

THE *ODES OF ISAIAH*: A NEWLY DISCOVERED SYRIAC
PSEUDEPIGRAPHON ≠ A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

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The full text of this paper can be found [here](#).

Larger issue: Christian transmission of Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha

Literary criticism: reader response criticism, intertextuality, deconstruction.

Maxine Grossman, *Reading for History in the Damascus Document: A Methodological Study* (STDJ 45; Leiden: Brill, 2002)

Alternate history in science fiction and as historiography

Robert Fogel, *Railroads and American Economic Growth: Essays in Econometric History* (Baltimore, Maryland, 1964) etc.

Geoffrey Hawthorne, *Plausible Worlds: Possibility and Understanding in History and the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Niall Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London: Picador, 1997), 1-90

My approach: The plausible imagined transmission of known ancient works by means different from those by which they actually reached us, with points of departure and duration on a very local and limited scale (to counter the "butterfly effect")

A "thick description" involving:

- * Construction of key "settings" using off-the-shelf "templates"
- * Greek translation technique of Greek Ben Sira
- * Syriac translation technique of Peshitta to Judith
- * Manuscript: London, British Museum, Add. MS 14.538 ("Codex Nintriensis")
- * "Reading with" contemporary ancient works as per Grossman's approach
- * Reading the work as embedded in its alternate-history thick-description through the eyes of a hypothetical modern scholar

The Hodayot Scroll from Cave One

- * Translated into Greek by a first-century bilingual nonsectarian Jew and given the title *Odes of Isaiah* (WDAI TOU HSAIOU)
- * Read by Greek-speaking Christians of the second or third century with the Gospels and Paul
- * Translated into Syriac by a Christian in the second or third century
- * Read in Codex Nintriensis by a medieval Syriac-speaking Christian
- * Greek version of the Self-Glorification Hymn extracted in Papyrus Bodmer XI
- * Codex Nintriensis and Papyrus Bodmer XI read by a twenty-first century scholar (MS, title, original language, poetry, genres, Jewish and Christian "signature features,")
- * The initial best working hypothesis would be composition by Syriac-speaking Christians

Conclusions: What's the payoff?

1. Testing of hypothetical methods for isolating Jewish works
2. Flagging of desirable areas for more research
3. Subjecting history to experimental falsification
4. To think with ourselves as outsiders and view our own complicity in the history we make

The Self-Glorification Hymn:

Recension B material preceding what survives of Recension A:

. . . wonderful things . . . His mighty acts . . . they chant and holy ones rejoice . . . in righteousness . . . [I]srael. He has established His truth of old and the mysteries of His shrewdness in al[l] . . . and the counsel of the poor for an eternal congregation . . . sound ones of [et]ernity, a throne of power in the congregation of the gods. None of the *kings of old* are enthroned in it and their nobles did no[t] . . . my glory is incomparable and none is *exalted* (or "silent") except me, and none shall come to me, for I am enthroned (or "I dwell") in . . . in heaven and there is not . . . I am reckoned with the gods and my abode is in the holy council. Not like flesh is [my] desire . . .

Surviving Recension A material:

. . . despised like me for in the habitation of holiness is everything precious to me . . . Who bears evil so as to be comparable to me, and who is like me together with the holy ones, and who is equal to me? . . . teaching is not comparable to my teachings . . . Who is like me among the gods? Who will cut off the words of my mouth, and the flow of my lips who will contain? Who will *advise me* with the tongue and be comparable to my judgments? I am beloved of the King, friend to the holy ones, and there shall not *come in* to me . . . Who is reckoned as booty by me and who is comparable to me in my *glory*? For as for me, with the gods is my station, and my glory with the sons of the King. I shall not crown myself with fine gold and gold of Ophir is not . . . shall not be reckoned *by me*.