

Beyond juxtaposing Luther and the »New Perspective on Paul«

A common quest for the »other« way of giving?¹

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I Introduction to an intricate matter

It would be no exaggeration to describe the relationship between Luther and Paul as rather intricate. Attempts have been made to clarify this relationship, but none of them has been successful in making the final clarification. It is the aim of this article to outline the problems connected to the role of Luther in the »New Perspective on Paul« and to propose another way of relating Paul and Luther, without neglecting the insights of the New Perspective by using the divine giving as link.

Luther has been a central figure in Pauline exegesis for the last 500 years, either positively as a motivator and collaborator or negatively as a chief opponent. Paul and Luther are, for obvious reasons, the two most central figures in Lutheran tradition, and studies on them have developed almost simultaneously, even in periods when awareness of the internal difference was prominent.

Studies on Paul – as well as on Luther – therefore proved to be direct ways into the intellectual history of modern Western Christianity. If Ritschl did influence Luther studies, as he surely did, he also, at the same time, influenced Pauline exegesis. If the discovery of Luther's lectures on

¹ When I was revising this lecture for publication in *Lutherjahrbuch*, New Testament Scholar John M. G. Barclay generously allowed me to read some of the chapters from his forthcoming book on Paul and the gift, for which I am deeply grateful. This made me aware of additional material and helped me sharpen some of my points.

Romans was important for our understanding of Luther in the 20th century, it was almost equally important for our understanding of Paul.² If the *Zeitgeist* is anti-metaphysical and existential and concerned with hermeneutics, so are studies of both Luther and Paul.³ If the *Zeitgeist* is sacramental and collectivistic, so is our understanding of Luther and Paul. If the *Zeitgeist* is critical towards the legacy from dialectical theology, so are readings of both Paul and Luther. From this perspective, it is no coincidence that the »New Perspective on Paul« and Finnish Luther studies developed almost simultaneously.⁴

The partner race of Pauline exegesis and Luther studies often presupposed that questions about what Paul said and meant, what Luther said and meant, and what a meaningful expression of Christianity would be today should not be treated as three distinct questions, but as one and the same. But this is not so. They have to remain three distinct questions, and before interrelating them, one should deal with them separately. That is why the relationship between Paul and Luther can never be exhaustively solved historically, but only theologically. This issue will be taken up below. First there is a brief survey of the role of Luther in the New Perspective.

Several introductions to the Luther-Paul-issue exist already,⁵ which makes sheer repetition less relevant. My focus will instead be on some

2 One needs only refer to K. BARTH, *Der Römerbrief*, ²1922, for a paradigmatic example.

3 The paradigmatic example is here G. EBELING, *Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik* (ZThK 48, 1951, 172–230).

4 An impression almost explicitly confirmed in R. SAARINEN, *The Pauline Luther and the Law: Lutheran theology reengages in the study of Paul* (Pro Ecclesia XV, No. 1, 2006, 64–86).

5 See, for example, the comprehensive study of S. WESTERHOLM, *Perspectives old and new on Paul: The »Lutheran« Paul and his critics*, 2004, and J. D. G. DUNN's lengthy introduction in his *The New Perspective on Paul*, ²2008, 1–98, where Dunn confirms his own personal appreciation of Protestant theology and Luther's doctrine of justification without giving up his critique of »Lutheran misinterpretations« (Ibd. 89–95, see especially the discussion in the footnotes), arguing for a Luther complemented by Calvin (95). By this Dunn seems to mean a Protestant theology which pays more attention to the transformation of the human being as normally inherent in the understanding of forensic justification. See also the brief but instructive survey in M. E. BRINKMAN, *Justification in*

general characteristics of the current debate in an attempt to sketch an alternative way of coping with the Paul-Luther-divide, which takes both the historical and the theological perspectives into consideration.

II Judaism and Luther as »negative foils«

A general tendency in the New Perspective's criticism of the Lutheran Paul is the attack on the understanding of Judaism as the mere negative foil for the gospel of justification by faith alone. Another general tendency in relation to the role of Luther in the New Perspective is the use of Luther as the negative foil for the New Perspective's new and better understanding of Paul. As put by New Testament scholar Francis Watson, »in the [...] world of Pauline studies, ›Lutheran‹ is currently employed as a term of abuse«. ⁶ Luther is the paradigm prototype of the rival exegetical tradition, which surely *did* understand Second Temple Judaism almost parallel to the Roman Catholicism that Luther opposed and *did* find in Paul both a *simul* and a distinction between Law and Gospel that was not in Paul – at least not in Luther's version. Along these lines the following considerations are relying on the premise that the New Perspective did have a point in rejecting an exegesis too depending on Lutheran interpretations. It is beyond questioning that Luther was very much present in the »Lutheran« perspective on Paul. A single reference to a central question and its answer in Ernst Käsemann's work will suffice here. When he, for example, asks, »Who represents the Jewish nomism that Paul attacked?«

Ecumenical Dialogue: Central Aspects of Christian Soteriology in Debate, 1996, 57–78. For a detailed and very independent study, see V. STOLLE, *Luther und Paulus. Die exegetischen und hermeneutischen Grundlagen der lutherischen Rechtfertigungslehre im Paulinismus Luthers* (ABG 10), 2002. For a comprehensive assessment, see also K. HAACKER, *Verdienste und Grenzen der ›neuen Perspektive‹ der Paulus-Auslegung* (in: *Lutherische und Neue Paulusperspektive. Beiträge zu einem Schlüsselproblem der gegenwärtigen exegetischen Diskussion* [WUNT 182], hg. v. M. BACHMANN/J. WOYKE, 2005, 1–16). For a different and fresh opinion, arguing for a more Lutheran Paul, see SAARINEN, *The Pauline Luther* (see n. 4).

6 F. WATSON, *Response: A response from Francis Watson* (SJT 59, No. 4, 2006, 461–468), 461.

and answers that it is the community of pious people that made God's promise regarding their own privilege and God's law a means of their own self-sanctification, then Käsemann surely does not see Paul's but Luther's opponents in the Pauline corpus.⁷

Revisions were therefore very much needed, and one may look for a historical explanation for why exegetes from the Anglo-Saxon world were necessary in order to rediscover what had for a long period of time been accessible academic knowledge in works on ancient Judaism.⁸ Such an explanation may include both theological and ideological reasons, but will not be elaborated further.⁹

But as the New Perspective had to revise the use of Second Temple Judaism as the negative foil for the Lutheran doctrine of justification, it is equally necessary to revise the use of Luther as the negative foil for the New Perspective. It is important to note (1) that a revision of the New Perspective's understanding of Second Temple Judaism, of Paul's relation hereto or of his use of paraenesis, a topic to which we will return later, is not necessarily implied in this second step of revision and (2) that bringing Luther's tendentious readings of Paul out in the open will not in itself clarify the Paul-Luther relationship. Further studies are very much needed.

III Luther in the New Perspective

It is commonly accepted, not least through the work of James D. G. Dunn, that the breakthrough of the New Perspective occurred with E. P. Sanders' seminal work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.¹⁰ Here Sanders successfully

7 Cf. E. KÄSEMANN, *Rechtfertigung und Heilsgeschichte im Römerbrief* (in: DERS., *Paulinische Perspektiven*, 1969, 108–139), 127f.

8 H. L. STRACK/P. BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 1922ff; H.-J. SCHOEPS, *Paulus. Die Theologie des Apostels im Lichte der jüdischen Religionsgeschichte*, 1959.

9 See, however, SAARINEN, *The Pauline Luther* (see n. 4), which at the end deals with the theological and ideological background for the breakthrough of the New Perspective. For a questioning of the »Newness« of the New Perspective see Notger Slenczka's article in the present volume.

10 E. P. SANDERS, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*,

rectified the Weberian understanding of Judaism, which until then pervaded research on Second Temple Judaism.¹¹ This correction is accompanied by a harsh critique of the Lutheran tradition of Pauline exegesis. That the understanding of Luther that emerges from this work of Sanders is highly questionable has since been widely documented. Forensic justification was used by Sanders in a very narrow and fictional sense, allowing no dimension of change or transformation. And although exegetes like Sanders had no problems distinguishing between different kinds of forensic justification, or combining forensic justification with participation, this interpretational generosity was not transmitted to their understanding of forensic justification in a Lutheran context.¹² Sanders, explicitly and implicitly, made Luther a central character in the New Perspective, a positioning that his followers did not hesitate to keep. The traditional

1977; J.D.G. DUNN, *The New Perspective on Paul* (1983) (in: IDEM, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 1990, 183–214). See also H. HÜBNER: *Pauli theologia proprium* (NTS 26, 1980, 445–473), 448.

11 F. WEBER, *System der altsynagogischen palästinischen Theologie aus Targum, Midrasch und Talmud*, 1880. To Weber's dependence on a Lutheran realm of understanding, see, for example, T. LAATO, *Paulus und das Judentum*, 1991 and F. AVEMARIE, *Tora und Leben. Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (TSAJ 55), 1996, 11–23.

12 Cf. SANDERS, *Paul* (see n. 10), 492, n. 57, »The term ›forensic‹ is somewhat ambiguous, since it can refer to God's declaring one to be righteous (though he is not), a meaning conveyed by the term ›imputation‹ and the catch-phrase *simul justus et peccator*. This meaning arises from Luther's theology (see, for example, his *Commentary on Galatians*, ET, pp. 22–23, 26, 137f. 223–229), and it is a meaning which I do not find in Paul. Paul does use the term forensically in the sense of the acquittal of past transgressions (=forgiveness), and this is the sense referred to here.« Wilfried Härle's objection can here be made representative: W. HÄRLE, *Paulus und Luther. Ein kritischer Blick auf die »New Perspective«* (ZThK 103, 2006, 326–393): »Aber an *einem* Punkt besteht jedenfalls – entgegen dem Urteil von E.P. Sanders – vollständige Gemeinsamkeit zwischen Paulus und Luther: das ›paulinische‹ Sein in Christus und die ›lutherische‹ Anrechnung der Gerechtigkeit Christi sind nicht fiktiv, sondern *real* verstanden. Das schöpferische Wort, durch das Gott den Gottlosen durch den Glauben gerecht macht, ist nicht weniger wirkmächtig als das schöpferische Wort, durch das Gott dem, was nicht ist, ruft, daß es sei, und als das neuschaffende Wort, durch das Gott die Toten ins ewige Leben ruft (Röm 4,17).«

Lutheran exegesis represented a strong rhetorical position, but the attack on this tradition did not lack rhetorical strength either.

At the same time, Sanders was influenced by a clearly Christian,¹³ if not Protestant, doctrine of grace in his reading of Second Temple Judaism. For example, his understanding of covenantal nomism implies an understanding of obedience where »obedience maintains one's position in the covenant, but [...] does not earn God's grace as such.«¹⁴ For this reason, it has been criticised that Sanders' understanding of Palestinian Judaism was hard to distinguish from the traditional understanding of Paul' own religion. Later studies on Paul by Sanders show that there is hardly any difference between his understanding of what is known as covenantal nomism¹⁵ and Paul, and he ends finding logical inconsistencies in Paul,¹⁶ as also Heikki Räisänen did.¹⁷ According to Räisänen, the reformers were right when finding an emphasis on divine grace in Paul, but in this question Paul is on the same line as the best of Jewish tradition.¹⁸ Sanders and Räisänen illustrate that it is difficult to avoid at least some mirroring effect from one's opponent in strong controversies.

And in the eager of positioning, the New Perspective overlooked that even a Luther scholar and theologian like Gerhard Ebeling, paradigmatically representing the Lutheran Paul, comes very close to providing a pre-

13 As criticised by J.D.G. Dunn in DUNN *Romans*, 1988, lxvi with reference to M.D. HOOKER, *Paul and Covenantal Nomism* (1982) (in: EADEM, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul*, 1990, 155–164). In a way this movement has been repeated in the work of Seth Schwartz, who in Judaism sees a society built on non-economic charity instead of competitive reciprocal relations, whereby he in Judaism's relation to Roman society finds a post-Kantian distinction between self-interested economic reciprocity and altruistic pure giving. S. SCHWARTZ, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism*, 2010. For a precise critique of Schwartz, see the forthcoming volume on Paul and the Gift from J.M.G. BARCLAY.

14 SANDERS, *Paul* (see n. 10), 420.

15 Cf. E.P. SANDERS, *Judaism, Practice and Belief 63bce–66ce*, 1992, 372–373.

16 E.P. SANDERS, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 1983.

17 H. RÄISÄNEN, *Paul and the Law*, 1983, 228: »In sum, I am not able to find in the relevant literature *any* conception of the law, which involves such inconsistencies or such arbitrariness as does Paul's.«

18 *Ibid.*, 268.

cise description of the difference between Luther and Paul in his 1958 article on the law. The most significant difference for Ebeling is the way Luther makes a permanent situation of simultaneity out of a clear transition from one situation into another in Paul. Ebeling furthermore pointed to the tendency of weakening the original Pauline meaning in Luther's understanding.¹⁹ According to Pannenberg, who dealt with the Luther-Paul problem in his *Systematic Theology*, this particular issue has led an almost miserable life in Lutheran Dogmatics.²⁰ However, to Pannenberg's conclusion has to be added that, in Ebeling's otherwise clear formulations, a tendency towards a certain reductionism can also be detected. It does not seem plausible, in the way Ebeling argues, that Luther is ignorant of a before and after regarding the life of a Christian. Pannenberg rightly points to Luther's understanding of baptism; at least his discussion with Latomus shows that baptism does play a crucial role in Luther's thinking, even if it is not always clearly expressed. The same is the case with Luther's revision of the ritual of baptism, which in 1526 surely reduced the number of ritual elements, but nevertheless kept the most crucial: the pre-baptismal cross signature and the post-baptismal clothing of the baptised in the christening gown, symbolising death and resurrection, respectively. It still, surely, remains a rather peculiar fact that Luther in his famous Preface to Romans only mentions baptism once, and when he does it, then in connection with the fulfilment of the baptism in the obedient taming of the body in the actual life of the Christian.²¹ But even at this point, the

19 See G. EBELING, *Erwägungen zur Lehre vom Gesetz* (in: DERS., *Wort und Glaube I*, 1960, 255–293), 269–270: »Denn das ist doch, wenn man von der reformatorischen Lehre von Gesetz und Evangelium her an Paulus herantritt, die auffallendste Differenz: daß aus dem Nacheinander in einer einmaligen, nicht wieder rückgängig zu machenden Wende das reformatorische Schema ein eigentümlich gleichzeitigen Nebeneinander, sozusagen eine Wende in Permanenz gemacht hat, die in dem Verdacht steht, gar keine Wende zu sein.«

20 See W. PANNENBERG, *Systematische Theologie Bd. III*, 1993, 75–84.94–113, esp. p. 96.

21 WAB 7; 19, 23–26, Vorrede auf die Epistel S. Pauli an die Roemer (1522): »Darumb haben wyr mit vns selbs genug zu schaffen vnser leben lang, das wyr vnsern leyb zemen, seyne luste todten vnd seyne gelidmas zwingen, das sie dem geyst gehorsam seyn vnd nicht den lusten, damit wyr dem tod vnd aufferstehen Christi gleych seyn, vnd vnser tauffe volbringen.« WAB 7; 20, 23–28 (1522/46): »Darumb haben wir mit vns selbs gnug zu

taming of the body is what distinguishes the baptised from the non-baptised and makes the paraenesis in Luther a pretty close functional equivalent to Pauline paraenesis. Such a reading would support Risto Saarinen's conclusion in his studies on the Pauline Luther. Saarinen finds in Luther an emphasis on the Christian life as a being in Christ, where the »justified person in his or her union with Christ can perform ›theological actions‹ in which good results are brought forth spontaneously, as the good fruit produced by a good tree«. ²²

Pauline paraenesis has over most of the last century remained a difficult subject, though not only for New Testament scholars. Luther research since Adolf Schlatter has used some time in clarifying the role of the law for the justified sinner. ²³ A major tendency in contemporary exegesis emphasises the paraenetic sections, not as appendices but as the real aim of the Pauline letters and therefore seen as examples of the non-Lutheran Paul. ²⁴ Also this view has to be nuanced. Luther has a positive

schaffen vnser leben lang, das wir vnsern Leib zemen, seine lueste toedten, vnd seine Gliedmas zwingen, das sie dem Geist gehorsam seien vnd nicht den luesten. Deutung der Tauffe. Damit wir dem Tod vnd auferstehen Christi gleich sein, vnd vnser Tauffe vollbringen (die auch den Tod der suenden vnd new Leben der gnaden bedeutet) Bis das wir gar rein von suenden, auch leiblich mit Christo auferstehen, vnd ewiglich leben.«

²² SAARINEN, *The Pauline Luther* (see n. 4), 83. See also R. SAARINEN: *How Luther got Paul right* (Dialog 46, 2007, 170–173).

²³ A. SCHLATTER, *Luthers Deutung des Römerbriefes*, 1917. Here Schlatter criticises Luther for reducing the meaning of justification and bypass a positive articulation of the Christian life. Schlatter's discussion was continued critically in P. ALTHAUS, *Paulus und Luther über den Menschen*, ²1952 and in W. JOEST, *Gesetz und Freiheit. Das Problem des Tertius Usus legis bei Luther und die neutestamentliche Parainese*, ³1961. In this book, Joest argues for an understanding of paraenesis, where the exhortations are connecting the resurrection with the actual life of the Christian (195–196). See also W. JOEST, *Paulus und das lutherische Simul Iustus et Peccator* (KuD I, 1955, 269–320).

²⁴ See, for example, the edited volume *Early Christian Paraenesis*, ed. by J. STARR and T. ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, 2004, although without reaching any final result. There is, however, a general tendency to see the paraenesis not as an appendix to the Pauline letters, but as the point to which the whole argumentation in the letters is directed. Paul's central concern is to make the communities live according to God's will. But again one might question whether this is the absolute opposite of Luther's view and whether one really can separate aims and medium in this way. In the end, the gospel in Luther is

use of paraenesis for the realisation of a life between human beings pleasant to God.²⁵

We are, for such reasons, forced to conclude that Luther's theology represents a multifaceted framework of interconnected thoughts, several of which contradict each other *when* isolated. His understanding of the Christian as a sinner *re vera* and justified *in spe* seems to exclude any kind of difference between the baptised and the non-baptised (cf. WA 56; 347,12; WA 39,1; 564,4) and surely does add something new to the Pauline texts. Although many formulations in Luther can be balanced with other formulations,²⁶ and the difference between, for example, being a sinner *re vera* and a justified *in spe* can be interpreted as a difference in visibility,²⁷ Luther's formulations cannot always be praised for their clarity.²⁸ This, as

oriented towards bringing the sinner into the relationship where God's will will be done. See also J. M. G. BARCLAY, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, 1988.

- 25 In fact paraenesis also plays a central role in Luther. For different views on this matter, supporting a paraenetic orientation in Luther, see P. ALTHAUS, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 71994, 238: »Luther gebraucht die Formel Melanchthons nicht, die dann von der Konkordienformel, von der lutherischen Orthodoxie und der Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts übernommen wurde: vom *tertius usus legis*. Aber der Sache nach findet dieser sich auch bei ihm.« Oswald Bayer has emphasised Luther's »Haus-Tafel-Ethik«. See O. BAYER, *Nachfolge-Ethos und Haustafel-Ethos. Luthers seelsorgerliche Ethik* (in: DERS., *Freiheit als Antwort. Zur theologischen Ethik*, 1995, 147–163). Also Saarinen argues in favour of a positive fulfilment of the law by Luther, although not a third use, and in contrast to Paul with an anti-Pelagian emphasis. See SAARINEN, *The Pauline Luther* (see n. 4), 78–81.
- 26 Cf., for example, WA 10,1,1; 377,1–4: »Eyn Christen mensch hatt durch seyne tauß und glawben schon alle ding und wirt yhm geben allis auff eyn mal, on das erß nit auffgedecht sihet, sondern ym glawben yhm behallten wirt, umb dißes lebens willen, wilchs nit ertragen mocht solcher gutter offenbarung.«
- 27 As by P. MANNS, *Fides absoluta – Fides incarnata. Zur Rechtfertigungslehre Luthers im großen Galater-Kommentar* (in: *Reformata Reformanda*, FS für Hubert Jedin, hg. v. E. IERLOH/K. REPGEN, 1965, 265–312), 282–283; J. FORSBERG, *Das Abrahambild in der Theologie Luthers. Pater fidei sanctissimus* (VIEG 117), 1984, 91–98, and S. PEURA, *Mehr als ein Mensch. Die Vergöttlichung als Thema der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1513 bis 1519*, 1990, 172f.
- 28 Therefore, Wilfried Härle's reservation remains valid. See HÄRLE (see n. 12), 390: »Es stellt ein sprachliches und inhaltliches Problem dar, daß Luther immer wieder (z. B. WA 56; 347,12; WA 39,1; 564,4) sagt, die Christen seien ›re vera‹ Sünder, ›reputatione Dei«

well as the differentiated ways by which Luther reads and uses Paul, has to be acknowledged.

IV Grace in the New Perspective

Post-Sandersian research on Paul leaves the distinct impression that the doctrine of grace was as profound in Second Temple Judaism as in Protestant theology. This, however, would imply that grace is a simple term that is easily understood. I am not convinced. Is grace really a concept that one can unambiguously operate with under all circumstances? Is it possible to understand Western theological and mental history at all without paying attention to the difficulties in reaching agreement about the nature of divine grace? In many cases, it is exactly the question of the nature of divine grace that is the motor of theological development, and the history of Christian theology shows abundant difficulties in conceptualising grace (Χάρις), not least in keeping it generous and excessive²⁹ – which in itself implies a certain perception of grace. If grace is the superabundant gift (as in Rom 5: 17 and II Cor 9: 14), then it cannot avoid the ambiguities otherwise connected to the gift. From an anthropological as well as philosophical perspective, gifts are from the outset ambivalent. And this ambivalence seems to make good and evil inseparable, as the good gift is often difficult to distinguish from the bad one.³⁰ A huge gift can be devastating

oder ›in spe‹ jedoch Gerechte. Dadurch *kann* der Eindruck entstehen, die Sünde sei *wirklich*, die Gerechtigkeit bloß *erdacht*. Dieses Mißverständnis ist bei Sanders anzutreffen, und es gibt bei Luther *Formulierungen*, durch die er dieses Mißverständnis mitzuverantworten hat. Die Einsicht, daß das, was Gott dem Sünder zuspricht und zurechnet, an Wirklichkeit der Realität *überlegen* ist, ist bei Luther jedoch stets vorauszusetzen und mitzudenken – auch dort, wo sie sprachlich nicht deutlich zum Ausdruck kommt.«

29 M. L. FRETTLÖH, Der Charme der gerechten Gabe. Motive einer Theologie und Ethik der Gabe am Beispiel der paulinischen Kollekte für Jerusalem (in: »Leget Anmut in das Geben.« Zum Verhältnis von Ökonomie und Theologie, hg. v. J. EBACH u. a. [Jabboq 1], 2001, 105–161).

30 In exemplary clarity, formulated by F. VIATTE and R. MICHAEL in the foreword to J. STAROBINSKI, *Largesse*, trans. by J. M. TODD, 1997, vii: »This Story of the gift is a kind of double-entry bookkeeping: it has a light side and a dark side. Each of its stages is bur-

when no return is possible, and it also seems impossible to imagine a relationship without any kind of mutuality and exchange, even if the return is sheer gratitude.

Furthermore, we can understand Old Testament Judaism and its idea of the covenant without paying attention to the fact that several mediators are installed in Israel's history to make the chosen people live under divine grace: the Torah,³¹ the prophets, the Temple, even Wisdom? All of them imply some dimension of divine presence on the human side of the covenant in order to make the human participants live up to their covenantal responsibilities under the grace of the covenant.

But it is one thing to argue, as Dunn does, that a concept of grace runs through the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism as well as the Pauline Letters – Dunn believes he learned this from the Westminster Confession.³² It is quite another thing to say that grace is always unambiguous and never insufficient. If grace really is grace, then there is something paradigmatically paradoxical about this concept. If grace is so self-evident, then all these variations that theological discussions have presented through the ages seem difficult to explain.

This point has been touched upon by scholars criticising the New Perspective for lacking a concise understanding of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism.³³ I would argue in favour of a broadening of this issue, cover-

dened or cursed with the fundamental duality at work in the act of giving, where good has become inseparable from evil.«

31 For the role of the Torah, see, for example, AVEMARIE (see n. 11). Avemarie's description of the role of the Torah bears many similarities to Protestant ethics: »Die Tora ist nach rabbinischen Verständnis Mittel und Weg zum Leben, Mittlerin des Heils. Aber sie ist mehr als das. Israel hält sie, weil Gott sie gegeben hat und weil es sie liebt.« (AVEMARIE [see n. 11], 584).

32 J. D. G. DUNN, *The New Perspective on Paul: Revised Edition*, 2008, 19f: »from the Westminster Confession I early on learned that there is a single ›covenant of grace‹ running through both Testaments – ›not two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations‹ – and that ›the justification of believers under the Old Testament was [...] one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament‹.«

33 See T. GEORGE, *Modernizing Luther, Domesticating Paul: Another Perspective* (in: *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume 2 – The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. by D. A. CAR-

ing the very concept of grace. In order to see the relation between Paul and Luther, a mere lexical comparison of the understanding of, for example, grace cannot be satisfying. What is needed is a reflection on the very nature of grace, which is a theological rather than lexical issue but, at the same time, implies that we interpret both Luther and Paul with regard to their own particular context. Such a procedure could end in a confirmation of central aspects in especially the New Perspective's understanding of Paul and, surely, of Judaism although, at the same time, criticising a loose use of theological terms and biased reading of the Lutheran tradition. Nevertheless, this would result in seeing the relation between Paul in the midst of Second Temple Judaism and Protestant theology as a continuation rather than as a rupture – a continuation specifically related to the struggle of understanding the nature of divine grace

V *Sensus proprius and sensus ipsius in dealing with Paul and Luther*

I cannot give a full explanation of the somewhat odd picture by which Luther is represented in the New Perspective, but I will attempt to point to some rather central aspects. There has been a tendency in the Lutheran tradition to read a certain *sensus proprius* into the texts of both Paul and Luther. Hermeneutically, it is impossible to get rid of all subjective elements in text interpretations. However, it seems that certain elements from Luther's theology can liberate themselves more or less from their original context and overshadow others. This has been the case with the two kingdoms doctrine versus the doctrine of three orders, the latter truly balancing the former. But it has also been the case with the doctrine of justification in its relation to other central elements in Luther's theology and with the distinction between law and gospel.

This gives reason for an ongoing examination of the role and context of the doctrine of justification. As the theologian Niels Henrik Gregersen

SON/P. T. O'BRIEN/M. A. SEIFRIED 2004, 437–463), 450, referring to P. F. M. ZAHL, *Mistakes of the New Perspective on Paul* (Themelios 27, No. 1, 2002, 5–11).

has argued, the doctrine of justification is not in itself, from a theological point of view, an object of belief.

The saving power of Christ, and not a doctrine of justification, is what must be believed [...] a distinction must be made between a first-order address of the biblical message and the second-order theological reflection on this message.³⁴

This theological statement converges with a methodical problem. The doctrine of justification has in the Lutheran tradition, and perhaps even by the reformers themselves, occasionally been emphasised so strongly that it has partly been neglecting the fact that the justification is not the primary frame of reference for the gospel's restoration of the God-human relationship. On the contrary, the doctrine of justification is embedded in a stronger framework of primary relationality, often expressed in social metaphors. By relocating the doctrine of justification within the framework of a full theology, it may be possible to at least partly solve the problem of the criteriological function of this key doctrine.³⁵

The court metaphor has a long theological and biblical background, but a court room is not a total social fact, as Marcel Mauss and others have called gift-economy,³⁶ although Ebeling's understanding and use of the fundamental character of the *coram*-relation comes pretty close to depicting such a »total social fact«, although in existential attire.³⁷ The ideal court always serves the society outside the court room doors. In the same way, any understanding of the doctrine of justification that does not pay attention to its function in re-establishing the human fellowship with God through Christ and in the Holy Spirit runs the severe risks of reducing its meaning.³⁸ Too strong an emphasis on the forensic dimension of

34 N.H. GREGERSEN, Ten Theses on the Future of Lutheran Theology (in: The Gift of Grace: The Future of Lutheran Theology, ed. by IDEM et al., 2005, 1–16), 6.

35 An attempt to do so can be found in R. SAARINEN, Theology of Giving as a Comprehensive Lutheran Theology (in: Transformations of Luther's Theology: Historical and Contemporary Reflections, ed. by C. HELMER/B. K. HOLM [AKThG 32], 2011, 141–159).

36 M. MAUSS, The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies, 1990, 78f.

37 G. EBELING, Luther. Einführung in sein Denken, 1964, 220–230.

38 As has been the case for those following what seems to be Melancthon's reduction of the meaning of justification to its mere forensic dimension. For a brief discussion of this issue, see M. A. SEIFRIED, Paul's Uses of Righteousness Language Against Its Hellenistic

justification runs the risk of reducing faith to a life in front of God as opposed to a life with God – the latter seeming to preoccupy Paul the most – or to downplay the role of divine self-giving, which is also crucial to Paul.³⁹ As least as to the first point, New Testament scholars can rightly object to several too Lutheran readings. The question remains, however, whether Luther himself is adequately read in this juxtaposition. Some think so, others do not. Luther scholars from Helsinki are very reluctant, and so are Luther scholars who try to read Luther's theology as a theology of giving.⁴⁰

Background (in: Justification [see n. 33], 39–74), 67–74; H. BLOCHER, Justification of the Ungodly (*Sola Fide*): Theological Reflections (in: Justification [see n. 33], 465–500), 490–499. The fact that one thereby runs the risk of reducing Melanchthon to a mere negative foil of the right Pauline-Lutheran understanding is yet another issue to be taken seriously. One might expect that close readings of Melanchthon may further nuance the debate.

39 The latter is even the case in Saarinen's use of Seneca in emphasising the role of the intention for understanding the gift as gift. See R. SAARINEN, Finnish Luther Studies: A Story and a Program (in: Engaging Luther: A (New) Theological Assessment, ed. by O.-P. VAINIO, 2010, 1–26), 17f: »I am more inclined to grant God's merciful favor a conceptual primacy over the *donum*, the effective fruit. I believe that a gift can only be identified as gift if we know the intention of the giver. Thus divine mercy and benevolence in a way precedes divine gifts. At the same time, however, I interpret forgiveness in more effective terms than has been customary in Finnish research.« Although Saarinen adds important new aspects to the Finnish approach to Luther, it is nevertheless the question whether the emphasised focus on the intention of the giver is not in danger of reducing the gift-giving-relation to a single aspect by not downplaying the simultaneity of divine intention and divine self-giving. See also below.

40 Ibid.; R. SAARINEN, God and the Gift: An Ecumenical Theology of Giving, 2005; B.K. HOLM: Gabe und Geben bei Luther. Das Verhältnis zwischen Reziprozität und reformatorischer Rechtfertigungslehre (TBT 134), 2006; N.H. GREGERSEN, Radical Generosity and the Flow of Grace (in: Word – Gift – Being: Justification – Economy – Ontology, ed. by B.K. HOLM/P. WIDMANN [RPT 37], 2009, 117–144). An exemption is M. Seils, who at the Luther Congress in 1983 almost coined the term theology of giving, but in his recent work has been very critical of any attempt to include some kind of mutuality in divine giving. See M. SEILS, Die Sache Luthers (LuJ 52, 1985, 64–80); IDEM, Gabe und Geschenk. Eine Zugabe (in: Denkraum Katechismus. FS für Oswald Bayer, hg. v. J. VON LÜPKE/E. THAIDIGSMANN, 2009, 87–108).

VI *Paul between covenant thinking and Roman gift-giving?*

To focus on the social dimension of the Lutheran doctrine of justification is similar to the long tradition of locating Paul's understanding of justification in relation to issues related to sociality, as the New Testament scholar Nils Alstrup Dahl did several years before the New Perspective.⁴¹ »Obviously«, Dahl states,

the doctrine of justification is not primarily social; it is theological and soteriological. But the framework which Paul uses to locate the doctrine is social and historical rather than psychological and individualistic⁴²

Dahl clearly points to the same individualistic reductionism in the Lutheran tradition that Krister Stendahl had in mind, and in this respect his reading is equally questionable.⁴³ On the other hand, Dahl provides a fruitful perspective, when extended beyond Dahl and his followers,⁴⁴ by ensuring that it does not merely focus on the social function and implica-

41 See N. A. DAHL, *The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implication* (in: IDEM, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission*, 1977, 95–120). See also BRINKMAN (see n. 5), 69–72.

42 DAHL (see n. 41), 110.

43 K. Stendahl's idea of a specific introspective conscience in the Western world originating from Augustine just does not pay attention to the »introspective« character of many Old Testament Psalms. See K. STENDAHL: *The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West* (in: IDEM, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and other Essays*, 1977, 78–96). On the other hand, it is by no means obvious that justification in Luther's theology could be equivocated with introspection. As P. Hinlicky has argued, justification in Luther is rather »extra-spection«. P. HINLICKY, *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom*, 2010, 122.

44 See, for example, F. WATSON, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, 1986, 179: »Attention to the social context and function of Paul's arguments produces an interpretation of Paul in some respects very different from that which stems from the Lutheran tradition. For example, the fundamental antithesis between faith and works is not understood as primarily theological contrast between receiving grace as a free gift and earning it by one's own efforts, but as a sociological contrast between two different ways of life: ›faith‹, the way of life practiced in the Pauline congregations, marked by the abandonment of certain norms and beliefs of the surrounding society, and the adoption of new norms and beliefs; and ›works‹, the way of life of Jewish community sought to live in conformity with the law of Moses.«

tions of justification in a narrow sense, but also takes into consideration the social content of the doctrine itself and the social framework to which it belongs. Perhaps then the doctrine of justification in Luther can be regarded as nothing less than social in its core.⁴⁵

One way to proceed would be to follow the trend in one branch of the New Perspective that relates Paul to Roman culture, placing him – like the New Testament scholar and expert in ancient philosophy Troels Engberg-Pedersen has done – between Jewish covenant thinking and Roman gift-giving relationships as described by Cicero and, especially, by Seneca in *De beneficiis*,⁴⁶ which means between two different understandings of

45 It is quite clear, as the Käsemann disciple H. Boers argued, that Paul did not understand the human being only »as an individual who stands existentially alone before the ultimate«, but as one who is also concerned with the human being as a »social being for whom engagement with others is constitutive for the meaning of life«. See H. BOERS, *The Justification of the Gentiles*, 1994, 216. But the question that needs to be asked is: Whoever did so – apart from New Testament scholars in their description of their counter position? – See, for example, E.P. SANDERS, *Paul: A very short introduction*, 2009, 77f: »The passive verb ›to be righteous‹ in Paul's letters almost always means to be *changed*, to be *transferred* from one realm to another: from sin to obedience, from death to life, from being under the law to being under grace [...]. Luther saw the world and the Christian life quite differently. He was impressed by the fact that, though a Christian, he nevertheless felt himself to be a ›sinner‹: he suffered from guilt. Paul, however, did not have a guilty conscience.«

46 I will point especially to the work of T. Engberg-Pedersen, leaving aside, however, the whole question of Paul's »Stoicism«. See T. ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, *Gift-Giving and Friendship: Seneca and Paul in Romans 1–8 on the Logic of God's Χάρις and Its Human Response* (HTR 101, No.1, 2008, 15–44); IDEM, *Om gavegivning hos Pierre Bourdieu, Seneca og Paulus* (in: *Historie og konstruktion*, FS til N.P. Lemche, ed. by M. MÜLLER/T. L. THOMPSON, 2005, 129–142). The fact that we find Paul using the language of Roman gift-giving relations, as they are described by Seneca, does not in itself make Paul a Stoic, as Engberg-Pedersen argues; it does not preclude it either, though. See T. ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, *Paul and the Stoics*, 2000. – Further studies on Paul and the gift include J. M. G. BARCLAY's forthcoming volume on Paul and the gift and J. M. G. BARCLAY, *Paul, the Gift and the Battle over Gentile Circumcision: Revisiting the Logic of Galatians* (Australian Biblical Review 58, 2010, 36–56). See also J. R. HARRISON, *Paul's Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (WUNT II 172), 2003, who situates Paul in the context of Roman gift-giving, but, nevertheless, find in Paul a notion of a pure gift, which I find rather problematic (see below). For this discussion, see ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, *Gift-Giving* (see n. 46), 17, who also draws on unpublished material by J. M. G. Barclay and D. B. Mar-

the reciprocal structures building the base of society.⁴⁷ If we follow this line of reading, we may be able to see a connection between Paul and Luther. If Paul – as Engberg-Pedersen suggests – is using the Hellenistic and Roman gift-giving system to articulate how Judaic covenantal theology also includes the non-Jewish Christians,⁴⁸ then we seem to be rather close to a form of language uniting Paul and Luther across the Augustinian divide that introduced Pelagianism as a problem in need of a solution. What makes this possible is the fact that the reformers, Luther as well as Melanchthon, also used what we could call the gift-giving system of Seneca in describing the gift of grace and its consequences.⁴⁹

tin. For the role of gift and exchange in New Testament in general, see O. DAVIDSEN: Give and Take: Narrative Exchange in the New Testament (web-publication: URL: http://pure.au.dk/portal/files/44152999/GT.OD.Part_One.Print.Open.pdf and http://pure.au.dk/portal/files/44153218/GT.OD.Part_Two.Print.Open.pdf). – From the point of view of systematic theology, M. Frettlöh has made some fine studies in gift exchange in Paul: M. L. FRETTLÖH, Und [...] höchst anmutig sein das Danken. *Gabetheologische und -ethische Perspektiven auf den Dank als Ereignis* (NZStH 47, 2005, 198–225); and FRETTLÖH, *Charme* (see n. 29).

47 See to this the forthcoming volume of J. M. G. BARCLAY on Paul and the Gift, where he offers a much more solid distinction between Old Testament Judaism and the Roman world than the dichotomised version found in the work of SCHWARTZ (see n. 13). The concept of the »pure« gift shows all signs of lack of terminological clarity as the pure gift can be found both in Paul, as by HARRISON (see n. 46), and in Second Temple Judaism, as by Schwartz. The fact that scholars have been able to find pure giving in both ancient Judaism, Paul and Luther could indicate that the concept is more connected to the semantic imagination of the reader or to his or her context than to the texts themselves.

48 Cf. ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, *Gift-Giving* (see n. 46), 27: »The background to the Christ event was set up in language that was covenantal rather than of the gift-giving sort. Then the notion of the gift was introduced in order to extend the covenantal language of God's justice, so as to explain the change from wrath to its opposite (the gift). Once it had been shown, by the end of chapter 4, how the original purpose of the covenant had been achieved through that change, the road was open to bring in even more elements from the gift-giving system.« – Jean Starobinski makes a converging connection between the idea of the covenant in OT and the gift-giving system of Roman culture, in general, and stoic philosophy, in particular, but without mentioning Paul. See STAROBINSKI (see n. 30), 64–71.

49 As in Luther's *Anti-Latomus*, WA 8; 105,36–198,31 and Melanchthon's understanding of

When Paul is read as a link between the covenant-thinking in Second Temple Judaism and Roman gift-giving, then Paul can be said to contribute to the formulation of a problem that theologians after him had to deal with – especially reading Paul in a new context formed at least partly by Paul himself. The primary link between Paul and Luther (or Melancthon) then does not lie in Paul, but in the mental world that Paul contributed to create. This separation of Paul and Luther, however, has to be balanced by a new connection that could be provided by readings like Engberg-Pedersen's, though without reference to the consequences for the Paul-Luther debate. I will try to sketch these, thereby arguing that the relation between Paul and Luther has to be understood in relation to the world in front of the text, especially Paul's, dealing with the questions the text produces.

Considering some of the traditional crucial points in the debate, we may conclude that justification in Paul is not identical with the forgiveness of sins, and neither is that the case in Luther. The forgiveness of sins has its place in a large context of communication between God and human beings in a broad sense, involving some ideas of exchange of goods, acknowledgements, honours and benefits.

Using Seneca as a prototype of ancient gift-giving, it is possible to show how the same logic is used in two totally different settings. When the gift-giving system of ancient society, with its logic of benefits and recognition of the giver, is used both in Paul to integrate the pagan world in the salvation history and in Luther and Melancthon to integrate the sinner in the renewed fellowship with God, overcoming the experience of divine wrath, then the understanding of similarities and differences could be nuanced, as could the sense of how the same thought model originated from basic social interaction.⁵⁰

grace in P. MELANCHTHON, *Loci communes* 1521, übersetzt von H. G. PÖHLMANN, ²1997, 200–204.

- 50 Risto Saarinen has argued in favour of using Seneca's *De beneficiis* as an interpretative tool in reading Luther and Melancthon. See R. SAARINEN, *Gunst und Gabe. Melancthon, Luther und die existentielle Anwendung von Senecas »Über die Wohltaten«* (in: *Kein Anlass zur Verwerfung. Studien zur Hermeneutik des ökumenischen Gesprächs. FS für Otto Hermann Pesch*, hg. v. J. BROSEDER/M. WRIEDT, 2007, 184–197).

According to Engberg-Pedersen, a Kantian reduction of the gift to a pure and unilateral action, implying no reciprocity or mutuality, has been preventing an accurate understanding of the gift. But if this is the case, Luther has to be placed on the same side of this Kantian demarcation line as Paul, which does not preclude that Luther at the same time in a certain sense is a precondition for Kant and modernity in identifying the sinner as the calculating self-centred egoist.⁵¹

The big issue here is whether Paul's thinking implies a distinction between divine and human initiative and action. New Testament scholar Francis Watson, who enrolled himself in the New Perspective with his book *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* from 1986 that made F. Chr. Baur's implicit Luther critique explicit,⁵² has in his recent book distinguished between unconditional salvation, exclusively expressing divine agency, and conditional salvation, involving human agency.⁵³ This fundamental distinction, to which we shall return shortly,

51 Several authors have argued that the reformation implies a major shift in the understanding of gift-giving. See, for example, J.M.G. BARCLAY's forthcoming book and Y. LEV, *Charity and Gift Giving in Medieval Islam* (in: *Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions*, ed. by M. FRENKEL/Y. LEV, 2009, 235–264), 259: »The divorce of charity from its salvific and purifying associations was a development unique to Protestantism with no parallels in Judaism and Islam.«

52 See, for example, WATSON, *Paul, Judaism* (see n. 44), 13: »Bultmann and other representatives of dialectical theology remain studiously silent about the fact that Baur persistently opposed Lutheran view of Paul's controversy with Judaism – the view which dialectical theology sought to revive. The idea that Paul's ›doctrine‹ might be closely related to his historical activity was implicitly rejected.« For a similar view, see D. BOYARIN, *A Radical Jew. Paul and the Politics of Identity*, 1994, who sees Paul as primarily a Jewish cultural critic. See also F.C. BAUR, *Geschichte der christlichen Kirche* vol I, ³1863, 46–73.

53 F. WATSON, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2004, 515–517. See also *ibid.*, 8: »it is conceivable that, precisely within the covenant, future divine saving action might in some sense be conditional on faithful (though not sinless or graceless) observance of the law [...]. If, for some Jews, law observance within the covenant was indeed a precondition of divine saving action, there is no longer any reason to deny that Paul *might* have contrasted this emphasis on certain modes of human action with an opposing emphasis on the radical priority of divine action« (italics by author). Watson himself declares that »it

makes Engberg-Pedersen label Watson's Paul just »Once More a Lutheran Paul?« – which is also the title of his review article of Watson's book,⁵⁴ although Watson himself assures that nothing could be further from his mind.

There are two significant and interrelated issues at stake here. Firstly, is it possible to operate with unconditional giving, as Barclay also does, without also operating with the idea of the pure gift? If so, Engberg-Pedersen's critique of Watson would be weakened. Secondly, is the distinction

is not part of my intention (conscious, subconscious, or whatever) to ›rehabilitate Luther‹« (ibid., 29).

- 54 T. ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, Article review: Once more a Lutheran Paul? (SJT 59, No. 4, 2006, 439–460), esp. 453–457. See also F. WATSON's reply: Response (see n. 6). According to Engberg-Pedersen the distinction between »faith« and »doing« or »working the law« is not, as Watson argues, the distinction between unconditionality (divine agency or saving action) and conditionality (human »salvific« action), but instead an ethnic one, as Sanders and his successors argued (ENGBERG-PEDERSEN, Lutheran Paul?, 457). Watson is helpful in demonstrating why Paul insisted on equal access for Gentiles as Gentiles, an answer that Sanders and his successors never gave. But according to Engberg-Pedersen, Watson blurs the fact that Paul in fact believed that in Christ one could find what was missing in the law: »the possibility of *fulfilling* the law in the quite concrete sense of actually doing God's will as expressed in the law« (ibid., 458). According to the general tendency within the New Perspective, this is one of the major points of divergence between Luther and Paul. As a consequence of his anthropology, Luther never taught an actual fulfilment of the law. A more careful reading of Luther, however, would show that this did not mean that believers never did fulfil the law. – Watson defends himself against accusations of having broken the exeget's code of good practice by imposing his own preconceptions on the text, distinguishing between divine and human agency in the following way: »I argue on exegetical ground (1) that this should not be understood (as it often has been) as entailing a maximal account of divine agency at the expense of human in the one case, and of human agency at the expense of divine in the other; and (2) that the relation of divine to human agency is nevertheless understood differently on the two sides of the antithesis. ›Faith‹ speaks of a communal life founded on and oriented towards the comprehensive reality of the divine saving action in Christ, of which it is the acknowledgement; ›works‹ speaks of a communal life oriented towards the Torah's prescriptions and prohibitions for the covenant people; and the relation of divine to human agency is understood differently within these two communal contexts.« Watson's objection shows how difficult it is to avoid *sensus proprius* when interpreting a text, even for those who most carefully try to avoid it. For both Paul and Luther scholars this remains a constant *memento*.

between unconditional and conditional giving to be avoided in relation to Paul or is it a necessary idea inherent in the Pauline writings? If the latter is the case, then Paul's idea of unconditional giving on the side of God is exactly what makes him break with the Jewish hierarchies, include pagans in the people of God etc. Then there is also a link to the breakdown of hierarchies in the Reformation which cannot be arbitrary.

The inclusion of the sinner in the renewed fellowship with God is not in Luther the pure reception of the pure gift since such a relation could never be understood as a fellowship and would instead reduce justified human beings to mere consumers, which is the permanent risk of exaggerating a pure forensic understanding.

A lot of issues, from social ethics to the Lord's Supper, have been disturbed by the idea of the pure, unilateral gift.⁵⁵ But the Lutheran idea of faith largely entails human acknowledgement of the divine giver, and this acknowledgement is precisely the gift that God seems to »want« from humans and is being given to him in the faith that God himself gives. From this perspective, Luther's theology can be read as a radicalisation of the divine-human giving in Paul; co-operation understood correctly is in one sense more important than the content in the act of giving, because in Luther's view humans cannot give anything that does not already belong to God – as is also reflected in Paul (Cf. II Cor 9: 8–11).⁵⁶ On the other hand,

55 W. Simon has shown how a careful and accurate reading of Luther's texts offers a new and nuanced interpretation of Luther's understanding of sacrifice in the Lord's Supper. See W. SIMON, *Die Messopfertheologie Martin Luthers. Voraussetzungen, Genese, Gestalt und Rezeption* (SMHR 22), 2003. See J. JOLKONEN, *Eucharist* (in: *Engaging Luther* [see n. 39], 108–137) for a »Finnish« reception of Simon's work.

56 See again FRETTLÖH, *Charme* (see n. 29), 37: »So sehr Paulus sich für ein möglichst hohes Spendenaufkommen einsetzt und auch bereits mit einer Fülle von Gaben rechnet ([II Cor] 8: 20) – entscheidender als die Höhe der Kollekte ist für ihn das ›Dass‹ der Kooperation.« – Following the argument of Frettlöh and her references to O. Bayer's »categorical gift« in particular, Paul and Luther can be said to reflect the fact that humans can fundamentally only give what they do not have. Here Frettlöh refers to B. WALDENFELS (see below n. 60) according to whom the act of giving remains more than the gift, and to Heidegger's concept of »Zu-Gabe« (ibid., 42). One could, however, also have referred to Seneca's understanding of the *beneficium* that remains after the gift has gone. Using the Roman understanding of *beneficium*, as described by Seneca, as a link between Paul

it would also be right to say that the content is the only thing that is really important, because what the human being is given to give is him- or herself in faith, as is the point in Luther's understanding of the three powers or virtues of faith in *On the Freedom of a Christian*.⁵⁷

If we follow the line of »alternative giving« in Christ, then there is surely a bond between Luther and Paul, though not terminologically; both seem to operate with an alternative to earthly ways of giving.⁵⁸ No harmonisation, however, is forced upon neither Paul nor Luther, since relations of giving are as close to pure formal structures as one can get, and the specific content remains as historically defined as before.

In this transition of Christianity from the Jewish context through the Roman world to late medieval Christendom, the doctrine of justification

and Luther becomes even more obvious when one compares Bayer's understanding of the divine »Vorgabe« of food, or Luther's understanding of the totality of divine giving in the Small Catechism's explanation of the first article of faith. Also Seneca can operate with a kind of unconditional giving. See Seneca, *De beneficiis*, 4.5. The description of divine giving in this passage resembles Luther's commentary on the first article of faith in the Small Catechism, ending with the clarification that all divine giving happens »without any merit or worthiness«. Some key element in the Reformation understanding of divine benevolence in creation and in Seneca's understanding of divine giving in *De beneficiis* are grounded in the same way of thinking, which is yet another argument for using Seneca as a link between Pauline and Lutheran theology. Luther is here not only bound to Senecan social logic, but also to a general tendency in Renaissance humanism, linking the giving God of the Old Testament to the Platonic demiurge and to the God benefactor of Stoicism. See STAROBINSKI (see n. 30), 64. Starobinski overlooks, however, that the very idea of the all-giving God also plays a crucial role in Rom 1, although in a negative way. Paul's way of arguing is not that different from Seneca's way of convincing his reader that the gods give gifts through the created nature.

57 WA 7; 53,20–56,14. See B.K. HOLM, Wechsel ohnegleichen. Über die Grundstruktur der Rechtfertigung und Heiligung und das Austauschen von »Gaben« in Luther's »Tractatus de libertate christiana« (NZSTh 40, 1998, 182–196). See also SAARINEN, Finnish Luther (see n. 39), 24–26.

58 In this reading, the distinction between »nehmendes Geben« und »gebendes Nehmen«, which M. L. Frettlöh finds in Paul, converges with Bayer's understanding of the categorical gift in Luther. See O. BAYER, Schöpfungslehre als Rechtfertigungsontologie (in: Word – Gift – Being [see n. 40], 17–42), 20–25. See also B.K. HOLM, Der fröhliche Verkehr. Rechtfertigungslehre als Gabe-Theologie (in: Die Gabe. Ein »Urwort« der Theologie?, hg. v. V. HOFFMANN, 2009, 33–54).

became the vehicle for the continuation of the Pauline rearrangement of social and religious hierarchies, making the doctrine of justification the centre, which it was not in Paul. At the same time, this process opened for Reformation theology the possibility of new reductionisms that would further dissociate Lutheran tradition from Paul.

Both in Paul and in Luther, Christology is the motor, though not in the same way. Luther's theology does not depend exclusively on Paul, but also on John⁵⁹ – and in both Paul and John, Luther finds his Chalcedonian Christology confirmed. Paul's Christology is truly an intricate issue, but, notwithstanding some tendencies towards adoptianism, his understanding of the self-giving of God in Christ is one of the cornerstones of the subsequent Christological development.⁶⁰ The relation of divine grace to divine self-giving, however, is an issue where thorough scholarly work is still needed.

Finally, the relation between Paul and Luther is not an issue that can be solved by historical analysis alone. The element in Luther that brings him closer to Paul, as argued by Risto Saarinen, seems to be his Christology. This points to a tendency in 20th-century Lutheranism to downplay the role of Chalcedonian Christology in Luther's theology; this is often done by questioning the adequacy of the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* as the central doctrinal element.⁶¹ But it is this very element that

59 To Luther's high estimation of the Gospel of John, see WADB 6; 10,29–34; WA 33; 200,9; WA 27; 528,8; WA 33; 166,3–5; 353,1. See also C. STANGE, Der johanneische Typus der Heilslehre Luthers im Verhältnis zur paulinischen Rechtfertigungslehre, 1949; J. ATKINSON, Luthers Einschätzung des Johannesevangelium (in: Lutherforschung heute, hg. v. V. Vajta, 1958, 49–56); J.D.K. SIGGINS, Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ, 1970; M. LIENHARD, Martin Luthers christologische Zeugnis, 1980, 31–37.

60 Cf., for example, the very precise footnote in Magdalena L. Frettlöh's work with reference to B. WALDENFELS, Antwortregister, 1994, FRETTLÖH, Charme (see n. 29), n. 11: »In der Menschwerdung wird die Selbsthingabe Gottes zu einem *nehmendem Geben*, also zur menschlich-geschöpflichen Art des Gebens, bei dem das Nehmen – so B. Waldenfels – ›kein *Ansichnehmen*, kein Bekommen oder Erhalten, sondern ein *Aufsichnehmen* und *Übernehmen*‹ (Antwortregister, 614) bedeutet.«

61 References to a sceptical attitude towards a Christology bound to ancient metaphysics are legio. For the central role of *communicatio idiomatum* in Luther's theology, see J. A. STEIGER, Die *communicatio idiomatum* als Achse und Motor der Theologie Luther. Der

combines Luther's forensic and transformative justification and associates him with the Protestant theology that Dunn asks for. At the same time, it would be rather futile and anachronistic to look for an explicit Chalcedonian Christology in Paul.

This leaves us with the problem that the link between Luther and Paul lies in the Christology that Paul – but not only Paul – builds a foundation for. This means that the connection between Luther and Paul depends on the tradition that Paul can only be said to be inaugurating. But it also means that a purely historical or exegetical solution is impossible to reach. Luther and Paul lived in two different worlds without any contact, despite a corpus of texts passed on through history from one to the other. Theologically, one should find inspiration in the History of Religions School, which, like Wilhelm Heitmüller, could argue that naturally Luther did differ from Paul, but he was closer to Jesus⁶² – not by repeating Heitmüller, or Gottschick or Wernle,⁶³ but by stating that Luther continues a theological reflection on the meaning of the Christ event that Paul initiated, but did not finish.

The link between Luther and Paul thus constitutes the interrelatedness of divine-human gift-giving and its inter-human imitation that is based on structures present in the gift-giving relationship in Greek-Roman culture, but which was definitely further developed. In this transition, Seneca may function as a link between Luther and Paul. First and foremost, because the meaning of Luther's and Melancthon's distinction between *favor dei* and *donum dei* lies pretty close to Seneca's distinction

»fröhliche Wechsel« als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zu Abendmahlslehre, Anthropologie, Seelsorge, Naturtheologie, Rhetorik und Humor (NZStH 38, 1996, 1–28).

62 W. HEITMÜLLER, Luther Stellung in der Religionsgeschichte des Christentums (Marburger Akademische Reden 38), 1917. Heitmüller could even see Luther as the necessary correction to Paul: »Aber von einer Erneuerung kann auch hier nicht die Rede sein: der lutherischen Glaubensbegriff überragt den paulinischen bei weitem an Tiefe und Kraft.« And to quote another crucial formulation by Heitmüller: »Nein, Wiederherstellung oder auch nur Erneuerung des Paulinismus war Luthers Christentum nicht, es bedeutet vielmehr die Beseitigung wichtiger Elemente des paulinischen Christentum, der jenigen nämlich, welche die katholische Kirche *mitbegründet* haben.«

63 J. GOTTSCHICK, Paulinismus und Reformation (ZThK 6, 1897, 398–460); P. WERNLE, Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus, 1897.

between the real *beneficium*, which lies in the intention of the giver, and the actual deed.⁶⁴ In the end it all depends on whether Paul can be said to articulate a transferal of covenantal thinking into the gift-giving system of the Greek-Roman world and thus create new ways of understanding divine and human giving.

At least three things become quite clear in reading works of the New Perspective with the eyes of a Luther scholar: Firstly, that exegetes in the New Perspective generally have had an unbecoming reductionist understanding of Luther and the Lutheran tradition. Secondly, that Lutheran theology itself has contributed to this reductionism by, for example, its stereotypical understanding of non-Lutheran types of religion. Thirdly, that we need, on this background, to let Paul be Paul in his own right without relation to the late medieval discussion about workrighteousness and the role of penance. It is not necessary to see Luther directly in the Pauline letters in order to establish a clear connection. The vision of another, divine, way of giving that crosses or breaks with the world of human economies may be a link that bridges the historical gap between Paul and Luther and modern time without diminishing the distance in between. Relations of mutual giving are universal phenomena; grace, on the other hand, is theologically a much more complex term to be sufficiently grasped by a single author.

64 See SAARINEN, *Gunst* (see n. 50).