

This is a deliberate choice on the part of the author. He begins his chapter on the 15th century by saying so. His idea is to place the emphasis 'on what happened then rather than on what was to happen' (p. 332). The difficulty is that this has its distorting consequences, for it gives us a narrative without its natural ending.

It would be unjust to end on a negative note. It is an immensely rich and close-textured tale, with many insights, though occasional banalities of expression. It is an excellent example of ecclesiastical history, but not a history of the Church. The Church has a mind.

G.R. EVANS

**DIVINE FREEDOM AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMMANENT TRINITY: IN DIALOGUE WITH KARL BARTH AND CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY** by Paul D. Molnar, *T&T Clark/Continuum, London and New York, 2002, Pp. 346.*

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three,  
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?'

Paul Molnar stopp'st us for a tale of the godforsaken voyage of modern Trinitarian theology. The ship would have been steered out of the rough seas of Neo-Protestantism and *De Deo-Plus-De Trino* Scholasticism if the helmsmen had simply kept Karl Barth in sight. They missed their chance. Having shot the friendly albatross of a revelation based doctrine, contemporary thought about the Trinity sailed into experientialism, dissolution of the immanent into the economic Trinity, confusion of God and human history, and various doomed efforts to rehabilitate the *analogia entis*. Subjectivity, subjectivity everywhere, and not a drop of it Christ's! Our Mariner wants to demonstrate that Rahner's axiom, that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa, leads to Trinitarian shipwreck, especially the 'vice versa'. His first chapter picks over the dualisms and immanentisms of LaCugna, Sallie McFague, and Mary Daly. Chapter Two notes the failure of Moltmann, Pannenberg, Robert Jenson and Rahner to stick to Barth's dictum that the twin obstacles to Christology are Ebionitism and Docetism. Chapter Three criticizes Bruce McCormack, Jenson and Douglas Farrow for erroneously taking Barth as an authority for their rejection of the '*logos asarkos*'. Chapter Four argues that Rahner's 'transcendentally oriented' experience leads, not to God, but to the identification of God and creatures: however ultimate, *horizon* is one name too far, if it's being used to denote God as unknowable. Chapter Five contends that LaCugna and Moltmann use *relationality* to define God, instead of

allowing God to define relationality. Chapter Six adversely compares T.F. Torrance and Rahner on the resurrection: Torrance the Elder's theology rests faith in the resurrection on the incommensurable uniqueness of Christ, whereas Rahner conflated *any* human transcendental hope with resurrection faith. Chapter Seven objects to Moltmann's selection of a feature of human experience, suffering, and making it the essence of God; this instead of leaving God free to be God. Chapter Eight faults Alan Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel for substituting knowledge of God through 'communion' and 'context' for faith, as achieved by God's miraculous act. Chapter Nine shows how Colin Gunton's aberrant, non-Barthian respect for human rationality is an iceberg destined to sink his Christology. Most of these chapters have become excellent journal articles. Excellent, because we can all learn from Molnar's finesse in unravelling the finer flaws of panentheism and experientialism. The individual chapters will prove an important resource for scholars of modern Trinitarian theology; anyone wanting a *sed contra* to Jenson, Alan Torrance, LaCugna et al., will find something here. Superlative as an argument, do our Mariner's convictions work as a *book*? Even those who otherwise agree that Trinitarian theology must 'think from a centre in Christ', not a centre in human experience, may find that the impact of the unvarying application of the same thesis over nine chapters, a conclusion and an Appendix (more on where Gunton went wrong) creates only an exhausted desire to escape that 'glittering eye'. The argument *appears* to be circular (Barth as the standard – failure of the theologian to follow Barth – failure of the theology), and sometimes wearily so, with Molnar continuing to protest, as if flabbergasted at the oversight, 'and yet, X fails to proceed as Barth did,' in the face of theologians who never aimed at this achievement. But Molnar has a pointer which is outside the 'Barthian circle': Rahner *did* want to put the Triune God at the centre of theology, but was methodologically compelled to found theology in experience instead. By dint of its sheer logicity, Molnar's book is an anti-Kantian *tour de force*. But it is just this superlative mode which works against it, rhetorically. There is no tale here, but only a thesis, each chapter presenting a philosophically gripping excursion. It takes a temperament even more anti-transcendentalist than Molnar's to read the whole "Rime of Divine Freedom" in one go.

Those who do, then, may wonder if it would be better to give reason and experience sailor-status in theology, instead of confining them to the galleys, only to have them turn piratical and take over the ship. That's impossible, Molnar would say, without denying the divine *freedom*, and it's impossible, too, one might add, because his thesis functions within a debate about theological Kantianism. The question driving this debate is, what is the locus of *revelation*? For

Molnar, the key to Barth's Christology is his denial that Christ's humanity, as such, reveals, and he faults Jenson, Gunton, and McCormack (etc.) for failing to observe this principle. What does that principle come from? Molnar's answer is *sin*: fallen, creaturely nature cannot reveal God. So it is not the human Jesus who reveals God, but the Logos, the Second Person of the Trinity. Bruce McCormack has shown that Barth's 'anhypostatic-anhypostatic' Christology aims to avoid violating Kant's objections to the appearance of the infinite (God) within the finite (creatures). Thus, as Molnar repeatedly reminds us, the incarnate Christ does not simply 'reveal God', but, rather, 'veils and unveils' the divine, veiling God as 'incarnate,' or creaturely, unveiling as divine. Revelation has to be dialectical because there is no *analogia entis*; the medium is not the message, that's the pure Barthian position. But, unless it can be shown, from Scripture, tradition or even reason that 'sin' univocally negates the revelational capacities of creation, the purist Barthian use of 'sin' as 'revelation-blocker' is just a fig-leaf for the opinion that the finite must anchor within the frontiers demarcated by Kant, unable to reveal the infinite. So the question is whether Molnar is not only contending (against Torrance the immoderate Nephew et al.) for a true appreciation of Barth, but also, ultimately, for an authentic appreciation of Kant, the Barthian one? If so, his Trinitarian voyage no more escapes from human, subjective and philosophical compassings than Rahner's does. For all his devotion to Barthian dialectic, Molnar wants the propositional clarity of early 20th-century Catholic philosophical theology plus all the Trinitarianness of the *Church Dogmatics*. It seems undeniable that he has achieved this aim, despite or because of the albatross.

FRANCESCA ARAN MURPHY

**BEYOND THE BLUE GLASS: CATHOLIC ESSAYS ON FAITH AND CULTURE** by Aidan Nichols OP, *The Saint Austin Press*, London, 2002, vol I Pp. 216, vol II Pp. 200, hbk.

A motive of credibility is a reason for taking the claims of the Catholic Church seriously. It does not demonstrate their truth by natural reasoning, for we can only properly assent to them by the supernatural virtue of faith, but it does dispose us for receiving the divine gift and, at the very least, presents a challenge to the mind. But where do we find motives of credibility? The First Vatican Council encourages us to look in the Church herself, with her 'wonderful propagation, outstanding sanctity, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in everything good'. Her capacity for survival and growth against all the odds, the heroism of her saints, and the goods of human culture