

The Samuel Scroll from Qumran. 4QSam^a restored and compared to the Septuagint and 4QSam^c. By Andrew Fincke. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah XLIII. Leiden: Brill, 2001. viii and 329 pages. Cloth. \$133.

4QSam^a, containing parts of 1 and 2 Samuel, is one of the most important of the Dead Sea Scrolls since its readings that differ from the Masoretic Text are often supported by the Old Greek Septuagint, made in the second century BCE, or by proto-Lucianic Greek readings, generally thought to come from the 1st century BCE.

While the definitive edition of these fragments is being prepared by Donald W. Parry and Frank Moore Cross, the present volume presents all the readings preserved on those fragments, assigns them a location in reconstructed columns of the text, and shows how these readings compare with the Masoretic Text and with Septuagintal readings and with the text of Josephus. All of the Greek witnesses are translated into Hebrew for this edition.

Until the Parry-Cross volume appears, this *could* be the best access most scholars would have to these Qumran fragments of Samuel. It needs to be noted, however, that the author provides only four pages of introduction to what is really a very daring, even risky reconstruction that cries out for a lengthy explanation and justification. It is not clear to me from the sparse introduction why only seventeen of the reconstructed columns are presented in standard Hebrew typeface, while they and the rest of the columns are also presented in plates that print the text in a typeface designed to look like the script of 4QSam^a. It also is not explained why some columns are given Roman numerals while others are labelled with non-Roman numbers. There is no index to indicate where 4QSam^c is cited, let alone why 4QSam^b is not included at all. There are also a surprising number of typing errors in a book devoted to textual criticism.

But the strangest and most controversial feature of this book is that the author has reconstructed what might have been originally present in every line of the scroll, before the worms ate the vast majority of the text. In columns 1 and 7, for example, only parts of four lines are actually preserved on the leather, but Fincke provides the complete Hebrew text for all thirty-seven lines of both columns. How could one possibly know what was on any individual line if no part of that line is preserved, or if no part of many lines before or after it is preserved? For lines with no Qumran readings does one just reproduce the Masoretic Text, or does one reproduce the Septuagint? The author also does not explain by what method he retroverted the Greek text back into Hebrew. An unwary user might get the very wrong impression that 4QSam^a is preserved almost throughout the books of Samuel whereas in fact only the words underlined in this edition actually appear on the leather, with all the rest being very arbitrary reconstructions.

Not only might textual critics be led astray by this book, but it is by no means clear why Fincke reconstructed every line in every column in the first place. There is some value to know where the fragment might have appeared within the original columns of this scroll, but surely no one would expect his lengthy, multi-line reconstructions to have any semblance of accuracy.

Textual critics who want to use the Samuel scrolls can find quite useful information included amid all this confusion. But why would not an editor of this volume or the publisher insist on some kind of methodological control before publishing such an expensive book?

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