

Assignment 2

1) What are the main differences that Professor Daniel Schwartz puts forward between 1&2 Maccabees?

Maccabees 1 was composed in Hebrew. It uses language similar to Biblical language, and is very restrained in its use of emotional language. Maccabees 2, however, was composed in the Greek of the second century BCE. It hardly uses Biblical language at all, and the author is familiar with Greek language and literature, and it is written in a style evoking emotions,

As a Hebrew book, 1 Maccabees would have been written in Judea, probably Jerusalem. It reads like a court history, a history of dynasties. There are lots of details of Palestinian geography, but few details of Hellenistic geography. However, 2 Maccabees was written in Greek, possibly in Alexandria in Egypt. There is less of an interest in rulers, and more of a concentration on ideas and values. It contains no geographical details of Palestine.

In 1 Maccabees there is no mention of Jews being sinful, so therefore no need for atonement. Any problems are caused by wicked neighbours and wicked rulers. In 2 Maccabees, sin causes the problems, so atonement needs to be the remedy.

2) How significant is it that 1 and 2 Maccabees were written in different locations?

It is highly significant that these books were written in different locations. For instance, in Maccabees 1 (written in Judea) there is some interest in the Temple cult, but very little interest in 2 Maccabees, (a Diaspora location) because the Jews of the Diaspora want God in heaven, rather than in Jerusalem so they can access Him in prayer.

Also, When the author of 1 Maccabees was writing of the desecration of the Temple, there is a lot of detail of what was removed, which would have been of interest to the audience of the book. But the author of 2 Maccabees omits the details, because it was of lesser interest to Diaspora Jews.

Location is important to how rulers are viewed. 1 Maccabees portrays leaders who plunder, slaughter, and cause many evils on the earth. And gentiles are wicked as well. In 2 Maccabees, however, it was important for Diaspora Jews to be seen to be getting along fine with their rulers and non-Jewish neighbours, and to be absorbing culture and sports. Similarly, in 1 Maccabees there is much mention of division among the Jews, and warfare, but in 2 Maccabees there is no hint of Jewish disputes, which fits with the picture of Diaspora Jews being more constrained and circumspect in the way they portray themselves.

3) What is the difference in the way 1&2 Maccabees depict martyrdom and resurrection?

In 1 Maccabees martyrs deserve some respect, but they don't get results. The only other way of doing things is to fight. Chapters 6 and 7 of 2 Maccabees illustrates that Jewish blood can be the solution. In other words, martyrs are the heroes.

In 1 Maccabees men are not supposed to flee the field of battle. If things go wrong it is because the enemies are wicked, and perhaps there is also bad luck as well. In 2 Maccabees the fate of people depends on their sins, and how divine providence deals with this.

In 1 Maccabees there is no belief in the resurrection, or belief in angels, prophets or miracles. There is also more of a belief in things happening by chance. In 2 Maccabees things don't happen by chance, but by providence. There is a belief in resurrection and atonement.