

*On the "Obedience" of Christ and of Christians*

1. Clearly, the New Testament writings speak not only of the obedience of Christians but also of the obedience of Christ. One may well be tempted to suppose, therefore, that they use "obedience" in the same univocal sense in both cases. And if one forgets or ignores the existential context of all christological talk, this temptation can hardly be resisted.

2. Nevertheless, I maintain that "obedience," as they use it (like "love," "sonship," and other terms), is an *analogical*, not a univocal concept, in that it has two different, if related, senses in the two cases. Whereas talk about the obedience of Christians is talk about their *actualization* of the possibility of faith working through love, talk about the obedience of Christ is talk about his decisive *re-presentation* of this possibility. This means that Christians are said to be obedient insofar as they actualize the possibility decisively re-presented to them through Jesus Christ, while he is said to be obedient insofar as he decisively re-presents our authentic possibility, given the existence and actuality of God. Thus, whereas to talk about the obedience of Christians is to talk about their existence as measured by the possibility of faith working through love, to talk about the obedience of Christ is to talk about this same possibility as the measure of authentic human existence.

3. The analogy here is not unlike that between truth and truthfulness (*Wahrheit und Wahrhaftigkeit*), the obedience of Christians being to truthfulness somewhat as the obedience of Christ is to truth. Thus to say that a Christian is obedient is like saying that someone is truthful, while to say that Christ is obedient is like saying that something is true. Accordingly, to say that Christians are obedient is to imply but not to assert what or who they are obedient to, while to say that Christ is obedient is to assert that it is he who is uniquely worthy of their obedience as well as that of every other woman and man.

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