



Volume 65 | Issue 1

Article 68

12-1-2022

Evdokimov & Cléments' "Two martyrs in a godless world: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alexander Men" (book review)

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Recommended Citation

McCormick, Jonathan (2022) "Evdokimov & Cléments' "Two martyrs in a godless world: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alexander Men" (book review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 65: Iss. 1, Article 68. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.2388>

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Book Review



Evdokimov, M., & O. Clément. (2021). *Two martyrs in a godless world: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alexander Men*. (Jeremy N. Ingpen, Trans.). Hyde Park, NT: New City Press. 160 pp. \$24.95 ISBN: 9781565483842

Two Martyrs in a Godless World is a translation of *Deux martyrs dans un monde sans Dieu: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Alexandre Men* by Evdokimov and “La mission commune des chrétiens dans la ville aujourd’hui” by Olivier. Michel Evdokimov was Professor of Comparative Literature at Université de Poitiers. He wrote a previous book on Alexander Men, *Petite vie du père Men, un prêtre pour notre temps*. His website is <https://michelevdokimov.fr/> Olivier Clément taught at St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute. Jeremy N. Ingpen translated *Transfigurer le temps; notes sur le temps à la lumière de la tradition orthodoxe* by Olivier Clément.

Two Martyrs in a Godless World compares two theologians and ministers who labored under governments oppressive to Christianity and died for their faith. The work is directed toward a popular audience. The introduction identifies major theological themes common to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alexander Men regarding ecclesiology and political theology. Part I is a biographical sketch of Bonhoeffer with attention to his *Letters and Papers from Prison* and *Life Together*. Part II is a biographical sketch of Men with attention to *The Wellsprings of Religion*. The afterword discusses the theme of faithful Christianity in a secular context. The book has reference footnotes and inline citations. The translator provided footnotes clarifying the translation or contextualizing material. The “Works Cited” and “For Further Reading” sections are brief, but helpful.

Two Martyrs is an enjoyable, well-paced book. Certainly Bonhoeffer and Men wrote other books with other themes. The choice of themes and works help manage the scope of an introductory study. The translator says, “This book is the second in a series of translations of the work of lesser-known European theologians” (p. 15). In light of the description, the goal of this book seems to be to say to those who know Bonhoeffer that they might also find Men helpful. At least for the reviewer, the work succeeded in that mission.

Martyr biographies can overly focus on the death of the subject to the detriment of the remainder of the book. *Two Martyrs* does not suffer from this problem within the genre. The hook of the book is that they were both martyrs. Men’s murder

is less systematic than Bonhoeffer's death by the Nazi's state violence. Both are final and painful markers of the persistent persecution inflicted because of their commitment to Christian discipleship. A strength of this book is the focus on the subjects' endurance of persecution for their theological vision. This book is worthwhile for collections with interest in the history of persecution, Bonhoeffer or Men, or models of Christian discipleship. Readers interested in Men should follow up with Evdokimov's *Fr Alexander Men: Martyr of Atheism* or Yves Hamant's *Father Alexander Men, A Witness for Contemporary Russia, A Man for Our Times*.

Reviewer

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