

*Concerning the particula exclusiva: Reflections after Reading Jüngel*

1. I remain convinced that a very good, if not indeed the best, scheme for ordering the several traditional concepts/terms in which the *particula exclusiva* is operative is that outlined in my "*Sola Scriptura, Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide*" (Notebooks, Fall 1982-83). Thus the ordering principles of such a scheme are:

(1) the distinction between the existential *question* and the specifically Christian *answer* to it;

(2) the distinction between the so-called *formal principle* of the Christian answer, i.e., the sole primary authority authorizing it (*sola scriptura*) and its so-called *material principle*, i.e., the sole primal source explicitly authorizing this primary authority (*solus Christus*);

(3) the distinction between the two moments of the Christian answer, i.e., its *historical moment* (*solus Christus*) and its *existential moment* (*sola gratia/sola fide*); and

(4) the distinction between the two aspects of the existential moment of the Christian answer, i.e., its *metaphysical aspect* (*sola gratia*) and its *moral aspect* (*sola fide*).

2. I also remain convinced that, although all the concepts/terms in which the *particula exclusiva* is operative do indeed function to exclude, what they are rightly understood to exclude is not all other relevant factors simply as such, and as playing any role at all, but only all other relevant factors as *primary* factors, and as playing any *primary* role. Thus, for example, *sola scriptura* is rightly understood to exclude, not all authorities other than scripture simply as such, but all other such authorities as in any way *primary* authorities, as distinct from being secondary authorities authorized (and that means also, always *to be authorized!*) by scripture. Or, again, if we are said to be saved *sola gratia*, what is rightly

understood to be excluded is not that things other than grace are or may be somehow involved in our salvation, but only that it involves something other than grace having the same *primacy*, as distinct from being a *means* of grace such as faith is said to be when it is called the *medium salutis apprehensivum*, or when we are said to be saved *through* faith (*per fidem*), not *by* or *because* of it.

3. I now see more clearly than before that all of the concepts/terms previously referred to are rightly understood to exclude possible misunderstandings of one such concept/term in which the *particula exclusiva* is operative—namely, *solus Deus*. What it means to say "God alone," as Christian faith, according to a Reformation understanding of it, is bound to insist, is spelled out, in their different ways, by "scripture alone," "Christ alone," "grace alone," "faith alone," and even "word alone" (*solo verbo*). But I also see more clearly why Jüngel is justified in saying, or implying, that the Christian faith that is christocentric as well as theocentric is soteriocentric as well as christocentric. Indeed, "the center of the center of Christian faith" is the gospel of the rightwising of the godless by grace alone through faith alone (cf. 12).

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