

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom. Edited by Paul Middleton. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley Blackwell, 2020. xvii + 537 pp. \$195.00 cloth; \$156.00 e-book.

Despite Paul Middleton's humble admission that the *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom* is far from exhaustive on the topic, this substantial and impressive volume delivers to readers dozens of compelling and diverse approaches to studying Christian martyrdom, the foci of which collectively span more than two millennia, virtually the entire globe, and an unexpectedly wide array of cultural and religious traditions. The scholars and perspectives that contribute to this volume are nearly as varied as the martyrs and "martyrs"—the definition of martyrdom and the legitimacy of many purported martyrs is questioned often—themselves.

Middleton organizes the volume into five large sections: "Introductory Matters," "Early Christian Martyrdom," "Martyrdom in the Medieval and Reformation World," "Martyrdom in Global Perspective," and "Legacies of Martyrdom." The chapters in each of these sections provide solid overviews of the historiography of their specific fields, for example Thomas A. Fudge's fascinating and enlightening account of "Bohemian Martyrdom at the Dawn of the Reformation." They also provide succinct evaluations of the competing arguments surrounding martyrdom in their respective contexts and a healthy dose of convincing revisionism, as in Matthew Recla's "Martyrdom and the Creation of Christian Identity." They even constitute a vigorous but friendly contest between theological and historical approaches to examining martyrdom, exemplified by the fruitful tension between the arguments found in Middleton's "Creating and Contesting Christian Martyrdom" and in Michael Jensen's "The Legacy and Future of Christian Martyrdom."

Two topics consistently draw mention throughout the volume, for obvious reasons, although at times they serve—unintentionally—more as a distraction than as an applicable context. The first is the phenomenon of suicide "martyrs" and the related redefinition and obfuscation (both intentional and incidental) of "martyrdom," in particular as it pertains to individuals actively killing themselves for reasons not purely religious. The most poignant examples are contemporary Islamist suicide bombers. The link to Christian martyrdom is usually clear but not always productive. The second is the most widely known historical account of Christian martyrdom, "Foxe's Book of Martyrs." Here it serves several authors well, but it also represents a scholarly view of premodern Christian Europe predictably skewed westward. Nonetheless, and perhaps even due in part to these aspects, Middleton's volume is essential and illuminating reading in the history of Christianity.

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