

GOSPEL REDUCTIONISM

Some Theses for Comment and Discussion

Edward H. Schroeder

[Two presentations at the Missouri Forward group of the LC-MS Northern Illinois District, River Forest and Broadview, IL, October 8-9, 1972]

1. The full phrase of the critics, "Law-Gospel Reductionism", alleges that our theology discards necessary and valued Christian material while we hold to the erroneous opinion that merely holding on to L/G is sufficient for full Christian faith and mission.
2. On the contrary L/G reductionism is not a screen for minimalizers, but a yardstick for measuring the validity of any allegedly Christian affirmation or Christian tradition, even the affirmations and traditions of the LC-MS.
3. The pedigree of this yardstick goes back to the central theological controversy of the Reformation. It is the yardstick by which the Reformers justified their preaching and parish life.
4. Then and now the critics who cry "Foul!" when the L/G reductionist yardstick is applied are legalists; a peculiar form of legalist, however, who say Faith-in-Christ is central, to be sure, but not this faith alone.
5. The pedigree of these critics of L/G reductionism also goes back to the earlier days of the church, in fact, back to the N. T. itself (St. Paul's conflict with the Galatian Judaizers and Jesus' conflict with Pharisaic Judaism).
6. The way the critics commend their doctrine about the Bible (as something you must accept if you are serious about being fully Christian) is a dead ringer for what the Pharisees were laying on the backs of their people in the days of Jesus (Mt. 23).
7. Thus L/G reductionism is not a minimalism, nor an "everything-is-permissible" libertinism, but a way of pinpointing what was done in the 16th century reformation and what must be done in the 20th century reformation of the LC-MS.
8. L/G reductionism is an affirmation and proclamation of what life and faith are all about; Human experience and Christian faith are re-ducible, capable of "being led-around-again" to the Biblical words L/G.

9. The distinction between L/G is the Christian key for reading our daily lived experience, for reading the Holy Scriptures, for practicing and managing the life of the Christian church.

10. L/G reductionism is the Lutheran yardstick for measuring the "new things in LC-MS: Preus' Statement, Mission Affirmations, Worship Supplement, Historical-Critical Method at the seminary, Kennedy Plan, and even the Ordination of Women.