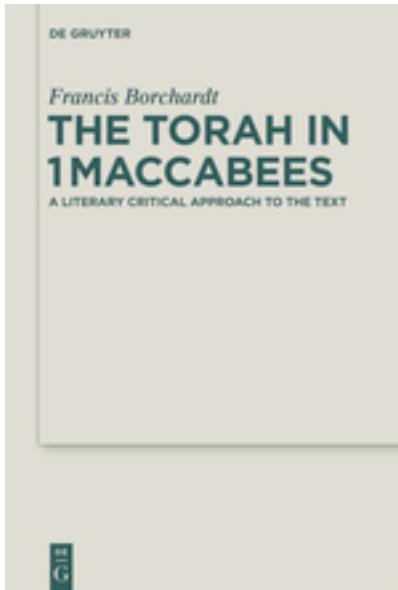


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Francis Borchardt

The Torah in 1 Maccabees: A Literary Critical Approach to the Text

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This very well outlined work on 1 Maccabees is the result of Borchardt's doctoral studies at the department of Biblical Studies at the University of Helsinki. According to the preface, Professor Raija Sollamo was the director, and Professors Anneli Aejmelaus, Martti Nissinen, and Christoph Levin are named as advisors. Borchardt was also part of a research group led by Dr. Juha Pakkala. Readers acquainted with the works of these scholars and their methodological approaches can already guess the direction Borchardt's study will take.

As "the law" ([the] torah/nomos/law—Borchardt treats these terms as synonyms) is so prominent in many passages in 1 Maccabees, and as 1 Maccabees is an important historical source for the period of the Hasmoneans and their subsequent rule in the second and first century BCE, the study addresses a very important question: "what is the place and function of the torah/nomos/law in 1 Maccabees" (231)? Borchardt explains his aims and methods in the first chapter ("Introduction") and also reviews previous studies on the subject. Two major approaches have influenced the debate in a significant way: Bernard Renaud, "La Loi et les lois dans les livres des Maccabées," *Revue Biblique* 68 (1961): 39–52, and Diego Arenhoevel, *Die Theokratie nach dem 1. und 2. Makkabäerbuch*, Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1967. Borchardt presents both studies by acknowledging

their achievements and indicating their weaknesses and methodological flaws (6–30). He identifies as a major problem that both scholars treat the entirety of 1 Maccabees as a unity. As the history of research shows, there are several approaches to prove the disunity of 1 Maccabees. Here Borchardt especially points to Nils Martola, *Capture and Liberation: A Study in the Composition of the First Book of Maccabees* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1984), and David S. Williams, *The Structure of 1 Maccabees* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1999). Although Borchardt acknowledges the approach and results of both diachronic studies of 1 Maccabees, he states that “they have not gone far enough” (41). He thinks it necessary to search in every part and chapter of 1 Maccabees for secondary compositions.

This is exactly what he does in chapter 2, “Literary Criticism of 1Maccabees,” the largest part of the entire study (47–186). “The criteria we will use to determine the unity of the text will be those traditionally associated with literary-critical studies. Doublets, parallels, differences in rhetoric and style, abrupt changes in form, content, competing traditions, and irregularities in vocabulary will all be used as major clues to a given phrase or passage’s composite nature” (43, with reference to an article by Rolf Knierim). Hence, Borchardt actually does the classical German “Literarkritik,” discussing the problems of authorship, sources, and redactional layers. This has to be clarified, since the term “literary criticism” seems to have a wider meaning in the English-speaking world. One might ask whether it is feasible to perform literary criticism (in the sense of source criticism, literary layers, and authorship) on a translation (as 1 Maccabees exists only in Greek manuscripts translated from a lost Hebrew original). Borchardt here points to the evidence “that the translation has stuck very closely to its Hebrew original” (44). He admits, however, that “the literary critic should still proceed with caution,” since the translator might have corrected inconsistencies in the original or introduced new literary problems in the process of translation. However, Borchardt sets out to weigh the arguments for secondary additions by putting them in a hierarchy of primary and secondary evidence; hence, he is confident that he will be able to detect all additions made before the translation into Greek. The Greek text Borchardt takes from the Göttingen edition by W. Kappler (1936); he does not delve into textual criticism.

Chapter 2 treats 1 Maccabees chapter by chapter, and except for 1 Macc 4, Borchardt finds secondary additions in every chapter. As an example, one may have a look at the identification of 1 Macc 3:3–9 as “problematic on a number of levels” (63). “The first clue is the formal difference; 3:3–9 is a poetic passage, technically a *Preisgedicht* [reference to p. 95 in G. Neuhaus, *Studien zu den poetischen Stücken im 1. Makkabäerbuch* (Würzburg: Echter, 1974)], which is surrounded by narrative prose.” A narrative introduction is missing as well as a reference to the poem in the succeeding narrative. This is the second problem with 3:3–9: there are only “very few connections that can be made between its

contents and the immediate context.” Not even the subject of the poem is clearly stated: “Judas’ name is not mentioned in v.3 or at any other point in the poem. The combination of the lack of a clear poetic subject and the dearth of references to specific acts raise the possibility that the poem does not belong to this context. Further evidence for the hypothesis of the secondary nature of 3:3–9 comes from the discrepancies between the poem and the narratives” (64; Borchartd presents an example). The final proof for the secondary nature of 3:3–9 is the close relationship between 3:1–2 and 3:10–11. The whole treatment of 1 Macc 3 stretches from pages 62 to 67, identifying only 3:3–9 as secondary. A firm date of origin for the addition cannot be given at this moment.

After having dealt with the entire book in the same way for more than a hundred pages, Borchartd organizes the additions and identifies the literary layers of 1 Maccabees. This is a fascinating process, since the many fragments isolated as secondary can be classified into three groups. Thus there are four layers in 1 Maccabees. (1) First is the foundational layer, “which we shall call 1MaccGrundschrift” (173; abbreviated as 1MaccG). On the basis of historical arguments and together with the observations of many other scholars, Borchartd dates the origin of the *Grundschrift* shortly after around 130 BCE. (2) The first group of additions can be assigned to a redaction that “describes a group most notable for going to those in power (usually kings, though not always), complaining against, or accusing the Hasmoneans, trying to seize power from the Hasmoneans, and abandoning ancestral laws” (174): this is “the Internal Opposition Redaction” (1MaccO). Borchartd sees the period 88–86 BCE as a “a good place for 1MaccO to have been written into the framework of 1Macc” (181). (3) The second group of additions appears only after the midpoint of the book; it covers larger passages in 1 Macc 8, 10, and 12 and the three final chapters: 1 Macc 14:1–3, 16–49; 15:1–41; 16:1–24. This “Documentarian Redaction” (1MaccD) focuses on the Hasmonean treaties with the Romans and the Spartans as well as the characters of Simon and his son John Hyrcanus. It was added “sometime between 120 and 104 BCE” (184). (4) The final additions “were loosely grouped together by a somewhat general trend to be concerned with honoring the members of the Hasmonean family to the exclusion of other Judaeans and allies” (168). This redaction is abbreviated as 1MaccH. The most probable date of origin is the period after the death of Alexander Jannaeus, during the reign of his wife Salome Alexandra (76–74 BCE; see 185).

Borchartd conveniently prints the entire book 1 Maccabees in the large appendix (235–329), in Greek and in his English translation, grouped and labeled according to the four layers 1MaccG, 1MaccD, 1MaccO, and 1MaccH. This is a very helpful feature, since the presentation of the text makes it easy for the reader to follow (and monitor) Borchartd’s literary-critical argumentation.

Now that 1 Maccabees is divided diachronically into four layers with an assumed process of origin that lasted almost a hundred years, Borchardt can return to his initial question, “The Nomos and Its Place in 1Maccabees” (ch. 3, 189–230). Thus Borchardt comes back to the works of B. Renaud and D. Arenhoevel and sets out to scrutinize their results against the diachronic layers of 1 Maccabees. In order to find the relevant passages, Borchardt identifies as “meaningful vocabulary” (190) the following nouns: νόμος, δικαίωμα, πρόσταγμα, νόμιμα, ἐντολή, λατρεία, and (only in instances where there is a legal connotation): σύγκριμα, κρίμα, λόγος. “The bulk of the legal vocabulary falls in 1MaccG” (190). In order to detect how the *Grundschrift* and the three redactional layers deal with the issue of “law/torah,” Borchardt asks six questions (based on the works of Renaud and Arenhoevel): “Is the nomos supreme in the hierarchy of religious values?”; “Does the nomos decide whether characters are good or evil?”; “Does the law assume the other traditional religious categories[the cult, the covenant, and the prophets]?”; “Is the Torah Israel’s way of life?”; “Is the Torah a fence [a border designed to protect Israel or isolate Israel from the gentiles]?”; “Is the Torah the state law of Judaea?” The four layers in 1 Maccabees give different answers to these questions. 1MaccG places a high value on the law but does not place it atop the religious hierarchy. “The deity still reigns supreme in the religious world of 1Macc” (223). Furthermore, the law is not the (only) arbiter of good and evil for 1MaccG. This is totally different in 1MaccO: here the law is the undercurrent that moves the characters, “the chief source of identity for all of the actors in this addition. ... the law overtakes all other subjects as the central religious value. Any mention of the divine is absent, the sanctuary is nearly insignificant, and other religious subjects play no part at all. The law is everything for 1MaccO’s religious worldview. ... As for the torah being the identifying characteristics of the Judaeans, 1MaccO surprisingly disagrees with 1MaccG and 1MaccD” (227). One might ask, however, if a redactional layer really can disagree with a text to which it only adds phrases and passages; if there were a deep disagreement, one would assume that the redactor rewrites his sources to some extent. Borchardt, however, concludes that the final form of 1 Maccabees therefore is something mixed, displaying “characteristics of the older religion, wherein the divine and the sanctuary are primary with the law playing an important supporting role, while also showing signs of rabbinism wherein the religion becomes much more focused on laws, rules, and their interpretations” (230). One might ask whether the opposition “older religion”—“rabbinism” insinuates the assumption of a certain kind of stereotyped “negative” development within early Judaism. Perhaps this alleged assumption belongs to the “own biases” the author speaks about on page 234.

As Borchardt applies a certain degree of redundancy, the reader can easily navigate within the book, especially when one grasps Borchardt’s overall idea of the text of 1 Maccabees, that is, his four-tiered model of origin including the different viewpoints of the layers.

Introductions and summaries provide helpful hints to keep track. The fourth chapter, “Concluding Remarks,” is especially helpful; here one gets the aims and results of the study on four pages *in nuce* (231–34). Borchardt repeats the various verse numbers of the passages he attributes to the three different redactional layers, the thrust of each layer, and its presumed date of origin. The divergent positions of the layers toward the law cannot be summarized as easily, as this is a complex matter pointed out in chapter 3. Hence, Borchardt concludes only that “the torah was not universally recognized and universally applicable to all even in the Judaeian heyday of the Hasmonean period” (234).

For those who fully subscribe to the way of literary criticism (German “Literarkritik”) that Borchardt applies, the book provides many points to discuss and a fascinating synthesis about the origin of 1 Maccabees. Some scholars will probably be more critical and skeptical about the method and its results regarding the (dis)unity of 1 Maccabees. Everyone commenting on this deuterocanonical book will have to deal with Borchardt’s suggestions, although one cannot adopt them all without further verification. Historians of the Hasmonean period will find interesting suggestions for the reconstruction of some events of this era with the help of 1 Maccabees.