

have largely evaded it. There the cry of “Why, O Lord?” cannot crush trust in God on account of Jesus who accompanies us to the end.

We urgently need a second edition of this book because “what is invisible to white Christians *and their theologians* is inescapable to black people” (159, emphasis added). Today’s lynchings are still too invisible to many. A second edition could make them more visible by detailing the mechanisms of poverty, infant mortality, unemployment, and life expectancy in the black community. It would be an even more compelling call to the “faith, repentance, and humility” (158) we need.

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MARTYRDOM AND IDENTITY: THE SELF ON TRIAL. By Michael P. Jensen. London: Continuum, 2010. Pp. x + 214. \$130.

The question of martyrdom haunts our present age. Few communities in the world today have not been affected in some way by the violent actions of individuals claiming to have sacrificed their lives in the name of religious ideology. Indeed, one could argue that the very term now connotes fear and terror as much as faith and devotion. Moreover, the use of the term to justify the actions of terrorists has provided ample fodder for those who wish to characterize all religious belief in terms of the irrational zealotry exemplified by the suicide bomber. It is against this loaded background that we must view Michael Jensen’s effort to answer the question: “What kind of self is the Christian, as it is to be discovered in Christian martyrdom?” (2).

In fact, the title of J.’s text is a bit misleading, for it really explores only Christian martyrdom. However, J. clearly wants to do more than simply distinguish the Christian martyr from other religious martyrs. He wants to argue that martyrdom is a “possibility latent in the Christian identity” (6). In other words, because the fundamental demand of the Christian is to witness to the truth of the risen Christ, there is always the possibility that one might be called on to pay the ultimate price for that witness. Thus, martyrdom is not simply some archaic remnant of the early church to be used as a heuristic device for understanding the challenges of faith. Indeed, J. argues, martyrdom is critical to understanding the very nature of Christian identity.

To make his argument, J. uses the narrative model of identity established by Paul Ricoeur, Alisdair MacIntyre, and others to assert that the self can be understood only in relation to the unfolding of time. “Narrative applies a causal and teleological form to events as we experience them” (9), allowing the individual not only to evaluate the lived life but also to apply some overall meaning to one’s existence. In this way, J. is able to connect the story of the individual (and the self-sacrifice of the martyr) to the larger historical drama of salvation outlined by Christianity. The result is a distinct

emphasis on the providential nature of human history and the central claim by J. that “*martyrdom is itself an act of God*” (194). Thus, martyrdom is most clearly understood as “a *dramatic performance of the death of Christ for the world*” (190). Martyrdom is a testimony to the divine will.

In his effort to detail the path of the martyr, J. devotes the bulk of his text to exploring the four temptations faced by Thomas Becket in the dramatic telling of his martyrdom by T. S. Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral*. For J., Eliot’s depiction of the spiritual trial endured by Becket before his decision to sacrifice his life illustrates how martyrdom is not a denial of this life and world but is instead an affirmation of God’s promise of salvation. According to J., the fundamental value of martyrdom lies in the fact that it is “a remarkably successful form of communication” (187). The martyr, like the prophet, is “speaking” for God.

Ultimately, two key questions emerge from a reading of this clear and well-written book. The first centers on J.’s effort to distinguish the Christian martyr from those of other faiths. Is it possible, according to his use of the term, for a non-Christian to be a martyr? The second question arises from the inevitable answer to the first. If the essential task of the martyr is to witness to the glory and power of God realized through Christ, then what do we call those individuals from other faiths who sacrifice their lives to express their commitment to God?

The answer to both questions reveals the audience for J.’s text and some issues concerning its value in regard to the current discourse on martyrdom. By producing such a vehement defense for Christian martyrdom, J. does well to explain the testimonial value of the martyr’s death and the spiritual value of the martyr’s choice. In this way, the book is an important reminder that martyrdom is not a political weapon but is a critical component of the Christian tradition. However, J.’s distinctly Calvinist argument places an inordinate emphasis on the ordained efforts of God to make the divine power known, and not nearly enough emphasis on explaining what that power entails and to what purpose. Instead, J. paints a picture of salvation history that is decidedly predestined, leaving little room for free will or human agency. The martyr announces God’s final plans for humanity, but little else. And he or she is really speaking only to those who will reap the rewards of that plan.

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A COMPANION TO THE CATHOLIC ENLIGHTENMENT IN EUROPE. Edited by Ulrich L. Lehner and Michael Printy. Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition. Boston: Brill, 2010. Pp. 462. \$230.

Until recent decades, most students of Catholic history would have viewed the notion of a Catholic Enlightenment as a contradiction in terms.