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[Review of: R. Ziadé (2007) *Les martyrs Maccabées: de l'histoire juive au culte chrétien: les homélies de Grégoire de Nazianze et de Jean Chrysostome*]

van Henten, J.W.

Publication date
2008

Published in
Review of Biblical Literature

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Henten, J. W. (2008). [Review of: R. Ziadé (2007) *Les martyrs Maccabées: de l'histoire juive au culte chrétien: les homélies de Grégoire de Nazianze et de Jean Chrysostome*]. *Review of Biblical Literature*, 2008(01). http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/5846_6174.pdf

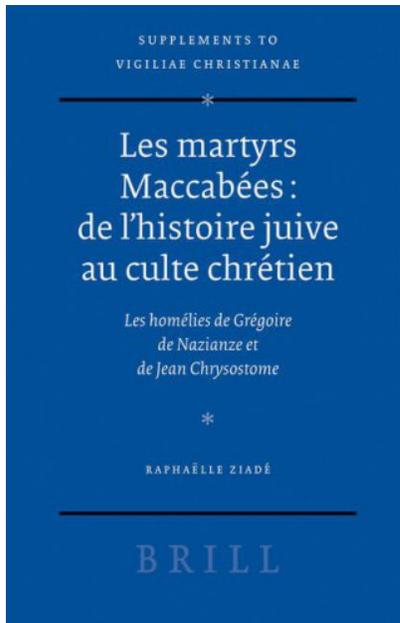
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RBL 01/2008



Ziadé, Raphaëlle

Les martyrs Maccabées: de l'histoire juive au culte chrétien: Les homélies de Grégoire de Nazianze et de Jean Chrysostome

Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 80

Leiden: Brill, 2007. Pp. x + 392. Hardcover. \$188.00.
ISBN 9004153845.

Jan Willem van Henten
University of Amsterdam
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The so-called Maccabean martyrs, Jewish heroes who died during the persecution of Antiochus IV in the second century B.C.E., have become holy persons within Christianity. According to longstanding traditions, their bodily remains are preserved in Saint Andrew's Church in Cologne as well as in the basilica Saint Peter in Chains in Rome. The remains of the mother are said to be in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchal Church of Agios Georgios in Istanbul. The Christianization of the Maccabean martyrs becomes explicit already around 200 C.E., when the first references to the martyrs in Christian passages about martyrdom are found. Origen's *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, composed circa 235 C.E., quotes long sections from 2 Macc 6:18–7:42, the oldest Jewish source about the Maccabean martyrs. Ziadé's monograph deals with one phase of the Christianization of the Maccabean martyrs: their commemoration as well as the praise for them in Christian homilies and panegyric discourses in the fourth century C.E.

The main part of the book offers a detailed thematic discussion of four speeches about the significance of the Maccabean martyrs dating from the second half of the fourth century C.E. Some of these discourses can be called a "panegyris," which is a Greek phrase that originally referred to a cluster of combined festivities: athletic and musical contests;

entertainment in the form of theater, dance, and drinking bouts; as well as cultic performances. In the Christian context, the festival concerned martyrs. The panegyric discourse was held on behalf of the community that had received relics of a martyr or had a special bond with him or her. Ziadé's main sources are *Discourse 15* of Gregory of Nazianze (born in 329/330 in Nazianze, Cappadocia, and later bishop of this city) and the two *Homilies on the Maccabees* as well as the *Homily on Eleazar and the Seven Infants* by John Chrysostom (born in Antioch between 344 and 354, priest in Antioch and archbishop of Constantinople from 398 C.E. onward). John's two *Homilies on the Maccabees* were written between 386 and 397 C.E., and the *Homily on Eleazar and the Seven Infants* dates circa 398 C.E. Ziadé excluded Severus of Antioch's *Homily on the Maccabees* because it is later and the third *Homily on the Maccabees* by John Chrysostom (PG 50:625–28) because it is probably inauthentic.

The book is set up in three sections. The first part offers an introduction to the martyrdom passages in 2 and 4 Maccabees as well as a survey of the Christian reception of these passages up to circa 250 C.E. It includes a discussion of the possible first location of the cult of the Maccabees (linked to Antioch). Ziadé suggests that there may also have been a Jewish festival of commemoration of the Maccabean martyrs, which, perhaps, was connected with the festival of Hanukkah (following a suggestion of E. Nodet). Ziadé argues for a double function of the Maccabean martyrs in their Christian reception in the second and third centuries C.E. The Maccabean martyrs were models (*exempla*) for Christian martyrs, but the texts about their martyrdoms also functioned as an example for the composers and editors of Christian martyrdoms (69).

The second part concerns the festival of the Maccabees in Antioch, Nazianze, and Constantinople as reflected in the panegyric discourses of John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianze. The Councils of Hippo and Carthage (393 and 397 C.E.) allowed for the liturgical reading of martyrdoms at the occasion of the celebration of the day of the martyr's death. The *Martyrologium of Edessa* (411-412 C.E., called "Le martyrologe de Wright" by Ziadé) refers to the celebration of the festival of the Maccabees on 1 August in Antioch in about the same period. Ziadé argues that the Greek original of the Syriac *martyrologium* dates from 362, which implies that Christians already venerated the Maccabean martyrs in the East when John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianze wrote their homilies on them. Ziadé connects Gregory's *Discourse 15* with the celebration of the "anniversary" of the Maccabean martyrs on 1 August 362, reflected in the Greek original of the *Martyrologium of Edessa* (focusing upon Antioch). Gregory's *Discourse* was, in her view, composed for the celebration on 1 August 362 C.E. at Nazianze.

The beginning of John Chrysostom's first *Homily on the Maccabees* refers to the corpses of the martyrs, which may imply that it was presented at the martyrs' tomb in Antioch

(possibly at the Church of the Maccabees in the Kerateion, mentioned in the *Martyrologium of Edessa*, which, perhaps, replaced a synagogue connected with the Maccabees). Ziadé rejects the hypothesis that John's *Homilies on the Maccabees* were connected with his eight discourses against Judaizers in the Antiochene community. In her opinion, the fact that John turned the Maccabean martyrs into Christian heroes and erased almost every trace of their Jewish origin goes against this hypothesis, but this argument can also be used in support of the hypothesis.

The third part offers a thematic analysis of the primary sources, which is focused on the application of conventional epideictic rhetoric as well as the reinterpretation and recreation of statements and themes from 4 Maccabees. The epideictic rhetoric highlights the physical weakness of the martyrs and embellishes especially the martyrdom of the mother, who is consistently portrayed as an old and weak woman, in line with her image in 4 Maccabees (16:1). In comparison to 2 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees already greatly expands the motif of maternal love (4 Macc 14:11–15:32). It compares the mother with birds and bees who protect their young from intruders (14:14–20; cf. Gregory of Nazianze, *Discourse 15*, PG 35:925.14–21) in order to make the point that the mother is highly admirable because she fully controlled her motherly feelings for her children for the higher cause of Jewish religion. John Chrysostom further elaborates this motif and presents the mother's martyrdom as a triumph of spiritual fire over actual fire (*Homily 2*, PG 50:625.32–46). The mother presents their sons as a second delivery to God, which allows them access into a world that concerns real life. The epilogue of Gregory's *Discourse 15* presents the martyrdom of the mother and her sons as the accomplishment of the mother's motherhood, which leads up to the educational exhortation at the end: the imitation of the seven brothers' sacrifice for Christ (PG 35:929.20–21; 932.36–39).

The athletic imagery of 4 Maccabees and especially the theme of the battle against the emotions is elaborated by both fathers and turned into a moral lesson for daily life. The martyrs' function as models for others becomes apparent in the many references to their exemplary enactment of important virtues such as courage and self-control and their philosophical attitude. Contrary to John Chrysostom, who remains silent about the Jewish origin of the Maccabean martyrs, Gregory of Nazianze considers their Jewish origin and their endurance for the ancestral laws an important motif. Nevertheless, Gregory interprets this endurance from a Christian typological perspective, which implies that the Jewish laws were a gift of Christ and that the martyrs, in fact, died for Christ. Translations of the four primary documents are appended to the volume, which also includes an index of passages.

Ziadé's discussion of 2 and 4 Maccabees as well as the Christian reception of these writings in the second and third centuries C.E. offers a good survey of the relevant

scholarship. An important result of her analysis is that she shows how both fathers made use of 4 Maccabees time and again. They built on rhetorical conventions already used in 4 Maccabees and elaborated many literary motifs from this writing, including the theme of the mother's maternal love for her seven sons. The mother clearly has become the most important martyr of the group in this stage of the reception. Gregory reinterpreted Eleazar as the spiritual father of the seven brothers, which is matched by the seven's spiritual noble birth (*eugeneia*). Ziadé notes that this view builds on 4 Macc 9:6 (201), where the seven brothers refer to Eleazar as their "aged instructor." Gregory may have inspired Eleazar as the seven young martyrs' instructor also on 4 Macc 18:10–19, where the mother recalls that the boys' deceased father taught them the Law and the Prophets.

Ziadé's second section deals with what she calls "the cult of the Maccabees." The only evidence we have for this cult are texts. The application of the literary evidence for a reconstruction of the martyr cults at Antioch, Nazianze, and Constantinople calls for a sophisticated analysis, because the texts are frequently open to more than one interpretation and must be contextualized in plausible ways. One wonders whether the epitaph for the Maccabean martyrs quoted in 4 Macc 17:8–10 can be considered as reliable evidence for a cult of the Maccabees at Antioch (55). The literary context in 4 Macc 17 probably implies that the epitaph is fictitious. In the case of the frequently discussed issue whether Jews already venerated the Maccabean martyrs in Antioch, we should acknowledge that our conclusions must be tentative at best.

The strong point of Ziadé's book is that she demonstrates that there is an important continuity between the early Jewish and the Christian commemorations of the Maccabean martyrs. Many details discussed by her support this continuity. The flipside of her approach is that she does not pay much attention to the discontinuities, radical new interpretations of the Maccabean martyrdoms of which one can hardly imagine that they have evolved from the Jewish passages. Perhaps such discontinuities are missing in the four primary documents discussed by Ziadé, but the reader is left in the dark about this. A comparison of John and Gregory's speeches concerning the Maccabees with contemporary homilies on Christian martyrs (see, e.g., Johan Leemans, Wendy Mayer, Pauline Allen, and Boudewijn Dehandschutter, *Let Us Die That We May Live: Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria [c. AD 350–AD 450]* [London: Routledge, 2003]) might illuminate this point, but this probably calls for another monograph on the Maccabean martyrs. All in all, Ziadé's monograph is a most useful contribution to the study of the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in early Christianity.