



Sidnie White Crawford. *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008. xii + 160 pp. \$16.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8028-4740-9.



Reviewed by John Kampen (Methodist Theological School in Ohio)

Published on H-Judaic (March, 2009)

Commissioned by Jason Kalman (Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion)

The Rewritten Bible

Sidnie White Crawford has created an engaging book with a significant thesis on an important subject in Second Temple Judaism. In this investigation of the methods of biblical interpretation and the scribal techniques used in rewriting, she attempts to determine whether there is a particular scribal interpretation that can be identified in these compositions. She distinguishes a distinctive line of interpretation, which she calls priestly/levitical, and identifies it with the Essene movement in Second Temple Judaism. Her assessment relies on a particular set of scriptural passages concerning Levi and the priests: Deut. 17:8-13, Deut. 33:10, and Mal. 2:4-7.

In the introduction to this careful and well-designed volume, Crawford pays close attention to the rather complicated question of definition. Noting the origin of the term "Rewritten Bible" with Geza Vermes, she goes on to trace the development of the attempts to categorize this body of literature through the work of Philip Alexander, Moshe Bernstein, George Brooke, and Emanuel Tov. This attempt, of course, is not simple, since it is affected in a major way by our understanding of the development

of the canon. She develops the concept of "Rewritten Scripture," arguing that this is a meaningful term for a distinguishable body of exegetical works found within the Qumran library. Accepting legal as well as narrative literature in the description, she develops a "category" or "group" of texts that "are characterized by a close adherence to a recognizable and already authoritative base text" and "a recognizable degree of scribal intervention into that text base for the purpose of exegesis" (pp. 12-13). Adopting the limitation of texts related to the books of the Pentateuch, she describes and analyzes a spectrum of texts. The next body of texts in the spectrum is Rewritten Pentateuch manuscripts. These texts are still marked mainly by harmonistic editing within the content of the biblical texts, but now also include the insertion of outside material into the text. An example of this is found in fragment 23 of 4Q365 containing material about the wood offering for the temple, apparently following the festival of New Oil. Crawford characterizes this scribal technique as hyperexpansion.

The Book of Jubilees and the Temple Scroll constitute

the next stage on the spectrum, the former having held scriptural status at Qumran. In this case, the scribal intervention is so extensive that it results in a new distinctive creation. Crawford describes in detail the innovations and techniques, including the manner in which various sources were utilized in the compositions. She also develops the manner in which the scribe utilized the inherited scribal tradition of the time to create these new compositions. She makes the point that this text is entirely legal material. As with the other texts, Crawford carefully describes the scribal techniques that can be observed when compared with the relevant extant biblical exemplars.

The Genesis Apocryphon is a more difficult text to study. It is only with the publication of Joseph Fitzmyer's revised commentary in 2004 that the full text has become available. In an insightful discussion, Crawford demonstrates the manner in which Enoch, Jubilees, and Genesis were combined into this composition. Her arguments for the use of Enoch and Jubilees by this scribe are significant and convincing. The final stage of development represented within the Qumran texts is described and analyzed in 4Q252 (Commentary on Genesis A), in which the familiar *âcition plus commentâ* format is found utilizing the term "*pishro*."

It takes a veteran scholar of scrolls study to produce a volume that constitutes a good introduction to the study of rewritten scripture, noting issues and providing the basic material on relevant texts, while also advancing an interesting thesis that is a significant contribution to the study of the discipline. Crawford has succeeded in producing such a volume. Her careful discussion of representative texts in each chapter provides students with good examples that illustrate the specific points she is making and that they can apply to other cases.

Within the discussion of Jubilees and the Temple Scroll, we also see one of the limitations of this volume or at least an area of dispute. The relationship of questions of the authority of the text in connection with these interpretive developments requires more discussion. Within these texts are rather audacious claims to authority. Crawford accepts Hindy Najman's argument that the two do not constitute one composition and that they were not meant to replace the Torah (*Seconding Sinai* [2003]). However, Jubilees was accepted as an authoritative text and arguments for such status for the Temple Scroll could be advanced, especially if the extent of the interrelationship of the two compositions as noted even by Najman is acknowledged. We also know that in these two texts are claims for viewpoints and practices that

are sources of conflict with other segments of Judaism as portrayed within the Qumran corpus and other evidence from Judaism of the next few centuries. It appears that more analysis is required of the manner in which the claims for authority affected the structure and nature of these texts in conjunction with the techniques that Crawford so ably discusses.

What we can establish with a relatively high degree of certainty is that at some point a new and distinct social structure emerged in Second Temple Judaism, which from a sociohistorical perspective is regarded as sectarian and represented within some of the texts in the Qumran corpus. These questions have found renewed attention in recent studies, first by Joseph Baumgarten, then Eyal Regev and David Chalcraft. From the Qumran evidence we have a variety of trajectories of ideology and literature attested within these sectarian texts. Since Crawford chose to base her study on the trajectory related to the texts of the Pentateuch, it is not surprising that she identifies a priestly/levitical line of interpretation with the Essenes. There are clearly other lines of interpretation attested in that same corpus, particularly apocalyptic traditions grounded most strongly in Enochic texts and wisdom traditions. Also evident are other interpretive traditions grounded in prophetic literature, established in widespread and diverse use of Isaiah as well as the prophetic texts utilized in the *peshar* tradition. The texts of liturgy and prayers, and the use of the Psalms, represents yet another track, which, while theoretically capable of the same analysis, is a harder tradition to identify and study in the same manner. What can be identified in all of these trajectories (or traditions) is a shift in which the utilization of the particular literary tradition is represented within a sectarian framework. What is less clear is the role and/or meaning of texts that contain elements which we recognize as distinctive within the sectarian texts but which are already present within texts not identified within a sectarian framework, many of which are thought to precede those sectarian texts.

These questions lead us to ask more questions of the texts studied by Crawford than have been identified in her study. This suggests that the sequential literary development is not as clear or simple as proposed. On the one hand, the case of 4Q252 is not to be viewed as simply a development from the earlier texts identified in the study. More of its shape and content is to be identified in connection with the entire corpus of sectarian texts. The question then is, how did the concrete emergence of a sectarian social structure affect biblical interpretation across the trajectories represented in the

Qumran corpus? On the other hand, within the range of texts discussed in the monograph, we then are faced with the other question. Did the particular authoritative claims represented in the works of Jubilees and the Temple Scroll have an impact on the move to or the formulation of a sectarian social structure? Again, these are more disruptive questions that cannot find easy solutions within the literary development that Crawford outlines.

Perhaps this is simply a call for another volume in which these questions arising from some understanding of a social history related to these literary compositions interact with the developments outlined in this monograph. It does appear that we need a better understanding of the social and ideological forces associated with the developments charted out in this very engaging volume.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-judaic>

Citation: John Kampen. Review of Crawford, Sidnie White, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*. H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews. March, 2009.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=23856>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.