

John's 'Rewriting' of Mark: Some Insights from Ancient Jewish Analogues

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1. Introduction

In his discussion of John 19:38-42 in the volume *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, Percival Gardner-Smith argued that if John had known Mark he would not have introduced the episode about Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus binding Jesus' body in linen cloths, since it contradicts the Markan (and Lukan) account that Jesus was 'hastily buried without the usual spices'. 'It is of course possible', he remarks, 'that John wished to correct the synoptic account, either from motives of reverence, or to put the death of Jesus still further beyond the possibility of doubt; but if he had known *and respected* the Second and Third Gospels he could hardly have introduced his account of the elaborate embalming by Joseph and Nicodemus'.¹ Such sentiments are expressed by Gardner-Smith with striking regularity throughout the work, because, in his estimation, there could only be two possible scenarios: either John was familiar with, even literarily dependent, on one or more of the Synoptic Gospels, or the evangelist had access to, and drew from, independent (oral) tradition. Since only 'an active, uncontrolled, imagination', he claims, can 'see in the Johannine account a conscious rewriting of [Mark's] plain narrative',² Gardner-Smith opts decisively for John's independence of the Synoptics. Moreover, 'if he knew them, he had no regard for their authority'.³

Notwithstanding the obvious fact that Mark and the other Synoptic Gospels did not yet possess canonical status at the time of the composition of John's Gospel,⁴ some recent evaluations of John's relationship with the other gospels, particularly Mark, have noted that authoritative texts—as broadly defined and understood—were in fact frequently subjected to a process of *rewriting* in the first-century Mediterranean world. There is a growing recognition, particularly in discussion of

¹ Percival Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 72 (emphasis mine).

² *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 25.

³ *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 36 (with reference to John 7:1-13).

⁴ For discussion of this issue with particular reference to Gardner-Smith's arguments and assumptions, see Chris Keith, "If John Knew Mark": Critical Inheritance and Johannine Disagreements with Mark' (in this volume).

Synoptic relationships,⁵ that ancient Greek and Roman authors did not practice verbatim reproduction of antecedent texts but engaged in free paraphrase, consciously rewriting and reconfiguring their sources for the purpose of interpretation and the careful (stylistic) integration of material into their own compositions. Graeco-Roman biographies and histories whose underlying sources are available or identifiable can be seen to apply several compositional devices, including the displacement of narrated events, the conflation of two or more elements, compressed narration of events or figures, and simplification through the omission or revision of details from earlier source(s).⁶ Training in such textual techniques was an essential part of elementary education; children were to be taught, for example, how to recount Aesop's fables in simple language and then, in their own written versions, to adopt 'bolder paraphrase' (*tum paraphrasi audacius vertere*) that could include abridgement as well as embellishment, as long as the intended meaning of the original text remained intact (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratorio* 1.9.2).⁷

Whatever the precise nature of John's relationship with Mark's Gospel, the compositional techniques attested in a range of Greek and Roman sources may be able to shed light on why John's engagement with 'Synoptic' source(s), however defined, differs so significantly from the way in which Matthew and Luke used Mark. For some Johannine scholars, undoubtedly, the Matthean and Lukan redaction models do continue to function as a kind of methodological template for assessing whether John is dependent on or independent of Mark,⁸ but without

⁵ See especially F. Gerald Downing, 'Redaction Criticism: Josephus' *Antiquities* and the Synoptic Gospels I and II', *JSNT* 8 (1980), 46-65; 9 (1980), 29-48; *idem*, 'Compositional Conventions and the Synoptic Problem', *JBL* 107 (1988), 69-85; Robert A. Derrenbacher, *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem* (BETL, 186; Leuven; Leuven University Press, 2005), 52-76. With reference to John's relationship with Mark, see especially Richard Bauckham, 'The Gospel of John and the Synoptic Problem', in Paul Foster, Andrew Gregory, John S. Kloppenborg and Joseph Verheyden (eds.), *New Studies in the Synoptic Problem: Oxford Conference, April 2008: Essays in Honour of Christopher M. Tuckett* (BETL, 239; Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 657-88, especially 660-62. In the same 2011 volume, see the articles by Robert A. Derrenbacher, 'The "External and Psychological Conditions under which the Synoptic Gospels were Written": Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem' (435-57) and F. Gerald Downing, 'Writers' Use or Abuse of Written Sources' (523-48).

⁶ For the application of these (and other devices) in Plutarch's *Lives*, see Michael R. Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels? What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁷ Cf. Downing, 'Writers' Use or Abuse', 529.

⁸ As noted, for example, by Jörg Frey, 'Das Vierte Evangelium auf dem Hintergrund der älteren Evangelientradition: Zum Problem: Johannes und die Synoptiker', in Thomas Söding (ed.), *Johannesevangelium – Mitte oder Rand des Kanons? Neue Standortbestimmungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 80-81. See also Jean Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean (1-12)* (Commentaire du

offering clear criteria for determining what level of agreement is required, in a redaction-critical approach, for making a strong case one way or another. What is not widely acknowledged, moreover, is that the character of the Matthean/Lukan reworking of Mark is in fact something of an anomaly in comparison with the ‘rewriting’ processes of contemporary Greek and Roman biographers and historians.⁹ John’s evidently flexible and creative use of sources is more in line with known compositional conventions,¹⁰ and, for that reason, cannot necessarily be taken as evidence of John’s reliance on related, but divergent, oral traditions.

2. The Phenomenon of Rewriting in Ancient Judaism

In the search for possible analogues to the ways in which the gospels rework their source material, the focus of scholarly enquiry to date has largely been Graeco-Roman practices and their concomitant low levels of lexical adherence to textual predecessors. Some comparisons have, admittedly, been made with Josephus’s rewriting strategies in *Antiquities*, where he similarly adopts such devices as paraphrase, expansion, omission, and rearrangement.¹¹ Where he uses the *Letter of Aristeas*, for example, verbal agreements are limited to a small number of words in sequence,¹² and, strikingly, the same applies to Josephus’s retelling of the Jewish Scriptures in *Antiquities* 1-11.¹³ Even in his summary paraphrase of the Decalogue, only four of the ‘cited’ words are identical to those found in the Septuagintal versions of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 (*Ant.* 3.91-92), prefaced by Josephus’s clarification that what follows is a reworded outline rather than faithful

Nouveau Testament, IVa; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2014), 31-32, who describes John’s (different) relationship with Mark as an example of ‘hypertextuality’ (rather than ‘intertextuality’).

⁹ Cf. Downing, ‘Redaction Criticism: II’, 33; Bauckham, ‘The Gospel of John and the Synoptic Problem’, 661-62. Nevertheless, John S. Kloppenborg, ‘Variation in the Reproduction of the Double Tradition and the Oral Q’, *ETL* 83 (2007), 74-49, notes some examples of ‘high agreement’ copying, especially in legal and regulatory texts (cf., e.g., 1QS and 4QS^{b,d}), that are closer to the Matthean and Lukan method of using sources.

¹⁰ Cf. Marianne M Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (New Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 8: ‘John’s interpretive freedom in selecting and ordering events, expanding or contracting material, especially discourses, in order to give an account of what Jesus did and said and how one should understand their significance—all this is exactly what one would expect of an ancient biography’.

¹¹ Downing, ‘Redaction Criticism: I’, 46-65; Derrenbacker, *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem*, 92-116.

¹² See further Kloppenborg, ‘Variation in the Reproduction of the Double Tradition’, 67-70.

¹³ On Josephus’s use of Scriptures, particularly with reference to *Ant.* 1.17, see Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 37-46; Steve Mason, ‘Josephus and His Twenty-Two Book Canon’, in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (eds.), *The Canon Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 121-24.

reproduction of the text: ‘These words we are not permitted to state explicitly, to the letter (πρὸς λέξιν), but we will indicate their general import’ (3.90). No explanation is given as to the motivation, theological or otherwise, for Josephus’s tightly rephrased adaptation of Scripture, but there is no doubt that, compositionally, it amounts to a clear-cut case of paraphrastic speech.

What remains to be explored is whether the positioning of Josephus’s rewriting techniques specifically within a *Jewish* context—that is, instead of aligning them primarily with Graeco-Roman conventions—can inform the discussion of John’s familiarity with or even reworking of Mark. Extending the analysis to take into account the practices of rewriting within late Second Temple Judaism has the advantage of increasing the number of ancient compositions as one’s disposal for comparative purposes. Indeed, and arguably more so than is the case with classical Greek and Roman evidence, it provides access to multiple examples of reworked texts whose central source, the Jewish Scriptures—whether in Hebrew or Greek—can be directly consulted to assess the method and scope of literary dependence. It also raises the possibility that additional, distinctively Jewish, compositional features and factors are brought to light and, if so, could indicate that John’s methods of reworking earlier sources are in fact part and parcel of its connectedness to first-century Judaism. This can, hopefully, lead to the sharpening of certain questions and proposals regarding the nature of John’s relationship with Mark, as well as clarifying likely connections between John and Jewish interpretative methods in the first century CE.¹⁴ The aim is not necessarily to search for new evidence or new examples of literary connections between John and Mark but to mark out some of the mechanics of a possible relationship through comparison with the phenomenon of rewriting within a Jewish milieu. This investigation will therefore proceed by examining various textual techniques and strategies applied by late Second Temple Jewish authors in their recasting of earlier sources. I will focus initially on texts that are widely classified as belonging to the category of ‘rewritten Bible’ or ‘rewritten Scripture’—interpretative rewritings of authoritative scriptural texts—before broadening the discussion to include other evidence for ‘rewrittenness’ as a well-established and significant form of literary production in Jewish texts roughly contemporaneous with the Gospel of John.

¹⁴ See also Catrin H. Williams, ‘John, Judaism, and “Searching the Scriptures”’, in R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (eds.), *John and Judaism: A Contested Relationship in Context* (RBS, 87; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017), 77–100.

2.1 *Rewritten Bible/Scripture*

Much of the discussion during the past few decades has focused on the nature and extent of the Jewish category labelled as ‘rewritten Bible’,¹⁵ particularly as to whether it amounts to a literary genre or should be defined as an interpretative strategy and process of rewriting. In an influential essay Philip Alexander proposed that four Jewish texts—*Jubilees*, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*, and Books 1-11 of Josephus’s *Antiquities*—belong to the generic classification of ‘rewritten Bible’, based on the formal literary characteristics that they all share.¹⁶ In all four texts lengthy portions of scriptural material, particularly from the Pentateuch, are retold in sequence through a combination of elaboration, omission, conflation and rearrangement, that is, broadly speaking, the same rewriting techniques as those encountered in certain Greek and Roman texts. The possible significance of these characteristics for the study of John’s relationship with Mark will be examined later in the study, but—from a methodological perspective—this kind of ‘generic’ approach has been questioned on the basis that the listed features are ‘to some extent predetermined by the selection and demarcation of those compositions’ said to belong to this particular classification of texts.¹⁷

The centrality of texts like *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* in any analysis of the phenomenon of ‘rewritten Bible’ cannot be disputed, although many of their literary features are in fact attested in a range of additional works of various form, content, perspective and degrees of reliance on a scriptural base text. The emphasis then falls on ‘rewriting’ as a textual strategy, with the net cast much more widely to include Jewish texts belonging to different genres,¹⁸ such as narrative blocks in

¹⁵ The term was coined by Geza Vermes; see *idem Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1961; 2nd revised edition, 1973), 67-126.

¹⁶ Philip S. Alexander, ‘Retelling the Old Testament’, in D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson (eds.), *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 99-121, including 119 n. 11: ‘Any text admitted to the genre must display *all* the characteristics’. For Alexander’s criteria, see ‘Retelling the Old Testament’, 116-18.

¹⁷ George J. Brooke, ‘Memory, Cultural Memory, and Rewriting Scripture’, *Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essays in Method* (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 52. See also Jonathan G. Campbell, ‘Rewritten Bible: A Terminological Reassessment’, in József Zsengellér (ed.), *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques?* (SuppJSJ, 166; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 56.

¹⁸ George W.E. Nickelsburg, ‘The Bible Rewritten and Expanded’, in Michael E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (CRINT, II/2; Assen: van Gorcum, 1984), 89-156; Daniel J. Harrington, ‘Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies: The Bible Rewritten (Narratives)’ in Robert A.

a non-narrative composition (such as accounts of the flood in *I Enoch* 6-11) and poetic presentations of scriptural stories in epic form (e.g., *Ezekiel the Tragedian*). Furthermore, after the publication of all the Dead Sea Scrolls, the category is now widely regarded as including legal compositions like the *Temple Scroll*, while Qumran scholarship has been responsible for shifting the labelling from ‘rewritten Bible’ to ‘rewritten Scripture’ because it can no longer be assumed that Second Temple Jews had a canonically recognizable ‘Bible’ at the turn of the Common Era; ‘Scripture’, in this respect, is a more apposite term to describe religiously authoritative compositions that have not yet been subjected to delimitation in a closed collection of texts.¹⁹

There is no doubt that a substantial number, if not the majority, of writings in late Second Temple Judaism interacted closely with existing scriptural texts through expansion, paraphrase and implicit commentary. But if tight generic classifications are viewed as overly restrictive, the consequence of subsuming a much wider range of compositions under the rubric of rewritten Bible is that it can become a mere description of phenomena observable in several loosely related compositions, thereby losing focus on those writings which have a recognizably *sustained* and *sequential* attachment to a scriptural base text.

Some clarity emerges when works of rewritten Scripture are assessed as a category distinct from, and yet closely linked to, other examples of interpretative scriptural reworking. Molly Zahn therefore helpfully identifies three core elements in what she describes as a ‘prototypical’ group of rewritten texts in which the structure and flow of their underlying source remains recognizable, even if they differ from each other in terms of individual literary features.²⁰ First, those responsible for producing ‘rewritten Scripture’ viewed their compositions as constituting distinctly new works and regarded themselves as ‘*doing* something different’ from scribes who produced new editions or copies of a scriptural text.²¹ Secondly, works of rewritten Scripture are concerned with the sustained

Kraft and George W.E. Nickelsburg (eds.), *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 239-47. Harrington also includes the *Testament of Moses*, *Life of Adam and Eve*, and the *Ascension of Isaiah* (among other texts).

¹⁹ See Eugene Ulrich, ‘The Notion and Definition of Canon’, in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (eds.), *The Canon Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 21-35, especially 29-30.

²⁰ Molly Zahn, *Rethinking Rewritten Scripture: Composition and Exegesis in the 4QReworked Pentateuch Manuscripts* (STDJ, 95; Leiden: Brill, 2011); *eadem*, ‘Genre and Rewritten Scripture: A Reassessment’, *JBL* 131 (2012), 271-88.

²¹ ‘Genre and Rewritten Scripture’, 282.

interpretation of a succession of specific scriptural passages; the aim is not simply to supplement or expand prior tradition but to interact with it through improvement and/or correction. Thirdly, the authors of rewritten Scripture intended their works to be seen as the same ‘kind of text’, positioning themselves within the same ‘discourse’ as the text forming the basis of rewriting.²² And so, from a rhetorical perspective, reworked texts of this nature produce a ‘version of past tradition that better reflects the concerns and ideology of their community’, thus enabling authoritative tradition to be of significance in the present.²³

2.2 Other Jewish Rewritten Texts

The category of ‘rewritten Scripture’ can, as a result, allow sufficient flexibility for texts like the *Genesis Apocryphon* to act as a template for assessing the nature and function of a much wider range of Jewish rewritten texts. What binds together the examples of Jewish ‘rewriting’ so far considered in the ‘genre vs. process’ debate is that they all display adherence, albeit to varying degrees, to a *scriptural* predecessor. In other words, rewriting constitutes the retelling of sacred and authoritative texts, while in the case of a text like *Jubilees* even the rewritten product was, at least in some circles, regarded as possessing ‘scriptural’ status as a divinely mediated text (CD 16.3-4; 4Q225-28). However, as far as *compositional* matters are concerned, there is clear evidence for the use of the same methods and techniques in texts where the basis of the recasting is not a *scriptural* source.²⁴ To cite one particularly instructive example: when Josephus in *Antiquities* 12-13 rewrites the *Letter of Aristeas* (*Ant.* 12.1-118) and I Maccabees 1-13 (*Ant.* 12.241-13.214) he handles them in the same way as he treats scriptural material in *Ant.* 1-11; the structure and flow of the base texts are kept intact, but they are interpretatively rewritten to create a new literary entity using paraphrase combined

²² ‘Genre and Rewritten Scripture’, 284. Zahn therefore defines ‘rewritten Scripture’ as follows: ‘[It is] a genre that functions interpretively to renew (update, correct) specific earlier traditions by recasting a substantial portion of those traditions in the context of a new work that locates itself in the same discourse as the scriptural work it rewrites’ (page 286).

²³ ‘Genre and Rewritten Scripture’, 286. See also Molly Zahn, ‘Rewritten Scripture’, in Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 323-36.

²⁴ Campbell, ‘Rewritten Bible: A Terminological Reassessment’, 70, helpfully distinguishes between ‘rewrittenness’ and ‘scripturality’. Cf. Molly M. Zahn, ‘Talking about Rewritten Texts: Some Reflections on Terminology’, in Hanne von Weissenberg, Juha Pakkala and Marko Marttila (eds.), *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period* (BZAW, 419; Göttingen: de Gruyter, 2011), 110 n. 58.

with compositional techniques like omissions, adjustments, expansions and additions.²⁵ Similar conclusions can be drawn, as we shall see, regarding the relationship between II Maccabees and IV Maccabees. The reasons for rewriting the antecedent texts may be more varied, but there are striking affinities when it comes to textual processes and techniques. It also widens even further the scope of the analogical base for comparisons with John and its relationship with Mark, demonstrating that the phenomenon of rewriting was far more widespread in late Second Temple Judaism than is often recognized.

3. John's Gospel and 'Rewriting'

The debate about 'rewritten Scripture' has taken a considerable step forward in investigating how and why ancient Jewish authors produced compositions that preserved the outline of existing texts and yet recast those texts with varying degrees of innovation. In terms of using that debate as a platform for assessing the appropriateness (or otherwise) of classifying John's Gospel as a 'rewriting' of Mark, it remains to be investigated how works of 'rewritten Scripture', and Jewish rewriting more generally, can be brought into fruitful dialogue with the question of John's relationship with Mark.²⁶ In what ways can a study of the compositional techniques, processes and strategies of Jewish rewritten texts, as well as points of contact between such features and John's Gospel, inform the discussion of John's use of Mark?

Before addressing these questions with reference to specific examples of Johannine/Jewish analogues, three issues of methodological relevance require some clarification. First, as far as generic classifications are concerned, John—and indeed, for that matter, Matthew and Luke—do not meet the criteria of 'rewritten Scripture' as an ancient literary genre. Even a fairly broad definition, such as the one provided by George Brooke, demonstrates some of the clear obstacles: '[It] refers to any representation of an authoritative scriptural text that implicitly

²⁵ See especially Downing, 'Redaction Criticism: I', 162-65; Campbell, 'Rewritten Bible: A Terminological Reassessment', 70-72.

²⁶ Bauckham, 'The Gospel of John and the Synoptic Problem', 661 n. 6: 'Further study of the Jewish examples of the genre of "rewritten Bible" might prove profitable'. One of the few references to Jewish 'rewriting' in connection with John's use of (Synoptic) sources can be found in Ruth B. Edwards, *Discovering John: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (London: SPCK, 2014; 2nd edition), 36. See also nn. 28-30 below. For a recent analysis of Matthew's relationship with Mark through the interpretative lens of 'rewriting' and 'rewritten Bible/Scripture', see Garrick Allen, 'Rewriting and the Gospels', *JSNT* 41 (2018), 58-69.

incorporates interpretative elements, large or small, in the retelling itself.²⁷ If one adopts the rewriting of *Scripture* as the key characteristic of this generic category and/or literary phenomenon, John's relationship with Mark cannot, by definition, be described as the recasting of an earlier scriptural work. This point needs to be emphasized in view of recent attempts at presenting John's reworking of the Synoptic tradition as a case of 'rewritten Scripture', that is, by interpreting 'Scripture' as a designation for 'any writing or book that is attributed a particular authoritative status'.²⁸ This definition is in fact so broad that it can be applied to any composition regardless of how 'authority' is defined.²⁹ The same applies to Mogens Müller's proposal that John functions as a radical and creative 'biblical rewriting' of Mark, which manifests itself as a 'biblical' book because 'its Jesus story perceives itself as a continuation of the biblical history contained in the sacred books of Judaism'.³⁰ While it may be possible, from an analogical perspective, to align the New Testament gospels—as rewriting projects—with ancient Jewish texts categorized as 'rewritten Scripture', this exercise must not be confused with how John engages in the creative redrafting and reinterpretation of a text (Mark) that was only later attributed canonical status.

Having said that, if the 'rewritten Scripture' debate is examined for what it reveals about ancient Jewish 'rewriting' procedures more generally, a number of the core elements identified in 'prototypical' texts such as *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon* resemble—and help to delineate—the affinities between John and Mark, that is, if John is understood as a new composition locating itself within the same 'discourse' as the text it reworks and, to some degree, rewrites. The

²⁷ George J. Brooke, 'Rewritten Bible', in Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 777.

²⁸ Anders Klostergaard Petersen, 'Rewritten Bible as a Borderline Phenomenon – Genre, Textual Strategy, or Canonical Anachronism?', in Anthony Hilhorst, Émile Puech and Eibert Tigchelaar (eds.), *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (SuppJSJ 122; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 286-306, here 288.

²⁹ This is even more the case in Anders Klostergaard Petersen, 'Textual Fidelity, Elaboration, Supersession or Encroachment? Typological Reflections on the Phenomenon of Rewritten Scripture', in József Zsengellér (ed.), *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques?* (SuppJSJ, 166; Leiden: Brill, 2014), where he locates the category of 'rewritten Scripture' 'in the wider context of rewriting authoritative texts, which is a far more prevalent phenomenon found not only in literature but in arts in general' (13 n. 3). See also *idem*, 'The Riverrun of Rewriting Scripture: From Textual Cannibalism to Scriptural Completion', *JSJ* 43 (2012), 475-96.

³⁰ Mogens Müller, 'The New Testament Gospels as Biblical Rewritings: On the Question of Referentiality', *Studia Theologica* 68 (2014), 21-40, here 29, 31-32. See also his essays in Mogens Müller and Jesper Tang Nielsen (eds.), *Luke's Literary Creativity* (LNTS, 550; London: T&T Clark, 2016), as well as pages xxi-xxiv.

comparative value of drawing on actual examples of Jewish rewritten texts is that it affords specific cases of analogous practices and prevents the notion of ‘rewriting’ from becoming unhelpfully vague when applied to the study of John’s ‘use’ of Mark. When understood in this way, investigating the compositional techniques and aims of Jewish rewritten texts, particularly in relation to their base text, can be heuristically valuable for the study of John in relation to Mark.

Secondly, the term ‘rewriting’ can evidently be used to cover a large spectrum of ‘rewrittenness’ in Second Temple Jewish texts. Even within the category of ‘rewritten Scripture’ the sliding scale can extend, on the one hand, from close paraphrase of and adherence to the content of a single source text to substantial reworking, on the other hand, in which large blocks of material from other sources are incorporated into the rewritten text.³¹ Thus, there are clear limitations to describing John’s Gospel as a *rewritten* form of Mark, particularly if the designation is understood in a narrow or literal sense. Nevertheless, the term ‘rewriting’ is heuristically valuable, and can be a meaningful description, if it is used more flexibly to denote characteristic features of rewriting techniques in John’s use of Mark. This relates in some respects to the notion of whether one speaks of John’s *familiarity with* or rather *dependence on* Mark; the more limited evidence of close connections between the two gospels, especially in comparison with how Matthew and Luke use Mark, does not, in the light of known Jewish rewriting conventions, provide a firm argument against positing John’s ‘reliance’ on Mark in favour of a more at-a-distance familiarity with the text. Rewriting can embrace close adherence to a base text in terms of content, structure and sequence as well as extensive literary and theological creativity.

Thirdly, to speak of an ancient author ‘rewriting’ an underlying source does not necessarily assume an exclusively visual mode of contact with a written text. Given the complex oral-textual matrix from which first-century CE compositions emerged, ancient rewriting practices could accommodate indirect as well as direct use of sources. While accentuating the prominence of *literary* conventions may point in the direction of John’s visual knowledge of the written text of Mark at

³¹ On this wide spectrum of ‘rewriting’, see, for example, Sidnie White Crawford in *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2008), 13-14. See also Michael Segal, ‘Between Bible and Rewritten Bible’, in Matthias Henze (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 16; Brooke, ‘Memory, Cultural Memory, and Rewriting Scripture’, 53-65.

some stage in the reception process, it does not rule out the possibility that John was mnemonically and aurally familiar with oral recitations of Mark.³²

Having outlined some important considerations and certain caveats regarding methodological and definitional matters, I will now examine three aspects in particular that point to the explanatory power of ‘rewriting’ conventions in ancient Judaism for investigating John’s relationship to Mark.

3.1 Preservation of Outline and ‘Rewriting’ of Content

The core Jewish compositional ‘rewriting’ technique is to retain the outline of the underlying text, but also, at the same time, to make additions, omissions, abbreviations, conflations, rearrangements and other changes that can be positioned along a continuum of minor to major revisions, or from close equivalence to innovative modification. Therefore, even if Matthew and Luke are to be placed on the less expansive end of the rewriting spectrum, certainly in comparison with John, all three gospels display the same strategy of keeping Mark’s framework intact and of preserving the basic Markan order. Following the prologue, John’s narrative begins with the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist, then focuses on Jesus’ miracles and conflicts with the Jewish authorities and a Roman trial, before culminating in Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. Indeed, the framing of John’s narrative, after the prologue, with an opening and ending evocative of Mark’s points to a conscious attempt by John to position his account within an overarching Markan framework.

This broad spectrum of ‘rewrittenness’ attested in the New Testament gospels is analogous to the varying degrees of reworking attested in Jewish texts betraying the hallmarks of ‘rewritten Scripture’. Given that John includes a significant amount of non-Markan material and also appears to work closely with known Markan material in blocks (John 1, 5-6, 12),³³ it is noteworthy that many of the

³² On re-oralization processes, see especially Michael Labahn, “‘Secondary Orality’ in the Gospel of John: A ‘Post-Gutenberg’ Paradigm for Understanding the Relationship between Written Gospel Texts”, in Stanley E. Porter and Hughson T. Ong (eds.), *The Origins of John’s Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 53-80. See also Andrew Gregory, ‘What is Literary Dependence’, in Paul Foster, Andrew Gregory, John S. Kloppenborg and Joseph Verheyden (eds.), *New Studies in the Synoptic Problem: Oxford Conference, April 2008: Essays in Honour of Christopher M. Tuckett* (BETL, 239; Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 90-95.

³³ For the view that ancient authors tended to follow one source at a time, see Downing, ‘Compositional Conventions’, 71; Derrenbacher, *Ancient Compositional Practices*, 440-41. See, however, James W. Barker, ‘Ancient Compositional Practices and the Gospels: A Reassessment’,

prototypical Jewish rewritten compositions similarly incorporate lengthy additions, several of which contain no evident interaction with the underlying *Vorlage*. Rewritten texts can also be highly selective, overlooking entire sections of the underlying text, such as the omission of I Samuel from the reworking of the books of Samuel and Kings in Chronicles. The book of *Jubilees* is the work of ‘rewritten Scripture’ that follows its scriptural base most closely, but even here some scriptural sections are significantly condensed or omitted altogether (e.g., Gen. 10:8-12), while in other places it incorporates a substantial body of new material such as its expansions of the story of Abraham (*Jubilees* 11-12, 20-22). Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities* presents history from Adam to the death of Saul, and yet omits large portions of Genesis (chs. 1-3, 12-50) and Exodus (chs. 3-13), while offering an expansive rewriting of the period of the Judges and, strikingly, a number of new speeches ascribed to Israel’s leaders. The same expansiveness can be found in many of the earlier columns of the *Genesis Apocryphon*, where lengthy additions possessing no scriptural parallels are interwoven into what is essentially an interpretative compilation of Israel’s story from the birth of Noah to God’s promise of a son to Abraham, although it follows the Genesis account much more closely in the final section of the scroll (21.23-22.34).

Given that the ‘rewritten Scripture’ compositions belong to the much broader phenomenon of rewriting in late Second Temple Judaism, and that rewriting is not only tied to scriptural texts, yet another instructive example is *4 Maccabees*, whose detailed account of the martyrdom of the seven brothers and their mother offers an interpretative rewriting of the earlier, and much briefer, narrative in 2 Maccabees 3-7. In line with its distinct philosophical aims *4 Maccabees* recasts many of the literary features of 2 Maccabees,³⁴ but it also clearly follows the same sequence and structure as its base text³⁵:

JBL 135 (2016), 109-21, for examples of compositions that simultaneously access (and reorder) multiple sources.

³⁴ See M. Gilbert, ‘Wisdom Literature’, in Michael E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (CRINT, II/2; Assen: van Gorcum, 1984), 317; David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Sinaiticus* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2006), xxxi: ‘If it should be objected that the author played fast and loose with 2 Maccabees, if that was his source, the author’s freedom in retelling the story of King David’s thirst (2 Sam 23:13-17; I Chron 11:15-19)—a biblical narrative—should provide sufficient evidence to suggest that the author’s treatment of 2 Maccabees is consistent with his *modus operandi* elsewhere’. One may add: it is also consistent with known Jewish rewriting practices during the period in question.

³⁵ For the table, see David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 29; a modified version can be found in Campbell, ‘Rewritten Bible’, 71.

2 Maccabees	Content	4 Maccabees
2:32	Introduction	3:19
3:1-3	Favourable conditions under Seleucus IV	3:20-21
3:4-40	Attack on the temple treasury	4:1-14
4:7-17	Change of government	4:15-20
5:1-26	Conquest of Jerusalem	4:21-23
6:1-11	Suppression of Judaism by Antiochus	4:24-26
6:18-31	Eleazar's martyrdom	5:1-7:23
7:1-41	Martyrdom of the seven brothers and their mother	8:1-17:6

Within this same outline *4 Maccabees* conflates certain characters and also overlooks a number of events/developments to offer no more than a concise outline of key episodes in accordance with its own outlook and purpose.³⁶ *4 Maccabees* condenses the historical context of the martyrdoms (2 Macc. 3:1-6:17) to the bare minimum, trimming down three and a half chapters (or eighty-eight verses) to just twenty-eight verses, but greatly embellishing the descriptions of the actual martyrdoms. This particular example demonstrates how Jewish texts in the late Second Temple period could display great freedom towards their underlying texts, both when the predecessor is scripturally authoritative and, more broadly, when it is regarded as constitutive for the rewritten composition.

The fact that such a vast range of rewriting strategies—from close running paraphrases to expansive reworkings—is attested in late Second Temple Jewish texts warns against rejecting John's interrelatedness to Mark on the grounds that its engagement with the Markan text is far less overt and less consistently sustained than is the case in the Matthean and Lukan texts. The compositional techniques encountered in Jewish rewritten texts, especially the inclusion of significant additional material, also lends support to the view that the question of whether John is interacting with Mark is *independent* of the question whether he (also) makes use of distinctively Johannine tradition.

3.2 Interpretative Frames

What often separates Jewish rewritten texts from other exegetical compositions is not the extent to which they part company from the scriptural base text but the fact that some of their innovative modifications accentuate the identity of these

³⁶ See further deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction*, xxx-xxxi; Christian Blumenthal, *Allweiser Schöpfer und durchsetzungsstarker Gesetzgeber: Eine Studie zur erzählerischen Entfaltung des Gottesbildes im 4. Makkabäerbuch* (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies, 35; Berlin; de Gruyter, 2016), 47-49.

cases of ‘rewriting’ as new literary entities. One such feature is that several rewritten texts open with an interpretative frame that is different from that of their predecessor.³⁷ As in the case of the Johannine prologue, with its cosmic context functioning as an interpretative filter for the ‘inherited’ earthly setting of the subsequent account of Jesus’ ministry, a new literary frame places the composition in a different setting and offers a new lens through which to interpret the underlying text. The rewriting of the martyrdom narrative in *4 Maccabees*, for example, is preceded by an exordium (1:1-12) and extended philosophical and ethical treatise (1:13-3:18) outlining the importance of reason and the virtues of prudence and courage. As a result, the martyrdom accounts that follow serve as historical illustrations of the principle of ‘pious reason’, as exemplified by the praise of Eleazar’s courage: ‘only a wise and courageous person is lord of the passions’ (7:23).

Similarly, the elaborate retelling of Genesis 1 to Exodus 16:1 in *Jubilees* is prefaced by an introduction (1:1-4) constituting a new literary frame: the text opens with verses from Exodus 24:12-18 before stating that the angel of the presence—acting on God’s express instructions (‘through the word of the Lord’)—dictates the contents of the heavenly tablets to Moses during the forty days he was on Mount Sinai to receive the law (1:27, 29; 2:1), namely, what has happened and what will happen ‘from the beginning of creation... through the ages of eternity’ (1:27). This recasting of Scripture, accordingly, is presented as divine revelation, a ‘primordial writing’ or discourse existing before the revelation that gave rise to the Pentateuch; its interpretative frame, moreover, shapes the narrative that follows through the signposting of frequent interventions from the angel addressed to Moses.

3.3 Issues of Authority

The focus on the literary framing of *Jubilees* leads, seamlessly, to the question of how authority is understood and created by rewritten texts, particularly—though not exclusively—by compositions that form rewritings of scriptural texts. How do their compositional techniques relate to their authors’ motivation or goals for recasting the base text and also to the status of the rewritten product? Does the strategy of rewriting constitute a claim to authority on the part of the new text? And what can be said about the relative authority of the rewritten or reworked text

³⁷ See Segal, ‘Between Bible and Rewritten Bible’, 21-22.

in relation to the text it reworks or rewrites? Such questions are important when seeking to determine the nature of the relationship between John and Mark, particularly if John's audience had already come to view Mark's Gospel as an authoritative, perhaps as the definitive, account of Jesus' life and ministry.

There is much debate as to how a text's authoritative status was understood, acquired or even lost in late Second Temple Judaism,³⁸ and also a recognition that not all rewritten texts were regarded as equally authoritative or that they understood what they set out to do in the same way. It cannot be assumed, for example, that a narrative retelling of Scripture like the one offered by Josephus in *Antiquities* 1-11 understands its task of rewriting in the same way as a rewritten text claiming for itself the status of divinely mediated revelation or 'Scripture'.

Jewish rewritten texts, moreover, may—or may not—attempt to replace or usurp the works they rewrite. The connection between them can be viewed in reciprocal terms, in the sense that the rewritten text acknowledges,³⁹ even enhances, the established authority of the underlying work through the act of rewriting and, at the same time, claims authoritative status for itself.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the relationship can be somewhat paradoxical: the rewritten text may rely upon the authority of the base text for its own legitimacy but (only) according to the rewritten text's interpretation of it.⁴¹ This applies in particular to interpretations of legal material in the Pentateuch.⁴² Thus, *Jubilees* affirms the validity of the laws as written in Genesis-Exodus, referring to them as the 'first law' (cf. 2:24; 6:22; cf. 30:21; 50:6), but it presents itself as the authoritative interpretation of those laws, as 'immediate revelation to Moses, not an interpretation of a prior one'.⁴³ Similarly, the *Temple Scroll* presents itself as unmediated divine revelation, with God speaking directly to Moses, although no

³⁸ Hanne von Weissenberg, Juha Pakkala and Marko Marttila, 'Introducing Changes in Scripture', in *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period* (BZAW, 419; Göttingen: de Gruyter, 2011), 5.

³⁹ John J. Collins, 'Changing Scripture', in *Changes in Scripture*, 32-33. Cf. Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 77; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 46: works like *Jubilees* and the *Temple Scroll* attempt to provide 'the interpretive context within which scriptural traditions already acknowledged as authoritative can be properly understood'.

⁴⁰ Brooke, 'Rewritten Bible', 780. See further *idem*, 'Hypertextuality and the "Parabiblical" Dead Sea Scrolls', *Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essays in Method* (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 73-76.

⁴¹ Segal, 'Between Bible and Rewritten Bible', 11-12.

⁴² See Collins, 'Changing Scripture', 33.

⁴³ Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 140. See also Hindy Najman, 'Interpretation as Primordial Writing: *Jubilees* and Its Authority Conferring Strategies', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 30 (1999), 379-410, especially 408.

reference is made to the ‘first law’ and claims for itself the status of Torah (56:20-21: ‘this law’). In both cases, but especially *Jubilees*, it was not written with the aim of replacing the scriptural text, without which it lacks purpose and legitimacy; however, by offering what it regards as the ‘correct’ interpretation of Scripture, it does in some sense surpass it.

Molly Zahn helpfully distinguishes in this respect between *literal or physical replacement*, on the one hand, and *functional replacement*, on the other.⁴⁴ For most rewritten texts, especially those based on the Pentateuch, it seems unlikely that their aim was to replace the scriptural text in the literal/physical sense that it could now be cast aside and forgotten as though it did not exist. From a functional perspective, however, certain Jewish works of rewritten Scripture could present themselves as *replacing* their predecessors with regard to authority by providing what was deemed to be the true meaning of the underlying text, even though the rewritings would have been intended for audiences who heard or read the retelling with the underlying scriptural text in mind.⁴⁵ In other words, they are to be read of heard ‘side by side’.

This kind of distinction, I propose, is also valuable for assessing how and in what sense John’s Gospel can be viewed as a ‘rewriting’ of Mark. Whereas Matthew virtually *absorbs* Mark,⁴⁶ making it more or less redundant by incorporating and yet adapting so much of the Markan text.⁴⁷ The much more sparing use of Mark in the Gospel of John may point in the other direction, away from any attempt at literal replacement. This envisaged scenario is lent additional support if John’s relationship with Mark is assessed through a more audience-oriented lens, that is, with John interpreted as a text presupposing that its audience already has knowledge of Mark.⁴⁸ John can then be read *in conjunction* with the Markan text, sharing the same narrative outline, sometimes assuming Mark’s content (e.g., John

⁴⁴ Zahn, ‘Rewritten Scripture’, 331.

⁴⁵ Cf. Alexander, ‘Retelling the Old Testament’, 108: Pseudo-Philo refers to the *Aqedah* on three different occasions (*LAB* 18:5; 32:1-4; 40:2) but does not narrate the event at the point where its retelling would be expected.

⁴⁶ For this language of ‘absorption’, see Eric Eve, *Writing the Gospels: Composition and Memory* (London: SPCK, 2016), 130. Cf. Petersen, ‘The Riverrun of Rewriting Scripture’, 490-93; and also *idem*, ‘Textual Fidelity’, 39, where he refers to Matthew’s ‘loyal textual engulfment of Mark’.

⁴⁷ Cf. David C. Sim, ‘Matthew’s Use of Mark: Did Matthew Intend to Supplement or to Replace His Primary Source?’, *NTS* 57 (2011), 183. See also page 182: ‘What role could Mark have possibly played in the Matthean community once Matthew had published his own corrected, revised, enlarged, improved and updated edition of Mark?’.

⁴⁸ Cf. Frey, ‘Das Vierte Evangelium auf dem Hintergrund der älteren Evangelientradition’, 114.

1:32-33; 6:67-71; 12:27), and in places attempting to dovetail the two accounts.⁴⁹ This would signify that, different from Matthew and probably Luke (1:1-4), the Markan text is not absorbed in John's Gospel and can accordingly be set aside, but rather works symbiotically with the Johannine text. Nevertheless, from a *functional* perspective—and this is where some of the Jewish analogues prove to be instructive—John's Gospel presents itself as *the* authoritative interpretation of Jesus' identity and significance (20:30-31; 21:24-25).⁵⁰ For that reason John does more than attempt to supplement or complement the understanding of Jesus provided by its Markan predecessor; John rather seeks to demonstrate that the interpretative key to the true meaning of the Johannine text cannot be located in or wholly derived from Mark's Gospel and that, ultimately, it aims to replace it.

⁴⁹ E.g., the explanatory aside in John 3:24 fills the 'gap' between Mark 1:13 and 1:14; cf. John 7:1; 18:24-28.

⁵⁰ See, most recently, Chris Keith, 'The Competitive Textualization of the Jesus Tradition in John 20:30-31 and 21:24-25', *CBQ* 78 (2016), 324-27, 329.