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TO FIGHT OR NOT TO FIGHT? VARIOUS ANSWERS TO THE FOREIGN POLITICAL POWER IN THE GREEK BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The subject of my article is close to the relatively popular question of the Bible and the state, related to the wider subject of ancient political theories in the Near East and Greece. However, the existing literature concentrates either on the Hebrew Bible¹ or on the New Testament². The same can be said about studies on the war in the Bible. It probably results from a general pattern of treating the deuterocanonical literature, transmitted in Greek, as a secondary appendix to the Hebrew Bible with not many new, interesting ideas.

In the case of the political attitudes this opinion is certainly inadequate. In this respect, the Greek books of the Old Testament do not have much in

¹ Cf. recently: Reinhard Müller, *Königtum und Gotterherrschaft. Untersuchungen zur alttestamentlichen Monarchiekritik* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2/3, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); Walter J. Houston, *Contending for Justice, Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (Old Testament Studies 428, London: T&T Clark 2008); J. Gordon McConville, *God and Earthly Power* (London: T&T Clark, 2008); Wolfgang Oswald, *Staatstheorie im Alten Israel: Der politische Diskurs im Pentateuch und in den Geschichtsbüchern des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009); cf. also Ph.R. Davies, J.M. Halligan (eds.), *Second Temple Studies III. Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture* (Journal for the Studies of the Old Testament Supplement 340, London/New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Richard A. Horsley (ed.), *In the Shadow of Empire. Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (Louisville – London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

² Leading studies: Oskar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (London: SCM 1963); Walter Schrage, *Die Christen und der Staat im Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag 1971); Walter E. Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors. Church and State in the New Testament* (Overtures to Biblical Theology, Minneapolis: Fortress 1999); Arnold T. Monera, “The Christian’s Relationship to the State according to the New Testament: Conformity or Non-Conformity”, *Asia Journal of Theology* 19(2005)1, 106-142; Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar. Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (Oxford: OUP, 2005; Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2008).

common with the core of the Hebrew Bible, even if they continue some motifs of the later Hebrew books. However, their relation to the politics received only a fragmentary treatment in the existing literature.³

The Bible is quite rich in political opinions, including the opinions on the functions of the state. Even if we put aside ordinary historical information on the states, political events and rulers, we have enough material for a large book. Accordingly, there is a substantial secondary literature on the Bible and the state, mentioned above. I will refer here to my book in Polish about it.⁴ My earlier studies I make use of in this paper include an article on the ethics in the books of Maccabees⁵ and an article on the ethics of the book of Judith⁶.

³ Cf. three articles in one issue of *Ricerche Storico Bibliche* 18(2006)1-2: Maurice Gilbert, ““La vostra sovranità viene dal Signore” (Sap 6,3): ambivalenza del potere politico nella tradizione sapienziale”, 117-132; Liliana Rosso Ubigli, “Religione e potere politico nel medio giudaismo”, 133-153; Lucio Troiani, “La rappresentazione dell’ autorità nella letteratura ebraica di lingua greca”, 155-164. Bibliographies: Andreas Lehnardt, *Bibliographie zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit VI/2, Gütersloh 1999); Lorenzo DiTommaso, *A Bibliography of the Pseudepigrapha Research, 1850-1999* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement 39, Sheffield: Sheffield University Press 2001); F.V. Reiterer, *Bibliographie zu Ben Sira* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 266, Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 1998); electronic resources BILDI (Innsbruck), BiBIL (Lausanne), Index Theologicus (Tübingen), RAMBI (Israel).

⁴ Michał Wojciechowski, *Biblia o państwie* (Kraków: WAM, 2008). Summary: This book contains a detailed overview of the biblical teaching on the state. It is presented under the following headings: I. The history of Israel before Christ (including the question of the origin of the nation and of the state). II. God and kings (power of God, royal and messianic ideology, tasks of the king, principles of government). III. Criticism towards the state in the Old Testament (bad kings, voice of prophets, Judg 9, 1 Sam 8-12). IV. Pentateuch on the government (law above politics, Deut 17). V. Israel and empires (initial conflict, submission to foreign rule, persecutions). VI. Critical acceptance of the state in the New Testament (Mark 12 on taxation, distance towards the Roman state and Jewish rulers, authority from God in Romans 13, further texts). VII. Conflict and persecutions (life of Jesus and Paul, Rev 13-19 and the satanic side of the empire). The state has its authority, both instituted and limited by God and his law. It has some justification, but also serious vices (godlessness, violence, high taxes). However, the citizens should obey the state which deals justly with them. In a much shorter form: M. Wojciechowski, *Biblijne oceny instytucji państwa*, article in print.

⁵ In Polish: Michał Wojciechowski, „Etyka Ksiąg Machabejskich”, in: „Żyjemy dla Pana” (Rz 14, 8) (Fs. E. Jezierska, ed. W. Chrostowski, Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne 23, Warszawa: Vocatio, 2006), 398-408; in English: “Moral Teaching of 1 and 2 Maccabees”, *Polish Journal of Biblical Research* 6(2007)1, 65-75; <http://www.uwm.edu.pl/ktb/index.php?a=7&D=60>.

⁶ Michał Wojciechowski, “Moral Teaching of the Book of Judith”, in: *A Pious Seductress. Studies in the Book of Judith* (ed. Géza G. Xeravits, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 14, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 85-96.

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Old and new questions

What was new in the deuterocanonical books? In the Hebrew books, the authors usually deal with the problem of their own state, Judah or Israel, and of their own rulers. It seems that at the beginning there were considerable hopes related to them. The king would assure security and justice (cf. 2 Sam 5:1-3; 1 Sam 8:19-20). Kings were characterized by justice and wisdom (Prov 8:15-16; 28:2; 1 Kings 3; 5:9-14). The royal dynasty benefited from the divine blessing (2 Sam 7; Isaiah 7:14-16 etc.; messianic psalms). This royal ideology found way into the biblical books.

Later, a disappointment came. Subsequently, the messianic hopes related to the Davidic dynasty were projected into the future, into a political or even an eschatological future. The earthly kingship became subject to criticism, clearly visible in the Deuteronomistic opinions on the kings (1 and 2 Kings). The main formulations of this criticism are artificially placed in earlier times as *vaticinia ex eventu* pronounced by Gideon, Jotham and Samuel (Judg 8:22-23; 9:8-21; 1 Sam 8:7-18; 12), but they probably resulted from bad experiences with later kings.

Another question dealt with in the earlier period concerns the principles of government. How the rulers should behave? We have a short answer in Prov 29:4 (more justice, less taxes) and a longer one in Deut 17:15-20 (royal power is subjected to the divine Law; the authority should be wielded with moderation – these ideas could be related to the reign of Josiah). Praises of the royal wisdom and justice function also as suggestions what the kings should do.

With the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., a fundamental change took place. No more own state and no more own king. Previously, the foreign political powers were always external enemies, strongly condemned, even if occasionally treated as an instrument of God (Isa 10:5-7; Jer 25:9; cf. Bar 4:15). Only Jeremiah was far-sighted enough to instruct the exiled to live and prosper in their new land (Jer 29:5-7).

Now the external enemy has become a permanent ruler. The political question became how to behave face to the foreign political power. This new situation brought contradictory answers. The people could either adapt to the situation, or to suffer martyrdom, or to resist and fight. We can find these answers already in the later parts of the Hebrew Bible. This situation brought also a reduction of interest for the principles of government, discussed before.

Deutero-Isaiah acclaimed Cyrus (Isa 41:1-4; 44:28-45:7). Nehemiah was a Persian courtier; Ezra was nominated by the Persian king. Both obtained royal favours for the city and people.⁷ Esther and Mardocheus raised to the position of respectively Persian queen and first minister. Joseph made a similar career in

⁷ Cf. Jon L. Berquist, *Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire*, in: *In the Shadow of Empire...*, op. cit., 41-58.

Egypt (his story from Genesis stems from the same late period). Qohelet said to keep the king's commands (Qoh 8:2; cf. Qoh 8:3-7; with some criticisms in Qoh 9:13-16; 10:5-7,16-19). Daniel and other young Jews were also successful at the royal court (Dan 1-6). It means an acceptance for the external political domination and exclusion of any thought of political or armed resistance. It is permitted to make careers and profits under the foreign rule. Favours of the foreign kings are hoped for.⁸ It seems that Persian kings were clever enough not to interfere too much in the life of their subjects and they were praised by them in exchange. Ptolemies' reign in the third century B.C. was also relatively tolerant.

However, in the later biblical books the loyalty to God of Israel goes first and remains the key to the success. No involvement with idolatry is allowed, ancestral laws should be kept, despite of the harshest punishments imposed by authorities (the same Dan 1-6). Even if such conflicts are not a rule, we meet here the second possible answer: the passive resistance and martyrdom.

It was a new answer, provoked by the second century crisis. Earlier the loyalty and submission were possible and practiced. The armed resistance was the third answer, dating from the Maccabean period as well, and impossible before. In the Hebrew Bible it is reflected in the later chapters of Daniel (7-12), but only in the spiritualized and symbolic form.

This set of questions and answers continued in the deuterocanonical books. We will deal in detail with the solutions they proposed. We should also remember that the described situation continued in the New Testament times. It contains sayings expressing loyalty to the foreign rulers (Mark 12:13-17; Rom 13:1-7: pay taxes!) and also sharp criticisms, implying martyrdom and future victory over the empire (Rev 13-19).

If we considered only the dimension of the attitude towards the external, political world, the Bible could be divided into two parts with a division line after the Babylonian Exile. Later books have more in common with the New Testament than with the earlier Hebrew tradition. (Perhaps it would apply to their other elements as well; non-christological divisions of the Bible seem possible). I would also observe that both the deuterocanonical books and the New Testament repeat the pattern of development found in the Hebrew Bible. At the beginning, the state is seen with more optimism, later conflicts come.

⁸ Cf. Terence L. Donaldson, "Royal Sympathizers in Jewish Narrative", *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 16(2006)1, 41-59 (on a figure of a king or official who respects Israel's God). Further: Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (Harvard Dissertations in Religion 26, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

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Career and loyalty

The book of **Tobit**,⁹ probably the earliest of the deuterocanonical books,¹⁰ concentrates on the family life and help from God. It is significant in itself. Nevertheless this book contains some interesting suggestions concerning the political choices of Diaspora. Tobit, although exiled, made a career, supplying the royal court in Nineveh with imported goods and making a very handsome income (Tob 1:13-14). His disgrace, as in the case of Daniel, resulted from his fidelity to the ancestral law, which pushed him to act against the will of the king; he buried condemned Israelites (Tob 1:16-20). However, next month a new king named Ahikar his chancellor. Ahikar was Tobit's nephew and quickly obtained amnesty for him. The lesson is clear: take advantage of the possibilities offered by the political situation, but remain faithful to God. *To Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's* (Mark 12:17 par.).

In the Book of **Baruch**¹¹ some Jews exiled into Babylonia collected money and send it to the Jerusalem Temple to make offerings for the Babylonian king (Bar 1:10). *Pray for the life of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and for the life of Belshazzar his son, that their days on earth may be like the days of heaven. And the Lord will give us strength, and he will give light to our eyes, and we shall live under the protection of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and under the protection of Belshazzar his son, and we shall serve them many days and find favor in their sight* (Bar 1:11-12).¹² This is not a standard biblical reaction to the Exile! The actual perspective of the author is later and probably reflects the sacrifices for the Persian kings offered in the Temple (Ezra 6:10).

Serving foreign rulers is presented as the will of God (Bar 2:21-24): *But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord and will not serve the king of Babylon, I will make to cease from the cities of Judah and from the region about Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness ...* etc. The submission to the foreign

⁹ Recent commentaries: Carey A. Moore, *Tobit* (Anchor Bible 40A, New York et al.: Doubleday, 1996); H. Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Freiburg/B et al.: Herder, 2000); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature, Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 2003); M. Wojciechowski, *Księga Tobiasza czyli Tobita* (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Stary Testament XII, Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła, 2005).

¹⁰ With roots in the northern Israel Diaspora in Assyria: Michał Wojciechowski, "Assyrian Diaspora as Background of the Book of Tobit", *Collectanea Theologica* 77(2007), fasciculus specialis, 5-19; <http://www.uwm.edu.pl/ktb/index.php?a=7&D=56>. The Greek version of Tobit could have been written in the third century B.C.

¹¹ Commentaries: Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah. The Additions* (Anchor Bible 44, New York: Doubleday, 1977); Odil H. Steck, Reinhard G. Kratz et al., *Das Buch Baruch, Der Brief des Jeremia. Zusätze zu Esther und Daniel* (Das Alte Testament Deutsch. Apokryphen 5, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Isabelle Assan-Dhôte, Jacqueline Moatti-Fine, *La Bible d'Alexandrie. Baruch, Lamentations, Lettre de Jérémie* (Paris, Cerf: 2005).

¹² Biblical quotations are from RSV.

occupation becomes a religious duty! Further, not the foreign invasions, but the sins of Israel are the source of all calamities (Bar 2:12; 3:4; 6:1).

Daniel 13 on Daniel and Susan does not refer to any governing authority, but the plot suggests a local judicial autonomy of the Jewish communities, which was apparently sufficient for them. Another deuterocanonical addition, Daniel 14, associates a polemic against the pagan religion with a favorable portrait of the foreign king who sides with Daniel. The message is similar to Dan 1-6 and Tobit: remaining faithful to their God, Jews may adapt to the society they live in and seek royal favours. Azariah addition has occasionally condemned the king (Dan 3:32). The Greek additions to Esther continue the motifs of the Hebrew book (career and loyalty).

The teachings of **Ben Sirach**¹³ mention politics only in passing. Much more is said on the household, friends and so on. There are some secondary reminiscences of the Hebrew Bible opinions: the praise of good kings in Sir 47-49, more optimistic than their Deuteronomistic portrait, and the praise of Elijah as the prophetic messenger to the kings (Sir 48:6-8). Older wisdom traditions seem to be reflected in Sir 8:2 on gold (bribes?) perverting kings; in Sir 10:1-3 on the leader's behaviour setting standards for the others and on bad or good effects of the way the city is governed (cf. Prov 8:15-16; 28:15; 29:2,4 etc.); in Sir 10:10 on a king dying tomorrow; in Sir 10:14 on the Lord overturning the thrones (close to Luke 2:52); in Sir 11:5-6 on the changes of fortune.

Ben Sirach was aware of the presence of different local governors, officials, judges, elders, councils, perhaps voting.¹⁴ He gave his approval: *A wise magistrate will educate his people, and the rule of an understanding man will be well ordered* (Sir 10:1). Parents, rulers, judges are natural authorities (Sir 41:17-18). Although he apparently preferred the authority of priests (Sir 50; cf. 10:24) and of the Mosaic law (cf. Sir 24:23; 32:17; 41:8; 42:2; 45:5,17; 46:14; 49:4) to the Hellenistic institutions, penetrating into the country, he abstained from an open criticism of any form of government. Acclaiming old ideals, he remains politically inactive.

¹³ Main commentaries: Patrick W. Skehan, Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (Anchor Bible 39), New York 1987; Johannes Marböck, *Jesus Sirach 1-23* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Freiburg/B et al.: Herder, 2010). Cf. Johannes Marböck, „Macht und Mächtige im Buch Jesus Sirach“, in: *Gottes Weisheit unter uns. Zur Theologie des Buches Sirach* (Herders Biblische Studien 6, Freiburg/B et al., Herder: 1995), 185ff; Antonino Minissale, *Ben Sira's Selbstverständnis in Bezug auf Autoritäten der Gesellschaft*, in: Renate Egger-Wenzel, Ingrid Kramer (ed.), *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 270, Berlin – New York: de Gruyter 1998), 103-115; Jan Turkiel, „Sirach's Criticism of Ruler (Sir 9, 17 – 10, 26)“, *Collectanea Theologica* 74(2004), fasciculus specialis, 5-14.

¹⁴ Cf. Th. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 140-162.

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Hence his advice (Sir 7:4-5): *Do not seek from the Lord the highest office, nor the seat of honor from the king. Do not assert your righteousness before the Lord, nor display your wisdom before the king.* Both Lord God and king are beyond our reach. Cf. further Sir 4:27: *Do not subject yourself to a foolish fellow, nor show partiality to a ruler. Kings are named by God: The government of the earth is in the hand of the Lord, and over it he will raise up the right leader for the time* (Sir 10:5; cf. Rom 13:1). *He appointed a ruler for every nation* (Sir 17:17).

In the Book of **Wisdom**, written probably in Ptolemaic Egypt in the first century B.C., an open polemic against the state is also absent. The condemnation of the religion of Egypt remains in line with the general principle of the earlier books that the loyalty towards the foreign rule does not include an approval for the idolatry. An explanation of its origin, given in Wisdom 14, mentions rulers whose images provoked the idolatrous cult. However, this criticism seems much milder than the story from Daniel 3 about the Nabuchodonozor and the golden image.

It sounds less as a political criticism and more as a scholarly explanation of the origin of religion, inspired by the Euhemerus' opinion that the Olympic gods were divinized earthly rulers. Wisdom 14:17,20: *When men could not honor monarchs in their presence, since they lived at a distance, they imagined their appearance far away, and made a visible image of the king whom they honored, so that by their zeal they might flatter the absent one as though present. [...] And the multitude, attracted by the charm of his work, now regarded as an object of worship the one whom shortly before they had honored as a man.*¹⁵

The Book of Wisdom continues also a motif from the Hebrew Bible, giving advice to the rulers. They should govern according to the law, wisdom and holiness, because they received their authority from God (cf. Rom 13:1) and they will be judged by him. From Wisdom 6:1-11 (especially v. 3):

- [1] *Listen therefore, O kings, and understand; learn, O judges of the ends of the earth.*
- [2] *Give ear, you that rule over multitudes, and boast of many nations.*
- [3] *For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High, who will search out your works and inquire into your plans.*
- [4] *Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly, nor keep the law, nor walk according to the purpose of God,*

¹⁵ See my article on the Greek influence on the biblical criticism of idolatry: Michał Wojciechowski, *Ancient Criticism of Religion in Dan 14 (Bel and Dragon), Bar 6 (Epistle of Jeremiah), and Wisdom 14. W: Deuterocanonical Additions of the Old Testament Books* (ed. Géza G. Xeravits and Joseph Zsengellér, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 5, Berlin / New York 2010), 60-76.

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- [5] *he will come upon you terribly and swiftly, because severe judgment falls on those in high places.*
- [6] *For the lowliest man may be pardoned in mercy, but mighty men will be mightily tested. [...]*
- [9] *To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed, that you may learn wisdom and not transgress.*
- [10] *For they will be made holy who observe holy things in holiness, and those who have been taught them will find a defense.*
- [11] *Therefore set your desire on my words; long for them, and you will be instructed.*

A suspicious king could find such words arrogant, but perhaps in the Ptolemaic Egypt such a general moral advice to the rulers put into the mouth of the divine wisdom was socially acceptable. For comparison: 3 Maccabees offers much harsher criticism of the king, changeable in mind and giving cruel orders, even if finally revoking them (despite the mortal danger, no resistance is considered). On the other hand, a more careful wording can be found in the letter of Pseudo-Aristeas (187-190), advising the king magnanimity, justice and the fear of God. In the opinion of the Jews in Egypt, loyal subjects can expect such things from their ruler.

From the **1 and 2 Maccabees**¹⁶ we know that the “old school” of the loyalty to the foreign political power was prevailing till the uprising. This attitude went too far, leading to apostasy. It seems that many Jews considered God of Israel to be a local manifestation of one universal religion and wished to adapt their piety to the Greek rites. Perceiving Greek culture as superior, they were ashamed of their Jewish customs. They wanted Greek school, culture, way of life and the position of Hellenes in the kingdom.¹⁷ They gained support of Antiochus IV (175-164 B.C.) and the control of the Temple. They wanted to break the opposition of the traditional monotheistic piety by force and so provoked a civil war.

However, the political loyalty did not imply apostasy. The high priest Onias III, who lived before the Maccabean uprising as a pious and traditional Jew, remained a loyal subject of the Seleucid monarchy, which allowed the Jews to govern their matters according to the Law and respected the Jerusalem Temple (2 Macc 3:1-3; 4:1-6; 4:35-38). Earlier, under the reign of Ptolemies, such an attitude was most probably current in the land of Israel, even if it became hardly possible after the murder of Onias and compulsory reforms from 167 B.C, which resulted in the profanation of the Temple.

¹⁶ When I refer to 1 and 2 Macc, I follow the main lines of my article mentioned before (Wojciechowski, “Moral Teaching of 1 and 2 Maccabees”), sometimes quoting it, but more often shortening, paraphrasing and sometimes developing its statements.

¹⁷ Put modern Europe instead of Greece and you will see a possibility of actualization...

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Alcimus, the high priest of noble descent (162/1-159 B.C.) tried, as it seems, to continue the traditional worship and piety without abandoning his loyalty towards the Greek kings. It involved him in the political collaboration. The Books of Maccabees suspect him of Hellenistic sympathies and burden him with responsibility for repressions (1 Macc 7:5-26; 9:1-3,23-27,54-57; 2 Macc 14:3-26). He is condemned together with the apostates, although without good reasons.

Nevertheless, in spite of their strong opposition to the Hellenizing attempts in the field of religion, the both Books of Maccabees follow Greek literary patterns and sometimes express their ideas in Greek categories. The both books also assume that friendly relations with Greeks who are sympathetic to the Jews and who make concessions to them remain possible (e.g. 2 Macc 10:12; 12:29-31). Among the allies of Israel we find pagan countries: Rome and Sparta (a panegyric in 1 Macc 8; 1 Macc 14:16-49). Further, the independence gained, the Maccabean princes made deals with the foreigners and accepted Seleucid dignities (1 Macc 10-11; 13-15). Accordingly, even these books do not exclude some forms of political loyalty to the foreign powers.

Fight and martyrdom

1 and 2 Maccabees refer to the dangers for the existence and identity of the Jews in the land of Israel resulting from its occupation by the Hellenistic kingdom of Syria, ruled by the Seleucid dynasty. Reactions of the Jews to its “cultural imperialism” were differentiated. They were basically three: collaboration and assimilation; next, on the opposite side, armed resistance or martyrdom;¹⁸ finally, an attempt to continue the intermediate attitude we talked about before: preserving the religious identity coupled with the political submission to the foreign rule.

In 1 and 2 Macc apostasy and serving to the foreigners are strongly condemned as equal to treason and participation in the persecutions (1 Macc 1:11,15,34,52; 2:44,48; 3:5,8,15; 7:9-24; 9:23,10:61; 11:21; 2 Macc 4-5; 5:8,15). A retaliation against the traitors is considered lawful and inspired by God (1 Macc 2:67f; 7:24; 2 Macc 8:33 cf. 13:7). It corroborates the conviction that the resistance is the only solution; there is no place for compromise or tolerance.

The resistance to enemies had a political and religious form. The both books fully justify such a resistance. **1 Macc** is largely an apology of the armed struggle of the Maccabean party against the Syrian armies and against the Jewish apostates. The author believes that the violence should be answered by violence. At the beginning of the book the two attitudes were contrasted: the passive

¹⁸ Cf. Katell Berthelot, « L'idéologie maccabéenne: entre idéologie de la résistance armée et idéologie du martyre », *Revue de Études Juives* 165(2006)1-2, 99-122 (1-2 Macc pp. 100-110, and pp. 111-122 later developments).

acceptance of the death by the Jews celebrating Sabbath and the decision of Mattathias to fight on that day. Armed pious Jews, Hasideans (*hasidim*), whose resistance to the pagan enemies was motivated in strictly religious manner, accepted the reasons of the guerillas and joined them (1 Macc 1:29-43).¹⁹ The cases of martyrdom are noted, but the book as a whole is a chronicle of the armed resistance, whether consciously undertaken, or forced upon the Jews by the situation. The fighters are inspired by the fidelity to the Law, by the desire to defend the nation and the Temple, by the eagerness to uproot apostasy and foreign cults from Israel (1 Macc 1:27; 3:21,58 etc.). The justice of their cause gives them victory (1 Macc 2:61; 3:18), which permits to cleanse the Temple and to live according to the Law.

Therefore, the only correct attitude is the resistance, aimed at the defense of both the nation and the religion. However, the two Books of Maccabees understand this resistance in a different way, or at least they put accents differently. 1 Macc stresses the armed struggle, whose purpose is both political and religious. Only the victory and the independence gained through it allow to live in the accordance with the Law of God and to preserve the holiness of the Temple.

The views of **2 Macc** are not the same.²⁰ The destiny of the nation and of the Temple depends on God. He helps promptly his faithful who pray for salvation. The persecutions constitute a punishment for sins (2 Macc 6:12-16; 7:32f; cf. 1 Macc 1:64), and the heroic death of martyrs has the value of atonement (2 Macc 7:38).²¹ It is necessary to obey the law, even at the price of death. The fighters carefully abide by the precepts of the Law, and their hope for victory is founded upon God to whom they pray. The faithfulness to the Law gives them victory. Regaining the Temple and keeping it is the peak of the Maccabean history (2 Macc 10:1-8; 15:37).

As we see, 2 Macc begins from religion. The faithfulness to God is both the starting point and the means of the future victory. Because of the martyrs' faithfulness God forgives his people and saves them. The victories are fruits of the piety of the soldiers. The army is an instrument in the hand of God.

The key moral question of both Books of Maccabees is how to answer the violence consisting in the foreign occupation and religious persecution. According to the Bible, a purely political loyalty to the foreign power is admissible, but not always: only if this power respects the religion and the law of the subjects. In the Maccabean period it was not the case. Therefore the both Books of Maccabees

¹⁹ Cf. Valentin Nikiprowetzky, « Le Sabbat et les armes dans l'histoire ancienne d'Israël », *Revue des Études Juives* 159/1-2, 1-17.

²⁰ Cf. Berthelot, art. cit.

²¹ Cf. Jan W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People. A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Journal for the Study of Judaism. Supplement 57, Leiden: Brill 1997).

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condemn concessions to the enemy who wants to deprive the country of its independence, culture and religion – of all its identity. They condemn those who pass on the side of the stronger and become his accomplices, whether because they admire the Greek world, or because of their cowardice, opportunism, or delusive hope that through collaboration they will save something.

As we have seen, 1 Macc puts stress on fight, and 2 Macc – on martyrdom. Both are necessary, although the authors of the books occasionally seem to contradict one another. 2 Macc still sees some possibility of reconciling the true piety and the loyalty towards a foreign power, if only the foreigners do not intervene in the religious matters. For the 1 Macc political independence appears to be an element and a condition of the religious independence. It is more consciously nationalistic.²² Accordingly, 1 Macc appeals more clearly to the fight against the foreign occupation.

Even if the cruel and terrorist methods of the Maccabean guerillas are obviously contrary to the commandment of love and the modern Western law, other moral dimensions of their uprising have not lost its value: courage and dedication, faithfulness to God up to the sacrifice of own life (in battle or through martyrdom), clear “no” to the arrogant invaders. This part of the message of the both Books of Maccabees finds its place in the biblical ethics as a whole.

The message of the Book of **Judith** is similar, but more restricted.²³ It could result from the same historical situation or an experience of later dangers from abroad.²⁴ The dilemma stayed the same: to fight or to submit? For the Book of Judith the submission is excluded, because it would imply the loss of the Temple. The enemy wants to be god himself. He has crossed the line implied by the earlier books, condoning the career under a foreign rule on the condition to remain loyal to the only God. Even by these traditional standards the resistance is necessary. Moreover, the enemies want to demolish the country in revenge.

Therefore, in the wake of 1 Macc, the martyrdom is not a good solution. Israel needs victory. God will give it, but through human hands. Jews are to weak

²² Contrary to some modern opinions, ancient times knew not only an ethnic identity, but also the national consciousness, and Israel furnishes an excellent example. Cf. David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: CUP 2006). Also Mark G. Brett, “Nationalism and the Hebrew Bible”, in: John W. Rogerson (ed.), *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium* (Journal for the Study of The Old Testament Supplement Series Supplement Series 207, Sheffield: Sheffield University Press 1995), 136-163.

²³ Here I also follow a section of my recent article, quoted above (Wojciechowski, “Moral Teaching of the Book of Judith”), but much more briefly. A bibliographical supplement: Benedikt Eckhardt, “Reclaiming Tradition: The Book of Judith and Hasmonean Politics”, *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* 18(2009)4, 243-263.

²⁴ See G. Boccaccini on Tigranes invasion as an inspiration of the book of Judith, “Tigranes the Great as “Nebuchadnezzar” in the Book of Judith”, in: *A Pious Seductress. Studies in the Book of Judith* (ed. Géza G. Xeravits, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 14, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 55-69.

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to gain the upper hand in an open battle and face total destruction. Judith says: *For if we are captured, then all Judea will be exposed, and our sanctuary will be looted* (Judith 8:21). It justifies the exceptional means, even evil, as deceit and terrorism. Judith, by means of lies and seduction, managed to murder the enemy leader, Holofernes. For the author, salvation of the nation and of the Temple was more important than prohibitions against these sins.

Conclusions

The earlier books of the Old Testament did not face the problem of living under a foreign rule. It surfaced after the Exile and is variously answered in later Hebrew books, in the Greek books of the Old Testament and in the New Testament. There are two main contradictory answers. One possibility is submission (Nehemiah, Ezra, Baruch). It can be variously modified and expanded: by avoiding politics (Sirach), by moderate critical opinions (Wisdom) and also by approving careers at foreign courts (Esther, Tobit, first part of Daniel). However, the faithfulness to God of Israel remains a necessary condition.

On the other side we meet an opposition, including a military action (1 Maccabees, Judith) and condemnation of the foreign empire (visions of Daniel). It can be modified by the religious factor: in 2 Maccabees passive resistance and martyrdom seem morally better and finally assure divine forgiveness and a victory in the field.

This variety of answers exclude a definite solution of the problem how to reconcile the faithfulness to God in heaven and loyalty to the political ruler on earth and whether it is possible at all. The answer has to be related to the situation. Seeing things more widely, in many cases the Bible cannot give us definite political solutions. However, if the rulers impose idolatry, the faithful should certainly say: *non possumus*.

Summary

Earlier books of the Old Testament do not face the problem of living under a foreign government. It surfaced after the Exile and is variously answered in later Hebrew books, in the Greek books of the Old Testament and in the New Testament. There are two main contradictory answers. One possibility is a submission; it can be expressed in avoiding politics (Sirach, Wisdom) and also in approving careers at a foreign court (Esther, Tobit, first part of Daniel). The faithfulness to God of Israel remains a necessary condition. On the other side we meet an opposition, including a military action (1 Maccabees, Judith) and condemnation of the foreign empire (visions of Daniel). It can be modified by the religious factor: in 2 Maccabees passive resistance and martyrdom are morally better and finally assure a victory in the field.