PAUL AND ROMAN THEOLOGIANS
Living in the observant branch of the Augustinian friars in Germany, Johann von Staupitz (ca. 1468–1524) held major leadership posts, was an esteemed preacher, and published works of theologically grounded spiritual edification. Staupitz wrote “theology-for-piety,” to use the term gaining currency in designating the works of numerous fifteenth and early sixteenth century writers.¹ At first the Pauline writings had only a sporadic impact on Staupitz’s works of 1497 to 1512, but Paul became a major influence on his teaching in three treatises of 1515–1518. In this trilogy, featured below, Staupitz drew on the Pauline writings to give elegant and forceful instructions on Christ, on God’s prevenient saving grace, and on relating to God in spiritual ardor.

Many present-day readers know about Staupitz from his contacts with his younger Augustinian confrere Martin Luther. These contacts came early in Luther’s life in the order, mainly 1508–1511, and were more a matter of personal guidance than of theological instruction. Luther remained appreciative of how Staupitz helped him find spiritual equilibrium in his early years as a friar. Of major historical importance was Staupitz’s decision as Luther’s religious superior that Luther would study for the doctorate and then be assigned to the chair of Sacred Scripture in the University of Wittenberg.²

Johann von Staupitz was born into the Saxon nobility, being a contemporary of the Prince-Elector, Friedrich the Wise, with whom he may have been in school. Staupitz became Master of Arts in Cologne

¹ This genre, pioneered by Jean Gerson (1363–1429), was aptly termed by Bernd Hamm, in Frömmigkeitstheologie am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts. Studien zu Johannes von Paltz und seinem Umkreis (Tübingen, 1982).