THE FIRST AND SECOND BOOKS OF THE
MACCABEES

COMMENTARY BY
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GENERAL EDITORS’ PREFACE

The aim of this series is to provide the text of the New English Bible closely linked to a commentary in which the results of modern scholarship are made available to the general reader. Teachers and young people have been especially kept in mind. The commentators have been asked to assume no specialized theological knowledge, and no knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Bare references to other literature and multiple references to other parts of the Bible have been avoided. Actual quotations have been given as often as possible.

The completion of the New Testament part of the series in 1967 provides a basis upon which the production of the much larger Old Testament and Apocrypha series can be undertaken. The welcome accorded to the series has been an encouragement to the editors to follow the same general pattern, and an attempt has been made to take account of criticisms which have been offered. One necessary change is the inclusion of the translators’ footnotes since in the Old Testament these are more extensive, and essential for the understanding of the text.

Within the severe limits imposed by the size and scope of the series, each commentator will attempt to set out the main findings of recent biblical scholarship and to describe the historical background to the text. The main theological issues will also be critically discussed.

Much attention has been given to the form of the volumes. The aim is to produce books each of which will be read consecutively from first to last page. The intro-
ductory material leads naturally into the text, which itself leads into the alternating sections of the commentary.

The series is accompanied by three volumes of a more general character. Understanding the Old Testament sets out to provide the larger historical and archaeological background, to say something about the life and thought of the people of the Old Testament, and to answer the question ‘Why should we study the Old Testament?’. The Making of the Old Testament is concerned with the formation of the books of the Old Testament and Apocrypha in the context of the ancient near eastern world, and with the ways in which these books have come down to us in the life of the Jewish and Christian communities. Old Testament Illustrations contains maps, diagrams and photographs with an explanatory text. These three volumes are designed to provide material helpful to the understanding of the individual books and their commentaries, but they are also prepared so as to be of use quite independently.

P. R. A.
A. R. C. L.
J. W. P.
CONTENTS

List of maps and charts  page ix
The footnotes to the N.E.B. text  xi
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
The world of the Maccabees  1
The dating of events in 1 and 2 Maccabees  6
The Syrian administration  8
Ancient writers who describe this period  10
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE MACCABEES  14
The original text and its date  14
The author’s approach to the work  15
The historical value of 1 Maccabees  16
The author  18
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
Antiochus and the Jewish revolt  19
The war under Judas and Jonathan  44
Jonathan rules the nation  128
The high-priesthood of Simon  176
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE MACCABEES  215
The original text and its date  215
The author’s approach to the work  216
The historical value of 2 Maccabees  217
The author  218
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

CONTENTS

Foreword: letters to the Jews in Egypt page 219
Preface to this abridgement 231
Syrian oppression of the Jews 234
The revolt of Judas Maccabaeus 277
The campaign against Eupator 295
The victory of Maccabaeus over Nicanor 326

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

The value for us of 1 and 2 Maccabees 345

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

A NOTE ON FURTHER READING 348

INDEX 349
LIST OF MAPS AND CHARTS

MAPS
1 The campaigns of 166–163 B.C. page 50
2 The last campaign of Antiochus 79
3 The final campaign of Nicanor 95
4 Judas’ last campaign and the work of Bacchides 110
5 The campaign of Ptolemy VI 146
6 The ‘three districts’ transferred to Judaea 154
7 Jonathan in Galilee and Syria 162
8 The campaigns of Trypho and Kendebeaus 173
9 To illustrate 1 Macc. 15: 22–4 203

CHARTS
Kings of Egypt xi
Kings of Syria xi
The Seleucids xi
The Maccabean family xi
High Priests of Jerusalem xii
THE FOOTNOTES TO THE N.E.B. TEXT

The footnotes to the N.E.B. text are designed to help the reader either to understand particular points of detail – the meaning of a name, the presence of a play upon words – or to give information about the actual text. Where the Hebrew text appears to be erroneous, or there is doubt about its precise meaning, it may be necessary to turn to manuscripts which offer a different wording, or to ancient translations of the text which may suggest a better reading, or to offer a new explanation based upon conjecture. In such cases, the footnotes supply very briefly an indication of the evidence, and whether the solution proposed is one that is regarded as possible or as probable. Various abbreviations are used in the footnotes:

(i) Some abbreviations are simply of terms used in explaining a point: ch(§), chapter(§); cp., compare; lit., literally; mng., meaning; MS(S), manuscript(s), i.e. Hebrew manuscript(s), unless otherwise stated; om., omit(§); or, indicating an alternative interpretation; pass., possible; prob., probable; rdg., reading; Vs(§), Versions.

(ii) Other abbreviations indicate sources of information from which better interpretations or readings may be obtained.

Aqu. Aquila, a Greek translator of the Old Testament (perhaps about A.D. 130) characterized by great literalness.

Aram. Aramaic – may refer to the text in this language (used in parts of Ezra and Daniel), or to the meaning of an Aramaic word. Aramaic belongs to the same language family as Hebrew, and is known from about 1000 B.C. over a wide area of the Middle East, including Palestine.

Heb. Hebrew – may refer to the Hebrew text or may indicate the literal meaning of the Hebrew word.

Josephus Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37/8—about 100), author of the Jewish Antiquities, a survey of the whole history of his people, directed partly at least to a non-Jewish audience, and of various other works, notably one on the Jewish War (that of A.D. 66–73) and a defence of Judaism (Against Apion).

Luc. Sept. Lucian’s recension of the Septuagint, an important edition made in Antioch in Syria about the end of the third century A.D.

Pesh. Peshitta or Peshitto, the Syriac version of the Old Testament. Syriac is the name given chiefly to a form of Eastern Aramaic used by the Christian community. The translation varies in quality, and is at many points influenced by the Septuagint or the Targums.
FOOTNOTES TO THE N.E.B. TEXT

Sam. Samaritan Pentateuch – the form of the first five books of the Old Testament as used by the Samaritan community. It is written in Hebrew in a special form of the Old Hebrew script, and preserves an important form of the text, somewhat influenced by Samaritan ideas.

Scroll(s) Scroll(s), commonly called the Dead Sea Scrolls, found at or near Qumran from 1947 onwards. These important manuscripts shed light on the state of the Hebrew text as it was developing in the last centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.

Sept. Septuagint (meaning ‘seventy’; often abbreviated as the Roman numeral LXX), the name given to the main Greek version of the Old Testament. According to tradition, the Pentateuch was translated in Egypt in the third century B.C. by 70 (or 72) translators, six from each tribe, but the precise nature of its origin and development is not fully known. It was intended to provide Greek-speaking Jews with a convenient translation. Subsequently it came to be much revered by the Christian community.

Symm. Symmachus, another Greek translator of the Old Testament (beginning of the third century A.D.), who tried to combine literalness with good style. Both Lucian and Jerome viewed his version with favour.

Targ. Targum, a name given to various Aramaic versions of the Old Testament, produced over a long period and eventually standardized, for the use of Aramaic-speaking Jews.

Theod. Theodotion, the author of a revision of the Septuagint (probably second century A.D.), very dependent on the Hebrew text.

Vulg. Vulgate, the most important Latin version of the Old Testament, produced by Jerome about A.D. 400, and the text most used throughout the Middle Ages in western Christianity.

[...] In the text itself square brackets are used to indicate probably late additions to the Hebrew text.

(Fuller discussion of a number of these points may be found in The Making of the Old Testament in this series.)
KINGS OF EGYPT

('Lagides’ or ‘Ptolemies’)
Ptolemy I Soter 304–285
Ptolemy II Philadelphus 285–246
Ptolemy III Euergetes 246–221
Ptolemy IV Philopator 221–203
Ptolemy V Epiphanes 203–180
Ptolemy VI Philometor 180–145
Ptolemy VII Neos Philometor 145
Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II 145–116

KINGS OF SYRIA

('Seleucids’)
Seleucus I Nicator 312–280
Antiochus I Soter 280–262
Antiochus II Theos 262–246
Seleucus II Callinicus 246–226
Seleucus III Ceraunus 226–223
Antiochus III ‘the Great’ 223–187
Seleucus IV Philopator 187–175
Antiochus IV Epiphanes 175–164
Antiochus V Eupator 164–161
Demetrius I Soter 161–150
Alexander Balas 150–145
Antiochus VI Epiphanes 145–142
Trypho 142–138
Demetrius II Nicator 145–138
Antiochus VII Sidetes 138–129

THE SELEUCIDS

The Seleucids from Antiochus III onwards were related in the following way:

Antiochus III
  Antiochus IV
    Demetrius I
      Seleucus IV
      Antiochus IV
  Demetrius II
  Antiochus VII

THE MACCABAEAN FAMILY ('the Hasmonaens')

Symeon ('the Hasmonite' or 'son of Hamon')
  John
    Mattathias
      (died 166 B.C.)

John (died 134 B.C.)
  Simon Thasis
  Judas Maccabaeus
    (died 160 B.C.)
    Eleazar Avaran
    (died 143 B.C.)
  John Hyrcanus
    (died 104 B.C.)
HIGH PRIESTS OF JERUSALEM
(from the time of Alexander the Great)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaddua</td>
<td>about 330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onias I</td>
<td>(dates unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon I</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleazar (brother of Simon I)</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manasseh (uncle of Eleazar)</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onias II (son of Simon I)</td>
<td>about 245–220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon II</td>
<td>about 220–200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onias III</td>
<td>died 172–171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason (brother of Onias III)</td>
<td>175–172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menelaus (&quot;of the clan Bilgah&quot;)</td>
<td>172–163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcimus (&quot;a priest of the family of Aaron&quot;)</td>
<td>161–159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vacancy for seven years)</td>
<td>159–152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan (son of Mattathias, ‘a priest of the Joarib family’)</td>
<td>152–143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon (son of Mattathias)</td>
<td>143–134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hyrcanus</td>
<td>134–104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unless otherwise stated, each high priest is the son of his predecessor. Our evidence for the earlier high priests in this list comes mainly from Josephus.