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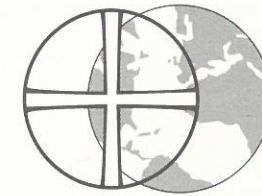
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Resurrection and the Trinitarian Knowledge of God

PAUL R. HINLICKY

In this essay, I want to ask and answer a question disruptive within the Western theological tradition: What difference does it make whether the construction of Christology orients itself with the notion of the incarnation of a divine idea (e.g., the Logos who became flesh of John 1:14) or with that of the vindication of Jesus, in David's royal line, as the Son of God (e.g., Romans 1:2–4)? Both motifs exist in the biblical sources and are at play in the traditions of Christian theology. The question posed is thus not a matter of a for-or-against choice between these motifs; it is rather a matter of orientation, or epistemic access, by which one of these motifs has primacy and therefore will govern the other, in particular, by construing differently the good news of resurrection.

The incarnation orientation¹ will interpret resurrection as datum alongside others, serving as miraculous confirmation of the presence of God expressed in

¹ I am thinking specifically of Western medieval scholasticism, which was oriented from the outset by Anselm's apologetic question, Why did God become human? Underlying Anselm's question were the acute criticisms of Jews, Muslims, and philosophers regarding the absurdity—indeed, blasphemy—of identifying creator and creature. An excellent contemporary exemplar of the incarnation orientation is the “metaphysically high, materially low” Christology of Marilyn McCord Adams, as seen in Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Resurrection as a concept only makes sense as something linked to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the resurrection of Jesus Christ is only properly seen in light of the knowledge of the Christian Trinity, God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the gospel message.

the figure of the incarnate one, a miracle of confirmation overcoming obstacles to faith. The vindication orientation will interpret resurrection as the exaltation of the controversial Jesus to saving, albeit still contested authority—also in the *ecclesia*, understood as the community of those elected to share in the sufferings of Christ in hope of sharing his glory.² As Christian theology is reflection on a word given prior to thought (Jüngel), in the first case, incarnation serves as the premise of christological thinking; in the second case, incarnation is the doxological conclusion of christological thinking which is premised instead on the proclamation of the divine sonship of this crucified Jew, in the act revealing the inauguration of the reign of the God of Israel. In a nutshell, for the incarnation orientation, resurrection overcomes the scandal of the cross, not to mention the Jewishness of Jesus, while the vindication orientation asserts and prosecutes these.

The alternative just sketched has many ramifications, although we should note from the outset a definite ambiguity that haunts the incarnation orientation and thus may confuse the issue. This ambiguity is usually masked by an alleged contrast between “high” and “low” Christologies, as if varying degrees of divinity might be assigned to the manifestly human Jesus.³ But even so-called low Christologies, which think of Jesus as a human being with a special or extraordinary consciousness of God, think fundamentally in terms of incarnation for telling that “God is present” with reassuring affirmations of “*what* God is like,” on this basis producing a normative idea or image of God. Such disclosure and assertion of timeless truth is what is decisive for an incarnation orientation, no matter whether conceived highly “from above” or lowly “from below.” In contrast, vindication tells what God is doing in raising Jesus, bringing to naught the things that are in order to evoke new creation.

Moreover, since each orientation wants to interpret the other biblical motif, it is not always clear how the governing christological logic is at work incorporating the other motif into its own framework. Both orientations claim revelation of God, for example, but for the incarnation approach, revelation is disclosure which clarifies, so far as possible, an essentially unknowable divine reality which the resurrection miracle in turn, alongside other miracles, is thought to confirm. For the vindication approach, by contrast, revelation is an apocalyptic incision executed in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus which gives and demands knowledge of God by proclaiming reconciliation through the cross of God's Son and, on that basis, promising fulfillment of the suffering creation in a resurrection like his.

Centrally for the question of christological doctrine, neither the personal characteristic of the eternal Son nor his human-historical particularity as Jesus of Nazareth determines essentially the portrait (Gal 3:1) or pastoral function (Gal 5:1) of incarnation. Indeed, in this kind of Christology, the name *Jesus* survives

² This position is exemplified in modern Lutheran theology stimulated by Karl Barth and by the post-Holocaust reckoning with Christian anti-Judaism. Representatives include Eberhard Jüngel, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert Jenson, and most recently Ingolf Dalferth.

³ It is the particular merit of Wesley Hill in *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015) to have prosecuted this case.

only so far as everything historically particular about him is sacrificed to his being disclosive as the universally human incarnation of God. All that matters is connection with divine being. By contrast, for the vindication Christology, not only does the historical particularity of Jesus who was crucified matter centrally for specifying the *Jewish*, that is, *messianic*, content of Easter vindication (Rom 1:2–4!), but brings with it inescapably the personal distinction of the divine Son (Phil 2:6) in relation to the God of Israel, whom he addressed as “Abba, Father” (Mark 14:36) and from whom he received the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of his incarnate mission to reconcile estranged humanity and redeem the frustrated creation.

Centrally for the question of christological doctrine, neither the personal characteristic of the eternal Son nor his human-historical particularity as Jesus of Nazareth determines essentially the portrait (Gal 3:1) or pastoral function (Gal 5:1) of incarnation.

Vindication Christology consequently must understand resurrection first and foremost as an event *within* the life of God, a resolution of the dramatic tension of Good Friday which left the Father without the Son, who was shrouded in death by the sin and woe of the world. Thus, in the resurrection, that Father decides what kind of God he will be.⁴ This decision comes about in answer to the divine dilemma classically articulated by Athanasius: “What was God in his goodness to do?” Ignore sin and let the creation go to ruin? Judge sin and in the process destroy the sinners and thus also ruin the creation?⁵ At the heart of the resurrection gospel is the divine decision to be God who justifies the ungodly and gives life to the dead, indicating in the process an eschatological metaphysics of anticipation with a relational ontology of divine being.

If so, however, that portends a reformation in the Christian understanding of the being of God away from the Platonic metaphysics of persistence, the natural habitat of the incarnation orientation. From its beginning in medieval scholasticism, the incarnation orientation is defending the Christian faith against a particular criticism, namely, that it is absurd for the perfect to become imperfect, the substantial to become insubstantial, the infinite to become finite, and so on. But as in all systematic apologetics, the tail comes to wag the dog as philosophical assumptions about simple, perfect, and substantial being are unwittingly taken over into Christian theology as self-evident axioms. By contrast, what is recovered in the vindication orientation is the root of the Trinitarian perception of God in that here, theology must simultaneously distinguish and relate in God the judgment on sin and the justification of sinners even as it simultaneously distinguishes

⁴ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Triune God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 115–25.

⁵ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 6.

and relates the God who sends, the God who is sent, and the God who accomplishes this purpose in humanity and for the creation.

Thus, incarnation Christology understands resurrection as validation of Jesus’s way of exemplifying God, where the notion of God is self-evidently presupposed in terms of the metaphysics of persistence: transcendent, self-identical, and thus the fundamentally unknowable ground of cosmic becoming. This classically Western approach going back to Augustine includes also Protestant Christologies of “absolute paradox,”⁶ as Karl Barth described the existentialist revival of the late medieval/early modern doctrine of God as sheer omnipotence, *Deus ex lex*, arbitrary freedom bounded neither externally nor internally. According to these theologians, God reveals Godself in a majestic display of daunting, cognitively paralyzing, and rhetorically overpowering contradictions such as the “infinite is finite” or the “impassible suffers.” The theology of absolute paradox, as it were, ups the ante in a risky bet against the logical criticism of “incarnation of God” as a contradiction in terms.

Inevitably, however, the bet fails. Such intentional nonsense posing as Christology finally bows to the recognition that all our metaphors, including “incarnation” (however paradoxically conceived), fail to state the ineffable. Not knowing what in the world is being claimed in the “dialectical” proclamation of absolute paradox, one can neither affirm it nor deny it. The would-be exclusive claim for revelation in Jesus in the Christology of absolute paradox thus slowly dies the death of a thousand qualifications until it collapses into religious relativism.

What survives this collapse is not Jesus, or even his name, but a christological pattern supposedly exemplified in him, namely, incarnation, now understood as the contextually concrete word of liberation. Jesus’s naming of the God of Israel as “Abba, Father,” and this Father’s naming of Jesus as Son in the Easter vindication, are left behind as time-conditioned metaphors that may safely fall from usage in favor of more apt contemporary metaphors on the same pattern: exploding binaries with all the more severe indulgence in paradox justified by the emancipatory intention. Ironically, then, for incarnation Christology the doctrine of the Trinity, which insists upon the personal distinctions in the life of God as the eternal Father of the Son by their Holy Spirit, now grasping hold of perishing creatures through the gospel, becomes dysfunctional and inoperative. All that matters is that by means of some incarnational metaphor, divinity makes contact with humanity. That is the good news. But if Jesus survives this Christology as only an exemplary past metaphor of the unknowable God so that on his precedence some emancipatory idea of the divine makes present contact with us lost in the darkness of flesh, why not a fresh “paradox” like “Stalin (or fill in the blank with your own pick) is risen”?⁷

⁶ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation in Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 3–156.

⁷ Paul R. Hinlicky, “Why Not ‘Stalin Is Risen!’?” (A symposium on David Congdon, *The Mission of Demythologizing: Rudolf Bultmann’s Dialectical Theology*), *Syndicate: A New Forum for Theology* (September–October 2016: 3/5) 95–102.

Incarnation Christology thus has a Nestorian inclination, distinguishing sharply between the God who was revealed once upon a time and the son of Mary; as categorically distinct agents, these two only functionally correlate, again no matter whether the correlation is strong or weak with a high or low dose of divinity manifest in the creaturely vehicle of incarnation. Taken to its logical extreme, for such thinking not only could any of the traditional Trinitarian three have become incarnate (since they are *equally*, that is, *abstractly* divine), but incarnation can occur with varying degrees of intensity anywhere and in anyone (as the eucharistic doctrine of impanation suggests).⁸

But vindication Christology will read the Christ hymn of Philippians 2, by contrast, as the story of a singular divine person passing from an antecedent state of glorious proximity to God into a state of obedient humiliation and indeed dereliction on account of which he is now exalted as the saving Lord of the humiliated of the earth whose plight he had made his own. What is good news, then, is that the Jew Jesus, the same *person* as the eternal Son, fulfilled all righteousness in this obedient act of loving solidarity up to and including ignominious death on an imperial stake. By his filial obedience there he has won the right to be saving Lord of the disobedient for whom he has taken personal responsibility and thus has been given this title, *kyrios*, by his God and Father, who is YHWH, the God of Israel. If that is so, anything like "Stalin is risen" is excluded (Mark 13:5, 21–22). *Only* Jesus is risen, marking him out as the *only* Son of Man who *is* the Son of God in that he came not to be served like a king, but to serve like a slave, giving his life for the redemption of many (Mark 10:45).

We turn now to corroborating the foregoing questioning of the Western theological tradition in favor of the thesis that the resurrection vindication of the crucified Jesus as the only Son of God launches the path to the Trinitarian knowledge of God. Here essentially two points must be argued: First, resurrection as vindication is intelligible on its Jewish background. Apocalyptic is the mother of Christian theology (Käsemann). Second, resurrection as vindication entails strong personal distinctions in the relational being of God, namely, being God as the Father who sends; being God as the Son who is sent and freely goes; being God as the Holy Spirit who unifies the Father and the Son even while uniting lost humans with the Son and so incorporating them into his own relationship to his Father.

We turn now to corroborating the foregoing questioning of the Western theological tradition in favor of the thesis that the resurrection vindication of the crucified Jesus as the only Son of God launches the path to the Trinitarian knowledge of God.

⁸ See my critique of Marilyn McCord Adam in my *Beloved Community: Critical Dogmatics after Christendom* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 602–7.

We have argued that Christology premised upon incarnation *as a starting point* obscures the Jewishness of the event of Jesus Christ in that it presumes precisely what the Torah forbids: our identification of a creature with the Creator, whether "highly" or "lowly" on a scale of intensity. It is just this tacit assumption of a permissible range of idolatries (more politely, similitudes) in Christology which finally makes imperceptible the resurrection of Jesus as a vindication of his unique divine sonship. Christology premised upon vindication, by contrast, is the epistemic avenue to the Trinitarian knowledge of the God of the gospel. Here one of the divine three fittingly, not necessarily, made his very own precisely the humanity which is Jesus of Nazareth, who in the cause of God's sovereignty befriended alike sinners and the sinned-against. In this framework we have to speak exclusively and with rigorous discipline of resurrection as the *Father's* self-identification by the Spirit with the crucified Son, revealed on Easter morn simultaneously with the creation of faith, with all that this complex event of the coming of God's reign portends for the being of God. Only so do we come doxologically to the confession of the incarnation (as John 20:28 actually teaches).

This "fittingness" of the incarnation thus premised on resurrection Christology is the real import of the seminal little tract published a generation ago by Pinchas Lapide, rich with illuminating parallels from rabbinic literature. The book was sensationalized as recognition by an Orthodox Jew of the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus, but the account provided by Lapide is far more subtle than the headline indicated. The actual argument was that in the theological climate of Second Temple Judaism, the rise of the early Christian resurrection faith is entirely intelligible on its native Jewish terms—indeed, that intelligibility *depends* upon the Jewish prophetic-apocalyptic framing of theology as knowledge of God who comes to judge and to save. "Expiatory suffering, a martyr's death and resurrection belong to that Jewish doctrine of salvation which until today is expressed in the examples of the patriarch Isaac who sacrifices himself voluntarily, of Isaiah's suffering servant of the Lord, and of the death-defying valor of the Maccabean blood witnesses."⁹

Lapide was careful to observe that there is no narration whatsoever in the New Testament literature describing the Easter event as such. As an event within the life of God, what transpired between the crucified, dead, and buried Jesus and the God of Israel whom he had addressed as his God to the bitter end, had no human witnesses, even as the manifestations of the risen Lord were confined to a select company of chosen witnesses.¹⁰ Something happened, to be sure. Something happened to turn defeat into victory and consequently to turn the disciples who had betrayed, fled, and denied from grief to joy. Something happened—yet *what* happened becomes cognitively accessible as "resurrection" only to those in whom its proclamation works a resurrection to faith in echo of Jesus's own resurrection from the dead. There is a subject-object correlation here in faith and resurrection

⁹ Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 132.

¹⁰ Lapide, 97.

that can be neither denied nor comprehended as it is no less a work of God the Holy Spirit than is the resurrection of Jesus itself. Indeed, it is one and the same work of the Lord and giver of life.

Naturally then, there are other explanations of the "empty tomb" or the Easter "appearances" than "resurrection." These other explanations are plausible ways of assimilating the unfamiliar to the familiar world where the dead are dead and do not rise. Moreover, we must observe and acknowledge critically how the Easter witness acquired midrashic expansions through the telling and retelling of the Easter announcement, "He is not here. He is risen!" This filling out occurred on the familiar pattern of Hebrew Scripture's narrative theology. These narrative embellishments consolidate in the resurrection narratives of the Gospels, often reflecting an anti-docetic stress on the identity of the Jesus who died and was buried with the risen one who now appears speaking peace. Knowing these things today, we may come to the skeptical conclusion that these stories are not intended as a proof of anything and certainly cannot serve as proofs that what happened was God's act of resurrection.

But we may also come to the insight that these midrashic expansions explicating the Easter announcement intend to extend the action of God in Jesus, upon Jesus, and now through Jesus into the here and now of proclamation. When we grasp just this conviction of the action of God upon Jesus such that it is Jesus who is now present and continues to speak to faith, we see how that Easter action of God was intelligently named "resurrection" by the faith which arose in turn at its announcement. The good news is indeed *news* in that its *content* is the vindication and exaltation of the crucified Jew Jesus by his God and Father, the God of Israel, who raised him from the dead. Because it is this *news*, it is ever made new in the retelling of it. One may disbelieve this, of course, but so far as we attend rigorously to the Jewish context of primitive Christian theology, the intelligibility of the claim and proclamation of the resurrection vindication of the crucified Jesus is the starting point—whether of knowing disbelief or knowing faith.

To corroborate now the claim that resurrection as vindication entails strong personal distinctions and relations between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,¹¹ I want to turn to a pioneering exploration in this regard, Walter Künneth's 1951 *Theologie der Auferstehung* (subsequently translated into English and published in 1965).¹² Unfortunately for Künneth's reputation, his polemical spirit led him into battle against the increasing purchase of Rudolf Bultmann's program of demythologization in postwar Germany, as Künneth was a leader in the "No Other Gospel" movement in the 1950s and '60s. Yet it was the same polemical spirit that had taken him into ferocious theological combat against Nazi race ideologist Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* in the 1930s.¹³ After

¹¹ Lapidé allowed for this also in *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine: A Dialogue by Pinchas Lapidé and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002).

¹² Walter Künneth, *The Theology of the Resurrection* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965).

¹³ Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age* (Torrance, CA: Noontide, 1982).

his 200-page tract against Rosenberg had sold 36,000 copies, the Gestapo banned it and took away Künneth's right to teach.

Künneth was active in the Confessing Church, but as a traditional Lutheran, he distinguished between the religious conflict for the soul of the church against its coordination with the National Socialist worldview and the open question of political obedience to governing authorities. Be that all-too-traditional Lutheranism as it may, Künneth saw his battle against Bultmann as continuous with his battle against Rosenberg because in either case, theological anti-Judaism was eclipsing the particularity of Jesus and thus the sense of *his* resurrection as vindication. And there is evidence for Künneth's perception of continuity in his polemics in Doris Bergen's observation that the anti-doctrinal Nazi Christians found a pretext for readmission to the postwar church in Bultmann's program for demythologization as providing the same liberation from Jewish myths and legalisms that they had sought in Nazism.¹⁴

What is important for our purposes is Künneth's "resurrection Christology" and its affirmative, apparently innovative (in the context of the Western tradition) treatment of divine sonship. Künneth, to be sure, directly opposed divine sonship to the "Logos Christology of the Greek councils and of early Protestant dogmatics." On analysis, however, Künneth fails in this to see the difference between Eastern and Western theologies. In fact, "Logos Christology" for Künneth is an iteration of the incarnation orientation previously discussed. According to it, "the human and divine natures exist side-by-side yet at the same time are also one in the unity of person." This paradoxical combination, however, "radically breaks down because of its failure to grasp adequately the concept of 'divinity.' The 'divinity' is conceived as an unchanging metaphysical essence of the Logos, and implies the immobile character of an abstractly existing state. The immutability of the divine nature of the Logos inevitably gives rise to speculation about the relation of the two natures with the incarnation of the Logos and, because of that incarnation, about the nature" of its union with human nature. Such speculation "forces Christology into unhistorical abstraction, without being able to make clear any living relationship between the humanity and divinity of the Christ. But above all, the Logos Christology does not make it possible to bring out the reality of God in its relation to Christ"¹⁵—that is, the saving assertion of God's reign. It only, as previously discussed, uses the human Christ as a disclosure vehicle to tell what the ineffable God is like, providing an authoritative metaphor of perfect being so far as possible in a cosmic structure taken as fixed and unchanging.

A "high" Christology, in light of Künneth's critique, is one which insists on the absoluteness of the paradox that God *is* this man, while a "low" Christology (a "Spirit Christology," as Künneth terms it) lessens that severe cognitive tension by saying that in this man, the absoluteness of God is somehow specially and

¹⁴ Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Künneth, *The Theology of the Resurrection*, 113.

authoritatively conceived. But neither high nor low Christologies satisfy because the orientation to the problem is confused, if not profoundly mistaken: "the choice of starting point is in fact decisive for the treatment of the Christological problem," and as a result, "our answer to the question takes its cue from the basic insight of the primitive Christian message and declares: *the resurrection of Jesus. Christology has to take its basic starting point in the raising of Christ.* With that, the theme of Christology is summed up as 'God's action on Christ in the resurrection,' in which is given the decisive point of reference and direction"¹⁶ for the production of christological doctrine (indeed, *Trinitarian doctrine*).

What "resurrection Christology" thus grasps firmly and essentially is that "the divine action upon Christ in the resurrection requires a thorough grounding" *within* the eternal life of God—that is, that Christ's obedience in the state of humiliation should be taken not as a contradiction to but rather as an expression of his true divinity—that is, his being God *in the way of being Son*. This grounding is what the concept of eternal divine sonship provides: precisely as the divine Son of God, Christ does not send or raise himself but is sent and raised by his Father. To be sure, one cannot be a father without a son nor a son without a father. The concept of sonship thus first of all expresses "the personal, spiritual and essential homogeneity with the Father. . . . This essential divine sonship of Jesus lies beyond all possibility of human comparison and means absolute transcendence." Yet, by the same token, sonship indicates "also the difference between Son and Father, the dependence of the Son and the fact of his being conditioned by God" such that there is not "an identity of power, rank and dignity with the Father." The sonship of the "preexistent one," then, is to be theologically understood and "used to safeguard the uniqueness of Jesus's filial status as transcendence and yet not as an expression of divine sovereignty."¹⁷ In this way Künneth challenges Western theology's misleading obsession, going back to Augustine, with the abstract equality of the Trinitarian persons to insist upon genuine personal distinctions and relations.

What "resurrection Christology" thus grasps firmly and essentially is that "the divine action upon Christ in the resurrection requires a thorough grounding" within the eternal life of God—that is, that Christ's obedience in the state of humiliation should be taken not as a contradiction to but rather as an expression of his true divinity.

For, as the Christ hymn of Philippians 2 states, the one who was in the form of God did not count "equality" with God something to be coveted but was able *as this form of God* to let go of any natural claim as Son and thus heir to the sovereignty that God as Father possesses. The Christ hymn indicates that the preexistent Son

¹⁶ Künneth, 117.

¹⁷ Künneth, 118–19.

"possesses divine being and essence, i.e., . . . 'identity of being with God' and in that sense 'divinity.' But he does not yet possess . . . the function of divine authority, the divine sovereignty of Matthew 28:18, which is first bestowed upon the Son through the resurrection."¹⁸ This exaltation to the right hand of divine power occurs in the Christ hymn as the awarding of the name above every name, that of *kyrios*, to the *vindicated* Jesus.

Künneth's exegesis thus provides the transcendent ground for Jesus's sonship: "God raises Jesus from the dead because he is his 'preexistent' son,"¹⁹ who now has truly lived out divine sonship in his human obedience, even to death upon a cross. Accordingly, however, the much-discussed *kenosis* in the Philippians passage "does not mean emptying himself of the divine sovereignty—which in fact the Son does not yet possess" but will rather attain on account of his enduring the test of divine sonship in his incarnate life. *Kenosis* has rather to do with the "change in the status of the Son in relation to God, as also to the world, what the old dogmatics called the 'state of humiliation.'" Bound to God as the sinless one, he also binds himself in love to the sinful humanity whose sphere of estrangement from God he has entered; thus he goes incognito into the ignominy of his sufferings. "Having become flesh, he shares with a brother's solidarity in the curse of sin and its effects in destruction and punishment, suffers in his 'servant form' with his fellows under the distress of humanity, and knows himself like all creatures subject to the laws of transience and the necessity of dying." Yet precisely here, the humiliated Son stands "the test of obedience," "filial obedience in the giving, suffering and dying."²⁰ This obedience of Jesus the eternal Son is thus identical with relinquishing his filial right to inherit by nature the sovereignty in favor of filial solidarity with the disobedient in an act of free grace. So, it is by the grace of this *kenosis*, complete in a death from which the Son cannot raise himself, that "the sonship of Jesus comes to its perfection": willingly he goes into the powerlessness of death to complete his solidarity of love with unworthy others; in the utter darkness of true death, he helplessly awaits his Father's vindication.

There are problems with Künneth's pioneering synthesis: A child of his times, he rejects too easily the patristic Logos Christology as a Hellenization of the gospel rather than as an evangelization of Hellenism (J. Pelikan). Mised in this way to read the prologue of the Gospel of John as an instance of the mediating Logos of middle Platonism, he fails to grasp the thoroughly Jewish atmosphere of the Gospel of John as well as the utter predominance within it of the father-son relation.²¹ Had Künneth understood this, he would have seen that the prologue serves to introduce and exposit nothing other than this relationship: "No one has ever seen God, but the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made

¹⁸ Künneth, 121.

¹⁹ Künneth, 122; italics original.

²⁰ Künneth, 123.

²¹ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York, Harper & Row, 1968).

him known" (John 1:21).²² Still lacking a genuine trinitarianism, Künneth also succumbed to the Western tendency to interpret the Holy Spirit as nothing but a nonphysical presence of Jesus rather than as a distinct *person* at work (also in the earthly sojourn of Jesus!) in the same sense as Künneth has explicated the distinct persons of the Son and the Father. Conceding all that, Künneth has nevertheless broken through to the crucial differentiation in Eastern trinitarianism between *ousia* and *hypostasis*—that is, between abstract being and concrete and social being in a particular or personal way.

You cannot have a resurrection without first a death, nor the justification of the sinner without first the just judgment on sin; nor can you have the loving God of the gospel apart from God's holy wrath against what opposes love. To be sure, the God of the gospel is deeply, darkly hidden in the wrath of God's love, in executing death and condemnation. For this very reason the *same* God, so hidden, is revealed in the surpassing mercy which has sought and found the way to the justification of the ungodly as the new and certain basis for the renewal of life. The God of the gospel is the Father who sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law. He became a curse for them in order that the blessing of Abraham might fall upon them. The blessing is the Spirit, whom they have now received by faith apart from the works of the law, the Spirit of this Son sent into their hearts crying, "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:4–6). The God who revealed his Son in raising him from accursed death for us and our redemption is revealed as the Father of this Son where and when the Spirit works resurrection to faith by the proclamation of Jesus's resurrection. The gospel-revealed God is the Trinity. ⊕

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²² Paul R. Hinlicky, *Divine Complexity: The Rise of Creedal Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 22.