NOTES

LUTHER ON THE PERSON BEFORE GOD

The dimensions of the ordinary book review are too limited for calling proper attention to a major event in Luther studies. The newest work of Wilfried Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*,[1] is such an event. Joest's thesis focuses our attention quite firmly on a theme of Luther's theology that has seldom been singled out either by Lutheran expositors or by Catholic critics. The fashionable existentialist reading of Luther also misses this point, because of its near-exclusive attention to the individual's self-understanding before the Word of God. The latter point is obviously of great importance in Luther's view of the Christian. Joest, however, directs our attention to the true center, by pointing out Luther's remarkable insistence on the actuality and power of Christ's influence in the life of the Christian believer. The dominant note of Luther's theology of justification is accordingly neither the extrinsicism of imputed righteousness nor the anthropocentrism of the *pro me* in faith. Rather it is his extreme intensification of Christ's effectiveness producing a new life-style and a new self-understanding in the believer.

For the Catholic theologian seeking to come to terms with Luther, Joest's work decisively alters the usual framework of discussion. The problematic *simul iustus et peccator* (long read as "just in God's judgment, sinner intrinsically") no longer need be opposed so categorically with stress on rebirth, new creation, and the gift of new powers for believing, trusting, and loving God. Luther knows very well that God's justifying act has a decisive impact. The controversial question shifts to the other side.[2] Did this incredible actualization of Christ's (or the

[1] Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967. Pp. 449. DM 48.—

[2] We imply the judgment that there remain significant aspects of Luther's theology of justification that must be examined critically on the basis of the *NT* and the Catholic tradition. In a recent euphoric article, Hans Küng stated that Luther's starting point and his articulation of his theology of justification were both right, with difficulties arising only in the one-sidedness of *De servo arbitrio* and in Luther's ecclesiological consequences: "Katholische Besinnung auf Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre heute," in *Theologie im Wandel* (Munich, 1967) pp. 449–68, esp. 467. We will show below that the Catholic examination of Luther's position has stopped short of at least one important theme of Luther's work—a theme which makes *De servo arbitrio* appear less a regrettable excess than an expression of Luther's central convictions. The recent Catholic scholarship which Küng reviews and rightly celebrates has in fact removed a host of pseudo problems and showed Luther's large overlap with the Catholic tradition. Further, it has showed Luther's recapture of important *NT* themes not seen so clearly before or after him. But there is yet more to Martin Luther. He was a thinker of extraordinary originality and power who worked from a unique cluster of ideas and convictions. Part of this creativity Joest

Word's) influence cause Luther to neglect the key role of assent or dissent to God's gracious intervention? The term *Alleinwirksamkeit* has considerable currency in Luther studies as a tag for Luther's conception of God's work in the world. Joest's work underscores the importance of this theme, and so forces us to ask whether Luther's achievement was not in fact flawed at the very point where he could have expressed the deepest "personalist" element in God's work of grace.

Wilfried Joest, the man who has impressively articulated this new situation, is Professor of Systematic Theology in the (Protestant) Faculty of Theology of Erlangen University. He is well known among Luther scholars for his book on the role of law in the life of the just,[3] a durable study that ranks among the most-cited works of postwar Luther research. He is also editor in chief of the quarterly *Kerygma und Dogma*, to which he has contributed a series of substantial articles.[4]

Our note on Joest's work will proceed in three parts: first, a chapter-by-chapter summary of his book; second, a comparison of his thesis with three recent Catholic works on Luther; third, our own indication of fruitful lines of reaction to Joest's work.

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER SUMMARY

1) *The problem.* Joest begins by referring to two current views of Luther's theology. Catholic scholars (Lortz, Schmaus, Congar, Volk) have criticized Luther's neglect of the human person who is subject of decisions and resulting attitudes both in sin and salvation. Luther tends to overstress both sin's power over man and God's sovereign activity in the just. Joest will thus ask whether Luther's polemic against Scholasticism led him to overlook or even falsify given structures of human existence. On the other hand, existentialist interpreters of Luther (Go-

has brought into clear light, and this invites the critical faculty into play. Here, it seems, Catholic researchers can do an important service, since they have the needed critical distance and are not encumbered by a confessional commitment to Luther's renewal of Christianity. The conviction that much work still lies ahead of us in the Catholic encounter with Luther's theology of justification is confirmed by the series of probing questions posed by Walther von Loewenich in his review of Harry McSorley's work on *De servo arbitrio* (*Theologische Literaturzeitung* 93 [1968] 928 f.). Although agreeing with McSorley's analysis and critique of Luther's polemic against Erasmus, von Loewenich still questions, e.g., whether the deepest thrust of Luther's theology of salvation was a Catholic possession of long standing, and whether the common rejection of Semi-Pelagianism amounts to an agreement in this vision of salvation.

[3] *Gesetz und Freiheit* (Göttingen, 1951; 3rd ed., 1961).

[4] "Paulus und das Luthersche Simul iustus et peccator" (1955); "Die Personalität des Glaubens" (1961); "Die tridentinische Rechtfertigungslehre" (1963); "Erwägungen zur kanonischen Bedeutung des Neuen Testaments" (1966).

garten, Ebeling) see in Luther's stress on the relational and dynamic character of religious existence the break-through from Scholastic substantialism to an adequate view of the person. The person is not a neutral datum prior to God's address. Rather, one becomes a person in answering God. Salvation is a dialogue, not a holy *res* conveyed to man's nature, Luther's "ut credis, ita habes" is thus the momentous arrival on the scene of a personalism that rightly sees man becoming a person in free decisions of self-creating authenticity.

Joest poses three questions about the adequacy of the existentialist interpretation. First, why did Luther stress so often man's passivity under God's action, thus not seeing man's response to God's call as self-creating? Second, why did Luther take traditional Christology so seriously, underscoring the given character of salvation in the personal presence of God who became one with us in our nature? Third, why did Luther fight so doggedly against Zwingli for the objective, corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist?

Thus Joest's central questions are these: How did Luther understand human existence before God? How did he interpret the reality of salvation present to man in Christ and received in faith? Joest admits that he began with the working hypothesis that Luther's over-all view was unified, that is, that the stress on passivity and the insistence on Christ and the sacraments is coherent with his theology of the Word and his evident personalism. This personalism must be such as to include a strong interest in the objectivity of salvation.

2) *Scholastic background.* Aquinas understood man's relation to God and his coming to salvation on the analogy of the *motus* and *moveri* of natural unfolding and growth from inherent powers and perfections. Ockhamism shifted emphasis to God's free decree and man's voluntary response, and saw salvation being given in the course of spontaneous self-determination by the will. Both views domesticize God's saving work by making man—albeit in grace—the operative cause of his own salvation. Biblically, the Scholastics saw man as the image of God and thus as a center of dynamic striving for perfection. Luther will question whether man's natural dynamic structures are operative in his relation to God. Instead of analogy with God, Luther will stress contrast, paradox, and reversal.

3) *Luther's initial critique.* Luther protested repeatedly against the use of Aristotelian concepts and principles in theology. He affirmed a sharp contrast between rational understanding and faith both in their respective objects and in their modes of operation. Thus Luther rejects the analogical application of philosophical categories in theology, be-

cause theology knows of a *future* intended by God in His dealing with man that is severely excluded from rational discovery and investigation. Also, theology knows of an *operation* of God which is beyond all philosophy: the folly of the cross; faith's reversal of our self-understanding; and God's action intervening in the natural course of life, for which we can only make room by faith. (4) The basic reason for Luther's rejection of philosophical ontology was Scripture's witness to the radical opposition between the structures of existence *coram mundo* and *coram Deo*. In the world, what counts is free choice and activity proceeding from one's own powers and achievements. The cross of Christ reveals God's judgment on the operations of our own powers and shows that before God ours is to endure (*pati*). We find justification in ignominy and weakness, or, more precisely, in *not* affirming our independence and efficacy in analogy to God. The crucified Christ shows that God Himself takes on the ultimate responsibility for our relationship to Him.

5) *Anthropological background and Luther's development.* In patristic and medieval anthropology Joest finds a dominant tendency to equate the biblical opposition of flesh and spirit with the polarity between the psychic and the bodily. In Aquinas' intellectualism grace fits well with the theory of how the faculties are moved by their object. Biel's moralism tends to see the supernatural as resulting from God's positive afterthought to add grace and merit to a human existence that could conceivably advance itself ethically quite far without grace. Gerson, whom Luther studied and cited, marked off a superior level in man's make-up, where simple intuitive understanding and the affective apex of the mind are grasped by God in the rapture of contemplative union. (6) As Luther worked with the tripartite anthropological schemes (*corpus/anima/spiritus; sensus/ratio/spiritus*), his thinking tended to move in two characteristic directions. (*a*) There was a dominant dualism: *spiritus* as the locus of basic decision before God for belief or unbelief; the rest of man as the area of execution and implementation of faith in the world. Thus the Christian exists in two spheres simultaneously, that of the spirit (where he is called to union with God) and that of this world (where he is called to service and fraternal charity). (*b*) In speaking of *spiritus* as the locus of faith, Luther emphasized passivity and resignation under the hand of God. Man does not actively orient himself on this level, but rather delivers himself over to God's determination of his being for salvation and eternal life. (7) By 1519 at the latest Luther had definitively overcome the unbiblical interpretation of *caro/spiritus* in terms of the ten-

sion between sensuality and reason. These terms do not indicate sectors of the person, but each refers to the whole self according to the respective dominance of self-love or love of God. Reason can thus be the principle of sin, when it seeks to be self-justifying. But what then is *spiritus*, whereby man's decisive determination for God occurs? Luther speaks of this as the will, the heart, or the conscience. Here the person is borne along by a superior power in a spontaneous nisus of attachment which qualifies everything he does. The self is involved here, not through an *actus elicitus*, but in a transitive orientation which it cannot initiate, suppress, or reverse. Regarding sin and grace, Luther does not attribute to man the power of self-determination he has in dealing with subrational creation. God's transforming movement of the heart takes place, according to Luther's characteristic mode of expression, through the Word of God. The Word is God's powerful instrument which takes hold of the heart of man and changes his basic affective orientation from self-love to love of God. Thus God's Word does not call men to self-determination on the basis of insight, but rather gives insight as one result of being determined and moved by its vital power.

8) *The person before God: ex-centric existence.* Against the Scholastic view of man as the relatively independent and responsible subject of conduct and attitudes, Luther sees the person existing "ex-centrically." The essence and power of what one is and does *coram Deo* is not in oneself but in another who has appropriated one's person. Righteousness is not a quality inhering in a subject, but is the action of God now become the subject of one's life-activity. This appropriation by God is so decisive that Luther frequently reverses the structure of predication: man does not do good, truth, and mercy, but God does these in him. "Ipse solus totus ac totaliter ea facit in nobis, ut operis nulla pars ad nos pertineat."[5] Joest notes the inadequacy of the exclusively forensic notion of justification in reflecting Luther's thought. Also, important light is thrown on the *simul iustus et peccator:* it states how God is not only the source but the subject of a vital new reality (*iustus*) neither alone nor definitive in the just (*peccator*). Joest concludes that this ex-centric mode of existence is not necessary as the result of sin, but that it stems from creation itself. Sin thus appears as

[5] Cited by Joest on pp. 262 f., with emphasis added over the original in Luther's *Operationes in psalmos* (early 1519; *WA* 5, 169, 13). After the Leipzig Disputation in mid-1519, where Johann Eck had urged the importance of consent to the movement of grace, Luther responded "liberum arbitrium esse mere passivum in omni actu suo, qui velle vocatur, et frustra garriri distinctionem sophistarum [i.e., Eck], actum bonum esse totum a Deo, sed non totaliter. Est enim totus et totaliter a Deo, quia voluntas gratia non nisi rapitur, trahitur, movetur" (*WA* 2, 421, 7).

man's presumptuous attribution to himself of self-determination before God (that is, unbelief).

9) *The person before God: responsorial existence.* Joest senses the danger that Luther may seem to reduce man to a mere object of God's activity. He counters with Luther's concentration on the Word whereby God gives true spontaneity in the affective movements He initiates and effects. For Luther, faith is the *fiat mihi* of hearing God's Word, relying on it alone, and basing one's self-understanding on it alone. In this hearing, to be sure, we are not self-determining, but are taken out of our concentric existence to deliver ourselves over to God's action. Faith thus has three aspects: (*a*) confession of God as truly good and of myself as sinful; (*b*) passive acceptance of God at work, as announced and effected by the Word; (*c*) rejection of independence in relation to God. Sin is equated with the claim to independent activity before God. Joest admits that Luther does not provide any indication of how sin first entered the world. Lastly, in contrast with Luther's denial of co-operation with grace in faith and love toward God, there are his numerous affirmations of co-operation with Him in love for the neighbor and of our initiative in dealing with the things of this world.

10) *The person before God: eschatological orientation.* Finally, human existence before God is marked by repeated conversion (*proficere* means *semper incipere*) to reliance on God's fidelity. In faith one is grasped ever anew by the certitude that God's saving power will prevail over sin and death and bring one to definitive communion with Himself. Joest argues that Luther did not reduce heaven and hell actualistically to present moments of becoming, but rather saw the conscience's present experiences of faith or of the anguish of unbelief as homogeneous with final, definitive beatitude or loss. Coherent with the previous notes of ex-centrism and responsiveness, the operative subject of this advance is God Himself.

Two final chapters treat the objective presence of salvation. (11) *Christ and the Word.* Joest begins with Luther's *fides apprehensiva*, which grasps Christ in His saving approach, His offer of Himself, and His efficacy in overcoming sin, Satan, and death. Faith is a union with Christ, in which Christ becomes the real subject of one's life before God. The "act" of faith is letting oneself be taken up by Christ unto salvation. In effect, Joest is rejecting the existentialist reading of Luther (Gogarten), which sees salvation as the ever-renewed but ever-momentary act of trust in the Word—to the detriment or near-exclusion of Christ's powerful influence announced by the Word. Here Joest draws his significant conclusion that Luther's main departure from the

previous tradition is neither his idea of imputed righteousness nor his personalist transformation of faith. Rather, Luther's true originality lies in his unheard-of actualization of the presence and actuality of Christ in the believer. Thus the Word is not salvation, but only the means by which Christ's work is proclaimed as present and by which He begins to act as the effective subject in the believer.

12) *The sacrament.* Luther's work on the Eucharist fell into two stages: the anti-Catholic defense of personal faith against ideas of sacrifice and *ex opere operato* efficacy; the anti-Zwinglian defense of the Real Presence. Joest argues convincingly that the first period did not see Luther reject the objective presence of salvation, but only a Scholastic depersonalization of the reception of salvation. Clearly, Luther urged each to focus on the *pro me* of the sacrament, but this is only the application, God's application, of Christ's saving action now "incarnate" in sign and word. In the second phase, Luther asserted adamantly the true approach of the glorified Christ as the gift itself of salvation. His bodily presence shows His presence among us in the realization of God's act *extra nos* for our salvation. Christ's gift of Himself as food corresponds to the effective and operative moment of justification, i.e., to Christ's impact at a level deeper than conscious reflection and decision, where He becomes the subject of ever-renewed trust, repentance, and obedience.

Thus Joest's book moves from an initial anthropological problematic, the "ontology of the person," to a convincing Christological thesis. It is in the light of Luther's characteristic conception of God's work in Christ that his thesis on subdecisional passivity and ex-centrism makes complete sense. We would submit that Joest has set in clear focus the true center of Luther's thought. In the words of an early sermon (Feb. 24, 1517), this is the "Christus actuosissimus,"[6] who becomes a transforming presence in the lives of those who believe. In the better known words of the 1531–35 Galatians' commentary, Christ is not distant from us in heaven, but is here in our hearts—"praesentissime et efficacissime."[7] Being a biblical theologian, Luther can shift easily his way of expressing this. In the 1518–21 *Operationes in psalmos* this same

[6] "...non sint otiosi, in quibus sapientia Christus revelata est, et qui non iam ipse sed Christus in eo vivit, non est metuendum, ne Christus sit otiosus, immo actuosissimus est, et idipsum cum omni suavitate et facilitate" (*WA* 1, 140, 19).

[7] "Ideo vana est Sectariorum speculatio de fide qui somniant Christum spiritualiter, hoc est, speculative in nobis esse, realiter vero in coelis. Oportet Christum et fidem omnino conjungi, oportet simpliciter nos in coelo versari et Christum esse, vivere et operari in nobis; vivit autem et operatur in nobis non speculative, sed realiter, praesentissime et efficacissime" (*WA* 40 I, 546, 23, cited by Joest, p. 368, n. 28).

reality is the "motus, raptus, ductus" of the Word of God stirring and maintaining faith, hope, and charity in the heart.[8] In *De servo arbitrio* (1525) Luther speaks of this as the overpowering work of the Holy Spirit.[9]

The believer is one who allows the personal center of his existence before God to shift to this *Christus actuosissimus*. Here is the ex-centric movement Joest has featured. Faith means ceding responsibility to Christ, allowing Him to take the role of subject in one's relation to God. Luther's language borders on the violent in speaking of the way to Christ—"fides apprehensiva," "Christum ergreifen"—but in the fuller picture Joest has sketched this exertion is not yet the center of the believer's relation to God. It is already God's work making me hold to Christ and to the Word *so that* Christ may live, work, and act in the movements of heart by which I revere, trust, and love God. At the center of Luther's thought, we could conclude, there is ultimately a deadly serious appropriation of Gal 2:20, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," which Luther takes with stark and awful literalness.

THREE RECENT CATHOLIC WORKS ON LUTHER

Most readers of *TS* will be aware that recent years have brought a veritable explosion of Catholic scholarly works on Luther.[10] In the face

[8] "Error est itaque, liberum arbitrium habere activitatem in bono opere, quando de interno opere loquimur. Velle enim illud, quod credere, sperare, diligere iam diximus, est motus, raptus, ductus verbi Dei" (*WA* 5, 177, 11).

[9] Luther's main topic in this polemical work is what free will can and cannot do without grace, i.e., man's inevitable sin "donec spiritu Dei corrigatur" (*WA* 18, 710, 8), or "nisi addatur ei spiritus Deo miserente" (705, 23). Several passages speak in passing of the Spirit's work as a "raptus" or "rapere" (636, 17; 699, 13; 782, 10.33), and once speaks of the effect of the Spirit's work as a "lubentia" and "pronitas" which one cannot oppose or divert (634, 37—635, 7). Later, Luther makes an explicit parallel between the general action of God which creatures necessarily follow ("omnia, quae condidit solus, solus quoque movet, agit et rapit omnipotentiae suae motu, quem illa non possunt vitare nec mutare, sed necessario sequuntur et parent. . . ." [753, 29]) and the work of the Spirit ("Deinde ubi spiritu gratiae agit in illis, quos iustificavit, hoc est in regno suo, similiter eos agit et movet, et illi . . . sequuntur et cooperantur . . ." [753, 33]).

[10] Otto H. Pesch surveyed the postwar period in "Twenty Years of Catholic Luther Research," *Lutheran World* 13 (1966) 303–16. Some key titles to add in 1969 would be these: Lortz, *The Reformation in Germany;* Congar, "Considerations and Reflections on the Christology of Luther," in *Dialogue between Christians;* Iserloh, *The Theses Were Not Posted*; McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong?;* Hacker, *The Ego in Faith* (Engl. tr. in preparation); Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin;* Hasler, *Luther in der katholischen Dogmatik*; Wicks, *Man Yearning for Grace—Luther's Early Spiritual Teaching*; Vercruysse, *Fidelis populus* (on the ecclesiology of Luther's first lectures on the Psalms). A collection of essays on Luther by six Catholic scholars is in preparation by Herder and Herder and will appear later this year under the title *Dialogue with Luther*.

of Joest's impressive focusing of Luther's thought, it should prove interesting to examine briefly three more notable works of this new genre to see whether Joest's main theme has been already seen, and if so, how it has been treated and evaluated. Somewhat randomly, we chose the works of August Hasler, Harry McSorley, and Otto H. Pesch for this inquiry. These works appeared roughly simultaneously with Joest's book, and so there are no explicit correlations to be found. Still, it is informative to inquire about the way Catholic scholars have taken cognizance of Luther's actualization of Christ and how the dialogue appears to be beginning.

August Hasler's Gregorian dissertation[11] worked out a detailed contrast between the presentation of Luther's theology of justification in recent Catholic manuals and in the works of reputable Luther scholars. Where Hasler comes into the vicinity of the Joest thesis, he appears most concerned to show that Luther's frequent statements about man being passive in the event of justification do not refer to a psychological state of affective apathy. Rather, Luther's concern is to exclude any autonomous and meritorious free choice that would infringe on the fullness of God's gracious influence (Hasler, pp. 175–79, 205 f.). Luther sees God's grace creating the person anew and setting the mind, heart, and affections in movement. On this score, Hasler rightly concludes that numerous Catholic manuals have caricatured Luther's thought by repeating the inauthentic dictum that man is a *lapis et truncus* under grace.

Hasler is also aware that the Catholic tradition sees more in saving faith than a spontaneous affective movement. It adds the plus of a decision and appropriation which could be dissent and refusal. Here, it seems to me, Hasler's concern to criticize the manuals distracts him from the serious questions posed by the Luther texts central in Joest's work. The closest Hasler comes is a reference to the question of double predestination in Luther and to his ambiguous statements about God's *Alleinwirksamkeit* (p. 179). Here Hasler seems to me to skirt the issue at hand by only giving the innocuous information that the Catholic tradition does not defend a synergism portraying God and man as equal partners. This is only a first distant approximation of what must be said in discussion and evaluation of Luther's articulated theological conception of the *Christus actuosissimus* who incites the affections in which the believer relates to God.

Hasler's chapter on man's co-operation with God after justification (pp. 204–14) is a useful summary of an important aspect of Luther's

[11] *Luther in der katholischen Dogmatik* (Munich: Hueber, 1968); reviewed in *TS* 30 (1969) 140–42.

thought. Luther clearly sees that God has chosen to have our active contribution in preaching the gospel, in the works of fraternal charity, and in ruling and ordering the world. It is a recurring thought in *De servo arbitrio* that man is free and active *in inferioribus*, where his saving relation to God is not involved. In this same section Hasler also reports on the views of some researchers who see Luther attributing to the justified man an active contribution in his growth in faith and in his progressive expulsion of sinful self-seeking. Here Hasler is pointing to an important question for further research, since Joest's findings lead him to distinguish sharply between our passivity in relation to God (where Christ is subject) and our activity in the world and society. My own initial work on Luther in 1518–19 and in *De servo arbitrio* inclines me to Joest's portrayal, but with Luther one hesitates to urge any systematization as the last word.

Harry McSorley has worked out a wide-ranging study of Luther's clash with Erasmus in 1524–25 on the freedom or bondage of the human will.[12] This topic brought him inevitably into contact with different elements of Joest's thesis. It is a clear result of McSorley's work to have registered a convincing objection to a central theme featured in Joest's presentation. Repeatedly McSorley points out Luther's denial of free decision within the act of faith (pp. 30, 220, 305 f., 328). In his chapters on free will in Scripture (39, 50 f.), in Augustine (107), and in Aquinas (174 f.), McSorley has shown that a free decision in and under grace has a firm and binding place in the traditional view of saving faith. McSorley also brings evidence to show how both Protestant confessional statements and systematic theology have not followed Luther on this point (330–36). All in all, this is a serious Catholic objection to one aspect of the thesis Joest has set in focus, and a persuasive invitation to Protestants to sift carefully in their appropriation of Luther's account of the just man's relation to God.

The strength of McSorley's book is his concentration on one thesis and one work of Luther's vast output. It seems to me that just this concentration leads him to set Luther's denial of freedom in saving faith in at best only half light. In a word, Luther's denial appears as a case of theological overkill. The main concern of *De servo arbitrio* was Luther's rejection of any autonomy in which the will could initiate its movement from sin to grace. Erasmus did not separate himself clearly and cleanly from the Neo-Semi-Pelagianism of Ockham and Biel (McSorley, pp. 246 f., 264, 281), and so came under Luther's

[12] The following paragraphs refer to the German version, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen* (Munich: Hueber, 1967); reviewed in *TS* 29 (1968) 542–44; Engl. tr.: *Luther: Right or Wrong?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969).

devastating attack. To clinch his argument, Luther brought in a necessitarian view of God's action in the world. It was this clumsy polemic that also struck down man's freedom under grace, although Luther had said expressly that this was not his topic (281).

It seems, though, that Joest is calling our attention to Luther's positive conception of Christ and Christian existence. Luther is more than a polemicist. Indeed, he wrote large our impotence without grace, and this must be acknowledged—as McSorley and today's Catholic scholars are doing. But Luther's obfuscation of free decision in saving faith is not merely an unintended excess. It is rather an important element in his account of just how Christ's intervention initiates, supports, and even dominates our affective relation to God. A few pages after the sentence cited above from Joest on how good works come to be ("ipse solus totus ac totaliter ea facit in nobis"), Luther specified how God effects the faith, hope, and charity that relate us to Him: "in his divinis virtutibus . . . non est nisi passio, raptus, motus quo movetur, formatur, purgatur, impregnatur anima verbo Dei. . . ." This was not just an aside, for Luther repeated this on the next page. An index of Luther's theological seriousness here is the careful distinction he then made in the next lines regarding our activity and co-operation in the external works in which faith, hope, and charity are implemented and made incarnate.[13]

Here we see in miniature how Luther developed before his clash with Erasmus. His growth was not simply a case of progressive polemic against speculation in the *via moderna* about man's achievements *ex puris naturalibus*. Over and above this polemic, Luther developed a characteristic way of thinking and speaking about God's activity and the believer's life before God. Probably, the theme of passivity—correlated with the *motus, raptus, ductus* of God's Word—is an indication of how the German mystical tradition exercised an important formative influence on Luther. Passivity and *raptus* could well be traces left from his attentive reading of Tauler's sermons and *Eyn theologia deutsch* in 1516–17. But there is more here than borrowings from the mystics. A theological genius is at work, spinning off brilliant (and one-sided) explanations of how Christ (or the Word or the Spirit) works in the hearts of sinful men to rule and renew them before God.

Otto H. Pesch, systematician of the Dominican faculty in Walberberg near Bonn, has produced the single most ambitious work of Catholic theological dialogue with Luther since the Reformation.[14]

[13] *WA* 5, 176, 12; 177, 11 (cited in n. 8 above); 177, 21–27.

[14] *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin: Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1967). A good in-

The first section (pp. 31–396) of this mammoth work portrays Luther's theology of justification as it is known today by reputable scholars in the field. Then (399–881) Pesch poses each major assertion of Luther's work as a question to Thomas Aquinas: Where do the two agree? To what extent and why do they differ? How serious does the difference appear to be? Let us ask how Pesch treats the material featured by Joest in each of his two major sections.

It is an index of Pesch's high level of competence that his survey of Luther has brought out most of the points which are central to Joest's argument. He is especially perceptive in laying out the correlation holding between God's activity specifically as creator and man's passivity in faith (204 ff., 252, 318, 369). Wanting to be an independent, or even a dependent, subject in relation to God entails a denial of God's divinity (260). A second reason for passivity is God's working *sub contraria specie* in our sinful world. Therefore He must reveal Himself if there is to be an encounter with His grace (208 f.). Any activity on our part seeking to relate to this *Deus absconditus* would inevitably be inappropriate and misdirected. Thirdly, Pesch has pointed out quite clearly the actuality of Christ in the believer, in part basing himself on the same texts Joest uses (the *praesentissime et efficacissime* of Luther on Galatians). Here Pesch brings out Luther's conception of Christ "taking over" the believer's subjectivity before God (243–246). Finally, Pesch has noted such points as Luther's correlation in opposition between passivity and merit (312 f.), his affirmation of our co-operation with God in the world though not in our relation to God (319), and the impossibility of a satisfying account of the origin of evil in Luther's theology (379–82).

This is not to say that Joest's work is made superfluous. Whereas Pesch's more reportorial *Erster Teil* ranges over all aspects of Luther's work on justification, Joest concentrates on his two basic questions. His result is sharply profiled and is strengthened by a greater wealth of firsthand citation. Because of Joest's independent investigation, we feel confident in judging the *Christus actuosissimus* and the ex-centric movement of faith as the true center of Luther's theology of the Christian life.

Pesch's presentation of Aquinas rightly stresses the transcendence of God's creative operation and salvific influence on the human will. It is precisely Aquinas' affirmation of human freedom to ratify or

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sight into Pesch's approach and method can be gained from the article "Existentielle und sapientiale Theologie," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 92 (1967) 731–42. An expanded version of this article will appear in the collection *Dialogue with Luther* (see n. 10 above).

frustrate the movement of grace that is the ultimate index of the divine transcendence (873). In both assent and dissent to grace, God's infallible providential plan is being carried out. For Aquinas, man's role is that of decision—not just a spontaneous actuation as in Luther (550)—and still is enveloped by God's transcendent sovereignty.

However, in his chapter (11) on justification (pp. 596–792, esp. 686–95), Pesch only hints at the decisional character of this freedom in Aquinas' view of man under and within grace. Pesch speaks only of consent, and suggests that "liberty" may not be the proper word here (683). Telling of Aquinas' idea of faith's consent, Pesch speaks more than once of "total passivity" as man's attitude under God's justifying action (696, 741, 744).[15] The conclusion of Pesch's comparison in this chapter is that the one major difference between Aquinas and Luther is that Aquinas interpreted justifying grace as an accident in the category of quality (699). It must be acknowledged that Pesch has made an outstanding contribution in his treatment of Aquinas' intention in the use of ontological categories (637–59). But regarding the question of free assent within saving faith and charity, the impression given by Pesch's chap. 11 is that only a minor, perhaps simply terminological, difference separates Luther and Aquinas.

Here, it seems to us, Pesch does not do justice to Aquinas' notion of *gratia operans*, by failing to make it clear that *de facto* man can refuse to ratify its movement. Pesch implies this in his chapter on sin (550 f.), but does not bring this information directly to bear on the question of justification. Also, in his otherwise enlightening exegesis of *Sum. theol.* 1–2, 114 on merit (771 ff.; e.g., 784), one misses the point that the existential response in grace to grace (which is a good work) is called "free" because it could have been otherwise. Here Pesch seems to us to be even apologetic regarding the role of liberty (773, 777). It is right to stress that for Aquinas this is not an autonomy over against God (784), but we do not find this complemented by precise information about what it does mean, i.e., a ratification and appropriation of the Spirit's lead that could have been refused.[16]

Thus Pesch does not highlight the divergence between Aquinas' *gratia operans* and Luther's *motus, raptus, ductus verbi Dei*. Here we would not see Luther merely as one concerned to express the personal

[15] Pesch's interpretation of Aquinas on the *motus liberi arbitrii* in justification (*Sum. theol.* 1–2, 113, 3c) has been criticized convincingly by McSorley, *Luthers Lehre*, pp. 174 f., n. 191.

[16] Pesch's treatment of freedom in justification and in the deeds of the just man has been criticized by the Lutheran Aquinas-expert Ulrich Kühn in his review article "Ist Luther Anlass zum Wandel des katholischen Selbstverständnisses?" *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 93 (1968) 881–898, at 891.

Ergriffensein of the renewed man (531) and to teach a spirituality of dependence on God expressed in petition and thanks (872). This is to underestimate Luther's theological range. Joest is telling us that Luther has specific theses about Christ's (or the Word's) operation, i.e., about its style, its locus in man, its effect, and about what man can and cannot do in relating to it. This is the *Christus actuosissimus* who sets our affectivity in motion in selfless trust and love, regarding which we can only be passive. Aquinas, though, was more subtle in locating the movement of grace and in continuing to maintain free ratification or refusal without derogating from our total dependence on God.

I hope my criticism will not be misunderstood; for Pesch does speak extensively and well on freedom in chap. 14 ("Deus Creator," pp. 840–81). Here, surprisingly, Aquinas' key idea is no longer passivity and receptivity, but decision and ratification of God's transcendent work in our wills. Here Pesch brings out well how the presence of contingent free choices within God's plan of salvation redounds to the glory and transcendence of God. Even the sinful decisions in which a person absurdly refuses to ratify the movement of grace have their place within God's plan. Here Pesch rejects the escape into an easy rationalization with the aid of a *praedeterminatio physica* (863 f.). It is God's infallible plan, and the impenetrable mystery is in Him and in His creative act. Our freedom to ratify or frustrate God's saving work is the index that God wills and works *totaliter aliter* than in the mode we can capture in our concepts and categories (864).

How, though, do Luther and Aquinas come out when compared on this point? Again, it strikes me that Pesch underestimates Luther's theological prowess. It is clear that Luther denied the role Aquinas attributed to free choice in ratifying and personally appropriating God's work of grace. The role of freedom was an important aspect of Aquinas' witness to God's transcendence.[17] But Luther articulated his confession of God's sovereignty precisely by denying the role of free self-determination in man's relation to God (872). Pesch's first conclusion is not to the divergence between the two theologians, but to the identity of their concern and intention. Both strove to uphold God's sovereign mastery over all his works (872).

The difference between Aquinas and Luther regarding freedom is relativized in Pesch's presentation by reference to the difference in their respective historical situations. Luther lived in an age dominated by the "synergistic misunderstanding" of how grace and free will were

[17] On p. 870 Pesch aptly notes that Aquinas' *Allwirksamkeit* is never *Alleinwirksamkeit*.

related to each other (871). In Luther's situation the admission of freedom would inevitably have meant a division of labor between God and man, with man's "part"—free choice—necessarily limiting the scope of God's work, if not involving possession and disposition over God's grace (531). Luther had no contact with the genuine Thomism in which God's transcendent, enveloping grace was the ground of freedom. Luther could only conceive of grace *and* freedom by understanding both on the physical, categorical level (871). This was the intellectual atmosphere in which Erasmus could propose a definition of *liberum arbitrium* which made no mention of the necessity of grace in, with, and under any choice relevant to salvation. In such an atmosphere Luther had but one choice: the forthright affirmation of the sovereignty of God in contradiction of the presumptuous claims of liberty wanting to be God's partner in salvation. Thus Luther gave a Christian answer to the needs of his times.

This resolution of our problem seems to us to underestimate both Luther and his theological contemporaries. Regarding the general intellectual atmosphere being polluted by the "synergistic misunderstanding" of the relation between grace and freedom (552 and 872), Pesch gives scanty documentation. It is not satisfying to have such a central point in the argument turn on this vague interpretative construct. This is particularly the case today, when recent work on the Late Middle Ages is teaching us restraint in using generalizations, especially those which qualify large segments of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century theology pejoratively in comparison with High Scholasticism.[18] For the present it seems wise to suspend judgment on Pesch's account of the possibilities open to Luther. Pesch does offer texts from Luther's *De servo arbitrio* (1525) in support of his thesis (871, n. 18), but these only show that one of Luther's arguments against Erasmus proceeded from God's infallible foreknowledge to the affirmation of necessity—not liberty—in our actions. Here Luther, the popular polemicist, was not appealing to a theological consensus, but to ordinary and narrow common sense (to the man on the street?) to show that an earnest confession of God's foreknowledge and omnipotence left no room for liberty and contingency in the world.[19] These

[18] Especially the undifferentiated use of the term "synergism" strikes me as problematic, when no account is taken of the great thesis of God's absolute freedom in the *acceptatio* of our works in grace. In Scotus and in the *via moderna* this changes the context within which grace and free will are correlated and makes difficult a simple comparison with Aquinas' inclusive scheme.

[19] An example of Luther's argumentation: "Seeing that He foreknew that we should be what we are, and now makes us such, and moves and governs us as such, how, pray, can it be pretended that it is open to us to become something other than that which He fore-

texts do not tell us about an era dominated by the "synergistic misunderstanding," but only about one theologian's use of simplistic arguments in the midst of a controversy. It still remains to be shown that his era was so crippled that it had to come to this. Also, one cannot accept easily the idea of a towering figure like Martin Luther being the helpless victim of an ingrained conception of his milieu. Joest's work makes us more aware of Luther's great originality in thinking about God's influence and man's consequent relation to God.

A small sidelight on this question comes from the argument between Johann Eck and Luther's colleague Andreas Carlstadt in the first part of the Leipzig Disputation in mid-1519. Luther was in the audience as Carlstadt argued that if God's grace and our free will both influence our works, then grace must be active and the will passive.[20] Eck roundly rejected this view, as well as any *partim/partim* conception of the interaction of grace and freedom. For Eck, man's consent to grace was in its entirety God's work, but still man's activity and nonetheless free.[21] Eck appealed to St. Bernard as a witness to the interpenetration of grace and human activity in causing the whole of the good work,[22] and concluded that when we say that the good work is *totum a Deo*, we must add *sed non totaliter* so as not to deny the

knew and is now bringing about? So the foreknowledge and omnipotence of God are diametrically opposed to our 'free-will.' Either God makes mistakes in His foreknowledge, and errors in His action (which is impossible), or else we act, and are caused to act, according to His foreknowledge and action. . . . This omnipotence and foreknowledge of God, I repeat, utterly destroy the doctrine of 'free-will.' Nor can the obscurity of Scripture, or the difficulty of the subject, be invoked against this conclusion. The words are entirely clear; boys know them; the point is plain and simple, and is established even by the natural verdict of common sense" (*The Bondage of the Will*, tr. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston [London: 1957] p. 217, translating *WA* 18, 718, 23 ff.).

[20] It is clear that, for Carlstadt, any activity attributed to the will would have derogated from God's role: "Quaero ex domino doctore, quomodo eiusdem operis boni possunt esse duae causae, quarum utraque totum producit, . . . nisi enim altera causarum tantum passive concurrat et altera tantum active, vix intelligi potest, quomodo totum opus ab utroque sit totaliter" (Cited from *Der authentische Text der Leipziger Disputation*, ed. Otto Seitz [Berlin, 1903] p. 35).

[21] Eck's thesis had been this: "quod voluntas non haberet se mere passive ad bonum nec liberum arbitrium esset res de solo titulo post peccatum, sed potius cooperaretur Deo sua gratia adjuvante" (*ibid.*, p. 18). Against Carlstadt, he clarified, "non tribuo opus meritorium partim a gratia, partim a libero arbitrio perfici" (*ibid.*, p. 26).

[22] Eck cited these words from chap. 14, n. 47, of Bernard's *De gratia et libero arbitrio*: "gratia cum libero arbitrio operatur ut tamen illud in primo praeveniat, in caeteris comitetur; ad hoc utique praeveniens, ut iam sibi cooperetur, ita tamen, quod a sola gratia coeptum est, pariter ab utroque perficiatur, ut mixtim non singillatim, simul non vicissim per singulos profectus operentur" (*Der authentische Text*, p. 26).

required ratification that is man's free consent to the movement of grace.[23]

Otto Pesch's argument would seem to be that Luther could do no better than agree with Carlstadt's simplistic view.[24] But could he not have accepted and even improved upon Eck's (and Bernard's) hints of a more sophisticated and more paradoxical conception of God's influence on human activity? The exchange at Leipzig is at least a small indication that there were other routes open to Luther than those presented by Erasmus' apparently autonomous *liberum arbitrium* and Luther's heavy-handed theology of divine necessity in his retort.

In his development Luther does not seem to be the hapless victim of the poor theology of others. Rather, there are signs that he was articulating an original view of grace—the *Christus actuosissimus*—in sovereign independence of the lesser lights surrounding him. Carlstadt appears to have known and agreed with Luther's conclusion, the denial or obfuscation of man's consent. But there is no evidence—at least in the Leipzig Disputation—that he grasped the deeper theme of Luther's thinking. After Joest's presentation this theme stands out clearly, and it should be a main topic of our reflection on and evaluation of Luther's work.

FRUITFUL LINES OF REACTION

Our main reaction to Joest's work is that of gratitude for the coherent and convincing way he has interpreted Luther. Various sections of his book, e.g., pp. 79–109 on Luther's rejection of Aristotelianism in theology, are models of historical theology. The range of his documentation witnesses to years of careful reading in the huge Weimar edition of Luther's works. As we have indicated already, the Luther of ex-centric faith and the superlatively active Christ ring true his-

[23] Eck urged that this formula was not a Scholastic theorem with systematic overtones of Aristotelianism, but rather an abbreviated way of referring to *both* grace and free consent: "... volo dicere totum opus bonum esse a Deo, sed non fit sine liberi arbitrii concursu et activitate, ne concursum illum negarem, dixi non fieri totaliter a Deo, quod est compendio et absolute rem pronunciare" (*ibid.*, p. 54). The disputation method (mainly, fencing with patristic citations) does not allow us to conclude whether Johann Eck had a developed sense of God's transcendent influence, but at least it is clear that he did not think of the interaction of grace and freedom as fitting neatly into the categories of *actio* and *passio*.

[24] As a fact, this is just what Luther did in his *Resolutiones* of the Leipzig theses, as we cited in n. 5 above. However, at this stage the basis of Luther's argument is not divine foreknowledge but his idea of grace: "est enim totus et totaliter a Deo, quia voluntas gratia non nisi rapitur, trahitur, movetur" (*WA* 2, 421, 9).

torically. With these two themes we have laid bare before us the central nerves of the organism that is Luther's theology. Beyond this fundamental agreement with Joest's presentation of Luther, there are four lines of thought that seem appropriate. The first two relate to questions of Luther research, and the last two to specific concerns of Catholic systematic theology.

1) We would begin with a criticism of Joest's choice in sketching the background of Luther's view of man and salvation. In view of the outcome of the work, it does not seem to us that his survey of Scholasticism places Luther in the proper historical context. Although not intending to uncover influences on Luther, he nonetheless investigated the structure of man in grace in Aquinas, Ockham, Biel, and Gerson. The result is an overwhelming sense of Luther's originality. But two oversimplifications seem to be at work here. There is a trace of the older Protestant reading of the history of doctrine, according to which God's grace was all but unknown between the writing of *Romans* in the first century and the *Lectures on Romans* of 1515–16. The grace of God in Christ is the second main topic Joest investigated. But would not Luther's actualization of the presence and activity of Christ make more sense if compared with Augustine's words on the Holy Spirit in *De spiritu et littera?* Why not sift out the agreements and disagreements between Luther's view of the *Christus actuosissimus* and Aquinas' *gratia operans?* Finally, why does one never hear mention of St. Bernard's *De gratia et libero arbitrio* in this context? The last-named work is clearly a highpoint in the Christian celebration of man's impotence and God's saving power. Just as Luther, Bernard is far removed from a synergism detrimental to the sovereignty of grace. Eventually we must begin to see Luther against a background that shows his continuity with elements of the prior tradition.

A second simplification in Joest's background work is entailed in his exclusive attention to Scholastic authors. Medieval theology involves much more than Scholasticism. The monastic theology of the twelfth century, the Rhineland mystics of the fourteenth century, and the Christological piety of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries should all be taken into account. Joest's presentation of Gerson on the *apex mentis* is a good example of how attention to mystical theology reveals important affinities between Luther and the preceding tradition. Could not this be further developed, e.g., by investigating the theme of passivity in Tauler to further elucidate Luther's notion of the ex-centrism of faith? We suspect that important sectors of the Luther presented by Joest do overlap with this larger, non-Scholastic Catholic tradition of the Middle Ages. Here is an urgent area of fur-

ther research.[25] It seems safe to predict that against this fuller background Luther's originality will remain considerable—although somewhat less than appears in Joest's presentation.

2) Joest's highlighting of Christ's actuality in the life of the Christian believer may help toward solving a problem that should trouble anyone with a more than casual familiarity with Luther's theological work. This problem is posed by Luther's earnest adoption of the necessitarian argument in *De servo arbitrio*. Harry McSorley has underscored how Luther argued from the infallibility of divine foreknowledge to the exclusion of contingent choices from the course of human affairs. Fortunately, this argument was not the whole of Luther's response to Erasmus. Luther also developed the biblical theme of our bondage to sin and consequent need of liberation by God. By distinguishing between these two arguments, one can see Luther as basically a defender of the Catholic tradition against naturalist optimism, who, sad to say, allowed himself to be carried away in his defense of grace to the extent that he used an indefensible theologoumenon in his polemic.

But there remains the nagging question about why Luther became involved with something so repugnant as this necessitarian argument, which inevitably casts God in the role of the master puppeteer. Was this only a regrettable accident? Is this argument no more than an external appendage to Luther's thought, which we can amputate without disturbing the organism? We must ask whether there were not themes in the central cluster of Luther's theological concepts and motifs which served as the point of insertion for the necessitarian argument.

Here Joest's focusing on the actualization of Christ (or the Word or the Spirit) and on passivity in saving faith seems to be important. Of course, they do not inevitably lead to a necessitarian view of the world. Historically, there was a sudden and inexplicable "jump" as Luther took over the necessitarian argument with a view to crushing presumptuous *liberum arbitrium*. But Joest's researches do show us the opening in Luther's thought that made the move possible, although not inevitable. Already, in the life of the believer, where Christ has become the operative and responsible subject, we have a

[25] Martin Elze made an important beginning in his two articles, "Züge spätmittelalterlicher Frömmigkeit in Luthers Theologie," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 62 (1965) 381–402, and "Das Verständnis der Passion Jesu im ausgehenden Mittelalter und bei Luther," *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966) 127–51. The new work of Reinhard Schwarz, *Vorgeschichte der reformatorischen Busstheologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), confirms this understanding of Luther's theological starting point. We will review Schwarz's book in the next issue of *TS*.

miniature world, enclosed in the bracket of saving faith, in which God is carrying out His plan in sovereign independence of what His creatures determine. Nonetheless, Luther's arguments from divine foreknowledge to necessity in our affairs entail a regrettable excess. Our point is that in Luther's theology of God's work in grace there was an inclination toward, and a first hint of, the necessitarian view of God's influence in the universe. Thus we are hesitant in accepting the conclusion that this argument can be so neatly excised from the body of Luther's thought that no roots and no traces of it remain.

3) The most important reaction by Catholic theology to Joest's insights into Luther would be to allow Luther's vision of Christ and His actuality in the believer to become a stimulus in our own renewal. Luther should send us to the New Testament to recapture themes that can enrich our presentation of the mystery of Christ.

Most basically, Luther points to texts on Jesus' present actuality and efficacy. One thinks of Rom 1:4, which speaks of Christ "designated Son of God in power (*en dunamei*) according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead." This should carry us further along the line of reflection regarding the presence of Christ as suggested by Vatican II in the Constitution on the Liturgy. This early Christian, probably pre-Pauline, formula suggests more than simple presence by its reference to Christ's power after the Resurrection. Paul's statement that "the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45) indicates just why Jesus is a dynamic presence in our world: His resurrection was a transforming event that made him the source of life and communication of the Spirit of God. Thus there is good warrant for Luther's *Christus actuosissimus*, and both our Christology and sacramental theology can be enriched by further thinking along the lines Luther suggests to us.

Within the theology of grace and justification, Luther's insistence on the actuality of Christ (or the Word or the Spirit) can probably help Catholic theology face up to a serious problem. This is posed by the awe-inspiring sublimity of the recent theology of uncreated grace. Clearly, the dominant affirmation of recent Catholic theology of grace has been that in the personal renewal that is justification God gives Himself to dwell within the heart. The pages of *TS* have presented important efforts by Catholic theologians to integrate this truth of God's self-gift into the biblical and Scholastic vision of God's being and operation.

Luther could well be telling us that there is an important aspect of God's self-gift that has been pushed to the fringe of our concerns. Perhaps the sublime truth of the divine indwelling has made us for-

get a point of more urgent pastoral relevance. This is the active, restless, disturbing, leading, impelling Holy Spirit whom Paul describes in the eighth chapter of Romans. This is not a placid God come to dwell in His temple, but one who has become involved in the crises large and small of the believer's life. This Spirit has been sent to be the agent of growth as the flesh is gradually debilitated and love comes slowly to dominate one's attitudes and prejudices. Prayer is a serious concern of this active Spirit (Rom 8:15, 26 f.). And He is already making a liberating impact on the created universe itself, as 8:19–23 seems to tell us.

However a more detailed exegesis may clarify Paul's vision, there can be no doubt that for him God's gift is that of a "working Spirit." The Luther Joest has presented should make us more aware of this, and stimulate us to bring our theology of grace into closer contact with Christian daily living. One cannot say that the sublime theology of the indwelling Trinity has been a factor of great influence over a wide range of recent Catholic spirituality. Luther's view of Christ's actuality can goad us toward closer contact with the Christian struggle for growth in "walking according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4).

4) Finally, how does it stand with the Catholic criticisms which were part of the original inspiration of Joest's book? Does the Luther he presents still appear to neglect the role of the responsible human subject in relation to God? One could be tempted (as Joest noted, p. 284) to seek to turn back the critics by arguing for an element of responsible decision in the initial, passive "letting go" that allows God's Son (or Word or Spirit) to initiate the basic affective relation to God. The giving up of independence and letting "a stronger one" take active responsibility for our relation to God could involve an ex-centric movement of disengagement, a responsible nondecision, which could open the way to Christ's efficacy in a personal manner. But the difficulty is that precisely here Luther stresses most the exclusive operation of Christ. Further, this movement passively endured (which is faith) is for Luther not merely the doorway to life in God's grace. The *semper incipere* points to an ever-renewed activity on God's part effecting our ever-renewed ex-centric movement of faith. In the face of Luther's resolute *totus ac totaliter a Deo*, we cannot single out an initial passivity which is more responsible than that which follows.

Thus we would judge that the basic Catholic criticism remains, namely, that in his theological account of God's influence in setting right man's relation to Himself, Luther's concentration on the prerational and nondecisional *Grundbewegung* leaves this relation at a subpersonal level. This affective thrust brought about by the *Spiritus*

rapiens—even taking into account the dimension of the Word—does not move man at the level of a genuinely personal engagement.

We do not intend our criticism to be another skirmish in the long line of confessional polemics which have disfigured the face of Western Christianity. Nor are we trying to marshal evidence to show that Luther was justly condemned on this point in 1520 or 1546. One doubts that the controversialists of that age had such a clear idea of Luther's teaching as Joest has given us. Our context is, however, much different. Mainly we wish to suggest that Lutheran systematic theologians would do well to sift critically as they appropriate the elements of Luther's thought Joest has put in a new, sharper light.

In making this suggestion we would, however, prefer to shift the manner in which Joest framed this Catholic objection. The principal reason for criticizing Luther's conception is not the need to save man's dignity as a personally engaged partner called to love God. This is important, but still a question of anthropology, and so not the ultimate question. The problem is not whether Luther lets man be man, but whether he lets God fully be God. As Otto Pesch urges in his chapter "Deus creator," the issue is the transcendent character of God's work in man's heart. Here Luther is simplistic, as his images of the carpenter with his saw (*WA* 2, 421, 17) and the knight with his sword (5, 177, 22) more than suggest. His influence on men is totally other than a physical or moral intervention. Even an unconscious influence of these all-too-creaturely notions of activity must be counteracted. Rather, His is the all-enveloping, all-sustaining spiritual influence on which we are dependent in our being and in every least inclination toward His love and service.

Critical here is the way we conceive the work of God's Spirit. He is one who penetrates all through our existence, but yet the first of His works is *agapē* (Gal 5:22). The Catholic theologian will see here the place where one must speak of a ratification and appropriation of the movements of the Spirit—yes, of a consent that could be refused in sin. The ratifying assent is itself a gift of God, but not a gift we must necessarily accept. Again, this is a transcendent work of God, for He attains His sovereign purposes through either of our responses. His transcendence appears precisely in our total dependence on Him— a dependence which does not exclude but rather includes our free (not just spontaneous) agreement or disagreement.

The exclusive, either/or option between God's activity or ours is actually a devaluation of God's work. Joest has convincingly portrayed such an option in Luther's theology. Ultimately this is simplistic in

featuring a categorical action, which comes to term in our spontaneous agreement. This is not subtle enough, it does not redound enough to the glory of God most manifest in the paradoxical interdependence of the Holy Spirit and human freedom.

Bellarmine School of Theology
North Aurora, Ill.

JARED WICKS, S.J.