CHAPTER 4

Application of Findings

In this chapter I apply the hypotheses developed in the preceding chapter to specific interpretive problems in Qumran texts that center on the time reference of the verb forms. The two questions I will take up in this chapter are (1) whether the Qumran writers used the so-called “prophetic perfect” in the Hodayot to refer to salvific acts of God, and (2) to what extent the verb forms may contribute to identifying the persons referred to by certain sobriquets in the pesharim.

4.1 Realized or Future Salvation in the Hodayot

4.1.1 The Problem

Before the Dead Sea Scrolls discoveries, the evidence suggested that Second-Temple Palestinian apocalyptic eschatology was totally future-oriented.¹ In such a context, the eschatology of the teachings of Jesus, in which present-realized and future-expected salvation were juxtaposed, seemed to be an anomaly.² With the discovery of the Qumran manuscripts, a more diverse picture of Jewish eschatology in the Second-Temple period was proposed. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn argued on the basis of certain poems in 1QHᵃ that the Qumran


² Werner Georg Kümmel, Promise and Fulfillment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus, trans. Dorothea Barton (Naperville: A.R. Allenson, 1957) is representative of the literature. The label often given to Jesus’ teaching now is “inaugurated eschatology,” a term first suggested by G. Florovsky and popularized by J.A.T. Robinson (e.g., in Jesus and His Coming: The Emergence of a Doctrine [London: SCM Press, 1957], 101). In Jesus’ view, some of the events leading up to the end had begun, but not all had come to pass.
sect believed in a present-realized eschatological salvation alongside of and overshadowing the usual future expectation.\textsuperscript{3} Decades later, Émile Puech rejected Kuhn’s conclusions, not by denying the tension between present and future, but by placing the emphasis on the future rather than on the present.\textsuperscript{4}

Kuhn’s exegesis of the Hodayot depended heavily on Diethelm Michel’s 1960 study on Hebrew verb forms and syntax.\textsuperscript{5} Michel had concluded that (a) \textit{qatal} verbs express facticity, (b) inversions (non-verb-initial sentences) are explanatory to the preceding statement, (c) \textit{wayyiqtol} verbs denote an immediate result from what was previously described, and (d) infinitives draw their time-reference from the finite verb of the main clause. This set of observations provided the basis for Kuhn’s analysis of the eschatology of the Hymns of the Community in 1QH\textsuperscript{a}. In these Hymns of the Community there is normally found a section Kuhn called the \textit{Soteriologisches Bekenntnis}, “soteriological confession.”\textsuperscript{6} In these soteriological confessions are usually found several \textit{qatal} verbs expressing God’s saving actions; Kuhn called these \textit{qatal} verbs \textit{Heilsperfekta}, “salvation-perfects.” It was the time reference of these \textit{Heilsperfekta} that led Kuhn to argue for an eschatological salvation that is mostly realized.

Puech, on the other hand, took a different approach to the eschatology of the Hodayot. He began not with the poem’s grammar, but with its \textit{structure}. He determined the possible meanings of the smaller units from the general


5 Michel, \textit{Tempora und Satzstellung}.

6 The soteriological confessions are characterized in form by the opening expressions \textit{אני ידעתי כי} or \textit{ואדעתי כי}; and in content by expression of God’s saving action toward his own, sometimes by contrast with the trouble that the godless will encounter. See, for example, 1QH\textsuperscript{a} VI 12–13; XI,20–23; XIX,7–14; XIX: 17–18.