# "They are the True Victors"
## Contemporary Usage of Early Christian Martyr Rhetoric*

Walter D. Ward[1]

[1] Professor, University of Alabama.

**Abstract**: This paper argues that the description of contemporary Christian martyrs deliberately imitates the rhetoric of early Christian martyr literature to articulate continuity of identity, to render present suffering theologically intelligible, and to consolidate communal memory. It examines how contemporary rhetoric echoes martyrdom accounts from the ancient period as presented in diverse texts such as Eusebius's *History of the Church*, Tertullian's *To the Martyrs*, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the *Martyrdom of Marian and James*, *Maccabees*, among others with a focus on three key themes: imitation of Christ, the athletic/military contest, and intercessory power. Such rhetoric has been used in papal discourse and narratives crafted by Christian groups to describe contemporary persecutions. This analysis demonstrates how ancient *typoi* are being deployed to depict modern martyrs as victorious witnesses, spiritual athletes, and heavenly intercessors, shaping Christian imaginaries ahead of the 2025 Jubilee while reinforcing the transhistorical narrative of a persecuted yet triumphant Church.

**Keywords**: Early Christianity, martyrdom, Jubilee, contemporary Christianity

In July 2023, Pope Francis established the "Commission of the New Martyrs - Witnesses of the Faith" to collect testimonies of contemporary Christian martyrs to be commemorated during the 2025 Jubilee (2023), explicitly continuing the project undertaken under John Paul II for the Great Jubilee of 2000, which collected over 13,000 names of Christians reportedly martyred during the twentieth century. The culmination of Pope John Paul II initiative including a papal ceremony in the Colosseum and the construction of a sanctuary in St. Bartholomew's Basilica in Rome to honor them (Glatz 2023; Basilica di S. Bartolomeo all'Isola, n.d). Pope Francis' decision to seek further contemporary martyrs followed statements that he made in 2019 connecting these new martyrs with ancient ones. He wrote:

*There are more martyrs today than there were at the beginning of the life of the Church, and martyrs are everywhere. Today the Church is rich in martyrs, it is steeped in their blood: "The blood of Christians is seed" (Tertullian, Apology, 50:13) and ensures the growth and fruitfulness of the People of God. Martyrs are not just "saintly", but rather men and women in flesh and blood who — as Revelation says — "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (7:14). *They are the true victors* (2019).




https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

In doing so, Pope Francis creates a narrative link between the ancient and modern Christians. As illustrated below, contemporary Christians employ the ancient descriptions of martyrs to demonstrate the continuity of their faith and to express the continuity of oppression which they believe is directed against them. The rhetoric embedded in these characterizations taps into Christian rhetoric defined in antiquity -- martyr as imitator Christi, spiritual athlete and soldier of God, martyrdom as victorious contest, and the martyr's efficacy as intercessor -- first articulated in ancient accounts of martyrdom such as Maccabees 2 and 4, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, and Tertullian's *Ad Martyras*. These idioms furnished a theological grammar through which the early Church construed its own suffering and memorialized it as the matrix of Christian identity. Contemporary Christian representations of martyrdom, especially in Catholic contexts aligned with the Jubilees of 2000 and 2025, consciously draw on these ancient rhetorical patterns to frame present violence against Christians within a triumphal narrative of witness. These narrative constructions convert contemporary descriptions of oppression into theological meaning, asserting historical continuity, and ultimately demonstrating the victory of Christians over their enemies. This last part is especially stressed: it is all Christians who will be triumphant, not members of any one sect or denomination. Thus, the ancient rhetoric used to describe martyrs today serves as a way to unify divided Christian creeds in the face of putative contemporary persecution.

**Origins of Christian Martyrdom**

Early Christian sources embed martyrdom within a frame of civic suspicion and periodic repression. Even before empire-wide measures in the mid-third century, provincial encounters often turned on the confession of the faith rather than on proof of a particular crime, as dramatized in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* and reflected in Pliny's correspondence with the emperor Trajan. The narrative effect was to render Christian identity itself the decisive criterion of persecution and martyrdom. Christian texts report that persecution began quickly after the Passion of Christ beginning with the stoning of Saint Stephen outside of a synagogue in Jerusalem.[1] The book of Acts (5-8.1) reports that members of the Jewish priestly class (Sadducees) joined with synagogue congregations to arrest and punish Jewish converts to Christianity. Many Jews actively participated in hunting Christians, as exemplified by the Apostle Paul prior to his conversion to Christianity (Acts 8:1-8.4; Galatians 1:13-14; Philippians 3:6). While the extent of these Jewish persecutions against Christians is unknown, they did not adversely impact the growth of the Christianity, especially after Christians made the decision to allow non-Jews (Gentiles) to convert.[2] The "parting of the ways" between the Christian and Jewish communities was accelerated by the Jewish Revolt and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. After this point, Jewish authorities lost much of their power to persecute Christians, allowing Christianity to spread within the Roman Empire (Dunn 1991).

Christians remained under the radar of Roman authorities for a surprisingly long period.[3] The first mention of Christians in Roman sources appears in the writings of the second century author Tacitus, who describes the scapegoating of Christians after the fire in Rome in 64 CE (*Annales* 15.44). The first large-scale persecution of Christians was launched by Decius in 249, and prior to this, persecutions of Christians were sporadic affairs, occurring locally and

[1] Acts 6:5-7:60. See Matthews 2010 on the use of the martyrdom of Stephen as an early example of anti-Semitism.

[2] It is entirely possible that Jewish persecution limited the number of Jews who were willing to convert in this early period. On the other hand, Jews of the diaspora seem to have had a less antagonist view of Christianity, at least in the beginning, and there seems to be ample evidence of so-called "Jewish-Christian" groups (Klijn and Reinink 1973).

[3] As Hopkins 1998 argues, this was a result of the very small numbers of Christians throughout the first and second centuries.


https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

generally associated with public disturbances.[4] Polytheist mobs misunderstood Christian secrecy as evidence of crimes such as cannibalism and incest, believed that Christians were "misanthropes" for avoiding public festivals, and accused Christians of "atheism" because they refused to worship the traditional deities.[5] Even Decius's legislation was not targeted directly towards Christians, but Christian refusal to sacrifice to the emperor was cause for persecution.[6]

It is unknown what Roman law Christians had broken, if any, but admitting to the name of "Christian" alone was enough to bring torture and death.[7] As recounted in the second century *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, the martyrs were condemned merely for saying "I am a Christian" (*Christianus Sum*). Thus, to the imperial authorities, Christians were not guilty of any particular crime; it was their existence and belief that was illegal. Pliny the Younger's famous correspondence with the Emperor Trajan illuminates many of these points (*Ep*. 10.96). Pliny, governor of Bithynia c. 110, remarks that he knew nothing about the persecution of Christians, how they should be punished, and if they should be punished for "the mere name" or only if they had to have committed a crime. However, Christians were brought to Pliny's attention by accusers, presumably jealous or wary pagans, and later anonymous accusations were made against others. After questioning, those Christians who refused to repent were executed for their "stubbornness and unshakeable obstinacy."[8] Trajan supported Pliny's executions, but forbid searching for Christians or allowing anonymous accusations. The *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* and Pliny's letter show that Christians were often given multiple chances to renounce their faith, who often angered their interrogators when they refused. Pliny's complaint about Christian stubbornness would be an enduring feature of the persecutions and a common trope in martyr accounts to the present day.

**Rhetoric of Martyrdom**

We do not know the exact number of Christians executed prior to the legalization of Christianity.[9] Those whose faith did not waver became honored in the Church as confessors and martyrs. They were commemorated with relics, pilgrimage destinations, and accounts of their suffering and victory (often termed "Acts"). Modern martyr narratives directly call upon these early accounts for inspiration. Three major themes from these early accounts are clearly visible in contemporary accounts: Imitation of Christ's suffering, victory in an athletic or military contest, and martyrs as posthumous intercessors.

Christian descriptions of martyrdom were profoundly influenced by the Jewish texts of the Maccabees, especially 2 and 4.[10] In Maccabees, an old man, Eleazar, was brutally tortured and

[4] Except for a short list of exceptions, such as during the reign of Domitian and Marcus Aurelius.

[5] Early martyr accounts do not generally describe the local conditions which led to the persecutions and begin *in media res* (Fox 1986: 424-427).

[6] For example, the persecution in Lyon in 177 was inaugurated by pagan crowds, rather than the imperial government (Eusebius *E.H.* 5.1). On Decius's religious policy, see Rives 1999 and Selinger 2002.

[7] de. Ste. Croix 1963: 8-17. De Ste. Criox argues that under a *cognitio extraordinaria* persecution, no charge was required, only an accuser (*delator*). For a summary of the early evidence concerning the legality of Christians up to the time of Decius, see Barnes 1968: 32-48.

[8] Translated by B. Radice 1963: 293.

[9] The number of Christians arrested was much higher than the number killed during the persecutions. Many recanted their faith (at Lyon, for example) in order to survive causing later repercussions such as the Donatist schism in North Africa Eusebius *E.H.* 5.1.11 (persecution at Lyon); Frend 1985: esp. 18-20, 167-168 (on Donatists). Scholars have estimated a wide range of Christian martyrs. Frend (1967: 393-394) estimates that 3000-3500 Christians were killed during the Great Persecution. Grégoire (1964: 166) argued for ten thousand total martyrs. For problems of obtaining reliable numbers for the early Christian population, see Hopkins 1998.

[10] On these texts, see van Henten 1997. Frend 1967: 19-57 argues that it would be impossible to imagine the Christian development of martyrs occurring the same way without the influence of the Maccabees and Daniel and their transmission through Hellenic Judaism.


https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

executed. Despite his infirmity caused by old age, he was described as "a noble athlete" who was "victorious over his torturers" and obtained "immortal victory" (4 Mac. 6:10, 7.3, 13). Next seven brothers and their mother were martyred. Because of the mother's stoicism in the face of the death of her children, she is called "a soldier of God" (4 Mac. 16:14). The account concludes with the statement, “Truly the contest in which they were engaged was divine, for on that day virtue gave the awards and tested them for their endurance. The prize was immortality in endless life. Eleazar was the first contestant, the mother of the seven sons entered the competition, and the brothers contended. The tyrant [here Antiochus IV] was the antagonist, and the world and the human race were the spectators. Reverence for God was victor and gave the crown to its own athletes” (4 Mac. 17.11-14).

Early Christian accounts sometimes directly mention the Maccabees martyr accounts, such as when Marian's mother was compared to the mother of the Maccabees after Marian was martyred (*Martyrdom of Marian and James* 13.1). Another example comes from the Sinai desert, where Pseudo-Nilus reworked the story of Eleazar and the mother to praise monks who were martyred in the desert (Pseudo-Nilus, *Narrationes*, 4. Caner 2010: 78-80; Ward 2015: 107-108). But even the connection with the Maccabees was not made explicit, the *topoi* are implicitly based on their story.

*Imitation of Christ*

Early Christian martyrs were seen as imitators of Christ, and in this, they were the embodiments of Paul's exhortations to live according to the example of Jesus (Moss 2010: 23-28, 102-109. C.f. Phil 3:17.). This is true even in the earliest accounts, when for example, Polycarp “waited to be betrayed as also the Lord had done, that we too might become his imitators” connecting Polycarp's arrest with Judas's betrayal of Jesus.[11] Later the text makes the imitation more explicit, “the martyrs we love as disciples and imitators of the Lord...”[12] The second century martyrs in Lyon were said to have imitated Christ even though they denied themselves the name martyr, reserving the term for Jesus alone (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.2.2).

*Athletes and Soldiers of Christ*

In addition to being portrayed as imitators of Christ, the martyrs were described as athletes and soldiers.[13] Occasionally, this comparison is taken to the extreme, such as when the young woman Perpetua dreamt that she was transformed into a male wrestler and fought against an Egyptian warrior. God (Jesus?) appeared in the dream as a man attired like a patron (*editor*) of the games, holding the rod of a gladiator's trainer (*lanista*).[14] Tertullian's letter *To the Martyrs* includes an evocative statement: “We have been called to the military service of the living God since the moment when we responded to the words of the Sacrament… [e]ven in peace soldiers are already learning by toil and hardships to endure warfare by marching under arms, by maneuvering over the plain, by working in the trenches, by closing files so as to form the 'testudo.'”[15] He continues by comparing martyrdom to wresting contests, “[y]ou [putative martyrs] are about to undergo a good contest wherein the living God is the President, the Holy Spirit is the Trainer, the wreath is that of eternity, the prize, angelic being, the citizenship in the heavens, the glory unto ages of ages.”[16] It is not a coincidence that Christian rhetoric relied on the tropes of athletic contests and military victory, for these were the two chief avenues for

[11] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 1.1, translated by Lake 1912.
[12] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17.3, translated by Lake 1912.
[13] For example, Blandina in Lyon (Eusebius *H.E.* 5.1.19). Malone 1950: 64-111. The images of games and victory first appear in Christian works in the book of Revelations (Seesengood 2006: 72-81).
[14] Perpetua 10; see Seesengood 2006: 92-109 for an analysis of the role of gender and the sexual nature of the athlete/gladiator in the descriptions of the martyrdoms of Perpetua and Blandina.
[15] Tertullian *Ad Mart.* 3. Translated by Bindley 1900.
[16] Tertullian *Ad Mart.* 3. Translated by Bindley 1900.


https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

obtaining glory in traditional Greco-Roman culture (Willaims 1999: 132-138; Scanlan 2002; McDonnell 2006).

*Spiritual Victors and Posthumus Intercessors*

Confessors and martyrs were believed to have immense spiritual power signifying their victory over their oppressors. Despite the pain faced by their bodies, the sources claim that the martyrs themselves were not harmed, and their souls were admitted into paradise (Fox 1986: 438-439. C.f. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2.3). Writing to help fortify Christians on the eve of execution, Tertullian wrote that martyrs obtained everlasting life and glory in heaven.[17] The martyr Cyprian was seated to the right of God in heaven and invited the martyr Marian to climb higher on the ladder to sit with him (*Martyrdom of Marian and James* 6.10). The martyrs were thought to advance directly to heaven (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 19-21).

There they had the ability to intercede on behalf of the living and the dead. For example, Perpetua, martyred in 203 in Carthage, described a dream in which her long dead brother Dinocrates was living in a hell in which he could never obtain the water that he thirsted for. After Perpetua's prayers, he was well dressed and drank from a golden cup. In Perpetua's words, "I realized that he had been delivered from his suffering."[18] The martyr Potamiaena, while in heaven, asked God for the conversion and martyrdom of Basilides, which then occurred (Eusebius, *H.E*. 6.5). A similar instance occurs when Agapius prayed repeatedly for Tertulla and Antonia to become martyrs (*Martyrdom of Marian and James* 11).

*"Making Martyrs"*

These descriptions demonstrate the role of rhetoric and memory in creating, or "making martyrs" (Grig 2004). The reading of a martyr's *acta* (account) represented a performance; just reading the text "constitutes a repeat performance of the miracle which it records" (Hopkins 1999: 148). The martyr accounts helped to produce a collective memory of Christians as a persecuted, but ultimately victorious group who were able to subvert the impious ruling authorities of the empire and their spectacles of power (Castelli 2004). In reading the acts of the martyrs and celebrating festivals oriented around remembering them, Christians invited the martyrs into their daily lives (Limberis 2011). These memories became the way of understanding the world for early Christians, even those living in a post-Constantinian, post-martyr world. For Christians of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the Council of Nicaea was legitimate precisely because those bishops had experienced persecution, and their trials "preserved the primordial essence of Christianity and kept it from novelty and error" (Sizgorich 2009: 55-56). The development of these motifs in the early Christian period has provided a source of inspiration for Christians throughout the centuries, as can be seen in today's accounts of Christian martyrs.

**The Rhetoric of Contemporary Martyrs**

Contemporary Christian martyrdom accounts explicitly draw on the rhetoric and memory of early Christian martyrdom. As Pope Francis asserted in the quote which begins this paper, some modern Christians believe that they are being persecuted in numbers far greater than those in the early Christian centuries (2019). Pope John Paul II wrote, "[a]t the end of the second millennium, *the Church has once again become a Church of martyrs.* The persecutions of believers… has caused a great sowing of martyrdom in different parts of the world. The witness to Christ borne even to the shedding of blood has become a common inheritance of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants…" (1994: 37). One Catholic website states that

[17] Tertullian, *Ad Mart*. 3, *Corona aeternitatis, brabium angelicae substantiae, politia in caelis,gloria in saecula saeculorum*

[18] Perpetua 7-8, tunc intellexi translatum eum esse de poena (translated by Musurillo 1972). See Salisbury 1997: 104-106.


https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

Catholics in the West are "remarkably ignorant … of the massive assault on Christians in the world."[19] Another website claims that there were more martyrs in the nascent twenty-first century as the entire two first millennia of Christianity.[20] These statements elide state persecution with criminal activity and sectarian (especially jihadist) violence, vastly expanding the definition of Christian martyrs compared to the early centuries of the faith.[21]

Contemporary martyrs are described in the same terms as the ancient ones, with themes of warfare and athletic victory most common. Pope John Paul II, for example, called modern martyrs "soldiers … of God's great cause" (1994: 41). Pope Francis called them "true victors" (2019). Msgr. Marco Gnavi, head of Pope John Paul II's martyr commission, said that the contemporary martyrs "didn't abandon the frontline of the battle between life and death" (Glatz 2023).

The website of the Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) contains many stories of contemporary martyrs described with the rhetoric of early martyrs. For example, the story of the martyrdom of Michael and Bolanle shows that martyrs are still seen as intercessors. According to their narrative on the website, "[t]oday, Michael's grave stands as guard and witness at the entrance of his seminary where he was a student. His colleagues can walk through the gates knowing they have a guardian angel. When we buried him (Feb 11th, 2020), we prayed that his killers will not go free. He has interceded for us. He now stands as a metaphor, a rallying point for us to walk towards the barking dogs of our time" (Aid to the Church in Need 2020). The mother of two brothers killed in Libya in 2015 was reported to have said, "I'm the mother of martyrs, I'm proud of them. They intercede for me and their father in heaven." The website concludes with the statement, "[t]he shrine in Egypt which is dedicated to the martyrs has been documenting miracles attributed to their intercession, and its caretaker, Father Abu Fanus Unan told ACN that many people were baptized and became Christians because of their example. 'The Coptic Church survives thanks to the blood of her children,"' the priest said (d'Avillez 2023*)*, directly referencing Tertullian's statement that the martyrs were the seed of the Church. The Catholic website *Aleteia* reports that Christians are being martyred just for refusing to renounce Christianity:

His name was Mathew Ayairga, a Black man from Chad. He was reportedly not a Christian, and yet, when he was asked "Do you reject Christ?" He indicated the beheaded men around him and said "Their God is my God," and so he was killed, too.

His story is the story of what happens when martyrs witnesses [sic] to Christ. Their faith attracts others. We all need to repeat his words again and again: "Their God is my God." Their faith is my faith; their hope is my hope. And that hope is strong (Hoopes 2023).

Here we have the modern equivalent of the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, in which the martyrs were condemned merely for saying "I am a Christian." The stories from ACN demonstrate not just the role of these contemporary martyrs as intercessors in Heaven, but also the role of their shrines and burial sites in the performance of miracles that help reinforce those who feel oppressed, just as the relics of martyrs, monks, and saints did in the ancient world.
When Pope John Paul II began his new martyr commission, he wrote, "[p]erhaps we were too used to thinking of the martyrs in rather distant terms, as though they were a category of the past, associated especially with the first centuries of the Christian era" (1994: 37). As I have demonstrated, martyrdom was an integral part of Christian belief, connected not just to the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus, but also to the danger that many Christians faced in the first

[19] https://www.lifezette.com/2018/03/assault-on-christians-should-be-lead-story-in-media/ [Accessed February 25, 2026].
[20] https://www.osvnews.com/modern-martyrs-give-witness-more-christians-than-ever-suffer-for-the-faith-worldwide/ [Accessed February 25, 2026].
[21] https://www.churchinneed.org/christian-persecution/ [Accessed February 25, 2026].


https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

three centuries of Christian history. After Constantine and the legalization of Christianity within the Roman Empire, the numbers of martyrs declined significantly.

The current emphasis on martyrs within the Catholic church revolves around the desire to explicitly connect contemporary Christians with a persecuted past. This converts the stories of suffering into structured theological meaning which serves to consolidate communal boundaries. One important theme that is stressed in these contemporary accounts is that these martyrs are Christians – not members of individual denominations. In the words of Pope Leo XIV in his commemoration of the Ecumenical Commemoration of Martyrs and Witnesses of the Faith of the Twenty-First Century (the product of Pope Francis's Commission of the New Martyrs - Witnesses of the Faith), "the ecumenism of blood unites Christians of different backgrounds who together give their lives for faith in Jesus Christ. The witness of their martyrdom is more eloquent than any word: unity comes from the Cross of the Lord."[22] Thus, it does not matter if the contemporary Christian martyrs are Catholic, Coptic, Orthodox, Protestant, *et cetera*, it only matters that they were "Christian." This current push to commemorate contemporary martyrs using ancient rhetoric appears to be an attempt at unifying the various Christian groups into an ecumenical Church, harkening back to a putative early unified Church which never truly existed, but exists in the memory of the persecuted early Church.

**Conclusion**

By embedding ancient martyr *typoi* of imitation, contest, and intercession in contemporary commemorative memory, today's Church reaffirms a transhistorical narrative of identity: persecuted yet triumphant, vulnerable yet expanding, facing persecution but in reality, "the true victors." The power of this narrative lies not only in its capacity to console those under perceived threat but also in its ability to sustain a common memory that transcends time and place. Precisely because of these characteristics, praising contemporary martyrs through the remembrance of the martyrs of the early Church helps to consolidate Christian unity in the face of an ever changing technological, political, and cultural landscape.

**Bibliography**


Aid to the Church in Need. 2020. Nigeria: Michael Nnadi & Bolanle Ataga—martyrs walking toward the barking dogs. https://www.churchinneed.org/nigeria-michael-nnadi-bolanle-ataga-martyrs-walking-toward-the-barking-dogs/

Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*. *PG* 26, cols. 835-976b.

Translated by Carolinne White. 1998. *Early Christian Lives, 1-70*. New York: Penguin.

Augustine. Sermon 306E. Edited and translated by François Dolbeau. 1996. *Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes.

Barnes, Timothy. 1968. Legislation Against the Christians. *JRS* 58:32-50.

Basil. *Epistulae*. Edited by Yves Courtonne, *Saint Basile. Lettres*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Basilica di S. Bartolomeo all'Isola, n.d. Sanctuary of the New Martyrs. https://sanbartolomeo.org/sanctuary-of-the-new-martyrs/?lang=en

Brakke, David. 1995. *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.


[22] https://www.osvnews.com/modern-martyrs-give-witness-more-christians-than-ever-suffer-for-the-faith-worldwide/ [Accessed February 25, 2026]; https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/modern-christian-martyrs-show-power-love-face-hatred-pope-says [Accessed February 25, 2026].



https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

Brakke, David. 2006. *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Brown, Peter. 1971. The Rise and Function of Holy Man in Late Antiquity. *Journal of Roman Studies* 61:80-101.
Brown, Peter. 1981. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Brown, Peter. 1983. The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity. *Representations* 2: 1–25.
Brown, Peter. 1988. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Buschmann, Gerd. 1998. *Das Martyrium des Polykarp*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Caner, Daniel. 2010. *History and Hagiography from the Late Antique Sinai: Including Translations of Pseudo-Nilus'* Narrations*, Ammonius'* Report on the Slaughter of the Monks of Sinai and Rhaithou*, and Anastasius of Sinai's* Tales of the Sinai fathers. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
Castelli, Elizabeth. 2004. *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Clark, Elizabeth. 1999. *Reading Renunciation Asceticism and Scripture in early Christianity*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Croix, G. E. M. de Ste. 1963. Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? *Past & Present* 26: 6-38.
Cyprian, *Epistulae.* Edited by Gerardus Diercks, and Graeme Clarke. 1999. Sancti Cypriani episcopi Epistularium. *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*. Turnholti: Brepols.
d'Avillez, Felipe. 2023. Egyptian martyrs bring orthodox, Catholics closer together. Aid to the Church in Need. May 16. https://www.churchinneed.org/egyptian-martyrs-bring-copts-catholics-closer-together/
Davis, Stephen. 2001. *The cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dunn, James. 1991. *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their significance for the character of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International.
Eusebius. *Historia ecclesiastica*. Edited and translated by Gustave Bardy. 1952-1958. *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf. SC 31, 41, 55.
Fox, Robin. 1986. *Pagans and Christians*. New York: Knopf.
Francis. 2019. General Audience, Saint Peter's Square, Sept. 25. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190925_udienza-generale.html
Francis. 2023. Letter of the Holy Father Francis constituting the "Commission of the New Martyrs - Witnesses of the Faith" at the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, 05.07.2023. https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2023/07/05/230705e.html
Frend, W.H.C. 1967. *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Christian Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*. New York: New York University Press.
Glatz, C. 2023. Martyrs next door: Modern day Christians who died for the faith will be honored. *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*. July 12. https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/martyrs-next-door-modern-day-christians-who-died-faith-will-be-honored
Grabar, André. 1971. *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*. London: Variorum Reprints.
Grégoire, Henri, Paul Orgels, Jacques Moreau, and André Maricq. 1964. *Les persécutions dans l'Empire romain*. 2nd ed. Bruxelles: Palais des Académies.
Grig, Lucy. 2004. *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity*. London: Duckworth.
Harmless, Watt. 2004. *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.


https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

Harvey, Sarah. 1990. The Edessan Martyrs and the Ascetic tradition. *Symposium Syriacum 1988*: 195-206.
Hayward, Paul and James Howard-Johnston. 1999. *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Henten, Jan van. 1997. *The Maccabean Martyrs as saviors of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*. Leiden; New York: Brill.
Hoopes, Tom. 2023. Our greatest hope: The 21st century proves the faith is strong. *Aleteia*. Feb. 20.
https://aleteia.org/2023/02/20/our-greatest-hope-the-21st-century-proves-the-faith-is-strong/
Hopkins, Keith. 1998. Christian Number and Its Implications. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (2):185-226.
Hopkins, Keith. 1999. *A World Full of Gods: Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Roman Empire*. New York: Penguin.
Hunter, David. 1999. Vigilantius of Calagurris and Victricius of Rouen: Ascetics, Relics, and Clerics in Late Roman Gaul. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (3): 401-430.
John Paul II. Tertio Millenio Adveniente**.** *Epistula Apostoslica***.** November 10. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19941110_tertio-millennio-adveniente.html
Klijn, Albertus and Gerrit Reinink. 1973. *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*. Leiden: Brill.
Limberis, Vasiliki. 2011. *Architects of piety: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Cult of the Martyrs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Malone, Edward. 1950. *The Monk and the Martyr: The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr.* Washington: Catholic University of America Press.
*Martyrdom of Polycarp.* Edited by Gerd Buschmann. 1998. *Das Martyrium des Polykarp*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Translated by Kirsopp Lake. 1912. *The Apostolic Fathers*. London: W. Heinemann.
*Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. Edited by J. Armitage Robinson. 1891. *The passion of S.* Perpetua, 61-95. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Translated by Herbert Musurillo. 1972. *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 106-131. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
*Martyrdom of Marian and James*. Edited and translated by Herbert Musurillo. 1972. *The acts of the Christian martyrs*, 194-213. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Matthews, Shelly. 2010. *Perfect Martyr: The Stoning of Stephen and the Construction of Christian Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
McDonnell, Myles. 2006. *Roman manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Moss, Candida. 2010. *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Mratshek, Sigrid. 2001. "*Multis enim notissima est sanctitas loci*: Paulinus and the Gradual Rise of Nola as a Center of Christian Hospitality." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (4): 511-553.
Pliny the Younger. *Epistulae*. Edited by Roger Mynors. 1963. *Epistularum libri decem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Translated by Betty Radice. 1963. *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*. London: Penguin.
Pseudo-Nilus. *Narrationes.* Edited by Frank Conca. 1983. Leipzig: B.G. Teubner.
Commentary and translation by Michael Link. 2005. *Die Erzählung des Pseudo-Neilos - ein spätantiker Märtyrerroman: Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar.* Munich: K. G. Saur.
Translated by Daniel Caner. 2010 *History and Hagiography From the Late Antique Sinai: Including Translations of Pseudo-Nilus'* Narrations*, Ammonius'* Report On the Slaughter of the


https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335

Monks of Sinai and Rhaithou*, and Anastasius of Sinai's* Tales of the Sinai Fathers. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
Rives, James. 1999. The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire. *Journal of Roman Studies* 89: 135-154.
Salisbury, Joyce. 1997. *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman*. New York: Routledge.
Scanlon, Thomas. 2002. *Eros and Greek Athletics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Seesengood, Robert. 2006. *Competing Identities: The Athlete and the Gladiator in Early Christianity*. New York: T & T Clark.
Selinger, Reinhard. 2002. *The Mid-Third Century Persecutions of Decius and Valerian*. Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang.
Shaw, Brent. 1993. The Passion of Perpetua. *Past & Present* 139:3-45.
Sizgorich, Thomas. 2009. *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Tacitus. *Annales*. Edited by Henry Furneaux. 1896. *Cornelii Taciti Annalium ab excessu divi Augusti libri: the annals of Tacitus.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Translated by Anthony Woodman. 2004. *The Annals*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub.
Tertullian. *Apology*. Edited by Heinrich Hoppe. 1939. CSEL 69.
Translated by Emily Daly. 1950. *Apologetical Works*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press. Pp. 7-126.
Tertullian *Ad Martyras*. Edited by Vincent Bulhart. 1957. CSEL 76.
Translated by T. Herbert Bindley. 1900. *The Epistle of the Gallican Churches*, 51-61. London: SPCK.
Ward, Walter. 2015. *Mirage of the Saracen: Christians and Nomads in the Sinai Peninsula in Late Antiquity*. Los Angeles, Berkeley: University of California Press.
Williams, Craig. 1999. *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Williams, Daniel. 1995. *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Nicene-Arian Conflicts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.


https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18774335