



FAITH & REASON

THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE

Spring 2004 | Vol. XXIX, No. 1

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. BASIL THE PRIEST

Translated from an Anonymous Greek Text, with an Introduction by
Edward Strickland

INTRODUCTION



THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. BASIL THE PRIEST PRESENTS THE PRIEST-MARTYR BASIL, A true priest of Christ trying to save the little flock that he could assemble in the “cruel times that have fallen” in mid-fourth century Ancyra. This flock was assembled from those who would hear him as he went about the city of Ancyra and engaged in controversy with heretic and pagan alike. He seems to have been a native of the city of Ancyra, the metropolis of Galatia Prima, a prosperous city that lay along the east-west trade route. It was as Julian the Apostate was heading to Antioch of Syria in the early summer of 362 that St. Basil had the final confrontation that led to his martyrdom.

St. Basil describes his apostolate succinctly: expose error, preserve the Faith of the Fathers integrally, and help the faithful to avoid following apostates to damnation. He himself seems to have been engaged in theological controversy with the Arians before Julian’s accession. If the translator correctly interprets *haireskbelias* (note 4), the original reading of the MS *Vaticanus* 655 in § 1, St. Basil is, then, noting how the rise or growth of heresy leads to the success of apostasy; it was through St. Basil’s perseverance “in the Faith and Tradition of the Fathers” that “he kept the Faith and his confession of God unbroken” in a time of persecution. The focus of the *Martyrion*, however, is how St. Basil’s fifteen-month long fight against state-sponsored apostasy culminated in his death.

The anonymous author of the *Martyrion* writes in the name of the Church in Ancyra, it seems. He writes to testify to the enduring effectiveness that St. Basil’s sacrifice has had; he was the Ancyrans’ “enduring support.” The storm of persecution during Julian’s abortive pagan renaissance had passed, but it was not the end of their problems. Heresy remained, and the example of St. Basil was still to be followed: Ancyrans, and all the orthodox, must still persevere, like him, in keeping the Faith completely. One must note that such a detail would seem to indicate that the state of orthodoxy was not so secure in Ancyra at the time of writing. One may, then, reasonably assume a late fourth-century date of composition from the author’s precise details that come from a fresh memory of the events, the apparent use of this text as the source for Sozomen’s notice about St. Basil, and the fact that orthodoxy at that time had not definitively triumphed.

Among the very touching features of the *Martyrion*, note St. Basil’s prayers and declarations, especially to the apostate bishop Pegasios; one can see that even after having left the Church, an apostate’s heart can be touched. The meaning of the exchange between the two in § 10 and the effect it had on Pegasios at the end of § 11 is illuminated

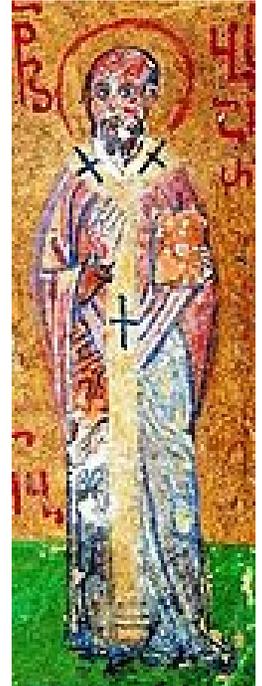
by a single well-chosen word: *lypoumenos*. The author uses exactly the same word that St. Matthew does when speaking of the rich young man who turned away from Our Lord. Pegasios' pain, the extreme reaction by Elpidios and Asklepios, and St. Basil's new bout of torture are more comprehensible not as revenge simply for offensive speech, but because St. Basil hit his mark. He touched Pegasios' heart, but still he did not convert. While he certainly piqued others figuring in the account, they seemed to have been less perceptibly impacted by the action of grace to repent.

St. Basil's attitude with Julian, the prefect Saturninus, and the comes Frumentinus was a resolute protest of God's rights over His Creation and the rights of His Church. Note worthy is the repeated warning that Julian had forfeited his divine sanction to rule by his apostasy and that he could expect to be removed, in consequence. The author of the *Martyrion* takes pains to note for his readers that St. Basil did not speak as a seditionist, nor were his denunciations of the evil government policies of Julian a call to overthrow him. St. Basil merely named the ineluctable consequences for those who oppose God.

A small riddle remains: why was St. Basil's feast day placed on 22 March instead of the anniversary of his martyrdom (29 June 362)? We do not know what the date of celebration was in Ancyra but refer now to the Greek calendar, whose date is, as well, the one used in the *Roman Martyrology*. Considering that the celebration of St. Basil's feast on 29 June would likely be occulted by the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, one wonders if the date chosen is not capricious. Perhaps this was the anniversary of some other event connected with his cult, the dedication of a church with his name or the translation of his relics. If the feast date originated in Ancyra, since that city lay along the pilgrim route to Jerusalem, it could have been a suitable date to allow one of the hallowed martyrs to be celebrated before pilgrims continued to the Holy Land for Easter. If one calculates that the beginnings of St. Basil's resistance to Julian is dated to fifteen months before the saint's martyrdom, March 22 is just about the time when his efforts may have begun.

In the hopes of proposing an explanation for a change of date for the Greek calendar related to the facts that the author of the *Martyrion* thought it worthwhile to record, one may do well to consider two points. David Woods, in his article noted below on the historical authenticity of this account, conjectures that the rites of Adonis occurred at Julian's advent to Ancyra. Adonis is to be identified with Attis, the consort of the *Magna Mater*, i.e. Hectate, the goddess honored by the procession welcoming the emperor in § 13. The Roman date for the mysteries of the *Magna Mater* and Attis took place in late March. If there is an eastern analogue, as one suspects there must be, for the Roman ritual cycle (which could inform the choice of an alternate date for Basil's feast day), it is significant that 22 March was the day on which Attis died in the mysteries. Referring to the date for the feast on the Greek calendar rather than the local observance in Ancyra, since the calendar of the ritual of Attis and the *Magna Mater* in Ancyra seems to be at a different time according to the *Martyrion*, if the date of Basil's feast was transferred from the anniversary of his martyrdom, it seems appropriate that the celebration should be connected with a date when died the false god whose cult was associated with his homeland, Anatolia, and which St. Basil hoped "God who is in heaven ... would disperse ... scatter and destroy."

St. Basil evokes St. Elias by his ironic reference to God as "God of the High Places" and suggests what was in his heart as he went to martyrdom. He was the holocaust in the ordeal between the two religions. His patient, resolute endurance was the miracle to prove the truth of the Faith. The meaning, then, for the date of his feast is the triumph of God over paganism, a grace granted in part because of the shedding of St. Basil's blood.



THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. BASIL THE PRIEST¹

1. Basil used to catechize everyone with the truth about belief in Christ and diverted them from the way of the Devil “and all his works,” saying, “A cruel time has befallen us, and those who wage war on behalf of the Devil are cunning. For, he has servants’ clothed in sheepskins; they are ravaging wolves within the sheepfold who prowl about to prey upon souls through their fear of not living in safety. At the appointed time their end will be revealed to all. My resolve is to expound the salvation that comes from belief in God and in His Christ, to set out the error of the lawless who gave up the living God who lives forever, of those who took refuge with blind, deaf, dumb idols, and who sought an inheritance that, as a result of what they have done, is leading them to unquenchable flames of fire. Consequently, let all of us who zealously keep the mysteries of Christ, who revere the chorus-master of the Faith, who keep our treasure un plundered in pure treasure-rooms of the soul, trample under foot what is connected with the Devil’s dance of errors. Let us flee his abominable sophistry,⁴ since we have Christ, who gives eternal rewards, as our help.”²⁵

2. This is what he used to do every day as he went around the city and supported everyone in keeping the Faith integrally and avoiding the punishment dealt out by the evil men who attacked them. Basil was forbidden by Eudoxios, Makarios, Eugenios,⁶ and many others from attending the synod being held in Constantinople; for he belonged to the pious,⁷ and he kept the Faith with scrupulous perfection. He addressed the two hundred thirty bishops at the synod in Palestine, and he considered the holy men, who loved God, as his teachers;⁸ for he was among those who were under judgment in the palace.⁹ His life was one act of worship of God,¹⁰ he was an unreserved herald of the doctrine of the Faith, and he converted many from error. In this critical moment that caused¹¹ every Christian soul to sink, he did not reply to everyone who was entrusted with authority like a seditionist, he was beloved by all on account of the truth, and he made many people Christians. He persevered in the Faith and the tradition¹² of the Fathers; he kept the Faith and his confession of God unbroken.

3. Julian became an apostate from the Faith in

God; when he was emperor, a subversion of souls that led to perdition occurred. For, he published¹³ bad decrees to sacrifice to the deaf, unfeeling, dumb idols; Basil prevailed against his decree in the districts of Galatia for a year and three months [after Julian’s accession].¹⁴ They scrupulously fulfilled his vain stratagem, but in Ancyra the sainted Basil blessed God and said, “O Christ, Savior of the world, O unquenchable lamp, O treasury of eternal riches, O Thou who dispersed the darkness at the command” of the Father, O Thou who fashioned the universe according to Thy Father’s will, behold with Thy

holy and awful gaze, disperse the polluted rites of those who oppose Thy truth, and snare them in their own desire, crush them with their own confused¹⁶ thought, let them not ensnare the soul that perseveres for Thee, the God who lives forever.”

4. When those who were completing the rites of the demons heard the sainted Basil, they raged furiously against him; one of them named Makarios rushed¹⁷ at him and seized him, saying, “Who are you to go around upsetting everyone and disrupting the rites in honor of the gods that the emperor did right to command?” Basil said, “God will stop your mouth, servant¹⁸ of the devil; for it will not be I who disperse your rites, but the God who is in heaven. He Himself with His invisible power will scatter it. He who abolished the error of idols through Our Savior Jesus Christ will Himself now scatter and destroy your whole plot in order that, since you persist in your insipid nonsense,¹⁹ you be damned and inherit the death deserved by disobedience that has been prepared for you.”

5. The lawless, then, were enraged against him and brought him before the prefect, Saturninus,²⁰ saying, “Is this man liable to be charged?²¹ Prefect, he upsets our city and is a deceiver causing great risk²² for many, and now he comes with the intention of overturning our altars. He speaks evil and blasphemes the Emperor.” Saturninus said, “Tell me, who are you to have such effrontery?” Basil said, “I am something better than all others; I am a Christian.” Saturninus said, “Why, then, since you are a Christian, do you not do what Christians do?” Basil said, “Well said, Governor, for the deeds of a Christian

“Basil said, ‘God will stop your mouth, servant¹⁸ of the devil; for it will not be I who disperse your rites, but the God who is in heaven.’”

should be manifest to all; on this point you have said the truth.” Saturninus said, “Why, then do you upset our whole city, why do you blaspheme the Emperor, why do you proclaim to everyone that what has occurred is a transgression against what is good?” Basil said, “I do not blaspheme the Emperor nor the rites that have been celebrated according to his order. But God Almighty, the God who dwells in heaven, can; and our Fathers were the worthy followers of His religion. They worshiped Him everywhere with a pure heart. He Himself can bring to an end the massive number of transgressions that you have committed.”

6. Saturninus said, “So, you do not think that these rites that our Emperor has established are pleasing worship?” Basil said, “How can they be pleasing worship, Prefect? They have flesh hanging from people’s mouths worse than any mad dog; then the people go around chewing,²³ launch into howling at the altars of the demon, place their own flesh upon them, and sprinkle their own blood around them.²⁴ How can things like these be pure?” Saturninus said, “Cease speaking nonsense and obey the king.”²⁵ Basil said, “I have long since obeyed the King of heaven, and I am not abandoning the Faith in Him.” Saturninus said, “What sort of ‘King of heaven’ is this in whom you believe?” Basil said, “He who is seated in heaven and sees everything; for your king is earthly and shortly will fall into the hands of the great King - he is only a man, after all.”



Gold Coin of Julian the Apostate, issued from 361-363 A.D.

7. When he heard these words the prefect became apoplectic and ordered him to be strung up and scraped. As the blessed man was being strung up, he prayed as follows, “I thank Thee, O Lord God of the ages, since Thou hast made me worthy through these tortures to see the way of life, in order that, once I have traversed it, I may see the inheritance that Thou hast promised.” As he was being scraped, the prefect said, “What do you need, Basil; have you acknowledged that the Emperor can avenge himself at once against those who do not obey him? Obey him, then, since you have experienced the woes that he can inflict.” Basil said, “In contrast

with you who are estranged from hope in Christ, as I have told you, I believe in the true King; I cannot be changed.” Since the interrogators²⁶ were ineffectual, he ordered the torturers to stop and said to Basil, “Obey me; sacrifice.” Basil said, “I have never sacrificed to your foolish gods, have I?” I gain nothing by sacrificing to them;²⁷ they damn the souls who serve them.”

8. The prefect ordered him to be taken away to the prison. As the blessed was being taken away, a filthy pagan named Felix²⁸ came up to him and said, “Basil, what is it that you do want to get? Just save yourself; become a friend of the gods. Enjoy the Emperor’s promises - if you refuse, you will be punished, since you are already judged.” **Basil said, “Be gone, you wicked, unclean creature. You are estranged from the true promises. Since you are in darkness, how can you look at the truth; how can you be made to see the darkness in which you are engulfed?”** Saying this, he left, and entered the prison.

9. The prefect referred the case of the sainted Basil to Emperor Julian. When Julian heard it, he sent Elpidios, who taught a doctrine of damnation,²⁹ and Pegasios, both of whom had lapsed and lost their treasure in heaven.³⁰ As they went, in Nicomedia they found a priest of Asklepios, himself named Asklepios.³¹ They took him along, and the three men, who were generals in the Devil’s war,³² came to Ancyra. As soon as they stopped there, they asked for St. Basil. They learned that he was in prison and that he sang hymns and glorified God both night and day.

10. And so, the next day Pegasios, who had become an apostate, came out at the prison and said to him, “Greetings,³³ Basil.” Basil said, “There is no rejoicing for you, sinner, robber of the truth: you once shared water from the Source,³⁴ who is Christ; now you are hateful to Christ. You once received from the Table of Christ; now you share from the table of demons. You once were a guide of the light, now you are an heir³⁵ of darkness; you once were a teacher of the truth, now you are a guide in damnation. You once celebrated feasts with the Saints; now you join in the dance with the host of demons. You were once a guide to help those who wandered in darkness; now you are buried in darkness. How did you come to destroy your hopes? How were you despoiled of what you had stored up? What must you do when the Lord

examines you?”

11. When he had said these words, he prayed as follows, “Glory be to Thee, O God, who art professed by Thy servants, who enlighten those who whole-heartedly love Thy Godhead, who honor those who hope in Thee, who bring shame upon those who hate Thy commandments, who promise salvation to those who are far from Thee, who art glorified by those who are in heaven, and art worshiped on earth: O God of the high places,³⁶ be pleased to melt away from the soul of Thy servant every bond of the Devil, in order that I may escape him who hates the good and overcome the power of those who threaten us.” When Pegasios heard this, he departed from the prison grieving,³⁷ and he went to his companions and reported what Basil had said. They were enraged on account of Pegasios’ plight. They went to the prefect and reported what³⁸ they had heard from Pegasios.

12. And so, since the prefect wished to allay Pegasios’ pain, he ordered that the righteous Basil be brought before him. So he came and stood before the tribunal; he made the sign of the Cross and said to the prefect, “Do what you will.” When Elpidios heard that he was so bold and spoke so frankly, he said to the prefect, “This filthy creature has gone completely out of his mind. Even now if he is tortured and won over, he has won his being spared; in the opposite case, hold him over for trial by the Emperor.” And so the prefect was himself angry, in turn, and ordered him to be strung up and racked with thongs in order that, he said, “for fear of enduring this punishment, he be persuaded to sacrifice.” **Basil said, “Do what you will, you unholy man; you have with you those who wage war with the power of the Enemy;³⁹ neither you nor your advisers will have any profit on my account at all. I have Christ on my side to help me.”** Saturninus said, “Take heavy irons and place them around his neck and hands; that is how he will be presented to the Emperor. For now, take him off to the prison.”

13. After a few days had passed, it happened that the Emperor was marching into Anatolia; when he entered Ancyra, the servitors of the Devil met him⁴⁰ ... with the idol of Hecate that they brought with them. When he entered the palace, he called the false priests⁴¹ of the idols and gave them money. That day, since games were ordered, Elpidios presented the circumstances of the

sainted Basil’s case to the Emperor. After he got up from watching the games, he ordered him to be brought to the palace. St. Basil came with a cheerful expression on his face, and Julian said to him, “What is your name?” Basil said, “As you ask, Emperor, I tell you who I am: the name ‘Christian’ comes first, Christ’s name is eternal. He it is who penetrates the minds of men. My second name is Basil; this is what I am called by men. And so, if we should keep Christ’s name without stain, on the Day of judgment we will receive⁴² the reward of immortality from Him.”



14. Julian said, “Do not be deceived, Basil, for do I not know well those things that you regard as mysteries: you believe in that man who was put to death under Pilate the procurator.” Basil said, “I shall not be deceived indeed, Emperor, for, did you not yourself become an apostate and reject the Kingdom of God? Yet, it is based on the Kingdom of God that I believe in Christ—the Christ whom you rashly rejected after he gave you imperial power. I believe He will, in turn, take your power away from you in order that you know who the God whom you abandoned is.” Julian said, “You are mad, and I am not doing your will, you maniac.” Basil said, “You do not remember His aid, nor do you revere His holy sacrifice by which you were saved; you do not keep His law that so often in the past you used to proclaim with your own mouth; but neither does Christ the great King remember you. Rather, your kingship is temporary, you will be driven from it, and will die in very great pain; your body will go unburied.”

15. Julian said, “For my part, you unholy man, I was willing to release you, but, since you have repeatedly been so impudent, have not obeyed⁴³ me, and have greatly outraged me besides, it is for that reason that my power orders that as your reward you spend a week as your skin is cut to ribbons off of your body.” Thereupon, he ordered Frumentinus, the *comes scutariorum*,⁴⁴ to flay⁴⁵ him. As the blessed was being flayed and enduring the savage torture, he said to the captain, “I would like to speak with the Emperor now and take my leave of him.”⁴⁶ The captain was beside himself with joy, since he thought he wanted to sacrifice. He came before the Emperor and declared this to him, saying, “My lord Emperor, Basil is unable to bear the torture that has been imposed. He

wishes to be presented before your might.”⁷⁴⁷

16. When he heard this he went out to the temple of Asklepios and gave orders that the just man be brought to him there. And so, Basil went out and said to Julian, “Where are your priests and the soothsayers who attend you, Emperor?” Did they tell you the whole reason⁴⁸ that I am speaking with you?” Julian said, “I think that, since you are intelligent, you have changed your mind; it is because you desire to sit at banquet with us and because you have yourself, moreover, come to recognize the gods.” Basil said, “No, it is so that you know that those whom you call gods are nothing, Emperor; for idols are deaf, blind things that lead to hell those who believe in them.” And when he finished saying this, he took one of the strips of flesh that had been cut from⁴⁹ his

“Make known to that tyrant, Julian whom you serve all that the God whom he forsook can do, make known to him that he damned his soul, since he has been led into error by the Devil. He did not remember how He rescued him from death.”

Emperor was angry with him on account of the outrage that Basil had committed against him. The captain was angry with the blessed and gave careful thought to what kind of torture would be quicker for killing him. He went into the praetorium and sat at the tribunal; he unlawfully gave orders that he be flayed beyond the daily round that was already extremely grisly. The result was that the arrangement of his internal organs became visible. As the blessed was being tortured, he prayed to the Lord as follows, saying: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord God, hope of Christians, who support the fallen and restore those who have been overthrown, who ransom from perdition those who hope in Thee, who correct our offences, who love the good, art merciful, who have pity and art long-suffering. From Thy holy glory look and see; grant me to finish my course with faith, to persevere

body and threw it at Julian’s face. “Here, Julian, this will be your food there; for me to live is Christ; to die is gain. Christ is my aid; I believe in Him. I am martyred on account of Him.” The Christians blessed the saint on account of his confession of Christ.

17. And so, the captain left in shame, for he knew that the

in the Faith of our Fathers, and to be found worthy of Thy eternal kingdom which is free of all corruption.”

18. Since it was now evening, the captain ordered him to be thrown into prison. And so, at daybreak Julian left for Antioch and did not receive the captain in audience. Therefore, the captain was even more enraged on account of the Emperor’s [displeasure] and ordered that the righteous Basil be taken to the public prison. As he was going, he said to him, “Well, you lunatic, are you going to sacrifice as the Emperor ordered or not? Will you acquiesce? If you do not obey us, you will be punished with death.” Basil said, “You foolish, wicked man, do you not know how many strips you cut off of my back yesterday; everyone who saw it took pity and lamented over the lawless way that you have tortured me. And now, since Christ wills it, I have stayed sound, while you have been netted by the devil, you inhuman savage. Make known to that tyrant, Julian whom you serve all that the God whom he forsook can do, make known to him that he damned his soul, since he has been led into error by the Devil. He did not remember how He rescued him from death, how through the intercession of His holy Christ-bearing saints He hid him in the holy, wondrous sanctuary of the holy Church, whom he has forgotten, from whom he drifted away, and whom he persecuted. I believe in my Christ, I believe that Julian will be accused by her, I believe that she, by doing what befits her, will requite him justly for what he has done, and he will dissipate himself by his tyranny.”

19. Frumentinus⁵⁰ said, “You are a deranged maniac; for the master of the world, the unconquered Julian, was patient with you, as he declared. Since he is an extremely philanthropic man, he exhorted you to join in our festival and partake of the meat and frankincense that we prepared, but you refused to obey. That was not enough: you have committed numerous outrages; in the first place you have done so against the Emperor, in the second against myself at your sentencing. I shall requite you with correspondingly intense torture; by means of it I will put a quick end to your life, you miscreant. I have already given the order for sharp spikes to be heated white-hot and run through your guts, you maniac.” Basil said, “I was not afraid of your tyrant in person - but are you unaware of that? - and you think that you are going to make me afraid with these words of yours?”

20. And so, the captain became angry at St. Basil’s resilience he order the spikes to be shapen and fired up.

After they were heated, he ordered his back to be stabbed with them. The blessed was lying on the ground being tortured and prayed to the Lord in a loud voice, saying, “O Christ my light, O Jesus my hope, O genial harbor of those buffeted by storms, I give Thee thanks, O Lord God of my Fathers, because Thou hast delivered my soul from the pits of hell. Maintain for me Thy name that cannot be denied, in order that I may gain the victory, complete the course to Thee, and be an heir to an eternal reward, in accord with the promises Thou hast made to my Fathers, through Thy great High Priest, Our Lord

Jesus Christ. Through Him receive my soul in peace, since I have persevered in confessing this truth: Thou art merciful and patient, rich in mercy and live eternally unto the ages of ages. Amen.” And when the blessed Basil finished his prayer, and, although pierced with spikes, like one reposing in a pleasant sleep, he gave up the ghost. Blessed Basil died in confession of the Faith and was martyred under Julian the Apostate on 29 June. His martyrdom is a support for all of us who believe in Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom to Thee be glory and power unto the ages of ages. Amen.



NOTES

1 The Greek text on which the translation is based is a transcription of MS *Vaticanus* 655, f. 382, as given in the *Acta Sanctorum* for March 22, pp. *13-*15.

2 *hoi tou diabolou stratēgoi*. The term *stratēgos* can mean equally a general, a *comes*, praetor, or other officer of imperial administration. The more generic rendering given here fits the context without excluding a more pointed allusion to the weight of the Empire's might that St. Basil was to confront. The Adversary (*diabolos*) can equally be Satan or his servant, Emperor Julian.

3 *diakonous*. Possibly these are Arians or apostates. St. Basil has seemingly employed a double entendre. This term, of course, names sacred ministers of the Church: the immediate context, i.e., apostasy among the faithful and St. Basil's exhortations to keep the Faith, prepare the reader for what is to come in this account, Christian clergy who apostatized. Is one to see from the terms used here that the author of the *Martyrion* assigns dual responsibility for the dilemma of the Church in Ancyra: the government for promoting apostasy and service of pagan gods, men in the Church for promoting heresy and undercutting through their initial act of infidelity the resistance that should have met this program?

4 The Bollandists remark that the MS here reads *haireskhelias*, which they have corrected to *hereskhelias*. It would be significant if the original word could be understood as “supports of heresy.” If that reading is valid, then one supposes that the author asserts a linkage between heresy and apostasy.

5 St. Basil here alludes to effects that Julian's pagan renaissance had in Ancyra. The dance metaphor suggests a specific festival in Ancyra, perhaps the very one that is mentioned in § 13. D. Woods, “The Martyrdom of the Priest Basil of Ancyra,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 31, identifies the feast occurring at Julian's advent as one associated with the cult of Adonis (i.e., Attis), the consort of the Magna Mater. The mention of rewards evokes the emperor's distribution of *largitio* (cf. § 13). Acknowledging the likelihood of the Bollandists' correction here to read *hereskhelias*, is there also to be envisioned some kind of disputation, whose assertions in favor of paganism are “abominable sophistry”?

6 Is this a Christian, perhaps the deacon of the same name who defended bishop Marcellus of Ancyra to St. Athanasius?

7 *tôn eulabon* - a synonym for the orthodox, it seems.

8 Woods signals that this is one of the passages that were misrepresented in the Latin *Acta*. The reference is, he writes, an obscure allusion to Acacius of Caesarea and not a council. See Woods, 39, n.41. It seems difficult not to read the Greek text as a reference to a council, known or not: *houtos oun, epi tês Palaistinçs kai epi diakosiôn triakonta Episkopôn eparrhêsiasato, ekhôn didaskalous hosious andras, tous erastas tou Kuriou*. Are these “lovers of God” monastic or identical with the bishops of the synod? In any event, it seems that the timeframe of this section

need not be restricted to the fifteen-month period from Julian's assumption of the title Augustus until the death of St. Basil.

9 He was either already under sentence or part of a list of notorious suspects on account of his opposition to Arianism or paganism, it seems.

10 Understanding *haploô* in the sense of making a prostration. It may easily mean "open," and, in consequence, the sentence may mean that his life was open to God, that is, he was in a state of docility to the direction of Providence.

11 Reading *sunisantos* for *suniasantos*. While reluctant to alter the text as given in the *Acta sanctorum*, it seems necessary here and elsewhere in the *Martyrion*, owing to small errors in transcription or typesetting, one must assume. There are a number of words in the text with incongruous meanings, if even words at all, that would leave sections with nonsensical content. On the strength of that and in the absence of a better edition to consult, the translator has changed the text slightly as needed and has noted the changes.

12 Reading *paradosei* for *paradôsei*.

13 Reading *ekthemenos* for *eathemenos*.

14 Woods, 36-37, remarks that the chronology is precise, if one dates from Julian's usurpation of the title Augustus in the spring of 361.

15 Reading *keleusmati* for *keneusmati*.

16 Reading *aneurôi* as a synonym for *anarthrôi*.

17 Reading *eispêdêsas* for *eipêdêsas*.

18 See note 2. Is Makarios, then, an apostate Christian deacon, or is one to understand by the term an officiant of Julian's reorganized paganism that aped the hierarchy of the Church? Woods, 39 n. 33, remarks that he is "a person of no consequence, whose memory we would not expect to find preserved by our historical resources."

19 *atoniâi*.

20 Both Woods, 32; and C. Foss, "Late Antique and Byzantine Ankara," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31(1977): 41, identify this Saturninus as the *praefectus praetorio Orientis*, Saturninius Secundus Salutius, whom Julian appointed to that office in 361.

21 In Greek *houtos* names the opponent in a legal proceeding, s.v. in Liddell-Scott.

22 *kubeuôn*. Literally, "playing dice." St. Basil is being accused of sedition, it seems.

23 Reading *emasônto* for *emasônto*.

24 Is this and the reference to an image of Hecate in § 13 to make us think of the mutilations associated with the Anatolian worship of Kybele in her guise as *Magna Mater*? Unconnected with this question, the Bollandists remark that the text lacks something to make complete sense and propose an addition in their endnotes that the translator has not incorporated. The text here seems sufficiently intelligible as it stands.

25 In the following interchange the emperor and God are named by the same Greek word, *basileus*. In order not to obscure completely St. Basil's assertion that it is God who is the true ruler over His creation, the translator here departs from the convention used elsewhere in the *Martyrion* and renders *basileus* as "king" when referring to the emperor as well.

26 *kouestionariôn* - a Latinism. *Quaestionarius* is the title of a military officer charged with interrogating, and consequently, torturing prisoners.

27 The Bollandists remark that the MS reads *periômai*, which they have expanded to *peripoioumai*. The question of Felix is, then, a follow-up to Basil's declaration. The editor's second emendation of *apollontôn* to read *apol-louse* (*sic!* he must have meant *apollousi*) has not been followed in the text that the Bollandists publish. It would make the text easier to read, but would change the translation little.

28 Most likely the *comes sacrorum largitionum* whom Julian appointed in March 362, Woods, 33.

29 Reading *apôleias* for *apoleias*.

30 Woods, 33, suggests that this rather prolix reference to their apostasy is not mere verbosity but an oblique indication of the new position that Elpidios had obtained: *comes rei privatae*.

31 Woods, 34, identifies him with the Cynic philosopher Asclepiades.

32 See note 2. Here and in subsequent references, the author of the *Martyrion* uses terminology that suggests accurately that the immediate instigator of the persecution was Julian in league with other apostate Christians, but

the ultimate author was the Devil.

33 *khairois*, literally, “rejoice.”

34 *pégēs* - St. Basil seems to make a small pun at the expense of Pegasios, whose name, in virtue of a pious folk etymology, he may be taking to mean one belonging to the Source.

35 *kléronomos* evokes *klēros*, the office of the clergy. The context indicates very strongly that Pegasios is a renegade priest. Woods, 34, identifies him with the bishop of Ilion, now become pagan priest, whom Julian had met in 354 on his passage west to the court in Milan.

36 St. Basil is, perhaps, being ironic with Pegasios: *ho Theos tōn hupsōmatōn* sounds extremely like the “gods of the high places” of the pagans found in Scripture.

37 Cf. Mt 19.22.

38 Reading *ha* for *han*.

39 *enantias*, “belonging to the opponent,” synonymous here with “diabolical.”

40 The Bollandists indicate a small lacuna here; the text is mutilated so slightly and without damaging the overall sense that they felt it unnecessary to conjecture what was missing.

41 *miereis*, i.e., *mē hiereis*, as the Bollandists piously observe, not priests at all. The word is equally applicable to heretics, like the Manichaeans, whose leaders Peter of Sicily names in the same way.

42 Reading *komizometha* for *komēzometha*.

43 Reading *epeisthēis* for *epei thēis*.

44 Not the captain of a detail of flayers, as the text reads in its current form, but the head of the imperial bodyguards. The Bollandists question both the orthography of the officer’s name and unit designation. They suggest that because of features of orthography in the Middle Ages, beta and mu were confounded. It had been conjectured that the name Frubetinus (or, as later in the text, Frubentinus) were misspellings for Frumentinus. As to his unit, *scutariorum* (shield-guards) would be easier to believe than the *cutariorum* (flayers) that appears in the text. The Bollandists suggest also that this title *comes* (translated captain throughout) is incongruous for an officer commanding a unit engaged in such a savage and vile task. Woods, 35-36, identifies him as the *comes domesticorum*, the commander of the emperor’s bodyguards, Dagalaifus, to whom reference is made here by his otherwise unknown *praenomen*. Nearly two generations later St. Nilus of Ancyra (fl. 390/430) sent a letter, ep. IV 21, to a person also named Dagalaifus, whom one assumes is an Ancyran. Perhaps he is a son or grandson of the persecutor, although it would satisfy piety were he the comes himself. The text from PG 79: 560C reads: “There is advantage in not putting off from day to day your conversion to the Lord: do not neglect it, do not be remiss, do not hesitate. Confess your failures. For Our Lord says through Isaias the Prophet: ‘Say thou first thy sins, that thou be justified.’ For if you make a declaration in this manner, if you confess, if you pray and make frequent supplications, without delay you will hear the Lord giving you this answer: ‘I am He who blots out thy sins and thy transgressions of the Law.’” There is another letter that St. Nilus wrote to a *comes* named Frumentinus, ep. II 27, PG 79:212A-B; this possibly could be the same person. This text reads: “‘Circumcision is nothing,’ the Apostle says, ‘and the foreskin is nothing.’ Neither of the things that I have just mentioned is profitable for the salvation of the soul and profound knowledge of God. What, then, would be useful; what would gain one profit? Clearly, it is keeping God’s commandments.” Piety would have one hope that St. Basil’s death obtained conversion for his persecutors and their progeny.

45 *derotomein* appears to be a *hapax legomenon*; the translator understands it as a specific application of the verb *derō*. Perhaps it means “to flay in slices”? The Bollandists report that some identify *derotomein* with *deirotoimein*, “to cut the throat” in preference to the other possibility *dērotomein*, “to cut lengthwise” (?).

46 There is a clever ambiguity here that secures St. Basil an audience with the emperor: *suntaxasthai* could mean “to bargain” as well as “to say good-bye.”

47 Reading *kratei sou* for *krateison*.

48 Reading *heneken tinos* (interrogative) for *heneken tinos* (indefinite).

49 The Bollandists conjecture that the word *ektomēthentōn* should replace *hēnotomēthentōn*, as found in the MS. Hazzarding a conjecture, may one suggest that the original word is a combination of *hēnia* and *temnō*? If so, then the word would mean “that had been cut into strips.”

50 See note 44. The Greek has an alternate spelling here, Frubentinus.