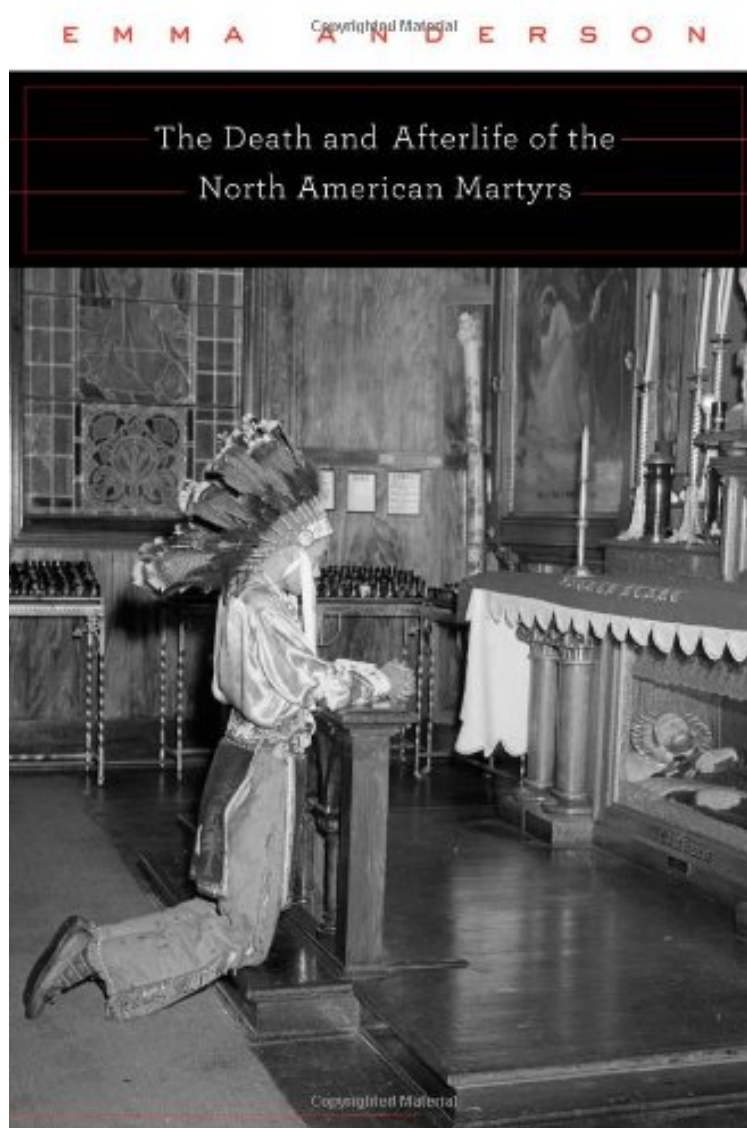


(Mobile book) The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs

# The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs

Emma Anderson

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**Emma Anderson : The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Superb Book about North American Religious HistoryBy Thomas J. FarrellIn her book THE DEATH AND AFTERLIFE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN MARTYRS (Harvard University Press, 2013), Emma Anderson (born 1970), a Canadian who holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University and teaches at the University of Ottawa, comes across as extremely articulate and fair-minded as she presents contested

material about the deaths of eight European white men in the 1640s who are known collectively in the Roman Catholic Church today as the North American martyrs. Their official recognition in the Roman Catholic Church came in 1930 - almost three centuries after their deaths. Because her book was published by Harvard University Press, perhaps we should note here that Harvard College was founded in 1636 in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Before that, John Winthrop had formulated his famous words about "a city on a hill" - words that various presidents of the United States have quoted. To the north of Massachusetts Bay Colony, French Jesuits embarked as missionaries to convert the native peoples of North America there. The Jesuit order was founded by St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556). Jesuit missionaries went to India (St. Francis Xavier), China (Matteo Ricci), and South America. The 1986 movie "The Mission" commemorates Jesuit missionaries to South America. The native peoples in North America lived in groups. But the groups formed alliances for the purposes of warfare and protection. The French Jesuit missionaries worked primarily with the native peoples in the alliance known as the Hurons (also known as the Wendat alliance). In the 1640s, the Wendat alliance sporadically engaged in warfare with the Iroquois alliance. The eight European white men who are known as the North American martyrs died at the hands of native people in the Iroquois alliance - as did many Wendat people. But the eight did not die at one time, nor in only one place. Anderson vividly recounts how each of them died. (She likes to write vividly - everything in the book is written vividly. She does not flinch from vividly describing the ritual torture involved in the deaths of Jean de Brebeuf, S.J., and Gabriel Lalemant, S.J., in detail [on page 44].) When the international border between the United States and Canada emerged historically, it turned out that three of the eight had died in what is now the state of New York. The other five died in different outposts in Canada. Today there is a shrine to the North American martyrs in Auriesville, New York, and a shrine in Midlands, Ontario. In 1984, when Pope John-Paul II visited Canada, he celebrated an outdoor Mass at the Midlands shrine (see page 271). What she refers to as the afterlife of the North American martyrs refers to various events that unfolded after their deaths. Some of those events are colorful - most notably the pageant organized at Midlands by Fr. Daniel Lord, S.J., a staunch anticommunist, during the Cold War (see pages 165-172).

I mentioned contested material. Anderson's entire book is primarily devoted to discussing the issues involved in the various contested points. She is excellent at presenting all the contested points. As I said, she is fair-minded. I admire her fair-mindedness.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An ongoing afterlife into the present

By Richard G. Eddy

As a child I visited the reconstructed Huron village in the Georgian Bay region of Ontario, Canada. Along with the stereotypic souvenirs I brought home with me a budding interest in the history of the indigenous/first peoples of North America. As I grew up on what is today Western New York soil this interest never left me. Many archeological sites and current Native American reservations dot the landscape of Upstate New York. As an adult I have viewed the Bruce Beresford film "Blackrobe," an adaptation of Brian Moore's novel depicting North American martyrdom, several times. Prof. Anderson's volume is the depth beyond the popular interpretations of this conflicted era. Reading "The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs" has brought me full circle to grasp the enduring meaning of the deaths of these European religious figures, and the resulting cultic following which has endured for centuries. Prof. Anderson does a fine job of explaining how these figures and peoples were no one-time blip on our historical stage. Their continuous legacy has been interpreted and re-interpreted by various individuals and groups, both Christian and secular, as the years have passed. This is a demanding book in that it requires some sense of the martyrs' original historical context, as well as the development of American and worldwide interest in the cult of martyrs for almost 400 years. It is a seminal book in its correlation of history ongoing with history complete. Prof. Anderson's ability to locate the North American martyrs' reality in our current world is the main contribution of this volume and its author.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent and stimulating

By Mississippi Bill

An excellent book by a very gifted scholar. This is no dry academic treatise, though it certainly is academic. With a lively style that vividly brings the Jesuit martyrs and the legacy of their memories to life, Dr. Anderson very effectively traces the development of their memory and cult, both from its origin in the moments following their very martyrdom to the present. Across the span of nearly 400 years, their symbolic power continues to invite redefinition and adoption. For example, in the 19th and early 20th Centuries, the Martyrs' memory became vehicles to articulate desired identities. In Canada, this meant a separate French Canadian identity as a distinguishing mark. In America, it meant assimilation and inclusion for all, Protestant or Catholic, under a unifying banner of common American-ness because three of them perished within the nation's boundaries. Today, the meaning of the Martyrs continues to change, even reverse. In Canada, that reversal is seen in recreating their symbolic meaning in new ways that are more abstract. Their work with the native populations as a sign of outreach is stressed, not their physical suffering, and the Martyrs become unifying symbols for all Canadians. The Martyrs' deaths and religious cult are disinvested of the emotional content fueling their symbolic power. In America, in contrast, for many their influence now rests in their physical example. The Martyrs symbolize a faithful witness unto death as they engaged a contemporary culture hostile to missionary designs and beliefs. Here, the emotional content of the Martyrs narrative is retained as a unifying bond yet is reinterpreted to the present and re-energizes as it also inspires and consoles. For each group, the symbolic power of the North American Martyrs is valorized with meanings drawn from the present and thus redefined in more contextual, if still spiritual, terms. Her interviews with religious leaders on both sides of the geographic and ethnic borders are particularly illuminating in this regard. The

Martyrs' missions and deaths then take on multiple, at times contradictory, meanings across various groups competing to define them-- as reflected in the canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, as unwanted intruders into natives' worlds, as focal points to rally native populations to return to their pre-contact traditions, as illustrations of how the Church historically reaches out to others, as indictments of the Church for prejudicially not canonizing fellow native Martyrs who died similarly, and as rallying points for transforming contemporary culture through the power of their spiritual testimony. In dealing with these understandably sensitive topics, Dr. Anderson is balanced and thorough. The reader leaves with a deeper understanding of how religious memory is dynamic and reflective of broader trends within the social world of those who strive to shape it. It speaks to the quality of this book, that one leaves it reflecting more deeply upon the implications for our own time. What is the future of the Martyrs as religious symbols, as their human elements (death, loyalty, love, sacrifice, fear, anger, etc. to which people easily relate) are dis-incarnated from their memorialization by religious elites and replaced by more abstract ideals? Will there be enough residual emotion to capture sufficient veneration that the Martyrs can be redefined again at all? To what degree will downplaying the material display of their martyrdoms (as at the Canadian shrine and less so at the American) neutralize their emotional power? Will their cult soon perish as it loses its vibrancy, and what are the implications for this in terms of devotion? Will people's emotions shift to another religious symbol that retains its power to draw them together in veneration? Or, will the symbolic power of the Martyrs be colonized and defined by grassroots movements as a counterpoise to elite redefinitions noted earlier? Every chapter is well done. But in particular, her first two chapters set up the remainder of her analysis. She illustrates how the Jesuits' and Iroquois' competing definitions of suffering and death complemented each other in such a way as to lead to the near inevitable result of the Martyrs' deaths. This sets into motion the underlying dynamic of her book: How different groups define the real activities, deaths, and memories of the Martyrs and then mold them into symbolic vehicles around which their own interests solidify and gather momentum. She assembles an enormous amount of material and draws her conclusions from multiple sources--the Jesuit Relations, correspondence, visual analyses of the Canadian and American shrines, and even some fieldwork and interviews with contemporary Canadian and American devotees and disparagers. Truly, an excellent and stimulating book.

In the 1640s--a decade of epidemic and warfare across colonial North America--eight Jesuit missionaries met their deaths at the hands of native antagonists. With their collective canonization in 1930, these men, known to the devout as the North American martyrs, would become the continent's first official Catholic saints. In *The Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs*, Emma Anderson untangles the complexities of these seminal acts of violence and their ever-changing legacy across the centuries. While exploring how Jesuit missionaries perceived their terrifying final hours, the work also seeks to comprehend the motivations of the those who confronted them from the other side of the axe, musket, or caldron of boiling water, and to illuminate the experiences of those native Catholics who, though they died alongside their missionary mentors, have yet to receive comparable recognition as martyrs by the Catholic Church. In tracing the creation and evolution of the cult of the martyrs across the centuries, Anderson reveals the ways in which both believers and detractors have honored and preserved the memory of the martyrs in this "afterlife," and how their powerful story has been continually reinterpreted in the collective imagination over the centuries. As rival shrines rose to honor the martyrs on either side of the U.S.-Canadian border, these figures would both unite and deeply divide natives and non-natives, francophones and anglophones, Protestants and Catholics, Canadians and Americans, forging a legacy as controversial as it has been enduring.

Emma Anderson has done something awe-inspiring: she has breathed life into the evocative story of the North American martyrs and their legacy. What's most exciting is that she has accomplished this with both the hand of a great storyteller and the mind of a brilliant scholar. (Joseph Boyden, author of *The Orenda*) This beautifully written study of how the Jesuit martyrs have been remembered and reinvented in the popular Catholic imagination is without rival in terms of its scope, ambition, and achievement. I enthusiastically recommend it. (Kathleen Sprows Cummings, author of *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era*) The eight men who became North America's first canonized saints have been imagined and appropriated in many ways by both Euro-Americans and Amerindians on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border. With vivid style and powerful insight, Anderson explores the history and changing interpretations of the martyrs' deaths, which, three centuries later, continue to serve as powerful cultural and spiritual symbols. (Dominique Deslandres, author of *Croire et faire croire: Les missions francaises au XVIIIe siecle*) In a lively and engaging style, Anderson recreates the story of Jesuit missionaries killed in the seventeenth century. More importantly, she uncovers the different meanings given to their deaths by American Catholics, Canadian nationalists, and Native people across the centuries. A fascinating book. (Allan Greer, author of *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits*) This richly imagined book is a delight to read. In prose of exquisite, often sensuous detail and striking immediacy, Anderson offers a compelling history that opens up important questions in the study of religion. Her account of Brbeuf's torture and death is a tour-de-force, while her treatment of the interactions between Native Americans and Europeans is psychologically acute and emotionally resonant. (Robert A. Orsi, author of *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study*

Them)This beautifully written book about memory will be widely praised. It respectfully analyzes the practices and worldviews of both aboriginal peoples and European missionaries. It combines historical and ethnographic methods to craft a story that ranges from the seventeenth century to the present. And, at a time when many scholars are trumpeting comparative and transnational studies, it provides a model for those who want to write religious history across national borders. (Thomas A. Tweed, author of *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*)[A] fascinating book. (Nathan M. Greenfield *Times Literary Supplement* 2014-04-11)[An] innovative history that crosses disciplines. (R. Berleant-Schiller *Choice* 2014-05-01)[Anderson] succeeds in illuminating the martyrs long afterlife, sketching along the way some major contours of Canadian history while keeping American and French contexts in mind as wellAs a comparative and multinational work, this book is exemplaryFrom the first page to the last, this beautifully written, smartly crafted, and assiduously researched book models the kind of empathetic, honest, and nuanced approach that characterizes history at its best. (Danae Jacobson *Books Culture* 2014-06-01)Anderson has masterfully traced the evolution of the martyrs myth to the present dayIt is a fascinating read. (Michael Stogre *America* 2014-09-29)Emma Anderson has written a big book packed with fascinating information and insightsThe *Death and Afterlife of the North American Martyrs* offers a rich and valuable study of the construction of memory as evidenced in this ever-evolving, ever-contested cult. (Jodi Bilinkoff *American Historical* 2014-12-01)About the AuthorEmma Anderson is Associate Professor of North American Religious History at the University of Ottawa.