

# The Self-Giving God

by OSWALD BAYER

“These are the three persons and one God, who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has.”<sup>1</sup> With these words, Martin Luther in his *Confession of 1528* emphatically reaffirmed the Apostles’ Creed in the words of his day, thereby confessing the heart and soul of the Christian faith. He did so through his focus on the terms “gift” and “endowment”—a focus which knows no like in the writings of any theologian before or after him and which is not replicated in any of his other writings, at least not with such succinct clarity.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately prior to this statement, Luther had praised the Holy Spirit as a “living, eternal, divine gift and endowment.” Then he proceeds to encapsulate the entire trinitarian faith as God’s gift and endowment, or, to be precise, in verbal form as God’s “giving,” or, to be even more precise, as God’s giving of himself in the totality of his essence and being (“wholly and completely, with all that he is and has”), corresponding to the universality of the recipients (“us all”).

These are the three persons and one God, who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has. The Father gives himself to us, with heaven and earth and all the creatures, in order that they may serve us and benefit us. But this gift has become obscured and useless through Adam’s fall. Therefore the Son himself subsequently gave himself and bestowed all his works, sufferings, wisdom, and righteousness, and reconciled us to the Father, in order that restored to life and righteousness, we might also know and have the Father and his gifts. But because this grace would benefit no one if it remained so profoundly hidden and could not come to us, the Holy Spirit comes and gives himself to us also, wholly and completely. He teaches us to understand this deed of Christ which has been manifested to us, helps us receive and preserve it, use it to our advantage and impart it to others, increase and extend it. He does this both inwardly and outwardly—inwardly by means of faith and other spiritual gifts, outwardly through the gospel, baptism, and the sacrament of the altar, through which as through three means or methods he comes to us and inculcates the sufferings of Christ for the benefit of our salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Luther intensifies the rhetorical impact by repeating God's "giving" three times. Evidently, even though this verbal noun cannot convey everything about God, it is nevertheless able to express what is most important and what is key.<sup>4</sup> This happens by way of one single verb: "Giving." It expresses the oneness and uniqueness of God's essence and actions—notwithstanding the threefold distinction between the different attributes and appropriations of creation, redemption, and consummation in the sense of a fundamental and succinct succession of salvation-historical elements<sup>5</sup> which can also be read in reverse order, beginning with the Holy Spirit—a kind of palindrome.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the pronounced emphasis on the unity of the trinitarian essence and action of God by the threefold repetition of the *one* verb "to give," the threefold "economic" orientation remains. There is no explicit mention of the "immanent" Trinity here. Yet Luther does address it elsewhere—and it is no accident that he does so in his exposition of the Gospel of John, especially of its prologue and the Paraclete statements, most impressively in his exposition of John 16:13. Here the paraclete is described as follows: "For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak."<sup>7</sup>

Here Christ refers to a conversation carried on [with]in the Godhead, a conversation in which no creatures participate. He sets up a pulpit both [!] for the speaker and for the listener. He makes the Father the Preacher and the Holy Spirit the Listener. . . . Here it is relevant to state that Scripture calls our Lord Christ—according to His divine nature—a "Word" (John 1:1) which the Father speaks with and in Himself. Thus this Word has a true, divine nature from the Father. It is not a word . . . that . . . comes out of him and remains outside him. No, this Word remains in the Father forever. Thus these are two distinct Persons: He who speaks and the Word that is spoken, that is, the Father and the Son. Here, however, we find the third Person following these two, namely, the One who hears both the Speaker and the spoken Word. For it stands to reason that there must also be a listener where a speaker and a word are found. But all this speaking, being spoken, and listening takes place within the divine nature and also remains there, where no creature is or can be. All three—Speaker, Word, and Listener—must be God Himself; all three must be coeternal and in a single undivided majesty. For there is no difference or inequality in the divine essence, neither a beginning nor an end. Therefore one cannot say that the Listener is something outside God, or that there was a

time when He began to be a Listener; but just as the Father is a Speaker from eternity, and just as the Son is spoken from eternity, so the Holy Spirit is the Listener from eternity.<sup>8</sup>

And so we see that for Luther, God—who as the giver enables communication by way of his salvific economy—embodies fellowship in and of himself, namely, the conversation between the Father and the Son, to which the Holy Spirit listens in order to communicate it to us and to make us certain of salvation.<sup>9</sup> This shows that Luther consistently conceives of the immanent Trinity also from the perspective of the theology of the Word.<sup>10</sup>

When Luther speaks of the economic Trinity, he is not concerned with it in any chronological sense. This is evident from the fact that whenever Luther uses the verb “to give,” he does so in the present tense. Now even if this were to be understood as a narrative present, it would have no chronological significance. Instead, it conveys God’s eternal present, which is the basis for both the future and the past.

This totality in the timing of the giving God corresponds to the totality of his gift. In and with his giving, God does not give this thing or that in some particular sense, but rather, as was briefly emphasized above, he gives *himself*—in the totality of his essence and being. He does not give *something*, but *someone*—he gives himself personally.<sup>11</sup> In his threefold generosity, he creates fellowship. Accordingly, the Formula of Concord for its part rejects the thesis “that not God himself but only the gifts of God dwell in believers.”<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, in the Son the Father has given himself (Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32; Eph 5:2) “completely,”<sup>13</sup> has “exhausted himself and talked himself out of breath”<sup>14</sup>—but without losing himself in the process. *When God gives himself away, he does not lose his identity.* In his incarnation, he did not lose his divinity; on the contrary, it was tried and tested. God did not transform into a human being, as the myths believe, but remained God even as a human being.<sup>15</sup>

To be sure, New Testament passages like John 3:16; Romans 8:32; and Ephesians 5:2 encouraged Luther in his view of God as one who gives—“God’s being is to give himself”<sup>16</sup>—but they certainly did not prompt Luther to discover him as such in the first place.

This inevitably raises the question: How did Luther come to focus so intensely on God's giving of himself, when this focus was neither traditional nor even self-evident? There is only one persuasive answer: In this focus we find the application, intensification, and universalization of what the Reformational Luther concretely discovered and experienced in the Lord's Supper: "When Luther perceives everything the triune God does as a giving promise and as a promising gift, he has in his ears, before his eyes, and in his heart the gift-word of the Lord's Supper."<sup>17</sup>

*The Lord's Supper as the Original Context of Gift and Promise*

In order for us to understand the structure of this intensification or universalization, we need to pay careful attention to the gift-word of the Lord's Supper. In his Reformational breakthrough, Luther discovered that the structure of the word of absolution is that of a *verbum efficax*, a word which does what it says and says what it does. He then proceeded to apply this insight to the understanding of baptism (1519)<sup>18</sup> and then also verified it in the understanding of the Lord's Supper (1520). The human word of absolution does not simply, for purposes of assurance, declare that divine forgiveness has taken place sometime in the past,<sup>19</sup> but actually causes forgiveness to take place then and there.<sup>20</sup> In the same way, the twofold gift-word of the Lord's Supper is no interpretive word, but precisely a gift-word. It is not an afterword, secondary in relation to some actual, inner event; no, it is a "word of power,"<sup>21</sup> an effective word, *verbum efficax*. In the Small Catechism, Luther takes the phrasing from the words of institution and very strongly emphasizes it by repeating it three times, almost punching it out, as it were: "The words 'given for you' and 'shed for you for the forgiveness of sins' show us that forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are *given* to us in the sacrament *through these words*."<sup>22</sup> "Whoever believes these very words has *what they sound and say*, namely, 'forgiveness of sins.'"<sup>23</sup> Correspondingly, preparation for a worthy reception of the sacrament consists alone of faith "*in these words*, 'given for you' and 'shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.'"<sup>24</sup>

The form of address is obvious in the word of absolution (*Ego te absolvo . . .*), but in the Lord's Supper it must be specifically identified and revealed: It consists in the "For you!" In and with the "For you!" the Lord devotes his personal attention and indeed himself to you, giving himself to you in his body and blood in, with, and under the gifts of bread and wine. "For you!"<sup>25</sup> is an opening address which needs to be heard and believed, "because the words 'for you' require truly believing hearts."<sup>26</sup>

To borrow a distinction commonly found in contemporary discourses of giving, Luther's formulation clearly seems oriented not towards the receiver, but toward the giver.<sup>27</sup> But it is precisely by virtue of focusing not on the human receiver but on the God who gives himself in his promise that the receptive and taking human beings benefit. After all, the address of the giving God already conveys within itself—in its "For you!"—the human recipients; they have already been written into and addressed by the Word coming to them. The dative case of the gift—which is silent in and of itself—is only stated unequivocally at the point when I hear it as a vocalized sound explicitly imparting the giver and being addressed to me.

That which is given needs to be received and accepted. Whoever has heard and believed the "For you!" has received and accepted the giver giving himself in the gift. Faith seizes the opportunity; it takes and eats. Faith listens to and trusts in the word occurring in the address.

### *Gift and Promise*

The word in which, with which, and under which God gives himself is the word which expects trust and kindles and nurtures it. For Luther, the gift-word does not simply state what already exists, but actually creates what did not exist before. It is a legally valid promise taking immediate effect. Luther does not explicitly say so in this summary, but on the strength of many other texts it is indisputable that for Luther, "gift" and "promise" belong inseparably together.

This can be seen, paradigmatically, in the keynote treatise prefacing his Wartburg postil: "A Brief Instruction on What to Look

for and Expect in the Gospels” (1522). Here Luther clearly shows that a *sacramentum* in the new sense of a *donum* is constituted by the *promissio*—the promise, the pledge, the assurance—as the concrete manner in which Christ and along with him the triune God gives himself to me. It is “the sermon or the gospel through which he is coming to you, or you are being brought to him.”<sup>28</sup> “So you see that the gospel is really not a book of laws and commandments which requires deeds of us, but a book of divine promises in which God *promises, offers, and gives* us all his possessions and benefits in Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

Now even though “gift” and “promise” are very closely inter-linked, it is still necessary to distinguish between them. Bread and wine are given—but are comprehended and permeated by the word, by a particular word, not by a statement, a command, or an announcement of some religious undertone,<sup>30</sup> but specifically by a promise. The gift being given to me apparently needs to be promised in a form of address for it to count as a gift in the first place—for it to be perceived as a gift, to be received as a gift, to be “heard” as a gift.<sup>31</sup> It requires the pure word in order to be a pure—an absolute and unconditional—gift: a word which only gives and does not demand, but is pure gift.<sup>32</sup>

If God is a great giver, then we human beings can and should be great recipients.<sup>33</sup> In this case, we could say that it is more blessed to receive than to give.<sup>34</sup>

### *Generous Abundance; Surplus*

God is open-handed and generous<sup>35</sup>—giving and for-giving: “who for-gives *all* your iniquity, who heals *all* your diseases” (Ps 103:3).<sup>36</sup> My cup overflows—and not just at his table. Luther universalizes; *everything* the triune God does is a giving promise and promising gift. As the Creator, he creates in his bountiful goodness—which is not a necessary emanation but occurs as a free affirmation—the necessary room for his creatures to live. He does so not in a self-restraint to keep from infringing upon the independence of his creatures, as some might argue, but in order to work and

fulfil all in all. This he does through his communicative word and through his decisions and bestowing determinations, which create order and enable communication, mutual exchange, and fellowship. As the Redeemer, he seeks all the lost in the lavishness of his love, returns them, and restores them. And as the Perfecter, he also restores access to the Father by the remembrance of the Son and assures<sup>37</sup> me by his overflowing comfort that the end goal of all the trials and tribulations of my life story, and indeed of the story of nature and the whole world, will be “very good” (Gen 1:31).

### *The Disturbing Discrepancy*

But God does not only *give*; he also *takes away*. He destroys and kills; the book of Job and the Psalms are filled with lamentations and complaints about it. Does the experience of this terrible hiddenness of God accord with Luther’s Confession of the one who gives himself to us and loves us wholly and completely? Only those who like Jochen Klepper also count the “wrath” of God among his “gifts” can answer yes to this question without being cynical about it.<sup>38</sup> In his summary of trinitarian theology, Luther does *not* address this problem of distinguishing between the God who is preached as being trinitarian and yet is also terribly hidden, the way he does in his *The Bondage of the Will*.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, since we are considering the horizon of his theology as a whole, we have to include a pertinent reference here, albeit an exceedingly brief one. To borrow an equally provocative sentence by Jochen Klepper: “God is wholly in Christ. But Christ”—or, more precisely: God in his threefold generosity—“is not the whole God.”<sup>40</sup> To be sure, observing such a discrepancy mars the beauty—the coherence and the elegance—of the well-rounded, virtually perfect summary. But this discrepancy prevents us from absolutizing the gospel in enthusiastic and triumphalist ways. It also ensures that the gospel and the certainty of salvation are not isolated from suffering and tribulation.<sup>41</sup> Luther’s summary is a confession in the strictest sense. As such, inspired by the Holy Spirit, it defies suffering and tribulation. It defies the disturbing discrepancy<sup>42</sup> and

remains assured of the God who gives himself to us wholly and completely in his “unutterable love.”<sup>43</sup>

*Translated by Karl Böhmer from an unpublished manuscript; originally presented by Gunnar Johnstad in Norwegian translation on August 24, 2018, at the Lutheran Study Days in Bergen, Norway, held on the topic: “A God Who Gives Himself.”*

## NOTES

1. Martin Luther, *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper, Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., Jaroslav J. Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 37:366. (Hereafter cited as LW.) *Vom Abendmahl Christi: Bekenntnis*, 1528, *Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 57 vols., ed. J. F. K. Knaake et al. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883ff.), 26:505.38–39. (Hereafter cited as WA.) Luther's *Confession* is the third and final section of his 1528 treatise on the Lord's Supper. It can also function as a discrete essay and was therefore also published separately (WA 26:250 and 253f.). In all the following notes this *Confession* will be cited as “Confession.”

2. We should immediately mention in the second instance a parallel passage from the end of Luther's explanation to the Creed in the Large Catechism: “For in all three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and his pure, unutterable love. For this very purpose he created us, so that he might redeem us and make us holy, and, moreover, having granted and bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has also given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. For . . . we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it not for the LORD Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge. But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit.” Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 439–440, sec. 64–65. (Hereafter cited as BC.) *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, ed., Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 1066, 1068. (Hereafter cited as BSLK.) For the most important literature on the topic, see Martin Seils, “Die Sache Luthers,” in *Lutherjahrbuch* 52 (1985): 64–80; Seils, “Gabe und Geschenk: Eine Zugabe,” in Johannes von Lüpke and Edgar Thaidigsmann, eds., *Denkraum Katechismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 87–108.

3. Luther, “Confession,” LW 37:366; WA 26:505.38–506.12.

4. I have attempted to account for the importance of the summary in my contemporary interpretation of Luther's theology; it is the one text quoted most frequently. See Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luthers Theologie: Eine Vergegenwärtigung*, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 90–91, 95, 101, 148–157, 200, 202, 230, 257, 310; see also 307–308; *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

5. As indicated by the word “subsequently,” Luther, “Confession,” LW 37:366. WA 26:505.42.

6. It may seem tempting to distinguish between the “chronological” succession as a *ratio essendi* and the reverse chronological succession as a *ratio cognoscendi*. But this distinction does not do justice to the subject matter itself, since God’s trinitarian action must be understood from the perspective of the theology of Word and gift as occurring in his own present, which is the basis of the past and the future. In this context, God’s essence and human knowledge should not be understood along the lines of a philosophical type of hermeneutical criticism (see endnote 25)—unless this criticism articulates itself within the framework of a hermeneutical ontology, or perhaps of an ontological hermeneutics.

7. Martin Luther, “Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14–16,” LW 24:362; WA 46:57.19–20.

8. Luther, “Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14–16,” LW 24: 364–365; WA 46:59.17–20, 59.26–60.6.

9. In his liberation hymn “Dear Christian, One and All, Rejoice,” Luther stages the intra-trinitarian relations as an eternal conversation having taken place and still taking place between Father and Son, which the Holy Spirit, the Listener, allows us also to listen in on by faith. See Oswald Bayer, “Das Sein Jesu Christi im Glauben,” in *Gott als Autor* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 112–127; “The Being of Christ in Faith,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 10 (1996): 135–150. For an abridged version, see Bayer, *Martin Luthers Theologie*, 193–203; *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 214–225.

10. The contemporary renaissance of the doctrine of the Trinity has now also been adopted by the ecumenical movement as a whole. Its catchphrase reads: “The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity, and vice versa.” Karl Rahner, “Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte. Methode und Struktur des Traktats ‘De Deo Trino,’” in Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhrer, eds., *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, vol. 2 of *Mysterium Salutis* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1967), 328. Concerning the reference especially to Luther’s “Confession” in this renaissance see above all Christoph Schwöbel, “Ökumenische Theologie im Horizont des trinitarischen Glaubens,” in Christoph Schwöbel, *Christlicher Glaube im Pluralismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 85–106; Christoph Schwöbel, “Trinitätslehre als Rahmentheorie des christlichen Glaubens: Vier Thesen zur Bedeutung der Trinität in der christlichen Dogmatik,” in Christoph Schwöbel, *Gott in Beziehung: Studien zur Dogmatik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 25–51; Christoph Schwöbel, “Einfach Gott: Trinitätstheologie am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (forthcoming, 2019).

The question about an “immanent” Trinity is usually answered by beginning with a reality and drawing from it conclusions about a possibility. The key question then is: What must God be like in and of himself in order to reveal himself the way he has? Now having said that, what would be gained theologically by answering this question? Of course it provides us with a conceptual reassurance and resolves a disturbing discrepancy—but that is all.

11. Robert Spaemann, *Personen: Versuche über den Unterschied zwischen ‘etwas’ und ‘jemand’*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1998); *Persons: The Difference Between ‘Someone’ and ‘Something’*, trans. Oliver O’Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

12. FC SD III, BC 573, sec. 65; BSLK 1414 (line 12); see also FC Ep. III, BC 497, sec. 18; BSLK 1240 (line 7–8). For an anthropological and ecclesiological perspective, see 2 Cor 8:5 (in giving their gift, “they gave themselves”).

13. In the Son, the Father “has given himself completely to us, withholding nothing.” Luther, *Large Catechism*, BC 434, sec. 26; BSLK 1054.24–31. God has in the fire “of love, which fills all heaven and earth and is beyond all power to comprehend it,” “given his Son for us. In addition to showering upon us both temporal and eternal blessings he has given his own self; he has completely poured out himself for us, with all he is, with all he has, with all he does.” Martin Luther, “Exhortation to be Imitators of God,” Sermon for the Third Sunday in Lent on Eph 5:1–9, trans. John Nicholas Lenker, in vol. 7 of *The Sermons of Martin Luther* (1909; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983): 150–161, 151; WA 17II:205.33–206.2.

14. Johann Georg Hamann, *Aesthetica in nuce* (1762; repr. Josef Nadler, ed., vol. 2 of *Sämtliche Werke*, Vienna: Thomas Morus Presse, 1950), 213, 7–8.

15. The pseudo-Athanasian Creed “Quicumque vult” confesses Christ as both God and human being in one person, stating: “However, he is one not by the changing of the divinity in the flesh but by the taking up of the humanity in God.” “The Third Confession,” BC 25, sec. 33; BSLK 60 (lines 1–4).

16. Seils, “Die Sache Luthers,” 68, 79.

17. Oswald Bayer, *Schöpfung als Anrede: Zu einer Hermeneutik der Schöpfung*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 100, 164.

18. For more detail, see Oswald Bayer, “Promissio und Taufe,” in *Promissio: Geschichte der reformatorischen Wende in Luthers Theologie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 254–273, and especially 257–258.

19. Oswald Bayer, “declaratio,” in *Promissio*, 167–175.

20. Oswald Bayer, “declaratio nimis modicum,” in *Promissio*, 175–180.

21. Christ’s gift-word: “Take; eat; this is my body” is “not merely an afterword; it is an authoritative word which does what it says.” Here Luther refers both to Gen 1 and to Ps 33:9). “Nicht ein Nachwort, sondern ein Machtwort, das da schaffet, was es lautet.” Luther’s “Vom Abendmahl Christ: Bekenntnis, 1528,” WA 26, 283, 2–5. For the translation from LW, see “Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper,” LW 37:181.

22. Luther, *Small Catechism*, BC 362, sec. 5–6, emphasis added; BSLK 888.26–28, 890.1–2.

23. Luther, *Small Catechism*, BC 363, sec. 7–8, emphasis added. BSLK 890.3–8.

24. Luther, *Small Catechism*, BC 363, sec. 9–10, emphasis added. BSLK 890.9–14.

25. “For you!” has at least a triple meaning: “In the stead of,” “for the benefit of,” and “with regard to.” The reformational “pro me”, arising as it does from listening to the “pro te” or “For you!” is not some principle of hermeneutical criticism, as the neo-Protestant misunderstanding would have it; rather, it is the way Jesus Christ himself comes to me, dedicates himself to me, and imparts himself to me as a promising gift and as a giving promise. See Hans Joachim Iwand, “Wider den Missbrauch des ‘pro me’ als methodisches Prinzip in der Theologie,” in *Evangelische Theologie* 14 (1954):120–124.

26. Luther, *Small Catechism*, BC 363, sec. 9–10; BSLK 890.9–14.

27. See Risto Saarinen, *Luther and the Gift* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

28. Martin Luther, “A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels,” LW 35:121; WA 10I/1:13.22–14.1.

29. Luther, “A Brief Instruction,” LW 35:120, emphasis added; WA 10I/1:13.6. “How should [God] not give us all things with his Son? [Rom 8:32] See, when you lay hold of Christ as a gift which is given you for your very own and have no doubt about it, you are a Christian.” Luther, “A Brief Instruction,” LW 35:120; WA 10I/1:12.6–8. “Grace and

salvation are not conferred upon us because of our faith but because of the will of Christ.” Martin Luther, “Sermon on Tit 3:4–7 for the Early Christmas Service,” 1522, trans. John Nicholas Lenker, vol. 6 of *The Sermons of Martin Luther* (1905; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, n.d.): 142–165, 163–164; WA 10I/1:125.17–18. Seils refers to another example where Luther uses the phrases “promised or bestowed gratis, out of grace” and “he promised and bestowed that as a gift”: Martin Luther, “Sermon on Gal 3:15–22 for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 10, 1536,” trans. John Nicholas Lenker, vol. 3 of Luther’s Epistle *Sermons* (Minneapolis, MN: The Luther Press, 1909); WA 22:232–237; see Seils, “Die Sache Luthers,” 95. Luther’s contradistinction between the law with its demands and the gospel with its gifts was favorably adopted by Hamann: Johann Georg Hamann, *Golgotha und Scheblimini* (1784; repr. Josef Nadler, ed., vol. 3 of *Sämtliche Werke*, Vienna: Thomas Morus Presse, 1951), e.g. 312, 11–12, where he says: “Not in the grandest and greatest commandment he imposes, but in the greatest good he gives” (emphasis removed).

30. Oswald Bayer, *Theologie*, vol. 1 of *Handbuch Systematischer Theologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994), 453–487 (Threefold typology: Against ethicizing, theorizing, and existentializing).

31. Christ as a *donum* “must be [...] translated into words.” “He will be of no benefit to you and you will not be able to avail yourself of him unless God translates him into words whereby you can hear and know him.” Martin Luther, “An Exposition of the Lord’s Prayer for Simple Laymen, 1519,” LW 42:57, 59; WA 2:113.37–38. For the connection between “gift” and “call,” see Rom 11:29.

32. Luther uses “endowment” and “endowing” “as words more accurately defining the words ‘gift’ and ‘giving’” (Seils, “Gabe und Geschenk,” 104). “Endowment” and “endowing” underline the unconditional and “absolute nature of the giving” (Seils, “Gabe und Geschenk,” 108). Luther’s passionate insistence on the purity of the gift, based on the theology of justification—most recently emphasized by Berndt Hamm (“Pure Gabe ohne Gegengabe—die religionsgeschichtliche Revolution der Reformation,” in Berndt Hamm, *Geben und Nehmen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Theologie, 2013), 241–276; “Martin Luther’s Revolutionary Theology of Pure Gift without Reciprocation” *Lutheran Quarterly* 29 (2015): 125–161)—is not blunted in any way—as Hamm contends (*ibid.*)—by the language of giving back (by praising God or by the sacrifice of the lips) or of passing gifts on to others (in love toward to the neighbor). Hamm’s criticism of Bo Holm (Hamm, *Geben und Nehmen*, 257, fn 36) is thus based on a misunderstanding. For more on “giving back,” “passing gifts on” or “giving in return,” see Oswald Bayer, “Ethik der Gabe,” in Veronika Hoffmann, ed., *Die Gabe: Ein “Urwort” der Theologie?* (Frankfurt: O. Lembeck, 2009), 115–116; “The Ethics of Gift,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 (2010): 447–468.

33. See Oswald Bayer, “Gottes Namen in Anspruch nehmen: Eine Meditation zum Zweiten Gebot” in *RENOVATIO: Zeitschrift für das interdisziplinäre Gespräch* 3 (1998): 75–78.

34. Acts 20:35 reads differently.

35. Luther’s catechetical instruction for giving thanks at meals reads as follows: “Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your *bountiful* goodness.” Luther, *Small Catechism*, BC 363, sec. 9–10. BSLK 890.9–14.

36. Forgiving, as the language demonstrates—and not just English, but German (*vergeben*) and French (*pardonner*) and others too—is also a form of giving.

37. “Only when salvation is *given* can we be sure of salvation.” Seils, “Die Sache Luthers,” 65. Emphasis added.

38. See Jochen Klepper's hymn, "Der du die Zeit in Händen hast"—*Evangelisches Gesangbuch* (Kiel: Lutherische Verlagsgesellschaft, 2013), no. 64, verses 4–5. Those who join Klepper in counting God's wrath among his gifts will find almost the entire philosophical and theological tradition since Plato stacked against them. Oswald Bayer, *Theologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1994), 23; Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 4–5.

39. See especially Martin Luther, "The Bondage of the Will," LW 33:139–140; WA 18:684–686.

40. Jochen Klepper, Diary entry for July 16, 1933, in Hildegard Klepper, ed., *Unter dem Schatten deiner Flügel: Aus den Tagebüchern der Jahre 1932–1942* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1956), 88. With reference to this quote by Klepper, Reinhuber has addressed the problem of the disturbing discrepancy in an in-depth and insightful manner. See Thomas Reinhuber, "Die Verborgenheit Gottes: Überlegungen im Anschluss an Luthers Streitschrift 'De servo arbitrio,'" in Joachim Heubach, ed., *Welthandeln und Heilshandeln Gottes: Deus absconditus—Deus revelatus* (Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1999), 75–94.

41. This danger is also recognized by Schwöbel in "Trinitätslehre als Rahmentheorie," 50–51.

42. The disturbing discrepancy can only be overcome by the hope of faith. The "light of glory . . . will show us hereafter that the God whose judgment here is one of incomprehensible righteousness is a God of most perfect and manifest righteousness. In the meantime, we can only believe this." Luther, "The Bondage of the Will," LW 33:292; WA 18:785.35–37.

43. See above, n. 1 ("unutterable love"). See Luther further: In "the depths of [God's] divine nature, there is nothing but fire and ardor which speaks love to the people." This love is "divine, it is God himself . . . He gives life to the whole world, he gives health, he gives all creatures; heaven and earth serve us. [In him] is nothing but a furnace of love." Martin Luther, "Sermon on 1 Jn 4:15–21, June 9, 1532," WA 36:424.3–425.2. Elsewhere, he states that no one "can understand or fathom" God's love, "for God is a glowing furnace full of love, reaching even from the earth to the heavens." Martin Luther, "The Seventh Sermon, March 15, 1522, Saturday before Reminiscere," LW 51:95. See also Thomas Reinhuber, *Kämpfender Glaube: Studien zu Luthers Bekenntnis am Ende von De servo arbitrio* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2000), 101–102, 231–233.