

RISTO SAARINEN

# Luther and the Gift

*Spätmittelalter, Humanismus,*

*Reformation*

100

---

**Mohr Siebeck**

# Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation

Studies in the Late Middle Ages,  
Humanism and the Reformation

herausgegeben von Volker Leppin (Tübingen)

in Verbindung mit

Amy Nelson Burnett (Lincoln, NE)

Johannes Helmrath (Berlin), Matthias Pohlig (Münster)

Eva Schlotheuber (Düsseldorf)

100





Risto Saarinen

# Luther and the Gift

Mohr Siebeck

RISTO SAARINEN, born 1959; studied theology and philosophy; 1988 Dr. theol.; 1944 Dr. phil.; 1994–99 Professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg; since 2001 (ordinarius) Professor of Ecumenics in Helsinki; 2004–19 Director of the Centre of Excellence “Reason and Religious Recognition”, Academy of Finland and University of Helsinki.

ISBN 978-3-16-154970-0 / eISBN 978-3-16-158638-5 unveränderte eBook-Ausgabe 2019  
ISSN 1865-2840 (Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation)

Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2017 by Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, Germany.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that permitted by copyright law) without the publisher's written permission. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.

The book was typeset and printed by Gulde Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

## Preface

I have greatly benefited from numerous discussions and email exchanges with other scholars. Among them, I want to mention in particular Oswald Bayer, Ingolf U. Dalferth, Berndt Hamm, Marcel Hénaff, Jan-Olav Henriksen, Veronika Hoffmann, Bo Kristian Holm, Pekka Kärkkäinen, Ulrike Link-Wieczorek, Friederike Nüssel, Wolfgang Simon, Philipp Stoellger and Michael Welker. In various conferences with Renaissance and Reformation scholars, systematic theologians, philosophers and historians I have received inspiration and support from many experts.

Volker Leppin and Amy Nelson Burnett recommended the publication of this volume in the present series and gave many helpful comments. Henning Ziebritzki, Klaus Hermannstädter and Philipp Henkys took professional care of the publication process at Mohr Siebeck. Lisa Muszynski and her colleagues in the Language revision services of the University of Helsinki worked hard to improve my English. Mikko Posti compiled the indexes. My colleagues at the Faculty of Theology in Helsinki and in the Academy of Finland's Centre of Excellence "Reason and Religious Recognition" have provided a stimulating academic environment. All remaining errors are my own.

The present volume contains both hitherto unpublished papers and studies that have appeared elsewhere. Some earlier publications have been translated from German into English for the present volume. I thank Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Luther-Agricola Society, E. J. Brill, Springer, Brepols, Cascade Books, Rowman & Littlefield and de Gruyter for due permissions. See acknowledgements at page 299.

The abbreviations are used according to the fourth edition of *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.

Helsinki, February 2017

Risto Saarinen



## Table of Contents

Preface . . . . .	V
1. Introduction . . . . .	1
The Aim . . . . .	3
Earlier Scholarship . . . . .	4
The Chapters . . . . .	11
Historical Issues . . . . .	15
2. Luther, Humanism and Philosophy . . . . .	17
New Scholarship . . . . .	17
Gifts, Presents and Favours . . . . .	22
The Autonomy of Doctrine . . . . .	24
The Passivity of Reception . . . . .	30
Conclusion . . . . .	37
3. Luther and beneficia . . . . .	38
Favours in the <i>First Lectures on the Psalms</i> . . . . .	40
The Proper Giving and Receiving of Favours . . . . .	44
God's Earthly and Spiritual Favours . . . . .	47
Favours as God's Mercy . . . . .	50
Comparison with Seneca's <i>De beneficiis</i> . . . . .	53
4. The Allegory of Things. Luther's Use of <i>allegoria rerum</i> and <i>metaphora rerum</i> 1519–1521 . . . . .	58
Conventional Metaphor . . . . .	59
Medieval Background . . . . .	62
<i>Second Lectures on the Psalms</i> . . . . .	65
<i>Against Latomus</i> . . . . .	70



5. In sinu patris. The Merciful Trinity in Luther's Exposition of John 1:18 . . . . .	73
The Bosom of the Father . . . . .	73
Psalm 73:11 in <i>Dictata super Psalterium</i> (1513–15) . . . . .	76
Sermons and Biblical Expositions (1524–1538) . . . . .	78
Disputations and Other Late Writings (1536–1545) . . . . .	81
The Systematics of Luther's Expositions of John 1:18 . . . . .	84
6. Ipsa dilectio deus est. Martin Luther's Use of Peter Lombard, 1. Sent. dist. 17 . . . . .	89
The Scholastic Background . . . . .	89
Luther's Marginal Glosses to Lombard (1509–1510) . . . . .	91
Criticism of Scholastic Theology (1515–1517) . . . . .	95
Late Disputations (1537) . . . . .	98
Conclusions . . . . .	100
7. Desire, Consent and Sin. The Earliest Free Will Debates of the Reformation . . . . .	102
Augustine . . . . .	103
Usingen . . . . .	104
Luther . . . . .	106
Eck and Karlstadt . . . . .	109
8. Ethics in Luther's Theology: the Three Orders . . . . .	112
The Division of Ethics: Three Hierarchies or Orders . . . . .	112
The Three Orders as ordinationes dei . . . . .	115
Prudence in Luther . . . . .	122
Theological Action . . . . .	125
Conclusion: a Covenant Model in Luther's Social Ethics? . . . . .	127
9. Weakness of Will: Reformation Anthropology between Aristotle and the Stoa . . . . .	130
Akrasia in Aristotle and the Stoa . . . . .	130
Other Introductory Perspectives . . . . .	133
Early Lutheranism . . . . .	134
Early Calvinism . . . . .	137
Conclusions . . . . .	143

10. The Heroic Virtue in the Reformation and Early Protestantism	145
Earlier Research . . . . .	145
Pre-Reformation Sources . . . . .	148
Luther and Melanchthon . . . . .	151
Early Protestantism . . . . .	156
Conclusions . . . . .	160
11. Renaissance Ethics and the European Reformations . . . . .	162
The Lutheran Reformation . . . . .	163
The Calvinist Reformation . . . . .	169
The Catholic Reform . . . . .	172
Theological Shaping . . . . .	179
12. Finnish Luther Studies: a Story and a Program . . . . .	181
The Story . . . . .	182
The Program . . . . .	192
13. The Pauline Luther and the Law: Lutheran Theology	
Re-engages the Study of Paul . . . . .	204
The Lutheran Paul vs the New Perspective . . . . .	204
Participation in Christ: Biblical Scholarship, Ecumenism and Luther Studies . . . . .	209
The Pauline Luther: Counter-evidence to Westerholm's Luther . . . . .	213
(a) How Radically Different is the Christian Alternative to the Mosaic Law? . . . . .	213
(b) Do Christians Remain Permanently Unable to Fulfill the Law? . . . . .	216
(c) Who Is Speaking in Romans 7? And What Does the Speaker Not Do? . . . . .	220
Conclusion . . . . .	224
14. Theology of Giving as Comprehensive Lutheran Theology . . . . .	226
Strategies of Doctrine and Theology of Giving . . . . .	226
The Giver-Oriented Perspective and Its Epistemology . . . . .	230
Giving as the Seed of Comprehensive Doctrine . . . . .	232
Truth and Love as the "Transcendentals" of Doctrine . . . . .	237
Road Maps and Comprehensive Theology . . . . .	241

15. The Language of Giving in Theology . . . . .	242
Model One: The Ditransitive Construction . . . . .	243
Model Two: “Give” as Basic Verb . . . . .	249
Givers, Recipients and Beneficiaries: Seneca . . . . .	252
Recipients and Beneficiaries in Forensic Justification . . . . .	256
Passive Reception . . . . .	260
Receiving the Gift mere passive . . . . .	264
Justification as a Comprehensive Event . . . . .	269
Passivity and Freedom . . . . .	271
16. Reclaiming the Sentences: a Linguistic Loci Approach to Doctrine . . . . .	276
Propositions and Sentences . . . . .	277
The Loci . . . . .	283
The Model . . . . .	286
Exegetics . . . . .	293
Acknowledgements . . . . .	299
Bibliography . . . . .	301
Index of Names . . . . .	315
Index of Subjects . . . . .	321

## 1. Introduction

In Romans 12:8, Paul exhorts the giver to give generously or, as the Vulgate has it, to give sincerely (in simplicitate). When Martin Luther comes to this exhortation in his early *Lecture on Romans*, he undertakes a classification of various types of giving and receiving gifts and favours. Theologically, both the gifts from the inferior people to the superior and from the superior to the inferior can go wrong. Concerning the first class, Luther claims that we normally give to our superiors in order to receive something better in return. In Luther's German, this class of gifts is called "present" (geschenck) or "honoring" (eer).<sup>1</sup> The biblical advice against this kind of giving is spelled out in Luke 14, in which Jesus says that we should not invite rich people to our parties but rather the poor and the handicapped. Although Luther is critical of giving presents to our superiors, he admits that such giving pleases some people. The retribution they may receive pleases them even more.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the second class, rich people obtain great pleasure from giving to their inferiors, as this provides them an occasion to boast and feel like a god. However, such donations manifest arrogance rather than sincerity.<sup>3</sup> For Luther, Romans 12:8 speaks of giving as practiced by the teachers of the word and other leaders. Teachers should communicate their gifts generously and without second thoughts. In German, this third class of giving is designated with the words "grace" (gnade) and "friendship" (fruntschafft).<sup>4</sup> While this is what Luther recommends, he devotes most of his attention to situations in which these gifts also go wrong. He wonders whether the religious donations given to the church really serve as true examples of this class.

In his critical examination of this issue, Luther considers the intention of the giver. Normally, the donors do not give their donation freely but in order to receive something back. While a donor does not directly consider to give temporal goods in order to receive eternal rewards, the obligations imposed on the endowments and the public display of the donor's name in the church witness of the expectation of some honor or reward.<sup>5</sup> Remarkably, Luther here also consid-

---

<sup>1</sup> WA 56, 455,19–25.

<sup>2</sup> WA 56, 456,11–12.

<sup>3</sup> WA 56, 456,13–16.

<sup>4</sup> WA 56, 456,17–26.

<sup>5</sup> WA 56, 457,1–7.

ers the practice of anonymous donations. Even in such a case, the givers are not free of egoistic expectations, as they do not focus on God's glory but think of some future remuneration.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, their gifts also go wrong. Luther concludes that most religious donations resemble commercial exchange rather than genuinely pious gift-giving.<sup>7</sup>

While this passage is typical of the young Luther's teaching of humility and self-denial, it also elucidates his awareness of gifts as social phenomena. Luther sees clearly how power relations and human expectations shape the practices of giving. The passage also resembles some classical and contemporary discussions on the so-called "free gift". From the Roman philosopher Seneca to the post-structuralist thinking of Jacques Derrida, philosophers have taught that the giver's intention defines the act of giving and that this intention normally includes some self-interest.<sup>8</sup>

The passage also shows the classical complexity of the biblical term "grace" (*charis*, *gratia*, *Gnade*). In some sense, grace is not merely a favour or a beneficial intention but also a gift. Paul employs both aspects in Romans 12:6–8: "We have gifts (*charismata*, *donationes*) that differ according to the grace (*charin*, *gratiam*) given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity." The giver's generosity or sincerity is a specific grace but it is also a gift. Moreover, as Luther here reserves the word "present" (*Geschenck*) to conventional social gifts, "grace" depicts one aspect of the overall "gift of God" (*donum Dei*).<sup>9</sup>

Another classical issue of gift-giving in the *Lecture on Romans* is that of self-giving or self-donation. Luther holds that the presence of the giver completes the gift.<sup>10</sup> This claim connects Luther with the ancient view of Seneca as well as with the twentieth-century anthropological views of Marcel Mauss and Marcel Hénaff.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> WA 56, 457,6–11.

<sup>7</sup> WA 56, 457,11–458,3.

<sup>8</sup> SENECA, *De beneficiis* (On benefits, ed. and transl. M. Griffin & B. Inwood, Chicago 2011). For a new historical and philosophical introduction to this classic work, see MIRIAM GRIFFIN, *Seneca on Society: A Guide to De beneficiis*, Oxford 2013; JACQUES DERRIDA, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, Chicago 1994.

<sup>9</sup> WA 56, 455,19–20.

<sup>10</sup> WA 56, 308,26–28: "... non satis est habere donum, nisi sit et donator presens."

<sup>11</sup> MARCEL MAUSS, *The Gift*, London 1990, 11–12; MARCEL HÉNAFF, *The Price of Truth: Gift, Money, and Philosophy*, Stanford 2010, 124–129. In ben 1, 8–9, Seneca tells of Aelchines giving himself to Socrates, who considers this an exemplary gift, as the real beneficium is the giver's mind or mentality behind things exchanged (cf. ben 1, 6).

*The Aim*

This book studies Martin Luther's understanding of the gift and related issues, such as favours and benefits, faith and justification, virtues and merits, ethics and doctrine, law and Christ. The historical motivation behind this focus consists in the insight that Luther both continues and criticizes the classical, medieval, and Humanist discussions regarding gifts and sales. Many other scholars, to whom I return below, have recently underlined the importance of the gift and giving in Luther.

There is also a systematic-theological interest that has contributed to this book. Recent anthropological, linguistic and philosophical publications have significantly increased our understanding of the gift and related phenomena. While their results can only very carefully be applied to historical theological sources, they do resemble classical theological discussions on, for instance, neighbourly love, the administration of sacraments, the handing over of traditions, free will and God's mercy. From Max Weber to Marcel Hénaff, Luther's sharp distinction between "gifts" and "sales" has been connected with the emergence of early capitalism with its different benefits and problems.<sup>12</sup> This discussion has not, however, paid much attention to the striking variety of gift discourses in Luther and early Lutheranism.

Most of the studies collected in this volume have emerged between 2005 and 2015, that is, after my small textbook *God and the Gift* and before the publication of John Barclay's monumental *Paul and the Gift*.<sup>13</sup> I have included one very early article and some hitherto unpublished papers. While I have updated the bibliographic accounts and created some interconnections between the chapters of the present book, the actual contents of the studies have not been altered.

My own interest in this topic started around 2003–2004 when I realized that Luther's views of donum, or the gift, do not merely illustrate effective justification with its "ontological" underpinnings. The gift is for the reformers a multi-dimensional concept that needs to be understood in many different contexts of the verb "give". Because this verb assumes both a personal giver and a living recipient in German and Latin, the theological uses of "gift" and "giving" entail a view of the recipient who is not "merely passive" or whose passivity is of a special kind. This inevitable semantic feature leads to complexities with regard to sola gratia and some other doctrines of the Lutheran Reformation.

This insight, presented in a textbook fashion in *God and the Gift*, prompted me to do more historical and theological scholarship on the gift and related issues on Luther and the Reformation. While I consider myself a member of the

---

<sup>12</sup> MAX WEBER, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, Tübingen 1934; HÉNAFF, *Price* (as note 11).

<sup>13</sup> RISTO SAARINEN, *God and the Gift: An Ecumenical Theology of Giving*, Collegeville 2005; JOHN BARCLAY, *Paul and the Gift*, Grand Rapids 2015.

so-called “Finnish school of Luther interpretation” established by Tuomo Mannermaa,<sup>14</sup> this new work on the social, anthropological and linguistic dimensions of the gift has led me to positions that are sometimes at variance with the views of Mannermaa. At the same time, the proper way to serve the Finnish “school” does not consist in repeating old results but in presenting new avenues of theological thinking.

The present book does not, however, lay out a systematic theology of the gift. For the most part, it gathers historical evidence from various theological discussions. While some taxonomies are presented in the last chapters, I do not deal with all theological topics that can be discussed under the aegis of “the gift”. This volume offers historical explorations and theological interpretations that neither historically exhaust nor systematically settle the details of this rich and often paradox phenomenon.

I have consistently excluded my ecumenical papers from the present volume, mainly because the historical and theological problems are already complex enough in themselves.<sup>15</sup> It may be premature to present definite ecumenical conclusions on the basis of our current historical and theological knowledge. As I point out in *God and the Gift*, uncritical ecumenical use of the phrase “gift exchange” should generally be avoided.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, I have left out my various entries on related topics in encyclopaedias and handbooks.<sup>17</sup> They often contain basic common knowledge rather than my own scholarly position on the subject. Such articles serve their purpose better in their original context.

### *Earlier Scholarship*

Before describing the individual chapters of this book, it is useful to outline some scholarly views of the gift in (i) cultural anthropology and history, (ii) biblical studies and the study of Greco-Roman antiquity, and (iii) Luther studies. The following survey is by no means comprehensive. It only highlights

---

<sup>14</sup> Especially in MANNERMAA, *Der im Glauben gegenwärtige Christus*, Hannover 1989 and the programmatic collective volume C. Braaten & R. Jenson (ed.), *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, Grand Rapids 1998.

<sup>15</sup> For some ecumenical issues, see RISTO SAARINEN, *Liebe, Anerkennung und die Bibel: Die Gabetheorien der heutigen Theologie*, in: JBTh 29 (2014), 321–338, and SAARINEN, *Klostertheologie auf dem Weg der Ökumene: Wille und Konkupiszenz*, in: C. Bultmann et al. (ed.), *Luther und das monastische Erbe*, Tübingen 2007 (SMHR 39), 269–290.

<sup>16</sup> SAARINEN, *God* (as note 13), 133–147.

<sup>17</sup> Among the most relevant ones are: RISTO SAARINEN, *Glaube*, in: V. Leppin & G. Schneider-Ludorff (ed.), *Das Luther-Lexikon*, Regensburg 2014, 259–261; SAARINEN, *Justification by Faith: the View of the Mannermaa School*, in: L. Batka et al. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, Oxford 2014, 254–263; SAARINEN, *Forensic Justification and Mysticism*, in: U. Lehner (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology*, Oxford 2016, 311–325.

some trends, listing significant contributions that have influenced my own work on the topic.

(i) The small book of Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, remains the classic against which all later studies are measured.<sup>18</sup> In his anthropological study, Mauss shows how Native Americans employ complex forms of reciprocity in giving and receiving gifts and services. Mauss can be read in many ways. One reading stresses that all gifts are reciprocal and assume some activity and self-interest from all parties. Another reading focuses on the opposition between gifts and sales. While early societies allegedly employed one overall societal circulation of things and services, later cultural developments led to a division of labour, separating the events of (a) buying and selling, (b) altruistic helping, and (c) paying taxes.<sup>19</sup>

For the purposes of the present book, it is noteworthy that the so-called Maussian sociology does not aim to be utilitarian or to reduce all gifts to economy. Such later Maussians as Jacques Godbout and Marcel Hénaff<sup>20</sup> are rather anti-utilitarians, that is, they hold that gift exchange and commercial exchange remain two different things. While gifts also assume reciprocity, this mutuality is different from buying and selling. An anti-utilitarian sociologist could thus say, for instance, that gifts are often altruistic and create strong bonds between the parties. Commercial exchange, on the other hand, aims to optimize the utility of both parties and can easily be detached from the personal bond between the parties.<sup>21</sup>

More importantly, historians have applied Maussian and other anthropological ideas to the historical evidence. For the Reformation, Natalie Zemon Davis's study of gift exchange in sixteenth-century France is particularly important.<sup>22</sup> With solid historical research, Zemon Davis points out that both forms of exchange, gifts and sales, co-existed in early modern Europe and that ordinary people were astonishingly well aware of the difference between the two forms. Simple things, like buying bread, often contained both aspects, as the baker often gave an extra bread "for free". On the other hand, the consumer knew when and how much she ought to pay. Poor people exchanged services in a gift-like fashion since they had no money, but also the upper-class people exchanged gifts among themselves, as this practice was considered more noble than commerce. Within this complexity, however, people of different classes knew very well when to give a gift and when to pay a price.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> MAUSS, *Gift* (as note 11).

<sup>19</sup> See MARY DOUGLAS, *No Free Gifts*, in: MAUSS, *Gift* (as note 11), ix-xxiii, and JACQUES GODBOUT, *The World of the Gift*, Montreal 2000.

<sup>20</sup> HÉNAFF, *Price* (as note 11); GODBOUT, *World* (as note 19).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. GODBOUT, *World* (as note 19).

<sup>22</sup> NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Oxford 2000.

<sup>23</sup> ZEMON DAVIS, *Gift* (as note 22), 73–109.



In Reformation history, Berndt Hamm considers that the practice of giving donations was so widespread in late medieval Europe that it can be understood in Maussian terms as a “total social phenomenon”.<sup>24</sup> While it was possible to make a legal difference between targeted long-term endowments (*Stiftungen*) and singular gifts, Hamm thinks that the religious difference between the two was not significant. Even in giving singular gifts, for instance, donating a picture to the church, the giver thought of the benefit that this donation can have in the eyes of God. In this sense, both endowments and singular donations belonged to the late medieval circle of self-interested reciprocity.<sup>25</sup> The Reformation changed the theology of religious donations. At the same time, the practice of endowments continued in Protestantism. According to Gury Schneider-Ludorff, the theological thinking behind early Protestant endowments emphasizes Christian witness and gratitude, thus giving the old donative practice a new meaning.<sup>26</sup>

The historical picture gets more complicated if scholars begin to apply big narratives to explain long-term historical changes. Among such big narratives, Max Weber’s views of the rise of capitalism and the disenchantment of the modern world still enjoy astonishing popularity. Marcel Hénaff has recently employed Maussian anthropology and Weber’s social theory to explain the gift discourses of the Reformation. For Hénaff, anthropological gift exchange expresses mutual recognition. Gift exchange is a method of getting to know strangers and building a trustworthy relationship between different parties. Gifts are the material vehicle that produces a mutual recognition of persons. Gifts thus serve social bonding and smooth communication among the members of society.<sup>27</sup>

Like Zemon Davis, Hénaff considers that late medieval and early modern Europeans were well aware of how commercial exchange and gift exchange complement one another. With commercial exchange, you practice economic justice, define fair prices and enable effective trade. With gift exchange, you build trust, alleviate unexpected misfortunes and create a society in which people recognize each other in friendly and peaceful terms. This synthesis breaks down, however, in the Reformation. When Luther and other Reformers preach a complete separation between gift-like religion and commercial everyday life, people start to lose this sense of complementarity. Due to the exclusive assignment of altruistic gifts to religion, the Reformation creates a secular realm in which capitalism begins to develop.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> BERNDT HAMM, “Zeitliche Güter gegen himmlische eintauschen”. Vom Sinn spätmittelalterlicher Stiftungen, in: U. Hahn et al. (ed.), *Geben und Gestalten*, Münster 2008, 51–65, here: 63.

<sup>25</sup> HAMM, *Zeitliche* (as note 24), 57.

<sup>26</sup> GURY SCHNEIDER-LUDORFF, *Der neue Sinn der Gabe. Stiftungen im Luthertum des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, in: *JBTh* 27 (2012), 277–291.

<sup>27</sup> HÉNAFF, *Price* (as note 11), 129–148.

<sup>28</sup> HÉNAFF, *Price* (as note 11), 268–290.

In this manner, Hénaff joins other contemporary Catholic scholars, for instance, Charles Taylor and Brad Gregory, who assume a cultural disintegration that is due to the Reformation, causing secularization and individualist capitalism.<sup>29</sup> Hénaff's work has become popular especially after its results were adopted by Paul Ricoeur in his late work on peaceful recognition.<sup>30</sup> Hénaff's idea of gift exchange as a vehicle that produces trust and mutual recognition can also be discussed without adopting the underlying Weberian or Catholic big narratives. What Luther says above of the so-called "presents" already witnesses to the human need to seek good relations and advantages by means of gift exchange.

(ii) In biblical scholarship, John Barclay has recently presented an elaborate study, which aims at showing the relevance of social and philosophical gift discourses for Pauline theology. According to Barclay, "both Paul and his contemporaries used the normal vocabulary of gift, favour, and benefaction in speaking of (what we call) 'grace'". For this reason, their discourse on this topic can be located "within the social domain that anthropologists label 'gift'".<sup>31</sup> This is a huge exegetical claim which cannot be discussed here. The first thing to note is that Barclay focuses on *charis* and related terms. My own studies assume the Latin words *dare* and *donum* and their vernacular equivalents as their starting-point.

Obviously, Barclay's study evokes the issue in which sense the Greek and the Latin vocabularies mean the same and whether the Vulgate usage of *gratia* and *donum* adds some new qualities to New Testament texts. After Barclay's exegetical claims, Luther scholars should in any case consider the eventual anthropological underpinnings of *gratia* and terms like *favor*. The present volume investigates Seneca's term *beneficium* to an extent and pays attention to Luther's views on a merciful God. Many other dimensions of the theology of grace are not, however, studied in the manner they deserve in the light of Barclay's claims. Somewhat similar to Barclay, Hénaff pays considerable attention to the gift-like forms of *charis* in Christian theology.<sup>32</sup>

Barclay treats Luther's theology of grace in some detail. For him, Luther did not discover grace in any fundamentally new fashion. Rather, Luther "configured" grace in a distinctive manner. In this configuration, believers are constituted "outside of themselves", that is, in Christ. Luther defends a strict "incongruity" of grace, meaning that God's grace is vastly different from any human analogies. For Barclay, there can nevertheless be some reciprocity between humans and God in the sense that the believers act out of love for God, not from

<sup>29</sup> CHARLES TAYLOR, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, Mass. 2007; BRAD GREGORY, *The Unintended Reformation*, Cambridge, Mass. 2012.

<sup>30</sup> PAUL RICOEUR, *The Course of Recognition*, Cambridge, Mass. 2005.

<sup>31</sup> BARCLAY, Paul (as note 13), 562.

<sup>32</sup> HÉNAFF, Price (as note 11), 242–268.

self-concern.<sup>33</sup> Referring to Tuomo Mannermaa and Oswald Bayer, Barclay admits the possibility of a fairly unconditional “counter-gift of the creature” in Luther’s theology.<sup>34</sup>

As Seneca’s *De beneficiis* is our main source concerning the Greco-Roman discussion on gift-giving and as this work was well-known in the Reformation, it needs to be asked whether Seneca comes close to the Maussian anthropological discussion on gift exchange. While different opinions have been presented in recent scholarship, Miriam Griffin argues in great detail that Seneca’s views display important similarities with the anthropological paradigm. Griffin considers that the institutions of friendship or patronage do not adequately explain the phenomenon of giving and receiving “benefits”. Seneca’s discussion is not concerned with an already existing institutional relationship but the giver creates and establishes this relationship with his benefits.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, Seneca aims at showing in which ways the voluntary granting of favours differs from monetary exchange. Obviously, both are reciprocal and they therefore display similarities. In both gifts and sales, the recipient is in some way obliged. The granting of a favour or benefit is, however, very different from selling, as it is voluntary and does not expect any proportional counter-act. Griffin considers that Seneca’s benefits resemble anthropological gift exchange because of these features that are different from buying and selling.<sup>36</sup> Griffin’s view cannot be discussed here in more detail. I have highlighted this view to show that historical scholarship can still today read Seneca in terms that resemble Maussian anthropology.

(iii) In Luther studies, Martin Seils and Oswald Bayer paid attention to the prominence of the gift and giving already in the 1980s. While they are aware of the anthropological discussion, they do not want to interpret Luther in that fashion but consider the gift rather as a theological concept in justification and the new life of believers. Wolfgang Simon has investigated the complex acts of giving and receiving in the context of Luther’s eucharistic theology.<sup>37</sup>

Bo Holm is the first scholar to undertake a consistent comparison between cultural anthropology and Luther’s theology. Holm claims that there are structures of reciprocity in Luther’s thinking that resemble the ideas of reciprocity available in post-Maussian anthropology.<sup>38</sup> This view has created some debate in the scholarship, especially as it seems to go against the received view of mere passive, that is, the passivity of human person in matters of salvation. Especially

<sup>33</sup> BARCLAY, Paul (as note 13), 109–116.

<sup>34</sup> BARCLAY, Paul (as note 13), 114.

<sup>35</sup> GRIFFIN, Seneca (as note 8), 31–36.

<sup>36</sup> GRIFFIN, Seneca (as note 8), 36–45.

<sup>37</sup> MARTIN SEILS, *Die Sache Luthers*, in: *LuJ* 52 (1985), 64–80; OSWALD BAYER, *Schöpfung als Anrede*, Tübingen 1990, 89–108; WOLFGANG SIMON, *Luthers Messopfertheologie*, Tübingen 2003 (SMHR 22).

<sup>38</sup> BO HOLM, *Gabe und Geben bei Luther*, Berlin 2006 (TBT 134).

Ingolf Dalferth has argued how Luther's view of such passivity is compatible with the view that the Christian is a person whose receptive capacity differs from other creatures and things.<sup>39</sup>

The comprehensive study of Philipp Stoellger solves many issues of this debate through focusing on the intellectual history of passivity and Luther's position in this history.<sup>40</sup> Stoellger gives textual support to Dalferth's position, showing how Luther in fact considers the "passive life" of Christians to emerge through justification. At the same time, Stoellger points out that Luther speaks of such soteriological life that is different from ethical life. Passivity in soteriological life does not mean ethical quietism but it is joyful life with good conscience. Stoellger even remarks that it may be inadequate to define such a life in terms of "passivity".<sup>41</sup> In this manner, Holm's claims of reciprocity also receive some support in Stoellger's analysis.

Chapter 15 of the present book contributes to the discussion initiated by Holm. In terms of content, my own position is close to that of Stoellger. However, I do not employ mystical traditions of passivity but rather aim at showing that the linguistic resources of "giving" and "gift" are already sufficient in themselves to produce the asymmetric reciprocity found in Luther. While cultural anthropology and mysticism may lend some additional plausibility to Holm's findings, they need not be seen as the constitutive historical background of Luther's theology. Simple linguistic resources are sufficient to undertake a historically and theologically solid interpretation.

In a recent programmatic study, Berndt Hamm claims that the Reformation formulates the idea of pure gift which has no counter-gift. For Hamm this means nothing less than a "revolution in the history of religions".<sup>42</sup> Hamm's claim is remarkable already in itself. While "the gift" has not traditionally been included in such main topics of Protestant theology that would have their own entry in theological dictionaries,<sup>43</sup> Hamm as a leading scholar now claims that precisely this Reformation idea is revolutionary in the entire history of religions.

Hamm's conceptual definition of this idea is close to that of Dalferth and Barclay. Luther teaches a consistent or pure passivity (mere passive) of the believer so that he also affirms the Christian freedom and the capacity to produce good works spontaneously. The ground of this possibility lies in the divine promise that is entirely outside of the believer. The passive reception is continued in the activity based on faith and promise.<sup>44</sup> As a historian Hamm does not

<sup>39</sup> INGOLF DALFERTH, *Mere Passive. Die Passivität der Gabe bei Luther*, in: B. Holm & P. Widmann (ed.), *Word-Gift-Being*, Tübingen 2009 (RPT 37), 43–72.

<sup>40</sup> PHILIPP STOELLGER, *Passivität aus Passion*, Tübingen 2010 (HUT 56).

<sup>41</sup> STOELLGER, *Passivität* (as note 40), 302–303.

<sup>42</sup> BERNDT HAMM, *Pure Gabe ohne Gegengabe – die religionsgeschichtliche Revolution der Reformation*, in: *JBTh* 27 (2012), 241–276.

<sup>43</sup> One exception is: HEINZ MÜRMELE & OSWALD BAYER, *Gabe*, *RGG* 4, 3 (2000), 445–446.

<sup>44</sup> HAMM, *Pure Gabe* (as note 42), 261–64.

discuss the philosophical consistency of these claims. He is rather engaged in showing that Luther's insight breaks down that archaic "Maussian" logic of gift and counter-gift which is prominent in late medieval theology.<sup>45</sup>

For Hamm, the Lutheran Reformation thus means a historical and theological farewell to the laws of anthropological reciprocity. In terms of methodology, however, Hamm is among the first church historians to pay consistent attention to the rise and fall of anthropological ideas in the Reformation. Historically, I think that the evidence presented by Hamm and others, including the Catholic critics of the Reformation, is convincing. Something like a revolution in gift-giving takes place in the Reformation. Theologically, however, I am persuaded by Holm and Stoellger, who focus on the conceptual complexities of this view. It is not obvious how pure passivity can be theologically combined with spontaneous altruism.

As the event of receiving gifts is something "less" than earning a merit and, at the same time, something "more" than a merely physical transfer of materials, the language of giving and the gift is proper to elucidate theological passivity. On the other hand, the gift is an elusive concept precisely because it can be employed both to increase and to decrease our personal involvement. The root of such elusiveness is found, I think, neither in cultural anthropology nor in philosophical sophistication. Rather, the complex simultaneity of these features is an inherent linguistic property of the words "give" and "the gift". However, anthropological reflection and philosophical analysis are nevertheless helpful. They can complement the historical work with texts.

The relationship between God's grace (favor, gratia) and gift (donum) is a classical problem of Luther studies. In Chapters 12 and 15 of the present book, I adhere to the view that both aspects are simultaneously present in justification. However, grace has a logical priority over the gift. This view differs from some earlier positions of Finnish Luther research. It needs careful attention and further elaboration regarding the logic of the gift. Wilhelm Christe has recently studied this relationship in great detail, coming to the conclusion that Luther's texts include a variety of different accounts, which cannot be entirely harmonized.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> HAMM, *Pure Gabe* (as note 42), 244–45; HAMM, *Abläss und Reformation: Erstaunliche Kohärenzen*, Tübingen 2016, discusses the problem of indulgences in fascinating ways. While I consider this study important, I do not treat indulgences in the present volume.

<sup>46</sup> WILHELM CHRISTE, *Gerechte Sünder. Eine Untersuchung zu Martin Luthers „simul iustus et peccator“*, Leipzig 2014 (ASTh 6), 271–283.

## *The Chapters*

The book is divided into two sections. The first one, *Historical Issues*, contains ten chapters on different but related topics. The second section, *Theological Shaping*, applies historical knowledge to systematic-theological issues. While the overall weight of the volume is on historical studies, the theological interpretations pay more detailed attention to the theoretical issue of gift exchange and its place in systematic theology.

Chapter 2, “Luther, Humanism and Philosophy”, investigates Luther’s relationship to Cicero, Seneca, Erasmus and other thinkers who discuss gift exchange. The chapter also studies such conceptions of teaching, doctrine and preaching that understand these processes as gifts that cannot be earned. The issue of receiving something in terms of passivity is introduced, making some comparisons with late scholastic views of human reception. Luther treats free will and free choice using analogies from the evaluations and choices performed in commercial exchange.

Chapter 3 discusses the topic of “favours” or “benefits” (*beneficia*), a theme that connects Luther and Melanchthon with Seneca. It is shown that the young Luther has already adopted this concept in a full-fledged form before his acquaintance with Melanchthon. In theological contexts, benefits are one expression of God’s merciful dealing with humans. Seneca’s view of benefits contains both similarities with and differences from Luther.

Chapter 4 focuses on a particular Trinitarian picture, namely that of the Son in the Father’s bosom (John 1:18). This traditional iconographic theme displays the Father as merciful and compassionate. Luther employs the phrase in *sinu Patris* regularly, focusing on God’s mercy and the distinction between law and gospel. In John 1:18, the Father hands out Christ as the sign from which God’s will can be known as merciful. The phrase thus aims at opening the human receptivity by Christological means.

Chapter 5 deals with the Holy Spirit as the gift of love. Luther shows sympathy to the view of Peter Lombard, according to which the love in us can be called God because it is the Holy Spirit. Scholastic theology normally requires a human interface, like a created grace, to grasp divine love. In his earliest writings as well as in his late disputations Luther shows an understanding Lombard’s view, affirming thus the idea of passive reception without human interface.

Chapter 6 investigates one specific *modus* of exchange that is available in Luther’s exegesis. When Luther speaks of the “allegory of things”, he refers to a medieval way of interpreting the natural world in terms of allegory. When he mentions the “metaphor of things” in a famous passage of his anti-Latomus, Luther has this exegetical figure in mind. The figure contains an idea of givenness, due to which a lower reality can become transformed into a higher one.

There is also some affinity with the broader soteriological terminology of “joyful exchange”.

Chapter 7 focuses on the issue of free will, investigating the earliest debates in 1516–1519. Luther is critical of the view of John Buridan that was transmitted to him by his Erfurt teachers Trutvetter and Usingen. Their view of the free consent of the will resembles a commercial mode of choosing goods and earning merits. For Luther, Augustine did not teach such free decision. He adheres to a strictly anti-Pelagian view of the will that may have been current in monastic theology. In Leipzig disputation, Johann Eck shows some understanding for this position.

Chapter 8 discusses Luther’s doctrine of the three estates, that is, the church, the state and the household. This threefold division of ethical deliberation resembles some late medieval and Renaissance models, but Luther replaces their individual ethics with the life in the church. As the three estates are “given” by God, divine causality determines the limits of human freedom in the estates. To understand this givenness properly, its dynamic and gift-like character needs to be preserved. Divine gifts assume both a one-sided determination and a two-sided covenant.

Chapter 9 elucidates the issue of free will from the Aristotelian perspective of the so-called “weakness of will” (*akrasia*, *incontinentia*). While Aristotle and the scholastics teach that such weakness alleviates the sinfulness of an action, Luther considers that all wrongdoers are equally sinful. However, Melanchthon and Calvin reintroduce the Aristotelian distinction between moral weakness and deliberate sinning. Later Protestant interpreters typically teach that weakness of will results from our inability to change earlier sinful habits. The gifts of new life can only fully renew us in heaven. Protestant accounts of human virtue therefore emphasize our imperfect virtues that still struggle with sin.

Chapter 10 is concerned with the understanding of the heroic virtue in early Protestantism. Since late medieval times, the heroic virtue was seen as the special gift and property of saints. While the Reformers abandoned the cult of the saints, they continued to reflect on the heroic virtue. Luther spoke of “heroic men” and Melanchthon broadened the topic to include excellent intellectual and artistic performers. The topic remained popular in the seventeenth century. While it appealed to nobility, it can also be understood as an early version of the modern idea of individual talents or giftedness.

Chapter 11 situates Lutheranism in the broader context of different European Reformations, including the Catholic Reform. While Lutheran thinking can be elucidated with the help of different early modern developments, its distinctive features, in particular the difference of law and gospel, human passivity and the freedom of conscience, are based on Luther’s theological insights. In ethics, this means the replacement of virtue ethics with views that emphasize God’s gifts and continuous struggle with sin.

The latter section, *Theological Shaping*, connects the historical studies with the broader theoretical views of gift exchange and contemporary Lutheran theology. In general, this section aims to show that Luther's theology is not parochial in the sense that its insights would only concern sixteenth-century Germans. Luther's insights are helpful in understanding the general nature of doctrine and dogmatics; they are also relevant in the exegetical debates as well as in the ontological grounding of Christian faith.

The section opens (Chapter 12) with a discussion of Finnish Luther research. In this chapter, new ways to understand the relationship between grace and gift, or forensic and effective justification, are developed. As Christians are not merely beneficiaries of Christ's work, but also recipients and participants of Christocentric reality, effective justification and salvific gift need to be affirmed. At the same time, the very concept of gift assumes that good will and favourable intention are already available. For this reason, grace as benevolence has logical primacy over the gift.

Chapter 13 discusses the so-called "New Perspective on Paul" in its relationship to Luther studies. This exegetical research paradigm claims to have falsified the traditional Lutheran accounts of Romans 7 and the permanent sinfulness of the Christian. The article does not defend such allegedly Lutheran accounts, but claims that recent Luther studies, in particular the Finnish school, come closer to the "New Perspective". Careful historical studies on "justified and sinner at the same time" do not claim a complete powerlessness of the Christian but the imperfect character of our good works. Given this, the Lutheran view of Paul is not entirely different from the "New Perspective".

Chapter 14 moves towards systematic theology, discussing the somewhat fragmentary character of Lutheran dogmatics. It is asked whether the theology of giving and the gift can be employed as an organizing principle of dogmatics. At this point, a preliminary taxonomy of various types of theological giving (teaching, sending, offering, forgiving etc.) is presented.

Chapter 15 makes the systematic argument which is distinctive in my own interpretations of the gift. According to this argument, the asymmetric reciprocities observed in theological discussions on the gift need not be explained in terms of cultural anthropology or sophisticated philosophical analysis. Rather, these peculiarities are embedded in the basic linguistic semantics of "give" and "gift" in different languages. The article also contains a historical discussion of lesser-known passages of Seneca's *De beneficiis* and remarks on the debate between Holm and Dalferth.

Chapter 16 returns to the issue of teaching and doctrine as something that is "given" and cannot be earned or grasped by one's own intellectual powers. The chapter presents a systematic argument, according to which the loci method of Erasmus contains a theory of doctrine. The theory considers biblical topics and sentences as given truths that need to be organized around Christological scop-



us. This method, as developed by Melanchthon, is closely related to Luther's view of the givenness of biblical language.

The main results of the book as a whole can be summarized as follows. Luther's proximity to the Humanist reception of Cicero and Seneca and the Augustinian emphasis on divine mercy shape his theology of the gift. At the same time, Luther's understanding of different religious acts of giving is primarily conditioned by the biblical phrases and concepts he uses. Passivity and bondage of the will coexist with complex reciprocal relationships between God and the believer. To explain such reciprocities adequately, the interpreter needs to apply the semantic perspective of the giver and the gift rather than that of the recipient. From this perspective, the believer's passivity appears to be of a soteriological and non-economic kind, a passivity that does not rule out the grateful reception of God's gifts.

## Historical Issues



## 2. Luther, Humanism and Philosophy

A generation ago, Helmar Junghans presented a new evaluation of Humanist traditions as the background of Martin Luther's thinking.<sup>1</sup> While the older scholarship emphasised the opposition between Luther and Erasmus of Rotterdam, Junghans discovered the Humanist networks of Luther in Erfurt and Wittenberg as well as the Humanist interests of Luther's close friends.

Junghans highlights the great significance of rhetorics and the Humanist ideals of language and style for Luther. The literary and pedagogical qualities of Luther's texts are witness to the positive influence of Humanism. Luther's working habits and his methodological goals reveal an affinity for the Humanist programme, often characterised by its hostility to the prevailing scholastic method.<sup>2</sup> In laying out these affinities, Junghans aims at a differentiated conclusion. On the one hand he concludes that the academic method and style of Luther's work displays strong connections with the Humanist movement. On the other hand, Junghans does not aim to reduce Luther's Reformation insights to this movement but emphasises the unique content of Luther's theological thinking.<sup>3</sup>

### *New Scholarship*

During the last thirty years, the study of Humanism has progressed rapidly. The relationship between the Reformation and Humanism has been discussed in many detailed studies.<sup>4</sup> In the following, I investigate some features of Humanist philosophy and its significance for the understanding of Luther's theology. New studies in the history of philosophy argue that the Renaissance and Humanism deserve to be understood as autonomous and creative periods of Western thinking.<sup>5</sup> With the help of such studies it can be claimed that the Hu-

---

<sup>1</sup> HELMAR JUNGHANS, *Der junge Luther und die Humanisten*, Göttingen 1985.

<sup>2</sup> JUNGHANS, *Humanisten* (as note 1), 269–273, 319–323.

<sup>3</sup> JUNGHANS, *Humanisten* (as note 1), 323–325.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the present series "Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation", Erika Rummel's many studies can be mentioned. See also WILLIAM WRIGHT, *Martin Luther's Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms*, Grand Rapids 2010.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. BRIAN COPENHAVER & CHARLES SCHMITT, *Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge 2003; J. Hankins (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge

manist movement was significant for the Reformation not merely because of its anti-scholastic method but also on the strength of its own philosophical contributions.

First, the new views of scholarship need to be elaborated concerning the distinctive profile of Renaissance philosophy or the philosophical content of Humanism. We know for certain that the renewal of language and philosophical method belong to the central tenets of Renaissance philosophy. In this respect, Lodi Nauta's comprehensive study of the Humanist critique of Scholasticism deserves special mention.<sup>6</sup> Through a careful analysis of Lorenzo Valla's *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie* Nauta shows how the Humanists replaced the technical vocabulary of Aristotelian scholasticism with a language that can be understood in common-sense terms. In this manner, many Aristotelian categories can be interpreted as qualities. Furthermore, the doctrine of virtue is not constructed in terms of habitus but Valla rather employs the theory of emotions and understands virtues as affects. Regarding Trinitarian theology, Valla likewise rejects many Aristotelian categories and concludes that the Trinity appears to us as a mystery rather than as a logical-philosophical phenomenon.<sup>7</sup>

Similar linguistic and methodological renewals can be observed in the texts of the Lutheran reformers. Nauta's research shows that the results of Junghans regarding Humanist language and method continue to be relevant. Another new study by William Wright highlights the relationship between Lorenzo Valla and Martin Luther.<sup>8</sup>

It remains an open question, however, whether this renewal of language and method accompanies genuinely new issues and philosophical problems. Many recent studies tend to answer this question negatively, showing how the philosophical content of medieval Aristotelianism continues to be taught, even after new translations and better knowledge of Greek original sources have become available. The extensive history of Renaissance philosophy, edited by Quentin Skinner and Charles Schmitt, shows the continuation of Aristotelianism from the medieval period until the days of Descartes. Within this current, Thomistic and Scotistic philosophical and theological convictions are defended in elegant Humanist Latin. New issues and problems are, however, seldom visible.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, some scholars argue that Renaissance philosophy introduces many new issues and innovative approaches. Pierre Hadot's concept of

---

2007; RISTO SAARINEN, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought*, Oxford 2011.

<sup>6</sup> LODI NAUTA, *In Defense of Common Sense. Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass. 2009.

<sup>7</sup> NAUTA, *Common Sense* (as note 6), 82–128, 152–210.

<sup>8</sup> WRIGHT, *Two Kingdoms* (as note 4).

<sup>9</sup> C. Schmitt & Q. Skinner (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge 1988. See also DAVID LINES, *Aristotle's Ethics in the Italian Renaissance* (ca. 1300–1650), Leiden 2002.

“philosophy as a way of life” has proved to be fruitful in this respect.<sup>10</sup> Hadot presents a thesis according to which we can speak of two different kinds of philosophy in Western thought. On the one hand, we have academic philosophy, prominently represented by Aristotelianism, aiming at a theoretical grasp of the world. On the other hand, we can see a current in which philosophy is to be understood as a sort of therapy or practical advice in solving life’s problems. This second current often takes the form of concrete exercises, aimed at the moderation or extinction of emotion for the purpose of finding peace of mind. This current, philosophy as a way of life, has allegedly existed in the shadows of academic philosophy, although its immediate popular impact has often been considerable.<sup>11</sup>

The period of Renaissance Humanism contains a lot of thinking that can be characterised in terms of “philosophy as a way of life”. Widespread works like Petrarch’s *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, books on the art of dying or many well-known treatises of Erasmus can be classified in terms of such programme.<sup>12</sup> These works were read outside of the classroom and they have therapeutic or other practical aims. It is possible to label the Renaissance and Humanism as currents in which this practical wing of philosophical thinking gains new popularity.<sup>13</sup>

A closer look at Hadot’s thesis, however, reveals a number of reasons why his view cannot be approved as an overall explanation regarding the history of philosophy. His thesis can highlight the issue that there is a popular philosophy which influences people beyond the classroom. Its practical and therapeutical advice is nevertheless taken from the achievements of mainline theoretical philosophy.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, “philosophy as a way of life” does not provide us with entirely new issues and problems. However, it may provide some heuristic insight regarding the criticism of classroom philosophy and its alleged alternatives. In the following, I will apply one such insight to the study of Luther, highlighting the discussion on gifts and giving in popular philosophy.

Luther’s anti-scholastic approach contains some features which can also be encountered in Humanist philosophy. With regard to gifts and giving, the historical sources of this popular philosophy are Cicero’s *De officiis* and Seneca’s

<sup>10</sup> PIERRE HADOT, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, London 1995.

<sup>11</sup> For serious academic attempts to outline such history, see MARTHA NUSSBAUM, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton 1994; RICHARD SORABJI, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, Oxford 2000.

<sup>12</sup> For Petrarch, see SAARINEN, *Weakness* (as note 5), 43–54. For *ars moriendi*, see BERNDT HAMM, *Luthers Anleitung zum seligen Sterben vor dem Hintergrund der spätmittelalterlichen Ars moriendi*, in his *Der frühe Luther*, Tübingen 2010, 115–163.

<sup>13</sup> For this idea, see SABRINA EBBERSMEYER, *Homo agens: Studien zur Genese und Struktur frühhumanistischer Moralphilosophie*, Berlin – New York 2010.

<sup>14</sup> I am following here SORABJI, *Emotion* (as note 11) and SORABJI, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death*, Oxford 2006.

*De beneficiis*. These books were widely distributed in Luther's days. They were read as textbooks of proper and civilized human conduct.<sup>15</sup> For Luther, their contents were primarily available as common cultural heritage and the social code of conduct observed by the educated class.<sup>16</sup> Luther employs this common heritage to illustrate his own theological programme. When Luther explains his theology with the help of popular codes of conduct, his hearers and readers can better grasp his message. Given this, it needs to be added that the actual message remains theological.

I will proceed beyond the findings of Junghans and claim not only that Luther took his language and method from Humanism but also that he likewise took from Humanism a number of popular philosophical ideas and tenets. They were available to him and his audience from the time of Seneca and Cicero, but they also belonged to the cultural climate of the educated class. This observation does not mean that these features were part of an overall "philosophy as a way of life" nor that Luther promotes Cicero and Seneca in a programmatic sense. Rather, I assume that there was a common cultural heritage, which Luther uses to communicate his message. I do think, however, that his precise use of Cicero and Seneca deserves to be investigated more closely.<sup>17</sup>

This approach is motivated by two studies which elucidate the common cultural heritage through social history and philosophical elaboration. In her book *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Natalie Zemon Davis studies the manifold gift exchanges in early modern Europe. She argues that European people had an acute understanding of the distinction between gifts and payments in the sixteenth century. An adequate giving and receiving of gifts was extremely important in all social classes, because honour, social status and mutual appreciation could not be bought and sold. Instead, it was manifested through a mutual exchange of gifts.<sup>18</sup>

With regard to the higher classes of society, the social rank was established through the proper giving and receiving of gifts. Seneca and Cicero discuss the art of such gift exchange. On the other hand, gift exchange was also vitally im-

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. JILL KRAYE, *Moral Philosophy*, in: Schmitt & Skinner (as note 9), 301–386. For Seneca's theological significance, see TROELS ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, *Gift-Giving and Friendship. Seneca and Paul in Romans 1–8 on the Logic of God's Charis and Human Response*, in: HTR 101 (2008), 15–44 and MARCEL HÉNAFF, *The Price of Truth*, Stanford 2010, 257–267.

<sup>16</sup> For the closer identification of this Humanist context, see LEIF GRANE, *Martinus noster: Luther in the German Reform Movement 1518–1521*, Mainz 1994 (VIEG 155).

<sup>17</sup> For some positive comments on *De officiis*, see WATR 2, 456,29–457,3. To proceed with such investigation, expressions like *honestum*, *beneficium*, *gratitudo*, *gratias agere*, *consuetudo*, *dignus* should be analysed. Cicero (off 1, 49) and Seneca (ben 1, 5–7; 2, 18–25, 31–35) treat extensively the nature of *accepta beneficia*. This expression is employed by Luther e.g. in WA 3, 89,12 and 276,17; WA 5, 181,18; WA 6, 364,20; WA 13, 355,23; WA 20, 33,29; WA 29, 452,2 and 454,9–13.

<sup>18</sup> NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Oxford 2000, 56–73 (Erasmus of Rotterdam is discussed on pp. 59–61).

portant among the poor, as they had no money and could not regulate their mutual relationships through monetary exchange. They were in many ways dependant on mutual help and benefits. In this manner, the different classes needed to be aware of the nature of gift exchange as social reality.

In the relationship between humans and God, the proper distinction between gifts and sales was also important. The Reformation very clearly preached against the view that we can buy God's favour with the help of our own achievements. Zemon Davis concludes that "the religious reformations of the sixteenth century were a quarrel about the gifts, that is, about whether humans can reciprocate to God, about whether humans can put God under obligation, and about what this means for what people should give to each other."<sup>19</sup>

In his major study *The Price of Truth*, Marcel Hénaff investigates the intellectual history of the ancient Greek view according to which truth and true teaching cannot have a price. As they cannot become an individual possession of humans, they cannot be bought or sold. Truth, teaching and doctrine belong therefore to the realm of gifts rather than to economic exchange. For this reason, the mutuality needed for the historical transmission of doctrine and true teaching is a mutuality of recognition, honour and gratitude. These attitudes accompany the proper exchange of gifts.<sup>20</sup> For Hénaff, the Reformation therefore appears as a struggle for the proper definition of gifts, gratitude, achievements and price. He concludes: "The crucial point of divergence between the two dominant faiths of the Christian West was probably the question of the gift."<sup>21</sup>

Basically, Hénaff thinks that the contractually regulated commercial exchange and the rationality that it requires only emerges through the Reformation, becoming the established norm of secular life in a society. In medieval Christianity, the good works of charity manifested both gift exchange and economic exchange. These two modes, gifts and sales, were intertwined and overlapping in human conduct. The theocentric Protestant Reformation distinguished and totally separated the gifts from the sales. For the Protestants, gifts belong to the realm of divine reality; no human religious achievement is considered possible. Because of this basic tenet, gift relationships were considered as inner and theological realities, whereas the external world was understood to be disenchanted and secular, operating with the rules of economic exchange.<sup>22</sup>

While Zemon Davis and Hénaff are no Luther scholars, they lay out the cultural context of Luther's times. I will now interpret some of Luther's texts dealing

<sup>19</sup> ZEMON DAVIS, *Gift* (as note 18), 167–168.

<sup>20</sup> HÉNAFF, *Price* (as note 15), 17–21. As he notes on pp. 356–367, the invention of the printing press and the profession of booksellers changed this view regarding the ownership of teaching.

<sup>21</sup> HÉNAFF, *Price* (as note 15), 269.

<sup>22</sup> HÉNAFF, *Price* (as note 15), 279–281.



with gift exchange in three thematic areas. First, I will deal with the concept of gift or present. Second, I will investigate Luther's understanding of doctrine and teaching. Third, I will focus on the proper receiving of gifts. Other themes like honour and gratitude or adequate humility and the avoidance of arrogance will also appear in this context. I will mention some parallel texts from Cicero and Seneca. It can be shown, on the one hand, in which sense Luther applies the distinction between gifts and sales and how the views of Zemon Davis and Hénaff are relevant for the understanding of Luther's theology. On the other hand, Luther reveals a deep and differentiated sensibility to this distinction, going beyond Hénaff's schematic separation between Protestantism and Catholicism.

### *Gifts, Presents and Favours*

I will first discuss three notions very briefly, namely, gift (*donum*, Gabe), present (*Geschenk*), and favour or benefit (*beneficium*, Wohltat). For Luther, gifts go together with faith and grace, whereas merits and works belong to the realm of economic exchange. The realm of faith is thus measured differently from the realm of works. The classical maxim "*suum cuique*", to each his own, can thus also appear in the context of gifts. Gift exchange can take place in a context of reciprocity which is proper to the realm of faith.<sup>23</sup>

The basic concepts of economic exchange are buying and selling. In the realm of faith or gift exchange, the necessary reciprocity is expressed in terms of giving and receiving favours or benefits. Luther translates the Latin concept of *beneficium* (favour, benefit) into German as "*Wohltat*". The vehicle of giving is "the gift" (*donum*), a term that can be employed of everything that is given without price. While the objects of economic exchange have a price or other similar value (e.g. merit), gifts have no price and they make no claim of payment. They can, however, evoke gratitude in the recipient. In such an act of gift-giving, the gift need not become a private property of the recipient. For instance, divine gifts like sunshine or the rule of law in a society remain the property of the giver. The recipient feels gratitude for such gifts, but this gratitude does not make a claim of ownership.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. WA 17/2, 38,12–23: „Das der glaube mit sich bringe als ein heubt gutt die andern gaben, das es darumb heysse glaubens mas und nicht unsers willens odder verdiensts mas, das wyr solche gaben nicht verdienet haben, sondern wo glaube ist, da ehret Gott den selben glauben mit ettlichen gaben als zur mitgabe odder ubergabe wie viel er will, als er spricht 1. Cor. 12.: ‚Er teylet eynem iglichen aus nach seynem willen‘. Eph. 4.: ‚eyn iglich gelied ynn seyner mas‘. Eben darumb spricht er auch, es seyen mancherley gaben, nicht nach unserm verdienst, sondern nach der gnaden, die uns geben ist, Das also die gnade gleich wie der glaube mit sich bringe solch edle kleynot und geschenke, eym iglichen seyne mas, Das ia also allenthalben die werck und verdienst ausgeschlossen und wyr mit den wercken nuer zum nehisten geweyset werden.“

Given this, expressions like “Gnade geben” (giving grace or mercy) need not imply any transfer in property relations. God can bestow grace or mercy so that it nevertheless remains God’s grace. Analogically, when Luther speaks of “God’s gift” or “high” and “exquisite” gift, he indicates that the gift remains divine property and something that is not controlled by human recipients.<sup>24</sup> Such semantic features are useful for defining the closer nature of some theological gifts. The German verb “übergeben” connotes a transfer of property or control more clearly than “geben”.<sup>25</sup>

The German concept “present” (Geschenk) is frequently employed by Luther. He often uses a double wording, “gift and present” (Gabe und Geschenk). At times, present can be synonymous with gift. In some cases, however, the word “present” seems to indicate a possession or the fact of belonging to someone. When Luther says, for instance, “a gift and a present, given to you from God, and your own” (eyn gabe und geschenck, das dyr von Gott geben, und deyn eygen sey), he connects the event of giving with the gift and the fact of possession with the present.<sup>26</sup> A similar connection is made in phrases “gift and present ... given and transferred by God (gabe und geschenck ... von Gott mitgeteilt und verliehen) and “gift and present ... that you may say: come here, dear Lord, you are mine” (gab und geschenck ... Das du magst sagen: kom her, lieber herr, Du bist mein).<sup>27</sup> In these phrases, Luther distinguishes between the dynamics of giving (von Gott geben, mitgeteilt, kom her: gift) and the resulting transfer of ownership (deyn eygen, verliehen, bist mein: present).

When Luther employs the word “present” (Geschenk), he at least in some cases connects it with the transfer of ownership.<sup>28</sup> In this manner, the vehicle of “presenting” becomes the property of the recipient in a stronger than in generic “giving”. Given this, all presents are also gifts, but not all gifts are presents. For instance, sunshine can be regarded as a gift, but cannot become the property of the recipient in the sense of a present. For such reasons, the phrase “I received it as gift and present” is not merely tautological. It means that something is (a) given and received as well as (b) it has become my property. In this sense, “present” (Geschenk) resembles the Latin word *donatio*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Gottes Gabe: WA 16, 299,34–37; hohe Gabe: WA 51, 215,24; köstliche Gabe: WA 20, 392,3 (Anm.). In WA 50, 368,17–18, music is called „koestliche Gabe Gottes“. Obviously, the gift of music does not change ownership.

<sup>25</sup> As e.g. WA 52, 620,1–16 shows, „übergeben“ is for Luther the translation of Greek *paradidōmi*. For this term, see RISTO SAARINEN, *God and the Gift*, Collegeville 2005, 37–44.

<sup>26</sup> WA 10/1/1, 11,13–15.

<sup>27</sup> WA 16, 353,31; WA 49, 661,41–662,23.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. MARTIN SEILS, *Gabe und Geschenk: eine Zugabe*, in: J. von Lüpke & E. Thaidigsmann (ed.) *Denkraum Katechismus*, Tübingen 2009, 87–103, here: 98–99.

<sup>29</sup> This complements the observations of SEILS, *Gabe* (as note 28), who says on p. 87 that the Latin concept *donatio* resembles the German *Geschenk*. Cf. WA 4, 596,13–14: „Quia donatio, dicunt Iuristae, constituit possessorem recipientem ...“ For the broader background of giving, cf. MARTIN SEILS, *Die Sache Luthers*, in: *LuJ* 52 (1985), 64–80.