

THE ROLE OF COVENANT AND WORKS IN SALVATION: A SURVEY OF SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have debated the basis of salvation in Second Temple Judaism. On the one hand, it is argued that salvation is conceived in the literature as achievable through works of the law. On the other hand, some hold the view that salvation was secured on the basis of the covenant, with proponents attacking Paul's understanding of Jewish soteriology (e.g., Rom 1-4). In this study, we attempt a survey of relevant primary sources across the spectrum of religious literature of the period to be able to describe the Jewish idea of salvation. The picture that emerges is a composite one. The basis of salvation as presented in the literature is both the covenant and obedience/works: the covenant secured the historical redemption of Israel from their enemies, while obedience/works is presented as the precondition for eschatological salvation. Having established the currency of the doctrine that eschatological salvation was achievable through obedience/works, we conclude that the Pauline teaching against merit theology—for example, “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal 2:16)—is a necessary corrective to such a soteriological concept in Second Temple Judaism.

INTRODUCTION

Studies related to the covenant idea in the Second Temple period have not only been stimulating, but also fundamental to a paradigm shift in New Testament studies, especially in the Pauline corpus. This is seen in the radical reaction against the long standing Christian understanding of Judaism as a religion of work-righteousness against which Paul reacts in his writings (e.g. Rom 1-4). The paradigm shift has received impetus in the works of E. P. Sanders.² Like earlier scholars,³ Sanders has argued that the merit theology associated with Second Temple Judaism is unsupported by the literature of this period, for Judaism has been a religion of grace rather than work-righteousness. Instead, Sanders proposes “covenantal nomism” as the appropriate rubric for describing the theological substance of the literature of Second Temple Judaism (except 4 Ezra). Thus in the Second Temple period, Jewish obedience to the law, rather than seeking to earn salvation by merit points as they outweigh sins, was a means of preserving one's position in the covenant that God had established solely on the basis of grace.⁴ Stated differently, Jewish soteriology is rooted in the covenant, not in legalistic work-righteousness. Consequently, Paul is charged guilty of

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²E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977).

³E.g., G. F. Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921): 197-254; idem, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927-30).

⁴E. P. Sanders, “The Covenant as a Soteriological Category and the Nature of Salvation in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism,” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. Hamerton-Kelly and R. Scroggs (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 41.

misconstruing the theology of the Judaism he seeks to counter. This has resulted in a shift in the tenor of Pauline studies.⁵

Sanders has not gone without criticism. For example, Jacob Neusner has severely questioned the exegetical integrity of Sanders' work, especially when it comes to the Tannaitic literature.⁶ Ellen Juhl Christiansen has also argued that Sanders' consideration of the covenant as a soteriological category is narrow and one-sided, proposing instead that the covenant in Second Temple Judaism is to be understood in terms of ecclesiology.⁷ There has also been an Evangelical reaction to "covenantal nomism."⁸ Although these Evangelical scholars arrive at different conclusions (i.e., some find Sanders' category as appropriate in some of the literature but others do not), the general view seems to be that Sanders' rubric does not correctly capture the general tenor of Second Temple literature, since there appears to be "variegated nomism" in the literature. While these and several other criticisms⁹ have questioned the appropriateness of Sanders' "covenantal nomism," his views are nonetheless strongly held by advocates of the "New Perspective."¹⁰

It has been pointed out that Sanders' covenantal-nomist model with its categories of 'getting in' and 'staying in' seems to be more historical than eschatological.¹¹ Yet, while eschatology remains a dominant concern of Second Temple Judaism, Sanders and his followers have not offered a clear "distinction between salvation as *getting in* and *final* vindication at the last judgment."¹² Here rise the questions that prompt this survey: Was the view of salvation on the basis of works current in the Second Temple period? What about salvation on the basis of the covenant? If both were present, what kind of salvation did each secure? Is getting into "the world to come" viewed on the basis of the covenant or on the basis of obedience and merits?¹³ These questions are pertinent to the debate on the view of salvation in both Judaism and Paul. This survey is intended to bring to light the relationship between covenant and obedience (works) with

⁵See B. W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11*, JSNTSup. Series 57 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 14; J. D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," in *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn (London: SCM, 1990), 183-214.

⁶E.g., J. Neusner, *A Religion of Pots and Pans? Modules of Philosophical and Theological Discourse in Ancient Judaism* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1988), 11-26.

⁷See E. J. Christiansen, *Covenant in Judaism and Paul: A Study of Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

⁸D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien, and M. A. Seifrid, ed., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1: *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2001); T. Gallant, "Covenantal Nomism? A Comparative Review of Sanders and Carson *et al.*," available from <http://www.findarticles.com>; D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (London: Marshall, 1981).

⁹E.g., T. Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination in Pauline Soteriology*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2/100 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1998), 56; S. J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 23-24; T. E. von Spanje, *Inconsistency in Paul? A Critique of the Work of Heikki Räisänen*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2/110 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1999), 236-40; R. H. Gundry, "Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Biblica* 66 (1985): 1-38.

¹⁰E.g., J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); idem, *The Theology of Apostle Paul* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998); N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991).

¹¹Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 23; T. Laato, *Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995), 156; M. Hengel and R. Deines, "E. P. Sanders' 'Common Judaism': Jesus and the Pharisees," *Journal of Theological Studies* 46 (1995): 1-70.

¹²Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 264 (cf. 23).

¹³Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 408, suggests that "God's covenant is the basis of salvation, and the elect remain in the covenant unless they sin in such a way as to be removed."

regards to salvation in the Second Temple period. It may help draw a distinction between historical salvation based on membership in the covenant community and eschatological salvation based on works. If the view of salvation on the basis of obedience is well established, we will be able to understand why Paul dismisses the merit theology of the Jews (e.g., Rom 1-4). To achieve this purpose, the study selects and briefly examines pertinent Palestinian and Hellenistic sources where the subject is discussed.

COVENANTAL SALVATION IN SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

This section surveys select passages from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Rabbinic Sources, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Philo where the idea of salvation on the basis of the covenant is present.

Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) seems to have a universal tone with widespread wisdom motifs, yet the election and the covenant of Israel have their place in the book. In 17:12, the author states that God established “an eternal covenant” with Israel. The discussion begun in v. 11 concludes with a declaration in v. 17: “He appointed a ruler for every nation, but Israel is the Lord’s own portion” (cf. 24:4). It is on the basis of this election/covenant that Israel is admonished to “remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook ignorance” (28:7). In a typical nationalistic passage (36:1-17), God is called upon to hasten the day when the Gentiles will be destroyed and the children of Israel be gathered again. While eschatological salvation is not in view in Ben Sirach,¹⁴ restoration of the nation on the basis of her covenantal, law-keeping relation with God is clear (10:19).

Wisd. Sol. 15 praises God for His mercies. Verse 2 reads, “For even if we sin we are thine, knowing thy power; but we will not sin, because we know that we are accounted thine” (v. 2). This covenantal context allows the thought that Israel (the righteous) will be saved (vv. 3-4) while the enemies of God’s people, those who oppressed His people, will face judgment (v. 14; cf. Esd 6:55-59). In Tobit 4:12, Tobit admonishes his son not to marry a foreign woman, but rather a woman from his own tribe, “for we are the sons of the prophets” and only the Israelites “will inherit the land.” Salvation in this context is not eschatological as it is restoration of the nation.

The motifs of righteousness and wickedness pervade the whole of 1 Enoch. Often times the identity of the “wicked” is not very clear; it may refer to the enemies of Israel or to wicked Israelites.¹⁵ In 95:2-4, the following diatribe is found: “And so judgement shall overtake you, sinners. Fear not the sinners, ye righteous; For again will the Lord deliver them into your hands, that ye may execute judgement upon them according to your desires. Woe to you who fulminate anathemas which cannot be reversed: Healing shall therefore be far from you because of your sins.” It appears that the “sinners” here are the oppressors of God’s people (cf. v. 7) and the “righteous” are the covenant bearers, Israel. Punishment awaits these sinners who persecute God’s people (cf. vv. 5-7). The contrast between “sinners” and “righteous” in 1 Enoch 96 makes it clear that the “righteous” here refers to Israel. The sinners shall suddenly perish before the righteous and the latter shall have “lordship over them according to your desires” (v. 1). Thus the author encourages Israel: “Healing shall be your portion . . . And the voice of rest ye shall hear from heaven” (v. 3). This points to the physical redemption of Israel (cf. v. 2). 1 Enoch 99 continues the diatribe by stating that the wicked, the “godless” who “spread evil to their neighbors,” will eventually be slain in Sheol (v. 9,11). The righteous, in contrast, who accept the words of wisdom and walk in righteousness, will be saved in the days when the godless will be destroyed (v. 10). While v. 10 seems to imply righteous people in a specific sense, it is being in consonance with the general context of the book (e.g. chs. 95-96) to say that

¹⁴This fact is recognized by Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 333-334.

¹⁵Cf. R. H. Charles, ed. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English with Introduction and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books*, vol. 2: Pseudepigrapha (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 276.

‘the righteous’ refers to Israelites as opposed to ‘the godless’ Gentiles. Thus understood, the salvation of Israel seems, at least in this context, to derive from their covenantal relationship with God. It is to be noted, however, that in these passages from 1 Enoch, salvation is not viewed in an eschatological sense.

The context of Jub 1 is Moses’ receipt of the Law at Sinai. It is foretold that the people will defect from God, sin against the covenant, and indulge in all kinds of sins (1:1-16). Yet they will later acknowledge their sin and will recognize that God has not forsaken them (v. 6). Although God will deliver them into the hands of the Gentiles for a period, he will restore them: “And after this they will turn to Me from amongst the Gentiles with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength, and I will gather them from amongst all the Gentiles, and they will seek me, so that I shall be found of them” (vv. 15-16). It appears that in vv. 15-17 the author intimates the future restoration of the nation, the interest of which is not the salvation of specific persons: the salvation of Israel as a nation on the basis of the covenant seems to be in view. Jub 15:25-34 places much emphasis on the role and value of circumcision as the sign of the covenant. If the people of Israel, the “elect” (cf. 23:23-24), keep the circumcision ordinance, they will be preserved forever.¹⁶ Obedience in this context has some bearing on salvation, yet salvation comes largely on account of God’s covenant with Israel. Jub 23 relates the future revival of the nation on the basis of the covenant: when in the future the people of God “begin to study the laws, and to seek the commandments, and to return to the path of righteousness” (v. 26), their days will be prolonged (v. 27) and they will rejoice in peace (v. 30). Jub 50 seems to form an envelope with chap. 1 by continuing the idea of future cleansing of the people of Israel and the total eradication of evil from their midst: “And the jubilees shall pass by, until Israel is cleansed from all guilt of fornication, and uncleanness, and pollution, and sin, and error, and dwells with confidence in all the land, and there shall be no more a Satan or any evil one, and the land shall be clean from that time for evermore” (v. 5). This restoration, however, is not to be viewed as an eschatological event. In fact, according to v. 11 the sacrificial service will still be in place and there is also the possibility of disobedience, so that the one who breaks the Sabbath is subject to death (vv. 12,13). It is clear that in Jubilees, salvation, defined as the historical redemption or restoration of Israel, comes on the basis of the covenant, though obedience is sometimes stressed.¹⁷

The preservation of Israel by God in the light of the covenant is also found in the Psalms of Solomon. In 9:5-10, the author pleads with God to restore the righteous (i.e., the nation, cf. v. 8) based on the covenant promises. In the messianic text of 17:44-46, the author refers to the future gathering of the tribes of Israel and pleads that God may “deliver us from the uncleanness of unholy enemies!” (v. 45). Because God’s love is upon the children of Israel, he chastises them as his “first-born, only-begotten son” in order “to turn back the obedient soul from folly (that is wrought) in ignorance” (18:4). Like Jub 50:5, Ps Sol 18:5 pleads with God to “cleanse Israel against the day of mercy and blessing, against the day of choice when He bringeth back His anointed.” In Pss. Solomon, therefore, salvation is a corporate event to be effected in Israel on account of the covenant. As in Jubilees, the future purging of Israel in Psalms of Solomon (17:30-32; cf. 18:6,15) during the messianic age is not an eschatological salvation; rather it is historical restoration of Israel.

In the Letter of Aristeas, Israel is called “men of God,” a title which “does not belong to the rest of mankind but only to those who worship the true God” (140). It is because Israel is precious in God’s sight that he “hedged us round on all sides by rules of purity” (142; cf. 144,145). Israel was “distinctly separated from the rest of mankind” (152; cf. 139-153) and is preserved by God (158). This preservation of Israel by

¹⁶According to Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 368, in Jub 15:32-34 “physical descent is the basis of the election, and the election is the basis of salvation, but physical descent from Jacob is not the sole condition of salvation.” Contrast Jub 1:22-25; 50:5 with 6:12; 30:7.

¹⁷J. Becker, *Das Heil Gottes. Heils-und Sündenbegriffe in den Qumrantexten und im Neuen Testament* (SUNT 3) (Göttingen, 1964), 22, notes that both salvation and damnation are equally according to works in Jubilees.

God may be deemed as salvation. In Joseph and Asenath 8, Joseph is said to have drunk from the “cup of immortality,” “anointed with the blessed unction of incorruption,” and therefore must not kiss a foreign woman (v. 5-6). Since Asenath was a Gentile, Joseph could not touch her until she underwent purification rites and confessed her sins. By so doing, Asenath enters the covenant and salvation seems to be granted practically on this covenantal basis: “Take heart, Aseneth, for lo, the Lord has heard the words of your confession. Take heart, Aseneth, your name is written in the book of life, and it will never be blotted out. From today you will be made new, and refashioned, and given new life; and you shall eat the bread of life and drink the cup of immortality, and be anointed with the unction of incorruption” (15:3,4).

In Pseudo-Philo 11 God promises to glorify Israel above all nations but he will chastise the ungodly (v. 1). Israel has the everlasting law by which God will judge the world, namely those who do not know the law (v. 2). This in turn implies salvation for Israel, who has the law.

Sanders recognizes that 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra present a problem to his covenantal nomism. This notwithstanding, some passages in 2 Baruch seem to point to the opposite. In 13:9 we read that God “had aforesaid no mercy on His own sons, but afflicted them as His enemies, because they sinned.” However, the purpose for such chastisement immediately follows: “That they might be sanctified” (v. 10). The period of sanctification seems immediately to precede the messianic era, when God “will protect only those who are found in those self-same days in this land. And it shall come to pass when all is accomplished that was to come to pass in those parts, that the Messiah shall then begin to be revealed” (29:2-4). In chap. 72, it is prophesied that the Messiah shall “summon all the nations, and some of them he shall spare, and some of them he shall slay. . . . Every nation, which knows not Israel and has not trodden down the seed of Jacob, shall indeed be spared. And this because some out of every nation shall be subjected to thy people. But all those who have ruled over you, or have known you, shall be given up to the sword” (vv. 2-6). In chap. 78, God is said to have inflicted Israel so that they would become worthy of their fathers and thus be saved in the last times (v. 5). They will also escape condemnation and torment, for “ye will receive eternal hope” (v. 7). All this rests on the claim that God promised the fathers “never [to] forget or forsake us, but with much mercy will gather together again those who were dispersed” (v. 7). Yet, the author exhorts the people to pray that God “may not take account of your many sins, but remember the faithfulness of your fathers.”¹⁸ It may be seen that 2 Baruch promises salvation on the basis of the covenant. The nature of this salvation, however, is the restoration of the nation in the messianic age; the eschaton is not necessarily in view. The reference to the sparing of Gentile nations who have not oppressed Israel further strengthens this conclusion (72:2-6).

Rabbinic Sources

In Makkoth 3:16, R. Hananiah b. Akashya declares, “The Holy One, blessed be he, was minded to grant merit to Israel; therefore, hath he multiplied for them the Law and commandments” (cf. Ab. 6:11; Ex Rab. 30:9; b. Mak. 23b-24a).¹⁹ This implies that the more commandments there are to be observed, the more the scope of acquiring merit widens. This declaration would agree with Jub 23:26-30, where the future restoration of the nation seems to follow their return to the law (cf. 1:15-17).

¹⁸In Ex. Rab. 15:4, R. Judah says that if God were to “scrutinize the deeds of Israel, they will never be redeemed [from Egypt]; I will therefore fix my regard on their holy ancestors.” Here, “deeds” are not meritorious deeds, but lifestyle in general. Again, salvation in this context refers to redemption from Egypt, not eschatological salvation.

¹⁹Cf. R. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, trans. R. H. Fuller (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 66.

Part of b. Sanh 90b is a discussion on resurrection. Rabban Gamaliel states, “Just as you are all alive today, so shall you all live again in the world to come.”²⁰ While evidence is lacking as to the extent of this resurrection, it may not be taken as though Gamaliel implies that all Israel will be saved at the eschaton. The future salvation of Israel is brought to view in b. Sanh 97b-98a. Rather than eschatological, salvation here refers to physical domination of Israel and freedom from foreign rulership (see also Jub 1:17; 15:26-34; 50:5). Sanh 10 is the clearest passage in Rabbinic writings suggesting the salvation of Israelites on the basis of the covenant: “All Israelites have a share in the world to come” (v. 1).²¹ This proclamation notwithstanding, several groups of people are listed who will not have a part in the world to come (vv. 2-4). Sanders seems to overemphasize the importance of this text, suggesting it underlines the basic structure of Rabbinic soteriology.²² However, it should be noted that the thought of Sanh 10:1 is not systematic, that is, we do not find any such statement elsewhere in Rabbinic literature. Since there is lack of evidence to support corporate eschatological salvation of Israel, we may suggest that Sanh 10:1, like the other passages given above, points to the messianic era, not the eschaton.

Dead Sea Scrolls

Several Qumran scrolls seem to suggest salvation on the basis of the covenant, though in many of the passages the ‘covenant’ refers to the sectarian, not the Sinaitic, covenant (cf. 1QS 5:8-9,20-21; 6:18; 1QSa 1:6-8).²³ 1QH 3:20-23 suggests that by joining the covenant, the people had entered into “community with the congregation of the Sons of Heaven” (v. 22), for the participants of the covenant “share a common lot with the Angels of the Face” (6:12). While salvation in the strictest sense may not be in view, it is possible that participation in the covenant conceivably granted the salvation of participants. This corresponds somewhat to the realized soteriology that characterizes several other writings.²⁴ Further, 6:7-10 looks forward to the establishment of the nation Israel by grace: “in a little while” God will raise up “survivors” or “remnant” and purify/cleanse them. This passage suggests that while the redemption of the members of the sectarian covenant is taken for granted, the author looks forward to seeing non-sectarian Israelites saved. If this is so, it means that the sectarian covenant is not the sole basis of salvation.²⁵ With the absence of clear eschatological indicators, this passage may be understood to refer to the expected revival of the nation as well as her redemption from foreign oppression.

According to 1QS 5:1-3, those who “freely volunteer” to join the covenant should separate themselves from sinners (i.e., non-sectarian Israelites) and obey God’s law (e.g., 1:6-7,16-17; 5:20), since members are examined according to their “insight” and “deeds” (5:21,23; 6:14,17). While the sinners will be destroyed (2:4-10; 4:11-14; 5:19), the sectarians are a community of salvation (5:12-14). Much as this

²⁰Earlier in the same passage, R. Samuel b. Nahmani says, “Whoever holds fast to the law of the Lord, has a portion; whoever does not, has no portion” (b. Sanh 90b).

²¹The phrase “in the world to come” or “in the future to come” may refer either to the messianic age or to the hereafter. See M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targum, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*, vol. 2 (N.p.: n.d.), 1129. Cf. Sanders, *Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism*, 20.

²²Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 149, seeks further support from Tanhuma Behuqqotai 5 (vol. II, p. 111), p. Taanith 63d (1:1), and Sanh. 97b-98a. However, these texts do not point to eschatological salvation; they refer to historical restoration of the nation.

²³See M. G. Abegg, “Paul, ‘Works of the Law’ and MMT,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20 (1994): 82; cf. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 110.

²⁴Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 283, notes that in Qumran “there is a kind of two-stage soteriology. One stage involves joining the group of the elect, the other the final purification of the elect.”

²⁵God’s cleansing of the people is predicated by their good deeds: “Thou wilt purify and cleanse them of their sin, for all their deeds are in Thy truth” (v. 10; cf. 1QH 1:36). M. Black, ed., *Scrolls and Christian Origins* (London: SPCK, 1961), 124, rightly notes that legalism is a major issue in the Qumran Scrolls.

salvation depends on the sectarian covenant (vv. 10-19), it is more of realized than end time salvation (4Q171 3:1-2; cf. 1QHa 6:21). In the Damascus Covenant (CD) 3:10-16, all Israel is said to have strayed from God. However, God established His covenant with those “who remained steadfast in God’s precepts” (vv. 12,13) and “built for them a safe home in Israel” (v. 19). Those “who remain steadfast in it [safe home] will acquire eternal life and all the glory of Adam.” The “covenant” here seems to refer to the Sinaitic covenant (vv. 5-11) that is applied to the sect. While belonging to this renewed covenant may imply salvation, the text says that it is those who remain in the “safe home in Israel” who will acquire salvation. Further, the emphasis on obedience seems to indicate that salvation is, to some extent, dependent on reverting to the law (CD 15:9,13; cf. 7:5-6; 13:14-20). A similar line of thought is found in 1QpMic frags. 8-10: the Teacher of Righteousness “teaches the law to his council and to all those volunteering to join the chosen of God, observing the law in the council of the Community, those who will be saved from the Day of Judgment.” It is the covenant community which observes the law that will be saved on the eschatological Day of Judgment. Belonging to the covenant does not itself earn one salvation.

According to 1QM 1:1, “the time for the salvation of the nation of God” will come during a war between the sons of light (i.e. exiled Judah) and the king of the North. The lot of Belial will be destruction (v. 5; cf. 13:9-11). 1QM 13:7 says that God established eternal covenant with Israel (i.e., with the patriarchs) and remains loyal to it “in order to aid the remnant, the survivors of your covenant” (vv. 8,9). 1QM 14:4-5 follows with the idea that the faithfulness of both God and the people to the covenant has resulted in their salvation. With the general background of the war between Israel and the nations (cf. 12:10-18), it is reasonable to suggest that salvation in 1QM 1:1 refers to the historical restoration of the nation (cf. 1QM 17:6-9). The impression created in 13:7-10 and 14:4-10 is that of a realized salvation. These passages serve as praise to God after the war with the nations (13:1; 14:2,4; cf. chap. 12).

1QpHab 5:3-5 relates about the domination of Israel over the nations after a time of suffering: “God will not destroy His people by the hand of the nations; God will execute the judgment of the nations by the hand of His elect. And through their chastisement all the wicked of His people shall expiate their guilt who keep His commandments in their distress.” If this translation is correct,²⁶ it appears that atonement will be made for the sins of wicked Israelites (probably those outside the sectarian covenant) through their suffering. This would imply that the sectarian covenant is not the sole basis for the expected redemption. If 1QpHab 5:3-5 foretells the salvation of the wicked Israelites through suffering, 1QSa 1:1-5 tells of the joining of the congregation of Israel in the sectarian community “in the last days” (perhaps prior to the war with the Gentiles) in order to “walk according to the law” of the covenant. The key idea is obedience to the precepts of the covenant, the purpose of which is to “atone for the Land” (v. 3; cf. 1QS 8:6,10). However “atone for the land”²⁷ may be interpreted, it is clear that the passage looks forward to the restoration and domination of Israel (cf. 4Qflor).

Philo

Philo’s comments on the primacy of Israel has led Sanders to state that “Philo regarded membership in Israel as ‘saving’.”²⁸ In *Quod Deus Immutabilis Sit* 144,²⁹ Philo says that Israel is on the “royal road” (cf.

²⁶This translation is by G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962).

²⁷Black, *Scrolls and Christian Origins*, 42, understands this in the sense of redeeming the land, while Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 303, sees it as “atonement for the defilement of the land,” since, according to him, the land was defiled by its occupation and use by non-sectarian Israelites.

²⁸Sanders, *Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism*, 26.

²⁹References from Philo are taken from C. D. Tonge, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated ed.*, trans. C. D. Tonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

Mos. ii.189). The “earthly Edom” (probably the nations) is constantly working “to hinder them from this road, and to make it pathless and impracticable forever.” This “royal road” seems to lead to salvation, and since Israel is on this road, their salvation is taken for granted. Elsewhere, Philo indicates that through this path, Israel will obtain the “vision of good incorruptible and genuine” (148-51). As in Joseph and Asenath, salvation here seems to be progressive, if not realized. In *De Specialibus Legibus*, Philo maintains that God “selected out of the whole race of mankind those who were really men for their superior excellence; and he elected them and thought them worthy of the highest possible honour, calling them to the service of himself, to that everlasting fountain of all that is good” (i.303). As in Joseph and Asenath, Israelites have drunk the cup of immortality (i.303). Further, while “atheists are dead as to their souls . . . those who are marshalled in the ranks of the true living God, as his servants, enjoy an everlasting life” (i.345). Philo does not tell when this everlasting life is realized. Nonetheless, much as his thought is gathered around the vision of the *logos*, salvation seems to begin at the point where one gets this vision of the *logos* (cf. *Deus* 148-51).

Elsewhere, Philo appeals to the piety of the fathers of Israel, who are “a sort of first-fruits of the whole human race” (*Spec. Leg.* iv.180). He says, “Excessive and admirable righteousness and virtue of the founders of the nation . . . remain like undying plants, bearing a fruit which shall ever flourish to the salvation of their descendants . . . provided only that the sins which they commit are such as are remediable and not wholly unpardonable” (iv.181). The passage seems to imply the salvation of Israel on the basis of their covenant belonging, particularly on the merit of the ancestors.³⁰ This notwithstanding, the people are to act within the confines of the law and engage in “virtuous actions” (i.182). The timing of such salvation is not indicated, though analogy with the above passages would imply realized salvation. In *De Praemiis et Poenis* 169, Philo urges his people that “the change in everything will be immediate,” meaning that while Israel is undergoing hardships, there will be a reversal of fates in the near future. This view of historical salvation, namely redemption of Israel from foreign oppressors, resurfaces in 162-172.

In sum, the survey of the Second Temple literature which seem to suggest salvation on the basis of membership in the covenant community shows that, with the exception of a few ambiguous passages, the salvation secured through the covenant is to be understood on a historical dimension: the redemption of Israel (sometimes excluding those Israelites who commit unpardonable sins) from foreign domination and her supremacy over the nations. In a few cases, however, salvation on the basis of the covenant is either realized or ambiguously eschatological.

WORKS/OBEDIENCE AND SALVATION IN SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

This section surveys select texts from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Rabbinic Sources, Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, and the Targums that suggest that obedience is the basis of eschatological salvation.

Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

Sirach 11:26 reads, “For it is easy in the sight of the Lord to reward a man on the day of death according to his conduct.” Accordingly, readers are exhorted to “do your work before the appointed time, and in God’s time he will give you your reward” (51:30). While any eschatological tone (or belief in afterlife) in Sirach is challenged,³¹ its doctrine on personal reward on the basis of personal obedience is clear (cf. 3:1,6; 44:12-

³⁰The nature of salvation in Philo is not entirely clear. On this soteriological ambiguity, Sanders, *Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism*, 37, comments: “We may infer that those who keep the traditional Jewish laws will attain ‘happiness’ and that those who see the *logos* attain it *now*, while the wicked (non-converted Gentiles and apostate Jews) perish or suffer eternal punishment.”

³¹The later (ca. 117 BC) Greek translation of Sirach 7:17 (cf. 11:26; 48:11) has eschatological undertones. A. A. Di Lella, “Conservative and Progressive Theology: Sirach and Wisdom,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 28 (1966): 146, says that this note on eschatology was influenced by the doctrine of immortality in the Wisdom of Solomon. In any

13). Wisd. Sol 6:18-19 indicates that “love is keeping her laws, and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality, and immortality brings one near to God.” This future immortality is the destiny of the righteous (e.g. 3:1; 4:1; 8:13,17). Although God created man with immortality (2:23) which was lost through the trick of Satan (v. 24), by obeying the law, one will attain this immortality (i.e., “the reward of holiness,” 2:22), probably at the eschaton (5:15,16).³²

In 1 Macc 2:51-52 Mattathias exhorts his sons to “remember the deeds performed by our ancestors, each in his generation, and you will win great honour and everlasting renown.” He notes that Abraham was justified because of his good works (v. 52), and so were several other national heroes (vv. 53-60). The motivation for law keeping is the reward for glory and honor (cf. 2:61-64). The insistence of the author on everlasting rewards on the basis of obedience seems to open the way for an eschatological interpretation. If this is correct, then salvation is clearly dependent upon law fulfilment.

1 Enoch 38:1-3 focuses on the fate of the wicked at the eschaton. The wicked shall be judged for their sins and be driven from the face of the earth, but “the chosen righteous whose works are weighed by the Lord of Spirits” will “dwell on the earth” (v. 2). This eschatological judgement will be carried out through weighing of deeds: “I saw all the secrets of heaven . . . and how the deeds of men are weighed in the balance” (1 Enoch 41:1-2; cf. 38:2; 43:2). This theology of the scales of judgment, further developed in 2 Enoch 44:4-5 (cf. 50:2,5; 51:3; 53:1), shows that eschatological salvation—going out of this present age and becoming inheritors of the everlasting age, 66:6—is based on merit. An interesting example of this concept of weighing is recounted in T. Abraham: Abraham sees a judgment scene presided by Abel and assisted by two angels, one holds “scales” and the other, “fire” (13:1-6). He then sees a soul which is “consigned . . . neither to judgement nor to salvation” because that soul’s sins balanced his good deeds (14:1-5). The patriarch and Prince Michael interceded for the soul (vv. 6-8), and based on this intercession the soul is saved (v. 10).

Jubilees 30:21-22 urges Israel not to forsake the law of God so that they will be recorded in the book of life. This keeping of the law does not merely describe the maintenance of one’s status in the covenant as Sanders would have it; rather, writing the people down as “friends of God” (v. 21) is “a verdict given subsequent to obedience.”³³ Although the soteriological significance of this law keeping is not explicitly stated, the punishment of the lawless wicked after death (36:10) seems to imply the opposite for the righteous.

An important aspect of eschatology in the Psalms of Solomon is its picture of the day of judgement when the righteous will resurrect (e.g. 2:31; 3:12) and be given eternal, indestructible life (3:11) and the wicked, eternal death (2:34; 3:12). Chap. 9 describes this eschatological salvation clearly in terms of reward and obedience: “He who does righteousness lays up life for himself with the Lord; And he who does wrong forfeits his life to destruction. For the judgements of the Lord are (given) in righteousness to (every) man and (his) house” (v. 5). This passage points to the “treasure in heaven” theology as elsewhere in Second Temple Judaism. If this treasure is life (9:5), then it follows that eternal life is based on the obedience that stores up this treasure with God (cf. vv. 3,5,10).³⁴

case, this Greek redaction is a good example of the development of eschatological soteriology in the Second Temple period.

³²D. J. Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 75, states, “The emphasis on immortality is the writer’s most original and influential contribution to biblical theology. . . . In this way he deferred the vindication of the righteous to their life after death or to the last judgment.”

³³Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 62.

³⁴D. S. Winnige, *Sinners and the Righteous: A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul’s Letters* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995), 74-75, is wrong in his defense of Sanders by saying that in Pss. Sol 9:5

Pseudo-Philo 3:10 is in the context of the flood. God promises not to destroy the earth with flood (v. 9). However, at the eschaton, “when the years of the world shall be fulfilled,” God will resurrect the dead so as to “render unto every man according to his works and according to the fruit of his own deeds” (v. 10). The reference to new heaven and earth (v. 10) further shows that here, as elsewhere, obedience is the precondition of eternal life (cf. 2 Esdras 5:26-36).

2 Baruch 14:12-14 states that though the righteous will die, they hope for the new world “because they possess with you [God] a store of good works preserved in treasuries. On this account also these without fear leave this world, and trusting with joy they hope to receive the world which Thou hast promised them” (vv. 12-14). As if this were not clear enough to show that the righteous will be saved through their “treasuries” (cf. 3 Baruch 11:9), the author states that the “righteous on account of my law” (51:3) have been “saved by their works. And to whom the law has been now a hope, And understanding an expectation, And wisdom a confidence, Shall wonders appear in their time. For they shall behold the world which is now invisible to them, And they shall behold the time which is now hidden from them” (51:7-8).

Eschatological salvation on the basis of works also appears in 4 Ezra 7:88-89.³⁵ In the “last times” (v. 87), those who keep the “ways of the Most High . . . shall be separated from their mortal body” (v. 88), for they did their best to “keep the law . . . perfectly” (v. 89). These righteous have “many works laid up” with God (8:32) and Ezra himself is spoken of as having a “treasure of works laid up” (7:76-77). The Testaments of the Twelve also contain references to eschatological salvation as a reward for obedience. As in T. Jud (24-26), T. Lev 13 talks of the reversal of fates at the eschaton. Levi admonishes his sons, “Do good works, my children, on earth, so that you find your reward in heaven” (v. 5). A similar concept obtains in T. Jos 18:1 and T. Zeb 10:2-3. Like T. Lev (13:6), T. Jos teaches that obedience to the commandments (or doing righteousness) leads God to exalt the person both in this world and the next (18:1). Again, Zebulun promises that at the eschaton he will resurrect and rule among his sons, particularly those who have “kept the Law of the Lord and the commandments of Zebulun” (10:2-3). While election/covenant underlines some of these passages, it remains clear that salvation at the eschaton is individualistic, the means of which is obedience to the law (cf. T. Job 4:4-11; 34:4-9; Sib. 2:149-153, 313-314; 4:105,187-188).

Rabbinic Sources

Some statements of Rabbi Akiba are instructive regarding the idea of eschatological salvation as a reward for obedience:

All is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given; and the world is judged by grace, yet all is according to the majority of works (Abot 3:15; cf. 4:22).

. . . the man who commits only one sin loses thus the merit of his good works. . . . (It refers to) whoever does not have one *mitsvah* which can prove in his favour (and so make the scales incline) to the side of innocence. This he said with regard to the world to come (y. Qidd. 61d).³⁶

The following statement appears in a debate between Rabbis R. Gamaliel II and Akiba regarding Ezek 18:5-9:

When Rabbi Gamaliel read this verse he wept, saying, ‘Only he who does all these things shall live, but not merely one of them!’ Thereupon R. Akiba said to him, ‘If so, *Defile not yourself in all these things* [Lev 18:24].—is the prohibition against *all* [combined] only,

there is nothing to suggest “righteousness by works.” So is Dunn, *Theology of Apostle Paul*, 152-153, in thinking that Ps. Sol 14 does not refer to a life yet to be achieved.

³⁵Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 409, admits that his covenantal nomism breaks down in 4 Ezra.

³⁶This translation is cited in Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 131.

but not against one? [Surely not!] But it means, *in one* of these things; so here too, for doing one of these things [shall he live] (Sanh 81a).³⁷

These statements of R. Akiba “about damnation for one transgression, salvation for one fulfilment (*y. Qidd.* 61d; *b. Sanh.* 81), and judgement according to the majority of deeds (*m. Abot* 3:15)”³⁸ clearly uphold obedience to the commandments as the way to eschatological salvation.

The idea of eschatological salvation on the basis of works/obedience appears elwhere in Talmudic literature. In a debate on the fate of those with “evenly balanced” sins and merit, the house of Shemmai says, “These go down to Gehenna, where they scream and again come up and receive healing” (T. Sanh 13:3). T. Qidd. 1:13-14 emphasizes good works as the precondition for eschatological salvation: “And [if] one did one commandment, happy is he, for he has inclined the balance for himself and for the world to the side of merit. [If] he committed one transgression, woe is he, for he has inclined the balance for himself and for the world to the side of guilt” (v. 14; cf. *b. Qid.* 40b; *m. Qid* 1:10).

Abot 2:12 admonishes people to be concerned with the study of Torah, because the study of Torah is meritorious, the reward of which comes at the eschaton (2:16). According to *Peah* 1:1, “performance of righteous deeds,” “acts which bring peace,” and more importantly “the study of Torah,” among others, are meritorious deeds which will enable individuals to inherit the world to come. To emphasize the importance of law keeping, *Kidd* 1:10 states, “He who performs one precept in addition to his [equally balanced] merits is well rewarded, and he is as though he had fulfilled the whole Torah. Hence it follows that for these others [one is rewarded] even for a single one! - Said R. Shemaiah: That teaches that if there is an equal balance, it tips the scale” (*Kidd.* 39b; cf. *Kidd.* 40b).³⁹ Finally, the Rabbis also teach that suffering has a purifying effect, for God “brings suffering upon the righteous in this world, in order that they may inherit the future world.” He also makes the wicked “prosper in this world, in order to destroy” them (*Kidd.* 40b; cf. *Deut.* Onq. 7:10).

Dead Sea Scrolls

4QMMT C 26-32 focuses on works of Torah.⁴⁰ If “the works of the Torah” are kept, “It shall be reckoned to you as justice when you do what is upright and good before him, for your good and that of Israel.” In this passage, concrete deeds are counted as righteousness on the day of judgment. The theme of

³⁷Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 139, consciously downplays the eschatological tone of these statements of R. Akiba as well as T. Sanh 13:3 and T. Qidd. 1:14, thinking that such passages serve only to encourage obedience to the law. See a rebuttal of this view in F. Avemarie, *Tora und Leben: Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (TSAJ 55) (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), cited in Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 149-156.

³⁸Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 152.

³⁹Arguing that Torah is a source of salvation in Judaism, J. Neusner, *Torah: From Scroll to Symbol in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 26, states, “Either the individual, through study of the Torah and obedience to its teachings, achieves life after death, or the people Israel, through study of the Torah, is saved from this-worldly disasters of a national or local character or through the Torah draws nearer the coming of the Messiah and the eschatological rewards of the age to come.” See also D. Daube, *New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 119,133.

⁴⁰Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting*, 92, noted that in Qumran, “works of Torah” are “deeds done in obedience to the totality of Torah.” In fact, 4QFlorilegium seems to indicate that the community exists so as “to send up, like the smoke of incense, works of the Law” (4Q174 6-7). Cf. 4Q470 fr 1 4; 4Q171 2:15; 4Q542 1 ii 1; 4Q461 1 8. Keeping the “whole Torah” (4Q174 fr 1 ii 2) helps escape judgment both in this world (1Q22 2:7-10; 4Q171 i 11-13) and at the eschaton (1QpMic frs 8-10)—law keeping is therefore the basis for the eschatological salvation.

eschatological rejoicing found in C 30 (cf. CD 20:32-34; 4Q403 fr 1; 1QM 14:3) suggests that the rejoicees gain entry into eternal life as a result of their good deeds (cf. CD 3:14-16; 20:27-34).

In the Rule of the Community obedience seems to be rewarded, among other things, with “eternal life” (1QS 4:6-8,25-26). 1QpHab 7:17 paraphrases Hab 2:4b as follows: “But the righteous man will live because of their loyalty to him.” The *peshet* goes,

Its interpretation concerns all observing the Law in the House of Judah, whom God will free from the house of judgment on account of their toil and of their loyalty to the Teacher of Righteousness (8:1-3).

As in the above passage, 4QInstruction indicates that eternal salvation is a reward for both suffering (4Q416 fr 2 i 6-7) and obedience or good deeds (4Q417 2 i 11-16). Despite the difficulty in the reconstruction of 4Q418 fr. 127, its theology of the scales of judgment seems clear: “For with the scales of justice he has weighed all their right times and with truth” (cf. frs. 167,172). Taken together, these texts show that final salvation is a reward for observance of Torah or good deeds. Qumran eschatology, therefore, is not limited to this world, because the expectation of life after death is clearly present.⁴¹

Josephus

Josephus discusses the theology of the Pharisees and the Essenes. Both groups believed in immortality of the soul as reward for the “good” (*Ant.* 18:12-13; *Jewish War* 2:154-58). Yet while the Pharisees believed in resurrection into new bodies (*Jewish War* 2:162-64), the Essenes did not, maintaining that the souls of the “good” people enter the “life across the sea” (2:155). Josephus himself believed in both resurrection and the immortality of the soul (3:374-75) and viewed eschatological salvation as a reward for obedience (3:374). In *Contra Apionem*, he maintains that reward accompanies the law: Those who “live exactly according to the laws” and “willingly die . . . for the laws” will be given “renewed existence and a better life at the transformation” (2:217-18; cf. 1 Macc 7). These passages tell that eschatological salvation on the basis of works or obedience was already present at the time of Josephus, a contemporary of Paul. While these and other passages in Second Temple period have covenantal/election undertones, the reward for salvation is clearly individualistic, not corporate.

The Targums

The Targum Neofiti of Genesis adds interesting comments on chap. 15:1 that relate to the theology of merit. After his conquest of the eastern kings (Gen 14), Abraham is afraid, thinking “perhaps I have received the reward of the precepts in this world and there is no portion for me in the world to come” or perhaps his “meritorious deeds” have been rewarded. However, the patriarch is assured that “the reward of your good works is prepared for you before me in the world to come” (cf. *Ant.* I.183).

Leviticus Onqelos 18:5 reads, “You should observe my ordinances and (my) laws, which, if a person practices them, he will live through them *in the future world*.” Similarly, Tg. Ezekiel asserts that the righteous, because they observe the laws, will be rewarded with “eternal life” (20:11,13,21; cf. Tg. Zeph 2:3). Tg. Ruth 2:12 contains a parallel theology: Naomi prays that the Lord repay Ruth “*a good recompense in this world* for your *good* deeds and may you be perfect *in the next world* from *before* the Lord.” On account of her good deeds, Ruth, who has now “*become a proselyte*,” will be “*saved from the judgment of Gehenna*” and will be counted among the patriarchs of Israel. These passages clearly reveal that the reward for living a righteous life and observing the commandments was not to be found in this life, but rather in the world to come.⁴² R. P. Gordon’s comment is also true: “Concomitant with the doctrine of

⁴¹J. J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997), 110-19; idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2d ed (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 171-74.

⁴²See also S. H. Levy, *The Targum of Ezekiel*, The Aramaic Bible 13 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), 63 n. 4.

Torah goes that of meritorious deeds which protect the doer of them on the day of judgment and in the world to come.”⁴³

This section has shown that salvation at the eschaton was deemed achievable through obedience to Torah or other meritorious deeds. The imagery of weighing human deeds in a balance pictorially illustrates this doctrine. The contexts of the passages studied are clearly eschatological, oftentimes containing the idea of universal resurrection before the judgment and eternal life after it. There is also a stark discontinuity between this world and the next. Although eschatological salvation is sometimes presented with election/covenant undertones, individuality is clearly highlighted. Membership in the covenant community does not itself qualify an individual for eschatological salvation.

CONCLUSION

This study started with the question whether salvation at the eschaton was viewed on the basis of the covenant or on the basis of obedience to the Torah in Second Temple Judaism. Having surveyed a wide array of texts from this period, it may be concluded preliminarily that in Second Temple Judaism, salvation was seen on the basis of both the covenant and obedience/works. Unlike the advocates of the New Perspective, we have observed in this study that, on the one hand, salvation on the basis of the covenant is basically to be understood on a historical level, namely the redemption of Israel from foreign domination and her subsequent supremacy over the nations. Even so, those members of the covenant who commit unpardonable sins do not seem to have a part in this national revivification. On the other hand, salvation at the eschaton is based upon merit, achievable through obedience to Torah or the performance of some good deeds. Accordingly, judgment at the eschaton is understood to be effected through the use of weighing scales, so that if an individual’s merit outweighs their sins salvation is assured. In such texts, several eschatological markers are present, for example, resurrection, judgment, and eternal life in the next world. Thus, whereas salvation on the basis of the covenant is mostly on a national or corporate level, eschatological salvation is individualistic, since it is a reward for personal obedience.

Many of the texts that refer to salvation on the basis of the covenant also point to final salvation as a reward for works. Moreover, in a few instances salvation on the basis of the covenant is either realized or ambiguously eschatological. Perhaps, this is a perfect reflection of the multiplex character of the theological thought of Second Temple Judaism. Nonetheless, much of the ambiguity vanishes when it is realized that two kinds of salvation are in view, namely historical redemption (based largely on membership in the covenant) and eschatological salvation (based on obedience/works). What remains clear, in the end, is that while the covenant seemed to assure historical redemption of Israel, obedience/works served as the precondition of eschatological salvation. If this observation is correct, Sanders’ theory of ‘covenantal nomism’ appears at best a narrow view of the “pattern of religion”—to use his own words—of Second Temple Judaism. Having observed the currency of eschatological salvation on the basis of obedience/works in this period, it goes without question to maintain that Pauline statements against merit theology—for example, “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal 2:16)—serve as a necessary corrective to such soteriological concept.

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⁴³R. P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, The Aramaic Bible 14 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 8.

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