

Divine Complexity: The Rise of Creedal Christianity, by PAUL R. HINLICKY. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010. xii + 284 pp. \$32.00.

In deliberate contrast with the classical conception of divine simplicity, Paul R. Hinlicky proposes that instead God is better described in terms of divine complexity. It is this point, specifically about divine simplicity but also generally about the way theological formulations are to be understood, that *Divine Complexity: The Rise of Creedal Christianity* undertakes to prove. To do this, Hinlicky offers a theological reconstruction of the transition from the Easter event, promulgated in the earliest kerygma of the church, to the formal creedal articulation of theology achieved at the Council of Constantinople in 381. His aim is to demonstrate that the creed represents not a surrender of Christianity's core values to philosophical theology but an active opposition to the philosophical vision of a simple God in favor of a truly Christian view of the saving, self-giving Trinity.

What most distinguishes Hinlicky's study from other efforts is his interdisciplinary methodology. He undertakes to address the problem through a melding of patristic studies, Reformation theology, and liberal Protestant historical criticism. This synthesis of methods will naturally, as Hinlicky admits, be unsettling for students of any one of those fields, but he justifies his approach with an appeal to the dangerous polarization of what ought to be related academic fields. Consequently, though the study is ostensibly laid out along a chronological pattern, Hinlicky has no qualms about interrupting, for example, his discussion of the early second-century rise of the canon with a protracted discussion of Bultmann, Käsemann, and Hosykns. While these tangents are often quite engaging, their direct bearing on the subject at hand is not always made explicit.

Throughout the study, Hinlicky has a number of compelling insights about the early church and deftly integrates these into a persuasive reconstruction of the theological trajectory that led to the formation of the earliest ecumenical creeds. He rightly emphasizes the primacy of the gospel for the earliest Christians and stresses its role as the hermeneutical filter through which the contemporary philosophical language was understood and appropriated. He thereby provides an ancient corrective for modern abuses of philosophical language. He also highlights the importance of the martyrs, not merely historically, but as a testament to a theology that opposed both polytheism and philosophical monotheism. In everything, Hinlicky appeals continuously to the experience of salvation in the Trinitarian act of creation, redemption, and fulfillment that functioned as the foundation for the codification of creedal language in the fourth century and, he argues, ought to still define our modern attempts at theology.

However, in his effort to correct the language of simplicity, Hinlicky has allowed the Trinity of God to eclipse and even to efface the unity of God. He even goes so far in his postscript as to counsel Christians not to take the oneness of God for granted as it is still a doctrine very much in dispute. For Hinlicky, God's oneness is not a matter of substance but of the singularity of

the social event of a tri-personal divinity's self-giving economy. In what sense this "radical monotheism" does not functionally reduce Christianity to a limited polytheism is unclear.

Hinlicky consistently attempts to make *Divine Complexity* as accessible as possible to as broad an audience as the subject matter admits. While the interdisciplinary methodology makes the thread of his argument easy to misplace, his helpful chapter summaries and commitment to defining theological jargon make reading this book as positive an experience as possible for ministers and students as well as academics. Even if it at times raises more questions than it answers, this work certainly invites readers to question even the most basic theological assumptions, both Hinlicky's and their own.