

**G.G. Xeravits and J. Zsengellér, eds. *The Books of the Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology*. JSJS 118. Leiden: Brill, 2007. Pp. xi + 245. ISBN: 978-9004157002. \$122.00 USD, cloth.**

**1.** This volume of essays is, with a few exceptions, devoted to the First and Second Book of Maccabees. The contributions of the volume were presented at the Second International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books (June 2005), organized by the Shimeon Center for the Study of Hellenistic and Roman Age Judaism and Christianity of the Reformed Theological Academy, in Pápa, Hungary.

**2.** The contents are: Gilles Dorival, “Has the Category of ‘Deuterocanonical Books’ a Jewish Origin?” (1-10); John Kampen, “The Books of the Maccabees and Sectarianism in Second Temple Judaism” (11-30); Jack Pastor, “The Famine in 1 Maccabees: History or Apology?” (31-43); Katell Berthelot, “The Biblical Conquest of the Promised Land and the Hasmonaean Wars according to 1 and 2 Maccabees” (45-60); Thomas Hieke, “The Role of ‘Scripture’ in the Last Words of Mattathias (1 Macc 2:49-70)” (61-74); Friedrich V. Reiterer, “Die Vergangenheit als Basis für die Zukunft Mattathias’ Lehre für seine Söhne aus der Geschichte in 1 Makk 2:52-60” (75-100); Tobias Nicklas, “Irony in 2 Maccabees?” (101-111); Marie-Françoise Baslez, “The Origin of the Martyrdom Images: from the Book of Maccabees to the First Christians” (113-30); János Bolyki, “‘As Soon as the Signal was Given’ (2 Macc 4:14): Gymnasia in the Service of Hellenism” (131-39); Beate Ego, “God’s Justice. The ‘Measure for Measure’ Principle in 2 Maccabees” (141-54); Armin Lange, “2 Maccabees 2:13-15: Library or Canon?” (155-67); Stefan Schorch, “The Libraries in 2 Macc 2:13-15, and the Torah as a Public Document in Second Century BC Judaism” (169-80); József Zsengellér, “Maccabees and Temple Propaganda” (181-95); Matthias Weigold, “The Deluge and the Flood of Emotions: The Use of Flood Imagery in 4 Maccabees in its Ancient Jewish Context” (197-210); Géza G. Xeravits, “From the Forefathers to the ‘Angry Lion.’ Qumran and the Hasmonaean” (211-21). Indices of authors and passages conclude the volume.

**3.** The volume has a thematic set up. The introductory matters are restricted to Dorival’s discussion of the category of “Deuterocanonical Books”. Unfortunately, an introduction to Maccabean literature or to the essays in the volume is absent. The book contains contributions concerning history, history and theology, theology and ideology, and cognate literature. Most of the contributions concern discussions of a certain theme or passage in 1 and 2 Maccabees. Dorival argues that some of the Deuterocanonical Books were only read in private and not studied (e.g., Esther), while others were studied but went over to the category of “unstudied books”. Kampen concludes that the Jerusalem Temple is at the heart of both 1 and 2 Maccabees but that both works target different groups of “lawless” people in connection with the Temple: 1 Maccabees opposes those who contest the legitimacy of the temple and the Hasmonaean high priesthood; 2 Maccabees presents Judah Maccabee as a model figure and the successor of Onias III, who guarded the purity of the sanctuary. Pastor argues that the famine mentioned in 1 Macc. 9:23-24 was real and the result of several poor harvests that preceded the Sabbatical Year (autumn 164 – autumn 163 B.C.E.). Berthelot observes that the theme of the conquest of the Promised Land was not prominent in 1 and 2 Maccabees. Hieke offers an intertextual reading of Mattathias’ “Testament” (1 Macc. 2:49-70) with useful observations. Reiterer analyzes part of the same passage (1 Macc. 2:52-60) and comes to different results, especially in the case of David (2:57). He argues that 1 Macc. 2:57 does not highlight David’s own piety or mercy but

God's compassion with David. Nicklas discusses obvious (chapter 9) and less clear cases of irony in 2 Maccabees and concludes that all cases are connected with negative characters. Baslez studies the origin of Jewish martyrdom and argues for a fluid definition that includes martyrdom as an "opportunity for divine intervention" and "individual transition from ordinary life to immortality" (p. 129). Bolyki argues about 2 Macc. 4:14 that Antiochus IV authorized Jason to turn Jerusalem into a Hellenized city that was called "the Antioch in Jerusalem". Ego observes that all "measure for measure" passages in 2 Maccabees have to do with the temple. The passages express two different concepts of God's righteousness: (1) definitive judgment over Greek and Jewish opponents, and (2) pedagogical punishment of Israel. Lange argues against Leiman, Beckwith and van der Kooij that 2 Macc. 2:13-15 does not offer evidence for the closing of the Hebrew canon or for more significant influence on the development of this canon than the pre-Maccabean temple library. Schorch analyzes the same passage with a different focus and concludes that 2 Maccabees' second festal letter reflects a stage in the process towards the public reading of the Torah that should be dated at the end of the second century B.C.E. Zsengellér argues that the purification, rededication and preservation of the Temple are the main theological issues in 1 Maccabees and concludes that the book has a "monotemplistic overtone". Weigold compares the flood imagery in 4 Macc. 15:31-32 with ancient parallels about the ark as a carrier of the world, the deluge as a storm at sea as well as the ark and the deluge as models of the human being. Xeravits, finally, discusses the Qumranic view of the Hasmoneans. He argues that the famous prayer in 4Q448 is directed against King Jonathan.

4. It is impossible to do justice to the individual contributions to this varied collection here and it is obviously not too difficult to find conclusions or opinions one can disagree with. Bertholet's argument (p. 46) that the only reference to Joshua and the conquest of Canaan is 1 Macc. 2:55 about Joshua as a model can be countered with a reference to the next verse in 1 Maccabees 2, which mentions Kaleb and alludes to the gift of a portion of the land as the reward for his encouragement of Israel (2:56, the passage is discussed by Hieke on p. 68; cf. Numb. 14:24, 30, 38; Joshua 14:6-15). Bolyki ignores important contributions by Robert Doran and Walter Ameling, who come to different conclusions than he does. However, the quality of most of the papers is good and some are excellent (e.g., Nicklas and Pastor). Every scholar working on 1 and 2 Maccabees should consult this book.

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