

argue that he presents a view of Christian persecution which is too taken up with a view of it as a top down affair with the authorities as its ultimate agents (note in this respect his emphasis on a Trajanic and Hadrianic rescript). For some, acts of violence against Christians should be situated less in objections to Christian ideas and practices by officials and more in the complex world of provincial communities, which in competing for resources, mobilised the judicial resources available to them by the Roman administration. One of those groups would have been Jews, who inhabited large parts of the empire, and it is a pity perhaps that Kinzig, though he mentions Jews a number of times, does not make enough of why they appear by and large to have avoided the persecution he posits as an ongoing and persistent reality for Christians when these groups shared so much in common. There are numbers of answers to this question, some of which Kinzig hints at, but whose engaged discussion would have been helpful.

This is a scholarly and accessible book, which provides the interested reader with a welter of well-ordered information on a complicated subject. Its fluent translation into English from the original German by Markus Bockmuehl is much to be welcomed.

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Desiring martyrs. Locating martyrs in space and time. Edited by Harry O. Maier and Katharina Waldner. (SpatioTemporality/RaumZeitlichkeit, 10.) Pp. iv + 236. Berlin–Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021. £54.50. 978 3 11 068248 9; 2365 3221 JEH (74) 2023; doi:10.1017/S0022046922001324

This impressive and exciting collection of essays grew out of a 2017 international workshop on spatial and temporal approaches to early Christian martyrology at the University of Erfurt: ‘Martyrs in Space and Time/Die Raumzeitlichkeit des Martyriums’. The editors must be commended for the quality and coherence of the essays, which together offer a substantive sense of the tremendous insights spatio-temporal approaches can offer to historians of Christianity. All but one of the papers focuses on early Christian/late ancient *milieux* within Roman imperial boundaries, but the methods they employ will be helpful to any scholar interested in how martyr stories build on or serve as venues for (re)negotiating understandings of time and space.

The introduction deftly orients the reader to spatial and temporal lenses, concluding that spatio-temporal consideration of martyr stories offers a way of locating and teasing out the persuasive functions of martyrial desire – i.e., both the desire individuals might have to become martyrs and the desire communities might harbour for martyrs of their own (p. 5). Hence the title of the book. The subsequent summary of contributions (pp. 6–11) is lucid, thorough and helpful.

The first essay, ‘Sacral meals and post-traumatic places: revision and coherence in the Epistle to the Hebrews’, by Michael Thate, uses insights from trauma studies – specifically Jill Stouffer’s *Ethical loneliness* – to highlight how the Epistle reconfigures Christ’s shameful absence as a saving presence (p. 19) by cultivating in the reading community a therapeutic desire for martyrdom that utilises visions of a repaired future to imagine a perfected past and present.

Harry Maier's essay, "'Who are these clothed in white robes and whence have they come?': the Book of Revelation and the spatiotemporal creation of trauma', also centres on trauma – here the way that Revelation's author narratively produces an experience of trauma for his too-complacent contemporaries by crafting two disparate chronotopes – the idolater and the worshipper – that the reader must choose between desiring.

Christopher Frilingos uses his contribution, 'Murder at the temple: space, time, and concealment in the *Proto-gospel of James*', to reconsider his own previous work on this text, which understood Zacharias's death as a martyrdom. But considering spatial and temporal features of the account alongside the discourse of desire illuminates that Zacharias's death is not configured as a martyrdom, but as the heroic death of a man who desires the earthly safety of his wife and son.

Jan Bremmer's essay ('Roman judge vs. Christian bishop: the trial of Phileas during the Great Persecution') was newly crafted for this volume, and the disconnect is noticeable; considerations of time and space seem an afterthought. Additionally, while the essay is delightful in its clear and erudite exposition of the *Acts of Phileas* and its text-history, it is marred by a perplexing insistence on Phileas's historicity being verifiable through the available manuscripts. Bremmer seems to think that scholars who emphasise the literary nature of all martyrdom accounts are claiming the complete fictionality of those accounts, and expends much energy arguing against this straw man only to come up with precisely the same end-product as those he critiques – the realisation that surviving texts (like all historical accounts) are mediated by technologies of communication and the literary sensibilities of reception communities.

Eric Smith's 'Pure bread of Christ: imperial necropolitics and the eucharistic martyrdom of Ignatius' compellingly re-reads Ignatius' *Letter to the Romans* through the decolonising lens of Achille Mbembe's notion of necropolitics, which understands colonial power as imposing upon the colonised a generalised instrumentalisation of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations (pp. 121, 124). Smith sidesteps questions of historicity and dating to illuminate the centre-periphery dynamic that would have coloured the composition of the letter; within this context, Ignatius' letters articulate resistance to imperial necropolitics and a reclaiming of death as something the subject, not the empire, can define.

From 'Prison to palace: the *carceras* heterotopia in North African martyr accounts', Stephanie Cobb's contribution, is enormously helpful – Cobb concretely establishes what Roman prison conditions were like and what Roman perceptions of prison were, which in turn restores the re-imaginings of prison in North African martyr texts to their original revolutionary force. Cobb uses Foucault's notion of heterotopia to underscore the significance of this reimagination as generating a distinct Christian perception of space and time – prison becomes radically reimagined as a space where the future joy of heaven can be experienced in the present.

In her essay, 'Bones ground by wild beast's teeth: late ancient imaginations of the death of Ignatius of Antioch', Nicole Hartmann brilliantly uncovers and compares competing configurations of space-time present in the two independent narratives of Ignatius' death, expanding the ways we can understand the late antique cultural battleground of the cult of saints (p. 172).

Co-editor Katarina Waldner offers yet another example of how much is to be gained from employing a spatio-temporal heuristic in ‘When the city cries: the spacetime of persecution in Eusebius’ *Martyrs of Palestine*’. Eusebius’ writing takes on a whole new worldview-constructing dimension when we realise how he has fashioned individual trauma as universally Christian by manipulating temporality and location.

Finally, Jennifer Otto, in ‘Making martyrs Mennonite’, looks at the ways in which seventeenth-century Anabaptists selectively retold early Christian martyrdom accounts so as to bolster their own understanding of their denomination’s place in Christian history. By noting (but not emphasising) dates and by vetting each early Christian martyrdom story through Mennonite doctrines, the *Martyrs Mirror* helps give the impression of a singular, Mennonite, Christian reality.

One remarkable feature of these essays is the skill, fruitfulness and (generally speaking) clarity that each displays – not only does each essay have unique subject matter to introduce, each must also quadrangulate time, space, desire and martyrdom. For as complex as these articles’ concepts are, each essay manages to be eminently readable and thought-provoking. There are significant typographical and grammatical errors that occasionally obscure the authors’ intended meaning (Hartmann’s essay suffers most) but aside from that small quibble, this is ultimately a tremendously valuable book which I suspect every martyrdom scholar will delight in.

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Pelagius. Commentaries on the thirteen Epistles of Paul with the Libellus fidei. Introduced and translated by Thomas P. Scheck. (Ancient Christian Writers, 76.) Pp. viii + 451. New York–Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 2022. \$49.95. 978 0 8091 0659 2 JEH (74) 2023; doi:10.1017/S0022046922002482

Thomas Scheck’s translation of late antique commentaries on Scripture has exhibited lasting quality, performed a great service and made substantial contributions to English-language scholarship on early Christian biblical interpretation. His translation of Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* (Washington, DC 2001, 2002) has established itself as a great treasure for students of Origen’s theology and exegesis. Scheck’s study of the commentary’s lasting impact within the Christian tradition (*Origen and the history of justification: the legacy of Origen’s Commentary on Romans*, South Bend, IN 2008) helps modern scholars to understand the significance of Rufinus of Aquileia’s Latin translation of it from the Pelagian controversy up through contemporary exegesis. As a natural extension of these studies and building upon the work of earlier scholars such as Alexander Souter (*The character and history of Pelagius’ Commentary on the Epistles of Paul*, London 1916), Theodore de Bruyn (*Pelagius’s Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, Oxford 1993) and B. R. Rees (*Pelagius: life and letters*, Woodbridge–Rochester, NY 1998), among others, Scheck has now provided translations of Pelagius’ commentaries on all thirteen of the Pauline Epistles (c. 406–9). Also included in this new instalment in the *Ancient Christian Writers* series is a translation of Pelagius’ statement of faith (the *libellus fidei*) written in the spring of 417.