

James C. V a n d e r K a m, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile*. Minneapolis–Assen, the Netherlands: Fortress Press/Van Gorcum 2004, ss. XIX + 548.

The book under review is a fruit of many years of studies and interest of V. in the Second Temple priesthood, while the idea to write a monograph concentrated on the high priests began to take shape already in the 1980s (p. VII). The author confesses that during his research he found out that although individual high priests have been subject to a thorough scientific treatment, a comprehensive history of all of them has yet to be written. As the high priests played an important role in the Second Temple period, the subject evidently appears to be of great importance for the proper understanding of political and religious life in Israel. Although „the complexities of the sources would require at least a book of its own”, and „often [...] we lack an adequate basis for determining the historical reliability of what we are told” (p. IX), V. undertakes the uneasy task „to gather and assess all of the available information about each one of them, from Joshua in the late sixth century BCE to Phannias during the Jewish revolt against Rome (66–70)” (p. IX). He bases his research on the biblical sources (especially Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Sirach, 1 and 2 Maccabees) as well as on the account of Josephus in *Antiquities* and *Jewish War*. The biblical evidence adduced by V. serves to depict in broad strokes of the pen the historical realities of successive periods, while a more detailed analysis of single accounts or terms concerning the high priests attempts to retrieve information about the role and status of this priestly office in the post-exilic Israel. The works of Josephus, not free of historical inaccuracies and doubtful accounts, are the only extensive source for the post-exilic period, and much space in V’s analysis is based on the information retrieved from Josephus, always with a critical assessment of the reported story. Not infrequently, the inscriptions on the coins or bullae concerning the office of governors and high priests are drawn into discussion with a judicious assessment of the historical value of this kind of information.

The structure of the monograph is set up according to the historical eras into which the Second Temple period is usually divided. V begins with analyzing the figure of the high priest Joshua and his eminent position at the side of Zerubbabel, Judah’s governor and Davidic heir (Chapter I: Beginnings, pp. 1-42). The first post-exilic high priest Joshua exercised his office during the time of Cyrus (538-530

B.C.) and during the reign of Darius (522-486 B.C.). During the Persian period (Chapter II: The High Priests of the Persian Period, pp. 43-111) the province of Yehud appears to be an independent political unit administered by a governor, at the side of whom the high priest held an important position of authority. The available evidence does not indicate that the high priest was subordinated to the authority of the governor. The lion's share in V's assessment of the period (pp. 63-85) is taken by Jaddua, the last high priest of the Persian period and father of Onias I, the first high priest of the early Hellenistic times. V rejects F. M. Cross' theory, according to which the biblical list of six successive high priests during the Persian period is not exhaustive, due to the haplography of the last two names. The original list would have the following sequence at its end: Johanan-Jaddua-Johanan-Jaddua; Cross also posits existence of other two high priests, Elyashib and Yohanan, unattested in biblical sources. V. opposes this proposal for lack of compelling evidence; although omissions by homoiographia are not to be excluded, „there is no evidence that they occurred and no convincing reasons to posit them” (p. 99).

Chapter III of the monograph (pp. 112-239) adduces all available, however meager, evidence about the office of the high priest during the early Hellenistic period (330-152 B.C.). From Jaddua's successor, Onias I (contemporary to Areus I, king of Sparta, [309–265 B.C.]?) to the rule of Onias III (before 175 B.C.) the genealogical line of the high priests exercised priestly and political dominion in Judea within the realm of autonomy from the Ptolemaic or Seleucid overlords. The sources do not mention any foreign or Jewish governor alongside the high priest. Beginning in 175 B.C. the royal Seleucid administration directly interfered in the high-priestly succession with the election of Jason, Menelaus and Alcimus (175-159). Josephus is again the main historical source for the period, together with the evidence from Hecateus of Abdera, and First and Second Maccabees for the second part of the period. The Talmudic evidence is also brought into discussion. V. dedicates a lot of attention to Simon I whom he convincingly identifies with Simon the Just (Josephus, *Ant.* 12. 4, 1 § 157-58).

The period of the Hasmonean civil and priestly rule (152–37 B.C.) is extensively treated by V. (Chapter IV, pp. 240-393). The sources mostly remain the same, that is Josephus, 1 and 2 Maccabees, coins, with a notable addition of some Qumran texts, with their often equivocal evidence concerning the identity of the Teacher of Righteousness, some Hasmonean rulers and political and religious situation in that period; late Mishnaic and Talmudic evidence is sometimes adduced. V. suggests that before Jonathan unified in one person the office of the head of state and high priest, Judah Maccabeus exercised this function bestowed upon him by his army, in accordance with the testimony of Josephus. The period of *intersacerdotium* (159-152 B.C.) is poorly attested in the sources, and the hypothesis that the Teacher of Righteousness held the office during this period (H. Stegemann) cannot be unequivocally substantiated. The royal and priestly offices were separated during the reign of Salome Alexandra (76-67 B.C.); while she exercised the royal prerogatives of power, her son Hyrcanus II served as high priest. When Hyrcanus became king the two offices were again reunited and the situation continued during the reign of Hyrcanus' brother Aristobulus II, who lost his high-priestly office in 63 B.C., when Pompey conquered

Jerusalem and reinstalled Hyrcanus in the high priesthood. The latter exercised civil rule in Roman Judea, and was deposed and mutilated during the Parthian invasion by the last Hasmonean priest and ruler, Antigonus (40-37 B.C.), son of Aristobulus II, who eventually was executed by the Romans and the civil rule definitely handed over to Herod, son of Antipater.

The last chapter of the monograph (pp. 394-490) treats the final period in the history of the office of the high priest in the Second Temple period. The high priests in the Herodian age (37 B.C.-70 A.D.), by Herod's decision, loose their connection to the Hasmonean family and do not exercise any political power, although their influence in political affairs is at times noticeable. The reliance on the Josephus's work is felt throughout the chapter, with occasional reference to the New Testament, especially Passion narratives in the Gospels and the account of early years of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles.

The very concise and precise way of stating the problems and looking for plausible solutions makes this monograph an invaluable introductory text for those who approach the thorny issues of the history of the high priesthood in the Second Temple period. As V himself confesses, this history is mostly dependent on Josephus Flavius's work (p. IX) and runs the peril of being considered a learned commentary to Josephus's presentation of the matter. V., however, manages splendidly to sort out the evidence and critically assess the fact. His ability in presenting the sources in a clear manner bound to his orderly presentation of the sometimes hypothetical succession of facts or events creates a work that has not only historical, but also literary value on its own. He convincingly proves, what some have repeatedly questioned, that the high priestly office was in some periods in the history of the post-exilic Israel connected with the exercise of the civic authority. To the long list of texts cited to prove this assumption one should perhaps add another composition, not explored in the monograph. The Aramaic *Visions of Levi* (also called *Aramaic Levi Document*) is a didactic composition from the early third century B.C. with clear references and allusions to the royal power of the high priest and the priestly class in general. This literary work should also be considered an unquestionable historical source, stemming from the priestly circles which wrote a story not only about Levi, the patriarch of the priestly tribe, but a story about what they considered the high priestly office should consist in. Although the *Visions of Levi* does not mention any 3rd century B. C. high priest by name, it transmits to priestly apprentices the image of the priestly class that occupies the ruling position in the society due to God's election and professional education. It therefore constitutes an excellent literary background for the position of the high priest and priestly class in general in 3rd century Judea.

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