

Ed Schroeder Parodies the Lutheran Faith

by

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A certain Ed Schroeder, a former Lutheran Church Missouri Synod professor who joined the Seminex walk-out in the 1970s and is a founder of an organization called “Crossings,” has gotten himself into a tizzy over my involvement in the homosexuality debate in Lutheran churches. In reaction to my forthcoming presentation at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (Sept. 21, 2004), Schroeder publicizes on the internet a letter that he wrote to Concordia’s president, hoping to censor my message by urging the president to “disinvite” me (<http://www.crossings.org/thursday/Thur081904.htm>; he also reposts here a 2002 harangue). While I am grateful for the publicity that he gives this event, I do not commend his distortions of my work, much less of the gospel. There may be some value to exposing Schroeder’s error to the light of the gospel.

Schroeder wants to “warn” Lutherans that I am a dangerous Presbyterian. Schroeder is fearful that I might encourage fellow believers to take seriously Scripture’s core values in sexual ethics. (By “core values” I mean values upheld strongly, absolutely, and counterculturally by Jesus and Paul in agreement with the creation texts, the biblical witness generally, and millennia of church history, including Lutheran history.) Schroeder believes that to take such values seriously is “anti-Luther” and a rejection of “Lutheran hermeneutics” regarding the law/promise distinction and a theology of the cross. He cites the Augsburg Confession and Melancthon’s Apology as documents in Lutheran history that would support his odd version of Lutheranism.

Schroeder also thinks that he is taking on Ezekiel’s mantle in warning Lutherans about my views on homosexual practice. Ironically—as we shall see, there are many ironies in Schroeder’s views—Ezekiel read the Sodom story in the light of absolute Levitical prohibitions against homosexual practice and labeled homosexual practice an “abomination,” an application that Schroeder contemptuously dismisses (Ezek 16:50; 18:12; see discussion in *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 79-85; *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 57-58).

Schroeder’s antinomian parody of classical Lutheranism

Cheap-grace antinomianism is not classical Lutheranism. Unfortunately, cheap-grace antinomianism appears to be the message that Schroeder is peddling.

Schroeder alleges that my “allies are the scholastic Confutators” who criticized the Augsburg Confession (AC). As it is, it is Schroeder himself who ironically gives aid and comfort to the critics of the AC. For *Schroeder’s antinomian views resemble the false parody of the Augsburg Confession put forward by the scholastic Confutators*. Rather than defending the Augsburg Confession, Schroeder unwittingly lifts up an antinomian caricature of the AC that at various points Melancthon took pains to refute.

Although Schroeder casts himself as the gatekeeper who defines for other Lutherans “the” Lutheran position, his hermeneutical lens for reading Scripture is not distinctively Lutheran. It is the same anti-Scripture, gospel-diluted, and Reformation-caricatured hermeneutic that I have heard from Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Methodist supporters of homosexual practice. Strangely, they all delude themselves into thinking that their hermeneutic is distinctive to their own denominational heritage. The truth is that neither they nor Lutherans like Schroeder represent their denominational heritage well.

More and more people are beginning to realize that the great danger to their denominational heritage comes not from listening to scholars from other mainline denominations who uphold the authority of Scripture but from the propaganda of persons within their own denomination who, captive to the contemporary culture, seek to undermine the witness of the gospel regarding sexual ethics and Christology.

The Augsburg Confession and Melancthon’s Apology: On faith and good works

Of course, the idea that an appeal to Scripture’s strong stance against homosexual practice contradicts the theology of Luther, the Augsburg Confession, and Melancthon’s Apology is ridiculous. I agree with Luther, the Augsburg Confession, Melancthon, and, more importantly, with Jesus and Paul on the fundamentals of faith and works. But I disagree with those, like Schroeder, who truncate the full-orbed message of the gospel.

The message of the Augsburg Confession on “Faith and Good Works” (Article XX) is clear (see also Article VI):

1. Justification is by faith alone. Good works cannot merit salvation.
2. Faith, in combination with the indwelling Holy Spirit, enables and impels us to good works, which are “necessary” for the Christian life. We do such works out of gratitude for God’s grace through Christ, not out of a vain desire to merit our way into heaven.
3. Where a life is lived under the primary sway of the lusts of the flesh faith is absent. “When there is no faith and trust in God, all manner of lusts and human devices rule in the heart.”

On this last point, we might note also Philip Melancthon’s Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Part VI:

Likewise the faith of which we speak exists in repentance i.e., it is conceived in the terrors of conscience, which feels the wrath of God against our sins, and

seeks the remission of sins, and to be freed from sin. And in such terrors and other afflictions this faith ought to grow and be strengthened. *Wherefore it cannot exist in those who live according to the flesh, who are delighted by their own lusts and obey them.* Accordingly, Paul says, Rom. 8, 1 [and 8:4]: There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. So, too, vv. 12. 13: We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. *Wherefore, the faith which receives remission of sins* in a heart terrified and fleeing from sin *does not remain in those who obey their desires*, neither does it coexist with mortal sin. (emphases added)

Melanchthon is quite clear: Faith cannot continue to reside in those who live according to the flesh, that is, in primary obedience to the flesh's sinful desires.

At the end of this essay I have appended some additional quotations from the Augsburg Confession and Melanchthon's Apology to buttress the points made above.

Paul's theology of the cross

Schroeder complains that I do not understand the theology of the cross. But the misunderstanding lies with Schroeder who has turned grace into a license to sin.

Of course salvation cannot be merited by any amount of good works. God justifies the sinner on the basis of grace, by means of Christ's atoning work on the cross, and individually appropriated by faith in Christ. Boasting in self-achievement is thereby excluded (Rom 3:27; 1 Cor 1:29; Phil 3:7-11). Of course we are to act out of what God has remade us to be by his grace and through his Spirit, not out of our own self-striving.

At the same time, grace is not cheap. It comes at great cost to Christ, a fact that lays a great claim on our lives, including our sexual lives. This is how Paul related the cross of Christ to a requirement for sexual purity in **1 Corinthians 6:18-20**:

Flee sexual immorality! Every sin, whatever a person does, is outside the body. But the one who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit in you, which you have from God, and *you are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* (emphasis added)

Moreover, Paul states that we are transferred into Christ's death and this for a purpose: so that we might no longer live for ourselves but for the one who died for us. The point is well made in **Galatians 2:19-20**:

For I through the law died to the law, in order that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ; and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself over for my sake.

Where Schroeder promotes a view of faith as a take-the-money-and-run approach to God's grace, Paul put forward a view of faith as a holistic life reorientation, a trust that repeatedly says "Yes" to God and "No" to self. Schroeder wants sin to transfer to Christ without the self also transferring to Christ. It can't happen. According to Paul, the theology of the cross necessitates a cruciform life—a life reshaped by the event of the cross such that I no longer live but am crucified *with* Christ. To continue to live for oneself is the antithesis of a life lived "by faith." The life lived by faith is the life lived for God, out of the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and in gratitude for Christ's great sacrifice on one's behalf.

Paul's theology of the cross is a theology that not only denies to the justified any personal boast but also requires that the justified allow the Spirit to do the work of crucifying the flesh with its sinful passions. Paul makes this point obvious again in **Romans 6:1-8:17** (similarly, Galatians 5:13-25; 6:7-9, below). He asserts that to continue in enslavement to sin is to contradict God's purpose in liberating us from sin, a purpose self-evident in our baptism into Christ's death and in our future expectation of resurrected bodies (6:1-14). Believers are now to be enslaved to God. Those who continue to behave as though slaves to sin, including slaves to "sexual uncleanness" (6:19), will be recompensed with death; those who behave as slaves of God will receive the gift of eternal life (6:15-23). "The 'law' (i.e. regulating principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" now liberates us "from the 'law' (i.e. regulating principle) of sin and death" (8:2; compare 7:7-23, which distinguishes the external, good, but weak law of God from the internal, bad, and strong "law" or regulating power of sin operating in human members). Christ died for us "in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4)—not just in "us who believe" but in "us who *walk* . . . according to the Spirit." In the conclusion to this section Paul states with absolute clarity:

So then, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, resulting in living in conformity to the flesh, for if you live in conformity to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God—these are the children of God. (Rom 8:12-14; note: vv. 12-13, plus v. 4, are also quoted in Melancthon's Apology, Part VI, cited above)

In conclusion, there is no valid theology of the cross that treats transformation as optional for those not under the law, including transformation away from sexually impure, immoral, or licentious behavior. Not surprisingly, then, when Paul sat down new converts to explain to them the kind of conduct expected of believers, sexual "commands" were at the top of the list. Along with them Paul delivered strong warnings that non-compliance would be tantamount to rejecting God, risking God's wrath and exclusion from God's kingdom (1 Thess 4:1-8; cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5). Either the apostle Paul or Ed Schroeder does not understand the import of grace for sexual morality. I personally prefer the apostle.

The law/promise lens

Schroeder also complains that I do not understand the law/promise dichotomy. But Schroeder forgets the fact that an essential part of the promise is the Spirit—see the phrase “the promise of the Spirit” (= “what was promised, namely the Spirit” [Bauer’s *Lexicon*]) in Galatians 3:14 and Acts 2:33. For Paul the Spirit is integrally related to the necessity of the transformed life, which in turn is integrally related to sexual purity and an outcome of eternal life. Thus Paul says in **Galatians 5:13-25; 6:7-9**:

You were called to freedom, brethren; only [do] not [use] your freedom as a bridgehead (or opportunity) for the flesh. . . . Walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires against the Spirit. . . . But if you are being led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are: sexual immorality (*porneia*), sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*), sexual licentiousness (*aselgeia*) . . . , which I am warning you about, just as I warned you before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. . . . Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its (sinful) passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also line up with the Spirit. . . .

Stop deceiving yourselves. God is not going to be mocked, for whatever a person sows, one will also reap this. For the one who sows into one’s own flesh will reap destruction from the (same) flesh; but the one who sows into the Spirit will reap eternal life from the (same) Spirit. And let us not grow tired of doing what is right for in due time we will reap—if we do not relax our efforts.

Here Paul states clearly that:

1. Believers are free in Christ. Those who seek justification through works of the law such as circumcision are severed from Christ and have fallen away from grace (5:4).
2. Nevertheless, freedom is for being led by the Spirit and not for carrying out the sinful desires of the flesh.
3. The ones who are no longer “under the law” are those who are “led by the Spirit.” Conversely, those who are dominated by fleshly impulses remain “under the law,” that is, within the realm of the law’s jurisdiction and condemnation, regardless of any confession of faith.
4. “Sexual uncleanness” (*akatharsia*)—a rubric under which Paul elsewhere prominently categorizes same-sex intercourse (Romans 1:24-27)—is a particularly obvious “work of the flesh” that believers are to steer clear of.
5. Those who practice, in a serial and unrepentant manner, such sinful behaviors and who thereby “sow seed” primarily in the field of the flesh, risk not inheriting God’s kingdom and reaping instead a harvest of destruction. They risk this not because they fail to merit salvation but because they demonstrate that faith has meant little more to them than an intellectual assent to the truth. Those who persist in doing what is right—in gratitude for Christ’s redemptive work and knowing that God is the one who energizes both the willing and the doing (Phil 2:13)—will reap eternal life.

Schroeder affirms the first point but denies points 2 through 5. He then claims that he has the right hermeneutic for discerning Paul's gospel of grace—which, apparently, Paul himself did not understand.

A second thing that Schroeder forgets (there are others) is that one of the main problems of the law is not just that it promotes self-striving or condemns but that it is powerless to effect obedience. Luther's comments on **Romans 6:14** ("sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace") are illuminating:

Hence we must note that the apostle's mode of speaking appears unusual and strange to those who do not understand it because of its great peculiarity. For those people understand the expression "to be under the Law" as being the same as having a law according to which one must live. But *the apostle understands the words "to be under the Law" as equivalent to not fulfilling the Law, as being guilty of disobeying the Law, as being a debtor and a transgressor, in that the Law has the power of accusing and damning a person and lording it over him, but it does not have the power to enable him to satisfy the Law or overcome it.* And thus as long as the Law rules, sin also has dominion and holds man captive. . . . Therefore he says in this passage that we can restrain the reign of sin because "we are not under the Law but under grace" (v. 14). All this means "that the body of sin might be destroyed" (v. 6) and the righteousness which has been begun may be brought to perfection. (*Lectures on Romans*, in *Luther's Works* [vol. 25; Saint Louis: Concordia, 1972], 316-17; emphasis added)

In other words, "*to be under the Law*" is to be locked into a regime of sin, serving the sinful passions of the flesh and disobeying the Law's moral demands. "To be under grace," then, must be the obverse of this; namely, to be liberated from the controlling influence of sinful passions and so to bear "fruit" in one's conduct that issues in eternal life. As Paul says later in **Romans 7:4-6**:

You were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to the one who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For *when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions that were aroused by the law were at work in our members so as to bear fruit that issues in death. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that by which we were being held down, so that we serve [as slaves] in newness of Spirit* and not in oldness of letter (i.e., under the empowering "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" [8:2] and not under the powerless, merely written text of the law). (emphasis added)

Perfection of course awaits the redemption of our bodies; but, as Luther notes, the process has begun. Melancthon makes the same point in his Apology, Part VI:

We, therefore, profess that it is necessary that the Law be begun in us, and that it be observed continually more and more. . . . Therefore the adversaries falsely charge against us that our theologians do not teach good works, while they not only require these, but also show how they can be done.

Relevant too are Luther's comments on **Romans 6:19**. Romans 6:19 states: "For just as you once presented your members as slaves to *sexual uncleanness* (*akatharsia*, the same term used for same-sex intercourse in 1:24) and to lawlessness for the purpose of [doing] lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for the purpose of [doing] holiness." Luther rightly notes the implication of this passage:

He who serves uncleanness, that is, dissipation and carnal uncleanness, is already becoming more and more unrighteous, for sin now rules over him, and he has lost faith and has become an unbeliever. (*Lectures on Romans*, 321)

According to Luther, active participation in sexually immoral behavior of an egregious sort is tantamount to a complete loss of faith.

If Schroeder refuses to accept what I say about Paul, simply because I am not a member of a Lutheran church, he can hear essentially the same message from a fine New Testament scholar who teaches at Smith College and happens also to be Lutheran: Karl P. Donfried. Almost 30 years ago Donfried wrote an article entitled "Justification and Last Judgment in Paul," which has since become a classic (first published in *Zeitschrift fuer die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 67 [1976]: 90-110 and *Interpretation* 30 [1976]: 140-52; reprinted in: Karl Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* [Eerdmans, 2002], 253-78; see also, "Justification and Last Judgment in Paul—Twenty-Five Years Later," in *ibid.*, 279-92). According to Donfried, "Paul expects a last judgment for Christians which can have different results: salvation for the Christians who have been obedient in faith and wrath for those who have been disobedient to their calling in Christ" (p. 270). Similarly, in connection with the case of the incestuous man in 1 Corinthians 5, Donfried concludes: "anyone who is baptized, justified and a member of the church but who is not obedient to the gift and possibility of his new existence, will not be tolerated [by God]" (p. 278).

On Schroeder's misunderstanding of Leviticus

Schroeder says that we shouldn't pay any attention to Leviticus because it was "God's civil ordinance for the Jews." Obviously Leviticus is a civil ordinance for Israel and, taken as a whole, is not our civil code. For example, we don't impose the death penalty for adultery and other sexual offenses.

At the same time it is equally obvious that Leviticus enshrines many core moral standards—including "love your neighbor as yourself" in Lev 19:18 (the second greatest commandment according to Jesus)—that are carried over into the new covenant. We don't say about adultery, or consensual adult incest, or bestiality, "Oh, that's part of the outdated Levitical purity code. We can ignore that." There is clearly significant continuity in the divine will between the two Testaments, including in sexual ethics. Jesus believed this. Paul obviously believed this, since he alluded to Lev 18:22 and 20:13 in his own denunciations of same-sex intercourse in Rom 1:24-27 and 1 Cor 6:9 (also of incest in 1 Cor 5). The entire New Testament canon professes it. Indeed, so far as sexual standards are concerned, the New Testament at a number of points actually intensifies the

Old Testament's demand rather than weakens it (compare, for example, Jesus' antitheses in Matt 5:27-32).

Schroeder also conveniently ignores the fact that Scripture's other-sex prerequisite for appropriate sexual relations spans the entire Scripture, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. It is certainly not limited to Leviticus, as I have shown in *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. Every narrative, law, proverb, exhortation, metaphor, and poetry that has anything to do with human sexuality presumes the sole and exclusive legitimacy of heterosexual unions. In most of my presentations I don't even have time to talk about Leviticus because I'm so preoccupied talking about Genesis, Jesus, and Paul, and various hermeneutical concerns.

On the definition of sin as not believing in Jesus

Schroeder says that I ignore "the new definition for sin that came with Jesus," namely, not believing in Jesus. Of course sin means this. However, the term "sin" doesn't cease to be used in the New Testament to refer to individual acts of rebellion that patently exhibit unbelief toward God and ongoing reliance on the flesh.

For example, what does Paul mean when he asks, "Are we to continue in sin . . . ?" or "Should we sin . . . ?" in Rom 6:1, 15? Context indicates that he means obedience to erring desires of the flesh, including desires for sexually impure behavior (6:12, 19; 7:5, 8, 18-19; 8:5-8, 12-13). When Paul says that "every [other] sin . . . is outside of the body but the one who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Cor 6:18), he is clearly referring to engaging in sexual immorality as a particularly egregious sort of sin in terms of its effects on the human body, whether it be sex with prostitutes (6:15-16), incest (ch. 5; 6:9), fornication, adultery, or same-sex intercourse (6:9). He means by *sin* engaging in behavior that God commands us not to engage in (7:19). When Jesus says to the woman caught in adultery "sin no more" (John 8:11) he means that the woman should stop committing adultery. If Schroeder would take the time to do a simple concordance search of the word "sin" (*hamartia* and cognates) in the New Testament, he would see over and over again that sin in the sense of failing to believe in Jesus does not eradicate sin in the sense of a violation of God's moral imperatives. If one claims faith in Jesus, a trust that Jesus' provision for my life is better than any self-gratification, and then engages in serial, unrepentant adultery or incest, what kind of faith is that? The answer: the nonexistent kind, no-faith, and no-faith is sin.

On "abominations" and loving homosexual persons

In a contrived effort to paint me as callous to homosexual persons, Schroeder says several times that my favorite word is "abomination." The truth is that I rarely use it in my writings apart from discussing Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, the prohibitions of homosexual cult activity that can be found from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings, and Ezekiel 16:15 and 18:12 (all of which use the term *to'evah*, "abomination," "abhorrent or detestable

act,” of homosexual practice). Even so, Scripture makes it quite clear that God abhors same-sex intercourse, as also incest and adultery; it would be unloving and deceptive to gloss over this fact. In describing same-sex intercourse in Rom 1:24-27, Paul uses similar words: “sexual impurity/uncleanness,” “indecent” or “shameful conduct,” self-“dishonoring/degrading” behavior.

At the same time I also emphasize strongly in my work the church’s obligation to love and reach out to those engaged in such behavior, and to be open to such outreach ourselves whenever we fall into willful sinful behavior. For example, on pp. 31-32 of *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Schroeder calls this my “now (in)famous book”), I say:

I deplore attempts to demean the humanity of homosexuals. . . . The person beset with homosexual temptation should evoke our concern, sympathy, help, and understanding, not our scorn or enmity. Even more, such a person should kindle a feeling of solidarity in the hearts of all Christians, since we all struggle to properly manage our erotic passions. . . . Thus a reasoned denunciation of homosexual behavior . . . is *not*, and should not be construed as, a denunciation of those victimized by homosexual urges, since the aim is to rescue the true self created in God’s image for a full life.

Similar observations are made throughout the book (see, *inter alia*, pp. 227-28, 484-85, 489-93), including the conclusions of chapters where they can hardly be ignored (although Schroeder chooses to do so). Abhorrence of a given practice can, and must, coexist alongside of love for violators. Jesus demonstrated precisely this in reaching out to tax collectors who exploited many economically.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that Schroeder operates with a highly truncated gospel. He views Lutheranism through the distorted lens of antinomianism. While there are indeed parts of the canon higher and more “core” than our parts, *in severing gospel from new life Schroeder has cut deep into the gospel itself.*

In Romans 1:18-32 Paul depicts the wrath of God in the present time as God standing back and allowing humans to be controlled in their behavior by self-degrading impulses. *What Paul describes as “the wrath of God” Schroeder sees as the grace of God.* For Paul, the gospel is not just a proclamation that our sins are forgiven, as though leaving us trapped in cycles of self-degrading conduct. It is also a message of hope regarding the transformed life. The tragedy is that this message is so easily gleaned from central (not merely peripheral) portions of the New Testament, including the consistent teaching of Jesus and Paul, and yet so many, including Schroeder, refuse to acknowledge it because it does not conform to their bogus “hermeneutic.”

We have focused mostly on Paul to this point but one could easily multiply material from the Jesus tradition, such as when Jesus says: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not *do* what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46); “Whoever *does* the will of God is my brother and

sister and mother” (Mark 3:35); “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not *do* them” is like the person who builds a house on sand, which is destroyed when a flood comes (Luke 6:47-49 par. Matt 7:24-27); “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me; for whoever wants to save his life must lose it” (Mark 8:34-37); and, in the midst of a discussion about sex, that one should be prepared to cut off body parts that “threaten one’s downfall,” because it is better to go into heaven maimed than to be thrown into hell whole-bodied (Matt 5:29-30). Salt that loses its taste and trees or branches that cease to bear fruit are to be thrown into the fire (Luke 14:34-35 par. Matt 5:13; Luke 6:43-44 par. Matt 7:16-20; Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-11).

Schroeder says that the Bible should be viewed as a “patient chart,” not as a body of texts that tells us “what to believe, how to behave.” But the dichotomy is false and certainly not one that the Augsburg Confession embraced. Moreover, a patient too needs practical instruction in how to get better and maintain health. Yet even a corrected version of Schroeder’s “patient chart” only goes so far, inasmuch as (a) there is a strong dimension of moral culpability to sin not conveyed by the sickness metaphor, (b) God’s commandments cannot be reduced to mere suggestions from a doctor, and (c) God’s role in judging cannot be reduced entirely to the kind of impersonal cause-and-effect nexus normally associated with disease.

The big picture that has apparently escaped the notice of persons like Ed Schroeder is that, even though the Bible is not in its entirety a rulebook (the Bible is composed of many different genres) and underwent development throughout its long history, it does contain rules to be obeyed, called “commandments.” Confession of faith in Christ is not an excuse to disregard core commandments of Scripture. On the contrary: it is the stimulus and means for obedience to such commands (as the AC acknowledges). That is why the risen Christ commanded the eleven to make disciples by “teaching them to keep all the things that I have commanded you to do” (Matt 28:20). That is why Jesus in John declared, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (14:15, 21). That is why Paul, in the midst of talking about sex ethics, declared that what counts is “keeping the commandments of God” (1 Cor 7:19). That is why the New Testament in general devotes an extraordinary amount of attention to instructing believers in how they should behave.

But for Schroeder it seems to matter little that these concerns were central to Jesus, central to Paul, and central to the rest of the New Testament witness. He has constructed glasses that allow him to discard whatever does not fit his own fabricated ideology. What he protects is not the view of faith and works upheld by Luther, the Augsburg Confession, and Melancthon’s Apology—much less the view upheld by Jesus and the united witness of Scripture. No, what he protects is a tragic parody of classical Lutheranism, a caricature of justification by faith. He fails to see that to be “under *grace*” involves the capacity and necessity to do right, including in the area of sexual ethics; that *freedom from the law* is only for those led by the Spirit; that *sin transfer* to Christ does not occur apart from self-transfer to Christ; and that *faith* is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth but a holistic life reorientation that entails living in “the law of the Spirit” and “for God.” All of these points can, and must, be affirmed in a theological context that

maintains that God justifies the ungodly on the basis of faith in Christ and in Christ's redemptive work. Schroeder's rigid "either-or" mentality about such things—either justification is by faith alone or moral transformation is necessary—is dead wrong.

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Appendix

The Augsburg Confession, Article XX ("Faith and Good Works"):

"Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding good Works. . . . Our teachers have instructed the churches concerning faith as follows: First, that our works cannot reconcile God or merit forgiveness of sins, grace, and justification, but that we obtain this only by faith when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone has been set forth the Mediator and Propitiation, 1 Tim. 2, 6, in order that the Father may be reconciled through Him. Whoever, therefore, trusts that by works he merits grace, despises the merit and grace of Christ, and seeks a way to God without Christ, by human strength. . . .

"Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God. It is only by faith that forgiveness of sins is apprehended, and that, for nothing. And because through faith the Holy Ghost is received, hearts are renewed and endowed with new affections, so as to be able to bring forth good works. For Ambrose says: Faith is the mother of a good will and right doing. For man's powers without the Holy Ghost are full of ungodly affections, and are too weak to do works which are good in God's sight. . . .

"Hence it may be readily seen that this doctrine is not to be charged with prohibiting good works, but rather the more to be commended, because it shows how we are enabled to do good works. For without faith human nature can in no wise do the works of the First or of the Second Commandment. Without faith it does not call upon God, nor expect anything from God, nor bear the cross, but seeks, and trusts in, man's help. And thus, when there is no faith and trust in God all manner of lusts and human devices rule in the heart."

The same point is communicated in Article VI, "Of New Obedience":

"Also [our teachers] teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification before God."

And also in Philip Melancthon's Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Part VI:

“It is . . . the opinion of merit that we exclude. We do not exclude the Word or Sacraments, as the adversaries falsely charge us. For we have said above that faith is conceived from the Word, and we honor the ministry of the Word in the highest degree. Love also and works must follow faith. Wherefore, they are not excluded so as not to follow, but confidence in the merit of love or of works is excluded in justification.”

Melanchthon’s Apology, Part VI:

“We, therefore, profess that it is necessary that the Law be begun in us, and that it be observed continually more and more. And at the same time we comprehend both spiritual movements and external good works [the good heart within and works without]. Therefore the adversaries falsely charge against us that our theologians do not teach good works, while they not only require these, but also show how they can be done. . . .

“Likewise the faith of which we speak exists in repentance i.e., it is conceived in the terrors of conscience, which feels the wrath of God against our sins, and seeks the remission of sins, and to be freed from sin. And in such terrors and other afflictions this faith ought to grow and be strengthened. Wherefore it cannot exist in those who live according to the flesh, who are delighted by their own lusts and obey them. Accordingly, Paul says, Rom. 8, 1: There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. So, too, vv. 12. 13: We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Wherefore, the faith which receives remission of sins in a heart terrified and fleeing from sin does not remain in those who obey their desires, neither does it coexist with mortal sin.”

Melanchthon’s Apology, Part XXV (on Article 20):

“Faith does not remain in those who lose the Holy Ghost, who reject repentance, just as we have said above (p. 253) that faith exists in repentance. . . . For we do not make void the Law, says Paul, Rom. 3, 31; yea, we establish the Law, because when by faith we have received the Holy Ghost, the fulfilling of the Law necessarily follows, by which love, patience, chastity, and other fruits of the Spirit gradually grow.”