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# CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM



EDITED BY  
**Paul Middleton**

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**The Wiley Blackwell  
Companion to  
Christian Martyrdom**

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# The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom

*Edited by*

Paul Middleton

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I am, of course, extremely grateful to the other twenty-nine scholars who agreed to contribute to the volume, especially those who kept more or less to the timetable. Some potential contributors unfortunately dropped out at various stages for entirely understandable reasons, and while I was able to fill some of those gaps, I would have preferred to include contributions on the Crusades, Orthodox perspectives on martyrdom, martyrdom in various other countries in the world, martyrdom and non-violence, and more reflection on martyrdom in the contemporary world. Perhaps a further edition in the future will enable those and other areas to be attended to.

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Paul Middleton  
April 2019



# List of Abbreviations

<i>Act. Eup.</i>	<i>Acts of Euplus</i>
<i>Act. Justin</i>	<i>Acts of Justin</i>
<i>Act. Pet. Paul</i>	<i>Acts of Peter and Paul</i>
<i>Act. Phil.</i>	<i>Acts of Phileas</i>
<i>Act. Scill.</i>	<i>Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs</i>
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
<i>Ad Mart.</i>	Tertullian, <i>To the Martyrs</i>
<i>Ad Nat.</i>	Tertullian, <i>To the Nations</i>
<i>Ad Scap.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Ad Scapula</i>
<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Against Heresies</i>
AM	Some Byzantyne chronicle
<i>An.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Annals</i>
<i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der romischen Welt</i>
<i>Apoc. Pet.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
BAC	Biblioteca de autores cristianos
BHG	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca</i>
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift fur die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>Carm.</i>	Paulinus of Nola, Poems
<i>Chron. Ad Olymp.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Chronicon</i> (Chronicles)
<i>civ. Dei</i>	Augustine, <i>City of God</i>
<i>Comm. Ezech.</i>	Jerome, <i>Commentary on Ezekiel</i>
<i>De Mart. Pal.</i>	Eusebius, <i>The Martyrs of Palestine</i>
<i>De mort pers.</i>	Lactantius, <i>The Death of the Persecutors</i>
<i>De Prov.</i>	Seneca, <i>On Providence</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
<i>Domit.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Domitian</i>

<i>En. Ps.</i>	Augustine, <i>Enarations on the Psalms</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistle</i>
<i>Ep. Barn.</i>	<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>
<i>Exhort.</i>	<i>Exhortation to Martyrdom</i>
<i>Fasti</i>	Ovid, <i>On the Roman Calendar</i>
<i>Gal.</i>	Julian, <i>Against the Galileans</i>
<i>Glor.</i>	Pseudo-Cyprian, <i>The Glory of Martyrdom</i>
<i>Gosp. Eb.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Ebionites</i>
<i>Gosp. Thom.</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
<i>H.E.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Church History</i>
<i>Herm.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Soctrates Scholasticus, <i>Church History</i>
<i>Hist. Laus.</i>	Palladius, <i>Lausiac History</i>
<i>Hist. Rom.</i>	Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i>
<i>Hom. 2 Cor.</i>	John Chrysostom, <i>Homily on 2 Corinthians</i>
ICUR	<i>Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae</i>
Ignatius, <i>Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
Ignatius, <i>Magn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Magnesians</i>
Ignatius, <i>Phild.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Philadelphians</i>
Ignatius, <i>Pol.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To Polycarp</i>
Ignatius, <i>Rom.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Romans</i>
Ignatius, <i>Smyrn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrneans</i>
Ignatius, <i>Trall.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Trallians</i>
<i>Itiner.</i>	<i>The Pilgrimage of Egeria</i>
<i>Jo. ev. tr.</i>	Augustine, <i>Tractates on the Gospel of John</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplementary Series
<i>Jud. gent.</i>	John Chrysostom, <i>Against Jews and Pagans</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>Mart. Agap.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Agape, Chionia, and Irene</i>
<i>Mart. Apoll.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Apollonius</i>
<i>Mart. Carp.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice</i>
<i>Mart. Crisp.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Crispina</i>
<i>Mart. Fruct.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Fructuosus and Companions</i>
<i>Mart. Lyons</i>	<i>Martyrs of Lyons (=Mart. Lugd.)</i>
<i>Mart. Marian</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Marian and James</i>
<i>Mart. Pion.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Pionius</i>
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>Med.</i>	Marcus Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i>
<i>Mirac. Theclae</i>	Basil of Seleucia, <i>Miracles of Thecla</i>
OrChrAn	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
parr.	Synoptic Gospel parallel passage
<i>Pass. Perp.</i>	<i>Passion of Perpetua</i>
<i>Perist.</i>	Prudentius, <i>Peristephanon</i>

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<i>Prot. James</i>	<i>Protoevangelium of James</i>
<i>Serm.</i>	Augustine, <i>Sermons</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement, <i>Miscellanies</i>
<i>Test. Truth</i>	<i>Testimony of Truth</i>
Trans.	Translated
VCSup	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i> supplementary series
<i>Vit. Const.</i>	Eusebius. <i>Life of Constantine</i>
<i>Vit. Soph.</i>	Eunapius of Sardis, <i>The Lives of the Sophists</i>
WA	Luther's Works
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament



# I. Introductory Matters



## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

Paul Middleton

### Part I: Introductory Matters

“The history of martyrdom,” wrote William Bramley-Moore, “is, in fact, the history of Christianity itself” (Foxe 1872, 2). Bramley-Moore penned these words in his introduction to one of the many editions of the iconic Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, a work that put martyrdom very much at the heart of the Christian story; or more precisely, at the heart of a very particular way of telling the Christian story. For Foxe, the true Church had always been persecuted; at its birth by the synagogue, then by the Romans, and later still by the “devilish” forces of the Roman Catholic Church. His famous martyrology fuses the experiences of Protestants on continental Europe and England with those of Jesus, his disciples, and the early Christians. Together, Jesus’ disciples past and present form an unbroken line of faithfulness to the gospel in the face of hostility and persecution. This view of Church history, arguably begun by Eusebius, and continued by Foxe and Bramley-Moore probably still represents much popular understanding of the plight of the early Christians. Classic films such as *Quo Vadis?* (1951) and *the Robe* (1953) reinforced the view that early Christians were in constant danger of being dragged off to the arena by a hostile Roman State to face the lions.

However, this is a view that largely disappeared from scholarly accounts of persecution more than 50 years ago. While the “minimalist” view of early Christian persecution is put most provocatively in a recent book by Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution* (2013), skepticism of early Christians accounts of their experience was found 250 years ago in Edward Gibbon’s mammoth, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (orig. 1776–1778). Gibbon suspects Christians exaggerated both the number of martyrs, and accused “monks of succeeding generations” of “invent[ing] torments of a much more refined and ingenious nature” (Gibbon 1998, 335), and so displaying

a “total disregard of truth and probability in the representation of these primitive martyrdoms” (Gibbon 1998, 336). In his conclusion, Gibbon does not pull his punches:

We shall conclude this chapter by a melancholy truth which obtrudes itself on the reluctant mind; that, even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must still be acknowledged that the Christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels. (Gibbon 1998, 373)

Although Gibbon could be accused of rather extreme anti-Christian polemic, he anticipates an important recent scholarly move in the study of early Christian martyrdom. While martyr texts were once used to reconstruct history, there is now increasing interest in martyrologies as literature. Danny Praet, in this volume, explains this shift, beginning with the Bollandist efforts to separate historical texts from hagiography by eliminating as fantasy those texts with overly miraculous elements. However, as Praet notes, the “canon” of “reliable” texts has become ever smaller with each new published collection of martyr texts. Of course, this is not to say that martyr texts have nothing to say to historians, but they are now thought to reveal more about the time of their composition than the time in which they are set. However, it is worth noting that there has been some pushback against an extreme minimalist position by scholars who accept the central conclusions of minimalism (e.g. Hartog 2014; Middleton 2018, 2020; Corke-Webster in this volume) but who are less radically sceptical about there being some history recoverable from the text. Scholarship appears to be heading towards something that might be termed “modified minimalism”.

Nonetheless, while Bramley-Moore’s assertion with which we began, that the history of martyrdom is the history of Christianity, cannot be accepted in the straightforward terms in which he understood his statement, he is not incorrect that martyrdom, or rather, the presentation of martyrdom, has played a significant role in developing Christian self-understanding throughout history. For some time, scholars have pointed to the way in which martyrdom *creates* Christian identity (Perkins 1995; Lieu 2002; Castelli 2004; Matthews 2010) by celebrating Christian heroes (van Henten 1995) who represent the beleaguered communities in a cosmic struggle against Rome and the devil (Middleton 2006). Martyr literature creates strong boundaries between insiders, who are persecuted but remain faithful, and outsiders, either persecutors, or crucially, apostates. It is worth noting that in Christian literature of the first few centuries, the confession “I am a Christian” is found exclusively on the lips of martyrs (Middleton 2014a).

This volume of essays by 30 scholars recognizes the hugely significant role Christian martyr literature has played in the development, shaping, and reshaping of Christianity, especially as it spread across the globe. While each essay can stand alone, providing a take on martyrdom in a specific place and time, the volume also has its own narrative arc. The material could, of course, be arranged quite differently. Some critics may question dividing martyrdom at the Reformation from the accounts of martyrdom from around the globe. This decision could be read as imposing a Eurocentric framework on foundational martyr stories in different parts of the world. However, as I note in the next



chapter (“Creating and Contesting Christian Martyrdom”), accounts of martyrdom are contested narratives. There is no neutral way in which to tell martyr stories, as they inevitably create heroes and villains. In a world in which martyrdom—particularly violent martyrdom—is prevalent and controversial, this chapter argues that even in the early church, martyrdom has always been contested. Moreover, any quest to distinguish objectively between true and false martyrdom essentially represents the imposition of the values or identity claims of the compiler, narrator, or even editor. Those who prefer a different framing might begin with the final chapter of this volume by Michael Jensen (“The Legacy and Future of Christian Martyrdom”), who takes the opposite view; that it is possible to recover an authentic meaning of Christian martyrdom that is not a tribal action. These two essays at either ends of the volume illustrate the contested nature of the meaning of martyrdom (see further, Jensen 2010; Middleton 2014b).

## Part II: Early Christian Martyrdom

The volume is divided into five parts. After the introductory matters, the second and largest section deals with early Christian martyrdom. James Corke-Webster (“The Roman Persecutions”) frames the essays that follow by bringing readers up to date with the state of scholarship concerning the extent of Christian persecution. Next, my essay (“Martyrdom in the New Testament”) examines the way in which suffering and persecution is presented in the writings of the New Testament, as well as offering comments on what kind of historical reality they might reflect. The next two essays turn to the question of origins and influences of Christian martyrdom, an area that has oscillated between seeing the phenomenon as predominantly Jewish or Roman (see Frend 1965; Bowersock 1995; Boyarin 1999). First Jan Willem van Henten (“Early Jewish and Christian Martyrdom”) explores the relationship between Christian and Jewish conceptions of martyrdom, before Stephanie Cobb examines “Martyrdom in Roman Context.”

The next two essays turn to early Christian martyr texts. First, Paul Hartog (“Themes and Intertextualities in Pre-Nicene Exhortation”) examines five representative texts from Ignatius to Pseudo-Cyprian, plotting particular important recurring themes and biblical texts used in their promotion of martyrdom. Following this essay, Jane McLarty (“Early Christian Theologies of Martyrdom”) takes a more general look at martyr theologies in second and third century martyr stories. It seems that in any aspect of Christian theology and practice, the figure of Augustine looms large. On the issue of martyrdom, this is no exception. Martyrdom became more controversial and contested in the third and fourth centuries as competing groups claimed authority on the basis of their martyrs. As Annemaré Kotz (“Augustine and the Remaking of Martyrdom”) explains, Augustine’s voice was decisive as he reclaimed martyr traditions from the Manichaeans, Donatists, and Pelagians, emphasizing that only dying for a just cause—of which, he was a significant arbiter—constituted true martyrdom.

The final three essays in the second part focus on particular interpretative issues in the study of early Christian martyrdom. Danny Praet “*Legenda aut non legenda? The Quest for the Literary Genre of the Acts of the Martyrs*”) reflects the recent literary turn in martyr scholarship (for other trends, see Moss 2012). Praet traces the concern to

separate “fact” from “fiction” in compilations of martyr texts, but argues that all these texts should be viewed primarily as literature. Robert Seesengood looks at “Martyrdom and Gender” in early Christian and Jewish martyr texts in the light of recent work in Gender and Queer studies. He demonstrates that when martyr literature is examined against their ancient context, gender expression in these texts portray the martyrs as more powerful than the State by emphasizing “gendered” qualities, such as self-control, endurance, and self-mastery. Finally, Matthew Recla’s essay on “Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity” notes that although scholars have observed the critical role martyrdom has played in the construction of Christian identity, martyrdom was a comparatively rare event. By seeking to separate the theological justifications for martyrdom from the act itself, Recla demonstrates how the relatively rare phenomenon of martyrdom had such an impact on the creation of institutional Christianity.

### Part III: Martyrdom in the Medieval and Reformation World

Matthew Recla’s concern for the role of martyrdom in creating an institutional Christian identity serves as a useful bridge to consider the way in which martyrs and martyrdom functioned as Christianity developed in an era of Christendom. While the contributors in the first half of the volume treat martyrdom primarily as a literary phenomenon, it is certainly the case that actual human beings suffered (and continue to suffer) horrific treatment and death for their faith, and that these martyrs played a significant role in subsequent religious expression. David Eastman examines the veneration of martyrs in Christian beliefs and practices in his essay on “Early Christian Martyr Cults.” Beginning with a concern for relics in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Eastman traces the background, development, and practices of martyr cults, and particularly their impact on developing Christian identity. Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen (“A Middle [Byzantine] Martyr: The Power and Point of Productive Suffering”) takes over this investigation at the Middle Byzantine Era, examining hagiographical practices in light of the Iconoclasm crisis, and the loss of Christian territories to Bulgars and Arabs.

While a strictly chronological account of Christian martyrdom would next move to the emerging issue of “missionary martyrs”, especially among the Franciscans, I have judged that because many missionary martyrs were foundational for Christian self-understanding in the countries in which they were martyred, consideration of these figures can be found in the next section. There was to be a whole chapter on martyrdom in the Crusades, but a late withdrawal means the Crusades are now covered instead in passing in a number of places in the volume. The remainder of the essays in this part considers martyrdom at the Reformation, arguably the time at which martyrdom was as contested as at any other point in Christian history.

First, Thomas Fudge (“Bohemian Martyrdom at the Dawn of the Reformation”) sets the scene by examining the Bohemian martyrs, Jerome of Prague and Jan Hus. The Hussite movement anticipates many of the martyrological controversies of the Reformation period. The movement began to develop a theology of martyrdom through the construction of narratives, and commemorations such as hymnody and popular

song. Despite dealing with “real” historical martyrs, the battle to control the martyrs’ legacy with the publication of competing accounts illustrates the complex relationship between history and hagiography. Narratives of “good deaths” were constructed to claim the mantle of martyr for those executed for heresy. In response, the Church issued accounts of the anguished cries of the burning heretic. Clearly, while one’s status as a martyr or heretic clearly does not depend on what actually happened at the site of execution, the way in which these deaths were “remembered” clearly illustrated the difference.

While the main battle over these martyrologies were between Catholics and Protestants, as Nicholas Thompson demonstrates (“Does the Cause Make the Martyr? Sebastian Castellio and John Calvin Debate the Execution of Michael Servetus”), this was also an intra-Protestant concern. Thompson draws the reader into a fascinating dispute in which Sebastian Castellio challenged John Calvin over the burning of Michael Servetus (d. 1553) for heresy, arguing that the difference between a heretic and a martyr was not at all obvious. But of all Christian groups in the Reformation period, arguably the Anabaptists arouse most sympathy. This generally non-violent group (the Münster rebellion of 1534 notwithstanding) were persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants for heresy—particularly over their rejection of infant baptism—and sedition, over their refusal to acknowledge developing city state structures. In his essay on “Anabaptist Martyrdom,” Lloyd Pietersen shows the way in which biblical tools, such as scriptural verses and concordances aided Anabaptists overcome their perilous situation in the Reformation world. More significantly, in hymnody and the famous martyrology, the *Martyrs Mirror*, Anabaptists developed a form of memorialization that played a significant role in the formation of their identity.

The final three essays in this part turn to England. The English Reformation was as turbulent as anywhere on the continent, not least because rather than a following a relatively smooth trajectory from Roman Catholicism to an independent National Church (as in, for example, Scotland), the four monarchs from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I lurched England towards or away from Rome, each creating different groups of martyrs. While Henry ultimately broke from Rome, he was nonetheless religiously conservative and authorized the execution of radical Protestants for heresy. Under his son, Edward VI, the Reformation took a more Protestant direction, only to take a sharp turn back towards Rome when his half-sister Mary succeeded him after his premature death. Hundreds of Protestants were burned in Mary’s short but brutal reign, earning her the epithet “Bloody Mary” (but see the revisionist account of Duffy 2010). When she was succeeded in turn by Elizabeth, England returned to Protestantism, and Catholics then faced the prospect of execution for treason. The English Reformation spawned propaganda in the form of martyrologies, the most famous of which was Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, which is the subject of Sarah Covington’s essay (“England’s Eusebius: John Foxe and the *Acts and Monuments*”). Covington argues that Foxe forged a new kind of Protestant ecclesiastical history, monumental in scope, which would shape the Church of England long after his death. Catholic martyrdom under Elizabeth is the subject of the essay by Victor Houliston and Aislinn Muller (“The Elizabethan Martyrs”). They show how Pope Pius V’s papal bull excommunicating Elizabeth (1570) made life difficult for English Catholics by placing them under suspicion of treason. Houliston and

Muller demonstrate how Catholics responded to this government “persecution” by adapting a “cult of the martyrs” to inspire continental seminarians to volunteer for missionary work in England, and thus freely risk, or indeed invite, martyrdom.

In the final essay in this section, Susan Royal (“The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Nation: Martyrdom in Reformation England”) takes a long view of the Reformation in the creation of English nationalism, arguing that martyrdom, and in particular John Foxe’s construction of martyrdom, shaped and continue to shape ideas of the English nation. Royal’s essay on the way in which martyrdom shaped a sense of English national identity is the ideal bridge to the next section, which treats martyrdom in global perspective.

## Part IV: Martyrdom in Global Perspective

Most of the essays in this volume demonstrate the close connection between martyrdom and identity creation, whether religious or national. The essays in this section examine the role martyrdom plays around the globe. First, Lawrence Cunningham (“Martyrdom in Roman Catholic Perspective”) offers an overview of the way in which martyrdom as a phenomenon is viewed by the Roman Catholic Church. In particular, he examines history, liturgy, and theology, and how martyrdom fits within a larger context of Catholic devotion of the saints.

The earliest Roman Catholic martyrs were created in missionary endeavors, although canonization could take many centuries. In the next essay, Christopher MacEvitt (“The Franciscans”) considers the first of the Orders to engage in missionary work, and develop a theology of martyrdom. The Franciscans, MacEvitt explains, cultivated a desire for martyrdom in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as a sign of holiness that would continue when the expansion of Christianity in Asia and the Americas created new opportunities for martyrdom.

The expansion of Christianity into Asia is the background for the next two essays. First, Peter Phan (“Christian Martyrdom in Asia: bearing Testimony to the Love of God”) offers an extended overview of Christian martyrdom in Asia, covering Japan, China, Korea, and Vietnam. He investigates the complex relationship between missionary enterprises and Western imperialism, but also the way in indigenous martyr cults began to develop as Christianity took hold in these countries. Next, Franklin Rausch treats “Christian Martyrdom in Korea” in more depth. Rausch shows how waves of both Catholic and later Protestant missions led to commemorations of martyrdom that still influence Christianity in Korea today.

The next two essays examine martyrdom in Africa and Latin America. Kevin Ward (“Christian Martyrdom in Africa”) offers an account of martyrdom in the African churches—Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant—from the Muslim conquest to the present day. Through his treatment of the Mobasa massacre (1631), the persecution of Malagasy Christians (1831–1865), the Ugandan “holocaust” (1885–1887), and other experiences of persecution and martyrdom, Rausch examines the complex link between martyrdom, politics, and colonialism in Africa, which often manifests itself not just in communal suffering, but individual sacrifice. A similar

explosive mix of martyrdom and politics is explored in Maria Soledad Catoggio's essay on Latin America ("'Dying Well' in Latin America: Christian Martyrdom, Religion, and Politics"). Catoggio examines the relationship between history and hagiography in the creation of martyr narratives that intersect with political narratives in Latin America from colonial times to the present. Martyrs prove to be controversial political figures, as the martyr narratives surrounding Oscar Romero demonstrate.

This blurring of the lines between political and religious martyr narratives leads to the final essay in this part by Scott Hoffman ("Martyrdom in Modern America"). Hoffman argues there exists a tradition of "martyr-making" in America, which he demonstrates by treating a range of martyr figures throughout history, including John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Matthew Shepard, and Cassie Bernall. A particular expression of modern American martyr-making, Hoffman argues, is not designed to defend the religious or political status quo, but to foster social change and inspire political action.

## Part V: Legacies of Martyrdom

Scott Hoffman's essay helps transition into the final part of the volume, in which three essays propose some legacies of martyrdom. The contributions to this volume have largely explored the complex and contested nature of the way in which martyr narratives or martyr rhetoric has functioned in the past. In this section, the essays point towards no less complex a future for martyrdom. First Kelly Denton-Bornaug's essay argues that in "Martyrdom Discourse in Contemporary U.S. War-culture," sacrificial rhetoric and logic in post 9/11 war-culture of the United States promotes a way of framing war that transcends its violence, which risks downplaying ethical consideration both about violence and the costs of waging war.

Past, present, and future come together in the essay by Jonas Kurlberg and Jolyon Mitchell ("Digital Representations of Martyrdom"), who examine the digital "afterlives" of six martyr stories from the last 2000 years: Stephen, Lucy, Thomas Becket, the Reformation martyrs, Oscar Romero, and Cassie Bernall. In the same way as the printing press created the famous and powerful martyrologies of the Reformation, Kurlberg and Mitchell demonstrate how the internet provides near endless ways of reinterpreting "malleable" Christian martyrs for a wide range of corporate and individual political and devotional uses.

For the most part, the essays in this volume examine the phenomenon of Christian martyrdom from historical, sociological, and literary perspectives, largely emphasizing the contested or constructed nature of rhetoric and discourse. The final essay by Michael Jensen ("The Legacy and Future of Christian Martyrdom") takes a more self-consciously Christian theological perspective, arguing for a theologically normative approach to martyrdom that emphasizes non-violence, differentiating it from more violent or destructive acts. Jensen, who in his earlier work used Salman Rushdie and T.S. Elliot to interrogate a theology of martyrdom (Jensen 2010), here turns to the martyrdom of the Tibhirine monks depicted in the film *Of Gods and Men*—and beatified in December 2018—to argue that the legacy of Christian martyrdom can testify to the possibility of lasting peace.

As I indicated earlier, Michael Jensen's theological account of a normative non-violent Christian martyrdom (and, indeed, he would claim the same is true of Islamic martyr traditions) is at odds with my own approach, which argues that this position is undermined by the history of martyrdom; martyrs are created by narratives rather than defined. Nonetheless, I am content to leave this question open, and indeed sharpen it by closing with two contradictory maxims by no lesser figures than Blaise Pascal and Oscar Wilde, which perhaps encapsulate both this tension, and the controversial and contested nature of martyrdom:

I only believe histories by witnesses who are ready to be put to death. (Blaise Pascal)

A thing is not necessarily true because a man dies for it. (Oscar Wilde)

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