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Review of *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity* by Paul Molnar

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are undergoing being forgiven that we can forgive; and we need to forgive in order to *continue* undergoing *being* forgiven." Later chapters treat undergoing in novel ways. In Chapter 11, which concerns honesty and the way forward for gay and lesbian Catholics, Alison rejects as "snake oil" the idea that honesty is something that any of us can lay claim to. People do not "brandish" honesty; rather, honesty is "someone's undergoing something in a way which tends towards truthfulness." The sense of them "undergoing something" is precisely honesty's distinguishing sign. ". . . they are not laying hold of something, but are working through something outside their control having happened to them." "In short, they are being possessed by a truthfulness which is coming upon them." Other chapters treat additional meanings of undergoing with engaging results, and the same is true of the remaining three poles.

It is a good thing that Alison has decided to write for adults who are just beginning to study Christian theology. While *The Joy of Being Wrong* (a reworking of his doctoral dissertation) was too dense and complex for most audiences, his later works speak with hearers or readers in mind. *Undergoing God*, serious as it is, actually is fun to read in many places, almost to the point of silliness (consider the hippopotamus in pink tutu on p. 100) Alison makes many of his points with similar unforgettable imagery and delightful story-telling. I think both seminary students and undergraduates could profit from reading it, whether or not they would be convinced by his arguments. At least, they would be exposed to an author who visibly thinks things through on the page in arresting ways, and such young students might be inspired to follow suit. In addition, it is refreshing to read a Catholic who knows scripture and theory of interpretation as thoroughly as Alison does (He was raised a British Evangelical), and I would hope that his works would stimulate would-be theologians to take the Bible as seriously as he does. One suggestion: young students need to be cautioned that not all good Christian theology bases itself on Girard's theory. And a good, critical reading of Girard could serve as a valuable, orienting prerequisite to the study of Alison.

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ELISABETH KOENIG

Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity. By Paul Molnar. New York: T&T Clare, 2005. xv + 357 pages. \$39.95.

It has been nearly forty years since Karl Rahner's *The Trinity* was published in English. Since then, publishing houses and theological libraries have been inundated with texts on the doctrine of God. None has been able to ignore Rahner's axiom: "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity." Many theologians, especially those in the Catholic tradition, find themselves in sympathy with Rahner's position. Paul Molnar is quite critical of Rahner's argument as well as the many who have followed him rather than the work of Karl Barth who argues from and for the ultimate freedom of God.

Molnar's argues that the given of Christian theology is God's ultimate independence, freedom, and unchangability. It is the Scriptures and the person of Jesus Christ, this independent God incarnate, that attest to these divine attributes. Molnar's 2007 Christology book *Incarnation and Resurrection* further supports his devotion to a Christology from above. His primary argument, in both texts, is more methodological than substantive. His criticism is not primarily of what theologians say but their means of argument.

Much of modern systematic theology has taken its starting point as the human experience of God in the world. This can be communicated in a myriad of ways, but transcendental theologians, feminist theologians, liberationists, and pluralists begin their examination into God's triune nature from the human experience of the economic Trinity. Molnar argues that the starting point must be faith in Jesus Christ as God incarnate—not as a human revealer. Beginning one's theology with the economic Trinity makes God dependent upon humanity—Creator needing creation. Molnar argues that the doctrine of the immanent Trinity must be protected if Christian theology is to respect the significance of Christ.

This book is well researched and demonstrates a precision in writing and analysis. Molnar takes seriously his interlocutors of Rahner, Moltmann, McFague, LaCugna, Kaufman, Johnson and others. This seriousness does not, however, equate with agreement with them. Molnar rejects all of these approaches as Ebionite, Docetic, pantheistic, or agnostic. It is rare to have such well respected theologians deemed heretical. The strength of his argument may be lost in the vociferous manner in which he criticizes others.

This text deserves attention from those interested in contemporary trinitarian theology. Its argument represents an important contribution to this theology although Molnar addresses specialists more than generalists. The voice of Karl Barth, who argued so strongly for the disclosive nature of Jesus Christ and the independence of God, is still being heard in contemporary theology.

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BRIAN M. DOYLE

The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition. By Neil Ormerod. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005. 175 pages. \$20.00 (paper).

This volume is the fruit of a sustained engagement with some recent questions in trinitarian theology, an engagement that responds particularly to Roman Catholic theologians formed by the work of Karl Rahner. Drawing on four already-published articles, Neil Ormerod brings forward what he finds to be a problematic framework for trinitarian theology, one that mistakenly jettisons the "permanent achievement" of the Western tradition, particularly as that tradition is grounded in the work of Augustine and, to a lesser extent, Aquinas.

Challenging the work of Rahnerians, particularly Catherine Mowrey LaCugna and Roger Haight, Ormerod (in company with fellow Lonergan scholar Robert Doran) charges that these theologians tend to use the legacy of Aquinas as an interesting collection of resonant fragments rather than as a systematic and compelling whole. Similarly, von Balthasar's use of allegory rather than