, torn between ancient sensualism and pious asceticism, between optimistic worldliness and devout seriousness: he deals a lot with the time of early Christianity. As an experienced author, Messadié tries to project the story of Saul and his change to Paul in a gripping yet historically true story and tries to bring the apostle as close and authentic as possible to the reader. With this way of writing the book has an impression on the reader even after reading it.

Comparing the two books, I noticed that Messadié has a better introduction to the whole world from Apostle Paul since he starts from the beginning of his story. He describes the time when Paul lived, how he grew up as Saul in a noble family, and then became a convinced follower after his encounter with Jesus. The persecution and execution of Christians are described in much more detail in *A Man Named Saul*. Although Messadié also describes the period after Paul's transformation, through his preaching, baptisms, missionary journeys, and his mission to convince others to follow his teachings, Young now gives much more detailed insights into the period after his transformation and Paul's theological picture. Messadié tries to convey the whole story more in the writing style of a novel, while Young concentrates more on biblical contexts and details. For me, *A Man Named Saul* is a book worth reading for believers and non-believers alike, while *Paul the Jewish Theologian* is probably more for readers who want to lose themselves in Paul's thoughts and want to understand more about the apostle and his often misunderstood teaching.

Young clarifies the reader about many misunderstood interpretations and still leaves enough freedom to form your own opinion. I have learned a lot of new knowledge about the

apostle, but I think Young should have kept the book much shorter, because he often repeats his thoughts and his analyses towards the end, making reading more difficult than it should be. However, he did a good job sorting his thoughts in such a way that even an unbelieving reader or one who is not so familiar with Paul's story can follow Young's thoughts. Furthermore, he often refers to teachings of the rabbis, which I liked very much, and in no way tries to find an unfriendly choice of words against Christians or other religious followers, but tries to analyze all the misunderstandings very neutrally.

If anyone would like to read through both of the books mentioned, I would recommend reading Messadié's *A Man Named Saul* first and then Young's *Paul the Jewish Theologian*, simply because then you can follow the whole story and transformation from sinner Saul to Apostle Paul from the beginning.

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