

Contrary to what I thought earlier, I no longer think that Marxsen's distinction between "'Christian'" and "Christian" is simply his way of doing what I've done by distinguishing between normative and descriptive senses of the same or comparable adjectives (and nouns). (Cf., e.g., "Some Thoughts on a Christian Theology of Interrreligious Dialogue": 5, where I assume, for the sake of argument, that "'religious tradition' can have two different senses. On the one hand, it can have a *descriptive* sense in which ^{it} refers indiscriminately to whatever has, in fact, been passed ^{down} or handed on as belonging to the religion in question. On the other hand, it can have a *normative* sense in which it refers discriminately only to what, by right, ought to have been passed down or handed on as belonging to the religion." Cf. also "The Enlightenment Is Not Over": 321 f., for an earlier use of the same distinction.)

True, he says such things as that "Christian" is ordinarily used with "a very broad meaning" to refer to "everything that has been thought, lived, and formed in a long tradition." But when it is asked whether everything in the tradition is "really 'Christian,'" a critical evaluation is called for. The question then is "whether what is said to be Christian agrees with the norm by which what is 'Christian' can be distinguished. Thus is raised the much-discussed question of the 'Christian proprium'" ("*Christliche*" und *christliche Ethik im Neuen Testament*: 11). Or, again: "That not all Christians are always 'Christians' remains noncontroversial." "Many things are given out as 'Christian' that are (only) Christian" (11, 12). But as much as statements such as these may indeed be taken to parallel my statements as cited parenthetically above, Marxsen also frequently uses "'Christian'" in a different sense to mean "eschatological existence," or actually existing eschatologically (cf., espec., 77). Thus he can also say such things as that "A Christian is a sinner who waits to become 'Christian'" (119). But, then, the distinction between "[↓]Christian[↓]" and "[↓]Christian[↓]" has a very different meaning, being used in somewhat the same way in which John Wesley uses the distinction between being "an almost Christian" and being "altogether a Christian." Just how different this sense of the distinction is from the other becomes clear when one reflects that, whereas, in the other sense, whether or not something is "really 'Christian'" can be determined "scientifically," which is to say, historically and systematically, in this sense, whether or not someone is "'Christian'" as

well as "a Christian" cannot be "objectively" determined at all, because, being a matter of actually existing eschatologically, it is not "visible," but "invisible," not "an enduring state," but a matter of the moment, and so on.

It is entirely legitimate, of course, to make both distinctions. As a matter of fact, it is imperative to make them. But, unless I've missed something, Marxsen uses the same terms to make both distinctions without ever making clear that and why his terms thereupon become systematically and significantly ambiguous.

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