Judging Christians

Any Christian worth his pillar of salt has learned the fine art of giving God credit for everything good and blaming the devil for everything else. When a baby is born, it's a miracle! It's a gift from God! But if the kid grows up to be a scoundrel, God had nothing to do with it. Then it's all the devil's doing.

Whenever anyone who claims to be a Christian does something bad or evil, some Christians shift blame by pronouncing authoritatively that that person wasn't really a Christian. Suddenly, that whole *judge not lest you be judged thing* is shoved to the background, out of sight and hopefully out of mind for the time being.

Which begs the question, when is a Christian not a Christian? Isn't that strictly God's domain? How can any human think he is in any position to judge that? Wouldn't that be playing God?

In the case of the Christian Church of the Middle Ages, when the clergy at all levels acted more like the Italian mafia than God's mundane representatives and spiritual guides, Christians typically insist that they weren't really Christians at all. But they have no plausible explanation for why God allowed his Church to be taken over by Christian impersonators and impostors for centuries, brutally exploiting and oppressing the common Christian masses. Where was God and why did He stand idly by?

The absurdity of that argument is also obvious in the case of Christianity's embrace of American slavery. That encompassed virtually the entire colonial and American population, who claimed to be good Christians. But how could they be Christians if they embraced the evil slave industry? Or to put it another way, how could they embrace slavery if they were Christians? Either Christians are fully capable of acting in evil and wicked ways, or there are no real Christians, and there never have been. After all, we all sin, don't we? Including Christians. Where do you draw the line?

If they weren't Christians, what were they? Where was the Christian God while all this slavery was going on in America by people who said they were Christians and thought they were Christians? Paul embraced slavery, and Christians sincerely thought God did too. Were billions of Christians wrong, or did God really embrace slavery as Paul said?

What about devout Christians during the Inquisition of the Middle Ages? They tortured, terrorized, and killed people who considered themselves just as devout in their Christian faith. Did God condone the evil of the Inquisiton? Or was the entire Church hijacked by non-Christians? What about the Crusades? When a group of crusaders decided to take a little detour and kill a bunch of Jews just for kicks and grins, were those men Christians, acting with God's blessing, or were they not really Christians at all? When did they stop being Christians – when they joined the Crusade, or when they whimsically decided to kill Jews?

Let's consider another example. Tell us about Jimmy Swaggart. Some years back the popular televangelist decided to expose the sins of one of his colleagues. That colleague, then, decided to get revenge. He did so by obtaining proof that Jimmy was enjoying the services of prostitutes. When that went public, Jimmy was kicked out of his church (defrocked), and his televangelist business took a major hit. Of course, we all saw how he cried like a baby, apologized profusely, demonstrated his profound shame and remorse, begged for forgiveness, and promised to clean up his act. So, he's still raking in the dough, although not nearly as much as he once did.

So, my question is this: is Jimmy Swaggart a real Christian? If so, how is that possible after such a whopper of a sin? Was he a real Christian before the scandal? During the scandal? Did he ever stop being a real Christian? Just explain to us exactly when he started and / or stopped and / or resumed being a real Christian. How does that work? Lay out the details for us, please. Surely you are capable of that if you believe the corrupt Church of the Dark Ages was comprised of non-Christians.

What about the money? If Swaggart collected money (and he certainly did) while donors were under the false impression that he was the kind of guy who practiced what he preached, that would constitute fraud, which is a whole 'nother sin, I believe. So, how much of his lucre should be refunded to atone for that sin? At what point (if any) did his income become fraudulent, and at what point, if any, did it cease to be fraudulent?

If you are one of those Christians who insists that the corrupt clergy of the Middle Ages were not really Christians, please explain exactly how that works. Thank you.