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Brad S. Gregory. *Salvation at Stake : Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999. xvi + 528 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-78551-9.

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It is a pleasure to report that this book is deserving of the praise, both in reviews and awards, that it has received. The difficulty of reviewing such a work comes in trying to provide a concise glimpse of the wealth of research contained between its covers. Professor Gregory, an assistant professor of History at Stanford University, has already received several awards for this book, most recently from the American Catholic Historical Association. The author succeeds not only in his attempt to understand martyrs and their followings cross-confessionally (Anabaptist, Catholic and Protestant), during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but in others as well. For example, in discussions of historiography and theory this study provides lively and informative arguments to challenge recent academic conventions.

Dr. Gregory argues that the three traditions of martyrs are best studied together because, "What made sixteenth-century Christianity so explosive was the combination of shared and incompatible beliefs" (p. 342). He reminds us how much early modern Christians held in common, and how little they were actually debating about. Foremost amongst the commonalities was a shared tradition of medieval Christianity. The book examines all cases of martyrdom that occurred in Europe during the early modern period. The most significant exclusion, and a necessary one(for brevity's sake), was of those Catholics martyred in missions abroad. Martyrs are defined as those whom some group recognized as such, with one further limitation, that they were usually executed by an authority.

The clarity of argument throughout the work is remarkable for such a compendious study covering so much time and such a variety of traditions. The argument with the greatest implications is that, while the martyrs held the same beliefs as their co-religionists, their deaths forced others to demand doctrinal purity and avoid compromise with other Christians. This made it virtually impossible for their followers to compromise with other Christians without shaming the memory of their martyrs. Gregory argues that as early as 1535 it was clear that the martyrs had made it too difficult for Catholics and Protestants to compromise in matters of doctrine. Early Protestant leaders, Calvin in particular, emphasized that they could not go back once blood had been shed.

The range of materials that the author marshals to build his argument are impressive. He should be praised in particular for his extensive use of woodcuts, artwork, pamphlets and private letters to help us understand the interior life of martyrs and those who chose to memorialize them.

The author reserves his sharpest words for those who would depend on cultural theory to understand early modern Christians. He emphasizes that "Any depiction of sixteenth century Christians is intended to be one in which they would have recognized themselves" (p. 11). In addition, the author suggests that too much Reformation research today examines the period exclusively in its social dimension, while ignoring the centrality of religious and intellectual matters. Martyrs were going to their deaths over fine points of doctrine, and their ranks included more than intellectuals and Church leaders. Hell was not a cultural construct for early modern people. It was a very real and troubling place.

For the most part, the author finds martyrological sources useful because they were frequently honest(describing events that took place in front of large crowds) and because they wrote contemporary accounts that were published quickly. There are exceptions of course, including writers like John Foxe who rewrote accounts of various martyrs to show a unity of doctrine and belief among a great variety of Protestants.

The inclusion of Anabaptists in this work increases its value considerably. The comparison of three traditions is instructive and shows the variety and unity that could be found amongst the three traditions. Anabaptists, in particular, used music to memorialize martyrs and the author does a convincing job of explaining these sources

to the reader. In a similar fashion, he discusses Catholic veneration of relics and the intricacies of Foxe's writings with great care. In all three traditions it becomes clear that the types of written memorials changed over time. The shift was from the immediacy of pamphlets and small books to more extensive texts and illustrated studies. A table (p. 245) vividly portrays the change in the dimensions of martyrologies over time.

Catholic martyrs took on roles that would never be assigned to Protestant and Anabaptist martyrs. Their role as saintly intercessors began as soon as they were killed. It is striking to discover that no Catholic martyr of the early modern period was canonized before 1700. The Catholic Church was concerned about how to talk about martyrs and what they might mean for the wider Church. Even More and Fisher, although famous before their deaths, were memorialized in only very limited ways. The difficulty for Catholics was that their martyrs came across as individuals. In other traditions martyrs were usually viewed as random members picked from a closely consolidated group. Protestants clearly saw their martyrs as prophetic symbols of a new age in Christianity, but what were Catholic martyrs to symbolize? The killing of Catholic martyrs was primarily limited to England and the Netherlands. The shift in the pattern of memorialization occurred when it became clear in the 1580s that England would remain Protestant. Until that time Catholics were trying to play a waiting game. Once they realized that further change was not forthcoming, martyrs were memorialized in an attempt to win converts over to Catholicism. These issues are presented in a striking manner because they are compared so closely to Protestant and Anabaptist experiences. It is at times like this that the reader really benefits from the author's comparative framework.

It is difficult to come up with a pithy description of such an impressive work, but perhaps encyclopedic would be the most appropriate descriptor. In particular the author should be praised for bringing together a discussion of three traditions. It is heartening to see such a compendious study that succeeds in explaining such a vast topic while relying on primary materials more than theory.

It would be interesting to see more research about how overseas Catholic martyrs were viewed at this time. Certainly that information goes beyond the scope of this book, but it might help us to further understand the unique memorialization of Catholic martyrs within Europe. Read in conjunction with Robert Royal's recent *The Catholic Martyrs of the Twentieth Century*, students would have a firm grasp of the position of Christian martyrs in modern history.

The crucial role of these martyrs was that they clearly marked off the difference between early modern Christians. Gregory is right to remind us how very much these people held in common. The skeletal outlines of all three sets of doctrine were the same. The martyrs dramatically marked off the crucial areas of difference, those matters of doctrine worth dying for.

In the concluding pages, there is an edifying discussion of religious toleration which should not be missed. The expectation that a Zwingli or an Ignatius Loyola would choose toleration over a search for pure truth, for the author, is a particularly troubling anachronism. Martyrdom cannot be understood unless we take the concept of religious belief and conviction seriously. Gregory's chastisements of theory and anachronisms are at times heavy-handed but they serve a purpose here and help make the book that much stronger. He is right to suggest that some well researched modern works on early modern religion fail because they do not accept the world view of the people that they write about.

The martyrs of the Reformation were not marginal characters, they were simply believers who were tested. The doctrinal disputes over which they died were not academic squabbles amongst Bishops and Professors, but central debates for everyone in the communities effected. The compilation and interpretation of letters, pamphlets, music, relics, sermons, woodcuts, and many other sources in this work are proof positive of the author's contention that the martyrs drew popular followings in their struggles over doctrine and belief. This is a study so profound that it should be read by anyone venturing into research on any aspect of early modern religion.

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