

Yahweh may in some cases accept idol worship as to himself (299) and that Jesus called the Syrophenician woman not a “dog” but the pejorative female version in order to denounce societal norms. Admittedly, for an iconoclastic treatise such as this, incendiary ideas are to be expected, but some of these can become a distraction. Certainly, the participation of animals in the purification rituals of the Assyrians—whether fictional or real—need not mean that animals themselves repented (cf. Jonah 3:8). Considering the heavy emphasis on cultic purity and the condemnation of idol worship in Scripture, it is a stretch to conclude that it would ever be acceptable to God. Most would cringe at the idea of Jesus using derogatory language towards a woman.

However, given the contribution this book makes to discussions on the intersection of biblical hermeneutics and traditional theism, these objections are not necessarily fatal. What you take away from the book is a call to say “No!” to everything that may have appeared to be *textually* certain about God, but that, ultimately, may be *theologically* inconsistent with his character as revealed in Jesus—even if you disagree with the circuitous way Korpman often arrives at his conclusions. But neither does Korpman expect full agreement, and saying “No!” to some of his unconvincing solutions is part of the very process he hopes to unleash. As he puts it: “I’m less interested in whether you agree with *how* I approach a topic, than whether you have begun to recognize the legitimacy of why we need to engage these issues” (308). More conservative readers would do well to consider whether it is preferable to have millennial Christians tackling these issues in ways that may be perceived as irreverent, or risk losing them because difficult but legitimate questions are off limits.

In sum, *Saying No to God* articulates a cogent postmodern biblical metanarrative that challenges hyper-orthodox approaches to Scripture and traditional theism. Because the author is at ease in the realms of biblical criticism as well as orthodoxy, his book could serve as a bridge over the hermeneutical chasm separating post-biblicism on one side, and fundamentalism on the other. As such, it could be a helpful resource for undergraduate religion courses.

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Lapidge, Michael. *The Roman Martyrs: Introduction, Translations, and Commentary*. OPCS. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. xvi + 733 pp. Hardcover. USD 170.00.

This tome brings a collection of forty Latin narratives of martyrdom (*passio*) from the region of Rome, presumably composed between AD 400–700. Lapidge did a great favor to the field in bringing these narratives together with comments alongside. These are hardly accessible texts, mostly available in the

sixty-eight Bollandist volumes of the *Acta Sanctorum* (AD 1643–1925). Even trained Latinists and historians—as Lapidge explains in his preface—have not paid much attention to them, although they are indispensable for learning about late Latin Christianity. Besides the English translations of forty martyr stories, it comes with maps of ancient Rome, a general introduction of forty-two pages, individual introductions and notes for each *passio*, a glossary, five appendices, and indexes of people, places, and general things that prove to be quite helpful when one is trying to compare a given *passio* with another.

Lapidge is a retired professor previously active at Notre Dame and Oxford, an expert in Latin literature of the early Medieval period, having as his latest work *Bede's Latin Poetry* (series Oxford Medieval Texts [New York: Oxford University Press, 2019]). In the introduction and notes of the *passiones*, the reader will find the mature reflection of a scholar of decades-long experience. Those interested in the history of biblical interpretation will find especially valuable the notes referring to the version of biblical texts used in the *passiones*.

Putting aside the scholarly notes and introductions, the book brings a group of stories that are just fun to read. His translation flows easily and makes a great source for Christian inspirational stories. These are examples of Christian faith and perseverance amid trials, highlighting the power of God against the political forces controlled by demonic influences and the promises of eternal life. Catholics will certainly be familiar with the names of some of these saints (e.g., S. Agnes) since they are mentioned in liturgy. Like Foxes' *Book of Martyrs* in the Reformation period, Christians, in general, can benefit from the reading of these *passiones*, of course with a careful eye to the details (e.g., immortality of the soul).

The stories are quite similar in the sequence of the plot. There is a Christian who is handed over to the Roman authorities to sacrifice to pagan gods. The Christian declares unswerving faithfulness to Jesus and is executed. The body of the martyr is recovered and deposited in a set place for veneration. Frequently, miracles result in the conversion of many, and the long speeches narrate the irrationality of paganism and the eternal rewards of Christianity. They were very popular in the medieval period, when most of them were copied or even composed in their final form. Sources of these *passiones* vary (39–41). Because they were quite popular stories in medieval Europe, most appear in hundreds of manuscripts from the late medieval period (e.g., more than five hundred of the story of S. Sebastian [III]). However, there is one case where the narrative is recorded only in a manuscript from the sixteenth century, the story of SS. Felix and Adauctus (XXXV).

The selection of stories about martyrdom (*passiones*) are organized by date of composition and not on the chronology of the events described (35). These compositional dates are debated in scholarship and remain hard to establish. Although most of the *passiones* describe stories that presum-

ably happened between the first and fourth centuries of the Christian Era, Lapidge dates their final composition between the fifth and seventh centuries. In posting tentative dates for the final composition of these works, Lapidge applies his wide knowledge of Christianity in Late Antique Rome and his command of the literature on archaeology and history of Roman Christian burial (mostly in German, French, and Italian), and sheds some light on the religious emphasis in the cult of the saints in Medieval Rome.

On establishing the dates of composition, he acknowledges his debt to the Bollandists, who were the first to systematically engage martyrologies with critical eyes. The discrepancies in chronology and historical information are exposed in many of Lapidge's notes. For example, Lucina is the name given to the pious Christian who often would rescue the body of the martyr in stories ranging from first-century rule of Nero to the fourth-century government of Diocletian (fourth century [33]). The conflation of names is also evident in the *passio* of S. Polychronius (XVI, an expansion of VI) where both the emperor Decius and the prefect Valerian preside at the trial and execution of Pope Sixtus II and S. Laurence. It is known from Cyprian that they were killed in the persecution of Valerian in AD 258 (23). By then, Decius was already dead (d. AD 251). The method of execution also raises suspicion.

As Lapidge notes, although the tortures and way of executing the saints are broadly conceived as a reflection of what is known from ancient Roman sources, there are hints of exaggeration (26–29). Lapidge writes a whole list of the punishments from the *passiones* and argues that the exaggeration comes from the fact that most martyrs are described as wealthy Roman citizens who, upon conviction, would normally be punished with deportation or decapitation. Crucifixion, while very common pre-Constantine, is not mentioned once in the *passiones*. Lapidge might have a point, but, interestingly, the majority of executions in the *passiones* are actually by decapitation, very few Christians are deported, and many are brutally punished. This agrees with the characteristics of Roman punishments described by Lapidge himself. Painful tortures, such as pouring molten metal in the mouth of the condemned, are rare both in Roman sources and in the *passiones* (XXI, S. Primus).

Although the stories do have some inconsistencies, I do not find a reason to doubt the stories completely, as Lapidge seems to do. He labels them “pure fiction” (269, et al.), dismissing the importance and even reliability of oral tradition. If there is an extreme in seeing everything in these *passiones* as being real, the other danger is to dismiss them *completely*. And this because—as Lapidge himself recognizes—many of these martyrs are probably authentic historical figures and there is “no way of proving” the details of their lives as narrated by these *passiones*. One can't confirm all the details or deny them, unless other reputable sources say otherwise. The authenticity of at least the core plot, a Christian persecuted by Roman authorities, is suggested in sources that pre-date their composition, at least

in their final form. The general description of persecution by Tertullian and Cyprian in the equivalent period, when the *passiones* allegedly took place, testifies to the reality of Roman antagonism to Christianity. Furthermore, as recognized throughout in Lapidge's notes and appendices, the *passiones* correlate with mid-fourth-century epigrams of Damasus (inscriptions found in tomb stones) and the *deposition martyrum* (list of martyrs) which list the names alongside a few details of some of these Roman martyrs. Lapidge translates both and makes them available in the appendices with other important lists of the Roman martyrs from the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, pilgrim itineraries to Roman churches of the seventh century, and a list of saints days from different sacramentaries or liturgical books (e.g., Veronese, Old Gelasian).

On another note, the number of details of the spaces in the city of Rome, as discussed by Lapidge, is commendable (e.g., introduction to passion VI of SS. Sixtus, Laurence, and Hippolytus). In the notes he explains briefly the locations and the archaeological findings of the places referred to in the *passiones*. For those seeking an entrance into the world of Christian Roman archaeology, alongside stories, this is a great resource with many bibliographical references. These ancient stories are an "indispensable resource for understanding the topography of late antique Rome and its environs" (back cover) and how Christians interacted with them. As Peter Brown has characteristically explained, the Christian devotion of the dead saints transformed the topography of the pagan city of Rome into a Christian holy place, based on the religious imagination of these accounts. The main focus of human and divine attention was no longer at the center of the city—with its pagan temples and kingly palaces—but with the periphery and the cemeteries that become special places in Christian Rome (Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Enlarged ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015], ch. 1). The present collection of stories testifies to this insight of looking at history from a geographic perspective.

As a young scholar, I highly appreciate the efforts of mature scholars such as Lapidge in translating ancient stories which are so significant in Christian history. The Oxford Early Christian Texts (OECT), and the Translated Texts for Historians (TTH), have made accessible to English speaking audiences many ancient texts not found in well-known translations of early Christian literature such as the Ante-Nicene Fathers (ANF) and the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Church (NPNF), Ancient Christian Writers (ACW), and the Fathers of the Church (FC). These series (OECT and TTH) have published translations of Priscilla of Avila, Papias, Adrian, and other writers not considered main stream or well-known in Christianity.

On this note, I do not understand why Lapidge's work on the *Roman Martyrs* is part of the series the Oxford Early Christian Studies (OECS) and not part of the Oxford Early Christian Texts (OECT). The latter is the best

fit for translations of primary texts, such as this collection of Roman *passiones*. The advertisement inside of the book for the series OECS is intriguing, with titles such as *Damasus of Rome* by Dennis Trout, a work referred frequently by Lapidge himself.

There is one graphic design detail lacking that would improve the layout of the book: clear subtitles. The introductions of the *passiones* are indistinguishable visually from the text of the *passion*. At a quick look, one does not know where one starts and the other ends. Apart from this observation, the book looks great and is an opportune collection of ancient Christian texts. I will certainly use portions of it in classes on early Christianity and the history of biblical interpretation, in order to show my students the richness of Christian faith and imagination.

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Martin F. Hanna, Darius W. Jankiewicz, and John W. Reeve, eds., *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology*. Theological Studies 11. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018. xiii + 478 pp. Softcover. USD 29.99.

Debates and discussions over salvation—what salvation is, how it works, and what it means—are not new phenomena within Christian history. Even the apostolic church had questions and arguments over salvation. For example, some in the early church were debating whether Gentiles first had to perform preparatory works—specifically circumcision, which would indicate a conversion to Judaism—before they could receive the Messiah. The Jerusalem Council, along with Paul and the other apostles (Acts 15; Gal 2:1–10), responded with the message of righteousness/justification by faith alone.

It should not surprise us, then, that the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) movement has experienced similar controversies which impact individuals and congregations to this day. One of our more famous debates came at the 1888 General Conference in Minneapolis and, like the early church, agitations over salvation have continued even into our present situation. Whether agitating over the meaning of the 1888 understanding of the Gospel, debating over Christian perfection and what it means, or encountering variants of Moral Influence Soteriology—which rejects the idea that humans are condemned under a legal penalty, for which Christ died a substitutionary death—Adventists continue discussing and debating the message and meaning of salvation. Within this context, I expected a publication edited by professors from the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University to wade into these frays and address each viewpoint. Instead, I discovered that *Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology* seeks to explore the key nuances—or contours—of