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Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times

Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature

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Crawford gives a survey of rewritten scriptural texts produced in Second Temple times. She identifies the exegetical methods for creating these texts and also discusses how people might have viewed the authority of these texts. Her examples include rewritten narrative and legal texts from the Pentateuch. She arranges these examples into separate chapters dependent upon how closely the base text is followed. Each chapter includes a bibliography of relevant works.

In chapter 1, her introduction, Crawford discusses the texts identified by Geza Vermes as “rewritten Bible” (*Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* [StPB 4; Leiden: Brill, 1961]). After surveying contributions by other scholars, she proposes her own understanding of this group of texts. Since the use of the term “Bible” is anachronistic at this time, she prefers the expression “rewritten Scriptures.” She states that these “constitute a category or group of texts which are characterized by a close adherence to a recognizable and already authoritative base text (narrative or legal) and a recognizable degree of scribal intervention into that base text for the purpose of exegesis. Further, the rewritten scriptural text will often (although not always) make a claim to the authority of revealed Scripture, the same authority as its base text” (12–13).

Chapter 2, "Text of the Pentateuch at Qumran," deals with the different text-types or literary editions of the separate books of the Pentateuch that were viewed as scriptural and could serve as base texts. Scribes copying such texts updated and modified them in various ways. She highlights the text-type of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which harmonizes certain texts on the basis of other parallel scriptural texts. Certain liturgical texts such as 4QDeut^a, phylacteries, and 4QTestimonia also reflect such "innerscriptural" harmonizing.

Chapter 3, "Reworked Pentateuch," addresses several texts that include harmonizations of pentateuchal texts as well as additions of new materials that address certain questions that arise in the base texts or that were not clarified in them. Crawford calls these texts "hyperexpansive" because they not only include harmonizations but also involve "creating new material, additions which not only fill interpretive gaps in the received text, but also expand the text for theological reasons" (55–56). These texts may have been considered as authoritative as the base texts from which they were copied.

Chapter 4, "Jubilees," deals with how an editor produced a new narrative work using parts of Genesis and Exodus. Crawford gives examples of the many modifications used by the editor. "To create his new composition the composer used verbatim quotation of his base text, harmonization, paraphrase, paraphrase of or allusion to Scripture or other Second Temple works, and the addition of new material, in particular sermonic elaborations and the importation of legal commentary into a narrative text" (80). The fact that there were so many copies found of this text at Qumran suggests that it had an authoritative status there.

Chapter 5, "The Temple Scroll," includes a new legal collection of materials from the Pentateuch. Several methods are used to produce this work. As Crawford says, the author "assimilates, by techniques of conflation, harmonization, modifications, additions for clarification, and addition through exegesis, those extrapentateuchal traditions into a new Book of the law" (86). While this text claims divine authority, it is uncertain if the community recognized this status.

Chapter 6, "The Genesis Apocryphon," relates to the remains of an Aramaic translation of the story of Gen 5–15. This text is a translation of the Hebrew text of Genesis but draws upon materials from Jubilees and 1 Enoch as well. Various methods are used such as "addition, omission, harmonization, re-arrangement, and anticipation to create a new unique narrative that is unlike any other retelling of Genesis from antiquity" (107). Crawford doubts that this Aramaic work was considered to be authoritative in the same way that Hebrew works might be.

There were some mistakes in this chapter. The Genesis Apocryphon does not shift back to the first-person narrative in column 22, line 27, as Crawford says (126), but continues with the third-person narrative to the end of the scroll. The stitching is found on the left side of the last sheet of leather of the Genesis Apocryphon, not the right (107 n. 7). In note 16 on page 110 Crawford suggests that Avigad and Yadin are following Fitzmyer, but the work of Avigad and Yadin was published in 1956 and the first edition of Fitzmyer's commentary was published in 1966.

"4QCommentary on Genesis A" (ch. 7) is a text that contains features of both "rewritten scriptural text" with implicit commentary as well as text plus explicit commentary that belongs to the peshet genre also prevalent at Qumran. Crawford thinks that this is a transition text between an earlier time when it was considered permissible to make changes within the text and a later time when a more fixed scriptural text became standard and commentators had to keep their comments separate from the text.

Crawford summarizes in a concluding chapter 8 the methods used in various texts related to innerscriptural exegesis. She also explains how much of this exegesis relates to a specific school, which she identifies as the "priestly-Levitical/Essene exegetical tradition." This movement began in the third to second centuries B.C.E. and then was largely adopted and further used by the Essenes at Qumran. Some of the characteristics of this tradition include the use of the solar calendar, the importance of the Levites, the practice of purity in everyday life, and the belief of written revelation from the time of Enoch (146–47).

One of the strengths of this work is the specific examples Crawford gives related to the process of rewriting scriptural texts. She does a good job illuminating the exegetical techniques used by these translators/writers. One can learn many of the concerns of the translators by paying attention to these specific changes to the base text.

Crawford also gives a helpful overview of several important rewritten Torah texts. She arranges the texts into separate chapters according to how close such texts were to the base texts. It is helpful to see that there are different degrees of alterations of the base text in different rewritten texts. Some scholars, however, have a broader definition of "rewritten texts" and include those that have been called "parabiblical" texts. It would have been helpful if Crawford had explained more clearly how one differentiates between "rewritten" and "parabiblical" texts.

Crawford's suggestions about the authority of particular rewritten texts is based on fairly standard criteria as proposed by James VanderKam and others. It seems difficult to know for certain how a particular work was viewed on the basis of how many copies of a particular book were found or whether a book was quoted in another source or whether a

book claims to have divine authority. Some might doubt whether there are any certain criteria that be used to distinguish scriptural from nonscriptural texts.

Crawford's proposal that a "priestly-Levitical/Essene tradition" was responsible for such texts is intriguing, but more evidence is necessary to make a convincing case. By looking carefully at specific details, one can see particular concerns of the translator/writer of these texts, but more attention should be given to the final shape of the texts. The final rewritten texts are more than the modifications made to earlier base texts. In some cases, considerable portions of the base text are included without modifications.