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Memory, Cultural Memory and Rewritten Bible

This paper seeks to combine the place of individual memory in the transmission of texts with the place of communities and their cultural memories in order to show from a different set of perspectives something of the character of Rewritten Bible. Several compositions appear on the borderline between authoritative scripture and its re-presentation in another form. In the first place attention has to be given to the role of scribes in the transmission of authoritative texts and how in the pre-canonical period they considered themselves part of the creative development of the text, so that text and interpretation often belonged together as exegetical variants were introduced into scriptural traditions; attention to the role of the memories of scribes in those processes illuminates individual readings. In second place consideration is given to the role of cultural memory as traditions from earlier generations are appropriated through cultural respect in subsequent generations; the rewriting exercise both receives authority from the earlier tradition and also promotes the authority of the earlier tradition by showing that it is important that new readers pay attention to it. When taken together these two facets of memory provide a dynamic matrix through which Rewritten Bible compositions can be better understood and appreciated.