

Luther argues from the fact that "we have all been baptized and are called Christians" that "we should endeavor to know what it means to be a Christian . . . and have the name Christian, and also what one must do to be one." In this sense, "we, too, must establish our name and demonstrate that we are rightly called Christians" (*LW*, 51:111).

Couldn't one rightly claim that doing theology is a necessary means of doing exactly this? Of course, educating oneself in the Christian faith and life is the primary means to the same end. But whether the Christian teaching by which one is educated is itself valid is never settled simply by the fact that this is the teaching one receives. On the contrary, this teaching can be validated, insofar as it can be validated at all, only by critical reflection, and thus only by doing theology.

Significantly, however, theology, like the teaching on which it is the critical reflection, is focused on "what it means to be a Christian . . . and have the name of Christian, and also on what one must do to be one." In other words, theology and witness alike are focused existentially. Thus Luther argues, "you must prove your name as a Christian by faith and nothing else, that is, so as to believe that Christ's righteousness is yours." "[We] are all Christians through faith and baptism . . . [and] that person is a Christian who has received Christ and believes in God with [her or ] his whole heart" (112, 113). But Luther goes on to add: "When we have Christ by true faith, then he causes us to live in such a way that we are strengthened in faith in such a way that I do these works which I do for the benefit and the good of my neighbor. For my Christian name would not be sufficient, despite my baptism and my faith, if I did not help my neighbor and draw him [or her] to faith through my works in order that he [or she] may follow me" (116).