

Book Reviews

Denis F. Sullivan, Alice-Mary Talbot & Stamatina McGrath (eds), *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger. Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Moscow Version*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 45, Washington DC, 2014, ISBN 9780884023975

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While working on the image of the Jews in Byzantine ecclesiastic literature, I discovered the Greek-English edition of the life of *St. Basil the Younger*, written in the mid-10th century. It seems to be a gold mine for researchers of Byzantine Christian Anti-Judaism. The *Vita* of Saint Basil is indeed an „immense artefact”¹ of middle-Byzantine literary creation and proves to be a wealth of information for present-day Byzantinists, philologists and theologians, as the text reveals luscious details of daily life in 10th century Constantinople. Among various ordinary events, one can also find in this text a description of a vision on the Last Judgment that occupies half of the entire text. Although it is called the life of St. Basil, a significant part of the narrative contains the experiences of Gregory, St. Basil’s disciple, who is the one that receives this vision on the Last Judgment.

It is interesting that the vision on the Last Judgment was triggered by thoughts that Gregory had on the fate of the Jews, as a result of his Biblical readings, as he was well trained in all the stories from the Old Testament (ἐξήσκηκώς, p. 347) – not commonplace for Christians of 10th century Byzantium. He confessed these thoughts to St. Basil, his spiritual father. Gregory initially draws positive conclusions from his Biblical reading on the final fate of the Jews, or at least of the descendants who have nothing to do with those that had crucified Jesus Christ. However, his spiritual father insists and harshly admonishes him over these thoughts. What follows is a long argument based on Biblical quotations that favour the damnation of all Jews after Jesus Christ.

The disciple finds it hard to believe and dares to request – through the intercession of his spiritual father – a vision upon how things will be at the

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¹ See the review of this book written by Jonathan Zecher in: *Sobornost* 37 (1/2015), 89-92.