

for this view is stated cautiously but convincingly, and it could be further substantiated by showing how the structure and content of the Akhmim Greek fragment is at multiple points incompatible with the version preserved in Ethiopic, in spite of the close parallels. This is a point on which further research is urgently required.

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Christian persecution in antiquity. By Wolfram Kinzig (trans. Markus Bockmuehl).

Pp. viii + 177 incl. 2 maps. Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2021. \$29.99.

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In this succinct and thoughtful book, Wolfram Kinzig gives an account of a much-discussed, and possibly little understood, phenomenon, the persecution of Christians in antiquity. Kinzig, while aware of the difficulty of our primary material, almost exclusively Christian and by and large hortatory, whether martyr acts or martyr passions, believes that such material ‘basically relate events that actually happened’, and this against a growing swell of opinion which has preferred to talk about the myth of persecution, or to undermine the historical reliability of the primary material.

Kinzig, defining persecution of the Christians as the threatening or the carrying out of violence by official authorities that was indirectly or directly connected to the religion of the victims, then proceeds to tell what is roughly a chronological tale. He begins with the marginalisation of Christianity by Judaism, proceeding to persecution of Christians under Nero and Domitian. He then devotes chapters to two different periods, from 111 (the date of the so-called Trajanic rescript) to 249, and from Decius to Valerian (249–60), the break here being justified by the fact that the so-called Decian persecution (possibly misnamed as Decius’ intention was not to persecute Christians *per se* but, through an edict, to compel members of the empire publicly to give veneration to the gods, an order with which many Christians were unable to conform) initiated blanket persecutions affecting Christians across the whole Roman Empire whereas the previous period had seen sporadic outbursts, which were geographically limited. He concludes with the so-called Diocletian persecution, which is possibly the first and only example of an emperor consciously initiating a persecutory policy. Persecution of Christians by the Goths and Sasanians is also discussed.

In the midst of this, Kinzig discusses the reasons for Christian persecution (a mixture of religious, social and economic), with helpful discussion of philosophical objections to Christianity, the form trials took, the controversies and ructions caused among Christian communities by those who complied with requests to sacrifice such as we find at the time of Decius and then Diocletian, numbers of deaths, modes of death and torture, and Christian responses to the violence (by and large passive or apologetic).

The book does not seek to make a contribution to scholarship in the form of a new thesis (its audience is clearly a general one) and the contours of its discussion are broadly conventional ones, which those who studied theology at university some time ago would recognise. Kinzig’s broadly optimistic view of the source material will not be accepted by all professionals in the field; and some will

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
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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.