

Asia – ancient and modern – has exerted on Christianity throughout its lifetime. Its aims are more than amply achieved.

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A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE AGES by F. Donald Logan, *Routledge*, London and New York, 2002, Pp. xiv + 368, £15.99 pbk.

This is the work of the maturity of a humane and reflective scholarly mind. It is a model of its kind in its balance and judiciousness. Yet it is not easy to sum up an age in a way which defines it, and it could be argued that Donald Logan has not succeeded. But then he has not attempted anything so ambitious. His emphasis, as he admits, is largely chronological and what he presents us with is a narrative. The narrative moves from the early Church, given as a background to the medieval Church; through the process of conversion of the various parts of Europe which were Christian by the end of the Middle Ages. A chapter is given to Justinian and Mohammed. The story then moves to the conversion of the English, and so we are moved on through a series of topics clustered about a period or a theme.

The obvious weakness of this approach is that it makes it difficult to bring out, at the level of the intellectual debate, the ebb and flow of the tides of indignation and the power-struggles and the rest of the forces which shaped the world in which the Reformation took place. This is not a story which can satisfactorily be told from the outside, and principally in terms of events. Heretics and dissidents were involved in a ‘process’ of thought and argument in which an individual was likely to pick up notions from others, and few stood alone. From the stage at the beginning of the book (p. 9) when the Church is discussed in terms of its ‘organization’ and ‘units’, to its last section, where John Wyclif is portrayed as holding ‘views on the Eucharist out of step with the received orthodoxy of the times’ and as denying the existence of purgatory (p. 326), we are given scant indication of the struggles of conscience and scholarship. There is no sense of the achievement of the Middle Ages in ecclesiology and sacramentology.

This is a ‘history of the Church in the *Western Middle Ages*’. The Greek Christians appear briefly in the story, before the Crusades at the time of the schism of 1054 and again at the Council of Florence in the 15th century.

It is startling to find the book ending short of the Reformation. The tradition of anti-establishment dissent now building to a climax and waiting their Luther; the discontent lingering after the inconclusive conciliarist challenge to papal monarchy, all lack their denouement.

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.

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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