

A Harvest of Lutheran Dogmatics and Ethics

The Life and Work
of Twelve Theologians

1960-2020

Robert W. Bertram
Edward H. Schroeder
Gerhard O. Forde
William H. Lazareth
Robert Benne
Paul R. Sponheim
Philip Hefner
Ted Peters
George A. Lindbeck
Robert W. Jenson
Paul R. Hinlicky
Carl E. Braaten

Carl E. Braaten

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Luther's Rose, depicted in the banner which hangs above the altar
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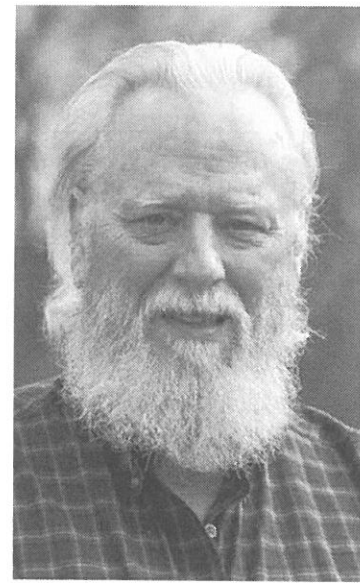
Paul Robert Sauer
Executive Director, ALPB

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The Life and Work of Twelve Theologians 1960-2020*
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Rev. Dr. Paul R. Hinlicky is Professor of Luther Studies at Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia. Before coming to Roanoke College in 1999 he was professor of systematic theology at the Evangelical Theological School of Jan Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia, from 1993-1999. In 2010 Hinlicky began teaching part time for the Institute of Lutheran Theology. He received a B.A. in 1974 from Concordia Senior College in Fort Wayne, Indiana, an M. Div. in 1978 from Christ

Seminary-Seminex in St. Louis, and a Ph.D. in 1983 from Union Theological Seminary in New York. He was ordained a Lutheran minister in 1978 in the Lutheran Church of America, a predecessor body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. While still a graduate student at Union Theological Seminary Hinlicky served as a pastor of several New York parishes. For four years Hinlicky held the position as Research Associate for the Department for Church in Society of the Lutheran Church in America. Then Hinlicky became the pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Delhi, New York from 1985 to 1993. Hinlicky served as editor of *Lutheran Forum* from 1988 to 1993. Hinlicky has also been a member of the editorial councils of *dialog*, *Lutheran Quarterly*, and *Pro Ecclesia*. Paul Hinlicky and his wife Ellen are amateur farmers; they own and manage a family farm of 83 acres, raising fruits and vegetables, as well as chickens, pigs, and bees.

Ten

Paul R. Hinlicky

Lutheran Critical Dogmatics

Paul R. Hinlicky is currently the Tise Professor of Lutheran Studies at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, where he has taught for more than twenty years. Before coming to Roanoke College he was Visiting Professor of Systematic Theology at the Protestant Theological Faculty of Jan Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia, from 1993-1999. He also teaches part-time for the web-based seminary, the Institute of Lutheran Theology, Brookings, South Dakota. Hinlicky received a B.A. from Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, Indiana, an M.Div. from Christ Seminary-Seminex, St. Louis, Missouri, and a Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary, New York. In 1978 he was ordained into the Lutheran ministry of the Lutheran Church in America, a predecessor body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. From 1985-1993 Hinlicky served as the pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Delhi, New York.

Paul Hinlicky has been a prolific writer of articles, book reviews, editorials, and monographs on a wide variety of subjects. He was the editor of *Lutheran Forum* from 1988-1993. His academic articles have been published in *Pro Ecclesia*, *Lutheran Quarterly*, *dialog – A Journal of Theology*, *Currents in Theology and Mission*, *Word and World*, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, *The Cresset*, *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, and others. In addition Hinlicky has contributed to various books, such as Conference

Proceedings, *Festschriften*, and the like. All of these occasional writings are based on wide-ranging research that prepared the author for an outpouring of books written between 2009 and the present. A great number of Hinlicky's published materials have been saved for posterity by inclusion in his *magnum opus*, *Beloved Community: Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, a huge volume of nearly a thousand pages in rather small print.

Paul Hinlicky has never hesitated to tell his readers exactly what he thinks, and what he thinks has often rubbed people the wrong way. In this respect it can be said with no exaggeration that he joins the company of Lutheran dogmatists and ethicists we have chosen to portray in this volume. Once when he was irked being disparaged as just another "white voice," he offered a self-revealing comment: "The color of my skin tells you next to nothing about me.... Though this is not the forum, I would be happy to supply further details of my ancestral story, being the grandchild of despised Slavic immigrants in WASP America, growing up poor on the wrong side of the tracks, being orphaned by a church schism in my youth and in adulthood being black-listed in my own declining denomination."³⁵⁴ This is a sample of Hinlicky's keen awareness that a person's social location and cultural particularity contribute to his or her theological subjectivity with hermeneutical significance.

I. Paul Hinlicky's Luther Interpretation

Paul Hinlicky wrote two major works that preceded and prepared the way for the publication of his systematic theology, *Beloved Community: Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*. One was *Paths Not Taken: Fates of Theology from Luther Through Leibniz*. The second was *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom*. Both of them

354. Paul Hinlicky, "Response to Contributors," *Pro Ecclesia*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, 181-185.

secured his reputation as a *bona fide* Luther-Scholar, but not of the garden-variety. In his Leibniz-book Hinlicky laments that the history of Lutheranism did not follow a path that Luther would have envisaged, zigzagging from the period of Lutheran Scholastic Orthodoxy, to its diametrical opposite in Halle's Lutheran Pietism, followed by Enlightenment Rationalism, failing to reform Christianity by the gospel and to develop a public theology for ordering society. Hinlicky works through the philosophical influences of Baruch Spinoza and Immanuel Kant, overcoming Cartesian dualism, and then charts a new path forward for Christian theology inaugurated by Karl Barth and subsequently developed in the systematic theologies of three great Lutheran theologians deeply influenced by Barth — Wolfhart Pannenberg, Eberhard Jüngel, and Robert W. Jenson. Hinlicky's theology is best understood in this post-Barthian lineage, with this caveat. All four of these Lutheran theologians are committed to overcome a lack of attention to the Third Article of the Creed — the Holy Spirit. Jenson wrote an illuminating article entitled, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went,"³⁵⁵ in which he attributed Barth's low sacramentology to lack of attention to Pneumatology. Hinlicky pointed to the exact same deficit in modern Lutheranism, when he writes about how the Holy Spirit disappeared in Lutheranism and, agreeing with Jenson, claims that it never reappeared in Barth.

In *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom*, what immediately meets the eye is two of the terms that reappear in the title of his systematic theology, *Beloved Community: Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*. The term, "after Christendom," is clear enough; Hinlicky believes that the era of the amalgamation of Christianity and society is passé. The church can no longer count on being propped up and in sync with the secularized society that now prevails in

355. Robert W. Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia*, 2 (1993), 296-304.

Europe and America. On this point Hinlicky is in agreement with Stanley Hauerwas' thesis in *After Christendom*. But what is the meaning of "Beloved Community?" What is its origin? Hinlicky gives credit to Josiah Royce and Martin Luther King Jr. for whom "Beloved Community" was an important concept; both of these Christian thinkers, one a philosopher and the other a preacher, were also influential on Hinlicky's thought in many ways. For Josiah Royce the "beloved community" was conceived of as an eternal place of rest and infinitely blessed, hence eschatological. For Martin Luther King Jr. the beloved community was thought of more as a society characterized by justice, equal opportunity for everyone, and love for one's fellow human beings, hence sociological. Hinlicky appropriated the concept of "Beloved Community" for his own constructive theology of the Holy Trinity, which functions as the framework of all its parts.

As a Lutheran theologian building a system of dogmatics for the twenty-first century Hinlicky retrieves aspects of Luther's theology that he deems suitable for the well-being of the church and its mission today. "Permit me to acknowledge from the outset that the Luther who appears in the pages to follow will be 'my' Luther, Luther as I appropriate him, for which I, not Luther, am responsible."³⁵⁶ He does not repeat, he does not re-pristinate "*was Doctor Luther sagt*." Instead, what Hinlicky offers his readers is a creative appropriation of the doctrinal theology of the mature Luther, especially on the Trinity and Christology. Hinlicky explained his intention this way: "In *The Substance of Faith: Luther's Doctrinal Theology*, with Mickey Mattox and Dennis Bielfeldt, we demonstrated the salience of the older Luther's return to academic method and canonical hermeneutic to clarify logically classical Christian dogmatic assertions as something needful in the life of the churches reformed by the Word of God. We accordingly lifted up the evident seriousness with

356. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther and the Beloved Community* (Eerdmans, 2010), xviii.

which the elder Luther applied himself to dogmatic questions in Trinitarian theology."³⁵⁷

Luther and the Beloved Community consists of three main parts, with a total of ten chapters. The first part deals with the doctrine of the Trinitarian God. Its first chapter indicates that for Luther doctrine based on the Word of God is "the bread of life." The second chapter takes up Christology, going against the stream of modern biblical historical criticism that attempts to reconstruct the Jesus of history as he actually was. Luther's Christology starts at the other end, with the incarnation of the Son of God, such that the divine attributes are communicated to humanity (*communicatio idiomatum*). Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God, one of the Trinity, who truly suffered under Pontius Pilate and died bearing the sins of the world. In chapter three Hinlicky shows that Luther's doctrine of the atonement combines aspects of all three of the main theories, victory (Aulén), substitution (Anselm), and moral example (Abelard). Chapter four provides a Trinitarian interpretation of the law-gospel dialectic, saying "yes" and "no" to Barth's famous criticism of Luther's view.

Part Two deals with theological anthropology, in two chapters. Chapter five undertakes a novel interpretation of Luther's most controversial writing, *De servo arbitrio*. *The Bondage of the Will* is the usual translation, but Hinlicky prefers "*On Bound Choice*." Luther said, "You can burn all my books except for two, *The Bondage of the Will* and the *Small Catechism*." Hinlicky does well to rescue this controversial book for theology today, despite the fact it has been an embarrassment to most of later Lutheranism, especially the Pietists and the Liberals. Hinlicky sees the work as an example of apocalyptic theology rather than as a philosophical treatise, as it was understood not only by Erasmus but also by Luther's ally, Melancthon. "What Luther says about human nature and the human plight is said strictly

357. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther and the Beloved Community*, xv.

in light of the revelation — concretely, the resurrection of the Crucified — not then as spontaneous self-understanding or even as a labored, rational account of experience. This apocalyptic reading yields a rich and suggestive idea of the new agency of Christ by the Holy Spirit active in the redemption of the body of the Beloved Community.³⁵⁸

Chapter six deals with the theology of the body, Luther's theology of marriage, controversial issues of sexual ethics, and suggests that the Church today could restrict its public marital blessing for heterosexual couples and at the same time openly recognize the value of same-sex unions. Here Hinlicky is walking a tight rope, careful not to fall too much to one side of the other. "This possibility of recognition, argued by using Luther as resource, admittedly falls painfully short for those seeking the public blessing of same-sex union.... Why is it necessary theologically to maintain that homophile desire is disordered, that is to say, not the will of God articulated in the Genesis passage, as Christologically interpreted? As it is necessary theologically to maintain that even marital love is afflicted by concupiscent desire for an infinity of objects, it is by analogy necessary also to maintain that polymorphous sexual desire is disordered; attraction to the same sex intrinsically refuses the procreative purpose of God, from which the blessing of Genesis 1:26-28 obviously cannot be separated. Nor is there any other 'blessing' from the Word of God for the church to pronounce over a marriage."³⁵⁹

Part Three consists of chapters seven through ten. Readers have had to wait to nearly the end of the book to find out what the author thinks about "the article by which the church stands or falls," the act of God by which sinners are justified (made right before God) by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone. This chapter will not enchant conservative Lutheran theologians whose approach is to repristinate the traditional

358. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther and the Beloved Community*, xxi.

359. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther and the Beloved Community*, 215.

jargon in defense of the doctrine, which historically has been used as a club against other denominations as well as against other Lutherans who do not fit the mould. Hinlicky warns, "Even those who self-identify as 'radically' Lutheran,³⁶⁰ for all their alienation from conservative confessionalism or ecclesiastical Lutheranism, still want to appropriate Luther under the mantle of *the* Reformation, *the* Protestant principle, *the* Scripture principle, *the* doctrine of justification. It never occurs to them that this is more of the same self-privileging, which ineluctably contains within it the original demonization of the opponent. This is why repristination, whether conservative or radical, is not only hermeneutically impossible but morally suspect. It never occurs in such thinking, for example, that the sixteenth-century 'Reformation' might with equal justice be labeled the schism of Western Christianity."³⁶¹

Hinlicky's discussion of the doctrine of justification turns to the recent hot debate on Luther's alleged misinterpretation of Paul. The New Testament theologian, James D. G. Dunn, framed the debate as "The New Perspective on Paul." The debate was initiated by two biblical scholars, E. P. Sanders³⁶² and Krister Stendahl.³⁶³ The new perspective on Paul, critical of Luther, was championed further by N. T. Wright.³⁶⁴ The debate has reached a stalemate; leading New Testament scholars have mounted

360. Our chapter on Gerhard Forde used the term "radical Lutheranism" to characterize his thought, because it was the term he chose himself.

361. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther and the Beloved Community*, 224.

362. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religions* (SCM Press, 1977).

363. Krister Stendahl, a Swedish Lutheran New Testament theologian, was perhaps the first to challenge Luther's interpretation of the law and justification in his famous essay about the "introspective conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Fortress Press, 1976).

364. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Fortress Press, 1991). And, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Fortress Press, 2005).

strong counter-criticisms, such as, Peter Stuhlmacher,³⁶⁵ J. Louis Martyn,³⁶⁶ and Stephen Westerholm.³⁶⁷ Hinlicky tackles this disputed subject by going beyond the old and new perspectives on Paul in sections entitled, “Sanders’ Misidentified Insight,” “Stendahl’s Misplaced Conscience,” “Käsemann’s Critique of Salvation History,” and “Beyond the Old and New Perspectives.” Hinlicky’s conclusion is that Luther can still help as a resource for a renewed understanding of the law and justification without necessarily defending all of his exegetical assertions. He asks, “Can Luther help? It depends of course on what kind of help he might offer. Certainly exegesis from the sixteenth century cannot settle critical-historical disputes of the twenty-first. Nor is it a matter of superimposing a ‘Lutheran’ dogmatic formulation about the righteousness that prevails before God.”³⁶⁸

Chapter eight reconstructs Luther’s catholic ecclesiology which has been largely neglected in various patterns of Protestant deformation. Luther’s vision of the church can be seen in substantial agreement with the *communio* ecclesiology highlighted at Vatican II. The ninth chapter takes up an assortment of issues bearing on the church’s encounter with the world in modern times — political theology, the challenge of Marxism, the struggle for peace and justice, the ministry of Martin Luther King Jr., and the doctrine of the two kingdoms. The tenth chapter offers an interpretation of Luther’s *theologia crucis*, a theme popularized by books on the subject by Walter von Loewenich³⁶⁹ and Jürgen Moltmann,³⁷⁰ and also in need of clarification in light of feminist

365. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (InterVarsity Press, 2001).

366. Louis J. Martyn, *Galatians. The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, 1997).

367. Stephen Westerholm, “Did Luther Get Paul Right on Justification?” *Preaching and Teaching the Law and the Gospel of God*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (ALPB Books, 2013).

368. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther and the Beloved Community*, 248-249.

369. Walter von Loewenich, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross* (Augsburg, 1976).

370. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (HarperCollins, 1974).

concerns. Hinlicky’s book on Luther ends with an appendix on Luther’s demonization of his opponents, an indefensible trait that he claims stems from his apocalyptic theology.

This brief survey of Hinlicky’s Luther interpretation omits many insights readers interested in the future of our Lutheran heritage would welcome. His interpretation of justification involves a social dimension, inclusion of the excluded in the beloved community, beyond, that is, the kind of individualist introspection that Krister Stendahl targeted. Not introspection, says Hinlicky, which tends to fit a purely forensic view of justification, but extra-spection, which entails seeing oneself in a new community with God and one’s fellow believers. Readers would also benefit from Hinlicky’s rich dialogues with the greatest theologians in Western Christianity, Augustine and Anselm, as well as his interactions with modern greats like Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Robert Jenson, and Oswald Bayer. But in the end, the epitaph of this book would read — Hinlicky discovers in Luther what the doctor ordered to treat what ails so much of contemporary Christian theology. On to his *magnum opus!*

2. The Critical Dogmatics of Paul Hinlicky

Paul Hinlicky’s book on Luther’s theology was a perfect springboard for him to undertake his next big project, a voluminous system of theology, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*. It was published in 2015. In the Preface Hinlicky writes: “What I now lay before the reader is a life’s work of reflection on the troubled state and future prospects in Euro-America of the message that improbably emerged out of ancient Palestine two millennia ago and is still on its journey through the nations on the way to the coming of the Beloved Community of God. Along the way, the message found a remarkable spokesperson in a talented and troubled being, Martin Luther. While I have found many other teachers of the faith, as will be amply evident

in what follows, this work manifestly stands in the tradition of theological reflection within the Western Catholic Church that arose from Luther's witness to Jesus Christ."³⁷¹ Hinlicky's dogmatics is critical, even at times of his main interlocutor, Martin Luther. It is critical of the kind of Christian theology aligned with either of two trends, on the one hand, the Scylla of progressive social fads and political correctness rampant in mainline Protestant denominations, including the one to which he uncomfortably belongs as an ordained minister and, on the other hand, the Charybdis of the obscurations of conservative evangelical fundamentalisms, including some that bear Luther's name. Hinlicky's dogmatics is critical also in the sense that he eschews the kind of method that repristinates the theology of a particular period held to be sacrosanct, authentic, orthodox, inerrant, infallible, or whatever. There are no sacred cows in Hinlicky's system, as we shall see.

Hinlicky's *Critical Dogmatics* consists of four parts, each with two chapters, and it ends with a concluding doxology. Part One is the Prolegomena with two chapters. Chapter One deals with the knowledge of God and the discipline of theology which presupposes that such knowledge has been revealed to the pilgrim people of God and inscribed in the biblical narrative concerning Israel in its prophetic writings (Old Testament) and concerning the Israelite, Jesus of Nazareth, in the writings of his apostles (New Testament). Hinlicky believes that doing theology in a situation deemed post-Christendom and post-modern providentially provides theologians an opportunity to retrieve their knowledge from scriptural, patristic, and Reformation sources, largely ignored and even repudiated by theologians of Liberal Protestantism who regarded the Enlightenment as the critical watershed demanding a paradigm shift of theological method and reflection in light of the impact of biblical criti-

371. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom* (Eerdmans, 2015), xi.

cism, new scholarly disciplines, religious pluralism, and global secularization.³⁷²

Already in the first chapter Hinlicky makes the case for the resurrection of Jesus as the originating event of the gospel. Apart from the resurrection history would not have remembered Jesus, since he was hanged on the cross like scores of other criminals. "Historically speaking, it is the case that ... the history of Jesus of Nazareth does not as such account for the beginning of the gospel, since Jesus' end in ignominious disgrace and abandonment would have left Him forgotten like countless other victims of legalized injustice among the crucified of the world. Rather, the history of Jesus is remembered as the 'beginning of the gospel' from the perspective of an event that early Christianity named 'the resurrection.'"³⁷³ But, many critical historians ask, did the resurrection of Jesus really happen as a real historical event in space and time? Robert Funk tells about how once he formulated the proposition, "The resurrection was an event in the life of Jesus," and presented it to members of the "Jesus Seminar." Then Funk writes, "My proposition was received with hilarity by several Fellows. One suggested that it was an oxymoron. Others alleged that the formulation was meaningless, since we all assume, they said, that Jesus' life ended with his crucifixion and death.... John Dominic Crossan confessed, 'I do not think that anyone, anywhere, at any time brings dead people back to life.'"³⁷⁴ Hinlicky is a theologian and does not claim to be a critical historian, but this is what he says, "Theologians are entitled to their personal taste, and it is surely the case that one does not tastefully speak of 'resurrection' in polite circles today — anymore than first-century Athens

372. An example of such an approach can be seen in a text book entitled *Christian Theology. An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, eds. Peter Hodgson and Robert King (Fortress Press, 1982),

373. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community, Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 20.

374. Robert Funk, *Honest to Jesus* (HarperCollins, 1996), 258.

(Acts 17:32). N. T. Wright, in his massive study, hit the nail on the head in this connection, however, when he wrote with emphasis: ‘*The fact that dead people do not ordinarily rise is itself part of early Christian belief*, not an objection to it. The early Christians insisted that what happened to Jesus was precisely something new; was, indeed, the start of a whole new mode of existence, a new creation. The fact that Jesus’ resurrection was, and remains, without analogy is not an objection to the early Christian claim. It is part of the claim itself.’³⁷⁵ Treatment of the resurrection of Jesus belongs in the Prolegomena simply because it is now and always has been the *sine qua non* of the possibility of doing Christian theology for the communion of saints who believe in him as Savior and Lord.

Chapter two looks to the theologies of Augustine and Luther as well as to some contemporary scholars such as Jean Bethke Elshtain, Philip Cary, and Jean-Luc Marion to offer material criticism of the Enlightenment idea of the sovereign self. Then Hinlicky poses and answers at length four questions to bring the Prolegomena to a close. 1. Is God possible? His answer recounts how he overcame a love affair with Paul Tillich when he discovered the relevance of the Trinity in reading Barth and Jenson, which Hinlicky would go on to develop in a unique way in constructing his dogmatics. Hinlicky acknowledges what he learned from them: “Jenson has rigorously carried through on the insight of Luther and Barth that neither existence nor essence can be privileged in the question of God; that it is rather the Bible’s personal and social, historical and narrative identification of God in our world that tells — as of first importance — *who* God is for us. At the same time, the understanding of the *who* brings a new understanding of the *what* and the *that* of God, as Jenson puts it: ‘...the gospel’s God can be an object for us if and

375. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 21-22. The quotation is from N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Fortress Press, 2003), 712.

only if God is so identified by the risen Jesus and his community as to be identified *with* them.”³⁷⁶

The second question: “Is Christ Necessary?” Luther and the Lutheran Confessions answer this question in spades, no need to look elsewhere. Christ is not necessary if we can merit the forgiveness of sins by acts we perform. Christ is not necessary if we can be justified before God by our reason and morality. Paul said in Galatians, “If justification were through works of the law, then Christ died to no purpose” (Gal. 2:21). Hinlicky sums up the discussion of the necessity of Christ with this thesis: “Christ the Crucified is made necessary when the prophetic critique of this world in the name of God is so penetrating — striking with the Baptist’s ax to the root (Luke 3:9!) — that nothing less than the Messiah’s cross can accomplish genuine reconciliation with Luther’s ‘real, not fictitious sinners.’”³⁷⁷ Other scholars are cited to reinforce the idea of the necessity of Christ — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Robert Bertram, and Daniel Bell.

The third question is: “Does Faith Justify?” The answer begins, “It all depends.” If faith is understood as a good work that we humans are able to choose to do by our own free will, then the answer is no. Faith does not justify as an act that we are able to perform. Hinlicky warns against the distortion of some brands of Lutheranism that explain faith psychologically or existentially. He gives high marks to Regin Prenter and the Mannermaa Finnish School of Luther Research, who bring into play the role of Christology and Pneumatology in Justification. Hinlicky concludes this discussion on faith with an historically informative excursus on three types of Lutheranism that fiercely quarreled over the very doctrine that supposedly was at the heart of Luther’s reformation, justification by faith alone — Orthodoxy, Pietism, and Liberalism.

376. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 123.

377. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 139.

The fourth question is: "Are the Scriptures Holy?" Hinlicky hits some inadequate answers on the head. One is the proof-texting method of Protestant Orthodoxy that could not withstand the rise of historical criticism. But the historical critical method tends to be equally arbitrary because critics are not as scientifically neutral as they often pretend. "Historical criticism is, or too often operates as, biblicism of a higher order."³⁷⁸ Hinlicky's own answer aligns with Luther's understanding of the Bible as the Word of God. "A theology is 'biblical' if, and when, it thinks with the Bible taken as a canonical narrative that tells of the eternal Father who is determined by the costly missions of his Son and Spirit to redeem the creation and bring it to fulfillment. Theology is then thinking after God's thinking ... counting the cost that is the Christ crucified that makes grace free to sinners and their faith alone to justify."³⁷⁹

Hinlicky's prolegomena privileges four doctrines which he claims are normative for any Christian theology that aims to be orthodox and ecumenical. The first is the canon of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation that tells the story of the creation to consummation. The second is the Trinity, identified as such in the canonical story of the Father with his Son and Spirit as the one God. The third is second person of the Trinity who became a servant to liberate those enslaved. The fourth is the power of the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son at work in preserving, redeeming, and fulfilling creation in the coming of the Beloved Community. These four doctrines are essential for ecumenical Christian theology and are normed in the shared forms of canon, creed, and confession. Admittedly, the last of these three remains in dispute, even though significant progress has been made in the many transactions of the modern ecumenical movement.

378. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 173.

379. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 172.

Within this cluster of canon, creed, and confession Hinlicky's dogmatics elevates two doctrines to a special place of normativeness, the Trinity and Justification by Faith. "In systematic theology, these two meta-doctrines of the Trinity and Justification by Faith, aside from any explicit treatment accorded to them, permeate the whole of this presentation so that they continually do the work of sorting and integrating the topics of traditional Christian belief."³⁸⁰

3. Innovative Treatment of the Trinity

The most innovative aspect of Hinlicky's dogmatics is the way he unfolds the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity. If the Christian doctrine of God is to be normed by the gospel, then it would seem to make good sense to start with the experience of receiving the gift of the gospel. That reception is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed each have three parts, the first with God the Father and creation, the second with God the Son and redemption, and the third with God the Holy Spirit, the church, and all the rest. That is following the order of being (*ordo essendi*). Hinlicky starts at the other end, following the order of knowledge (*ordo cognoscendi*) gained through experience. I know of no other systematic theology, Catholic or Protestant, that starts with Pneumatology, then Christology, and last Patrology. It remains to be seen whether any junior dogmaticians will follow Hinlicky's lead. In any case, in my mind, it is a worthy experiment that deserves careful attention and critical examination to discern if this approach has pragmatic teachable significance.

Hinlicky starts his doctrine of God with the three persons and not with the one. The leading medieval scholastic theologians, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, started with a chapter on the

380. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 37.

oneness of God (*de deo uno*), setting forth what metaphysical reason can know. Hinlicky wrote a book entitled, *Divine Simplicity: Christ the Crisis of Metaphysics*, vigorously arguing that the traditional doctrine of God starting with what can be known of God by philosophy apart from the biblical revelation has caused great confusion. The church fathers constructed a synthetic doctrine of God, combining what Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus taught about God via reason with what the Bible reveals concerning the acts of God in the history of salvation, culminating in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hinlicky follows the Trinitarian personalism of Karl Barth and Robert Jenson who deny that the true God can be known apart from what the Bible reveals. They rejected the view that Christian theology can properly superimpose a trinitarianism upon a prior monotheism. This approach has led to a colossal muddle, giving the doctrine of the Trinity an unstable place in the tradition of Christian theology. Karl Barth places the Trinity at the front of his *Church Dogmatics*, with the very first things to be said in the Prolegomena. He wrote, "The doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian."³⁸¹

There was another Karl writing about the Trinity about the same time as Barth, Karl Rahner, who said some sobering things about the doctrine. "Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists.' We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.... The treatise on the Trinity looks itself in even more splendid isolation, with the ensuing danger that the religious mind finds it devoid of interest. It looks as if everything which matters for us in God has already been said in the treatise *On the One God*."³⁸²

381. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. and trans. G. W. Bromiley (T.&T Clark, 1956), 1/1, 301.

382. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (Herder and Herder, 1970), 17.

Since Hinlicky starts his treatment of the Trinity with Pneumatology, in chapter three he takes up the doctrine of baptism, the initial point of contact between the Spirit and the human on the way to becoming Christian, a member of the body of Christ. Baptism is the Spirit's work of regeneration, bringing about union with the crucified and risen Christ. Hinlicky discusses the early Christian practices of baptism, the baptismal theologies of Martin Luther ("*Baptizatus sum!*"), Menno Simons, and Karl Barth. That leads him into the debate over the validity of infant baptism, which is theologically justifiable but becomes questionable when it is administered to all infants with no regard as to whether they will be brought up in the Christian faith. Karl Barth surprised many of his followers when in his ripe old age he rejected the practice of infant baptism. In defense of Barth one can point to the scandal he observed of a Christianity under Hitler in which millions of nominal Christians supported the evil regime and its genocidal policies of mass murder.

Chapter four continues to consider issues under Pneumatology, naturally the doctrine of sanctification, the ministry and mission of the church, with an excursus on the ordination of women. Hinlicky boldly speculates on the distinctive role of the Spirit within the immanent Trinity as the unifier of the Father and the Son. "Just as the origin of the persons is the Father who begets the Son and breathes the Spirit, the personal indivisibility of these Three distinct by way of origin is the eternal act of the Spirit, showering the Father's love on the Son and returning the Beloved Son to the Father in love, as active anticipation of God's ever-new future. In this respect the Father is Alpha and the Spirit is Omega in God."³⁸³

Part Three deals with Christology, also in two chapters. Chapter five focusses on Mary as *Theotokos*, a term used in the Eastern Orthodox Church for the one who gave birth to God

383. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 322.

the Son, otherwise often translated as "Mother of God." This chapter deals principally with the truth of the Incarnation and its essential connection with eucharistic theology, rife with many controversies. In discussing the Lutheran emphasis on the "real presence" of Christ in his body and blood, Hinlicky regards the terms as redundant. "What other kind of presence could there be than 'real'?"³⁸⁴ To say "real presence" is what Hinlicky calls "emphatic polemical rhetoric," used in controversy over the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, he regards the idea of a "symbolic presence" as an oxymoron. The bread and the wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ, who is then considered not present but absent. "In this ceremony, with this bread and wine, the *man* Christ is present, i.e., as His *body-and-blood human reality born of Mary and suffered under Pontius Pilate* — or, He is not there as such at all."³⁸⁵

Chapter six begins with an attempt to show that the post-Vatican II dialogues between Lutherans and Catholics have reached a convergence on the doctrine of the Eucharist. "Both traditions acknowledge a 'manifold presence of Christ,' but specifically 'that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is present wholly and entirely, in his body and blood, under the signs of bread and wine.'³⁸⁶ In this chapter Hinlicky also discloses a core concept of his dogmatics, in that he goes to the East to retrieve the neo-Chalcedonian Christology of Cyril of Alexandria and couples it with the Western theological anthropology of Augustine. A Cyrillian Christ is the Savior of an Augustinian sinner. "Our claim

384. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 479.

385. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 480.

386. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 499. Hinlicky is quoting from *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, eds. Paul C. Empire and T. Austin Murphy (Augsburg Publishing House), III: 189.

has been that nothing less than a Cyrillian Christ is soteriologically adequate to facing, engaging, and in the end overcoming the predicament of Augustinian humanity that is sinfulness."³⁸⁷ The chapter ends with a discussion of the threefold office of Christ — priest, prophet, and king.

Part four complete's Hinlicky's treatment of the Trinity with his discussion of Patrology, the doctrine of God the Father. In Chapter seven he offers extended commentary on Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer. In addressing God as Heavenly Father, Hinlicky contends, Jesus is acknowledging that God is the audience of theology. If that is so, then theology has more than one audience, because theology is written for the church to hear, to equip it to proclaim the gospel, to teach the articles of the faith, and to plan its mission to the nations. Chapter eight deals with the primary agency of the Father, the Creator of everything that is not God. This chapter also takes up the problem of evil and explains Hinlicky's concept of the theodicy of faith, drawing upon his book on Leibniz. It also deals with the concept of the existence of God, against the backdrop of Tillich's famous assertion that "God does not exist." When Paul Holmer of Yale Divinity School heard that Tillich made such an assertion, he said it shows that Tillich was an atheist. It might have been better for Holmer first to read what Tillich meant by what he said.³⁸⁸

Hinlicky's volume of dogmatics fittingly concludes with a "Doxology." Readers who have come this far will rejoice to praise

387. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics after Christendom*, 567-568.

388. See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (University of Chicago Press, 1951), Vol. I, 204-208. Tillich wrote, "It would be a great victory for Christian apologetics if the words 'God' and 'existence' were very definitely separated except in the paradox of God becoming manifest under the conditions of existence, that is, in the christological paradox. God does not exist. He is being-itself beyond essence and existence." He says, God is the creative ground of essence and existence. As such God is real, beyond essence and existence applicable to created things.

God from whom all blessings flow. It has been a heavy read. Only those who have more than a sophomore's knowledge of the history of philosophy and theology will be able to delight in the to and fro of Hinlicky's dense argumentation and subtile nuances. The "Doxology" takes up the relevant themes of eschatology, including the hotly debated one of universal salvation, engaging the thought of David Hart.³⁸⁹ I will end this review with the last words that Hinlicky wrote to end his book: "The Father remembers us better than we can remember ourselves, so that, purified by final conformation to Christ, in the resurrection the Spirit makes us all together new forever in His love. So it is that already now the church sings in anticipation, 'Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was, is now and will be forever. Alleluia. Amen.'"³⁹⁰

4. Recent Monographs

After twenty some years of teaching at Roanoke College Paul Hinlicky looks forward to retirement. After the publication of his tome of dogmatics, Hinlicky continued to publish shorter books related to Luther and Lutheranism. I will close this review of Hinlicky's prolific work as a Lutheran dogmatician with brief notes on a few of his most recent writings. With his wife Ellen and son Will, Paul Hinlicky has a small farm in Virginia where the family is busy raising naturally grass-fed beef, chickens and honeybees. That's what I read online, which made me wonder when does he find time to write so much.

One of the most interesting of Hinlicky's books was written before the publication of his dogmatics. Its title is, *Before Auschwitz: What Christian Theology Must Learn from the Rise of Nazism* (Cascade Books, 2013). I wrote a blurb for the book I

389. David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Eerdmans, 2003).

390. Paul Hinlicky, *Beloved Community*, 893.

will repeat here: "Paul Hinlicky's interest is not merely to shed light on how it could happen that highly cultured and sophisticated German Christians could support the evil actions of Nazi anti-Semitism, but to suggest that we have no guarantee that something similar could not happen within American Christianity." That is a comment that seems even more apropos in America 2021. I know of no more informative book on the extent to which Christians were complicit in the rise of Nazism, some of them well known Lutheran theologians, Paul Althaus and Werner Elert. Before Auschwitz German church leaders believed that Hitler would be a great leader of the German people and help to build a *Volkskirche*. Instead, what came about was a deadly version of fascism. Hinlicky has a chapter on "The Not So Strange Theology of Adolf Hitler." This book is a gem and a must read for American Christian church leaders and theologians in our time.

In 2017 Hinlicky published a book rehearsing the events of the sixteenth century Reformation that led to Luther's excommunication by Pope Leo. The book's title is enough to whet one's appetite to take up and read — *Luther vs. Pope Leo: A Conversation in Purgatory*. In the Preface Hinlicky opines: "There must be a place in contemporary theology for thought experiments, such as the author now lays before the reader.... Let me confess right up front: I am no stylist. Genre-wise, I have birthed some kind of a monster in what follows: neither history nor theology but some fanciful, or, if you will, creative hybrid of the two that I am tempted to call 'ecumenical fantasy' ... as fanciful as putting Luther and Leo X together in an interminable purgatory may seem."³⁹¹ Even though Hinlicky may be right to call what he has written a work of fantasy, the author clearly has a sure grasp of both the history and theology of what was going on between Luther and Rome. Since the author's intent is to move the ec-

391. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther vs. Pope Leo: A Conversation in Purgatory* (Abingdon Press, 2017), IX.

umenical ball down the field, Hinlicky is aware that there will be conservative Lutherans as well as conservative Catholics of the Pre-Vatican II variety who will be unhappy with the words he has coming out of the mouth of both Luther and Leo.

Luther and Pope Leo have lengthy conversations in purgatory, where they have to share the same room, discussing the key issues that divided Lutherans and Catholics in the sixteenth century. The outcome is that they achieve the kind of reconciliation in the afterlife that mirrors the convergence that Lutherans and Catholics have reached on earth in their mutual signing of the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification."

Hinlicky rejoices in the ecumenical progress that has been made between Lutherans and Catholics, and so quotes what Pope Francis said in authorizing the liturgy for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2017: "Separating that which is polemical from the theological insights of the Reformation, Catholics are now able to hear Luther's challenge for the church today, recognizing him as a 'witness to the gospel.' And so after centuries of mutual condemnations and vilification, in 2017 Lutheran and Catholic Christians will for the first time commemorate together the beginning of the Reformation."³⁹² This book is eloquent testimony to the ecumenical commitment of Paul Hinlicky, and reinforces his understanding of Luther's theology as fundamentally "Catholic."

In 2018 Hinlicky wrote another book on Luther's theology, this one entitled, *Luther for Evangelicals: A Reintroduction*. In teaching courses on religion and theology at Roanoke College, Hinlicky no doubt had many students who were "Evangelicals," not of the Lutheran kind but conservative Protestant. Undoubtedly also he became aware that Evangelicals know practically nothing about Luther, except that he started the Protestant Reformation by posting the 95 Theses on the door of the Castle

392. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther vs. Pope Leo*, XII.

Church. One could learn about that dramatic event from seeing one of the popular films on Luther. Hinlicky graciously welcomes Evangelical readers, presenting his book as "a scholarly project of liberating Luther from Lutheranism to make him available as a resource for the rest of the Christian world."³⁹³ He chose to write on four Christian doctrines that would surely be of special interest to Evangelicals — the new birth, the Bible, evangelization, and atonement. Hinlicky sees the traffic of communication going in both directions: Luther's theology has much in common with the concerns of Evangelicalism; at the same time Evangelicals would benefit from Luther's teaching on these four topics. Hinlicky expounds Luther's key idea of the "joyous exchange" (*fröhliche Wechsel*) in explaining the atonement. On the cross Jesus does not only suffer the punishment sinners deserve, but out of unfathomable love he takes upon himself the sin itself. Thus atonement is a once-for-all act of divine liberation, which is good news for sinners always and everywhere.

In the second part of the book Hinlicky produces a masterful explanation of Luther's Catechisms, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. In my knowledge of standard Evangelical theology, Luther's explanations of what is meant by each of the ten Commandments, the three articles of the Creed and the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer would be readily digestible, but I would expect many would choke on the red meat that Luther serves up in explaining the three Sacraments, Baptism, Confession and Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. In his *Critical Dogmatics* Hinlicky offers strong evangelical catholic and orthodox teaching on each of the Sacraments, but here he tends to pull his punches a bit when addressing Evangelicals directly. Most usefully, this book would be an excellent choice for an ecumenical book club to read and discuss.

393. Paul Hinlicky, *Luther for Evangelicals: A Reintroduction* (Baker Academic, 2018), ix.

Hinlicky's most recent book is entitled, guess what, *Lutheran Theology. A Critical Introduction* (Wipf and Stock, 2020). I have to confess that I have not purchased or read this latest book released in May of 2020, but what I can do is transmit the publisher's blurb for the book.

In this book Lutheran theologian Paul Hinlicky makes the deeply conflicted origins of Lutheran theology fruitful for the future. Exploring this intellectual and spiritual tradition of thought through its major historical chapters, Hinlicky rejects essentialist projects, exposing the debilitating binaries such programs engender and perpetuate, to establish an authentic Luther-theology or Lutheran theology. Hinlicky excavates the ways that throughout a five-hundred-year tradition the legacy of Luther texts has been appropriated, retooled, subverted, or developed. Readers of this introduction will thus be critically equipped to make intellectually honest appropriations of the Luther legacy in the plurality of contemporary context in which the iteration of Christian theology will continue.