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**Pulikottil, Paulson.**  
***Transmission of Biblical Texts in Qumran: The Case of the Large Isaiah Scroll***  
***1QIsa(a)***

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This volume represents a revised version of Pulikottil's doctoral dissertation done in the Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield, under the supervision of Philip R. Davies.

In the introduction Pulikottil defines his work as an attempt to move beyond mere textual criticism of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, the best-preserved biblical scroll from Qumran. Rather than just investigating 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>'s variant readings for reconstruction of the "original" Bible text, Pulikottil wishes to appreciate 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> as a product of scribal skill and scholarship in Second Temple period Judaism.

In chapter 1, "The Study of the Isaiah Scroll," Pulikottil discusses previous scholarship on 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and his own particular approach. He agrees with scholars who see the more plene nature of the second half of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> as evidence of a single scribe coming to terms with a new orthographic system, rather than being explained by two scribes or two different scribal histories for the two halves of the book. He accepts Tov's theory that the peculiar orthography that 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> shares with other important Qumran scrolls is a feature of Qumran scribal practice. Note, however, against Pulikottil, that this "Qumran orthography" *is* attested elsewhere—at Masada.

Pulikottil next reviews earlier evaluations of the nature of the variations of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> from the Masoretic Text (MT). He finds that they are characterized by a negative attitude, based on the mindset that deviations from the MT must be scribal errors. Pulikottil argues that in most cases there are no adequate criteria for deciding that variations are in fact errors. He argues that the scribe was careful and competent, and every variant in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> must be examined on its own merits. Pulikottil then discusses the idea that some of the readings in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> are interpretive in nature. He finds that this idea arose mainly from the desire to defend the MT. Scholars presupposed without argument that the exegetical

techniques used in the Qumran pesharim (“commentaries”) must have been applied to 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> also.

Pulikottil then reviews E. Y. Kutscher’s approach to 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, in particular in his monumental *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1QIs<sup>a</sup>)* (Leiden: Brill, 1974 [1959]). He finds Kutscher’s approach anchored in the mindset already described: that variations from the MT must be seen as errors (cf. my comments in *JJS* 52 [2001]: 128 n. 36). Kutscher explained variations almost exclusively as linguistic corrections toward the language of general Second Temple period sources. Pulikottil criticizes Kutscher’s linguistic work for often ignoring the more immediate linguistic context in the Qumran scrolls.

Pulikottil then outlines the aims and approach of his study. He proposes that it is a mistake to locate the scribe of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> in the medieval context where letter-perfect copying of biblical scrolls was the ideal. Instead, 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> comes from an era when scribal revision was as acceptable as direct copying of manuscripts. To define the unique contribution of the scribe of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, Pulikottil must isolate unique readings of the scroll. He defines these as the cases where the scroll varies from both the MT and the Septuagint (LXX).

In chapter 2, “Scribal Activity in the Scroll,” Pulikottil discusses the various sorts of changes made by the scribe of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> to his text. The first category of changes is “harmonization,” that is, aligning elements of one text with another. Pulikottil discusses, with many examples, three types of harmonization: (1) contextual harmonization, where the influence is the immediate context; (2) textual harmonization, where the influence is from other passages in the book; and (3) intertextual harmonization, where the influence comes from other scriptural books. Pulikottil concludes that the harmonizations result from a careful reading of the passage in which they occur and show how well the scribe knew other texts. Pulikottil argues that the scribe was very concerned to produce a “correct” text, in the sense of a text free from anomalies and one that related to other scriptural texts.

The next category of changes Pulikottil discusses is “explication,” that is, filling in conceptual voids of the text. Within this category Pulikottil distinguishes explanations, which clarify the meaning of the *Vorlage*, and interpretive readings, which import a foreign meaning into the text.

The next category of changes, which Pulikottil calls “modernization,” covers the linguistic changes discussed in Kutscher’s *Isaiah Scroll*. Given the criticisms of Kutscher in the opening chapter, this section is somewhat of a disappointment. We are given little more than a summary of Kutscher’s views, with almost no critique. Furthermore, on occasion Pulikottil’s reading of Kutscher is unreflective and misleading. For example, in

regard to the spelling of the name “Damascus” with a *resh* (*DRMŠQ*), Pulikottil states: “Kutscher concludes that the form of the scroll is not earlier than the first and second centuries BCE” (118), which fits conveniently with the idea that the “modernization” is the work of the scribe of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. Yet Pulikottil and Kutscher both note that the form appears in the MT of Chronicles, which Kutscher seems to date to the fifth century B.C.E. (*Isaiah Scroll*, 4 n. 1). Presumably Kutscher would be hesitant to attribute the Chronicles form to linguistic updating of the MT, and hence Pulikottil must be misreading Kutscher. In regard to dating linguistic forms, nonattestation of a linguistic (or textual; see below) form in our meager sources does not prove that such a form did not in fact exist in a period earlier than its first attestation.

Finally, Pulikottil discusses “contextual changes,” that is, cleaning up grammatical and syntactical irregularities in the context.

In chapter 3 Pulikottil discusses “The *Traditio* of the Scroll.” He defines *traditio* as the interpretive contribution the scribe made to his *traditum* (i.e., the text). He discusses two types of exegesis in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. Historical exegesis involves updating details of a historical nature. Theological exegesis involves protecting the scribe’s notion of God. In this section he makes the important observation that the common tendency to change *‘al* to *‘el* with the name of God is to avoid conceptions of being “against” (*‘al*) God rather than having anything to do with a supposed weakening of the guttural letters. Pulikottil then discusses significant themes of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. Usually these are derived from small variants in only one or two passages. Thus, it must be admitted that Pulikottil’s interpretations sometimes appear forced, especially when he sees a particular “Qumran” slant to the ideology. Pulikottil comments, nevertheless, that the scribe has a wider concern than just engaging in changes of a sectarian nature.

In chapter 4, “The Milieu of the Scroll,” Pulikottil investigates the scribe’s “conceptual universe.” Pulikottil expresses reservations about the idea that the Qumran scrolls came from the Essenes. Furthermore, he notes that the scrolls are diverse and cannot be all taken together as reflecting the faith of any particular community. Within the scrolls, however, Pulikottil finds links between 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and those texts associated with the “*Yahad*”—community. He notes that one of the scribes who made corrections to the scroll was the same one who copied the sectarian 1QS (and 4QSam<sup>c</sup>). He notes “*Yahad* sensibilities” and “*Yahad* themes” in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>’s unique readings. For example, the word *yahad* is repeatedly changed to protect against readings taking the word as the noun “community” in a negative context rather than the adverb “together.” Thus Isa 43:2 could have been read as “the *Yahad* has been judged.” Another example Pulikottil discusses is how oracles of judgment are directed, not against “you,” as in the MT, but against “them” in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> (= those outside the community.) He finds most of the major themes of *Yahad* texts reflected in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. In contrast to these conclusions, Pulikottil finds no substantial textual relationship between 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and other *Yahad* texts or other texts written in the so-

called Qumran orthography. Thus, for example, 1QS follows the MT versus 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> when quoting Isaiah.

The “Conclusion” recapitulates in detail the main findings of the study. The book concludes with an appendix containing three tables referred to in the text, a bibliography, and indexes of references and authors.

This work is important in particular for its insistence that variant readings have a significance beyond the question of the “original” form of the biblical text. It shows how scribes, such as the scribe of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, could have given coherent interpretations of Isaiah or other books through rewriting of details. From a linguistic point of view, it calls into question a number of Kutscher’s interpretations of the variants. It is carefully researched and suggestive of new avenues of research.

My main reservation about the argument is the questionable nature of the evidence and its interpretation. For one thing, Pulikottil must decide which textual variants stem from the particular scribe of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. He does this by eliminating all readings shared by the MT or the LXX. But how much do we know about the biblical text at this time? How many lost manuscripts could perhaps show us that the so-called unique readings are no such thing? It is not as if the ideology of a single scribe jumps out clearly from the 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>. On the contrary, Pulikottil must tease out nuances, often from very small variants such as the person and number of pronouns and verbs. We do not know enough about the text of Isaiah to be sure that Pulikottil is not simply reading a consistent ideology into what is in reality an accumulation of unrelated textual variants over many generations. In this context the absence of clear textual affinities with *Yahad* documents becomes even more worrying for Pulikottil’s thesis.