JASON MASTON

Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul

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A Comparative Study

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Jason Maston, born 1978; 2010 PhD from Durham University (England); tutor of New Testament at Highland Theological College UHI in Dingwall, Scotland.

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Preface

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Above all, my wife Erin, deserves the most thanks, and I dedicate this study to her. You have sacrificed much in the pursuit of my dreams. Thank you for being a model of grace and love. You have created the perfect home for our children. Your reward will be great in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jason Maston
August 2010

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Introduction

A. Divine and Human Agency in Recent Discussion

With the publication of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977, Sanders began what has been described as a "Copernican revolution."[1] Prior to this work, NT scholars generally portrayed Judaism as crass legalism. Each individual attempted to meticulously keep the law, and each lived in perpetual fear of falling short at the Judgment by a mere one evil deed. Those who did manage to keep the law more often than not boasted egotistically before God. They demanded that God honour them, for they had successfully kept the law. Rejecting this Judaism as a false religion, NT scholars found in Paul true religion, and they read Paul as an opponent of this version of Judaism. The apostle of Christ came triumphantly to man's rescue with his proclamation of righteousness by faith alone. He showed that salvation was wholly the work of God. Here the apostle and his former religion are set in the sharpest contrast, and the dividing issue is the divine-human relationship. On whom does salvation depend – God or man? This version of Judaism and Paul is what Sanders found in the scholarship prior to his volume.[2]

Against this view of Judaism and the apostle's relationship to it, Sanders argued that Judaism was not "works-righteous legalism." He proposed instead "covenantal nomism" as the pattern of religion for Judaism.[3] Salvation was by God's grace, not human deeds. God graciously chose Israel as his people, gave to them the covenant, and this act determined that "all Israelites have a share in the world to come" (*Sanh.* 10.1 [Danby]). Obedience became, then, not the way into salvation, but the means to maintaining salvation. It was the response of any faithful covenant member. Obedience to the law belongs within the covenant relationship and was never far from God's grace. In Sanders' own words, "[C]ovenantal nomism is the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression" (75; cf. 236; 422).

[1] Hagner, "Paul and Judaism," 75.

[2] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 33–59. Parenthetical references in the following are to Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.

[3] In addition to Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, see also his "Covenant" and *Judaism*, 262–78. Sanders' view of Judaism was not new, as he notes (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 4–7) with reference to Montefiore (*Judaism and St. Paul*), Schechter (*Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*), Moore (*Judaism*) and Davies (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*).

With this drastically different perspective on Second Temple Judaism, Sanders attempted a different reading of Paul. The opposition between grace/faith and works that so many earlier generations of scholars found in Paul simply could not be there. Instead, Paul's problem with the law was not that it required doing, but because it was not Christ. Paul held that salvation was by Christ alone, and this meant that salvation could not be through the law. Sanders argued,

> *Since* salvation is only in Christ, *therefore* all other ways toward salvation are wrong, and attempting to follow them has results which are the reverse of what is desired. What is wrong with following the law is not the effort itself, but the fact that the observer of the law is not seeking the righteousness which is given by God through the coming of Christ (Rom. 10.2–4). Effort itself is not the sin; the sin is aiming towards *any* goal but being found 'in Christ' (Phil. 3.9). (482; emphasis original)

While agreeing with other Jews about the goal, namely righteousness, Paul claims that the only true "righteousness" is that found by faith in Christ. He, therefore, rejects the righteousness of the law not because it requires obedience, but because "such a means leads to the wrong end (righteousness based on the law); and the end itself is wrong, since it is not salvation in Christ" (551). Paul also denies the salvific value of the Jewish covenant and claims instead that those who have faith in Christ are Abraham's descendants. In his rejection of the covenant and the election and grace implied by it, "it is thus not first of all against the *means* of being properly religious which are appropriate to Judaism that Paul polemicizes ('by works of the Law'), but against the prior fundamentals of Judaism" (551; emphasis original). *"What Paul founds wrong in Judaism,"* Sanders famously claimed is that *"it is not Christianity"* (552; emphasis original).

In his later work, *Paul, Judaism and the Law*, Sanders maintained this contrast between Christ and the Torah as fundamental to Paul's theology and rejection of the law. He also brought in an emphasis on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. Sanders argues that especially in Galatians, but also in Romans Paul does not oppose faith or works themselves but the refusal to accept Gentiles apart from law observance.[4] The issue is about membership into the people of God. This is "the actual subject of the dispute" between Paul and the Christian missionaries in Galatia, not "the theological issue of grace and merit."[5] The theological content is not dismissed entirely. It is rather interpreted as a contrast between Christ and the law, and the sociological argument is elevated to equal status.

Despite setting the law in opposition to Christ, Sanders maintained that the pattern of religion was fundamentally the same: salvation is by grace and one remains in the sphere of salvation through obedience. The point at which

[4] Sanders, *Law*, 18–20, 47, 155.
[5] Sanders, *Law*, 19.

many find Paul and Judaism to diverge irreconcilably, namely grace and works, Sanders claimed instead that "Paul is in agreement with Palestinian Judaism" (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 542). He continues, "There are two aspects of the relationship between grace and works: *salvation is by grace but judgment is according to works; works are the condition of remaining 'in', but they do not earn salvation*" (543; emphasis original). Although Paul and Judaism shared this similar view, Sanders held that Paul's thought should not be described as "covenantal nomism." Paul's thought revolved around participatory categories, and covenantal nomism could not capture these ideas (514).[6] Despite Paul thinking in fundamentally different categories, the relationship between "getting in" and "staying in" was basically the same. No substantial differences can be detected in the patterns.

Sanders' two volumes, especially *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, have decisively altered the direction of Pauline research. Within four years, Dunn had dubbed the possibilities opened by Sanders' work the "New Perspective on Paul."[7] In this lecture of the same title, Dunn began to develop an understanding of Paul built firmly on Sanders' picture of Judaism. Dunn was unimpressed by Sanders' interpretation of Paul, though, so he sought to understand Paul within Sanders' Judaism.[8] Dunn thus agreed with Sanders that Judaism did not think salvation was by works. Recognising the importance of Paul's antithesis between "faith in Christ" and "works of the law," Dunn argued that the latter phrase should not be generalised to any human deed. It is rather a contextually specific phrase referring to the key distinguishing markers of the Jewish people: circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath regulations, or covenantal nomism when bound too close to Israel's national identity.[9] While Dunn's subsequent works have clarified how he understands this phrase, he argues consistently that the phrase has nothing to do with legalistic works-righteousness.[10] It cannot mean this simply because Judaism believed that salvation was by grace not works.

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[6] He discusses Paul's participation ideas in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 453–72, 502–08.

[7] Dunn, "New Perspective." This article was originally given as a lecture in 1981 and published in 1982. Page references are to the reprint in *The New Perspective on Paul.*

[8] Dunn, "New Perspective," 93–95. Commenting on Sanders' Paul, Dunn writes, "But this presentation of Paul is only a little better than the one rejected. There remains something very odd in Paul's attitude to his ancestral faith. The Lutheran Paul has been replaced by an idiosyncratic Paul who in arbitrary and irrational manner turns his face against the glory and greatness of Judaism's covenant theology and abandons Judaism simply because it is not Christianity" (93).

[9] Dunn, "New Perspective," 101; idem, "Works of the Law," 117.

[10] Dunn writes, "'[W]orks of the law' characterize the whole mind set of 'covenantal nomism'—this is, the conviction that status within the covenant (= righteousness) is maintained by doing what the law requires ('works of the law'). Circumcision and food laws in particular come into play simply (!) because they provided the key test cases for most Jews of Paul's time" ("Yet Once More," 208). See also idem, *Theology of Paul*, 358; "New Perspective on Paul: Whence, Whither, and How," 22–26.

Whereas Sanders set Christ and the Torah in opposition to one another as the distinction between Paul and Judaism, Dunn found this contrast in Paul's claim that Gentiles can be among God's people without Jewish identity markers and the exclusivity of Judaism.[11] Paul's gospel opened the way for Gentiles to be saved apart from observance of the Jewish Torah. They could come to faith in Christ as Gentiles. The antithesis between justification by faith or works of the law encapsulates Paul's attempt to establish that salvation is possible outside the confines of Jewish exclusiveness.[12] While the antithesis might have something to say about the individual's standing before God, it is primarily about the ecclesiological relationship between Jews and Gentiles as the one people of God.[13] Paul's problem with his fellow Jews, then, is not that they prioritise human action over divine action, but that they limit the scope of salvation.

In contrast to those who found Paul's soteriology to be radically different from Judaism, Dunn contends that one finds in Paul's thought the same basic relationship between grace and obedience that one finds in Judaism. Against Sanders Dunn argues that covenantal nomism is an accurate description of Paul's soteriology. He agrees with Hooker, who writes, "In many ways, the pattern which Sanders insists is the basis of Palestinian Judaism fits exactly the Pauline pattern of Christian experience: God's saving grace evokes man's answering obedience."[14] What Paul objects to is not "covenantal nomism" itself, but a form of covenantal nomism that ties the covenant and the law too closely to Israel's ethnic and national identity.[15] Once removed from this nationalistic context, Paul is quite comfortable with the pattern.

While some scholars opposed Sanders' interpretation of Judaism,[16] for the most part Sanders' view was warmly embraced and would come to be simply taken for granted by much of subsequent scholarship. Studies by Garlington and Yinger sought to support Sanders' interpretation of the Jewish texts. Garlington explores the relationship between faith and obedience in the "apocryphal" texts.[17] He contends that the two are not in opposition, but expressions of one another. The Jewish person did not obey in order to attain salvation since this was already given by grace through the covenant and election. Obedience has the precise function that Sanders claimed for it, namely, as the response of

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[11] Dunn, "New Perspective," 104; idem, "Noch einmal," 411.

[12] See Dunn's interpretation of Galatians 2.15–16 in his *Galatians*, 132–41. Cf. Wright, "Paul of History," 71: "[W]e must see justification by faith as a polemical doctrine, whose target is not the usual Lutheran one of 'nomism' or *'Menschenwerke'*, but the Pauline one of Jewish national pride."

[13] See Dunn, "Justice of God;" idem, "Paul and Justification by Faith," 365–69.

[14] Hooker, "Paul and 'Covenantal Nomism'," 157. Cited by Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 632n.29.

[15] Dunn, "Theology of Galatians."

[16] See Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*, 86–95; Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*.

[17] Garlington, *'Obedience of Faith'*.

the covenant member to God's grace. Based on his analysis of the uses of the phrase "judgment by deeds" in the Jewish texts, Yinger concludes that obedience did not earn salvation. Rather it was the evidence of one's faithfulness to God.[18] Both studies maintain that salvation according to the Jewish texts discussed is by God's grace.

Although giving broad support to Sanders' interpretation of Judaism, many scholars have rejected his interpretation of Paul, and they have busied themselves with the task of making sense of Paul against the backdrop of a non-legalistic Judaism. The two works just noted fall squarely in this category. Both seek to demonstrate the continuity between Paul and Judaism on the relationship between obedience and salvation. Yinger argues that there is no conflict between justification by faith and judgment according to works in Paul because faith and works are simply not in opposition. Garlington and Yinger explicitly maintain that Paul's pattern of religion is identical to covenantal nomism.[19] Although the taxonomy "covenantal nomism" itself may not be entirely accurate, Yinger maintains that "the fundamental structure of grace and works, election and obedience, salvation and judgment, remains the same" even though "the role of the Spirit in enabling obedience, while not absent in Judaism, is certainly heightened significantly in Paul." He continues, "Salvation . . . is given by God's grace; *and* it is contingent upon continuance in the faith and obedience which are required by that relationship."[20]

The important work by Engberg-Pedersen begins from the premise that Sanders is correct about Judaism and that the "New Perspective" is accurate about the basic problem that Paul had with other Jews.[21] The details of Engberg-Pedersen's study need not detain us, for the primary reason to note him here is his refusal to discuss Paul's statements about divine acts. This refusal stems from his claims about what constitutes "real options" for the post-Enlightenment person. Paul's ethics, as well as those of the Stoics, are still valid options, but theological claims, while important for Paul, must be bracketed out and ultimately ignored.[22] Engberg-Pedersen does not deny that Paul makes statements about divine action nor that these claims may have been important for Paul himself. For example, while noting Paul's "participation" ideas ex-

[18] Yinger, *Judgment*, 285–86.

[19] Garlington, *'Obedience of Faith'*, 264–65; Yinger, *Judgment*, 288–90.

[20] Yinger, *Judgment*, 289 (emphasis original).

[21] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 14–16.

[22] "[T]he present work cannot at all get off the ground unless one takes the historical-critical, 'naturalistic' perspective wholly seriously. One must bracket completely, at least initially, any 'theological' interest one may have in aligning oneself with Paul's own perspective, which is definitely a 'theological' one that begins, logically, 'from above' in ideas about God and his acts. One must part company with Paul and give up reading him merely from within. Instead, one must read the whole of Paul—including his 'theological' ideas—coolly from the outside" (Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 2).

pressed in Romans 8.1–13, they are quickly set aside because they do not help the modern interpreter to understand why the Christ event can result in sinless living.[23] Statements about divine action (that is, the Christ event) are passed over in favour of statements about how the believer perceives himself or herself.

The outcome of Engberg-Pedersen's hermeneutical claims is that one can talk seriously only about Paul's statements about human understanding.[24] In his interpretation of Paul's ethics and anthropology, the issue of divine and human agency stands out not because he explicitly discusses the issue, but because of the dismissal of the problem. He has attempted to clarify his understanding of divine and human agency in subsequent studies, but in both one finds an emphasis on the human agent and one senses in fact hesitancy toward the subject itself.[25]

Two decades after Sanders' volume, Marshall described the "New Perspective on Paul" as "the new orthodoxy."[26] Scholars in general have been content with Sanders' picture of Jewish soteriology, and while disagreeing with his interpretation of Paul, they have often claimed that the basic pattern that one finds in Judaism is also found in Paul. This brief survey has highlighted the general rejection by recent scholars of the Pauline contrast between faith and works of the law as indicating fundamentally different means to salvation, an interpretation of Paul's antithesis that earlier scholars simply took for granted. Against this "traditional" reading of Paul's antithesis, these scholars have claimed that everyone agreed that salvation was by grace not works. To put this claim in the language of this study: salvation is accomplished through divine action not human action. The outcome of Sanders' portrayal of Judaism and the development of the New Perspective on Paul is a general claim that Paul and Judaism agreed on the relationship between divine and human action. While the relationship between certain aspects of a "soteriological" pattern or a "pattern of religion," such as justification by faith and judgment by works, remains unclear, these items do not indicate alternative means to salvation. This is so because faith and works were never in conflict. This claim, which is based on Sanders' portrayal of Judaism and the "ethnic" interpretation of Paul's antithesis, has become the

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[23] Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 248–52.

[24] Engberg-Pedersen denies that one must choose between Paul's apocalyptic statements about God and his philosophical statements about humanity ("Response," 106), but the only "real option for us" remains his statements about human understanding.

[25] Engberg-Pedersen, "Self-Sufficiency and Power;" idem, "Material Spirit." In the latter article on Romans 8.1–13, he interprets the *pneuma* not as the divine Spirit, but as a constituent part of the human being. Where others have found divine action, he has explained it away.

[26] Marshall, "Salvation, Grace and Works," 340. Many scholars have been stressing the diversity of the "New Perspective," and it is mistaken to think of it as a "school." There are nevertheless key points that hold a group of scholars together under the umbrella "New Perspective." These would include (an uncritical) following of Sanders' view of Judaism and generally an opposition to a "Lutheran" interpretation of Paul and justification by faith. See Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 250–57.

trump card against any attempt to find in Paul's debate with Judaism different understandings of how God and humans interact. This is nowhere clearer than in the works of Engberg-Pedersen.

In his review of Watson's *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, Engberg-Pedersen claims that Sanders and the New Perspective on Paul have demonstrated that Paul's antithesis between faith and works of the law is not "between unconditionality (divine agency or saving action) and conditionality (human 'salvific' action)" but "is fundamentally an ethnic one."[27] Watson argues that Paul's antithesis derives from his interpretation of the soteriological patterns found in the Torah.[28] One view arises from Leviticus 18.5 and makes life contingent on law observance. The other view originates from Genesis 15.6 (and Hab 2.4), which describes the unconditional nature of God's promise. Whereas other Jews highlighted Abraham's obedience to God's will as the reason he is declared righteous, Paul centres the story on God's unilateral promise. This interpretative claim, according to Watson, is Paul's antithesis, and at the heart of this antithesis are two alternative means to salvation. The one is based on human obedience to the Torah, and the other is oriented toward what God has done in Christ. Paul's antithesis, according to Watson, is primarily about the ways in which the divine and human agents interact, and in this sense, it is set over against the "ethnic" interpretation advocated by Dunn, Wright, and others.[29] Watson seeks to reintroduce into the interpretation of Paul's antithesis a "vertical" aspect and to read the antithesis as less directly about the Jew-Gentile problem. Paul's claims about the unconditional divine saving act have consequences for how Jews and Gentiles relate within the church, but the antithesis is not fundamentally about this issue.[30]

In Watson's view, the contrast between the unconditional nature of God's saving act and human obedience set forth in Paul's antithesis between faith in Christ and works of the law is not the sum total of Paul's view on divine and human agency. Abraham is not simply a passive recipient of divine grace. Rather, the divine saving act calls for a response in faith and obedience.[31] The two phrases "faith in Christ" and "works of the law," Watson argues, refer to communal ways of living and, therefore, human agency.[32] Each way, however, has a different focus since the former is directed toward what God did in Christ

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[27] Engberg-Pedersen, "Lutheran Paul?" 457.

[28] Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 39, 76; idem, "Constructing an Antithesis," 101–02.

[29] Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 218.

[30] Watson shows how the antithesis functions within an ecclesiological setting in his revised *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*. He argues that the antithesis has the social function of limiting the scope of salvation to the "Christian" community, which is formed of both Jews and Gentiles, rather than the "Jewish" community (121–21; 212).

[31] Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 192, 218.

[32] Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*[2], 121–25, 129.

and the latter is oriented toward what humans do.[33] In Paul's view, Watson contends, divine and human agency are not set in opposition, but in comparison with some of his fellow Jews, Paul does indeed prioritise divine action.[34]

Watson's argument that the Pauline antithesis is about the divine-human relationship runs against the grain of recent studies that have claimed the antithesis is solely or fundamentally about how Gentiles can be considered equal members of the one people of God. Additionally, his argument that Paul's theology prioritised divine action in a manner not seen in some other Jewish texts directly opposes claims that Paul and Judaism agreed on the relationship between works and grace. These claims about Paul's view of the divine-human relationship are what Engberg-Pedersen objects to when he asserts that Paul's antithesis is "fundamentally an ethnic one." His critique of Watson assumes that the arguments made in favour of the New Perspective over the last three decades are accurate and beyond question.[35] Moreover, the "ethnic" interpretation is set against any explicit "theological" reading of the grace/works contrast.[36] All Paul's talk about grace, faith, and works of the law amounts simply to an attempt to get Gentiles into the people of God. The language means nothing more than this. As the title to Engberg-Pedersen's review implies, "Once More a Lutheran Paul?", any interpretation that resembles the old perspective and thus raises even the slightest possibility that Paul has something to say about how God and humans, both Jews and Gentiles, relate in the salvation process, is to be rejected outright. The New Perspective has taught us this, at least in Engberg-Pedersen's view.[37]

Engberg-Pedersen advances a second reason that talk about divine and human agency in Paul is invalid: it introduces an "either/or-*dichotomy*" between divine and human action that no one in the ancient world made.[38] Here along with Watson's work, Martyn's interpretation of Paul is subjected to criticism. Martyn contends that at the heart of Paul's gospel is a claim about God's apocalyptic act in Christ to liberate humanity from the grasp of Sin and the Flesh.[39] Here God himself has invaded the human realm to resolve the human dilemma

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[33] Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*[2], 125–27, 129.

[34] Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*[2], 15–19.

[35] Engberg-Pedersen does briefly discuss Romans 4.16 as support for the ethnic interpretation ("Lutheran Paul?" 457–58). His conclusion that Paul's point is only that faith makes salvation available to all never actually addresses the issue that Paul writes about divine initiative and human response. The relationship between these two aspects is simply ignored.

[36] Here the charge that the New Perspective amounts to a sociological study does have some validity. See Matlock, "Almost Cultural Studies;" Byrne, "Interpreting Romans Theologically," 230–32.

[37] While Engberg-Pedersen claims that Watson is wrong to prioritise divine action, Hays criticises Watson for underemphasising divine action in his interpretation of πίστις Χριστοῦ as "faith in Christ" ("Paul's Hermeneutics," 129–30).

[38] Engberg-Pedersen, "Response," 109.

[39] Martyn, *Galatians*, 97–105, 349.

created by Sin and the Flesh. Against the power of the Flesh, God sends his Spirit. The Christian community is swept up into this cosmic battle between the Flesh and the Spirit as each battles the other for the loyalty of the community. Believers are not passive agents, unable to act in accordance with one power or the other. Rather, they are "soldiers."[40] Even in points of exhortation, according to Martyn, the focus remains on God's acts of deliverance through his Son and in the Spirit. Paul's gospel prioritises divine action.[41]

In Engberg-Pedersen's view, the emphasis placed on divine action by Martyn and Watson fundamentally misconstrues Paul because it introduces a mode of thinking that has its origins in post-ancient debates. He writes, "[T]he idea of a clear and radical contrast between a way to salvation that is 'unconditional', in the sense that it is exclusively an expression of divine agency, and a way that is 'conditional' in the sense that it also involves human agency" is a contrast that "has no footing at all in the ancient texts themselves."[42] The proposed distinction that Watson, Martyn, and others identify is simply the creation of modern minds. "There just is not such a distinction to be found anywhere, neither phenomenologically nor in the ancient texts themselves. It is a later, distinctly theological construct, made in order to contrast the one true 'faith' from all other types of (ir)religion, which are so many forms of humanly based idolatry."[43] Here the creation of the distinction is given a polemical thrust since the contrast arose as an attempt in modern times to defend "the one true 'faith'" (presumably he means Christianity) from all pretenders. As he contends in another essay, "It is possible, therefore, that the question of specifically divine and human agency understood in this theological sense is a fundamentally post-ancient one. Perhaps the distinction will turn out not to have any real grip in an ancient analysis of action but rather to have served as a weapon in a more recent battle between 'religion' and 'humanism', Christianity and philosophy."[44] The very question of divine and human agency has been ruled beyond the pale by Engberg-Pedersen because it belongs to a different time and a different debate. Thus, not only is it not found in Paul's letters because he is concerned with ethnic issues (as the New Perspective has demonstrated), but one should not even expect it to be there because he simply could not have thought about it (since no one in the ancient world did).

This final quote comes from Engberg-Pedersen's contribution to the volume *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* edited by Barclay and Gathercole. This claim sits awkwardly in a volume devoted to the very subject of divine and human agency in the ancient world. While recognis-

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[40] Martyn, *Galatians*, 529–32; cf. idem, *Theological Issues*, 251–66.
[41] Martyn, *Galatians*, 271.
[42] Engberg-Pedersen, "Lutheran Paul?" 452.
[43] Engberg-Pedersen, "Lutheran Paul?" 456.
[44] Engberg-Pedersen, "Self-sufficiency and Power," 116; cf. 127.

ing the difficulty of speaking about this subject, the essayists in this volume are generally quite comfortable exploring how various sources explained the interaction between God and humanity. No thought is given to the possibility that the very issue, especially in this either/or format, is invalid. They find in the Jewish texts a variety of attempts to explain the relationship between divine and human actions. Engberg-Pedersen's claim, therefore, sits uneasily in a volume that finds the issue in the ancient texts.[45] It presses the question of whether the entire project was misguided from the outset.

Engberg-Pedersen's claims appear to be significant challenges to those interpretations that have sought to find in Paul's letters contrasting salvific patterns based on either divine initiative or human obedience. Nevertheless, the assumption that the New Perspective interpretation is right must be tested against the sources themselves rather than assumed. Here Josephus' description of the Jewish schools is very informative. Josephus' texts indicate that the claim that Judaism maintained that salvation was always by grace (divine action) not obedience (human action) is not entirely accurate. Also, the assertion that no one discussed the issue of divine and human agency is contradicted by Josephus.

B. The Jewish Schools, Human Action, and Fate

Josephus often mentions men who belong to the leading Jewish groups of the Second Temple Period, but only on three occasions does he describe the theological positions of the groups (*J.W.* 2.119–166; *Ant.* 13.171–173; 18.11–25). While in two of the accounts he lists several differences between the three groups, the only issue that appears in all three accounts is the relationship between fate and human freedom, the issue of divine and human agency. Although Josephus considered his description in *War* 2.119–166 to be the definitive statement (cf. *Ant.* 13.173; 18.11), it is more useful for our purposes to begin with *Antiquities* 13.171–173.

Although following the narrative of 1 Maccabees in this section of *Antiquities,* Josephus interjects this comment about the Jewish schools:[46]

> Now at this time were three schools among the Jews, which thought differently about human actions [περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων διαφόρως]; the first of these were called Pharisees, the second Sadducees, and the third Essenes. The Pharisees, for their part, say that certain events, but not all, are the work of fate [εἱμαρμένης]; with others it depends on ourselves [τινὰ δ' ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς ὑπάρχειν] whether they shall take place or not. The sect of the Essenes, how-

[45] Indeed, his discussion of Epictetus and Paul presumes that ancient thinkers did discuss and attempt to work out how divine and human agency related. He never relates this to his claim that the topic is a modern one, though.

[46] The reason Josephus puts this passage here is debated. See Sievers who argues that the passage was introduced secondarily into the text ("Josephus, First Maccabees, Sparta, The Three Haireseis").

ever, declares fate the mistress of all things [πάντων τὴν εἱμαρμένην κυρίαν] and says that nothing befalls men unless it be in accordance with her decree. But the Sadducees do away with fate, believing that it is nothing and that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our power [ἅπαντα δὲ ἐφ᾽ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς κεῖσθαι], so that we ourselves are responsible for our well-being, while we suffer misfortune through our own thoughtlessness [ὡς καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν αἰτίους ἡμᾶς γινομένους καὶ τὰ χείρω παρὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀβουλίαν λαμβάνοντας]. (*Ant.* 13.171–73 [Marcus, LCL])

The main topic of this comment is how the Jewish schools (αἱρέσεις) understand the issue of "human actions," and particularly how each understands the relationship between human actions and divine sovereignty ("fate"). Although aware of other differences between the schools, Josephus here distinguishes them based solely on their views of fate and responsibility. Boccaccini rightly comments, "[I]t is important to see how the major ancient historian of Jewish thought took exactly the problem of the relationship between human and divine agency as the criterion for identifying the Jewish 'schools of thought' of his time, more than any halakhic controversy. The emphasis on theological and philosophical issues is not (only) a modern obsession of Christian scholars."[47]

Josephus' language is drawn from philosophical debates, and his presentation of the Jewish schools mirrors other summary statements about different views taken by the Greek philosophical schools.[48] His presentation has caused many debates, most of which centre around the issue of whether Josephus intended his readers to identify individual Jewish sects with individual philosophical schools.[49] Josephus' language is too vague to go much beyond superficial generalities. More likely, he portrays the Jewish schools through common philosophical patterns simply in order to give his readers a point of contact. He assumes his readers will be familiar with the philosophical debates and the manner in which one can briefly relay those positions, so he adopts this pattern in order to relay to his readers something about the leading Jewish groups of that period. More importantly, for our purposes, his use of these standard patterns indicates that one need not be a philosopher to have an interest in the subject of divine and human agency.

Josephus plots the three schools along a single line. The Essenes and Sadducees correspond to the extremes, with the Pharisees representing something of a compromise. The Essenes, according to Josephus, attribute everything to

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[47] Boccaccini, "Inner-Jewish Debate," 15. Cf. Moore, *Judaism*, 1:456.

[48] See Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 132–52; idem, "Josephus' Pharisees." See Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 46–58, for a survey of Jewish and Greco-Roman perspectives on freedom and determinism.

[49] These issues include his use of εἱμαρμένη (is it being used in a philosophical or popular sense? how does it relate to God and Jewish ideas about providence?), the intent behind identifying the "schools" as "philosophies," and the historical accuracy of his description. On the first issue, see Moore, "Fate and Free Will;" Martin, "Josephus' Use of *Heimarmene*;" Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 132–42, 383–98. On the second see Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 123–27; Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 125–28. On the third see Maier, *freier Wille*.

fate. They view God's sovereignty as absolute and uncompromising. The Essenes on this view eliminate the human agent entirely by making him or her a passive character acted upon by fate but never acting with or against it. The position is theological determinism in its fullest expression. The Sadducees, on the other end, deny the reality of fate and attribute every action to the human agent alone. They do not deny the existence of God – such a notion would make little sense in an ancient Jewish (or Greco-Roman) context (cf. *J.W.* 2.165 [see below]). They reject rather the notion that God is the ultimate cause behind what a human does. The prospect of blessing belongs to those who do good, while misfortune is the outcome for those who are careless. Apparently, they deny fate because they wish to maintain human accountability. The Sadducean view comes close to human autonomy. The Pharisees hold the middle ground between these two extremes. They deny neither human nor divine agency, and neither do they allow one more control. In their view, according to Josephus, they attribute some actions to fate, but others to humans. Despite recognising both agents, they do not fall outside of Josephus' single trajectory. They do not view God and humans working together. Instead, they limit each to certain tasks. God does this; humans do that.

In this account of the Jewish schools, Josephus has selected only one issue by which to introduce them: the relationship between fate and human freedom. He presents the schools similarly to the Hellenistic philosophical schools of which his readers would probably have been aware. By plotting the schools along a single line, Josephus depicts the divine-human relationship in antithetical terms. The two agents do not cooperate, but when one acts the other does not. This antithetical framework appears in the other two school passages also, although Josephus does hint at the possibility that there are other frameworks in which to relate the two agents.

The school passage in *War* 2.119–166 is the longest because of Josephus' lengthy description of the Essenes (§§119–161). When he finally comes to the Pharisees and Sadducees (§§162–166), he very quickly lays out the differences between them regarding the issues of fate, immortality of the soul, and their mannerisms toward "members" and outsiders. Due to this last comment, the Pharisees are presented in a good light, although they are still overshadowed by the glowing review of the Essenes. This alerts the interpreter to be aware that Josephus has a rhetorical purpose in view as he writes. He is not striving for historical objectivism, although he is describing the schools' views in a manner that he considers accurate.

He writes:

> Of the two-first named schools, the Pharisees, who are considered the most accurate interpreters of the laws, and hold the position of the leading sect, attribute everything to Fate and to God [εἱμαρμένῃ τε καὶ θεῷ προσάπτουσι πάντα]; they hold that to act rightly or otherwise rests, indeed, for the most part with men, but that in each action Fate co-operates [καὶ τὸ μὲν πράττειν τὰ δίκαια καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὸ πλεῖστον ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις κεῖσθαι βοηθεῖν δὲ

εἰς ἕκαστον καὶ τὴν εἱμαρμένην]. . . . The Sadducees, the second of the orders, do away with Fate altogether [τὴν μὲν εἱμαρμένην παντάπασιν ἀναιροῦσιν], and remove God beyond, not merely the commission, but the very sight, of evil. They maintain that man has the free choice of good or evil, and that it rests with each man's will whether he follows the one or the other [φασὶν δ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπων ἑκλογῇ τό τε καλὸν καὶ τὸ κακὸν προκεῖσθαι καὶ κατὰ γνώμην ἑκάστου τούτων ἑκατέρῳ προσιέναι]. (*J.W.* 2.162–165 [Thackeray, LCL])

Josephus uses some of the same language here that he uses also in *Antiquities* 13.171–173. He places the issue of fate at the beginning of his account thereby bringing the focus of the reader onto this topic.[50] He had not mentioned the Essene position on fate in his review of them, which further highlights the importance of this topic for his contrast between the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Concerning the Pharisees, Josephus explains that they hold both fate and human freedom. On the one hand, the Pharisees are comfortable ascribing to God and fate an absolute sovereignty. "Everything" (πάντα) has its origin in God and fate. On the other, they maintain that humans are ultimately responsible for their deeds. Humans possess within themselves the capacity to choose between good and evil. The Sadducees represent the contrasting position. They not only claim that God neither sees nor does any evil, they also cast out the very idea of fate.[51]

The account of the Sadducean position here is virtually identical to the one in *Antiquities* 13.173. Josephus makes clear that they approach "fate" and God differently. They deny the existence of the former, while only limiting the purview of the latter. By rejecting fate, "they deny the 'executive' aspect of God's nature, his involvement in the world."[52] This distinction between fate and God confirms the assumption made in the interpretation of *Antiquities* 13.173 that the Sadducees are only rejecting the concept of fate not God himself. Their disavowal of fate leaves ethical behaviour solely in the hands of humans. Again, Josephus presents their view in antithetical terms, and it is a form of human autonomy.

The description of the Pharisees, though, contains more complexity. In *Antiquities* 13.172–173, the Pharisees hold the middle position between the other two schools.[53] In *War* 2.162–165, Josephus only works with two schools so he

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[50] The two participles δοκοῦντες and ἀπάγοντες, according to Mason, "are strictly preliminary to the main issue in 2:162ff., which now comes clearly into view, namely: the Pharisee's position on εἱμαρμένη and voluntary action." He continues, "By isolating the main verb (προσάπτουσι), we have also found the central issue in the comparison (μὲν . . . δέ.) between Pharisees and Sadducees in §§162–165. The two schools differ about whether 'fate' is a factor in human life" (*Flavius Josephus*, 132).

[51] Baumbach draws a false distinction between "the question of predestination and free will" and "a Jewish problem of a soteriological sort" ("Sadducees in Josephus," 175).

[52] Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 137n.62.

[53] For discussion see Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 203–07. His conclusion is that the difference stems from Josephus' vagueness when discussing the divine-human relationship (p.205).

presents the Pharisees as the opposite perspective of the Sadducees. Whereas in Antiquities 13.172 only some things (τινὰ καὶ οὐ πάντα) are attributed to fate and some (τινά) to human action, in *War* 2.162 everything (πάντα) originates from fate. The change in the Pharisaic view is due to rhetorical pressures. Josephus needs the Pharisees to contrast the Sadducees in *War* 2.162–163, and in *Antiquities* 13.172–173, that role can be filled by the Essenes. Based on this alteration in the accounts, Mason contends that it "shows how little he wishes to be seen as the pedantic sort of philosopher. Broad strokes, changeable as needed for presentational reasons, suffice."[54]

This apparent change, however, relies too heavily on single words and downplays the consistency that does appear in both texts. Mason himself rightly notes that Josephus' language in both passages is vague and imprecise,[55] and this should caution the interpreter against overemphasising the exact language used. In fact, "everything" (πάντα) in *War* 2.162 is immediately modified by the point that the Pharisees think the act of doing good or evil arises from the human agent. By overplaying the potential difference between "all" and "some," Mason has actually missed the one new point that may affect substantially how one defines the Pharisaic position. The new point is that fate "helps" (βοηθεῖν) the human in what he or she does.[56] How exactly fate assists humans is not made clear, but at the least it suggests that divine and human agency are not viewed by the Pharisees, according to Josephus, as always in opposition. Whereas in *Antiquities* 13.172, Josephus holds fate and human action apart in his description of the Pharisees, here in *War* 2.162 he brings them together. The ultimate agency of the human is in some fashion dependent upon the actions of fate. If this is something of what Josephus intended with his statement in *War* 2, then it also indicates that Josephus can work with different models of the divine-human relationship. As discussed below, the oppositional model, which is what Josephus presented in *Antiquities* 13.171–173, is not the sole method by which to explain the interaction between God and humans. Josephus' more precise, although not extremely helpful statement about the Pharisees in *War* 2.162–163 introduces another possible way to relate the two agents.

In summary, according to *War* 2.162–165 a fundamental dividing issue between the philosophical schools (cf. §§119; 166) is their respective understandings of the interaction between fate and humanity. The Pharisees are the polar opposites of the Sadducees not because they ascribe "everything" to fate and the Sadducees ascribe nothing, but because the former believe in fate and the latter deny it. The issue that divides these two schools is whether the divine

[54] Mason, "Josephus' Pharisees," 59; cf. idem, *Flavius Josephus*, 205.

[55] Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 205.

[56] Thackeray's translation of βοηθεῖν as "co-operates" is probably too specific. The term has the general idea of assisting or helping, while "co-operates" implies more direct involvement than Josephus probably intends.