**Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, Chapter 16**

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*The Mythmaker*

“Paul was not primarily a thinker, but he had a religious imagination of a high order.” (184)

“The basic theme in the Pauline myth can be summed up in one phrase: the descent of the divine savior.” (184)

“Thus some kind of doctrine of predestination follows: when the divine rescuer descends, he does not look to see who *deserves* to be rescued, because this would be to ascribe some kind of saving efficacy to something that man does by his own effort, whatever he does that comprises deservingness. How then, do we know who will be rescued? We do not. Those will be rescued whom the savior has decided to rescue. What, then, can we do to be rescued? Nothing, except to have *faith*.” (185)

“What imprisons us is the human condition, which is one of bondage to the powers of Evil.” (185)

“In Gnosticism, this world is regarded as so evil that it cannot have been created by God. It was created by a limited or evil power called the Demiurge.” (185)

“ . . . this world is so sunk in evil that rescue from above is a necessity.” (186)

“Though the Jewish Pseudepigrapha and Qumran writings have a sense of cosmic evil, they still believe in the efficacy of the Torah and of the election of Israel; they do not require a savior from the upper world in order to make human life viable. “ (187)

“No plausible Jewish model can be found for Paul’s type of dualism; the only contemporary parallel is in Gnosticism.” (187)

“ . . . Paul introduced the view that the Torah was a work of limited authority . . . given, not by God, but by angels.” (188)

“Paul is the sole creator of this myth about the angels fathering the Torah.” (188)

“For Paul, however, the human condition is desperate and the only issue is salvation. Thus law is irrelevant, for it is useless to talk to a drowning man about how he should behave. . . .” (191)

“For rabbis, the point of life is in the struggle, rather than in the reward. For Paul, the reward has become the indispensable substitute for the struggle, which he regards as hopeless and, therefore, pointless.” (192)

“Carpocratians” – followers of Carpocrates of Alexandria (d. 138 CE), reported by Irenaeus and Clement as libertine, heretical Gnostics—logical end to antinomianism (193). *An antinomian is a person who believes himself saved by faith and divine grace and no longer required to follow the law of Moses.*

“This led to the ironic result, in Christianity, of the building up, eventually, of a huge body of canon law in a religion which began as a revolt against law.” (193)

“Pauline Christianity did not consist of Gnosticism alone, but contained other important ingredients which the Gnostic Christians were not prepared to accept.” (194)

“The chief non-Gnostic element was derived from the mystery religions. [From them] Paul derived his idea of Jesus as a dying and resurrected god, who confers salvation and immortality through a mystic sharing in his death and resurrection. . . . There is no *sacrificial* motif in Gnosticism. The savior does not come to Earth to act as a sacrifice for mankind, but to bring them knowledge, if they are fit to receive it.” (194-195)

“Docetism” derives from Greek word meaning “to seem, to appear.” Heretical Gnostic sect which rejected idea that Christ was material enough to undergo sacrificial experience. “But for Paul, it was essential that Christ should be a real sacrifice, not just a seeming one.” (195)

“From mystery religion, too, comes the paradox of sacrificial salvation: that it is the result of the success of evil.” (196)

“ . . . threefold synthesis of Judaism, Gnosticism, and mystery religion was not constructed consciously by Paul . . .” (198)

“Paul took the cosmic drama of good and evil from Gnosticism, and so took over also the dramatization of the Jews as the representatives of cosmic evil. . . . The Jews became not just the opponents of the figure descended from the world of light, but the performers of the cosmic sacrifice by which the heavenly visitant brings salvation.” (204)