

Книги Маккавеев. Перевод с древнегреческого, введение и комментарии Н. В. Брагинской, А. Н. Коваля, А. И. Шмаиной-Великановой; Под общей редакцией Н. В. Брагинской. Иерусалим–Москва: Гешарим – Мосты культуры, 2014. 632 с.

The Books of Maccabees. Translation from Ancient Greek, Introduction, and Commentaries by Nina V. Braginskaya, Andrey N. Koval', Hellenistic Anna I. Shmaina-Velikanova. Ed. by Nina V. Braginskaya. Jerusalem–Moscow: Gesharim–Mosty Kul'tury, 2014. 632 p. (in Russian).

The modest title of this book is somewhat misleading. This is not only a translation with commentary of the best known four (out of, at least, eight<sup>1</sup>) books called «Maccabean» but an encyclopaedia of Jewish Hellenistic culture focused on different historical and hagiographical traditions that refer to «the Maccabees», whatever it could mean. And, indeed, the book looks as the encyclopaedic editions do, being a huge large-format volume with 136 illustrations and several maps. The illustrations provide the history of different «Maccabean» (in any of possible senses of the word) legends in art, both ancient and mediaeval, eastern and western.

Such a volume was produced by the team, where the responsibilities were distributed as following (I enumerate the main sections only): four scholarly introductions to four books of Maccabees (by Nina V. Braginskaya, Anna I. Shmaina-Velikanova; Introduction I is dedicated to the unity of the four books established in the later tradition – thus explaining the *raison d'être* of the present volume; Introduction II to the books 1–2; Introductions III and IV to the books 3 and 4, respectively), Russian translations of the four books (by Braginskaya and the classical scholar and renowned Russian translator of ancient and mediaeval sources, Andrey Nikolaevich Koval', 1962–2014), very detailed commentaries to the texts of the four books (by Braginskaya, Koval', and Shmaina-Velikanova), Appendix I («The Epistles of the Prologue of 2 Mac 1:2–2:18» by Braginskaya; p. 497–504); Appendix II («The Cult of the 'Maccabean Martyrs'» by Braginskaya in collaboration with Shmaina-Velikanova; p. 505–525), Appendix III («The Maccabees in the Russian Tradition» by Varvara A. Romodanovskaya who is a specialist in the Old Russian biblical tradition; p. 526–540), two *Addenda* (added «at the last moment» due to the appearance of new important data, both by Braginskaya): «New Data on the Grave of Mattathias' family» (p. 540–541) and «The Recently Discovered Mosaic from Huqoq» (p. 542–548), *Appendix* (called so in the Russian original) «The Hasmonaeans in the Literature of the Talmudic Sages» (translation of the 1996 Hebrew article by Isaiah M. Gafni; p. 548–628), and chronological tables for the first two Books of Maccabees (by T. A. Mikhaylova-Smirnova, S. V. Smirnov, and Braginskaya; p. 558–565); the maps are prepared by D. Frumin, the illustrations are selected by Braginskaya. A detailed index of the ancient and mediaeval sources (p. 592–628) was prepared by P. N. Lebedev (such an index is still not an ordinary thing in the scholarly publications in Russian). Besides the «general editor» N. V. Braginskaya, the team included four more different «editors», among them the

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<sup>1</sup> The commentators provide a generally satisfying checklist of other (apart from the four books) materials pertinent, in one way or another, to the Maccabean hagiographical dossier in the broadest sense (p. 19). Their description is a bit confused only for the so-called Ethiopian Maccabees book (*Mäqabäyan*), and, therefore, I would like to suggest here a clearer and more correct one. Its plot is completely different from any other «Maccabean» story; the main characters are *five* martyrs who are the sons of a pious Jewish *man* (not woman). The book is still understudied, and the currently authoritative hypothesis that it could be composed in Ethiopia in the 14<sup>th</sup> cent. or later is perhaps not entirely compelling. It would be desirable to state, moreover, that this book is the only Maccabean book of the traditional Ethiopian biblical canon; the late Ethiopic translations of 1–2 Mac (probably, from the Latin Vulgate) are rare in the biblical manuscripts. See Bausi 2007.

«scholarly editor» Mikhail Tuval. The principal responsibility on the scholarly treatment of the Books of Maccabees rests with Braginskaya, shared to a large extent with Shmaina-Velikanova.

The book is certainly worth of appreciation as a remarkable contribution to the modern Russian culture, but this topic is beyond the present review, whose interest is limited to authors' contribution to the international scholarship.

The commentary provides a detailed survey of the previous studies – whose number has been rapidly growing since the beginning of our century – up to and including 2012 (and even 2014 for the Huqoq mosaics which are the first and so far the only known depiction of the Maccabees in the Jewish synagogues). Normally, the commentators have not failed to mention any available scholarly viewpoint on any of the multiple disputed questions, without, however, sacrificing their own ideas. In many cases, they take one or another side in the discussions they follow, thus contributing, with their critical assessment, to the progress of the relevant studies. In general, the commentators' attitudes fit within the recent (post-Qumranian) and now prevailing scholarly paradigm – shared by the present reviewer as well, – on the two major points: 1) the Jewish traditions represented in the four books are considered as fundamentally Jewish, that is, in an unbroken continuity with the earlier Jewish tradition, – and not pagan intrusions into theologically sensitive matters<sup>2</sup>, and 2) as being in a similar continuity with the early Christian traditions, especially the Christian theological conception of martyrdom.

On several occasions, the commentators undertake completely original research. The major case is their treatment of the person of the high priest Alcimus (in the introduction to 1–2 Mac, esp.p. 69–75, and the commentaries to 1–2 Mac). They put forward a new dating for the beginning of his high priesthood: «since 163 certainly and since the end of 164 possibly», that is, «earlier than 1 and 2 Mac introduce him into the action» (p. 71). The anti-Alcimean bias shared by 1–2 Mac with Flavius Josephus led to a distortion, in these sources, of the whole historical picture. Braginskaya and Shmaina-Velikanova argue – convincingly, in my opinion – that the real Alcimus was not a «helleniser» but a sincere Jewish believer whose religious attitude was the same as that of his antagonist Judas Maccabeus. However, he «almost certainly was a collaborationist and an adherent of peace with the [Seleucid] king» (p. 73). This attitude toward the ungodly power was unacceptable to Judas Maccabeus and the authors of 1–2 Mac. Judas and his followers did not rely on the shaky peace concluded by the Jews with Antiochus V Eupator in 163 or 162 BC. Braginskaya and Shmaina-Velikanova go as far as supposing, in the fate of Alcimus, «...a true tragedy of a pious man – an adversary of the continuation of the war with the king when the religious persecutions ceased. In the civil quarrel, he drew on his side the exterior power and has been used by the latter» (p. 163, note to 1 Mac 9:56). This could be true – from a certain viewpoint, at least. Then, our commentators pass to a far-fetched conclusion that the authors of 1–2 Mac «...failed to hold, in their understanding of history, such a dramatism, inconsistency, and tragedy, and [therefore, they] from the painful duality fashioned a symbolic traitor» (p. 74). I doubt that the authors of 1–2 Mac were writing out of their «understanding of history» in any modern sense of the word. They were interested in history – as well as in many other things – as a milieu of divine revelation; their historical views expressed their theology. The collaborationism with aggressive ungodly power was for them unacceptable theologically, even in the period when this power was weakened to the extent of being unable to persecute. In the recent Russian Church history, we have seen the same theological problem with the so-called Sergianism (when the collaboration with «ungodly powers» was, in 1927 and later, a theological problem for some but not for others, even though the two parties were not divided in other articles of faith). Despite this minor disagreement, I consider the image of Alcimus painted by the commentators especially successful. It would be interesting to add, to their survey of the legends on his death (p. 162–163, note to 1 Mac 9:56), a toxicological version that is perhaps the only historical: poisoning with the aconitine – a poison particularly popular in antiquity among the nobility, which one could extract from the monkshood plant (*Aconitum napellus* L.). In this case, the external symptoms would have looked as an otherwise inexplicable combination of the apoplectic insult with vehement pains<sup>3</sup>.

Another particularly interesting instance of original research is the treatment of the recently found mosaics in the synagogue of Huqoq (*Addendum II* by Braginskaya). Quite recently, an archaeological team headed by Jodi Magness has cleaned new parts of the mosaics; the complete mosaic on the floor was first published on-line on September, 9, 2016<sup>4</sup>. The *Addendum II* is now superseded with the new publications

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<sup>2</sup> Cf.p. 62, a polemic note against Martin Hengel's overestimation of the Greek influence on the Jews in religious matters.

<sup>3</sup> Moog, Karenberg 2002.

<sup>4</sup> In the electronic version of the *National Geographic*: Williams 2016. The author of this article translates Jodi Magness' opinion that the mosaic floor combines scenes from Maccabean books with the scene of the entrance of Alexander the Great into Jerusalem. Braginskaya convincingly refutes the identification with Alexander the Great. See, after the book under review, her abstract of an oral communication (Braginskaya 2016) and her paper (Braginskaya forthcoming).

by Braginskaya, but its main ideas concerning the identification of the figures and the conclusions on the origin of the hanukkiah (nine-branch menorah for the Jewish festival of Hanukkah) still hold and have become even better substantiated.

In their treatment of 3 Mac, the commentators are very cautious, leaving open most of the problems of this rather obscure text. Nevertheless, they put forward a guess that 3 Mac could have been written as one more «scroll» (*megillah*, in the sense of a specific short book destined to be read as a whole at an appointed great festival), in addition to the *Five Megillot* of the Hebrew Bible but specific to Alexandria (p. 333). This idea is perfectly fitting with my recent analysis of the liturgical contents of 3 Mac<sup>5</sup>. However, their supposition that this new book would have been written as an Alexandrian alternative *megillah* for an ancient feast prescribed by the Pentateuch, such as the Passover or the Weeks (Pentecost) (p. 333), seems untenable to me. In my analysis I concluded that the great feast at issue was relatively new, being a specific – already not original – form of the Second Temple period New Oil festival (the third pentecost festival after the Weeks).

Dealing with 4 Mac, the commentators join those few researchers who bravely intrude into a «blind spot» of the modern historiography – the perpetual value of the human and especially child (and more specifically, adolescent) sacrifice in the pre-Rabbinic Jewish and Christian traditions. They do not hesitate to treat the purity and other virtues of the Maccabean martyrs in the terms of requirements for the sacrificial animals and understand both their death and that of Christ as a human sacrifice (esp. p. 418, with a discussion – and rejection – of alternative treatments; speaking frankly, I have just straightened their lines of reasoning and slightly displaced the accents – but without any substantial change in the meaning). I would like to add, that the reception or rejection of 4 Mac goes in parallel with the attitude, positive or negative, toward the sacrifice of Jephthah – completely negative in the Rabbinic tradition, but positive already in Heb 11:32 and, then, in the mainstream traditions of Christian East<sup>6</sup>.

The commentators discuss the problem of continuity between the two theologies of sacrifice – that of 4 Mac and the early Christian one. They provide additional arguments for the existence of such continuity, although they feel uneasy due to the lack of direct quotations from 4 Mac in Christian sources (p. 421). Such a feeling seems to me unjustified with the historical reality being a side effect of their scholarly approach, rather philological than hagiographical. Dealing with the traditions related to the cult of martyrs or other saints, we have to look primarily at the cultic practices rather than their secondary epiphenomena such as the hagiographical legends. Therefore, the «quotations» on the level of practices and religious behaviour have the decisive importance, whereas the role of the flexible hagiographical legends is not to be overestimated.

The commentators did not omit a discussion of the possible continuity between the Christian and Jewish dates of the liturgical commemoration of the Maccabean martyrs (p. 514). Their own considerations related to the possible connexion of the Christian August dates with the Jewish fast days *Tish'a be-av* (9 Ab) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement, 10 Tishri) when the Jewish martyrs – but other than the Maccabees – are now commemorated seem to me still too raw (as the commentators themselves perfectly acknowledge), whereas, in the present state of scholarship, are to be taken into account. However, the Jewish legends on the martyrs commemorated in the Rabbinic Judaism on these dates, the so-called Ten Martyrs (*‘Aseret harugey malkut* «the ten killed by the [Roman] kingdom») referred to by the commentators, could be hardly dated earlier than to the fifth century<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, if there was any connexion between them and the cult of the Maccabean martyrs, it was rather an attempt to replace the Maccabean cult with a properly Rabbinic one. There are several fundamental points of disagreement between the Rabbinic and Christian understanding of the martyrdom for the faith. The most obvious is the cult of the holy relics. The Maccabean cult, as our commentators themselves correctly recall, was centred on their burial place near Antioch; very likely, the original shrine beneath the relics was Jewish but, evidently, pre-Rabbinic. The cult of the most famous of the Ten Martyrs, Rabbi Ishmael, contained, on the contrary, a mockery of the Christian veneration of the relics presenting it as a pagan custom<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lourié (forthcoming), where I take into account Braginskaya's and Shmaina-Velikanova's treatment of 3 Mac. See *ibid.* on the relevance, for the understanding of the liturgy and the narrative of 3 Mac, of the Ptolemaic rituals in the months of Payni and Epiphi dedicated to Bastet and Hathor (this topic has so far totally dropped out of scholarly sight – in the book under review as well).

<sup>6</sup> See, for specifically relevant data, Weitzmann 1964; Schroeder 2012. Katell Berthelot provides separately valuable discussions of both ideological transition «[f]rom condemnation of human sacrifices to praise of self-sacrifice, as illustrated by the cases of Jephthah's daughter and of Isaac» (Berthelot 2007: 166–173), and the Maccabean ideology of martyrdom (Berthelot 2006) but does not grasp their interdependence.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Boustán 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Cf., for more details and in the context of Jewish-Christian polemics, Lourié 2014, 445–450.

Concerning the intriguing problem of the names of the seven martyrs in the Byzantine tradition, the commentators limit themselves to referring to the recent paper by Albrecht Berger who tried to resolve the problems with a kind of cavalry raid<sup>9</sup> (p. 517). The commentators quote Berger in the explanation of the names Antonius (in fact, this name oscillates between Antonius and Antoninus) and Markellos as Latin names widespread in the Roman Syria, with a possible reminiscence of the famous bishop of Apamea Markellos (r. 375, martyred before 391).

According to Berger, «[a]ll in all the choice of these names points to their being ascribed to the seven brothers when their cult was still concentrated in Antioch and Syria»<sup>10</sup>. I do not think so. The names of Antonius/Antoninus and Markellos, taken together, point to a Palestinian intermediary. These are the names of Palestinian martyrs (the name of Antonius/Antoninus is oscillating in the same manner in all the relevant dossiers). They appear together in the later hagiographical dossier of the Martyr Antonina of Nicaea (1 March); it is said there that they were decapitated in Palestine. In genuine Palestinian documents, they appear within different groups of martyrs but near each other in the liturgical calendar. Thus, Antonius/Antoninus is commemorated on 13 November within the group known from Eusebius of Caesarea's *On the Martyrs of Palestine* IX, 5–6 (where his name is Antonius). Markellos is commemorated within another group of Palestinian martyrs on 15 November (16 November in some other synaxaria). On the same day, 15 November, falls the Byzantine feast day of Gurias, Samonas, and Abib, the famous Syrian martyrs whose names are also used for the Maccabean martyrs. Thus, the names of Antonius/Antoninus and Markellos go back to the same source, the commemorations near 15 November. These names are a hallmark of a Palestinian tradition preserved in Constantinople but disappeared in Palestine, as it would have easily happened in the turbulent period from about 449 to 553.

The length of the present review is by itself a witness of a thought-provoking nature of the work. Of course, the book is not without some accidental shortcomings<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, we have to congratulate the authors on this great achievement and the readers on a precious gift they received.

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<sup>9</sup> Berger 2012, 114–115. Cf. «Resolving the question of their [names'] origins and meaning does not seem difficult» (*ibid.*, p. 115). Pointing out the unusual names Eusebonas and Abibion (instead of their usual counterparts Eusebius and Abib) in the *History of the Monks* by Theodoretos of Kyrros is certainly a merit of Berger. This is not, however, a proof that the names of the respective holy monks were borrowed there for our martyrs; there could have been a common source (tradition). Anyway, the name of the eldest son Abib (in this normal form but in Syriac; therefore, Habib) appeared in the earliest Syriac sources where all other brothers are still unnamed: the anonymous and undated homily ed. by Bensly 1895, 104–115 (Syriac pagination) and XXV–XLIV (translation) (*BHSE* 968), and, albeit indirectly, Jacobus of Sarug's (ca 449–521) *Memra on Habib the Deacon* (historical martyr, d. 322) (*BHSE* 229), where his mother is called «Shamuna the Second», «since, had seven been burned instead of one, she had been well content». The majority of the hagiographical materials dedicated to the Maccabees in Syriac is still unpublished (including two *memre* by Jacob of Sarug), whereas they could be especially relevant for establishing the early history of the Christian cult(s) of the Maccabean martyrs. The name Eusebonas is derived from a rare verb εὐσεβέω that appears continuously in the relevant chapters of 4 Mac (10 and 11) but never in 2 Mac; cf., 4 Mac 11:5, where this verb is put into the mouth of the fifth son, thus exactly matching the ordinal number of the name Eusebonas in the Byzantine list. Therefore, this name could have been inspired with the text of 4 Mac directly, in the same manner as the name of another brother Eleazar.

<sup>10</sup> Berger 2012, 115.

<sup>11</sup> Somewhat annoying is the authors' manner to mention repeatedly the pseudo-problem of canonicity of these books, which is purely theological and disappears immediately once one oversteps the borders of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. At one place, they themselves state that the notion of canonicity (sc., in the late western sense) is inapplicable to the Syrian and Armenian Churches (p. 17), but, in other places, they «exclude» these books, especially 4 Mac, from biblical canons, even when discussing their presence in the main codices of the Septuagint (p. 4, 17, 23), or invent a section of «non-canonical biblical books» in «the Orthodox Bibles» that they define as «those that reached us in Greek and are not contained in the Tanah» (p. 329). To avoid such confusions – between modern western theological problems and actual facts from the ancient and mediaeval history of ideas, – I would suggest using the recent term «open canon», which is equally applicable to the early Christian, Byzantine, and other Eastern/Oriental traditions. The difference between «open» and «closed» canons has been aptly grasped by Bruce Metzger who discerned between «a collection of authoritative books» (= open canon) and «an authoritative collection of books» (= closed canon); s. Metzger 1987, 283. Within a larger framework, see the same approach in Ulrich 2002, who also quotes Metzger (p. 30). On p. 329, n. 2, Braginskaya and Shmaina-Velikanova correctly referred

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to the presence of 1–3 Mac in the list of *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, 47, 85, but elsewhere (p. 406) wrote that 4 Mac is also included into the list of «*Apostolic Constitutions*, 85» (Nr 85 alone is sufficient for the reference to another recension of these *Apostolic Canons*, which is outside the *Apostolic Constitutions*; in the index, p. 627, the reference to this place is correct). In fact, for the recension of canon 85 outside the *Apostolic Constitutions*, even the mention of 1–3 Mac is not genuine (appeared in some later Greek manuscripts only and the Latin version; the original text does not mention the Maccabees at all: s. critical ed. in Joannou 1962, 51). The authors' date of the Council of Florence is strange: 1439–1442 (p. 17), instead of either 1438–1439 or 1438–1445 (the latter includes the union with the Armenians). Finally, I hope that Sigrid Peterson will not reproach the authors too much for referring to her in the masculine (p. 19, 20).