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Angel on Collins, 'The Use of Sobriquets in the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls'

Author: Matthew A. Collins**Reviewer:** Joseph L. Angel**Matthew A. Collins.** *The Use of Sobriquets in the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls*. The Library of Second Temple Studies Series. London: T & T Clark International, 2009. x + 267 pp. \$140.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-567-03364-2.**Reviewed by** Joseph L. Angel (Yeshiva University) **Published on** H-Judaic (September, 2010) **Commissioned by** Jason Kalman

Sobriquet Development in the Sectarian Scrolls of Qumran

In this revised version of his University of Bristol dissertation (2006), Matthew A. Collins grapples with a long-standing crux in Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship, the use of sobriquets, or assumed names, in the sectarian writings of the Qumran community. Representative of a growing trend in the field, Collins eschews the “traditional” approach that seeks to identify the referents of such labels as “the Teacher of Righteousness” and “the Wicked Priest” with historical figures known from external historical sources, such as Josephus and 1 and 2 Maccabees. Instead, in recognition of the methodological difficulties and “naïve historicism” often characterizing such an approach, the author opts to focus on the forms and functions of these labels within their particular literary contexts. Different forms of the sobriquets (as well as related terms) are studied and situated along a chronological axis that, for the author, attests to a process of development “from indefinite scripturally-grounded description to a definite titular form” (p. 191). The development from typological descriptions to titular forms in the sectarian literature is paralleled and illuminated by the findings of the sociology of deviance and more particularly, labeling theory, which has documented the process of role engulfment reflecting increased “stereotypicality” and the attribution of titular forms in the acquisition of “master status.”

This volume primarily focuses on the development of the “standard” forms of two different sobriquets: “the Teacher of Righteousness” (*moreh ha-tsedeq*) and “the Spouter of the Lie” (*matif ha-kazav*), as well as the variants of these designations and related terminology. In addition, the final chapter (chapter 5) provides a case study of the development of the title “the Seekers of Smooth Things” (*dorshei ha-halaqot*). The book includes an extensive bibliography and two helpful indices (ancient references and modern authors). A general subject index also would have been useful. For example, those interested specifically in the author’s comments on “the Wicked Priest” (*ha-kohen ha-rasha*) may find it difficult to locate the two separate excursuses on this sobriquet that are quietly nested within chapter 4.

Collins lays the methodological foundation for his study in the first chapter. He observes that many of the sobriquets found in sectarian literature appear in more than one form (e.g., *moreh ha-tsedeq* [1QpHab 1:13] and *moreh tsedeq* [CD 1:11]). The general tendency of scholars has been to treat such seemingly minor grammatical variants as synonyms displaying a certain looseness of usage. Collins, in contrast, sees in them evidence of development over time. Of course, to begin testing this hypothesis, the relevant texts must be ordered according to a reliable chronological schema. This task presents the author with a major difficulty since it is not presently possible to determine the absolute dating of

the thirteen compositions he wishes to examine. Moreover, the evidence does not even allow for the relative ordering of each of these texts in relation to one another. As such, Collins chooses to focus on blocks of tradition reflecting “distinct sectarian compositional periods” (p. 31). Based on indications of literary dependence and previous redaction critical research, he settles on a tripartite relative chronology: the formative sectarian period (FSP), represented by the “pre-Yahadic” material in the Damascus Document (D); the early sectarian period (ESP), represented by the “Yahadic” D material, the Hodayot, and 4QCommentary on Genesis A; and the late sectarian period (LSP), represented by the Pesharim. Readers familiar with the complex composite nature of the sectarian corpus and the ambiguities involved in determining the absolute and relative dates of these texts will not be wholly satisfied with this schema. Indeed, Collins is well aware that evidence for ongoing redaction and other uncertainties bring his divisions into question, and he warns that his schema represents a blunt approximation at best. Nonetheless, heuristically, it serves as a logical and flexible backdrop to the careful study of sobriquets in the ensuing chapters.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are devoted to the systematic study of the designations “the Teacher of Righteousness” and “the Spouter of the Lie” (as well as associated terms and titles) in the FSP, ESP, and LSP respectively. Collins locates the earliest traces of the former sobriquet in the FSP in CD 6:11’s messianic expectation of “one who will teach righteousness (*yoreh ha-tsedeg*) in the end of days.” The author notes that this designation likely derives from the scriptural phrase “and rain righteousness” (*ve-yoreh tsedeg*) found in Hosea 10:12, and represents a fitting adaptation for the eschatological context of the CD pericope. While no terminological connection to “the Spouter of the Lie” appears in the FSP, Collins finds a thematic precursor to the fully developed dichotomy between “the Teacher of Righteousness” and “the Spouter of the Lie” (LSP) in the dualistic typological opposition between “the holy anointed ones” and those who “prophesied falsehood” in Israel’s past mentioned in CD 6:1.

In the following stage (ESP), we twice encounter the phrase *moreh tsedeg* (CD 1:11, 20:32), which the author takes as a descriptive non-titular form meaning “a teacher of righteousness.” The author makes a case that this description, while clearly related to Hosea 10:12, is primarily influenced by the messianic expectation of CD 6:11. Following the work of Philip Davies, he concludes that the mention of “a teacher of righteousness” who arose to lead the community in CD 1:11 represents a polemical Yahadic interpolation (ESP) that sees the fulfillment of the prediction of CD 6:11 (FSP) in the historical rise of the Yahad’s leader, also labeled “the Teacher of the Community/the Unique Teacher” (*moreh ha-yahid*) in the ESP (CD 20:1, 20:14). This figure is opposed by “the Man of Scoffing” (*ish ha-latson*) in CD 1:14, also known as “the Man of the Lie” (*ish ha-kazav*) in CD 20:15. Significantly, this negative figure is described further as “a spouter of a lie” (*mattif kazav* [CD 8:13]), an indefinite phrase that Collins sees as constructed specifically in opposition to the indefinite description of “the Teacher of the Community” as “a teacher of righteousness.” Collins finds harmonious ESP data in the so-called Teacher Hymns of the Hodayot, which depict a conflict between rival teaching authorities in stereotypical terms very similar to the Yahadic layer of CD (e.g., “a mediator of knowledge” and the “elect of righteousness” vs. “mediators of a lie” [1QH 10]) without the attribution of titular sobriquets.

In the final stage of development (LSP) represented by the Pesharim, Collins observes that the titular forms “the Teacher of Righteousness” and “the Spouter of the Lie” are consistently utilized. (He also observes that the sobriquet “the Wicked Priest” appears exclusively in the LSP.) The contexts and terminology employed in connection with these titles are found to be consistent with those connected to their indefinite counterparts in the ESP. For the author, the shift from indefinite to definite forms indicates a significant development “from a descriptive function to an appellative one” (p. 181). This conclusion is supported in chapter 5, which charts the development of the sobriquet “the Seekers of Smooth Things.” Collins locates the first hint of this title in the phrase “they sought smooth things” (*darshu ba-halaqot*) of CD 1:18 (FSP), which derives from Isaiah 30:9-11. Next, in the ESP, appears the indefinite description “seekers of smooth things” (*dorshei halaqot* [1QH 10:15, 10:32]). Finally, in the LSP we find the exclusive use of the titular form “the Seekers of Smooth Things” (*dorshei ha-halaqot* [e.g., 4Q169 3-4 II, 2]).

The author concludes his study by showing that this developmental model comports with the findings of the sociology of deviance, and more particularly, those of labeling theory, which clarify the process by which appellative labels are attributed to “deviants” as a function of social control and boundary affirmation. This process involves a movement from “denunciation,” whereby the offender is accused of a specific deviant behavior (e.g., “committing a crime”), to “role engulfment,” whereby the offender is depersonalized, his identity subsumed by the deviant behavior and attributed an essentializing and judgmental title representative of “master status” (e.g., “criminal”). Within this framework, Collins argues that the sobriquets in the sectarian literature function as “tools for labeling deviance and affirming positive counterparts” and that the move from scripturally based typological descriptions to definite titular forms reflects “a process of role engulfment geared towards the personification of the quality and the acquisition of ‘master status’” (p. 209). One of the more interesting implications of this understanding pertains to the historical consciousness and self-perception of the Qumran community. For Collins, the stereotypical and depersonalized nature of the standard forms of the sobriquets is representative of a typological worldview that allowed for the reapplication of essentializing titles to multiple historical referents. This conclusion casts doubt on any study seeking to identify singular historical referents to the sobriquets.

Collins's thesis is coherent and well argued but remains open to criticism on several grounds. Foremost, readers might question whether the evidence truly attests to a clear chronological development in the forms of sobriquets. For example, in determining what data belongs to the FSP and ESP in the D material, the author depends on the impressive but much disputed redaction history of Davies. He thus (as noted above) sees the expectation of *yoreh ha-tsedeq* in CD 6:11 (FSP; derived primarily from the scriptural *ve-yoreh tsedeq* [Hos. 10:12]) as the source for the phrase *moreh tsedeq* in the ESP layer of CD (1:11, 20:32). But if this is the true direction of development, it remains unclear why the definite article would be added to the scriptural source in the earlier stage (FSP), but removed in the later stage (ESP). In fact, from a morphological perspective, the indefinite phrase *moreh tsedeq* is just as close to Hosea 10:12's *yoreh tsedeq* as CD 6:11's *yoreh ha-tsedeq*. (Collins does note the closer contextual and terminological similarities between CD 6:11 and Hosea 10:12, but this need not indicate exegetical priority, only increased reliance on the root verse.) It could be argued just as easily that the phrase *moreh tsedeq* preceded *yoreh ha-tsedeq* (see Joel 2:10: *ha-moreh li-tsaqa; va-yored lakhem geshem moreh*), and, in fact, this would be more harmonious with his theory of development from indefinite to definite forms. Indeed, most scholars opine that the *yoreh ha-tsedeq* of CD 6:11 is to be understood as the typological, eschatological counterpart of the historical Teacher of Righteousness (identified as *doresh ha-torah* in this particular passage [CD 6:7]).

Collins is to be commended for taking variant forms seriously, but for some readers the two appearances of the phrase *moreh tsedeq* will not constitute sufficient evidence for an intermediate phase of the development of the Teacher sobriquet. Even if one accepts that the *moreh* references in CD are from a later compositional stage than CD 6:11, more data is necessary for a firm conclusion. It has been claimed that these indefinite forms are representative of the poetic practice of omitting the definite article, and are to be interpreted as referring to the Teacher of Righteousness. This understanding might serve to balance the pitting of *moreh tsedeq* against the definite titular form "the Man of Scoffing" (CD 1:11-14), as well as his apparent identification with the titular form "the Teacher of the Community/the Unique Teacher" in the same layer. While Collins may be correct in dismissing this approach, he does not seriously engage in discussion of the absence and presence of the definite article in the construct state in Qumran Hebrew.

Further "irregularities" pose problems for the author's developmental model. For example, definite titular forms are found in the FSP (e.g., *doresh ha-torah* [CD 6:7]), the ESP (e.g., *meshiah ha-tsedeq* [4Q252 V 3] and *ish ha-kazav* [CD 20:15]), and the LSP (e.g., *moreh ha-tsedeq*, *mattif ha-kazav*, and *ish ha-kazav* [1QpHab]). Moreover, indefinite forms are found in both the ESP (e.g., *moreh tsedeq* [CD 1:11; 20:32] and *mattif kazav* [CD 8:13]) and the LSP (*melits daat* [4Q171 1 I, 27]). For Collins, such data is not problematic since he takes it as evidence of varied rates of development with regard to individual sobriquets, and notes further that the available texts always attest to the same direction of movement from indefinite to definite forms. But it remains unclear why such definite forms as "the Man of the Lie," "the Man of Scoffing," and "the Teacher of the Community/the Unique Teacher" should have developed prior to "the Teacher of Righteousness" and "the Spouter of the Lie," and why indefinite forms such as "a mediator of knowledge" (likely referring to "the Teacher") should persist into the LSP. If the development of titular sobriquets solely reflects role engulfment and the attribution of master status, one might have expected the Qumranite authors to have left a more uniform picture. Moreover, one sobriquet in particular defies the author's developmental model. The titular designation "the Interpreter of the Law" (*doresh ha-torah* [CD 6:7]) occurs in the FSP, but in a later compositional stage we find the indefinite phrase "a man seeking the law" (*ish doresh ba-torah* [1QS 6:6]). Collins admits that this case calls into question "our chronological layering of material, or at least the veracity of the developmental process we have advocated." His proposal that this sobriquet is "a special case (with explicit provision for a plurality of 'seekers') and thus not representative of the other epithets we have witnessed" is not entirely convincing (p. 196).

Despite these difficulties, this book represents a significant development in the study of the use of sobriquets in the Scrolls, and, more generally, it is an important step forward in the field of Qumran studies. Of particular importance is the author's sophisticated methodological approach, which emphasizes the recognition of both the unique and interrelated nature of individual sectarian compositions as well as the evidence for chronological development and literary dependence within this corpus. Indeed, the fact that the sectarian documents were compiled and composed over the span of several generations and contain evidence of ideological change warns against treating this literature uncritically as a homogeneous collection and justifies the author's search for sobriquet development. In his search for thematic overlaps and linguistic connections, Collins consistently refrains from uncritical amalgamation of evidence from different sectarian compositions--a method so characteristic of earlier study of the sobriquets.

Perhaps the greatest strength of this volume lies in the author's keen ability to identify the "development of the terminological and contextual connotations governing both the employment of sobriquets and the direction taken by the passages in which they are set" (p. 208). The reader will be grateful for a plethora of insightful observations drawing connections between later sectarian compositions and their earlier sectarian and scriptural precursors (especially noteworthy are Collins's comments pertaining to the interrelationship of specific passages in the Pesharim, the Hodayot, and the Damascus Document). The textual relationships observed by Collins in his study of sobriquet employment have fascinating implications for our understanding of Qumranite self-perception and historical consciousness (e.g., the conflict between the Teacher and the

Wicked Priest recorded in the Pesharim may have a typological rather than a strictly historical foundation). They also represent a good start in mapping a more detailed textual geography of the sectarian corpus that will ultimately enhance our understanding of the Scrolls and the Qumran-related movement.

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Michigan State University Department of History