Martyrdom in Early Christianity & Islam

History 100WM
Pomona College
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Description

Martyrdom played a key role in the formation of Christianity during the first three centuries of its existence, much more than it had played or would play in the Jewish tradition. Even after the Roman Empire suspended its "persecutions" and embraced the church in the fourth century, the cult of saints — built on the physical remains of the martyrs—kept their memories alive and guaranteed their continued influence. The prominence of martyrdom and martyr veneration in the late antique Christian tradition was a major factor in shaping the idea of martyrdom that emerged within Islam beginning in the seventh century.

Schedule

1. Introduction: Prudentius and St. Lawrence
   - Prudentius, Crowns of Martyrdom II (c. 400), pp. 109-143 (alt. pages).

2. Background: Martyrdom in the Christian Bible
   - John, Philippians 19
   - Selections from Old Testament
     - Genesis 22 (Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac)
     - Daniel 3, 6 (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace, & Daniel in the lion's den)
     - 2 Maccabees 6-7 (Eleazar and the mother with her seven sons)

   - Tacitus, Annals 15 (109 CE)
   - Pliny, Letter to Trajan (117 CE)
   - Ignatius (d. 107), Letter to the Romans
   - Martyrdom of Polycarp (d. 155)
• The Martyrs of Lyons (177 CE)


  • Plato, *The Apology* (399 BCE)
  • Martyrdom of Carpus, Papylius, Agathonice (d. 170)
  • Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs (d. 180)
  • Martyrdom of Perpetua & Felicitas (d. 203)
  • Martyrdom of Pionius (d. 250)


  • Apochryphal Acts of St. Peter (late 2C)
  • Clement of Alexandria (d. 215), *Stromata* 4
  • Origen, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* (c. 235)
  • Tertullian (d. 220), *On Flight in Persecution*
  • Pontius, *Life of Cyprian* (d. 258)


  • Ignatius (d. 107), Letter to the Romans
  • Aelius Aristides (d. 181), *Sacred Tales*


  • The Martyrs of Lyons (177 CE)
  • Martyrdom of Perpetua & Felicitas (d. 203)
  • Acts of Paul and Thecla.

8. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*

  • Augustine, *City of God*, Book 22 (selections)


  • *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (late 2C)


  • Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* (851)