

University of Redlands

InSPIRe @ Redlands

Our House Articles, Posters, and Presentations

Our House

10-2015

Covenantal Nomism and the Gospel of Matthew

Eugene Eung-Chun Park PhD
San Francisco Theological Seminary

Follow this and additional works at: https://inspire.redlands.edu/oh_articles

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Jewish Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Park, Eugene Eung-Chun PhD, "Covenantal Nomism and the Gospel of Matthew" (2015). *Our House Articles, Posters, and Presentations*. 342.

https://inspire.redlands.edu/oh_articles/342



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License](#)

This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Our House at InSPIRe @ Redlands. It has been accepted for inclusion in Our House Articles, Posters, and Presentations by an authorized administrator of InSPIRe @ Redlands. For more information, please contact inspire@redlands.edu.

Covenantal Nomism and the Gospel of Matthew

EUGENE EUNG-CHUN PARK
San Francisco Theological Seminary
San Anselmo, CA 94960

Abstract: In this article, I examine whether the notion of covenantal nomism is applicable to the Gospel of Matthew. I survey several key concepts of covenantal nomism in Matthew to see how they function in the presentation of the story of Jesus. Then I discuss two equally binding terms in Matthew's soteriology: Torah and its hermeneutics by Jesus. I will show how Matthew significantly alters the terms of covenantal nomism and articulates a soteriology that is still thoroughly anchored in Jewish roots and yet distinctively shaped by the teaching of Jesus.

Key Words: covenantal nomism • Matthew • E. P. Sanders • soteriology • election • Jewish identity

COVENANTAL NOMISM is a soteriological concept proposed by E. P. Sanders to describe the "pattern of religion" in Palestinian Judaism.¹ He articulates that in common Judaism one's salvific status is established on the basis of the covenant, which is by God's initiative of election, and that the covenant requires obedience to the commandments of the Torah as the proper response to this grace and at the same time provides means of atonement for transgression.² This concept has been

This article is a revised version of the paper that I presented at the sixty-sixth annual conference of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS) in 2011.

¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977). See also idem, "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. Essays in Honor of William David Davies* (ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs; SJLA 21; Leiden: Brill, 1976) 11-44, esp. 15: "In the entire body of Palestinian Jewish literature between *Ben Sirah* and the redaction of the Mishnah, with only the exception of *IV Ezra*, membership in the covenant is considered salvation."

² Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 236. The term "common Judaism" is more clearly articulated in idem, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 B.C.E.–66 C.E.* (London: SCM, 1992) 47.

received rather well in NT scholarship despite various criticisms that are multi-faceted but have several common threads. One criticism is that there is so much diversity in Judaism that it is impossible to find a common pattern.³ Another is that covenantal nomism is not attested in Jewish literature as pervasively as Sanders believes. Related to this is the argument that many Jewish texts support legalism, works righteousness, or synergistic soteriology.⁴ Three decades after the publication of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Sanders wrote an autobiographical essay in which he reiterated the main points of this book and reaffirmed their correctness.⁵ Shortly thereafter he published an academic article in which he summarizes the criticisms against covenantal nomism, responds to them, and adamantly defends its validity.⁶ Scholarly assessment of the concept of covenantal nomism itself is not part of my aim in this article. In my opinion, covenantal nomism as a *terminus technicus* for a common soteriological pattern in Second Temple Judaism in Palestine has weathered various criticisms over the past few decades rather well and therefore, *mutatis mutandis*, it still provides a workable frame of reference for a predominant form of Jewish soteriology at the time of earliest Christianity. It is also true that covenantal nomism in and of itself cannot function as a criterion to determine if a particular text or theology is Jewish enough regardless of its time or provenance.

³ Jacob Neusner has consistently advocated this position against Sanders; see Neusner, *Judaic Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: A Systematic Reply to Professor E. P. Sanders* (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 84; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993). Neusner calls Sanders's covenantal nomism a conception that is "valid but systematically trivial" (p. 9). He criticizes Sanders for imposing a Protestant theological category on Jewish texts without interpreting them on their own terms. See Neusner, review of E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, *HR* 18 (1978) 177-91. On the other hand, Shaye J. D. Cohen affirms the validity of Sanders's notion of common Judaism and argues that the concept itself and Sanders's list of what constitutes such a common Judaism cohere with the understanding of most Greco-Roman writers who discuss Jewish matters. See Cohen, "Common Judaism in Greek and Latin Authors," in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders* (ed. Fabian E. Udoh et al.; Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 16; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008) 69-87.

⁴ E.g., Timo Eskola, "Paul, Predestination and 'Covenantal Nomism': Re-Assessing Paul and Palestinian Judaism," *JSJ* 28 (1997) 390-412; Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," *CBQ* 63 (2001) 1-22; A. Andrew Das, "Beyond Covenantal Nomism: Paul, Judaism, and Perfect Obedience," *Concordia Journal* 27 (2001) 234-52; Philip S. Alexander, "Torah and Salvation in Tannaitic Literature," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; WUNT 2/140; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 261-301.

⁵ Sanders, "Comparing Judaism and Christianity: An Academic Autobiography," in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities* (ed. Udoh et al.), 11-41, esp. 24-25 and 30.

⁶ Sanders, "Covenantal Nomism Revisited," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16 (2009) 23-55. He argues that covenantal nomism is an underlying principle in Judaism and therefore it may not be stated explicitly in every Jewish text. He also points out that reward and punishment do not correspond to salvation and damnation and that reward and punishment in Jewish literature should be understood in a larger context, that is, "that of the love of God who reaches out to people and who will save those whom he punishes" (p. 47).

With this notion of covenantal nomism as a common soteriological pattern in Judaism as a working hypothesis, I apply the idea to the Gospel of Matthew as a Jewish text to see if Matthew stays within the framework of covenantal nomism or significantly deviates from it.⁷ This article is not an examination of Matthew's notion of salvation in general, which would have to incorporate a more comprehensive scope including the recent trend in Matthean scholarship that emphasizes the Roman imperial context of Matthew's Gospel.⁸ Rather, this article specifically concentrates on the *terms* of salvation in Matthew as they pertain to classical Jewish soteriology in reference to covenantal nomism. Within these parameters of selected themes, it is my thesis that Matthew's soteriology does not squarely fit the covenantal nomism as it is defined by Sanders but that Matthew's deviation from covenantal nomism does not make his soteriology any less Jewish for that, because it is still articulated in thoroughly Jewish terms within the parameters of Jewish theology at this time.⁹

I. Covenant in Matthew

The word διαθήκη ("covenant") is a *hapax legomenon* in Matthew in 26:28, in which Matthew preserves Mark 14:24 verbatim except for adding εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν ("for the forgiveness of sins").¹⁰ Another version of the Lord's Supper

⁷ The debate regarding the socioreligious location of the Matthean community—whether it is *intra-muros* or *extra-muros* vis-à-vis post-70 Judaism—goes beyond the scope of this article. I regard Matthew's community as a Christian-Jewish sect at the end of the first century C.E. In that regard I am in agreement with such scholars as Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (CSHJ; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 14; Lewiston: E. Mellen, 1988); Philip Sigal, *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth according to the Gospel of Matthew* (Studies in Biblical Literature 18; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). This issue will be briefly discussed again in section II.A in this article in the context of Matthew's attitude toward gentiles.

⁸ For the issue of the Roman colonial context for the Gospel of Matthew, see Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001); John Riches and David C. Sim, eds., *The Gospel of Matthew in Its Roman Imperial Context* (JSNTSup 276; London: T&T Clark, 2005); Warren Carter and Amy-Jill Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013).

⁹ In this article I use "Matthew" to refer to the anonymous author of the text that came to be known as the Gospel of Matthew. Since Μαθθαῖος is a masculine name, I will use the third person singular masculine pronoun to refer to this author without prejudicing the real gender of the unknown author.

¹⁰ The word διαθήκη is a *hapax legomenon* in Mark. For a survey of the concept of covenant in the OT and NT, see Scott Hahn, "Covenant in the Old and New Testaments: Some Current Research (1994–2004)," *Currents in Biblical Research* 3 (2005) 263–92.

has ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη (“the new covenant”) for the cup (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).¹¹ This suggests an allusion to the same phrase in Jer 31:31 (LXX 38:31) (ברית חדשה; διαθήκη καινή), which is the only OT passage that refers to a new covenant.¹² In this oracle, the return from the exile becomes a critical salvific event that invites a new covenant between God and the people of Israel.¹³ The text suggests both continuity and discontinuity between the earlier covenant and the new one. As the utterance of God (נאם יהוה) in v. 33 demonstrates (בתתי את תורתִי, “I will put my torah”), the Torah will be a key point of continuity between them.¹⁴ More importantly, Jer 31:31 makes it clear that the beneficiaries of this new covenant will be the entire Israel, both Israel and Judah.¹⁵ Both the earlier and the new covenant are part and parcel of Jewish soteriology in this passage. Later on, two communities will claim that they are the heir to this new covenant, that is, the Qumran community and early Christianity.

The phrase “the new covenant” (הברית החדשה) appears in CD 6.19, 8.21, and 20.12 and in 1QpHab 2.3 (ועל הבוג[דים בברית] החדשה) . . . and concerns the trait[ors in the] new [covenant]). In both documents, the phrase is used as a reference to the new covenant that God made with the present community, and it functions as evidence of legitimization of their existence as a separate community. The *Damascus Document*, especially CD 20.12, clearly talks about the judgment against those who despise the new covenant established in the land of Damascus. In addition, CD 3.12-13 mentions “(with) those who remained faithful in the commandments of God” (ובמחזיקים במצות אל) and “those who were left from them” (אשר נותרו מהם), with whom God makes his covenant (בריתו) with Israel forever.¹⁶ It is not clear if the community behind the *Damascus Document* is the same as the Qumran sect or

¹¹ The only other occurrence of διαθήκη in Luke is in Luke 1:72, which does refer to the original covenant that God made with the ancestors of Israel.

¹² It is debated whether this oracle of the new covenant came from Jeremiah or a Deuteronomistic author.

¹³ Terence E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2002) 442. It is unclear whether the Jeremiah oracle implies the abrogation of the earlier covenant. Jack R. Lundbom provides a list of different scholarly opinions (*Jeremiah 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 21B; New York: Doubleday, 2004] 465). It seems to me that the burden of proof lies with those who argue for the abrogation of the original covenant. In the absence of textual evidence, it should be assumed that the new covenant is built on the earlier one, renewing and reaffirming it, rather than nullifying it. For the inadequacy of the Christian supersessionist interpretation of the new covenant in Jeremiah, see Walter Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26–52* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 69-70.

¹⁴ Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 443.

¹⁵ Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 466: “There is nothing to suggest that this new covenant will be made with an expanded Israel, including Gentiles.”

¹⁶ Even though the noun בריתו is not qualified by the adjective חדשה in CD 3.13, it is clear that the concept is implied in the text.

a different group with a link to Damascus either as an actual geographic name or as a metaphor. Regardless of the exact identity of its community, however, the *Damascus Document* implies that its members no longer participate in the Jerusalem temple cult and that the new covenant applies exclusively to the members of this separate group so that this newly constituted covenant community replaces the old Israel.¹⁷ In a similar vein, the pesher in 1QpHab 2.3, commenting on Hab 1:5, identifies the audience of the prophet as the “traitors” (בוגדים) in the new covenant, who do not believe in the words of the Teacher of Righteousness (מורה הצדקה) that are coming from the mouth of God. These statements in the Dead Sea Scrolls imply that the new covenant may not nullify or obviate the original covenant but that salvation requires embracing the new covenant, which confirms and fulfills the original covenant.¹⁸

The phrase *καινή διαθήκη* appears four times in the NT: Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:5-14 (in v. 6); Heb 8:8-12 (in v. 8); 9:15-22 (in v. 15); cf. Heb 10:16-17. Among them, the Hebrews passages most clearly advocate the abrogation of the old covenant and the christological interpretation of the new covenant as replacing the old one.¹⁹ In 2 Cor 3:5-7 Paul juxtaposes the earlier covenant written in letters on stone tablets and the new covenant written in spirit. The portrayal of the old covenant in this passage is demonstrably negative as if it is salvifically invalid, even though there is no specific declaration that the old is abrogated.²⁰

Neither the Marcan-Matthean version of the Lord’s Supper nor its Corinthian-Lucan counterpart uses the word *διαθήκη* in the specific sense of the covenant between God and the people of Israel. In fact, it is not even clear who exactly are the parties to the covenant that Jesus mentions in relation to his blood. In one version, his blood is said to be shed “for many” (*περι πολλῶν* in Matt 26:28//*ὑπὲρ πολλῶν* in Mark 14:24), and in another, it is “for you” (*ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν* in Luke 22:20).²¹

¹⁷ See Maxine L. Grossman, *Reading for History in the Damascus Document: A Methodological Study* (STDJ 45; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 163: “In addition to presenting the community as a structural equivalent of the nation of Israel, the text goes a step further, by providing images of the covenant community as Israel’s full-scale replacement.”

¹⁸ See Markus Bockmuehl, “1QS and Salvation at Qumran,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (ed. Carson et al.), 381-414, esp. 391.

¹⁹ See Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) 226, 253, 281. Attridge notices that the author of Hebrews modifies the Jeremiah text to make the scope of the new covenant more universal. He calls it “manipulation” of the text (p. 281).

²⁰ See E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (London: SCM, 1983) 138. Commenting on 2 Cor 3:4-18, Sanders says, “The simplest explanation of this dual form of contrast seems to be that he came to relegate the Mosaic dispensation to a less glorious place *because* he found something more glorious and that he *then*, thinking in black-and-white terms, developed the death/life contrast” (*italics his*).

²¹ Ulrich Luz says that these two different references, “for many” and “for you,” are in fact the same (*Matthew 21-28* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005] 381).

The covenant could be between God and those who are present there, with Jesus included or not. Or it could be between Jesus and those who are present there. There is a typological allusion in this passage to Exod 24:8, in which Moses takes the blood, dashes it on the people and says, “See the blood of the covenant [דַם הַבְּרִית] that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” This typology has been used by scholars to interpret Jesus as a second Moses, especially in Matthew.²² The Matthean text, however, does not make that connection.²³ More importantly, there is no indication in the Matthean version of the Lord’s Supper that the covenant in Jesus’ blood would nullify the Sinai covenant of Moses and replace it. For Matthew, the original covenant remains valid in its full intent (Matt 5:17-19) regardless of the specific meaning of the covenant in the blood of Jesus. Therefore, if this covenant in Matt 26:28, which is *not* designated as a *new* covenant, has an allusion to Exod 24:8 at all as part of the authorial intent, it will be in line with the new covenant in Jer 31:31, which renews and fulfills but does not negate the earlier one.

This examination shows that the word διαθήκη does not feature prominently in the sayings of Jesus in the NT except at the Last Supper. This implies that the notion of covenant is not important for Jesus or that it is foundational for all Jews and therefore is presupposed rather than stated in the Jesus traditions, as Sanders suggests.²⁴ If applied to the historical Jesus, this idea could only be highly speculative.²⁵ As for the Gospel writers, this question can be adequately answered only when the identity of the addressees of each Gospel is taken into consideration. If the audience is predominantly gentile, the absence of the covenant language may indeed indicate the lack of a strong interest in covenantal theology on the part of the author of the given Gospel. If the audience is Jewish, however, the implication of the scarcity of covenant language remains ambiguous. Then other indicators should be examined to determine if covenantal theology is indeed presumed in the text, even when it is not stated.

²² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97) 3:474.

²³ Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 380.

²⁴ Sanders, “Covenantal Nomism Revisited,” 34–36.

²⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 337: “Since he [Jesus] did not spend his time discussing the covenant historically . . . , nor discussing the fine points of obedience, but rather preparing his followers and hearers for the coming redemption, I have managed to write virtually an entire book without the phrase ‘covenantal nomism.’” Sanders here implies that Jesus assumed covenantal nomism as a given. This point is criticized by Dale C. Allison, “Jesus and the Covenant: A Response to E. P. Sanders,” *JSNT* 29 (1987) 57–78. Here Allison assumes that Jesus had a Christocentric view of things, considering himself to be the destined king of Israel and that he redefined salvation with reference to his own person (p. 72). Allison’s criticism of Sanders holds only when his assumption of Jesus’ own Christocentric self-identity is proven correct, which is very difficult.

II. Election and Jewish Identity in Matthew

Election is foundational in covenantal theology in the Jewish tradition, and it is a critical component in Sanders's construction of covenantal nomism. That is, the election of Israel is purely by the grace of God, and being born into the covenant community is also by the grace of God. Matthew seems to take this notion of election for granted, and therefore one could assume that the idea of election by God's grace is implied in the Gospel, even though the word χάρις does not appear. Matthew has a few passages that explicitly mention "elected ones" (ἐκλεκτοί) and also other passages in which the notion of election seems to be embedded, even though it is not stated, for example, texts that characterize gentiles as outsiders.²⁶

A. Passages That Refer to Gentiles

Matthew's treatment of gentiles is complex, and his attitude toward them is ambiguous. This has long puzzled Matthean scholars. Generally, the majority opinion tended to emphasize those passages in Matthew that portray gentiles in a positive light and therefore to see Matthew as basically pro-gentile. The more recent trend, however, has been to view the Matthean community primarily as a ("Christian"-) Jewish sect, and there has been a move, especially by David C. Sim, to reexamine the allegedly pro-gentile stance of Matthew.²⁷ Sim examines both positive accounts and negative remarks about gentiles in Matthew and situates them in the larger context of the Matthean community as a sect within formative Judaism. He concludes that the attitude of the Matthean community toward the gentile world is consistent with the "law-observant Petrine church."²⁸ Sim recognizes the suggestion in certain Matthean texts that gentiles were invited into the community, but he argues that this does not necessarily prove that the Matthean community was actively engaged in a gentile mission.²⁹ Instead, Sim says, the Matthean group "did, however, accept Gentiles into the community provided they underwent circumcision (if male) and upheld the requirements of the Torah."³⁰

Another possibility is that the Matthean community embraced gentiles either through an active gentile mission or through passive acceptance, without

²⁶ Matthew uses the term ἔθνος/ἔθνη fourteen times (4:15; 6:32; 10:5, 18; 12:18, 21; 20:19, 25; 21:43; 24:7, 9, 14; 25:32; 28:19). Not all of these occurrences refer to "non-Jews," and even those that designate "gentiles," show varying degrees of negative connotation. For an analysis of the meaning of ἔθνη, see Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 78-81.

²⁷ Sim, *Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 215-56.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁹ The Matthean texts that Sim cites as showing a pro-gentile stance are 1:3, 5, 6; 2:1; 4:15-16; 8:5-13, 28-34; 12:18-21; 15:21-39; 21:43; 27:54; and 28:19. He discusses these passages briefly in *Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 217.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

necessarily making them formal converts to Judaism. It is doubtful that the Matthean community had a rigid set of requirements for membership.³¹ During and after the Second Temple period, the relations between Jews and gentiles were complex, and it is likely that there was more than one way for gentile persons to be associated with the Matthean community. Some may “have come forward” as formal converts (προσήλυτοι); some may have just become “God-fearers” (θεοφοβούμενοι). It is important to recognize that Matthean language about gentiles should be understood in the larger context of the Gospel of Matthew, which maintains the boundary between Jews and gentiles and emphasizes the continuing validity of the Torah and its binding nature for all the members of the community. Whoever joined the community must have known that he or she joined a thoroughly Jewish community.

To treat all the Matthean passages about gentiles goes beyond the scope of this article. I limit myself to discussing a few significant passages that have direct bearing on the issue of boundaries and group identity for the Matthean community, interpreting them in light of the notion of election and covenant.

Matthew 6:32 juxtaposes τὰ ἔθνη and the addressees in the second person plural (ὕμῶν), as if the “heavenly father” were the God only of the addressees (ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος) and not of the gentiles. Matthew 5:47 and 6:7 also make a dismissive reference to οἱ ἔθνικοι as outsiders vis-à-vis the addressees. It is possible that Matthew here is simply transmitting what came to him as a source material.³² Even so, the fact that Matthew retains the disparaging language about the gentiles implies that he and his community understand themselves as Jews over against the gentiles. Although Matthew is distinguishing his community from other groups in Judaism, this intramural tension does not seem to blur the primary boundary between Jews and gentiles in Matthew’s text. In a similar vein, Matt 18:17 lumps together ὁ ἔθνικός καὶ ὁ τελώνης (“the gentile and the tax collector”) as if they are representative of ultimate outsiders to the Matthean community. This case is particularly poignant because in this passage the Matthean community is referred to as the ἐκκλησία (“church”). For Matthew, the ἐκκλησία is probably smaller than the sum total of the Jews, but this does not obscure the salvifically meaningful distinction between Jews and gentiles.

³¹ Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 79: “[T]he definition of who was within and who outside the Jewish community was far less clear in the first century than it became in later centuries after the development of more precise and elaborate talmudic categories. Numerous gentiles had a variety of relationships with the Jewish community, and what was required to be a member of the community varies in time and place.”

³² For the hypothesis that the Sermon on the Mount as a whole is a pre-Matthean composition, see Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20–49)* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 43–44.

In the commissioning discourse, the Matthean Jesus instructs his disciples not to go to the gentiles but to go only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5-6), as if gentiles *qua* gentiles were outside the boundaries of the kingdom of heaven. This exclusive statement is reiterated by Jesus regarding his own mission in the story of the Canaanite woman (15:24). The fact that Jesus relents and grants this gentile woman’s wish at the end of the story does not necessarily change the principle of going only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Like the story of the healing of the centurion’s son (8:5-13), the episode of the Canaanite woman stands out because of its exceptional nature rather than as a paradigmatic case that changes the principle.³³

At the end of the Gospel, the resurrected Jesus commands his disciples to go out to πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (28:19), which may indicate that the Matthean community eventually opened up to gentiles and conducted an active gentile mission. Yet, even if there was an active gentile mission by the Matthean community, it should not automatically lead to the assumption that the Matthean community became predominantly gentile. Most probably, the Matthean community still remained Jewish with the addition of a number of gentile sympathizers. What is not clear is the terms of the admission of gentiles to the community. Were the gentile sympathizers asked to convert formally to Judaism by receiving circumcision or its equivalent? Or were they allowed to remain gentiles and still join the community? Sim believes they were required to convert to Judaism:

We must take into account as well the great probability that in so far as the great commission does advert to a gentile mission that circumcision as a mark of entry was understood by both author and reader alike. Had Matthew’s community abandoned this most Jewish of practices we should expect some defense of this stance in the material which treats the conflict with formative Judaism.³⁴

Such a conversion is certainly a possibility, but there is no conclusive evidence for it. It is clear, however, that the gentile persons who were admitted to the Matthean community were subjected to the fully binding Torah and Prophets (Matt 5:17-19). In that sense, the Matthean community remained fundamentally Jewish, no matter how many gentiles became part of it, and the distinction between Jews and gentiles, which is an important aspect of covenantal nomism, was upheld in Matthew.

B. Passages That Deal with Election

The verb ἐκλέγομαι is not used as a finite verb or as a participle/infinitive in Matthew. An aorist indicative form of it appears in Mark 13:20, διὰ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς οὓς ἐξελέξατο (“for the sake of the elect, whom he chose”), but Matthew deletes

³³ Sim, *Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 225.

³⁴ David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (SNTSMS 88; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 209.

the clause οὐς ἐξελέξατο, presumably because it is redundant (Matt 24:22). The plural noun ἐκλεκτοί is used four times in Matthew (22:14; 24:22, 24, 31); the singular ἐκλεκτός does not occur in Matthew. The four instances of the plural do not include any specification of who is designated by this term. This means there is a shared understanding between the author and the readers about who the ἐκλεκτοί are. The most natural assumption is that the notion of the people of Israel as chosen by God is maintained in these Matthean references to ἐκλεκτοί with no modification. That is, there is no new theology of election that would specifically identify the members of the Matthean community as elect, such as the one expressed in the Qumran *Hodayot*, in which an individual is destined by God to belong to the sectarian community: וְאֵדָעָה כִּי אֵשׁ מִקְוֵה לְאִשְׁרָיִם יִצְרָתָהּ מֵעֶפֶר לְסוּד עוֹלָם (“And I know that there is hope for the one whom you fashioned out of dust for an eternal community” [IQH^a 10.20-21]).³⁵ At a deeper level, however, there seems to be room for a new interpretation of election in Matthew’s language.

At the end of the parable of the royal wedding feast, Matthew declares, πολλοὶ γὰρ εἰσὶν κλητοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί (“For many are called, but few are chosen” [Matt 22:14]). This distinction between the called (κλητοί) and the elect (ἐκλεκτοί) poses a rather puzzling question as to the identity of each category. The word κλητοί is definitely linked to the κεκλημένους (Matt 22:2),³⁶ and it probably refers to the leaders of the Jewish religious institutions (οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ, “the chief priests and the elders of the people,” in 21:23; οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι, “the chief priests and the Pharisees,” in 21:45; and Σαδδουκαῖοι, “Sadducees,” in 22:23), against whom Jesus speaks a series of parables in Matt 21:28–22:14. The Matthean text says that when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them (21:43). So, the κλητοί in the parable of the royal wedding feast are the Jewish leaders who were originally called but declined the invitation, and the ἐκλεκτοί are the ones who were invited later and responded positively.³⁷ If viewed allegorically in terms of the parable, these two groups are mutually exclusive, which raises the question: Were the religious leaders not originally part of the ἐκλεκτοί, or is the term ἐκλεκτοί given a new definition here? The text is ambiguous. It is probable that Matthew sees the religious leaders as ones who have fallen out of the community of the ἐκλεκτοί, so that the scope of the ἐκλεκτοί in Matthew has been significantly altered.

³⁵ For a recent treatment of the notion of election in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Sigurd Grindheim, *The Crux of Election: Paul’s Critique of the Jewish Confidence in the Election of Israel* (WUNT 2/202; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 55–69.

³⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:206.

³⁷ Another possibility is that not all those who have come are ἐκλεκτοί but only those who are wearing the wedding garments. Then there are three categories rather than two. In any case, a precise allegorical correspondence cannot be given.

There are two important observations to be made in this regard. First, there is no evidence in the parable itself (22:2-13) or in the interpretive conclusion (22:14) that the ἐκλεκτοί are gentiles who will *replace* the people of Israel. There has been a tendency in Matthean scholarship to identify the κλητοί as the historic Israel and the ἐκλεκτοί as the church, where the distinction between Jews and gentiles is nullified.³⁸ But there is no evidence for such a replacement theology in the Matthean text. Therefore, the ἐκλεκτοί must be those among the chosen people of Israel who, unlike the leaders, remain faithful to the covenant and therefore are still eligible for salvation. If gentiles are included in this group, they are there in the capacity of new members of a Jewish community.

Second, not even the ἐκλεκτοί are safe in Matthew, because the parable talks about one person among those who have come and joined the feast who will eventually be thrown into the outer darkness. At first, this may sound like a deviation from the conventional soteriology of covenantal nomism, in which salvation is by membership in the covenant community. In this regard, one Mishnaic passage provides an important point of comparison: *m. Sanh.* 10:1 says, כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא (“All Israel have a share in the world to come”). This saying is cited by Sanders as “the clearest and most concise statement of a view which in fact seems to have been universal.”³⁹ On the other hand, *m. Sanh.* 10:2-3 adds a list of those who will not have a share in the world to come: (1) those who deny the resurrection of the dead, (2) those who say that the law is not from heaven, (3) an Epicurean. Concerning these exceptions, Sanders points out that only the worst individual sinners and only the most unregenerate generations are named, implying that these exclusions prove rather than invalidate the rule of covenantal nomism.⁴⁰ Here Sanders seems to have overstated his case. I am not sure whether those who deny the resurrection of the dead should justly be called “the worst sinners” or “the most unregenerate generations,” as Sanders says. Nevertheless, this passage does seem to affirm the fundamental principle of covenantal nomism, even though it reveals a sectarian mentality by denying salvation for certain groups of people within Judaism. The Matthean parable here presents a similar case. Salvation is primarily based on being part of the chosen people, but not everybody in that community will be saved because salvation is reserved for those who successfully fulfill the Torah in accordance with the particular hermeneutics of Jesus. This point will be further elaborated later in the eschatological discourse (Matthew 24–25).

³⁸ See, e.g., John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 891-92; R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 827-28. For an argument that the church replaces the historic Israel, see Richard E. Menninger, *Israel and the Church in the Gospel of Matthew* (American University Studies: Series 7, Theology and Religion 162; New York: P. Lang, 1994) 135-57.

³⁹ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 149.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Two other passages are indirectly related to the issue of the salvific efficacy of election. One is the speech of John the Baptist against the Pharisees and the Sadducees in Matt 3:7-9 and the other is the saying of Jesus that follows the healing of the centurion's son in 8:10-12. Both seem to challenge the notion that being the descendants of Abraham guarantees a certain salvific status. Yet neither of these passages proposes a motif of replacement of the chosen people by the gentiles, as some have argued.⁴¹ Rather, both sayings employ the rhetoric of hyperbole to make the point that election, while still remaining a primary category in soteriology, no longer provides an automatic safeguard for those who are chosen.⁴²

In Matt 24:24, which talks about the signs and wonders of the pseudomessiahs (ψευδόχριστοι) and the pseudo-prophets in the end-times, there is an ominous implication that they could lead astray even the elect (ὥστε πλανῆσαι, εἰ δυνατόν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς). This is not surprising, though, in light of the fact that the religious leaders have already fallen away and therefore are no longer part of the ἐκλεκτοί, as far as Matthew is concerned. This verse seems to give a warning to the members of the Matthean community that being part of a "Christian"-Jewish group such as the Matthean community is not a guarantee of salvation. This idea coheres with the recurring theme in Matthew that good and bad always coexist even among the chosen disciples of Jesus, and by inference within the Matthean community.⁴³ The parable of the weeds (Matt 13:24-30) makes the same point by juxtaposing the σῖτος and the ζιζάνιον.⁴⁴

On the other hand, this point is balanced with a prospect that the elect are not limited to the members of the Matthean community. In Matt 24:31, the Son of Man at his parousia will send out his messengers and they will gather his elect from the four winds. There is no hint in this passage that the elect of the Son of Man are different from the historic chosen people of God. Rather, the reference seems to be to all the chosen people of Israel, both in the heartland of Palestine and in the Diaspora, who remain faithful to the Torah and the Prophets as they are interpreted by Jesus and who are therefore qualified for eschatological salvation. Again, if gentiles are included there, they are included on the basis of their newly acquired identity as law-abiding members of the Jewish community of Matthew as well as followers of Jesus Christ.

⁴¹ E.g., Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992) 131, 151.

⁴² See Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 145.

⁴³ In Matthew, Jesus frequently uses the adjective ὀλιγόπιστος/ὀλιγόπιστοι (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8) and the noun ὀλιγοπιστία (17:20) for his disciples/followers.

⁴⁴ It is debated whether the reference in the parable of the weeds in Matt 13:24-30 is to the Matthean community or to the world. Scholarly opinions are divided. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:408-9. I support the interpretation that views the "field" in v. 24 as a reference to a specifically designated area, not just anywhere in the world. That is, it is an allegorical reference to the Matthean community.

This examination so far has revealed that Matthew, as a Jewish theologian, has not invented a new wheel for theology of election. He takes it for granted that his community of followers of Jesus is primarily Jewish and as such it is a community of chosen people of God. In that sense Matthew seems to assume that it is by God's grace that the members of his community are given the status of the elect. He also maintains the distinction between Jews and gentiles, even though the terms of demarcation are not clearly defined. He has altered the scope of the ἐκλεκτοί in such a way that parts of people of the historic Israel, especially its religious leaders, are now excluded and some gentiles are included. He suggests that even the ἐκλεκτοί are not guaranteed salvation. This seems to be a significant modification of conventional soteriology of covenantal nomism but not necessarily a rejection of it.

III. Nomism in Matthew

The nomism part of Sanders's covenantal nomism has to do with the measures provided in the law for maintaining one's membership in the covenant community. In principle, this requires observation of all the Torah commandments, but in Sanders's scheme, great emphasis is laid on the provisions of the Torah that absolve one of breaching the commandments such as those pertaining to guilt offerings or sin offerings. The hermeneutical principle in Matt 5:17-19 affirms the lasting validity of the Torah in its entirety, and therefore it implies the continuing obligation on the part of the covenant people, including the members of the Matthean community, to keep the entire Torah. There is no hint, however, of legalistic perfectionism in this passage. It is interesting that, while emphasizing the binding nature of the Torah, Matt 5:19 implies that even the one who loosens up a Torah commandment will enter the kingdom of heaven, albeit being called the least there.⁴⁵

In Sanders's theory, the measures in the Torah for dealing with failures to observe the commandments are taken primarily, but not exclusively, through the temple cult. There is also the notion that reward and punishment according to one's faithfulness to the Torah will be meted out in this world or in the world to come. Nevertheless, that does not alter the status of the members of the community as saved people.⁴⁶

As a Jewish sectarian group, the Matthean community still acknowledges *in principle* the validity of the temple cult, even though at the time of the composition

⁴⁵ For the possibility that ἐλάχιστος here could be a wordplay on the name of Paul (Latin *paulus* meaning "small"), see Hans Dieter Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 51. If that is part of the authorial intent in this passage, the potential anti-Pauline rhetoric of Matthew here is still benign and not as scathing as that of the later anti-Pauline language such as in the Pseudo-Clementine literature.

⁴⁶ Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief*, 272-73: "In most discussions in the Jewish literature of our period, reward and punishment function within this world; life after death is not a major theme, and Christian scholars often impose soteriology on the material."

of the Gospel the temple has been destroyed and the cult has ceased. Matthew 5:23-24 depicts Jesus as taking for granted that his addressees were participating in the temple cult. Whether that applies *in principle* to the Matthean community is ambiguous.⁴⁷ Even if we assume that the various measures for dealing with disobedience to the law are still available for the Matthean community, they will not be performed through the temple cult, which has ceased. Matthew 18:15-17 implies that the church (ἐκκλησία) has taken over part of the functions previously regulated by the temple, just as the synagogues did in the formative period of rabbinic Judaism. This implies that the nomistic part of covenantal nomism is largely maintained in Matthew.

On the other hand, a statement such as Matt 5:20 (“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”) indicates that there are different degrees of righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) and that one has to achieve/maintain a certain level of it in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. In view of the fact that both the addressees of the Sermon on the Mount and the intended readers of Matthew’s Gospel are primarily Jewish people, this statement is a rather provocative declaration that the Pharisaic and the scribal ways of observing the commandments are no longer salvifically efficacious.

What then, according to Matthew, is the correct way to fulfill the obligation to observe the Torah commandments that would ultimately allow one to enter the kingdom of heaven? The context indicates that the δικαιοσύνη that exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees (5:20) is articulated in the so-called six theses and antitheses in 5:21-47, in which honoring the original intent of the Torah rather than limiting practice to the letter of its individual commandments is required. Together with the declaration of the full validity of the Torah in 5:17-20, this section presents Jesus’ hermeneutical approach to the Torah,⁴⁸ which is as salvifically binding as the Torah itself. In other words, Matthean soteriology is based on the combination of the Torah as the unshakable foundation of salvation given by the grace of God through the covenant, on the one hand, and the new authoritative interpretation of it by Jesus, on the other.

Another critical statement about how one enters the kingdom of heaven is Matt 7:21. Having rejected the scribal and the Pharisaic way of observing the Torah as a means to enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20), the Matthean Jesus now denies the salvific efficacy of calling Jesus κύριε (“lord,” 7:21). In view of the fact that the members of the Matthean community are primarily Jews who follow Jesus as

⁴⁷ Matthew 23:23 affirms the cultic laws even while highlighting the weightier matters of the law. Considering that the anti-Pharisaic rhetoric in chap. 23 reflects more of Matthew’s situation than that of the historical Jesus, one can assume that the principle behind Matt 23:23 is still valid for the Matthean community.

⁴⁸ Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount*, 37-53.

their σωτήρ (“savior”),⁴⁹ it is remarkable that calling out to Jesus as κύριε will not guarantee eschatological salvation. This Matthean saying of Jesus seems to allude to a notion that is expressed in Rom 10:13, which may even suggest an implied anti-Pauline ethos on Matthew’s part.⁵⁰ Regardless of the correctness of the argument for an anti-Pauline ethos in Matt 7:21, the two sayings in 5:20 and 7:21 seem to imply an emphatic denial of any guarantee of salvation either through conventional observation of the Torah as members of the historic covenant community of Israel or through confessing Jesus as κύριος as members of the community of followers of Jesus. In this sense, covenantal nomism per se is not rejected, but it takes on a very specific connotation, with Jesus as the arbiter of the meaning of the Torah.

The upshot is that there are now two pillars of salvation in Matthew: the Torah itself and its interpretation by Jesus. *Both* are salvifically binding. On the other hand, neither membership in the covenant community in general nor that in the Jesus movement in particular, including the Matthean community, provides a guarantee of salvation. In that sense, Matthew has certainly altered, if not rejected, the terms of soteriology of covenantal nomism as it is defined by Sanders.

Matthew’s denial of the salvific significance of membership in the covenant community and the ensuing modification of covenantal nomism seem to have become a major impetus for the gradual opening up of the mission from the initial limitation to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10:5) to the post-Easter mission mandate to go out to all the nations (28:19). The gentiles who join the Matthean community as a result of the gentile mission will be on an equal footing with the original Jewish members when it comes to soteriological obligations, that is, doing the will of God revealed in the Torah as interpreted by Jesus. It is still the Jewish Torah interpreted by a Jewish teacher, Jesus. Thus, the distinctive Jewishness of Matthean soteriology is firmly maintained. The exclusive nature of the covenantal nomism of the so-called common Judaism, however, gives way to universal mission at the end. In other words, Matthean soteriology can be characterized as a Torah-based Jewish soteriology that is articulated in (Jewish) universal terms made possible through the hermeneutics of Jesus in the interpretation of the Torah.

⁴⁹ Neither σωτηρία (“salvation”) nor σωτήρ appears in Matthew, but σώζειν (“to save”) is frequently used by Matthew (1:21; 8:25; 9:21, 22; 10:22; 14:30, 36; 16:25; 19:25; 24:13, 22; 27:40, 42, 49).

⁵⁰ For an extensive argument for the anti-Pauline perspective of this passage, see David C. Sim, “Matthew 7.21-23: Further Evidence of Its Anti-Pauline Perspective,” *NTS* 53 (2007) 325-43. Sim argues that those condemned in Matt 7:21-23 are specifically Pauline Christians. He develops this argument mainly on the basis of an antinomian interpretation of ἀνομία (“lawlessness”) in v. 23 and a comparison between the activities of prophecy, exorcism, and miracles mentioned in v. 22 and their Pauline parallels.

IV. Concluding Remarks

The fact that Matthew as a (“Christian”-)Jewish theologian has significantly modified certain terms of covenantal nomism, which is characteristic of the “common” Judaism at that time, does not make him or his theology any *less* Jewish for that, just as 4 Ezra is no less Jewish because of its departure from covenantal nomism.⁵¹ As a Jewish theologian, Matthew maintains the classic Jewish notion of *salvation here and now*.⁵² But at the same time, as an apocalyptic thinker, he envisions an ultimate eschatological salvation, which is signified by the expression “entering the kingdom of heaven.” This is obviously different from “getting into” a covenant community. For Matthew, deliverance from any condition of present predicaments is salvation, and there are many instances in the Gospel in which Jesus dispenses such salvation to individuals. Healing the centurion’s παῖς (“child,” 8:5-13) and healing the Canaanite woman’s daughter (15:21-28) are among the representative examples. In both cases, healing is extended on the basis of the πίστις (“faith”) of the one who requests it (8:10, 13; 15:28). Such deliverance from disease is certainly an aspect of salvation, but the ultimate eschatological salvation is still reserved for those who do the will of God that is revealed in the Torah and interpreted through the hermeneutics of Jesus.

Another important aspect of Matthew’s idea of salvation is that there is no statement in the Gospel that identifies believing in Jesus or confessing him as κύριος as a necessary and sufficient condition for the ultimate eschatological salvation. In that regard, Matthew is very different from Paul, who did say, ἐὰν ὁμολογήσης ἐν τῷ στόματι σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ πιστεύσης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, σωθήσῃ, “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom 10:9), and πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom 10:13). It goes without saying that Paul’s soteriology is much more complex and comprehensive than these two verses, taken out of context, may suggest. It is not inconceivable, however, that some of the Pauline communities after Paul’s death developed a “Pauline” theology that was rather exclusively based on the confessional aspect, as if a cognitive belief in Jesus and a public confession of it were a necessary and sufficient condition for salvation. In fact, such a putative “Pauline” soteriology

⁵¹ The quotation marks for “Christian” in this article are used to avoid anachronism. In that regard, what makes the issue of Matthew’s Jewishness more complicated is that the Gospel has traditionally been read in the context of the Christian canon. Therefore, interpreting Matthew on its own terms rather than imposing extratextual Christian theology on it is a critical reading strategy to understand Matthew’s soteriology.

⁵² Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief*, 272-73.

became dominant in later Christian theology, and I suggest that Matthew might be reacting against such a view whether he regarded it as Pauline or not.

Further, the theological interpretation of the death of Jesus as salvifically efficacious through its power as penal substitution is not explicitly developed in Matthew's text. Matthew preserves the Marcan saying, *καὶ γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45) verbatim in Matt 20:28.⁵³ Yet the absence of any further interpretive gloss makes it difficult to figure out what this particular saying means in Matthew's text. Given the Jewish context of Matthew, it is not impossible that this saying was interpreted by his audience as a reference to a less clearly defined redemptive impact of a martyr's death, such as the one in the Maccabean literature (4 Macc 17:21-22). Even the statement in Matt 26:28 (*τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*, "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins") does not clearly indicate how the absolution of sins will be granted.⁵⁴ Whatever the unarticulated meaning was in Matthew's mind, there is no evidence that it refers to the idea that whoever believes in Jesus will be forgiven their sins just by virtue of the belief itself.

In sum, salvation in the Gospel of Matthew is not guaranteed on the basis of a particular belief or membership in a particular community. For Matthew, salvation is a matter of doing the will of God in the Torah as it is interpreted by Jesus. In that sense Matthew's soteriology may not squarely fit the mold of covenantal nomism, but it is still articulated in Jewish terms within the parameters of Jewish theology. At the same time, it is distinctively qualified by the teaching of Jesus, which concentrates single-mindedly on the will of God in the Torah as he understands it. This idea of salvation has a universalistic orientation, even though this universalism is still of a Jewish character. This may represent the effort of Matthew as a Jewish theologian to maintain both his Jewish and his "Christian" identity, while grappling with the fact that substantial alterations of conventional Jewish ideas are being made in various early Christian communities.

Unlike Paul in Gal 3:28, Matthew is not willing to say there is no longer Jew or gentile in Christ. Nor would he say that Christ is the end of the Torah (Rom 10:4). For Matthew, the Torah endures forever (Matt 5:17-20). Previously, the Torah was exclusively for Jews. Now, in Matthew's "Christian" Jewish theology, the Jewish Torah as newly interpreted by Jesus is made available for all the nations. If Paul departed from covenantal nomism, as Sanders argues,⁵⁵ Matthew alters the

⁵³ The word *λύτρον* ("ransom") is a *hapax legomenon* in both Mark and Matthew. Neither *λύτρωσις* ("ransoming") nor *ἀπολύτρωσις* ("buying back") appears in Mark or Matthew.

⁵⁴ The word *ἄφεσις* ("forgiveness") is a *hapax legomenon* in Matthew.

⁵⁵ According to Sanders, Paul departed from covenantal nomism and by doing so he broke

terms of covenantal nomism but nevertheless still stays in Judaism. This inherently entails unresolved tensions in the Matthean text, which is understandable, because any alteration of traditional ideas inevitably causes a certain degree of category confusion. Therefore, characterizing Matthew's soteriology in absolute terms as to whether it is *intra* or *extra muros* of Judaism is too simplistic and may not do justice to the complexities of Matthew's text.⁵⁶ There are still many unresolved tensions among these conceptual categories. Recognizing such ambiguities is in part honoring the *intentio auctoris* of the Gospel of Matthew, because Matthew seems to prefer to leave tensions in the text unresolved rather than impose a forced resolution on them.

with Judaism (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 511-15, 543-56). A fuller treatment of this subject is in idem, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 207-10. In a different vein, Heikki Räisänen points out that Paul's break with Judaism may not have been fully conscious; there is inconsistency in his thoughts, but the cumulative effect of Paul's negative portrayals of the Jewish law leads to an ultimate departure of his theology from Judaism ("A Controversial Jew and His Conflicting Convictions: Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People Twenty Years After," in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities* [ed. Udoh et al.], 319-35). For the arguments for Paul as a Jewish thinker who never broke with Judaism, see Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 9-16; John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 43-75; Paula Fredriksen, "The Birth of Christianity and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism," in *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (ed. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 1-30, esp. 17-18; Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009) 55-98, 208-39. In this regard, I want to note that, in the case of Matthew, there is little doubt that Matthew's theology, especially his soteriology, remains squarely within the parameters of Judaism.

⁵⁶ Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 2.



Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.