

1. A Christian in the strict and proper sense is a person who so experiences Jesus, immediately or mediately, as to come to obedient faith in God decisively through him—where "obedient faith" means, first, entrusting oneself to God without reservation; and then, second, living loyally to God and to all to whom God is loyal without qualification.

2. As such, a Christian at least implicitly believes certain things to be believed (*credenda*) and does certain things to be done (*agenda*)—namely, whatever is necessarily presupposed or implied by coming to obedient faith in God decisively through Jesus, in the sense of unreserved trust and unqualified loyalty to God and to God's cause.

3. But simply believing, however sincerely, the things that a Christian at least implicitly believes; and simply doing, however sincerely, the things that a Christian at least implicitly does are not sufficient to make one a Christian in the strict and proper sense.

4. On the contrary, one may believe all the things that a Christian believes and do all the things that a Christian does, and even do both sincerely, without having the obedient faith in God, the unreserved trust in God and the unqualified loyalty to God and to God's cause, to which one is decisively called through Jesus and which alone suffices to make one a Christian in the strict and proper sense.

5. But, surely, one who sincerely believes what a Christian believes and sincerely does what a Christian does must be a Christian in *some* sense—if only in a broad and improper sense; in fact, what is ordinarily understood in distinguishing a Christian from a non-Christian is precisely a person who believes and acts in just this way.

6. Granting this, however, requires one also to say that being a Christian in this broad and improper sense of sincerely believing and doing all that a Christian at least implicitly believes and does is in principle exactly like being a

Jew or a Greek (i.e., circumcised or uncircumcised), being a slave or a free person, or being a male or a female, in the sense in which Paul understands these distinctions in Galatians 3:26 ff.

7. Therefore, if one is to feel the full force of Paul's point in this oft-cited passage, one must be able to say, "in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put Christ on. There is neither Christian nor non-Christian, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (This presupposes, obviously, that baptism in the sense of putting Christ on, i.e., dying and rising with him, is not something over and done with once for all in the past, but is ever to be actualized anew in every present.)

8. Of course, it is only in the broad and improper sense of being a Christian that it is possible to say this; for to be a Christian in the strict and proper sense is precisely what it means to be a child of God decisively through faith in Christ Jesus and thus to be one with all who have been baptized into Christ and have put Christ on through faith—non-Christians as well as Christians, Greeks as well as Jews, slaves as well as free persons, females as well as males.

18 August 1998; rev. 18 September 2002; 22 June 2009