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New Testament Literature

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Book Review

Brad H. Young "Paul the Jewish Theologian"

Brad H. Young, *Paul The Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles*, (Baker, 1995) Price \$24.00 (Amazon) ISBN: 0801048214

Brad H. Young is a scholar, professor of biblical literature in Judeo-Christian studies, and the author of "Paul the Jewish Theologian." He has also authored several other books, including "Jesus and His Jewish Parables" and "Meet the Rabbis: Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus."

"Paul the Jewish Theologian" is a book that seeks to explore the Jewish roots of the Apostle Paul's theological framework. The book examines the impact of Paul's background as a Jewish scholar on his teachings and aims to provide insight into how Paul's Jewish worldview influenced his writings.

The purpose of the book is to help readers gain a deeper understanding of Paul's writings by exploring the Jewish context in which they were written. The audience for the book is primarily scholars and students of biblical studies, theology, and Jewish studies. However, it may also be of interest to anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of Paul's teachings and their relationship to Jewish thought and practice.

Chapter One is the Introduction of the book and thus introduces the topic and theme that is going to be discussed in the book to the reader.

Chapter Two is about the Apostle Paul's Jewish background, his education, and his role as a Pharisee. It also explores how Paul's understanding of the Torah influenced his teachings and his interpretation of Jesus' teachings. The chapter also explores the significance of Jesus' teachings and actions in relation to the Jewish context of his time.

Chapter Three focuses on the significance of the Pentecost and how it relates to the nations of the world and the teachings of the Apostle Paul. Young examines the Jewish background of Pentecost and how it influenced Paul's message to the Gentiles. The chapter explores the implications of Pentecost for Jewish-Christian relations and the importance of understanding the Jewish context of the New Testament.

In chapter Four Young also examines the differences and similarities between Judaism and Christianity regarding their perspectives on the Torah.

Chapter Five explores the role of the Torah in Paul's message and theology. He argues that Paul's understanding of grace and faith has its roots in the Torah and that Paul saw himself as a faithful interpreter of the Torah in light of his encounter with Jesus. Young also discusses how Paul's message of grace and faith challenged some of the dominant views of his time and paved the way for a new understanding of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the early Christian community.

Chapter Six discusses the concept of Torah as the "dead letter" versus the "living word." Young explores how Paul's understanding of Torah influenced his teachings and how his view of

the Law differed from that of the Pharisees. He also delves into the tension between legalism and grace in Paul's writings.

In chapter Seven Young argues that Paul's understanding of Torah goes beyond its traditional interpretation in Judaism, and that he saw the ultimate goal of Torah as the realization of God's plan of salvation through faith in Jesus. The chapter also discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to live out the transcendent principles of Torah.

Chapter Eight is about the concept of love as the foundation of Christian ministry, specifically focusing on 1 Corinthians 13. The chapter explores the cultural context and linguistic nuances of the Greek word for love (agape) and how it relates to Paul's teachings on spiritual gifts and Christian community.

Chapter Nine is about the essence of Paul's Jewish faith. Young explores how Paul's Jewish background influenced his faith, specifically how his understanding of God and salvation was rooted in Jewish thought and scripture. Young also examines how Paul's theology of grace relates to his Jewish heritage.

Chapter Ten explores seven key elements of Paul's Jewish theology, including monotheism, election, eschatology, and the Law. The chapter examines how these pillars influenced Paul's teachings and understanding of Jesus as the Messiah, and how they continue to shape Christian theology today.

One book that could be compared to Brad H. Young's "Paul the Jewish Theologian" is "Paul and Palestinian Judaism" by E.P. Sanders. Both books aim to understand the Apostle Paul's theology in light of his Jewish background and context.

However, there are some differences between the two books. While Young focuses on Paul's theology, Sanders focuses on the relationship between Paul's thought and Palestinian

Judaism. Sanders argues that Palestinian Judaism was not legalistic and works-based, as it was traditionally portrayed, but rather focused on covenantal relationship with God and observance of the Law as a response to God's grace. This differs from Young's emphasis on the continuity between Paul's theology and Jewish thought.

Additionally, Sanders' approach is more academic and scholarly, drawing on historical and textual analysis, while Young's approach is more accessible and geared towards a wider audience, incorporating anecdotal evidence and personal experience.

One strength of Brad H. Young's "Paul the Jewish Theologian" is his ability to provide a nuanced understanding of Paul's theology by examining it within the context of first-century Judaism. Young's use of a wide range of Jewish sources, including the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Talmud, helps to deepen our understanding of Paul's thought and the intellectual milieu in which he operated. Additionally, the book's clear and engaging style makes it accessible to a wide audience, not just scholars.

One potential weakness of the book, however, is that it relies heavily on the assumption of continuity between Paul's theology and Jewish thought. While this may be a valid perspective, it is not without its critics, and some scholars argue that Paul's theology represents a significant departure from Jewish tradition. Additionally, some of Young's arguments are based on conjecture and speculation, particularly when he attempts to reconstruct aspects of Paul's life and thought that are not explicitly mentioned in the biblical text.

Brad H. Young's "Paul the Jewish Theologian" is a valuable resource for anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of Paul's theology and the context in which it developed. It might be difficult to understand everything without any background in biblical studies or Jewish thought but Young's accessible writing style and use of personal anecdotes make complex ideas

easy to understand and engaging. At the same time, the book is grounded in rigorous scholarship, so even those with more advanced knowledge of the topic will find it informative.