KIERKEGAARD'S THEOLOGY: CROSS AND GRACE.
THE LUTHERAN AND IDEALIST TRADITIONS IN HIS THOUGHT
VOLUME ONE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

BY
CRAIG QUENTIN HINKSON

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
DECEMBER 1993
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**VOLUME ONE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A WORD CONCERNING SOURCES AND THEIR CITATION</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE. LUTHER’S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO. KIERKEGAARD’S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE. JOHANN GEORG HAMANN AS LIKELY MEDIATOR OF LUTHER’S THEOLOGIA CRUCIS TO KIERKEGAARD</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR. THE APPROPRIATION OF GRACE AS ITSELF</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE. KIERKEGAARD’S TEACHING ON THE WILL: LIBERUM ARBITRIUM OR SERVUM ARBITRIUM?</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VOLUME TWO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER SIX. KIERKEGAARD'S CHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARD LUTHER</th>
<th>177</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SEVEN. CROSS WITHOUT RESURRECTION</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER EIGHT. THE ROMANTIC-IDÉALIST ROOTS OF SK’S EXISTENTIAL DIALECTIC</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER NINE. THE COMPROMISE OF LUTHER’S GRACE TEACHING IN THE POLEMIC AGAINST LUTHERANISM</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following list of short and abbreviated titles is used in citing Kierkegaard's works throughout the dissertation. If the relationship between the abbreviated and complete titles is not always apparent, this is due to the fact that individual volumes within the English corpus sometimes contain disparate materials, not all of which are adequately reflected by the English title. The abbreviated titles correct this deficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviated Title</th>
<th>Complete Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armed Neutrality</td>
<td>Armed Neutrality and An Open Letter with Relevant Selections from His Journals and Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack upon Christendom</td>
<td>Kierkegaard's Attack upon &quot;Christendom&quot; 1854-1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Discourses</td>
<td>Christian Discourses and The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air and Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Anxiety</td>
<td>The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Irony</td>
<td>The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates together with Notes of Schelling's Berlin Lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>Crisis in the Life of an Actress and Other Essays on Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses</td>
<td>Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either/Or I</td>
<td>Either/Or: Part I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either/Or II</td>
<td>Either/Or: Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear and Trembling</td>
<td>Fear and Trembling. Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Self-Examination</td>
<td>For Self-Examination. Judge for Yourself!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragment Title</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragments</td>
<td>Philosophical Fragments, Johannes Climacus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel of Suffering</td>
<td>The Gospel of Suffering and The Lilies of the Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Priest - Publican - Woman Who Was a Sinner</td>
<td>Christian Discourses and The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air and Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannes Climacus</td>
<td>Philosophical Fragments, Johannes Climacus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP</td>
<td>Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge for Yourself!</td>
<td>For Self-Examination, Judge for Yourself!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilies and Birds</td>
<td>Christian Discourses and The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air and Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Activity as a Writer</td>
<td>The Point of View for My Work as an Author: A Report to History and Related Writings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Authority and Revelation</td>
<td>On Authority and Revelation: The Book on Adler, or a Cycle of Ethico-Religious Essays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Open Letter&quot;</td>
<td>Armed Neutrality and An Open Letter with Relevant Selections from His Journals and Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pap</td>
<td>Søren Kierkegaards Papirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of View</td>
<td>The Point of View for My Work as an Author: A Report to History and Related Writings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postscript</td>
<td>Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice in Christianity</td>
<td>Practice in Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Age</td>
<td>The Present Age and Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purity of Heart</td>
<td>Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing; Spiritual Preparation for the Office of Confession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Fear and Trembling, Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickness unto Death</td>
<td><em>The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
<td><em>Stages on Life's Way. Studies by Various Persons</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td><em>Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Værker. 1901-1906</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts on Crucial Situations</td>
<td><em>Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life: Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Discourses at Communion on Fridays</td>
<td><em>For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourselves! and Three Discourses 1851</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises</td>
<td><em>The Present Age and Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unchangeableness of God</td>
<td><em>For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourselves! and Three Discourses 1851</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What We Learn from the Lilies and Birds</td>
<td><em>The Gospel of Suffering and The Lilies of the Field</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Woman That Was a Sinner</td>
<td><em>Training in Christianity and the Edifying Discourse which &quot;Accompanied&quot; It</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works of Love</td>
<td><em>Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following list of abbreviations is used in citing sources other than Kierkegaard:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>En christelig Postille</td>
<td><em>En christelig Postille, sammendragen af Dr. Morten Luthers Kirke- og Huuspostiller efter Benjamin Lindners tydske Samling udgivet i ny dansk Oversættelse af Jørgen Thisted.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td><em>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDNT</td>
<td><em>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A WORD CONCERNING SOURCES AND THEIR CITATION

Throughout the dissertation all references to Kierkegaard's collected works in Danish are to the first edition (1901-06) of Drachmann, Heiberg, and Lange. All quotations of it and other foreign language sources within the main text are given in English translation. Unless otherwise noted, the translation is that of the appropriate English edition, where such exists. Quotations appearing in the footnotes are generally given in the original language in the case of German, and in English in the case of the Scandinavian languages. Throughout the dissertation references to English editions follow those to the original foreign edition and are set off by parentheses or brackets.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The people and institutions that have aided me in this project are many, and I cannot do justice to them all in these brief remarks. Nevertheless I would like to mention a few. The idea for this dissertation was given me by Edna Hong a decade ago. During a visit to the Hong Library in Northfield, Minnesota she remarked that if she were a young graduate student she would write on Kierkegaard's doctrine of grace. I followed her advice and the topic has afforded me a fruitful point of access to Kierkegaard's theology as a whole. To her and her husband, Howard, who has been a gracious mentor to me during these years, I owe enormous thanks. Besides offering his insight and counsel along the way, Prof. Hong opened invaluable research opportunities to me, including visits to the Northfield library and the University of Copenhagen's Kierkegaard library. Additionally I am indebted to the Divinity School for its generous financial aid throughout my graduate program, to the American Scandinavian Foundation for its financial support during my first year of study in Denmark, and to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and Ib Hendriksen foundation for their support during my last two years there. Julia Watkin, Grethe Kjær, the late Paul Müller, and Lektor Paul Lier were wonderful hosts and conversation partners during those years. From them and other research colleagues in Denmark I have learned much. Finally the members of my dissertation committee--Brian Gerrish, Hermann Deuser, and Langdon Gilkey--have been of the utmost help to me, not only in terms of their knowledgeability, but of the human qualities so indispensable to mentorship. Prof. Emeritus Gilkey--initially my advisor--stayed with my project in the capacity of a reader long after it was incumbent upon him to do so. During the time of his retirement when it was not yet clear who would succeed him as my director, Prof. Dr. Hermann Deuser offered to help in whatever way he could. I am indebted to him not only for his particular expertise in continental Kierkegaard scholarship, but for his warm encouragement along the way. Finally, to Prof. Gerrish I owe a particular debt of
gratitude. He accepted me as his student at a time when I was uncertain about the fate of my project. I could not have asked for a finer adviser. I have long admired his scholarship as an ideal for which to strive. To have worked under his supervision has been a distinct honor, and I might add, pleasure.

Lastly there are, above all, two people without whom this work would not have been possible: my dear mother, who has helped us financially along the way, and tirelessly cared for our young son since our family returned from Denmark; and my devoted wife, Ellen, who has made countless sacrifices since the day she met me--not the least of which was leaving her native Denmark, and her family, to begin a new life with me in the United States. She has provided every possible support along the way, including that of being the family's sole breadwinner.
In memory of my father
INTRODUCTION

There can be no doubt that Kierkegaard's situation was, in large part, determinative of his thinking. Finding himself in a context in which grace meant little more than possession of a baptismal certificate—which, naturally, all possessed—Kierkegaard saw it as his task to emphasize the enormous personal cost at which grace is appropriated by the Christian. Tirelessly he enjoins the infinite demand that Christianity places upon the individual—a demand from which there is no respite in this life, the presence of grace notwithstanding. This has led not a few theologians to deny that Kierkegaard understood the true meaning of grace. The mature Karl Barth, for example, reports that his break with crisis theology—and with Kierkegaard—was motivated in part by the displacement that the gospel suffered at the hand of law in each:

Was it permissible in the long-run to continue, again and again, to bring to light the antitheses, contradictions, and abysses that Kierkegaard so masterfully demonstrates—to formulate ever more rigorously the conditions of a thought and life in faith, in love, in hope—to make the truly necessary negations in this matter into the theme of theology, and thus, again and again to enforce them—to give to those poor beggars who become Christians and who would like to think that they are Christians, again and again the bitterness of the required training in Christianity to taste? Was this permissible when the matter here should have been, namely, one of proclaiming and expounding to them the gospel of God, and therefore the gospel of his free grace? Curious how easily one fell prey, oneself, to a law that only kills, becoming sour, gloomy and sad!1

The late Kierkegaard himself lends credence to this judgement by denying that Luther's way of speaking about law and gospel has its foundation in Christ's teaching.2 Such a pronouncement can of course be "explained" by the justification, "Kierkegaard simply did not understand the reformer" (the Lutherbild of the age perhaps obscuring the true Luther for

2 Pap XI1 A 572 (JP 3:2554).
him). Similarly, SK's tendency to harp upon Christianity's crushing requirement, but not its liberating freedom, can perhaps be explained in terms of the situation to which he was (as he himself admits) a "one-sided corrective." Nevertheless, the conclusion lies close at hand that SK's increasing antagonism toward Luther, and his presentation of Christianity principally as requirement, expressed at bottom a displeasure with the Lutheran teaching on grace and constituted a return to some sort of legalism.

The question of the nature and extent of Kierkegaard's variance with Luther cannot be decided by a simple comparison of their statements regarding "law," "gospel," or "grace." For one thing, SK does not always employ traditional rubrics. For another, the relative infrequency of terms such as "gospel" or "grace" in his writings may indeed be due to the exigencies of his situation. And finally, a term such as "grace" receives its precise determination, in the final analysis, from the wider context of his thought. Dictated, then, is an analysis, not of isolated concepts, but of comprehensive theological frameworks. Here comparison becomes fruitful for it issues in the result that Kierkegaard and Luther do in fact share the same basic framework: they are both "cross theologians." More than this, their respective theologies bear comparison on a host of particulars, as we shall see.

This raises the question of possible influences. Any direct influence exercised by Luther during the formative stages of Kierkegaard's thinking would seem to be out of the question. At the time that SK studied theology at the University of Copenhagen the faculty was under the firm leadership of H. N. Clausen, a rationalist theologian whose contempt for Lutheran orthodoxy was but thinly veiled. As was the case at many Lutheran theology faculties during the early nineteenth century, few of Luther's own writings were read. Clausen did, however, hold frequent lectures on the Augsburg Confession and SK probably

---

1Pap X' A 640 (JP 6:6467).

2See Leif Grane, "Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925," in Det teologiske Fakultet, ed. Leif Grane, vol. 5 of Københavns Universitet 1479-1979, ed. Svend Ellekjær et al. (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1980), 330. Clausen looked to Friedrich Schleiermacher as his ideal, eschewing radical criticism as greatly as he did an obscurantist orthodoxy. Grane writes that his approach could be characterized by the formula, "Reason and Bible"—i.e., philological-historical study of the Bible as the foundation of theology, reconcilable with faith in revelation, but irreconcilable with Lutheran confessionalism." In the latter Clausen saw "catholicizing tendencies" that were fundamentally at odds with "the scientific and Protestant temperament" (p. 356).
attended these during 1834. Likewise he attended Clausen's dogmatics lectures. During 1834-35 he took the rising young star, H. L. Martensen, as his private tutor. Martensen chose as his subject matter the principal points of Schleiermacher's *Der christliche Glaube*. In addition to these influences Kierkegaard may have received early exposure to the radical criticism of F. C. Baur and David Strauss, whose works, *Die christliche Gnosis* and *Das Leben Jesu*, appeared in 1835 and 1835-36. Whether or not this is so, it is hardly surprising that by 1835 we encounter entries in SK's journals that are extremely critical of Lutheran orthodoxy. Nor is it surprising that at this time Kierkegaard was so far from his childhood faith that he could only continue his theological studies with difficulty.

---

5See Sejer Kühle, *Søren Kierkegaards barndom og ungdom* (Copenhagen: Aschehoug Dansk Forlag, 1950), 78. Clausen was a capable and erudite commentator whose approach in these lectures seems to have been that of comparing Protestantism with Roman Catholicism (Grane, "Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925," 342).

6He did so during 1833-34. Kierkegaard's notes are incomplete, which has led Niels Thulstrup to suppose that he found it unnecessary to attend the lectures straight through. Instead SK seems to have used Clausen's own sources in preparing for exams. As cited by Thulstrup in Pap I C 19 (vol. 12, p. 50) these included textbooks by K. G. Bretschneider, Karl August von Hase, August Hahn, Philipp Marheineke, and G. B. Winer.

7Concerning this early encounter, Martensen reports that SK was given to a sophistic wrangling "that came through on all occasions and often was wearisome." He notes that Schleiermacher's dogmatics yielded ample occasion for this given its teaching on election, which was, "so to speak, an open door for sophists." That doctrine, together with the atonement, exercised a particular fascination for the young theology student (Kühle, *Søren Kierkegaards barndom og ungdom*, 77-78). A few years later we find SK in attendance at Martensen's lectures on speculative dogmatics (1837-38) and recent philosophy (Descartes through Hegel, held in 1838-39).

8Ibid. 89-90. Both of these figures are discussed in Kierkegaard's dissertation (1841), Baur frequently so.

9Kühle reports that Søren's elder brother, Peter, confided in his journal of March 1835 that "Søren does not seem to be reading toward his exams at all now. May God help him out of all this inner ferment in a way that is good, and to his soul's salvation" (ibid., 86-87). Kühle also notes that, were Søren to have followed in his older brother's footsteps, he would have taken and passed his theology exams already in 1834--instead of in 1840 (p. 83). SK's special position as the "baby" of the family who wanted to exert his independence certainly had as much to do with his unwillingness to apply himself to his theological studies as did the overwhelming world of ideas to which he was being exposed at the university.

In passing we may note that Søren's elder brother was an extremely gifted intellect in his own right and was himself at this time on his way toward becoming a bright light in Denmark's theological firmament. Only the year before he had returned with his Doctor of Philosophy degree from Göttingen, where he had been dubbed "der Disputierteufel aus dem Norden." Grane writes that Peter's "abilities as a dialectician were in no way inferior to his brother, Søren's" ("Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925," 358). Because of Peter's association with Grundtvig, however (whose confessionism stood for "catholicizing tendencies" in the mind of Clausen, et al.), he was blocked from a theological appointment on the pretext that his degree was "only" in philosophy. To remedy this deficiency Peter took a licentiate in theology--yet his theological dissertation so enraged the faculty that he was thereafter blackballed from any appointment, though for a time he did give lectures as a
Along with the above-mentioned theological influences, other formative influences of a literary and philosophical nature were also at work upon the young Kierkegaard. Interest in German romanticism and idealism was high in Denmark during the 1830's, and the young university student certainly shared that interest. Emanuel Hirsch writes:

The great theme of the deep stratum of German intellectual and religious history during the first half of the nineteenth century—the clash between Christianity, romanticism and idealism—played itself out once again in Kierkegaard under the aspect of finding an intellectually mature formation of a religious life-view that would be equal to the conditions of the age.°

Oehlenschläger, the chief representative of romanticism in Denmark, spoke glowingly of Goethe, who had only just died in 1832. So did virtually everyone else.°° Consequently SK did a great deal of reading on his own of Goethe. But his interest in the literature of romanticism was by no means limited to him. Hirsch writes that by 1837 Kierkegaard was "an excellent connoisseur of the more recent German and Danish belles-lettres, and in addition, a close observer of the newspaper, theater, and art criticism in Copenhagen."°°° In Hirsch's judgment it was this fascination with romanticism—not Hegelianism—that precipi-

---


°°Including F. C. Sibbern, professor of philology and philosophy for whom SK had enormous respect (Kühle, Sören Kierkegaards barndom og ungdom, 113).

°°°Hirsch, Kierkegaard-Studien, Zweiter Band, Drittes Heft, Erste Studie, 48 [494]. We know that at this time SK not only frequented the Royal Theater, he even flirted with the idea of a career as an actor.
tated SK's break with Christianity in 1835. Yet some exposure to Hegelianism certainly had occurred by this time, whether through Clausen's dogmatics lectures (recall that he employed Marheineke as a source), or Martensen, or Poul Møller, Kierkegaard's philosophy mentor. Moreover by 1835 or 1836 Kierkegaard had begun to move in the literary circle of J. L. Heiberg, the most prominent proponent of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark. Heiberg's popularized, aesthetic Hegelianism afforded a clear point of access to Hegel's philosophy, though one may doubt that the influence that he exercised was simply intellectual. He and Mme. Heiberg (a glamorous young actress) were bedazzling personages even by the standards of Copenhagen's cultural elite, and association with them can only have enhanced the young student's sense of estrangement from the stifling atmosphere of his father's and brother's house, and the faith it epitomized.

This of course leads to consideration of yet another influence upon the young Kierkegaard, one that is by no means to be disparaged: viz., his strict upbringing within the confines of Lutheran pietism. Though Herrnhuters were not present in considerable numbers in Copenhagen, they were plentiful in Jutland, the region from which Kierkegaard's father had come. Thus it was only natural for Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard to attend the meetings of the Herrnhuter Fellowship in Copenhagen (being chosen at one point to oversee construction of their meeting hall, which was to seat six hundred), as well as churches the pastors of which were known for their pietist leanings. As is well known, the elder Kierkegaard was a deeply melancholy man who dwelt upon Christianity's darkest side (a feature typical of Jutland pietism). This dark, feeling-centered religion in which one

---

13Hirsch writes: "Der Hegelianismus ist 1835 für ihn noch keine lebendige Größe" (ibid., 36 [482]). Direct acquaintance with Hegel's writings did not come until 1838. Immediately preceding it in 1837 was immersion in the writings of Hegel's critics (in particular, Immanuel Hermann Fichte), as well as his proponents--e.g., Bruno Bauer, Karl Rosenkranz and Karl Daub (ibid., 54-56 [500-501]). As previously noted, SK also attended Martensen's lectures on recent philosophy and speculative dogmatics from 1837 to 1839.


15Kühle, Søren Kierkegaards barndom og ungdom, 17.
continually ransacked one's soul for secret sin and agonized over one's eternal fate was in turn handed down to the sons, Peter and Soren.

From this brief accounting it is possible to isolate any number of significant influences upon the young Kierkegaard. Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, for example, has gone in depth into the pietist element, finding it to be crucial for interpreting SK's authorship. Emanuel Hirsch, on the other hand, sees German romanticism's "ideal humanity" as the foundation for SK's thought. Romanticism's philosophy of the individual is given a paradoxical Christian development by Kierkegaard that not only guards, but completes its conception of the universally human. Hirsch also finds the roots of SK's conception of the unconditionedness of duty and freedom in Kant and Fichte. And he observes, despite

---

16 See Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, "Søren Kierkegaard og Johann Arndt," in *Kierkegaardiana IV*, ed. by Søren Kierkegaard Selskabet by Niels Thulstrup, (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962), 7-17. See also Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard og Pietismen*, Søren Kierkegaard Selskabets Populære Skrifter XIII (Copenhagen: Munksgaards Forlag, 1967). (The latter work is also to be found under the English title, "Pietism," in *Kierkegaard and Great Traditions*, Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana, vol. 6, ed. Niels Thulstrup and M. Mikulová Thulstrup [Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1981], 173-222.) In these works Thulstrup demonstrates Kierkegaard's first-hand acquaintance with certain Pietist authors--Arndt, Brorson, Gerhard, Spener, Scriver and Tersteegen. In my estimation, however, she postulates familiarity with still other figures on the basis of rather scant evidence. Moreover she quite overstates the influence of Pietism on SK's theological program as regards his doctrine of sanctification. On the one hand she acknowledges that Kierkegaard "never involved himself in a discussion about sanctification" (Kierkegaard og Pietismen, 42), and on the other, she asserts that "Kierkegaard seems, in principle, to have adopted the pietist schema for man's sanctification" (p. 49). In fact, Kierkegaard shares orthodoxy's criticism of Pietism--viz., that it tends to focus on the human being's moralistic efforts rather than upon God's free grace and works done spontaneously out of gratitude. Sanctification for SK--at least prior to the late period--is much more akin to Luther's daily conversion and embrace of justifying grace (the recurrent transition from *totus peccator* to *totus iustus*) than to steady "growth" in holiness (contra Thulstrup, pp. 52-55). This is not to discount, however, that the priority that Kierkegaard gives to subjectivity throughout his authorship has, in a certain sense, made of him a "pietist of a higher order" after the pattern of Schleiermacher. Nor is it to discount that pietism's prudish disparagement of things sexual has decisively influenced his view of corporeality, and therewith his understanding of life under the cross. These matters will come up for discussion at a later point.

17 "Søren Kierkegaard," 446.

their manifest differences, an exceedingly close affinity between Kierkegaard and Friedrich Schleiermacher. SK's tenet that "subjectivity is the truth," is said to reproduce in intensified form Schleiermacher's own fundamental view as to the relationship between religion and knowing, piety and dogmatic utterance. "In that respect," writes Hirsch, "Kierkegaard is the only genuine pupil of Schleiermacher in his entire generation."19

While a certain influence stemming directly from Luther has also been acknowledged by scholars, it seems to date from a later period (1847 on).20 Niels Thulstrup correctly observes that "Luther had practically no influence on Kierkegaard's philosophy of subjectivity."21 Heywood Thomas and the Italian scholar, Cornelio Fabro, are constrained to agree that any influence had to have been indirect, that is to say, via the Lutheran milieu in which Kierkegaard found himself. Thomas speculates that the young SK "absorbed Luther in ideas from text-books" such as Bretschneider's and von Hase's. Yet he clearly is not terribly satisfied with this result, given the similarities that he himself perceives between Kierkegaard and Luther. The problem is a vexing one, and the dearth of attention that this historical question has received can only be explained by a failure to attend to the sweeping dogmatic similarities that obtain between Kierkegaard and Luther.

An earlier generation of Kierkegaard scholarship certainly was well aware of these similarities, as evidenced by the young Barth's naming of Luther and Kierkegaard as princi-

auch wenn er Reformation als Reduplikation versteht, stärker berücksichtigt werden?" ("Kierkegaard und Luther," Kerygma und Dogma 30 [1984]:243 n. 26).

19"Sören Kierkegaard," 454.

20This is not to deny that SK has read (or more likely, read in) certain of Luther's works prior to 1847. There are indications in the earlier journals to this effect (e.g., Pap VI A 108 [JP 3:2460], dating from 1845). Moreover, references to Luther occur in the published works prior to 1847 (Either/Or II, The Concept of Anxiety, Philosophical Fragments, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, A Literary Review, Edifying Discourses, and Works of Love). Nevertheless, Regin Prenter writes that "the few quotations from Luther in the writings of Kierkegaard during that period are incidental and without real significance" ("Luther and Lutheranism," in Kierkegaard and Great Traditions, ed. Niels Thulstrup and M. Mikulová Thulstrup, Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana, vol. 6 [Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1981], 127). Kierkegaard's surprise upon discovering the reformer's congeniality to his own point of view during Advent of 1847, together with his casual remark, "I have never really read anything by Luther" (Pap VIII A 465 [JP 3:2463]) tend to corroborate the lack of significance that Luther had held for him prior to that time.

pal intellectual ancestors.\textsuperscript{22} Certainly the presence of both men is everywhere discernible in the second edition of The Epistle to the Romans. That this should be so is not at all surprising. The Luther renaissance that had been stimulated by the discovery of the lost manuscript of Luther's Lectures on Romans, and given enormous momentum by the scholarship of Karl Holl, occurred not long after the reception of Kierkegaard's works in Germany. Both events contributed to the rise of dialectical theology. The central role played by the Lectures on Romans in the Luther renaissance cannot but have caused Kierkegaard's works to have been read in a unique light, viz., that of the theology of the cross to which a number of those works (e.g., Philosophical Fragments, Concluding Unscientific Postscript and Practice in Christianity) possess a startling affinity. Similarly the converse: Kierkegaard's writings exercised a profound influence—whether directly as in the case of Karl Holl, or indirectly as in the case of dialectical theology—upon the Luther-interpretation of the period.\textsuperscript{23} In short, it was the Kierkegaard-interpretation of Barth and his circle, and the Luther-interpretation of Holl and his followers, that called attention to this common theological horizon shared by Kierkegaard and the young Luther.

Accordingly one finds in the earlier Kierkegaard literature a recognition, if not of actual dependence upon Luther, then certainly of affinity to him. Torsten Bohlin speaks of "the similarity between one side of Luther's 'theology of the cross' and Kierkegaard's faith and grace concepts," maintaining that because Kierkegaard remained fixed at the standpoint of the "pre-reformational" Luther, as it were, he "was not able to appropriate the reformat-

\textsuperscript{22}Karl Barth, Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1924), 164.

\textsuperscript{23}Regarding the reciprocal influence that existed between dialectical theology and the Luther-interpretation of the time, Walther von Loewenich writes (concerning Paul Althaus's ground-breaking work on the theology of the cross): "1926 erschien sein Aufsatz 'Die Bedeutung des Kreuzes im Denken Luthers'. Die darin programmatisch ausgearbeiteten Gedanken gaben die Anregung, der 'Theologia crucis' Luthers genauer nachzu­geben und dabei die innere Verwandtschaft mit Grundanschauungen der Dialektischen Theologie festzustellen." And again: "... die Lutherdeutung von Althaus ohne die von der 'Dialektischen Theologie' empfangenen Anregungen und ohne die Auseinandersetzung mit ihr wohl nicht verstanden werden kann" ("Paul Althaus als Lutherforscher," Luther-Jahrbuch 35 [1968]:13-14). Regarding the direct influence of Kierkegaard upon Karl Holl himself, Emanuel Hirsch writes: "Vielleicht darf ich hier nebenbei die Tatsache mitteilen, daß Karl Holl durch einen in seine Frühzeit fallenden Einfluß Kierkegaards zu demjenigen scharfen Gefühl für Folgerichtig­keit im Gottesverhältnis gebildet worden ist, welches ihn dann befähigt hat, durch das traditionelle Lutherbild zum wirklichen Luther durchzubrechen" (Kierkegaard-Studien, Zweiter Band, Drittes Heft, Dritte Studie, 236 [838]).
tional certainty of salvation in all its fullness." By way of response, Walter Ruttenbeck enumerates the "unmistakable" similarities that exist between Kierkegaard's and Luther's respective theologies of the cross but denies that SK has any less appropriated Luther's "reformational" view than did Luther. Walter Künneoth points out the clear convergence of the thought of Luther, Kierkegaard and dialectical theology as regards the doctrine of sin—it is a transcendent entity, not discernible except by a revelation. Emanuel Hirsch and Eduard Geismar are particularly struck by the fusion of grace and judgement that is present in Kierkegaard: Hirsch speaks of the "paradox of grace at the bottom of judgement"; Geismar maintains that "this inner fusion is a rediscovery of authentic Lutheranism and should, according to Kierkegaard, prevent Christianity from becoming secularized." "It is Luther's honor," Geismar writes, "never to have forgotten his theologia crucis; it is the

---

24. *Kierkegaards dogmatiska åskådning i dess historiska sammanhang* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokforlag, 1925), 487. The absence of the certainty of salvation as a present possession has as its correlate, for Bohlin, that "Kierkegaard never did really arrive at 'the freedom of a Christian' in his personal life, but in a certain sense always stood under 'the law'" (p. 483).

25. *Sören Kierkegaard. Der christliche Denker und sein Werk* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1929), 347 n. 473. The similarities noted by Ruttenbeck include the hiddenness of God and its accompanying dialectic, the "uncertainty" of faith, the subjectivity in which self-understanding consists, the stress upon the abasement of Christ and the offense that it prompts. Elsewhere (pp. 304-11) in discussing the characteristics that dialectical theology has in common with Kierkegaard, Ruttenbeck frequently uses language that is, in fact, Luther's. Dialectical theology and Kierkegaard are said to work with a concept of God as the Deus absconditus who is most deeply hidden precisely when he reveals himself, whose "back side" is ever turned toward his children, whose grace appears to be judgement, whose heaven seems like hell (p. 305). Christ is designated "the skandalon," faith in him as a "dare," a "leap into the void," into "the uncertain" (p. 307). While such turns of phrase certainly call to mind Kierkegaard, they conjure forth Luther with equal felicity.

26. *Die Lehre von der Sünde, dargestellt an dem Verhältnis der Lehre Sören Kierkegaards zur neuesten Theologie* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1927). "In this fundamental question the most recent theology is fully in agreement with Kierkegaard; it, in particular, wants to elevate the theologia crucis to the decisive principle of all theological thinking once again" (p. 22).


significance of Kierkegaard that he brought this theologia crucis to bear against a secularized Christianity with unrelenting earnestness. Henning Schröer observes that both Geismar and Hirsch are indebted to Holl for this basic understanding of Kierkegaard. And despite Geismar's disagreement with the Kierkegaard-interpretation of Barth in other respects, there

---

29Ibid., 228. Cf. p. 237: "Das Verhältnis zwischen Luther und Kierkegaard kann... wie ich schon gesagt habe, so ausgedrückt werden: Kierkegaard hat alle Mittel des Dichtens und Denkens darauf eingesetzt, die theologia crucis wieder in der lutherischen Kirche gelten zu machen, in der Überzeugung, daß wenn die theologia crucis übersprungen wird, der Protestantismus die chronische Verweltlichung des Christentums würde. Wenn ich Kierkegaard so hoch schätze, so beruht es darauf, daß ich in dieser Betrachtung mit ihm einig bin."

In addition to his general description of SK's authorship as a reassertion of the theology of the cross vis-à-vis a decadent Lutheranism, Geismar draws a considerable number of more specific parallels between Kierkegaard's presentation of Christianity and Luther's. For Luther the cross of Christ is experienced both as sacramentum and exemplum: inasmuch as our suffering under the cross has to do with God's judgement upon our sin, on the one hand, and Christ's vicarious sacrifice, on the other, the cross is sacramentum; but inasmuch as our suffering under the cross has to do with following in Christ's footsteps and suffering persecution for his sake, his cross is exemplum. Kierkegaard presents both aspects with unrivalled clarity (p. 228). In addition, he has arrived at the experience of grace in and through judgement as a result of the collapse of ethical idealism—precisely as did Luther (p. 230). Kierkegaard shares Luther's conception of sin as involving the whole person and as disclosed only through a revelation (p. 232). Faith, for SK, means accepting God's judgement and resting in his grace which has thus been set in motion. The greatest sin is to despair of the forgiveness of sin (p. 233). Kierkegaard and Luther alike deny that faith's certainty entails repose: "Alles Christliche ist nach Kierkegaard dadurch erkennbar, daß jede Bestimmung ihren Gegensatz enthält, die Gewißheit die Ungewißheit, die Freude das Leiden usw." (p. 233). For Kierkegaard as for Luther, Anfechtung is "eine tief erlebte Reaktion Gottes dem Sünder gegenüber, sie geht von dem heiligen Gott aus und wird so empfunden, als würde man abgesetzt und mit Gewalt von Gottes Nähe abgewiesen" (p. 237). Geismar notes that, like Luther, Kierkegaard suffered greatly from such Anfechtungen; only by means of the master's help (after "discovering" him in 1847) did SK attain to a measure of spiritual wholeness: "Ihm war es außerordentlich schwer, an Gottes Gnade zu glauben, er hatte grade Luther selbst nötig, um das zu lernen. Er war wie dazu geschaffen, die theologia crucis wieder zu entdecken, und er war dagegen gesichert, diese theologia zu verlernen. Ihm ist das Gebet das einzig mögliche: So gib du in der Reue den Freimut, wieder Eines zu wollen. Nur in der Reue kann er den Freimut finden; ihn auf einer andern Stelle zu finden, wäre für ihn Oberflächlichkeit gewesen. Die Reue ist der stetige Hintergrund der Gnad" (p. 239).

These are some principal points at which Geismar finds a strong convergence between Kierkegaard and Luther—particularly the Luther of the Lectures on Romans. Geismar does not, however, play down the dissimilarities: e.g., SK's movement toward increasing asceticism and world-denial, which contrasts strongly with Luther's movement away from them.

30"Kierkegaard und Luther," 231 and 232. Schröer also regards Geismar, Hirsch and Bohlin as having been influenced by Holl in terms of the tendency to see Kierkegaard and Luther against the backdrop of a failed ethical idealism and its unconditional requirement (more precisely, the ethical idealism of Kant and Fichte) (p. 233).
can be no doubt that his recognition of the centrality of the theology of the cross for understanding Kierkegaard owes to the stimulus supplied by him as well.31

Geismar is the only Kierkegaard scholar who has, to my knowledge, taken Luther's theologia crucis as the crucial interpretive key for understanding the significance of SK's authorship, though, lamentably, he does so in the limited confines of the cited article. The other early scholars (mentioned above) offer but passing comments concerning the similarities that they have seen between Kierkegaard's and Luther's theologies of the cross—similarities that had no doubt already been set in bold relief by the ascendancy of dialectical theology and the Luther-scholarship of the day, and therefore not in need of greater elaboration. But in the decades since this first wave of Kierkegaard-scholarship, rather less notice has been taken of the theology of the cross as a means of evaluating Kierkegaard's theology vis-à-vis Luther's.32 This is particularly true of English-speaking scholarship which

31See Jens Holger Schjørring, "Barth - Geismar - Tidshverv," Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift 39 (1976):79-83. While Geismar drew inspiration for his theologia crucis interpretation of Kierkegaard from both Karl Barth and Karl Holl, he was clearly closer to the school of Holl and his pupil, Emanuel Hirsch. Geismar was greatly concerned lest the all-consuming krisis proclaimed by Barth preclude even the possibility of "a theologically legitimate description of human obligations." His desire was to "retain the judgement, but without bursting the parameters for public life." Schjørring notes that Geismar found in Holl's exposition of Luther's concept of the conscience "an authority that was suited to maintaining the seriousness of ethics' demands." Like Holl and Hirsch, Geismar found in Kierkegaard no radical discontinuity between Christianity and the universally human, but rather a "connection that Christianity establishes to the human obligations" (p. 82). Along this line, Henning Schröer observes that Geismar was wont to cite Pap X I A 59 (JP 2:1383) as evidence that SK dialectically protects his leitmotif of "the infinitely deep qualitative distinction between God and man" from the use made of it by Barth in the forward to the second edition of Der Römerbrief ("Kierkegaard und Luther," 232). In this particular entry SK writes: 'Notwithstanding that there naturally could be nothing, unconditionally nothing meritorious about any work . . . , everything nevertheless depends upon one's daring, in a childlike way, to get involved with God.'

32Henning Schröer, for example, observes that next treatments of Kierkegaard's relationship to Luther to come along were those of K. E. Løgstrup ("Die Kategorie und das Amt der Verkündigung im Hinblick auf Luther und Kierkegaard" in 1949) and Hermann Diem (Die Existenzdialektik von Sören Kierkegaard in 1950). Schröer writes: 'Daß Diem überhaupt nicht auf die Arbeiten von Bohlin, Geismar und Hirsch zu unserem Thema eingegangen ist, empfinde ich als Mangel. Dagegen hat er Stellung zu Løgstrups Aufsatz genommen, in dem 'die Kategorie und das Amt der Verkündigung im Hinblick auf Luther und Kierkegaard' verglichen worden sind' ("Kierkegaard und Luther," 235). To my knowledge this overlapping of the earlier interpreters holds true of many of the more recent treatments of SK's theological relationship to Luther. Many have given either limited attention or—more frequently—no attention at all, to the manifestly Lutheran "cross" elements of SK's thought. Hermann Deuser's book (Dialektische Theologie. Studien zu Adornos Metaphysik und zum Spätwerk Kierkegaards [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1980]) strikes me as an exception inasmuch as it seeks to view SK's late works as a self-critical moment of Lutheran theology, taking traditional rubrics such as servum arbitrium, simul iustus et peccator, finitum est capax infiniti, Deus absconditus, etc., as loci of such self-
overwhelmingly proceeds not from a theological standpoint, but from a philosophical one (whether it be analytic-philosophical, existential, or now, deconstructionist). It might, indeed, not be too strong a claim were one to maintain that the shared "cross framework" of Luther and Kierkegaard, though a foregone conclusion on the continent earlier this century, has never been adequately observed in the English-speaking context. The present work seeks, among other things, to remedy this deficiency by delineating the similarities that obtain between Luther's and Kierkegaard's respective theologies in chapters one and two.

It also seeks--in an admittedly tentative way--to redress yet another glaring lacuna that afflicts research into the relationship of Kierkegaard to Luther: viz., the issue of how Kierkegaard came to adopt a theological framework so similar to Luther's (given the vast array of correspondences, this is a question that, it seems to me, absolutely begs for an answer). As noted, Luther's writings were not studied at the theology faculties of the day. The notion of a "theology of the cross" was not a current one--it was not associated with Luther's theology at all (such association did not occur until the highly inadequate treatments of it given by Theodosius Harnack and others later on in the century). And as also noted, any substantial direct acquaintance on the part of Kierkegaard with Luther's writings did not come until 1847. Nevertheless all the earmarks of Luther's theology of the cross are present in SK's writings prior to that time. How did they get there? In chapter three I will suggest that the uncanny likeness that Kierkegaard's thinking bears to Luther's is due to the influence of Johann Georg Hamann, that archfoe of the Enlightenment whom Kierkegaard did avidly read while yet a student and who was also the 18th century's most

criticism. In general Deuser seeks, via Kierkegaard and Adorno, to rehabilitate the notions "paradox" and "dialectic" for use in theology once again. Still other continental Luther scholars--one thinks particularly of Valter Lindström and Per Lønning--interpret SK out of the Lutheran dogmatic tradition, taking into account the earlier generation of Kierkegaard scholars. But no one has, to my knowledge, exhaustively explored the affinities of the cross elements of Kierkegaard's thought with those of Luther.

acute student of Luther. Such an account of the origins of Kierkegaard's thought will serve not only to explain the hitherto unexplained convergence between SK and Luther—it will also point up the divergence that later announces itself in their respective attitudes toward a number of theological issues. In comparing SK with Luther and Hamann on these points one will hardly escape the conclusion of Hirsch and others that influences of romantic-idealist provenance are at work upon SK's theology as well.

Following the chapter on Hamann a provisional account of Kierkegaard's teaching on grace is undertaken in chapter four. It is based upon the previously demonstrated theologia crucis tenets and yields an understanding of grace that is consistent with Luther's own: grace as a divine operation that manifests itself paradoxically under the aspect of human freedom. Lest it be thought that the ostensible monergism of this conclusion inadmissibly harmonizes the determinist, Luther, with the "existentialist," Kierkegaard, SK's conception of the will is explored in chapter five. The result of this investigation, however, only corroborates the prior finding: Kierkegaard is shown to share Luther's conviction concerning the bondage of the will and the impossibility of a synergistic understanding of conversion.

Were this all that is to be said about Kierkegaard's teaching on grace, we could conclude our study at this point. But it is not all that is to be said, for it is based upon the Kierkegaard of the early and middle periods, and as we noted in our opening remarks, the late Kierkegaard is not only less well-disposed toward Luther, but less inclined to think in traditionally Lutheran ways. Some account must be given of the swing away from Luther.

---

While some Luther and Hamann scholars have pointed out Hamann's debt to Luther, and a few Kierkegaard scholars have acknowledged Kierkegaard's debt to Hamann, a common thread linking the three has not, to my knowledge, been recognized. Neither has the full extent of Kierkegaard's debt to Hamann. For example, so eminent a scholar as Hirsch disposes of Kierkegaard's relation to Hamann in a mere paragraph. After observing the parallel that Hamann draws between law and reason—one that Kierkegaard finds "recht interessant"—Hirsch concludes: "Nimmt man noch hinzu, daß Hamann ihm der Vermittler zu Sokrates geworden ist und daß die (vor Hamann in seinen Gesichtskreis getretenen) Begriffe Ironie und Humor von nun an durch Hamann in ihm zu immer neu überdachten ernstlichen Denkaufgaben werden, so ist aber auch alle entscheidende Einwirkung Hamanns erschöpft" (Kierkegaard-Studien. Zweiter Band, Drittes Heft, Erste Studie, 44 [490], emphasis added). Hirsch utterly fails to see that, though Kierkegaard's acquaintance with Hamann has not led him directly to Luther, the possibility nevertheless exists that Hamann has served as an indirect mediating link: "Wunderlich ist, daß ihm [Kierkegaard] Hamann damals nicht gleich Brücke zu Luther geworden ist" (pp. 43-44 [489-90], n. 3).
Chapter six seeks to do this by surveying the factors that led to Kierkegaard's initial enthusiasm for the reformer (factors that had mainly to do with SK's discovery of his own theological principles in Luther) as well as the factors that lay behind his final disillusionment with him. Two ends are sought by this historical study of SK's changing relationship to Luther. First, it seeks to enlarge upon other such studies, all of which attempt a determination of the dynamics (whether situational or theological) that were operative in SK's widening breach with Luther. In so doing it hopes to contribute to an area that even today requires further research. And secondly, it sets the stage for the subject matter of the latter part of the dissertation: viz., the non-Lutheran elements that are tacitly present from the very beginning in Kierkegaard's theology and that increasingly gain the ascendancy. These are elements that significantly qualify SK's cross perspective—and ultimately his teaching on grace—so that these cannot in the final analysis be simply equated with Luther's. Yet they come fully to light only in the final attack against Luther and Lutheranism.

Chapter seven takes up the situational elements that cause a skewing in Kierkegaard's theology of the cross during the middle and late periods so that he departs from Luther. For reasons of a sociological-historical sort (and reasons grounded in his psyche as well) Kierkegaard's own variant of the theologia crucis is characterized by a "remaining standing" at the cross. Naturally SK's incessant and quite one-sided emphasis upon painful contemporaneity with Christ in his abasement is a didactic measure calculated to shake the church out of its complacency, compelling it to take up its commission anew to be a church militant. But his fear of contributing to the conceit that the church already has triumphed in time causes him to eschew every consideration of the exalted Christ's presence in his


Church, and consequently, to ignore the proleptic nature of redemption in this life. Instead Kierkegaard focuses entirely upon the individual in the situation of contemporaneity with the suffering Prototype. Thus does SK's situational concern effect a downplaying, a distortion—and in its extreme consequence, even a denial—of such dogmas as the church and marriage. The emphasis upon suffering as the sole locus of the God-relationship also makes of suffering a kind of law. In all of these ways we see a departure from traditional Christian dogma that could perhaps be justified by an orthodox defender of Kierkegaard if it could be attributed entirely to the exigencies of Kierkegaard's extraordinary situation.

But it cannot. Behind the critique of Luther and Lutheranism there also lies an ideational component that sets Kierkegaard's theology quite at odds with that of Luther in the ways described above. That component is to be traced to the romantic-idealist roots of SK's existential dialectic. It is, paradoxically, the Hegelian influence upon Kierkegaard's anthropology (though Fichte and Schelling also come into play) that, in the end, forces him to deny the significance of creation and its orders for the God-relationship. The absolute power that is accorded finite subjectivity in constructing itself and its world, together with the "deworldization" and overdrawn "superhumanity" that ensue therefrom (posited is a progressus toward becoming absolute "spirit"), have repercussions not only for SK's anthropology, but for nearly every other doctrine, whether it be creation, church, scripture, ethics, christology, soteriology—and yes, grace. Chapter eight explores the romantic-idealist roots of the existential dialectic and the impact of that dialectic, over time, upon a broad range of theological issues as Kierkegaard draws its implications with increasing consistency.

The end goal of this study, however, is to come to terms with Kierkegaard's understanding of grace: just how Lutheran is it? Accordingly the final chapter analyzes utterances from the middle and late periods in which an "indulgence" understanding of grace comes increasingly to the fore (i.e., a provisional reduction in spirit's demands). Grace qua "indulgence" effectively asserts the continuing claim of Christian ideality (with intermittent rescissions), forestalling the abuse of forgiveness by keeping the individual in striving. Kierkegaard defends this postulate of a species of "grace" beyond mere forgiveness on the ground that forgiveness can apply only to the past, and that some other provision must be made for the future. This sharp disjunction between the respective spheres of influence of
forgiveness (the past) and indulgence/rerequirement (the immediate future) coincides with a bifurcation in SK's christology: the office of Christ the Model (which holds sway during the situation of contemporaneity) is distinct from, and essentially unqualified by, that of Christ the Redeemer (which goes into effect after our failure to fulfill contemporaneity's demands). This grace teaching and christology in effect deny the present applicability of redemption; seeking to forestall an over-realized eschatology, they posit an under-realized one (chapter seven). The "fissure" in SK's christology is, in particular, attributable to the equation of one of its halves--Christ qua Model--with "absolute spirit" (chapter eight). This fissure cannot be overcome however much Kierkegaard may try, and in the end his understanding of the Christian life is inevitably characterized by the alternating hegemony of two Christs: the Christ who is the embodiment of the superhuman demands of "absolute spirit," and the Christ who embodies pure forgiveness. Kierkegaard is not able to hold fast the simultaneity of judgement and grace that obtains in the theologia crucis, a simultaneity wherein the law is continually present, but as overcome by grace. Consequently Barth's charge of legalism with which we began is confirmed: on the late Kierkegaard's schema, Christians are repeatedly bereft of grace and thrown back onto a soteriology according to which they strive, unassisted, to realize the infinite demands of spirit.

This compromise of the Lutheran teaching on grace that is effected by the late Kierkegaard amounts, in his own eyes, to the spiritual use of the law brought to bear against the abuse of grace by a decadent Lutheranism. It is by no means intended to abolish the need of grace, but to impel all to flee rightly unto grace. Certainly if one prescinds from the criticism just brought (viz., that it in principle bars reliance upon forgiveness in the present, thereby forcing Christ to assume the role of judge), the Pattern - Redeemer dialectic serves as an apt description of the Christian's experience of law and gospel; indeed, to the "old man," Christ does assume the role of judge. Moreover Kierkegaard's understanding of the movement from repentance to faith as an ever repeated movement, with faith providing the point of departure for "imitation," bears a striking resemblance to what Wilfried Joest has designated the "partial" or progressive aspect of Christian existence. These elements of Kierkegaard's presentation of the Christian life, together with the cross elements outlined in the early chapters, lend credence to the claim that, despite his divergence from Luther on
key points, Kierkegaard has taken up Luther's mantel as perhaps no other theologian of the
nineteenth century. By championing the theology of the cross within the context of a
decadent Lutheranism, Kierkegaard has demonstrated its indispensability as a self-critical
moment of Lutheran theology. Eduard Geismar writes:

After having gained insight into Luther's theologia crucis it has become easy for me
to say what Kierkegaard's primary significance is within the Lutheran church: just as
it is Luther's distinction never to have given up the theologia crucis, so is it
Kierkegaard's significance to have reintroduced it at a time when it had vanished. If
one is of the opinion that the Lutheran form of piety becomes secularized when the
theologia crucis is forgotten, we have here a standpoint from which Kierkegaard's
significance can become clear.37

One might add that the theology of the cross is a self-critical moment of all theology, a
moment that all theology--not just Lutheranism--forgets at its peril. Yet any formulation of
it that unduly obscures--or silences--"the deep and secret 'yes' that is under and above the
'no,'"38 is subject to an opposite tendency than that of secularization. And this, too, belongs
to Kierkegaard's theological legacy.

---

37Religionsfilosofi. En Undersøgelse af hvad Religion og Kristendom er, 2d ed. (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads
Forlag, 1930), 342.

38WA 17¶, 203.
CHAPTER ONE
LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

At the heart of the theological program set forth by Luther's Heidelberg Disputation (1518) lies a distinctive principle of cognition. It has even been suggested that this principle provides "the point of departure not only for a theological, but for a universal theory of knowledge." While it is undeniably true that Luther's theology of the cross is the product of a theoretical insight with considerable explanatory powers, it is also the case that, like his theology as a whole, it grows out of a practical context and is a critical response to it. The immediate situation eliciting the Ninety-five Theses (1517) was, of course, the practice of selling indulgences. The Heidelberg Disputation begins at the very point at which the Ninety-five Theses leave off insofar as it carries the attack one stage further to the theoretical outlook allied to the suspect praxis. Luther coins the term theologia gloriae to describe that outlook's underlying attitude.

The theology of glory is the attempt to know God's invisible nature through his created works. Luther rejects this approach in theses nineteen and twenty of the Heidelberg Disputation, saying,

The one who beholds what is invisible of God, through the perception of what is made, is not rightly called a theologian. But rather the one who perceives what is visible of God, God's 'backside,' by beholding the sufferings and the cross.³


The pseudo-theologian referred to in thesis nineteen is the practitioner of the scholastic method. Since the time of Peter Lombard (1100-60) it had been held that human beings excelled other creatures, in part, because of a unique faculty of intellectual apprehension, intellectus. By its exercise in concert with the lower faculties, humans had access to the invisible spiritual world. Such intellectual illumination did not overleap God’s created works, but ascended from them. Luther’s rejection of intellectus as a point of contact with the divine is characteristic of his consistent rejection of every attempt at knowing God that would proceed from beneath upwards. Since the advent of sin, if God is to be known at all this can only occur through an act of divine condescension into the visibilia of cross and suffering. Luther can speak of "seeing" God in such visible things; he can even speak of "understanding" (intelligere); yet such understanding is not that of religious speculation, but of faith.

A certain ambiguity, however, exists in Luther's use of the word "works," for in the explanation that he offers for thesis twenty-one he speaks not of God’s creative works but of the ethical works of human beings. Similarly, in that same explanation Luther plays upon the meaning of the word "cross." No longer does it have reference simply to the cross of Christ, but to that of the Christian as well:

He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross. . . . These are the people whom the apostle calls "enemies of the cross of Christ," for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works. . . . [By contrast] the friends of the cross say that the cross is good and works are evil, for through the cross works are dethroned and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated

---

1Wand, "Theologia Crucis," 386.

5Luther denies the fitness of any of the faculties to which medieval theology had ascribed the knowledge of God. Intellectus, or man’s capacity for apprehending invisible realities (and hence, the seat of the consciousness of God); syneresis, or man’s moral faculty; and finally, ratio (reason)—a function that had already been relegated to a status beneath, and in opposition to, fides (faith) and auctoritas (authority) by Occam—all are incapable of cognizing God. After the Fall, human beings are bereft of any point of contact with the divine. For closer discussion of Luther’s attitude toward the above faculties the reader is referred to von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 54-86 (52-77).

6Wand, "Theologia Crucis," 386.
and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's.\(^7\)

The deliberate ambiguity of Luther's usage of "works" and "cross" signifies that epistemology and ethics are not unrelated; rather, they are mutually conditioning. As applied to Luther's adversaries this means that religious speculation and works-holiness are theoretical and practical manifestations of one and the same demand for direct intercourse with God.\(^8\) The theologia gloriae, like works-righteousness, is an expression of human pride that would attain to God by its own powers. This indicates why it is destined to failure from the start. It is a manifestation of the selfsame sinful impulse that, in the beginning, rendered creation a closed book to man. With the Apostle Paul (Romans 1:21-22) Luther concludes that sinful humans cannot, and must not, try to know God by reason of works (ex operibus), but rather, through suffering and cross (per passiones et crucem). Here, too, we see the convergence of theory and praxis. God is known by the means through which he has chosen to reveal himself: through the cross of Christ, the meaning of which is only disclosed to those who themselves stand under the shadow of the cross and suffering.

It has often been observed that a great many "theologies of the cross" preceded Luther's, and that common to them all was a shared conviction about the necessity of suffering for a true knowledge of God. Moreover each such theology was, in its own way, a reaction to the perceived aridity of scholastic thinking. There can be no doubt that Luther's theologia crucis belongs in the company of these, for it did not arise in a vacuum. In addition to its manifest debt to Paul, Luther's theology was influenced by the devotio moderna, humility, and mystical traditions that preceded it.\(^9\) Nevertheless Luther's understanding of

\(^7\)WA 1, 362 (LW 31, 53).


\(^9\)Enough so that von Loewenich can claim: "A study of the Imitation [Thomas a Kempis's book] shows clearly that Luther could never have arrived at his theology of the cross if he had not been a monk" (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 191 [164]). Martin Elze has pointed out the affinities of Luther to late medieval spirituality ("Züge spätmittelalterlicher Frömmigkeit in Luthers Theologie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 62 [1965]:381-402), though Erwin Iserloh warns, "still there are decisive differences to be noted," ("Luther's Christ-Mysticism," in Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther, ed. Jared Wicks [Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970], 40).
Luther encountered the humility tradition at firsthand in the theology of his mentor, Johann von Staupitz. Staupitz taught that the way of salvation is a way of judgement and humiliation: the one who suffers himself to be humbled by God's judgement will be exalted, since this is how God effects the humility by which the sinner is made righteous. Ernst Bizer points out the similarities between the theology of the Dictata super Psalmterium (1513-15) and Staupitz's teachings (Fides ex Auditu. Eine Untersuchung über die Entdeckung der Gerechtigkeit Gottes durch Martin Luther, 3d ed. [Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966], 19-22). The work of David C. Steinmetz affords the most recent scholarship on the relation of Staupitz's theology to that of Luther: Misericordia Dei: The Theology of Johannes von Staupitz in Its Late Medieval Setting (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969) and Luther and Staupitz: An Essay on the Intellectual Origins of the Protestant Reformation, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, no. 4 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1980).

Finally, the late medieval mystical work, Eyn theologia deutsch, together with the sermons of Johann Tauler impressed the young Luther greatly. Of the former Luther wrote in 1518: "No book except the Bible and St. Augustine has come to my attention from which I have learned more about God, Christ, man, and all things." Of the latter he wrote (also in 1518): "I have found in him more solid and sincere theology than is found in all the scholastic teachers of all the universities or than can be found in their propositions." Heiko Oberman and Erwin Iserloh maintain that this positive attitude was not merely fleeting; it remained essentially unchanged throughout Luther's life (Oberman, "Simul Gemitus et Raptus": Luther and Mysticism," in The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought [Edinburgh: T. &T. Clark, 1986], 138-40; Iserloh, "Luther's Christ-Mysticism," 39). The basis for Luther's positive estimate is not far to seek: in many respects the theology of early medieval Augustinianism seems to have survived in the works of these German mystics (so contends A. V. Müller and Bengt Hägglund--see Hägglund, The Background of Luther's Doctrine of Justification in Late Medieval Theology, Facet Books, Historical Series, no. 18 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971], 3). For example, both Tauler and the Frankfurter teach man's hopeless depravity; consequently each counsels complete inactivity or passivity (i.e., selfless humility) as the way of salvation. This is carried to the point of acceding to God's righteous judgement, and so resigning oneself to hell (the resignatio ad infernum so familiar in the young Luther). The presupposition behind such passivity is that God is the active agent of salvation, effecting a supernatural righteousness in the soul through the "birth of God" in it, or mystic union with Christ. Still other parallels exist between the German Theology and Luther, particularly as regards their understanding of sin as self-will (incurvatus in se) and of the nature and role of Anfechtung in making a theologian (for a brief summary of parallels see Brian Gerrish, "By Faith Alone: Medium and Message in Luther's Gospel," in The Old Protestantism and the New. Essays on the Reformation Heritage [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982], 313 n. 93). Finally, one other salient feature marks off "German mysticism" (along with "Latin mysticism"--Bernard, Bonaventure, Gerson, et al.) from "Dionysian mysticism" in Luther's mind: viz., its christocentricity. Whereas Dionysian mysticism regarded the incarnate Word as but a means to union with (or absorption into) the uncreated Word (and hence constituted for Luther a theology of glory), non-Dionysian mysticism regarded the incarnate Word as the unsurpassable object of such union, and hence held to the cross, God's indispensable potentia ordinata.

the cross distinguishes itself from most of its medieval antecedents in that Christ's cross qua *exemplum* plays a markedly subordinate role. Overriding significance is attached to Christ's cross qua *sacramentum*. Our cross of sin and judgement is part and parcel of His cross as sacrament, from which ensues derivatively the cross of imitation. In bearing the latter the Christian seeks not to replicate the way of salvation blazed by Christ the example. Rather, in the strength of Christ the sacrament he seeks to take up those crosses that are given by God in the course of mundane life, crosses of His own choosing. For Luther the

10 This of course does not hold true of the early Luther—the Luther of the *Dictata* (1513-15), *Lectures on Romans* (1515-16) and *Lectures on Hebrews* (1517), who views Christ's work largely in terms of Augustine's *exemplum/sacramentum* distinction (*De Trinitate*, bk. 4, chap. 3, par. 6), using it in a manner typical of the day. Early on in this period, Luther is under the sway of the tropological interpretation of scripture. Whereas the literal sense has to do with Christ, who is the principal sense of all Scripture, what is said uniquely of him nevertheless has tropological application to the individual Christian. This interpretive schema lends itself to stress upon Christ as *exemplum* (so, too, do the *Dictata*'s Neo-Platonic contrasts between "shadow" and "reality," "sensible" and "intelligible," "exemplar" and "image"—see Uuras Saarmivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel, New Light upon Luther's Way from Medieval Catholicism to Evangelical Faith* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951], 61-62). On this schema Christ is the pattern of the way in which God deals with Christians. The way that Christ trod is the way that the Christian must go: a way of utmost humiliation and hidden exaltation, a way whose reality is not what it appears, a way along which the Christian, by hope, is transformed into that for which he hopes. In a word: the way of salvation is the way of humility, as exemplified by Christ (Bizer, *Fides ex Auditu*, 27).

Matters do not remain thus. As Norman Nagel documents, the *sacramentum/exemplum* formula proves inadequate to the young Luther's emerging understanding of justification. "*SACRAMENTUM* is the loser to *exemplum* as long as [Christ's] death is thought of paradigmatically and not as unique and vicarious. When Christ's death is first of all a saving death such as only He could die, and not first of all a death that provides the paradigm of dying, then its unique achievement can be fully apprehended" ("*SACRAMENTUM et exemplum in Luther's Understanding of Christ,*" in *Luther for an Ecumenical Age: Essays in Commemoration of the 450th Anniversary of the Reformation*, ed. Carl S. Meyer [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967], 182). Accordingly, the weight is increasingly transferred from Christ's passion qua exemplar of God's way of salvation to his passion qua sign of salvation with the power to effect what it signifies. Even where this process is not yet complete—as in the *Lectures on Romans* and *Lectures on Hebrews*—Luther's teaching that true humility is the work of God, effected by his word of judgement, already gives the priority to Christ's cross as *sacramentum*.

difference is crucial. To the extent that the aforementioned theologies of the cross (including his own in its earliest version) attend principally to Christ's example, they make of him a law and transfer the burden of salvation (psychological if not theological) to the person himself. They bear traces of the theologia gloriae against which they were a reaction.\(^\text{12}\)

We have already indicated that the theoretical basis that Luther gives in support of his cross-principle of knowledge is the circumstance that pride has so blinded human powers of perception that God can no longer be known from works.\(^\text{13}\) Whatever dim light

\(^{12}\)This tends to be true of the piety of the devotio moderna. Iserloh writes: "Luther was critical of such a piety, since for him it was not enough to immerse oneself only meditatively in the Passion of Christ and then to live out the Passion in an ethical-moral imitation of Christ. In fact, Luther forcefully denied any possibility of such a following of Christ, unless a man is first one with Christ in the depths of his person in a union which is prior to all deeds and which is usually not consciously experienced" ("Luther's Christ-Mysticism," 40). Such external imitation, however, is foreign to Tauler and the Frankfurter, for whom a prior sacramental union with Christ causes the Christian to be conformed unto his life and death. Moreover, this "birth of God" in the soul is viewed as the work of God, not man. This leads Hägglund to write of the German mystics: "It is therefore not true when it is said that mysticism knows Christ only as an example and emphasizes in this connection only the imitation of Christ" (The Background of Luther's Doctrine of Justification, 15). Similarly, Brian Gerrish writes: "Mandel thought that the German Theology presented Christ as merely the ideal or the model for imitation, and the treatise does in fact seem, at points, to teach a naïvely exemplary concept of Christ's work and person: we are told, for instance, that as Christ's soul had to visit hell, this is the path also for the souls of men (chap. 11; cf. chap. 52). But the constant emphasis on the work of God within the soul transcends the category of example (see esp. chap. 9); and even if it is not a very prominent feature, the treatise does speak of sacramental participation in Christ (chap. 43)" ("By Faith Alone," 313 n. 97). Nevertheless, Gerrish also points out that disagreement exists among scholars concerning the alleged Augustinianism of the German mystics. Steven Ozment, for example, detects "even in the subtle mystical form of passive resignation—a 'doing' which is a 'doing nothing'" (Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1973], 24; cf. Saarnivaara, who sees in the Seelengrund an uncorrupted divine kernel akin to the scholastics' synteresis [Luther Discovers the Gospel, 76]). But if German mysticism's "doing nothing" does in fact bear traces of Semi-Pelagianism's facere quod in se est, then the focus has most certainly, if subtly, been shifted—in this respect at least—to Christ as model. Depending upon whether German mysticism truly is Augustinian in its view of what man can contribute toward salvation, it does or does not anticipate Luther's theology of the cross.

\(^{13}\)Thesis twenty-two (WA 1, 362-63 [LW 31, 53-54]). Luther of course goes farther, maintaining that the depth of man's impairment is such that he no longer knows himself. The deportment of the theologians of glory testifies amply to this, for they neither know that their faculties are impaired, nor that this impairment is due to sin. In general, so corrupted are fallen man's powers of perception that he neither knows what sin is nor that it is present in him. Cf. WA 56, 229 (LW 25, 213-14): "Man of himself could not know that he such a person
of nature still remains to humanity's fallen faculties proves singularly unhelpful, for it is inevitably misused. Therefore no longer is God knowable through his effects (Thomas), but instead by his cross and suffering, or "back parts" (posteriora Dei) as Luther puts it, alluding to Exodus 33:18-23. There seems, however, to be an even more fundamental reason for the theology of glory's untenability as a cognitive principle than the debilitating effects of pride, for even in the absence of pride God remains fundamentally unknowable. The fact that God is transcendent rules out all knowledge of him as he is in himself. Fundamental to Luther's rejection of the knowledge God by his effects, then, is not only the sinful presumption that vitiates it, but his strong sense of the transcendence of God, which can just as easily manifest itself in a manner contrary to what we customarily regard as his "effects."

Luther frequently uses the designation, "naked deity" (Deus nudus), in referring to God as he is in himself—i.e., in his transcendent unknowability. Over against this he contrasts "God clothed" in his Word (Deus indutus). Luther's constant warning is to avoid the Deus nudus, whose works are "terrible," and to seek out God clothed in his word:

Some through their speculations ascend into heaven and speculate about God the creator, etc. Do not get mixed up with this God. Whoever wishes to be saved should leave the majestic God alone—for He and the human creature are enemies. Rather grasp that God whom David [Psalm 51] also grasps. He is the God who is clothed in his promises—God as he is present in Christ. . . . This is the God you need. May you as you are yourself never be confronted by the unclothed God. . . . We know no other God than the God clothed with his promises. If he should speak to me in his majesty, I would run away—just as the Jews did. However, when he is clothed in the voice of a man and accommodates himself to our capacity to understand, I can approach him.

before God [i.e., a liar and unrighteous], unless God Himself had revealed it to him. . . . But now God has revealed what He thinks about us and what He judges us to be, namely, that all are in sin. Therefore we have to yield to this His revelation." Cf. also the Smalcald Articles, Part III, art. 1: "Hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature that reason cannot understand it. It must be believed because of the revelation in the Scriptures" (The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959], 302).

14WA 407, 329ff. as quoted in Paul Althus, The Theology of Martin Luther, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 20. Similar in tenor is WA 316, 38, 21ff. (LW 16, 54-55): "I have often advised and still advise younger theologians today that they must so study the Holy Scriptures that they refrain from investigating the Divine Majesty and his terrible works. God does not want us to learn to know him in this
Now, the contrast between the "clothed" and "unclothed" God, particularly as it is elaborated in the above passage, brings us to an important point not previously touched upon in our discussion of the Heidelberg Disputation. Precisely because God in his absolute majesty is unapproachable to his creatures, he must wrap or veil himself in sensuous media—visibilia—if they are to have commerce with him. These media are sundry: the word of promise, God's saving acts, the sacraments, the man Jesus Christ. From this it becomes evident that the concept of the **hidden God** lies at the heart of the theology of the cross qua cognitive principle, and that in a two-fold respect. In his naked deity God is perforce hidden, and in his revealed deity he is again hidden since he can only reveal himself by an act of veiling. The supreme instance of this is his hiddenness in Christ, the "God hidden in suffering" (*Deus absconditus in passionibus*). The theology of the cross qua cognitive principle instructs us that if we are to know God at all, this can only occur by his entry into concealment—the concealment of the cross.16

way. You cannot nakedly associate with his naked Godhead. But Christ is our way to God. Those who speculate about the majesty are crushed and led to despair by Satan." Other texts illustrative of the *Deus nactus/Deus inductus* distinction, and unremitting in their attacks upon speculation, include WA 40 176-80 (LW 26, 28-30) and WA 42, 11 (LW 1, 14).

16 These twenty and twenty-one and their explanations are the point in the Heidelberg Disputation at which the indispensability of hiddenness for revelation comes to the fore. In the explanation to thesis twenty Luther cites Isa. 45:15 (" Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself") as a warrant for the claim that God is to be found in the cross and suffering rather than works. Immediately on the heels of this John 14:8-9 is cited, where Philip asks Christ to show him the Father, to which Christ replies, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." In citing these texts, Luther intends that two inferences be drawn: first, that God "hides" himself in visible things precisely in order to reveal himself, and second, that **Christ** is the primary such locus of revelation, in particular, the **crucified Christ** who is the "God hidden in suffering." If we ask the further question, "But why the cross? Why does God conceal himself so deeply—or conversely—why does he manifest himself so paradoxically as this?" the Heidelberg Disputation offers but one explanation: God does so in order to crush human pride so that man, having ceased to work, might be prepared for God's work (thesis twenty-four, explanation). Elsewhere, however, Luther identifies still other factors that contribute to God's choice of the cross as his medium of revelation—God does so, e.g., in order to make room for faith; or he does so simply because he is God and can, accordingly, reveal himself in whatever manner he pleases. We should, therefore, not be surprised that he chooses to reveal himself by creating something out of nothing, or by creating a thing out of its very opposite (Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 1st ed. [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1962], 41 [34]). Finally, Luther can ascribe the strange impression that God's revelation makes, not to the modus operandi of revelation itself, but to sin's legacy upon man's perceptual apparatus: because sin has so altered our perception of existing orders and relationships, God's revelation will necessarily appear the reverse of what it "should" be (von Loewenich, *Luthers Theologia Crucis*, 52-53 [50]).
The essential hiddenness of God has as its corollary the paradoxical, and even offensive, nature of revelation. Luther glories in this essential characteristic, making it the hallmark of his own theology. Quite deliberately he refers to the Heidelberg Disputation's theological theses as "theological paradoxes" and in so doing makes use of an expression most uncommon for the time. Precisely because of its paradoxical, provocative character the Wittenberg theology occasioned considerable controversy from the moment of its appearance. The ill reception with which it met was due in large part to its refusal to countenance the role that had been traditionally assigned to Aristotelian ontology and logic within theology. Yet Luther's was not merely a love of paradox (and scandal) for its own sake. The various paradoxes of the Heidelberg Disputation are not without connection to each other; on the contrary, they have as their common center Christ crucified. The cross of Christ itself shatters all human ways of thinking about God. It is the great source of scandal and the ultimate reason that the gospel awakens opposition wherever it is preached:

Our wisdom is offended at God's Word; it is scandalized by the cross of Christ. But Luther knows that it must be so (WA 5, 263, 15). If the church's proclamation is no longer a rock of offense to the people, this is a sign that it has betrayed the gospel (WA 2, 601, 25 [LW 27, 387]). The cross of Christ vehemently opposes natural understanding (WA 3, 367, 36ff. [LW 10, 310]). For nothing but lowliness, disgrace and shame are to be seen there, unless we recognize the divine will, yes, God himself under this cloak (WA 5, 108, 1ff.). It is generally true of the divine

---


18Schlink, "Weisheit und Torheit," 4-6. Schlink contrasts the fundamental axioms of Aristotelian ontology and logic with the premises that are operative in Luther's Heidelberg Disputation and concludes: "So erfolgte in Luthers Paradoxen ein Angriff auf die ontologische Grundstruktur des aristotelischen Denkens, und es brach geschichtlich-existentielles Denken durch das Gehäuse der aristotelisch-scholastischen Denkform hindurch" (p. 6).

19"Die verschiedenen Paradoxe der Heidelberger Thesen stehen also nicht beziehungslos nebeneinander, sondern sie haben ihre gemeinsame Mitte in dem gekreuzigten Christus, dem 'absoluten Paradox' (Kierkegaard)" (ibid., 2).
works that reason does not know what to make of them and tends to despair because of this (WA 5, 615, 17ff.; WA 19, 195, 31ff.). Thus the gospel becomes a rock of offense, a scandal. But in that scandal lies the power of the gospel. "The gospel is itself an offense, not just offensive" (WA 31\textsuperscript{11}, 500, 9ff. [LW 17, 311]). We see that the incompetence of reason in spiritual things is based chiefly on the idea of the offense. Reason refuses to come to terms with the paradoxical character of the divine activity.\textsuperscript{20}

Quite in contrast to reason,\textsuperscript{21} faith does come to terms with the hiddenness of God in Christ's cross and suffering. Yet it does not do so in such a way that the hiddenness is abrogated by a higher "seeing," or even in such a way that the offense is once and for all removed. Both conditions persist until the veil of revelation is lifted and God's mysteries are made manifest by the light of glory. Until then faith is the means by which God's hiddenness, and the offense attendant thereto, are overcome. Indeed, the very existence of faith depends upon such negative experience. Hebrews 11:1, accordingly, retains the force of a definition of faith for Luther throughout his life.\textsuperscript{22} In the well-known passage from The Bondage of the Will he writes:

\textsuperscript{20}von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 85 (76-77). It is ever Luther's contention that God in his Word "promises us absurd, unbelievable, and impossible things" (WA 40\textsuperscript{10}, 46). Whereas man, possessed of natural reason, "deals with those matters which are possible," it is "the office and art of the Christian ... that he deals with impossibilities" (WA 27, 275). Among the impossibilities-absurdities taught in Scripture are the doctrines of the Trinity, creation, sin, the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, Christ's two natures, his crucifixion and resurrection, the resurrection of the saints, the present hiddenness of their estate, the sacraments (see Brian Gerrish, Grace and Reason. A Study in the Theology of Luther [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979], 20 n. 1, for texts illustrative of most of these. WA 40\textsuperscript{1} 361 [LW 26:227-28] is particularly apt). In response to reason's rejection of the Virgin Birth, Luther writes: "We shall hold to the word in faith against all such temptations and speculations" (WA 37, 55). And regarding reason's refusal to accept the teachings of the Trinity and Incarnation on scriptural authority, he curtly replies: "God does not want us to master it and fit it together, he wants us to believe it" (WA 37, 44). Not satisfied with this, but seeking to "comprehend" these mysteries, reason has devised the trinitarian and christological heresies of church history (WA 1\textsuperscript{0}1, 191 ff.; WA 37, 39, 42ff.). The above citations and their translations are to be found in Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, 68, 67, 52-53, 68.

\textsuperscript{21}Or as should, by now, be apparent, in defiance of reason, from which it follows that no one can give himself faith: "It is up to God alone to give faith contrary to nature, and ability to believe contrary to reason" (WA 39\textsuperscript{1}, 91 [LW 34, 160]). And again: "Let no one assume that he has faith by his own powers, as so many do when they hear about faith and then undertake to gain it by their own ability. They thus undertake a task which belongs to God alone, for having true faith is really a divine work" (WA 12, 422, 33ff., as quoted in Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, 48).

\textsuperscript{22}von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 36, 94 (36, 85).
Faith has to do with things not seen [Heb. 11:1]. Hence in order that there may be room for faith, it is necessary that everything which is believed should be hidden. It cannot, however, be more deeply hidden than under an object, perception, or experience which is contrary to it. Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven he does it by bringing down to hell.  

This passage is most significant because it declares hiddenness to be the sine qua non of faith, even asserting that God's true intentions are "the exact opposite of what we see, sense, and experience." God reveals himself "under the opposite form" or, as Luther can also express it, "he does an alien work in order to do his own work." It is this further feature of revelation—viz., that not only is it concealed, but concealed so deeply as to appear sub contraria specie—that accounts for the offense that reason takes at revelation. And because believers, too, are possessed of reason that is not wholly regenerate, the possibility of offense is a necessary concomitant of their faith.  

---

28

23 WA 18, 633 (LW 33, 62).


25 The distinction, opus proprium/opus alienum, is taken from Isa. 28:21 and is used, together with the formula, sub contraria specie, to describe the paradoxical nature of the divine deportment:

For the Lord will rise up as on Mount Perazim,  
he will be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon;  
to do his deed—strange is his deed!  
and to work his work—alien is his work! (Isa. 28:21)  

26 Although the teaching that God works sub contrariis is given forceful expression at a great many points in Luther's writings, perhaps nowhere is this more the case than in his first Psalm lectures: "If under the glory of the flesh God gave the glory of the Spirit, and under the riches of the flesh the riches of the Spirit, and under the graciousness and honour of the flesh gave the grace and honour of the Spirit, then the latter would rightly be described as profoundly concealed. But as it is, since he gives it under his contrary, and contradicts what is signified by the sign itself, it is not merely profoundly but far too profoundly concealed. For who could realize that someone who is visibly humbled, tempted, rejected, and slain, is at the same time and to the utmost degree inwardly exalted, comforted, accepted and brought to life, unless this was taught by the Spirit through faith?" (WA 4, 82, 14-21, as quoted in Gerhard Ebeling, Luther: An Introduction to his Thought, trans. R. A. Wilson (London: Collins, 1970), 236, emphasis added).

27 "Offense must constantly be overcome by faith. Where this offense is excluded we are no longer dealing with a life in faith" (von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 158 [135]).
The hiddenness of faith's realities and resultant severance of faith from reason and experience lead Luther to characterize it as "blind." The "blind eye" that faith turns to experience has to do not only with outward states of affairs, but--far more importantly--with the believer's own inner condition. Faith is not an observable psychological state. Rather

In Luther's 1517 exposition of the penitential psalms we are told that faith sees nothing, walking a dark path, declining to follow the light of reason (WA 1, 217, 8ff. [LW 14, 201]). The prototype of faith is Abraham who, letting go of his own understanding, was led like a blind man along the right way (WA 1, 171, 29ff. [LW 14, 152]). In the same manner, the godly are instructed to keep their eyes shut since God's eyes are always upon them (WA 1, 172, 10ff. [LW 14, 152]). The motif of darkness is, likewise, much in evidence in the Lectures on Romans of 1515-16. There we are told that enlightened zeal for God takes place "in pious ignorance and mental darkness... without understanding, without feeling, without thinking" (WA 56, 413, 22 [LW 25, 404]). In Luther's Operationes in psalmos (1519-21) faith is said to be "the entrance into darkness, where everything that the feeling, reason, mind and understanding of man is able to grasp will be dissolved" (WA 5, 69, 20ff. [LW 14, 342]). "God alone knows the way of the righteous. It is hidden even to the righteous; for his right hand leads them in such a wonderful way that it is not the way of the senses or of reason but of faith alone, which is able to see even in darkness and behold the invisible" (WA 5, 45 30ff. [LW 14, 309]). Luther's exposition of the Magnificat (1521), too, draws the contrast of not thinking or feeling, but believing (WA 7, 586, 11ff. [LW 21, 340]). At such times as we feel nothing of God's love we must descry his arm through faith. In order for this to happen "our sense and our reason must close their eyes" (WA 7, 587, 8ff. [LW 21, 341]). Luther describes the darkness in which faith has its abode by likening its seat, man's spirit, to the holy of holies of the tabernacle: "In this tabernacle we have a figure of the Christian man. His spirit is the holy of holies, where God dwells in the darkness of faith, where no light is; for he believes that which he neither sees nor feels nor comprehends" (WA 7, 551, 19ff. [LW 21, 304]). Such descriptions of blind faith are by no means confined to the young Luther who, as is well known, was very much under the influence of the language of mysticism. In the Lectures on Isaiah (1527-29) believing means committing oneself, with eyes shut, to God's guidance along an unknown path (WA 31, 320, 26ff. [LW 17, 76]). In the famous definition of faith that is given in the 1535 Lectures on Galatians, Luther refers to faith as "a sort of knowledge or darkness that nothing can see. Yet the Christ of whom faith takes hold is sitting in this darkness as God sat in the midst of darkness on Sinai and in the temple" (WA 40, 228, 31ff. [LW 26, 129]). And finally, in the Lectures on Genesis (1535-45) blind faith is enjoined for the purpose of grasping God's providential care as well as the highest articles of faith (WA 44, 378, 3ff. [LW 7, 106]). In these late lectures, faith is said to recognize not only that it has not yet become sight, but that it exists in total contradiction to sight (WA 43, 393, 9ff. [LW 4, 357]). In view of these many instances where faith is portrayed as being in blind opposition to experience (most of them gathered by von Loewenich, pp. 86-99 [77-88]), we are not surprised when he remarks that the frequency with which Luther enjoins blind faith can at times border upon tedium (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 129 [113]).

WA 40, 46, 7: "Faith... is the knowledge of things hoped for and not seen; this knowledge consists in the promise and word of God and, like them, it is divine even though it cannot be grasped or felt" (as quoted in Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, 68). "Therefore faith in Christ is an exceedingly arduous thing, because it is a rapture and a removal from everything one experiences within and without to the things one experiences neither within nor without, namely, to the invisible, most high, and incomprehensible God" (WA 57, 144 [LW 29, 149]). von Loewenich writes: "Faith comes directly from heaven and... can in no way be anchored psychologically." It "is not a psychological given; it cannot be recognized objectively." "Faith itself is a work and a power of God and therefore never a psychological given. Ultimately its subject is not man at all, but God himself (in faith, where it is not man who sees, but God.' WA 3, 542, 34f.)" (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 88-89, 109 [79, 97, 98]).
it is a clinging to God's Word, whatever one's psychological state. Because faith's presence is compatible with even the most palpably felt despair,\textsuperscript{30} Christians must maintain a \textbf{resolute ignorance} of their own inner condition, placing all their confidence, not in some quality or feeling that they may perchance find in themselves, but in God's gracious promise alone:

Faith is ardently opposed to all human feeling and all human observation (WA 5,86, 33ff.). It must be considered a temptation of Satan when man judges on the basis of what he feels within himself. Faith does not ask about that; it is simply 'insensibility' (WA 5, 623, 36ff.). Of course it is a great miracle that man, who feels nothing but his God-forsakenness, may still believe in the gracious God. But faith lives in this miracle (WA 5, 270, 17ff.).\footnote{\textsuperscript{31}}

The fact that faith and the Christian's standing before God are hidden realities inaccessible to introspection is intimately connected with Luther's understanding of justification. Various scholars have noted that the \textit{theologia crucis} is but an expression of Luther's teaching on justification.\textsuperscript{32} We are in the position to observe, however, that not even this is a strong enough claim for, as an underlying methodological principle of his theology, the \textit{theologia crucis} "determines" Luther's understanding of justification."\textsuperscript{33} There is no direct cognition of God or his activity. Faith affirms his "proper work" in the "alien work" of the cross and suffering. It affirms, hidden in Christ's cross, God's gracious will toward us. By means of the cross God has effected our redemption and conferred upon us a new life that is likewise hidden in Christ. We are \textit{simul justus et peccator}. Visible is the sinful reality of

\footnote{\textsuperscript{30}"For it happens, indeed it is typical of faith, that often he who claims to believe does not believe at all; and on the other hand, he who doesn't think he believes, but is in despair, has the greatest faith" (WA 26, 155 [LW 40, 241]).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{31}von Loewenich, \textit{Luthers Theologia Crucis}, 92 (82). Cf. Paul Althaus, \textit{Die Theologie Martin Luthers}, 62 (60): "To believe means to be certain of God's word; but this does not include faith's being certain of its own existence as faith."}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{32}Regin Prenter's identification of the two is to be found in the excerpt quoted earlier. In like fashion, Heinrich Fausel writes: "In Wahrheit ist Luthers Theologie des Kreuzes nichts als ein anderer Ausdruck für seine Rechtfertigungslehre" (\textit{D. Martin Luther: Leben und Werk 1483 bis 1521} [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1977], 107-8).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{33}Paul Althaus, \textit{Die Theologie Martin Luthers}, 40 (32), emphasis added. Walther von Loewenich renders an identical judgement: "Luther's doctrine of justification is a concrete application of his theology of the cross" (\textit{Luthers Theologia Crucis}, 133 [116]).}
the old Adam; hidden is our righteousness in Christ.\(^{34}\) This object of faith, like every such object, is held fast in defiance of all purely human understanding and in the absence of any immediate experience. Our reliance is not upon any visible holiness of our own. Where ratio would place its trust in lex (both being determined by the creature's attitude of self-assertion) faith humbly acknowledges in Christ's shameful death a redemptive act that is not directly to be seen, receiving there a righteousness that is not its own. This is to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling block.\(^{35}\)

Now, the severance that the theology of the cross effects between faith, on the one hand, and reason and experience, on the other, would seem to imply a corresponding demarcation between faith and knowledge. And so it does. This demarcation is due not only to the occult nature of faith's objects, but to their eschatological character as well.\(^{36}\) The fact that faith's domain is the future rather than the present causes Luther to identify faith

\(^{34}\) All his people are concealed even from themselves (WA 9, 196, 16f.) so that they have no conception of their adornment before God (WA 9, 191, 3ff.). "A Christian is even hidden from himself; he does not see his holiness and virtue, but sees in himself nothing but unholiness and vice" (WA, DB 7, 420 [LW 35, 411]). The profound hiddenness of the Christian standing is particularly in evidence in the Lectures on Romans where, in a gloss to Rom. 6:8, Luther asserts that "no one knows that he has life or feels that he has been justified, but he believes and hopes" (WA 56, 58 [LW 25, 52]; cf. WA 40\(^{16}\), 24-25 [LW 27, 21-22]). In the scholium to Rom. 9:3 Luther enlarges upon this theme: "For what is good for us is hidden, and that so deeply that it is hidden under its opposite. Thus our life is hidden under death, love for ourselves under hate for ourselves, glory under ignominy, salvation under damnation, our kingship under exile, heaven under hell, wisdom under foolishness, righteousness under sin, power under weakness. And universally our every assertion of anything good is hidden under the denial of it, so that faith may have its place in God... Thus 'the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field' (Matt. 13:44). The field is dirty in contrast to the treasure; while the one is trodden underfoot, the other is picked up. And yet the field hides the treasure. So also 'our life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. 3:3), that is, in the negation of all things which can be felt, held, and comprehended by our reason. So also our wisdom and righteousness are not at all apparent to us but are hidden with Christ in God. But what does appear is that which is contrary to these things, namely, sin and foolishness" (WA 56, 392 [LW 25, 382-83]).

\(^{35}\) WA 5, 68 (LW 14, 342).

\(^{36}\) These are not unrelated. The present hiddenness of faith's objects stands in intimate relation to the futurity of those objects. Hebrews 11:1 which, as we have noted, retained the force of a definition of faith for Luther throughout his life, explicitly connects the two. Referring to Luther's exegesis of this verse in the Romans lectures (WA 56, 409, 8ff. [LW 25, 399]), von Loewenich writes: "As the evidence of things that do not appear, faith draws the believer away from all that is visible; as the assurance of things hoped for it directs him to eternal things, which are, however, not present but future" (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 89 [80]). Cf. WA 56, 424, 27ff. (LW 25, 416).
with hope, and to distinguish it from knowledge. The relationship between faith and knowledge is given in negative terms—right knowledge consists in knowing that one knows nothing.

If this be the nature of faith, then it is a venture to believe, yes, a daring leap into the dark. In this life faith’s certainty can only be a fighting certainty, firmitas, not securitas that presumes to possess more than God has deigned to give—himself in ab-

37 von Loewenich (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 100 [89]) writes: "Faith and hope are almost identical for Luther in the first period. For also faith is in the first instance directed to the future; therein lies its difference from knowledge which has to do with the present (WA 4, 323, 20f.). But it is distinctive of hope that it stands in contrast to the reality surrounding us. Hope (spes) and physical reality (res) are two members of a disjunctive relationship (WA 3, 301, 11f. [LW 10, 249])."

38 "For the highest knowledge is to know that one knows nothing; true faith accomplishes this knowledge" (WA 57, 207, 10ff. as translated by W. Pauck in Luther: Lectures on Romans, The Library of Christian Classics [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961], 287). It is to be noted that, while this text distinguishes faith from knowledge, it also identifies it with knowledge. Accordingly, one must exercise caution in developing the antitheses, faith vs. reason, faith vs. experience, and faith vs. knowledge. Luther does not, for example, deny that regenerate reason has a role to play in "things higher." Neither does he deny that religious experience has a positive, as well as negative, content. Similarly, he can describe faith as knowledge, the seat of which is intellect—N.B., intellect "in-formed" by faith (WA 40n 25-27 [LW 27, 22-23]). The fact that the intellect is the seat of faith leads Luther, in this text, to distinguish it from hope, whose seat is the will. Hence despite their close association, they are by no means to be identified identical.

39 "To believe means to abandon the viewpoint of reason and of our own heart and take a chance on God's word." "As a human act, faith is simply the taking of a chance: I stake my life on the word" (Althaus, Die Theologie Martin Luthers, 59, 62 [57, 60]). The fact that faith is a dare causes Luther to contrast it with worldly shrewdness, which prudently avoids risk and its attendant dangers. In contrast to shrewdness, which "looks around with endless deliberation," it is "the nature of faith to walk in such danger where reason always argues, 'Where will this end?"' (W 31ff, 321 [LW 17, 76-77]).

40 Heinrich Bornkamm writes: "Luther's faith is a daring faith; it looks to Christ. His open eyes for reality with all its profundities and tensions had made it apparent to him that God is not visible, not demonstrable, not calculable, but that belief in Him calls for a venture, a leap into the dark. . . . Luther once described this daring leap of faith very beautifully as follows: 'If God chose to show us life in death, and showed our soul place and space, way and manner, where and how it is to appear, whither it is to go and remain, then death would not be bitter; it would be like a leap over a shallow stream on the banks of which one sees and feels firm ground. But He does not reveal any of this to us, and we are compelled to jump from the safe shore of this life over into the abyss where we feel nothing, see nothing, and have no footing or support, but entirely at God's suggestion and with his support' [WA 19, 217, 15]" (Luthers Geistige Welt [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1953], 102-3 [Luther's World of Thought, trans. Martin H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 87]).
The theologia crucis is a theologia viatorium, a wayfarer theology. That is to say: the Christian life is a striving, a perpetual process of coming-to-be, not a steady-state quality of being.

Lennart Pinomaa, Sieg des Glaubens: Grundlinien der Theologie Luthers, ed. Horst Beintker (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 110-13, especially p. 110: "Luther unterscheidet von seiner Frühtheologie ab zwischen zwei Arten von Sicherheit, zwischen firmitas und securitas. Die firmitas ist die echte christliche Gewißheit, securitas die falsche pharisäische Sicherheit. Die christliche Gewißheit ist jedoch so beschaffen, daß man sie sich nicht als einen festen Besitz ein für allemal aneignen kann. Vielmehr gibt es sie nur als immer neu zu erkämpfende Gewißheit." The reason that the Christian's certainty is ever a "fighting certainty" is rooted in the incompleteness of justification in this life: "Weil jedoch in diesem Leben die Gerechtigkeit niemals vollendet wird und daher auch die firmitas niemals vollständig werden kann, ist die rechte Gewißheit immer ringende Gewißheit, das heißt der Zustand, in dem die Anfechtung besiegt wird" (p. 113). The fact that certainty must ever be won anew through faith's appropriation of the divine promise leads Wilhelm Walther to remark: "Wenn Luther von 'Gewißheit Glaubens' redet, so will er diese Gewißheit absonder von jeder sonst bekannten Wahrnehmung. In dem Wort 'Glaubensgewißheit' ist demnach der Ton auf die erste, nicht auf die letzte Hälfte zu legen" (Das Erbe der Reformation in Kampf der Gegenwart, 4 Hefte [Leipzig: 1903, 1904, 1909, 1917], 2:91). Corroboration of this claim can certainly be found in Luther--see WA 26, 155 (LW 40, 241): "One must believe but we neither should nor can know it for certain." The converse, however, must be affirmed as well--namely, that faith's certainty "is more certain than empirical or rational certainty" (von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 167 [142]). It is so because it is a God-given certainty that repeatedly overcomes doubt: "The Holy Spirit is no Skeptic, and it is not doubts or mere opinions that he has written on our hearts, but assertions more sure and certain than life itself and all experience" (WA 18, 605, 32 [LW 33, 24]). The Holy Spirit is the ultimate, and only, guarantor of certainty for the angefochten believer (see Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator. Studier i Luthers Theologi, 2d ed. [Copenhagen: Samlerens Forlag, 1946], 213-17). From our communion with him issues a "experiential knowledge" which is neither speculative nor historical, but similar to conjugal love (see Erwin Iserloh, "Luther's Christ-Mysticism," 46).

von Loewenich writes, "Faith is a contending, not a possessing"; "Our Christian existence is ... a 'becoming rather than a being'" (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 90, 134 [80, 117], translation mine). Iwand puts the matter powerfully, and in a most Kierkegaardian way, when he remarks: "Eigentlich kann man ein Christ nie sein, man kann es nur werden" ("Theologia Crucis," 394). A multitude of statements by Luther himself can be marshaled on this point. For example, in his Defense and Explanation of All Articles (1521), he writes: "This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal but it is the right road. At present everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed" (WA 7, 337, 30ff [LW 32, 24]). Implicit in this characterization of the Christian life is Luther's resolute rejection of every exclusively realized eschatology that would wrest from faith its restless, wayfaring character. The theme is a constantly recurring one. As early as the first lectures on the Psalms (1513-15) Luther writes: "For it is not sufficient to have done something, and now to rest, but, as philosophy tells us, movement is an uncompleted act, always partly comprehended, and partly still to be comprehended, always lying midway between two contraries, and belonging at the same time both to the starting-point and to the goal. If we existed in one only, there would not be any movement. But this present life is a kind of movement and passage, or transition ... a pilgrimage from this world into the world to come, which is eternal rest" (WA 4, 362, 35-363, 2 as quoted in Gerhard Ebeling, Luther. An Introduction to his Thought, trans. R. A. Wilson [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970], 161-62). We encounter this same ontology in the Lectures on Romans (1515-16), as applied to justification: 'For just as there are five stages of
natural growth, . . . not-being, becoming, being, action, and being acted upon, . . . so it is also with the Spirit: not-being is something without a name and man in sins; becoming is justification; being is righteousness; acting is to act and live righteousness; to be acted upon is to be made perfect and complete. These five are somehow always in motion in man. . . . Man is always in not-being, in becoming, in being; . . . i.e., always a sinner, always penitent, always righteous. For by repenting he becomes righteous from being unrighteous. Repentance is, therefore, the medium between unrighteousness and righteousness. And thus he is in sin as the terminus a quo and righteousness as the terminus ad quem. If, therefore, we are always repenting, we are always sinners, and precisely thereby we are righteous and being made righteous" (WA 56, 442 [Luther: Lectures on Romans, trans. Wilhelm Pauck, 322]).

These early statements of the simul iustus et peccator teaching are followed by many others throughout Luther's career. Up to 1518-19 the teaching is understood primarily in its Augustinian sense: the Christian is sick, but in the process of being made well. Justification is conceived as a process of acquiring actual righteousness. By contrast, after 1518-19 it is generally interpreted in the light of the two realms distinction: the Christian is already completely righteous in God's sight, though in his own sight he remains completely sinful. This total righteousness is imputed or "passive"; from it issues an active, partial righteousness as its fruit (F. Edward Czran, An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law and Society, Harvard Theological Studies, vol. 19, [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959], xvi-xvii, 56-57, 73-94). Accordingly the mature Luther interprets the simul formula in a two-fold sense. The Christian is totus iustus/totus peccator (completely righteous by imputation, although empirically a sinner) and partim iustus/partim peccator (gradually being made righteous by impartation). On both interpretations of the formula an ongoing transitus is occurring from one state to another (in the case of the totus aspect it is the repeated flight from one's complete unrighteousness to Christ's complete righteousness; in the case of the partim aspect it is the incremental growth in righteousness—see Wilfried Joest, Gesetz und Freiheit. Das Problem des Tertius usus legis bei Luther und die neustamentliche Parainese, 3d ed. [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961], 60-65 and 65-70).

Were this all that is to be said about the two kinds of righteousness, we could make a clear demarcation between their status: imputed or passive righteousness has to do with justification, imparted or active righteousness with sanctification and the Christian's activity in the world. The mature Luther, however, draws no such clear distinction between justification and sanctification. In the Lectures on Galatians (1535), for example, justification is said to be based upon both kinds of righteousness. As the "first fruits of the Spirit" faith is an actual, if partial, righteousness to which the nonimputation of sins for Christ's sake must be added. Christ's righteousness supplements what we lack in real righteousness, inflect enlarging the real righteousness that has begun to be in faith (WA 40 408-9 [LW 26, 260-61]; see Joest, Gesetz und Freiheit, 67). The lines between the two kinds of righteousness are not at all clearly drawn, and with good reason: since Luther is not talking about two fundamentally different kinds of righteousness or supplementary schemes of justification (see Brian Gerrish, "By Faith Alone," 82-85). Perhaps surprisingly, the concept that integrates "justification by imputation" with "justification by impartation" is none other than "formed faith": not the scholastics' fides caritate formata but fides Christo formata, faith "in-formed" by Christ or "Christ working effectually within" (p. 83). Heiko Oberman makes the same point in his essay, "Justitia Christi' and 'Justitia Dei': Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification" (in The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986], 122 and 123-24). So, too, does Erwin Iserloh, who emphasizes that a real union takes place with Christ through faith so that the Christian assumes Christ's righteousness as his own. This union can only be described as mystical since the Christian is "cemented to Christ," "made his 'substance'," "becomes one with the Word made flesh," "quasi una persona," is "seized and transformed in Christ," "torn away from [himself] and glued to Christ." Hence in contrast to the fanatics who say that Christ "is in us spiritually, that is, speculatively, while being realiter in heaven," Luther insists that "Christ and faith must be joined together, and we must dwell in heaven while Christ is in our hearts. This does not happen speculatively, but realiter" (WA 40', 546. See Iserloh, "Luther's Christ-Mysticism," 45-46 for the above references). Through such union there occurs a "happy exchange" in which a real, not merely forensic,
It is this "in transit" character of Christian existence that makes possible the recurrent episodes of doubt and despair that characterize the walk of faith. Christians lack any empirical assurance of their standing before God since whatever actual righteousness they possess is only partial, submerged under their greater unrighteousness. On the other hand, their total righteousness is imputative so that their true estate remains "hid with Christ in God." As a consequence they are repeatedly angefochten and faced with the challenge of making faith's leap from judgement into life.\textsuperscript{44} The spiritual trials that call forth this leap are the most intensive kind of suffering, occurring at such times as the Christian is unable to press through from the Deus absconditus to the Deus revelatus, from the opus alienum to the opus proprium.\textsuperscript{45} In the absence of faith's experience of God, the Christian is alone with his human experience and bereft of God. Indeed, at such times he has experience against himself, for the God that is experienced in Anfechtung appears to be a devil.\textsuperscript{46} 

\textit{communicatio idiomatum} takes place (pp. 47-51). Iserloh writes that Luther describes this same event by his use of the \textit{sacramentum et exemplum} formula (pp. 51-57). As \textit{sacramentum}, Christ effects a real conformity of our natures unto his, from which the imitation of Christ as \textit{exemplum} proceeds. In all of these ways it is clear that Luther's view of justification is not merely forensic. Christ is not merely present to God as our total righteousness. He is also present to faith, his presence rendering it a \textit{real}, if inchoate, righteousness.

The sum of the matter is that the mature Luther, like the young Luther, comprehends under the \textit{simul} formula a simultaneous presence of two contradictories with a continual \textit{kiv{a}c{a}c} being effected from the one to the other. Justification is a continual passage from unrighteousness to righteousness, and that, in a \textit{two-fold} sense. Christians are constantly involved in the struggle to realize what they already are in Christ, whether forensically \textit{coram Deo} (through daily repentance and conversion) or formally \textit{coram hominibus} (through the growth of faith, which is actively engaged in subduing the flesh and serving the neighbor). This is not an insignificant element of Luther's theology. On the contrary, Gerhard Ebeling writes: "Man's existence in a transitional state is to be properly understood as the fundamental tension to which all the antitheses in Luther's thought are related" (Luther. An Introduction to his Thought, 165).

\textsuperscript{44}"The Christian is constantly angefochten," writes Paul Althaus. He "stands in Anfechtung throughout his entire life, beset by what is visible, the empirical, and therefore ever in battle with doubt. Anfechtung is not an exception; rather, it is the rule for the believer" (\textit{Die Theologie Martin Luthers}, 40 [33] and 59 [56], translation mine).

\textsuperscript{45}von Loewenich, \textit{Luthers Theologia Crucis}, 159 (136).

\textsuperscript{46}"Peter says truthfully (2 Peter 1:19) that the word is like a lamp shining in a dark place. Most certainly it is a dark place! God's faithfulness and truth always must first become a great lie before it becomes truth. The world calls this truth heresy. And we, too, are constantly tempted to believe that God would abandon us and not keep his word; and in our hearts we begin thinking he is a liar. In short, God cannot be God unless he first becomes a devil. We cannot go to heaven unless we first go to hell. We cannot become God's children until we first become children of the devil. All that God speaks and does the devil has to speak and do first. And our flesh agrees. Therefore it is actually the Spirit who enlightens and teaches us in the Word to believe differently.
This terrifying experience of God having assumed the visage of the devil occurs whenever the law gains the upper hand in the conscience of the Christian. Unable, in faith, to descry the God who has graciously hidden himself in sufferings, the Christian finds himself face to face with that other hidden deity—the terrifying God of predestination. At such moments the Christian is persuaded that God has consigned him to perdition; yes, he is even tempted to believe that God is a malevolent being who delights in his destruction.47

During such episodes of Anfechtung the Christian experiences a desolation similar to that felt by Christ on the cross. "As Christ on the cross no longer felt his own deity, so the Christian according to his outer man may 'no longer feel the faith' through which he is God's

By the same token the lies of this world cannot become lies without first having become truth. The godless do not go to hell without first having gone to heaven. They do not become the devil's children until they have first been the children of God. . . . To summarize, the devil does not become and is not a devil without first having been God. He does not become an angel of darkness unless he has first been an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). . . . I know well that God's word must first become a great lie, even in myself, before it can become truth. I also know that the devil's word must first become the delicate truth of God before it can become a lie. I must grant the devil the hour of godliness and ascribe devilhood to our God. But this is not the whole story. The last word is: "His faithfulness and truth endure forever" (WA 31, 249 [LW 14, 31-32]).

47This is, after all, what the Deus nudus appears to do. In his distinction in The Bondage of the Will between the God who is preached and the God who is hidden, Luther acknowledges that the Deus praedicatus does not will that any should perish; indeed, he does everything to prevent this from happening. The same cannot, however, be said of the Deus absconditus who, "hidden in his majesty neither deplors nor takes away death, but works life, death, and all in all. For there he has not bound himself by his word, but has kept himself free over all things." This God "wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his word. Thus he does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his" (WA 18, 685 [LW 33, 140]). Luther freely admits the offensiveness of this: "Admittedly, it gives the greatest possible offense to common sense or natural reason that God by his own sheer will should abandon, harden, and damn men as if he enjoyed the sins and the vast, eternal torments of his wretched creatures, when he is preached as a God of such great mercy and goodness, etc. . . . And who would not be offended? I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had never been created a man, before I realized how salutary that despair was, and how near to grace" (WA 18, 719 [LW 33, 190]). Of course, the possibility of offense is salutary—if one has faith. But as Luther points out, the disparity between the behavior of the hidden and the revealed God is so enormous as to present an intractable dilemma to faith, the task of which it is to unite the two: "God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under iniquity. This is the highest degree of faith, to believe him merciful when he saves so few and damnst so many, and to believe him righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily damnable, so that he seems . . . to delight in the torments of the wretched and to be worthy of hatred rather than of love. If, then, I could by any means comprehend how this God can be merciful and just who displays so much wrath and iniquity, there would be no need of faith. As it is, since that cannot be comprehended, there is room for the exercise of faith when such things are preached and published, just as when God kills, the faith of life is exercised in death" (WA 18, 633 [LW 33, 62-63]).
child. At such times faith 'crawls away and hides.' When this happens Luther's only counsel is to cling to the word of promise. More concretely, he instructs us to cling to Christ--fleeing, in effect, from the God who is hidden to the God who is revealed. Luther urges the Christian on such occasions to fight against God himself—a bold exhortation

---

48 Althaus, Die Theologie Martin Luthers, 63 (61), citing WA 17', 72.

49 Luther's sermon on the Syro-Phoenician woman provides a striking example of the sense of abandonment that overwhelms the believer in Anfechtung, as well as the vital necessity that he or she cling to the word in faith. Althaus writes: "What makes this particular trial so grievous is the fact that Jesus Christ himself assumes a stance identical to that which our heart in its moment of perplexity and doubt ascribes to him. He himself speaks the 'no' and our heart thinks of this 'no' as absolutely final. But this is not the way it really is. Therefore the heart must turn its back on such feelings and with strong faith in God's word grasp the deep and secret "yes" that is under and above the "no." This is what Christ's encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman teaches us. The story is "written to instruct and comfort all of us, so that we may know how deeply God hides his grace and not think of him according to our own feelings and reactions but exactly according to his word" [WA 17', 203] (Die Theologie Martin Luthers, 60 [58]).

50 So observes Brian Gerrish in "To the Unknown God': Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God" in The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 140, where WA TR 5, 294, 24, 34 and 295, 5 are cited: "Begin from below, from the incarnate Son... Christ will bring you to the hidden God... If you take the revealed God, he will bring you the hidden God at the same time." While the revealed God is absolutely indispensable as the terminus ad quem of faith, so too is the hidden God as its terminus a quo: "The hidden God is never the object of faith. But faith nonetheless takes on an urgency, perhaps even a passion, because of the hidden God, who prevents faith from becoming complacent. Faith, in Luther's sense, was a dare, a risk, or--in one of his favorite words--a 'flight.' Under Anfechtung, a man must dare against God to flee to God (ad deum contra deum [WA 5, 204, 26]). Faith is not a repose, but movement. Hence faith really does take into itself something of the meaning of God's hiddenness even though it is not directed toward that hiddenness; rather it is movement away from the hidden God" (pp. 147-48).

While faith in the revealed God provides the only means for overcoming Anfechtung, and while this revealed God is, first and foremost, to be sought in Christ, it is also true, as Kari Holl and others after him have pointed out, that in times of Anfechtung Luther drew particular comfort from the first commandment, "I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2-3). While any discussion of the "helps" in overcoming Anfechtung remains incomplete apart from a consideration of why Luther found this ostensible word of law so helpful, we choose to take it up at a later point where the usefulness of the command in Kierkegaard's experience will be discussed.

51 "There is sufficiently abundant protection in the promise of God not only against the devil, the flesh, and the world but also against this lofty temptation. For if God sent an angel to say: 'Do not believe these promises!' I would reject him, saying: 'Depart from me Satan, etc.' Or, if God himself appeared to me in his majesty and said: 'You are not worthy of my grace; I will change my plan and not keep my promise to you,' I would not have to yield to him but it would be necessary to fight most vehemently against God himself" (WA 44, 97, 38ff. [LW 6, 131]). Cf. also WA 10', 130: "The word itself without regard for the person must satisfy the heart and must so convince and grasp a man that he immediately feels compelled to admit that it is true and right even though all the world, all the angels, and all the princes of hell disagree; yes, even though God himself would immediately say otherwise." Luther's answer to the question as to how this is possible is that faith "is omnipotent just as God himself is" (WA 10', 214, 26). It is so because it has its source in God (WA 17', 73,
that suggests that God himself is the source of Anfechtung.\footnote{Luther rejects the apostle James's claim (Jas. 1:13) that "God tempts no one" (WA 43, 201, 25ff. [LW 4, 92]). Among the reasons why God might choose to withdraw the tokens of his presence from the believer von Loewenich gives three: (1) to destroy pride and teach a humble estimate of oneself--WA 5, 397, 30ff.; WA 2, 125, 8ff. (LW 4, 74); WA 43, 203, 26ff. (LW 4, 95); WA 42, 491, 11ff. (LW 2, 320); WA 42, 551, 37ff. (LW 3, 5)--(2) to strengthen faith through the repeated challenge that offense poses--WA 31\textsuperscript{11}, 506, 30ff. (LW 17, 319); WA 43, 230, 37ff. (LW 4, 132)--and (3) to teach prayer (WA 6, 223, 14ff. (LW 44, 46-47); WA 3, 62, 19ff. (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 163 [139]). It should be noted that Luther can speak in very practical terms about God's reasons for "attacking" the Christian. For example, he describes God as behaving no differently than an earthly father who thrashes his son more soundly and frequently than he does his servant. Indeed, the more cherished the child, the bigger the rod that the father uses, whereas he does not use a rod at all on the disobedient servant, but simply runs him out of the house. Yet it is to the son that the father gives the inheritance (WA TR 2, 2701). Anfechtung, then, is an expression of fatherly discipline; it is the "school" through with God puts his children in order that they may come to know themselves, and him (see Paul Bühler, Die Anfechtung bei Martin Luther [Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1942], 217-20).}

And in fact, though Luther generally ascribes these assaults to the devil, he can as well attribute them to God. Indeed, the very ascription of Anfechtung to the devil is tantamount to an ascription to God, the devil being God's devil, or "mask."\footnote{On the devil as the mere instrument of God's effective agency, von Loewenich cites WA 40\textsuperscript{III}, 519, 13ff. (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 160 [137]). Althaus cites WA 16, 143, where God is said, first, to incite the devil to evil, and then, to cause man to sin. Althaus writes: "Luther finds himself compelled to assert that God both forsakes and incites to sin--though neither of these is intended to signify that God is the author of sin. But what does this mean? Does it mean that God's will is in contradiction with itself? He gives us the law and wants us to fulfill it and yet he incites the devil to seduce us to sin? There is a real conflict between these two and theology cannot resolve it. Luther finally is able to say nothing more than 'This is too deep for us. God's will is involved, but I am not supposed to know how this all happens'" (Die Theologie Martin Luthers, 143 [158-59]). It would seem that in Luther's teaching about God as the effectual cause of sin, we meet once again with The Bondage of the Will's chilling tenet that the hidden God "works . . . all in all."} But herein lies the dilemma that Anfechtung poses for faith. If, in Anfechtung, God is our assailant, then perhaps it is not merely with his "mask" that we have to do; perhaps it is with God himself--i.e., the predestinating God already discussed. This circumstance that God himself assails the Christian is accordingly what makes Anfechtung so unspeakably horrific, for in the absence of faith the Christian is utterly without a clue as to the true nature of the deity that assails him. Out of this soul-crushing desolation to which the believer feels himself abandoned in the midst of Anfechtung there emerges the characteristic passion of faith: Luther likens it to hanging from a cross, suspended
midway between heaven and earth.54 "The Christian is," he says, "the sort of hero who
constantly deals with absolutely impossible things."55

In circumscribing the religious phenomenon of Anfechtung and connecting it with
God's hiddenness we have not, however, exhausted the implications of that hiddenness for
the Christian life. Certainly Luther's identification of Christ's cross with that of the Christian
entails that the latter, like Christ, will be angefochten; but it also means that he or she will
be subject to all manner of negation. It cannot be otherwise, for in whatever specific manner
God chooses to reveal his presence, he does so paradoxically, under the sign of the cross.
Hence, though Anfechtung is certainly the most intense and terrifying form of suffering that
attaches to the "sub contraria specie" of revelation, it is not the only form. "Christians must
become like their Master in all things." Just as the ultimate reality about Christ was hidden
in manifold degree, so too must the Christian's true estate be: "its glory must present itself
in lowliness, its nobility in disgrace, its joy in suffering, its hope in despair, its life in
death... The hiddenness of the Christian life is a following of Christ's suffering."56 And
just as the way of the cross signified a way of annihilation for Christ, so too does it signify
this for the Christian.57 This is God's alien work, the end of which is his proper work, the
impartation of life.

Luther describes the Christian life as a "being crucified with Christ" (concrucifici
Christo) in order to drive home the truth that it is a veritable process of dying. This assumes
both inward and outward forms. Inwardly the Christian suffers the martyrdom of the
consciousness of sin for, as we have already had occasion to observe, he or she is simul

54WA 1, 102, 39ff.
55WA 27, 276 (cited by Althaus in Die Theologie Martin Luthers, 61 [59]).
56von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 136 (118), the translation of which is slightly amended from
the English version.
57Ibid., 139 (120-21). Cf. WA 2, 548, 28f. (LW 27, 308): "It is necessary that we be destroyed and rendered
formless, in order that Christ may be formed and be alone in us."
justus et peccator--i.e., ever in the process of being condemned and justified. The practical significance of the "in transit" character of Christian existence, however, is not limited to this, for it also includes the daily **crucifixion of the flesh**. The latter, in particular, is symbolized in baptism, a sacramental act that effects the death of the old man and the rising of the new. This event, however, is not consummated once and for all at the beginning of the Christian life; rather, it is reenacted daily with the renewed putting to death of the old man through the mortification of the flesh. This means that baptism is peculiarly connected with the Christian's daily, inner experience of death and suffering.

In identifying **mortificatio** as one of the forms of suffering that constitute the believer's crucifixion with Christ, we come face to face with a crucial determinant of Christian suffering--viz. that it is **voluntarily** incurred. The Christian life is a process of **willed** dying--yet, N.B., not in such a way that this is conceived as something that Christians accomplish on terms of their own choosing, but rather, as something set before them by God. The Christian is not to seek out suffering for its own sake--about this Luther is quite

---

58The real and true work of Christ's passion is to make man conformable to Christ, so that man's conscience is tormented in like measure as Christ was pitiably tormented in body and soul by our sins" (WA 2, 138, 19 ff [LW 42, 10]). The German is as follows: "Das eygene naturlich werck des leydens Christi ist, das es yhm den menschen gleych formig mache, das wie Christus am leyb und seel jamerlich in unserm sunden gemartert wird, mussen wir euch ym nach alzo gemartert werden im gewissen von unszem sunden." "Martem" in middle high German can mean "to torture" or "torment" as it does in modern German. But it can also mean "to martyr," "to nail to the cross."

59As long as we live we are continually doing that which baptism signifies, that is, we die and rise again. . . . Thus, you have been once baptized in the sacrament, but you need continually to be baptized by faith, continually to die and continually to live. . . . You will understand, therefore, that whatever we do in this life which mortifies the flesh or quickens the spirit has to do with our baptism. The sooner we depart this life, the more speedily we fulfill our baptism; and the more cruelly we suffer, the more successfully do we conform to our baptism" (WA 6, 534-35 [LW 36, 69]). Baptism "establishes a covenant between us and God to the effect that we will fight against sin and slay it, even to our dying breath, while he for his part will be merciful to us" (WA 2, 731, 35 ff. [LW 35, 35]).

60However vehemently Luther may condemn the "self-chosen" works upon which the monastic vocation prided itself, his rejection of such works cannot be a rejection of the voluntary nature of Christian suffering. Consider what, at the time of the Lectures on Romans, he sees as positive about this vocation that is otherwise fraught with meritmongering: "I think that to become a monk is a better thing today than it has been for the last two hundred years, and for this reason: up to now the monks drew away from the cross and it was something glorious to be a monk. But now people begin to dislike them again, even the good ones among them, on account of their foolish garb. For this is what it means to be a monk: to be detested by the world and to let oneself be taken for a fool" (WA 56, 497 [Lectures on Romans, ed. and trans. Wilhelm Pauck, 385]). What can be said
clear. But by the same token, this does not mean that he or she leans back in ease, regarding only those vicissitudes that are the ordinary human lot as Christian suffering. von Loewenich writes:

Not every suffering may claim to be discipleship of the cross (WA 10\_III, 115, 15ff.) What does it mean to bear Christ's cross? 'The cross of Christ is nothing else than forsaking everything and clinging with the heart's faith to Christ alone, or forsaking everything and believing that this is what it means to bear the cross of Christ' (WA 1, 101, 19ff.).

to the credit of at least some monks, then, is that they have not drawn back from the cross, but willingly embraced it. It is the voluntary nature of their suffering that prompts the world to deride them as fools, but elicits Luther's praise. The undesirable accretions to this pure intent of monasticism, of course, soon lead Luther to abandon it altogether as a useful vehicle for mortification. God wills that we be humbled by works of his choosing--works that truly destroy the Old Adam--rather than works of our choosing that build him up. Hence in 1517, one year after the Lectures on Romans, Luther records God's estimate of "self-chosen" works: "Therefore not you, not a man, not a creature, but I, through My Spirit and the Word, will teach you the way you must go. You must not follow the work which you choose, not the suffering which you devise, but that which comes to you against your choice, thoughts, and desires. There I call; there you must be a pupil; there it is the time; there your Master has come" (WA 18, 489 [LW 14, 152]). Henceforth the secular world is to be the setting for the Christian's asceticism: The "true mortifications," writes Luther, "... do not happen in deserts, away from the society of human beings. No they happen in the household itself and in the government" (WA 43, 214, 3ff. [LW 4, 109]). Accordingly, the theologia crucis finds its practical expression in Luther's ethic of vocation: "Das wirkliche Leben--das ist der Weg des Kreuzes. Nicht das abstrakte, das selbstgezimmerte, das in einer bestimmten Isolierung von der Welt verbrachte, womöglich mit eigenen Martern und Kasteiungen geformte Dasein" (Iwand, "Theologia Crucis," 395). As Luther demonstrates in his Treatise on Good Works (1520), ordinary life offers endless possibilities for the mortification of the flesh. His ultimate rejection of monasticism therefore in no way rescinds the requirement of the theologia crucis that Christians voluntarily embrace suffering. "God himself wants us to be conformed in all things to the image of his Son (WA 1, 571, 34ff. [LW 31, 153]), and do this altogether voluntarily (WA 4, 645, 21ff.)" (von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 143 [123], emphasis added).

61"God does not want us to search for misfortune and to choose it ourselves. Walk in faith and love. If the cross comes, accept it. If it does not come, do not search for it. Therefore those hotheaded spirits do wrong by scourging and beating themselves or by killing themselves and trying in this way to take heaven by storm" (WA 12, 364 [LW 30, 109-10]).

62Luther's Theologia Crucis, 138 (120). The view that ordinary vicissitudes do not constitute discipleship of the cross is already evident from the context of the above proscription against seeking out misfortune (WA 12, 364 [LW 30, 109-10]). There Luther observes that all people, good and evil alike, are "subjected to misfortune"--a circumstance that makes it all the more necessary for "those who want to come into eternal life to bear the cross!" Similarly, in the text cited by von Loewenich here (WA 10\_III, 115, 15ff.) Luther categorically denies that ordinary misfortune counts as the Christian's "cross" (though it may well be considered an Anfechtung--see Paul Bühler, Die Anfechtung bei Martin Luther [Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1942], 35-36). But more on this later.
"Forsaking everything"—in a word, voluntary self-denial. As a part of such self-denial Luther advocates physical asceticism.\(^{63}\) The voluntary, though not self-imposed, character of Christian suffering can be summed up in the following way: "God disciplines the Christian, but he does it in such a way that he also summons the Christian to discipline himself and to struggle actively with his old man throughout his life.\(^{64}\)

But Christians are not only subject to struggle, the locus of which lies within; outwardly, too, they contend. To be sure, they are blessed of God. Yet viewed from without, this blessing appears to be the greatest curse.\(^{65}\) The blessedness of the Christian estate is

\(^{63}\)Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check" (WA 7, 30 [LW 31, 358]). To a statement like this the caveat must be added that human nature is not dualistically conceived by Luther, as though the body were the ultimate obstacle to the exercise of man's higher faculties. It is not our corporeality, but our self-will ("flesh"), that perverts our faculties, lower and higher alike. Consequently it is our self-will that must be annihilated. In this regard, the mortification of the body is of limited utility: "One can weaken and mortify the body with fasting and works; but one does not expel evil lust in this way. Faith, however, can subdue and restrain it, so that it gives room to Spirit" (WA 12, 296 [LW 30, 41]). Physical asceticism is useful and necessary in reigning in the lusts of the body, but only in conjunction with the liberating presence of faith in man's higher faculties: "Since by faith the soul is cleansed and made to love God, it desires that all things, and especially its own body, shall be purified so that all things may join with it in loving and praising God. Hence a man cannot be idle, for the need of his body drives him and he is compelled to do many good works to reduce it to subjection. Nevertheless the works themselves do not justify him before God, but he does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God" (WA 12, 30-31 [LW 31, 359]). In sum, all our efforts at discipline count for nothing unless God first gives faith, and then the works—including acts physical asceticism—wherein faith is to be exercised. A closer discussion of this "incarnational movement of faith" into the sphere of corporeality may be found in Wilfried Joest, Gesetz und Freiheit, 104-8.

\(^{64}\)Paul Althaus, The Ethics of Martin Luther, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 22. Because the theologia crucis provides the context for Luther's ethic of vocation, the latter is anything but spießbürgerlich in character. von Loewenich observes: "If it is ever asserted that Luther made lesser practical demands of men than medieval Catholicism, one glance at Luther's theology of the cross should be sufficient to convince one of the opposite. The most radical asceticism and the most sublime mysticism, stripped of their false tendencies, are here given their due in their rightful concerns and are even surpassed in the seriousness of their approach. Unvaried in its emphasis, the melody sounds forth from Luther's theology of the cross: Who ever would follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me!" (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 136 [118]).

\(^{65}\)"Outwardly His grace seems to be nothing but wrath, so deeply is it buried under two thick hides or pelts. Our opponents and the world condemn and avoid it like the plague or God's wrath, and we too do not feel much differently about it" (WA 31, 249, 15 [LW 14, 31]). "God's gifts and benefits are so hidden under the cross that the godless can neither see nor recognize them but rather consider them to be only trouble and disaster" (WA 31, 51, 21 as quoted in Althaus, Die Theologie Luthers, 38 [30]). "Thus the favor bestowed by God on this little group is completely hidden from the world and appears to be nothing but eternal wrath, punishment, and
not externally evidenced by the material blessings that it brings. If anything, the situation is precisely the reverse: it is identifiable by the tribulation that follows in its train. In this Christians are completely as their King, who distinguishes himself from all other kings in that he offers the cross and death. He advises contempt for the good that one sees, and likewise for the evil, since He will confer on you a much different good, namely, that which the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard, and has not entered into the heart of man (I Cor. 2:9). You must die if you would live under this King. You must bear the cross and the hatred of the whole world. You must not flee from ignominy, poverty, hunger, and thirst, in other words, all the evil that floods the earth. For this is the King who became a fool to the earth and died, and who thereupon destroys His own with a scepter of iron and smashes them like a potter’s vessel. How can anyone stand such a King if he relies on his own senses, defines things rationally, and stands in the doorway of his tents and cannot see the face of Moses (Ex. 33:7-10)? Therefore instruction and training are necessary, that you may rise above this, regard the visible things with contempt, and be drawn to the invisible, as you aspire, not to that which is on the earth but to that which is above, where Christ is (Col. 3:1-2).  

Chief among the outward perils that the Christian must endure is "the hatred of the whole world." It cannot be otherwise, for "the world and its rulers cannot tolerate a man who through this [spiritual] 'desire' wants to be blessed and scorns their blessings." The world behaves like a spurned lover; its blandishments give way to increasingly vicious recriminations. Even at the outset when it dismisses this little band of Christians as a lot of fools, it recognizes them as far more dangerous than that, for their deportment constitutes nothing less than the not-so-tacit condemnation of it and all that it deems wise, good, and estimable.  

...torment from God himself" (WA 31, 91, 21 [LW 14, 58]).

Cf. Luther’s exposition of "the righteous man" in Psalm 1: "I have said that the blessedness of this man is hidden in the spirit, i.e., in God, so that it cannot be known except through faith or experience. ... Therefore the man whom the prophet here calls blessed is unanimously declared by the world to be the most wretched of all, as Isaiah looked upon Christ, the Head and Model of the blessed, whom he calls the lowest of all" (WA 5, 36 [LW 14, 298]). And a little later on: "[Beware] that prosperity is not understood as prosperity of the flesh. This prospering is hidden; it is so deep within the spirit that if you do not hold fast to it in faith, you might rather call it the greatest adversity" (WA 5, 41 [LW 14, 304]).

WA 5, 69 (LW 14, 342), emphasis added.

WA 5, 36 (LW 14, 298).
Thus do its fulminations mount until, in the end, the Christian is forced to bear the brunt of its fury:

We teach that all men are wicked; we condemn the free will of man, his natural powers, wisdom, righteousness, all self-invented religion, and whatever is best in the world. . . . This is not preaching that gains favor from men and from the world. For the world finds nothing more irritating and intolerable than hearing its wisdom, righteousness, religion, and power condemned. To denounce these mighty and glorious gifts of the world is not to curry the world's favor but to go out looking for, and quickly to find, hatred and misfortune, as it is called. For if we denounce men and all their efforts, it is inevitable that we quickly encounter bitter hatred, persecution, excommunication, condemnation, and execution. 

69 WA 40', 121 (LW 26, 58). Particularly noteworthy is the phrase, "to go out looking for, and quickly to find, hatred and misfortune." Because the gospel is an offense to the world, one cannot proclaim it without "looking for" misfortune. Luther is "certain that the Word of God cannot be rightly treated without incurring hatred and danger of death, and that if it gives offense--especially to the rulers and aristocrats of the people--this is one sign that it has been treated rightly" (WA 2, 601 [LW 27, 387]). Accordingly, the fact that the Christian does not "search for misfortune" (WA 12, 364 [LW 30, 109-10], cited above) cannot mean that he or she maintains silence concerning God's Word, or tones it down to the point of acceptability to the world. Again, therefore, we see that properly Christian suffering is voluntarily incurred--this time as the inevitable outcome of the service of God and one's neighbor. In Luther's Treatise on Good Works--the very writing in which the earlier, more "monastic" formulations of the theologia crucis are translated into the eminently secular prescriptions of the ethic of vocation--Luther describes the risk entailed in defending God's name: "It is not enough that I for myself and in myself praise God's name and call upon him in prosperity and in adversity. I must step forth and for the sake of God's honor and name bring upon myself the enmity of all men. . . . Here we must provoke father, mother, and the best of friends to anger. Here we must strive against spiritual and temporal authorities and be accused of disobedience. Here we must stir up against us the rich, the learned, the holy, and all that is of repute in the world. And although this is especially the duty of those who are commanded to preach God's word, yet every Christian is bound to do so too when time and place demand. For the holy name of God we must risk and give up all that we have and all that we can. . . . By this we confess that we regard him as the highest good, for whose sake we renounce and give up all other possessions" (WA 6, 226 [LW 44, 50]).

No less danger is incurred in the service of one's neighbor. Luther points out that "it is very easy to fight . . . against the wrong done to popes, kings, princes, bishops, and other big shots. Everybody wants to be the most pious in this, where the need is not so great. . . . But where anything goes against a poor, insignificant man, the deceitful eye finds little pleasure, though it sees the disfavor of the mighty well enough; therefore, he lets the poor man remain unhurt. And who could tell the extent of this vice in Christendom? . . . What good would it be for a man to do all manner of good, make pilgrimages to Rome and to all the holy places, acquire all indulgences, build all churches and found all endowments, if he were found guilty of sin against the name and honor of God by not speaking, by deserting the truth, and by regarding his possessions, honor, favor, and friends more highly than the truth? Or who is he at whose door and into whose house such good works do not present themselves every day?" (WA 6, 226-27 [LW 44, 50-51]).

Whether the Christian be engaged in defending God's name against an official Christendom that defames it, or in redressing the injustices done to his neighbor, he does so with the knowledge that it could well cost him all that he has--yea, his very life. These things he risks voluntarily. Hence here, as in the case of mortification, we have to do with an ignominy that is voluntarily incurred. This is what it means to bear the cross. All other suffering is mere vicissitude which, though it be borne in a Christian manner, nevertheless
Naturally, the world will charge that Luther prevaricates in the most perverse manner by claiming that the Christian risks **daily** the loss of everything for the sake of the gospel: "Certainly we are not so wicked as that—on the contrary, our pope is God's vicegerent on earth. Did not Christianity prevail among us long ago, establishing its reign in Christendom? How, then, could such imminent danger exist unless it were brought by the Turks from without?" To this Luther's response is that it is not the Turks who are the most dangerous enemies of the gospel, but the very guardians of Christianity, those who are "Christians" in eminent degree:

If persecution of this kind has become a rarity, it is the fault of the spiritual prelates who do not awaken people with the gospel but just let it get buried. By doing this they have abandoned the very thing on account of which martyrdom and persecution should arise. . . . But if the gospel should be revived and heard once again, no doubt the whole world would arise and bestir itself. The greater part of the kings, princes, bishops, doctors and clergy, and all the great ones would oppose it and grow furious, as has always happened when the word of God has come to light, for the world cannot tolerate what comes from God. This is proved in the case of Christ, who was . . . the very best of all. . . . Yet the world not only did not receive him, but persecuted him more cruelly than all the others who had ever come forth from God.  

With the mention of Christ's crucifixion we arrive at Luther's honest expectation concerning the fate of the Christian in the world (N.B., the "Christian" world!): his

---

comes unbidden from without. Luther clearly distinguishes the two: "Aber krankheit, armut, wetag etc. heist nit Creutz, sonder leydenn. Passio ignominiosa, das ist wann einer umb seines glauben willen verfolgung leyd, das heyst creutz." And again: "Creutz bedeutet eigentlich ein Leiden, das mit Schmach und Schande verbunden ist. Davon spricht Paulus [Phil. 3,8] 'Christus ist gehorsam worden bis zum Tode', aber nicht zu einem schlechten Tode, sondern setzet hinzu 'zum Tode am Creuz', das ist zu einem schandlichen Tode. So hat Christus auf das allerschmachlichste leiden müssen. Daher heisset das Creuz das eigentliche Leiden der Christen. Denn anders leidet ein Christ, anders die andern, als Jüden, Heyden etc. So musten die Märtyrer, ob sie auch gleich ganz unschuldig waren, dennoch allerley Schmach leiden um Christi willen" (WA 10\textsuperscript{iii}, 115, 18ff. and 116, 27ff.).

\textsuperscript{70}WA 6, 274 (LW 44, 111-12).
testimony to the gospel will probably cost him his life. Of Luther's strong conviction about the likelihood of martyrdom, Walther von Loewenich writes:

Luther reckons with martyrdom in all earnestness as a not at all surprising further addition to the Christian condition. It seems to Luther to be a characteristic difference between the Old and New Testaments that God only allowed his own to come into danger of life in the old covenant, whereas he abandons them to death itself in the new covenant (WA 5, 276, 1ff.)

In this connection von Loewenich reminds us that, contrary to the prevalent perception that Luther encouraged the politicization of the reformation and thereby the domesticizing of Protestant Christianity in its turn, Luther was ever of the opinion that "a church that is all too militant and vocal in its politics is suspect (WA 5, 227, 7ff.). The true church is, on the contrary, a church of martyrs."

We may summarize our treatment of suffering in its various forms by reiterating that these eminently practical phenomena possess epistemological import: they are part and parcel of the theologia crucis's necessarily indirect form of communication. So significant an index is persecution, for example, that in the Lectures on Romans Luther regards its absence from a Christian's experience as an almost certain indication that God is not well-

---

71 Luther concludes his Treatise on Good Works by noting that "much more ought to be said about this kind of dying these days, for things are much worse. . . . No more shameful cover for infamy has been found on earth than the most holy and blessed name of Jesus Christ! . . . It is high time that we earnestly pray God that he hallow his name. But it will cost blood, and those who enjoy the inheritance of the holy martyrs, the inheritance which was won with the blood of martyrs, must in their turn take on the role of martyr" (WA 6, 229 [LW 44, 53-54]).

72Luther's Theologia Crucis, 141-42 (122-23), translation mine.

73Ibid., 148 (127).

74In the litany of sufferings cited above, it must be held firmly in mind that these will occur with a kind of apodictic, or theoretical, certainty since hiddenness is a necessary qualification of faith and it is precisely in suffering that we have to do with the hidden God (ibid., 96 [86]). Thus can Luther assert in his Treatise on Good Works: "The sufferings which are borne in this kind of faith [in the hidden God] excel all works of faith. Therefore there is an immeasurable difference between such works and sufferings, and the sufferings are better" (WA 6, 208 [LW 44, 28-29], emphasis mine).
pleased with that individual yet.\textsuperscript{75} Similarly, in On the Councils and the Church (1539) Luther numbers suffering in all its forms--but persecution in particular--as one of seven essential "marks" of the church. Suffering constitutes, as it were, the "negative sign" that one truly is a child of God:

The holy Christian people are externally recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross. They must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh... by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly adhere to Christ and God's word... No people on earth have to endure such bitter hate; they must be accounted worse than Jews, heathen, and Turks. In summary, they must be called heretics, knaves, and devils, the most pernicious people on earth, to the point where those who hang, drown, murder, torture, banish, and plague them to death are rendering God a service. No one has compassion on them; they are given myrrh and gall to drink when they thirst. And all of this is done not because they are adulterers, murderers, thieves, or rogues, but because they want to have none but Christ, and no other God. Wherever you see or hear this, you may know that the holy Christian church is there.\textsuperscript{76}

We have quoted the above passage at length because, in addition to identifying suffering as the badge of membership in Christ's church, it discloses the ultimate purpose of that suffering: viz., that Christians may "become like their head, Christ." Conformity with Christ is the concept that, in the final analysis, most aptly characterizes the unity of contrasts that obtains in the life under the cross. In it "both the hiddenness and lowliness, as well as the supreme glory and greatest riches of the Christian life are comprehended."\textsuperscript{77} Luther prefers this designation, conformitas cum Christo, to imitatio Christi because of the latter's tendency to elevate Christ as model at the expense of Christ as gift. While, for Luther,

\textsuperscript{75} As long as we are doing good and do not experience as a result of it opposition, hatred, trouble, or harm, so long we have reason to worry that our work has not pleased God as yet... But if our work is immediately attacked, then let us be of good cheer and firmly trust that it is well-pleasing to God, that is, believe that it is of God Himself, for what is of God must be crucified in the world. So long as it does not lead to the cross (that is, to shameful suffering), it is not recognized as a work that comes from God, inasmuch as the only-begotten Son was not protected against this experience but rather was appointed the example of it" (WA 56, 194 [LW 25, 177]).

\textsuperscript{76} WA 50, 628-29 (LW 41, 164-65).

\textsuperscript{77} von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 144 (123).
Christ is certainly also model, "the decisive thing about our relationship to Christ is exactly what does not admit of description by this category." Imitation devoid of inner renewal remains within the bounds of the moralistic; like the theology of glory in general, it concerns the activity of the person. Conformitas, on the other hand,

bursts these bounds; it stands in connection with suffering, and not a self-chosen one at that, but a suffering sent by God. Conformitas does not primarily have to do with an endeavor of the person, but with an activity of God. In a word: the concept of conformitas is not to be severed from that of the cross in the pregnant sense--which cannot be said of imitatio.

In the concept of conformity with Christ, we arrive at the ultimate and hidden "synthesis" that God seeks to effect by the means of the manifold, repellent paradoxes of the cross.

This concludes our résumé of Luther's theology of cross. The various aspects that we have treated are by no means restricted to the young, "pre-reformational" Luther. On the

---

78 Ibid., 143 n. 157 (196 n. 157). Translation mine.

79 Ibid. Translation mine.

80 This is not to deny that the theologia crucis undergoes a development coincident with Luther's general development from an Augustinian view of justification to a view stressing the Christian's already present, total righteousness. Indeed, in its earliest form (that of the Dictata) the theology of the cross is not even Augustinian. There grace is given to the person who first "does what lies within him" (explanation of Ps. 113:1, WA 4, 262). Heiko Oberman observes that the usual nominalist grounds are cited: viz., that "man's disposition is not meritorious de condigno but de congruo due to God's merciful commitment" ("Facientibus Quod in se est Deus non Denegat Gratiam: Robert Holcot O.P. and the Beginnings of Luther's Theology," in The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986], 99).

Oberman goes on to show that the decisive shift in Luther's attitude to the doctrine of the facere quod in se est occurs at some point during the Lectures on Romans (November 1515 to September 1516) since toward their end Luther explicitly repudiates it (WA 56, 503 [sch. Rom. 14:1]). Saarnivaara traces this evolution more precisely still by documenting Luther's changing attitude to synteresis within the lectures themselves (ranging from initial acceptance in WA 56, 177, 14 [sch. Rom. 1:20] to outright rejection in WA 56, 275, 18 [sch. Rom. 4:7]--see Luther Discovers the Gospel, 77).

Despite Luther's abandonment in the Lectures on Romans of his earlier nominalistic presupposition of justification, his depictions of justification and justifying faith remain largely those of the Dictata. Justification continues to be understood as a process of being made just, justice consisting in the confession of one's complete injustice and impotence in the matter of salvation. We are apprised that this is our condition by God's word of judgement, to which we can only accede. Therefore humility is the desideratum; it is the quality wherein man's formal righteousness consists. Faith enters into the schema insofar as we must believe that Christ's way of humiliation was a way of secret exaltation prototypical of the way that we must go. And it enters in vis-à-vis the word of judgement that brings low--faith is the means by which God effects the humility by which the sinner is truly, if inchoately, made righteous. In effect, it is the scholastics' formed faith, or more aptly, humilitate formata. (N.B. We observed earlier the importance of humility in the teachings of Staupitz and German mysticism. Oberman notes that it is also "characteristic for nominalistic theology where it appears as a refined form of the facere quod in se est," citing its occurrence in Biel--"Facientibus Quod in
Such humility commences the healing of our nature. Because this healing, or increase in formal righteousness, remains incomplete in this life, it must be supplemented by the non-imputation of sins. Yet such non-imputation is granted on account of the commenced cure. Seminal treatments of Luther's understanding of justification at the time of the Lectures on Romans have been given by Bizer, Fides ex Auditu, 23-52 (pp. 51-52 providing an excellent summary of his position); Uuras Saarnivaara, Luther Discovers the Gospel, 74-87; and F. Edward Cranz, An Essay on the Development, 20-40.

Saarnivaara, Bizer, and Cranz alike maintain that this sanative framework prevails in Luther's view of justification up to 1518-19 (roughly the date that Luther himself assigns to his breakthrough regarding the righteousness of God in the 1545 preface to his Latin works). They document its waning influence from about 1517 on, while observing a concomitant emergence of reformational insights. If they have not succeeded in convincing the entire field of scholars that Luther's reformational theology did not come into its own until 1518-19 (and they have not), it is principally because each assumes a specific theological content in which Luther's breakthrough is assumed to have consisted, tracing its emergence and development throughout the period. Both the limitations and fruitfulness of this approach become apparent inasmuch as each assumes a different content as reformational, and yet each arrives at a date corresponding to that which Luther himself gives. The limitation of the approach has to do with the fact that the complexity of Luther's thought makes for a plurality of levels on which his development took place (Oberman, Facientibus Quod in se est Deus non Denegat Gratiam, 100). One seeks in vain to isolate a single concept that is of such incomparable moment for understanding the origins of Luther's theology (Leif Grane, Modus LoQuendi Theologicus. Luthers Kampf um die Erneuerung der Theologie (1515-1518) [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975], 12). Nevertheless, the fact that these scholars have arrived at the same date using three different reformational insights does abundantly confirm that a development does occur in Luther's thought, and that the mature theology is the product of a confluence of developing insights.

The problem, however, is that by selecting other insights than those employed by Bizer et al. one can arrive at a dating that puts Luther's breakthrough considerably earlier. This being the case, it is doubtful that "the line of demarcation between the young and the mature Luther can be so sharply drawn" (Gerrish, By Faith Alone, 81). Two evidences can be adduced for this. First, there are already in the Lectures on Romans elements that strain to the breaking point the conception of Christian righteousness as, so to say, a magnitude that admits of growth and increase (pp. 76-77). Gerrish calls attention to no less than eight: the notions of hidden righteousness, imputation, and the happy exchange; the proleptic character of righteousness in hope; the simul formula's approach to a~ aspect at certain points; the understanding of faith as the organ by which Christ indwells the believer; the beginnings of a sharp distinction between law and gospel; and the insight that the righteousness of God is a gift, not a threat (pp. 77 and 80). Conversely, Gerrish notes that Augustinian patterns of thought have an embarrassing habit of turning up again in the later writings, even when the tidy-minded scholar would have preferred their permanent retirement (p. 76). Reference is to the persistence of the partim understanding of the simul formula in Luther's later statements regarding justification (see n. 43 above). Gerrish demonstrates how Luther's mature doctrine of justification embraces both imputed and imparted righteousness ("By Faith Alone," 82-85). In view of these factors, he writes: "I still find it more plausible to view the Lectures on Romans as the work of a man who, as we can see more clearly in retrospect, had already struck out along a fresh path" (p. 77).

The significance of this discussion about the nature and date of Luther's reformational breakthrough becomes clear when we consider that Bizer and others have championed anew Otto Ritschl's view that the theology of the cross is pre-reformational (Bizer, Fides ex Auditu, 93 and 202-3). Singling out the importance that the word as sacrament assumes for Luther from 1517 onward, Bizer contends that the theology of the cross has been supplanted by a theology of the Word. Yet this is but one aspect of the mature Luther's theology (as is the teaching of the "two realms" [Cranz] and imputed righteousness [Saarnivaara]); and other teachings with no less claim to reformationality begin to make their appearance much earlier on. Specifically, cross motifs are to be found early and late. Accordingly, the presumption lies close at hand that their early occurrence foreshadows the direction that Luther's later theology will take. The most judicious approach
other hand, neither will it be denied that the theology of the cross is but a perspective from
which Luther's total theology can be viewed, and that any balanced presentation must take
into account the shift in emphasis in the mature Luther toward a more "cataphatic" theology.
There faith is defined, for the most part, not negatively, as having to do with invisibilia, but
positively, as directed toward the Word and Christ. Likewise in the later Luther we find
a much more generous role assigned to "experience." Because faith can, and ultimately must
be felt, it is increasingly bound up with experience. Nevertheless, even in the mature
Luther faith is not experience, nor is it dependent upon experience. Rather, it is the divinely
wrought prius of experience, the invisible source from which experience proceeds.
Similarly, the material determinateness of faith in Christ and the Word does not abrogate
faith's formal delimitation, as having to do with invisibilia. Faith's directedness to the Word
is, as we have seen, precisely its directedness away from all objectifiable experience.
Moreover, the Christ who is laid hold of by faith is no "brute fact" that can be directly
perceived. Hence the negative determination of Luther's faith concept provides the

therefore seems to be to evaluate these motifs in relation to the changing contexts in which they occur, and, rather than maintain their incompatibility with later developments, trace how they have conspired to lead Luther to the final form of his theology. Saarnivaara, in fact, adopts something of this approach. He holds that, in the Dictata and the Lectures on Romans, the theology of the cross is "more a teaching of how God deals with sinners according to the 'pattern' of Christ than good news of what Christ had done for them" (Luther Discovers the Gospel, 116). He contends, however, that this same theology of the cross undergoes modification during the period leading up to the "tower experience," whereupon it assumes a fully reformational character. For Saarnivaara, the cross-elements were not what retarded Luther's theological development; rather, it was his allegiance to the tropological interpretation of scripture that did this, since it "practically forced one to understand justification as a renewal, wherein man was lifted up, step by step, from sin to righteousness and conformity to Christ" (pp. 116-17). While one might look to still other factors than just this one, the point is that cross motifs were not what impeded Luther in his efforts to understand the meaning of "the righteousness of God"; if anything, they tended to impel him forward to the conception of passive righteousness.

81 von Loewenich, Luthers Theologia Crucis, 113-21 (101-7).
82 Ibid., 105-6 (95).
83 Ibid., 110-11 (98).
84 Whereas fides historica can well grasp the historical facticity of Christ, the ultimate truth about him is concealed from it and only accessible to fides specialis. This leads to what one might designate a "contemporaneity concept" in Luther. von Loewenich writes: "Historical faith keeps its distance from its object, and does so in a double respect: it does not leap over the historical chasm that is between us and the time of Jesus, and it views these events purely as a spectator. Special faith, however, receives these accounts for their effect, that
critically delimited field within which the positive definition has its place, and apart from which the latter must give an entirely false impression. It has been the intent of this chapter to provide a sketch of just this negative moment of Luther's total theology.

---

is, it is not neutral over against them, but feels itself participating in them to the highest degree. This faith knows that 'this concerns me.' For this event, to which faith is directed, is not historical in the sense of an event that is closed and lies behind us, but one that is new every day through faith (WA 40, 523, 30ff. [LW 26, 340]).

85Ibid., 104 (93).
CHAPTER TWO
KIERKEGAARD'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

In SK's Judge for Yourself! (1851) we read that "the cross... belongs together with everything that is essentially Christian." These words indicate the central role that the theology of the cross plays in his critique of Lutheranism. They also testify, if only indirectly, to the affinity that the mature Kierkegaard felt to Luther. While the awareness of that affinity had dawned only gradually, it was certainly present by the time of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846). There Kierkegaard had attacked Lutheran orthodoxy's one-sided emphasis upon the sole efficacy of grace in baptism, pointing out its failure to observe Luther's equally strong insistance that the sacrament is effectual only where faith is present. "What is baptism without personal appropriation?" Kierkegaard asks:

Take appropriation away from the essentially Christian, and what is Luther's merit then? But open his books. Note the strong pulse-beat of appropriation in every line... Did not the papacy have objectivity and objective definitions and the objective, more of the objective, the objective in superabundance? What did it lack? Appropriation, inwardness.2

Central to the kinship that Kierkegaard perceived between Luther and himself at the midpoint of his career was their shared concern for introducing the personal appropriation

---

1SV XIV 434 (Judge for Yourself!, 161).
2SV VII 317 (Postscript, 366). Certainly it must be noted that Kierkegaard--here in the guise of Johannes Climacus--does not share Luther's postulate of a fides infantilis. Consequently, he ridicules the very notion that this most serious of matters--becoming a Christian--could possibly be decided at infancy (pp. 250, 318, 322-23 and 514-15 [292-93, 367-68, 372-73, and 590-92]). Nevertheless, his departure from Luther on this point does nothing to diminish the authentically Lutheran basis for his criticism of nineteenth century orthodoxy: viz., that by virtue of its hyperorthodoxy vis-à-vis baptism, it had lapsed into heterodoxy vis-à-vis regeneration (p. 518 [595]).
of grace into a context in which the means of its conferral had come to be conceived as an opus operatum.³

In the case of Kierkegaard this attempt took the form of the pseudonymous authorship. Because the majority of his contemporaries lived their lives according to aesthetic categories and were not even aware of the existence of the ethical, Kierkegaard felt compelled to initiate them into the despair of the aesthetic lifestyle and to set before them the ethical way of life that can, alone, secure from despair.⁴ At this early stage Kierkegaard is silent about the fact that the ethical itself is despair. As Luther painfully discovered in the monastery, the conscience that is trained in the ethical can only progressively discover its own guilt and incapacity. With each essay at doing the good, a new and even greater sin is discovered of which one must first repent; hence the movement is backward into deeper guilt-consciousness, not forward into triumphant ethical endeavor.⁵ If Kierkegaard, in the guise of Either/Or's Judge William, is less than forthright on this point, it is because his readers must first receive a thorough schooling in the ethical.⁶ But the ethical is only a way

³Kierkegaard, in fact, uses this very term (Pap XI 2 A 25 [JP 1:368]) in describing the status that baptism had assumed in his day.

⁴E.g., SV XIII 529-43 (Point of View, 22-43) and Pap VIII 1 A 548 (JP 5: 6107). While it perhaps oversimplifies Kierkegaard's use of the term, det Esthetiske, to identify it with eudaemonism, a close correspondence nevertheless exists. Such a system of ethics is no ethics at all on SK's understanding. The life-view that is truly ethical is determined solely by considerations of duty, though--N.B.—not in the Kantian sense, as though duties were self-legislated; on the contrary, God alone is their originator (Pap X 2 A 396 [JP 1:188] and SV IX 111-14 [Works of Love, 119-22]). Yet before one can come to the point of experiencing the liberating force of the limits that duty imposes (Pap VII 2 B 235, pp. 160-61 [On Authority and Revelation, 127-28]), one must first have been made to taste of the anxiety, melancholy and despair in which unfettered aesthetic connoisseurship ends. It is the task of Judge William to clarify this to his young friend and to urge that he despair of his condition qua aesthete, and thereupon embrace duty (SV II 166-193 [Either/Or II, 183-215]).

⁵SV VII 459-60 (Postscript, 526-27). Because the ethical requirement is so enormous "that the individual always goes bankrupt," the highest to which the ethical life-view can attain is repentance (SV III 146n [Fear and Trembling, 98n]; SV VI 443, 451-52 [Stages 476, 486]). This state of affairs in which ethics finds itself is a "self-contradiction" (Pap IV A 112 [JP 1:902]; SV III 146n [Fear and Trembling, 98n]; SV IV 385 [Concept of Anxiety, 117-18]) since its ultimate τέλος is, after all, action. The result is despair. The ethical individual can effect nothing. His repentance is an "infinite annihilating power" (SV VI 443 [Stages, 476]).

station; it has no identity independent of the religious. Its *terminus ad quem* is the despair of the anguished conscience that acutely feels its need of grace. Only after one has reached this extreme state of ethical bankruptcy is one in the position to appropriate grace, and the grace thus appropriated— it goes almost without saying— does not achieve its effect *ex opere operato*.

---

7 SV VI 443 (Stages, 476).

9 Leading his readers into ethical bankruptcy in order thus to forestall the possibility of taking grace in vain is certainly the greater part of what Johannes Climacus understands under his authorial task of "making things difficult" (ibid., 155 [186-87]). His intent is, in the first place, to show the aesthetic sufferer that, "even if he winces ever so much," he "can most likely come to suffer even more, and then when he sends for the ethical—well, it first helps him out of the frying pan into the fire so that he really has something to scream about—and only then does it help him" (pp. 372-73 [429]). Yet the help that the ethical affords is exceedingly short-lived, for Climacus next introduces Christianity which makes the way the most difficult of all, confronting the ethical enthusiast with a beginning wherein "everything becomes much more difficult than ever" (pp. 372-73 [428-29]). Christianity does so by positing a *teleological suspension of the ethical* wherein the ethical continues to be "present at every moment with its infinite requirement," yet in such a way that "the individual is not capable of fulfilling it." "The suspension consists in the individual's finding himself in a state exactly opposite to what the ethical requires. Therefore, far from being able to begin, every moment he continues in this state he is more and more prevented from being able to begin: he relates himself to actuality not as possibility but as impossibility. Thus the individual is suspended from the ethical in the most terrifying way, is in the suspension heterogeneous with the ethical, which still has the claim of the infinite upon him and at every moment requires itself of the individual, and thereby at every moment the heterogeneity is only more definitely marked as heterogeneity" (p. 226 [266-67]). N.B. Johannes Climacus's usage of the expression, "teleological suspension of the ethical," in this context clearly differs from Johannes de Silentio's in Fear and Trembling. There the divine command that Abraham slay Isaac entailed the supersession of ethics' claim to *universality*. Here the demands of ethics are assumed to retain their force for all, without exception. Nevertheless ethics itself suffers shipwreck due to Christianity's teaching on sin. How so? "Ought implies can" is ethics' operative premise (SV IV 288 [Concept of Anxiety, 16]); where there is no ability, neither is there--from ethics' point of view--obligation. Hence if Christianity's postulate of sin is true, then ethics finds itself superseded, this time absolutely. Christianity, however, is hostage to no such premise; it is perfectly free to press ethics' claims (the theological use of the law) in order to make known the person's true status: sin, "this dreadful exemption from doing the ethical, the individual's heterogeneity with the ethical" (SV VII 227 [Postscript, 267]).

Now— to return to our main point— to labor thus into greater and greater difficulty, only, in the end, to land in an impossible situation that only grace can remedy— this is the antithesis to an objective, mechanistic understanding of the same. One must first have gone through the entire preceding ethical development: "Religiousness A must first be present in the individual before there can be any consideration of becoming aware of the dialectical B. . . . Thus it is evident how foolish it is if a person without pathos wants to relate to the essentially Christian, because before there can be any question at all of simply being in the situation of becoming aware of it, one must first of all exist in Religiousness A. . . . Of course, to become a wohlfeil [cheap] edition of a Christian in all ease is much easier and is moreover just as good as the highest— after all, he is baptized, has received a copy of the Bible and a hymnbook as a gift; is he not, then, a Christian, an Evangelical Lutheran Christian? . . . In my opinion, Religiousness A (within the boundaries of which I have my existence) is so strenuous for a human being that there is always a sufficient task in it. My intention is to make it difficult
The "theory" of the stages is therefore a process of upbringing in the ethical, the aim of which is to bring SK's readers to the point at which there can first be talk about receiving grace. In what may be an allusion to Luther's teaching that God must first slay in order to make alive, Kierkegaard states that God's Spirit does bring life, but only after we have died. The penultimate stop prior to Christianity in the progression of the stages is religiousness A's dying to the world. Because the religious individual seeks an absolute relation to the absolute τέλος, he strives for a relative relationship to relative τέλη—an outcome that can only be had by their continual, complete renunciation. In enjoining such renunciation Johannes Climacus points to the Middle Age's monastic movement as exemplary. He does so, not because he views outward renunciation of the world as desirable in and of itself, but because such outward renunciation provides an index as to whether one really has inwardly submitted to "the absolute danger and the absolute strenuousness . . . solitary and silent association with the absolute." By so submitting one arrives at the ultimate stop on the way to Christian existence: the discovery of guilt as total determinant of one's being. Here, too, those "deep and earnest souls who found rest in a monastery" in days bygone receive high praise, for they were willing to "scrutinize in sleepless vigilance every single secret thought, so that . . . [they might] in anxiety and horror discover and lure forth . . . the dark emotions hiding in every human life."

---

10SV XII 360-61 (For Self-Examination, 76-77). The scriptural allusion is to 2 Cor. 3:6 ("For the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life"). Kierkegaard, however, enlarges upon it in a decidedly Lutheran way since, on his rendering, it is the Spirit that kills in order subsequently to give life. On the necessity of experiencing the dread of judgement prior to the comfort of forgiveness see SV VII 218 (Postscript, 258).

11SV VII 361 (Postscript, 416). It is interesting to note that in this passage Kierkegaard offers the identical observation about the monastic estate that we found in Luther—viz., that the monk is praiseworthy precisely because of his ostensible buffoonery in the eyes of his contemporaries: "In our time, a person would be regarded as lunatic if he entered a monastery, if one were established. . . . This I regard as an extraordinary bonus" (pp. 360-61 [416]). And like Luther, SK repudiates the misdirection of medieval monasticism, i.e., its elevation of "outwardness" to an end in itself (works-holiness).

12Ibid., 458-99 (525-61).

13SV III 147-48 (Fear and Trembling, 100).
There is likely an allusion to Luther here, and it is not without justice that Karl Holl has credited Kierkegaard with having rediscovered the same ideality of the ethical that lay at the foundation of Luther's own religious experience. Holl writes:

The distress in which Luther saw himself get embroiled with the act of 'awakening' and with contritio was, in reality, only the unavoidable result of his understanding of the ethical. With it, Luther comes up against the problem that had first become apparent to Paul, the great trailblazer, and for which, not until the nineteenth century, did Søren Kierkegaard and, in his own way, Nietzsche, seek to awaken understanding. It has to do--this is the meaning of his struggles--with the feasibility at all of an ethical striving that is directed to the unconditioned.14

"Unconditioned" or "absolute" are, in fact, precisely the terms that, for Kierkegaard, best describes ethics' demand--or what is identical with it, Christianity's.15 Holl is quite right in calling attention to SK's discovery--in the manner of Luther--of Christianity's ethical ideal. In a discussion that is no less than a locus classicus on the subject, Climacus writes:

There is and can and shall be in every human being this privy understanding with the ideal, which requires everything and comforts only in annihilation before God. . . . In the relation of silence to the ideal, a judgment is passed upon a person. Woe to him who as a third party would dare to judge a person in this way. There is no appeal from this judgment to anything higher, because this is absolutely the highest. . . . In the relation of silence to the ideal, there is a criterion that changes even the greatest effort into a trifle, changes the year-after-year striving into a chicken step. . . . The one, then, who turns upon himself with the absolute criterion will of course not be able to go on living in the bliss that, if he keeps the commandments and has no sentence pending and is regarded by the clique of revivalists as a really sincere person, that he then is a splendid fellow who, if he does not die too soon, will in a


15"The ethical as the absolute is infinitely valid in itself"--i.e., valid without respect to mitigating considerations of human frailty (SV VII 116 [Postscript, 142]). Similarly, "Christianity did not come into the world as a showpiece of gentle comfort, as the preacher blubberingly and falsely introduces it--but as the absolute, . . . Therefore all the relativities people have hit upon about why and wherefore are untruth. Perhaps they have hit upon them out of a kind of human compassion that thinks it has to haggle and bargain--for God presumably does not know man; his demands are too extravagant, so there have to be pastors to haggle and bargain. . . . But all this is untruth, is a distortion of Christianity, which is the absolute" (SV XII 59 [Practice in Christianity, 62]).
short time become all too perfect for this world. He will, on the contrary, again and again discover guilt and in turn discover it within the totality-category: guilt.16

The outcome of religiousness A's discovery of guilt qua total determinant is the wretched condition of the Quidam-figure of Stages on Life's Way (1845) who, crushed by resignation and repentance, cannot see the possibility of being raised to life again. And yet the despair is not complete, for Christianity and its decisive category, sin, have not yet been brought forward. Only with the introduction of sin--the transmutation of human nature whereby the possibility of all truck with the divine is cut off--does the individual's ethical bankruptcy become complete.17 Kierkegaard's conception of sin as constituting an absolute

16SV VII 478-79 (Postscript, 548-49, slightly amended). Note in this regard Climacus's amusement at the attempts of medieval piety to assuage the anxious conscience through penance (p. 473 [542]).

17The distinction between the concepts "guilt" (which belongs to "religiousness A" or religious "immanence"--i.e., universal piety) and "sin" (which belongs to "religiousness B," the "paradoxically religious," or Christianity) is strictly observed by Kierkegaard. Humans can, through their innate powers of perception, win through to the insight that their condition is one of total guilt--a qualitative (not merely quantitative) determination by which they are stamped, and from which they are powerless to escape (SV VII 459-66 [Postscript, 526-34]). This seems to be a doctrine of sin. Yet it is not, for within the framework of guilt one retains a tenacious link to God via conscience's "eternal recollection of guilt" (pp. 466 and 467 [534 and 535-36]). Not so with sin. There the relationship has been completely severed, and not even conscience is of avail, for it is not privy to sin. Sin is so complete a transformation of human nature that "the existing person does not discover it by himself, but gets to know it from without" (p. 466n [534n, slightly amended]); he "cannot acquire sin-consciousness by himself, as is the case with guilt-consciousness. . . .[T]hat power which enlightens him . . . must be outside the individual. . . .That power is the God in time" (p. 509 [584], translation mine). Therefore, in contrast to guilt, sin is a transcendent category, a veritable cipher: "No man of himself and by himself can declare what sin is, precisely because he is in sin; . . . That is why Christianity begins in another way: man has to learn what sin is by a revelation from God (SV XI 205-6; cf. also 200-1 and 206-7 [Sickness unto Death, 95; cf. 89 and 96]). The fact that man can be, and apart from Christianity is, in such ignorance concerning his own nature is the thrust of the Postscript's paradox, "Subjectivity is truth"/"Subjectivity is untruth" (SV VII 174 [Postscript, 207]). The revelation of sin means that the individual is without any faculty for perceiving truth (including the truth about himself) and hence, for relating to God. Insofar as he has been born into sin, "a change so essential has taken place in him that he in no way can take himself back into eternity by Socratically recollecting" (p. 174 [207-8]). He is cut off, not only from God, but from himself. "Sin-consciousness is the breach; by coming into existence the individual becomes another . . . for otherwise sin's definition is placed within immanence. From eternity the individual is not a sinner, so when the eternally conceived being, who at birth comes into existence, becomes a sinner at birth or is born a sinner: then it is existence that surrounds this being on all sides so that every communication within immanence via recollection's way of retreat into the eternal is cut off, and the predicate 'sinner,'--which first, but also immediately, emerges through the act of coming into existence--gains such a paradoxically overwhelming power that the act of coming into existence makes him into another. . . .[G]uilt-consciousness is an alteration of the subject within the subject itself; sin-consciousness, on the other hand, is an alteration of the very subject itself" (pp. 508-9 [583-84], translation mine). To sum up: becoming a sinner is the ultimate qualitative change: it is not a mere change of predicate (as shuffling off temporality and assuming eternity would be); rather it is a change of subject.
breach between the divine and the human lies at the heart of his theology of the cross, with its correlate of blind faith in an authoritative, paradoxical revelation.¹⁸

This parallels in significant respects Luther's understanding of sin which, as we have seen, is so deep-seated a disturbance of humans' cognitive capabilities that they are not even aware of its presence. The similarity is not surprising for Kierkegaard was himself influenced by Luther's teaching on sin.¹⁹ Now it will be recalled that, for Luther, sin was the crucial category that foreclosed the possibility of human beings knowing God ex operibus—whether the works in question were those of God or man. The various faculties that were supposed to convey innate knowledge of God—synteresis, intellectus, ratio—had all been disabled by sin. Similarly, we read in Philosophical Fragments that human beings, by virtue of their sin, have deprived themselves of the condition for receiving the truth, with the consequence that God is no longer knowable via "immanence." A new organ of knowledge is needed,²⁰ for after the fall "the God" is merely that frontier at which the understanding continually arrives but beyond which cannot pass, whether it essays to do so via negationis or via eminentiae. As the "Unknown" or "absolutely different"²¹ God is denotable by categories the opacity of which is reminiscent of the Deus nudus/absconditus of The Bondage of the Will.

It is important to note that while Kierkegaard can refer the hiddenness of God to the qualitative abyss that distinguishes the divine from the human,²² the stress is not upon God's predicateless being qua Deus nudus, but upon man's self-inflicted benightedness—sin

¹⁸SV XI 206-7 (Sickness unto Death, 95-97).

¹⁹See Pap VII A 192 (JP 3:2641), written in 1846, where Kierkegaard applauds Luther's teaching that "man must be taught by a revelation about how deeply he lies in sin." See also The Concept of Anxiety, 26 (SV IV 298), written in 1844, where he quotes from the Smalca1d Articles (Part III, Art. I) concerning the depth of corruption of nature due to hereditary sin.

²⁰SV IV 272 (Fragments, 111).

²¹Ibid., 212 (44).

²²Eg., SV VII 182 (Postscript, 217); SV XI 235, 237 (Sickness unto Death, 125-26, 127); Pap VII² B 235, p. 145 (On Authority and Revelation, 112).
has issued in the "qualitative distinction" that conceals God from human view;\(^\text{23}\) it has compelled the expedient that God reveal himself by assuming the form of a humble servant.\(^\text{24}\) It is within this context that the hiddenness due to transcendence subsequently comes into play. Because divinity's "absolute difference" (eternity, infinity, etc.) is not a directly recognizable feature, every act of unveiling must entail an act of veiling.\(^\text{25}\) SK's "God

---

\(^{23}\)SV IV 184-87, 214 (Fragments, 15-17, 46-47) and SV XI 208-11, 227-231 (Sickness unto Death, 98-100, 117-22). This is important to note for it means that the qualitative abyss that separates God and humans is not primarily ontological in nature. In that case the breach would be built into our very make-up and without remedy. No, sin is what separates and it is acquired in freedom (SV IV 185, 214 [Fragments, 15, 46-47]; SV XI 206 [Sickness unto Death, 95]). Certainly Torsten Bohlin is correct when he observes that in the Postscript Kierkegaard frequently represents the breach between God and humankind as ontological: it is the difference between time and eternity, the relative and the absolute, the finite and the infinite--distinctions borrowed from idealism. Yet he seems deliberately to overlook that the "breach" is so defined only within "the Socratic": a framework that assumes that human beings are possessed of the qualifications for attaining to truth, and hence in immanent possession of it. Accordingly that breach is not absolute; the person is conceived as a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal and on his or her way toward becoming one of the two. Such an anthropology is not the radical dualism that Bohlin claims it to be. On the contrary, it is Hegel's notion of "Spirit" transferred to individual human beings. As such there is no breach--the breach becomes qualitative and absolute only with the introduction of sin. We may therefore categorically deny that the Postscript defines sin in ontological terms (Kierkegaard "geht im Grunde von einer metaphysischen Bestimmung vom Wesen der Sünde aus, in der die Sünden dasselbe wie die Endlichkeit selbst bedeutet" (Bohlin, "Luther, Kierkegaard, und die dialektische Theologie," trans. Anne Marie Sundwall-Hoyer, in Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, neue Folge 7 [1926]:176).

The text that Bohlin cites in confirmation of his claim, SV VII 499 (Postscript, 573), admittedly uses terms borrowed from religiousness A in describing sin's effects--sin is depicted as effecting an absolute breach between the eternal and the temporal (thereby breaking the fluid continuum presupposed by "immanence"). SK is not here referring sin's breach to the time/eternity distinction, but describing it in terms of it: humankind has been cut off from all access to the eternal. From the preceding discussion of sin and guilt (n. 17) however, it could be supposed that sin's breach is referred to "coming into existence," and therewith to some change wrought in the individual by temporality. Yet when, in the Postscript, Johannes Climacus asserts that the predicate, "sinner," emerges through the act of coming into existence, he cannot mean that it is caused by that act, for in the Fragments he had previously declared sin to be an act of freedom. What is more, coming into existence [Tilblivelse] was itself said to occur by an act of freedom (the "Interlude"). Intended, then, is that the person, in being brought into existence (God's free act), simultaneously becomes a sinner (the person's free act--God leaving to human freedom the kind of being that it will assume). We must therefore reject Bohlin's claim that SK has conceived sin along the lines of a dualist ontology in the attempt to counter Hegel's all-embracing monism. SK makes it very clear that sin is not simply identical to finitude, temporality and sensuousness even if it does profoundly transform them so that they become sinful (see SV IV 342-43, 363 [Concept of Anxiety, 73, 93]).

\(^{24}\)SV IV 199-202, 221-30 (Fragments, 31-35, 55-66); SV XI 235-37 (Sickness unto Death, 126-28).

\(^{25}\)When God, who is absolutely different, reveals himself this cannot be in the guise of his absolute difference for "the understanding cannot even think the absolutely different; it cannot absolutely negate itself" (SV IV 212 [Fragments, 45]). Divinity is "not an immediate qualification" (p. 256 [93]) and true deity will accordingly be unrecognizable: "If Christ is true God, then he also must be unrecognizable, attired in unrecognizability. . . . Direct recognizability is specifically characteristic of the idol" (SV XII, 127 [Practice in
incognito and Luther's Deus absconditus in passionibus are equivalent expressions of the necessity of such "indirect communication" where revelation is concerned. If God is to reveal himself at all to sinful humanity, such revelation will necessarily entail an act of condescension that simultaneously conceals him or, more accurately, that preserves intact the essential secrecy that is intrinsic to godhead.

This gives rise to paradox, the characteristic mark of revelation, for not only is divinity not directly recognizable in the medium of revelation—the man Jesus—it stands in direct contradiction to what is visibly present. But as we learned from Luther, scandal is the inevitable concomitant of hiddenness in this degree: when God "gives [his Spirit] under its contrary, and contradicts what is signified by the sign itself, it is not merely profoundly but far too profoundly concealed." Kierkegaard makes the same point in a startlingly similar way:

In Scripture the God-man is called a sign of contradiction. . . . In addition to being what one is immediately, to be a sign is to be a something else also. To be a sign of contradiction is to be a something else that stands in contrast to what one immediate-

---

Christianity, 136]. Cf. SV VII 176, 204-7 (Postscript, 210, 243-246). Because of the impossibility in principle of the God-man offering any immediate token of his godhood, his advent can be no ordinary (that is to say, verifiable) fact. Luther, too, was aware of this: as we have seen, it was his contention that while "historical faith" could well grasp the "facts" about Christ, it could not know the ultimate truth about him, since this was accessible only to "special faith." A precise analog of this in Kierkegaard is to be found in the distinction drawn in Fragments between the "historical eyewitness" and the "contemporary follower" (SV IV 225 [Fragments, 59]). For Kierkegaard and Luther alike, the incarnation is no brute fact. Kierkegaard calls it the absolute fact that, while "indeed also historical" (pp. 262-63 [100]), must nevertheless be distinguished from every other simple, historical fact.

26 SV IV 229 (Fragments, 64); SV XII 119-24 (Practice in Christianity, 127-33).

27 SV IV 228 (Fragments, 63); SV XII 123-27 (Practice in Christianity, 132-36).

28 "Secrecy is the indication that the revelation is a revelation in the stricter sense, . . . the secrecy is precisely the only thing by which it can be recognized" (SV VII 206-7 [Postscript, 245], translation mine).

29 The "absolute fact" of the incarnation distinguishes itself from every simple, historical fact by virtue of the "contradiction" that it embodies: that "that which can become historical only in diametric opposition to all human understanding has become such"—ibid., 177-78 (211), translation mine; cf. pp. 504-5 (579) and SV IV 226-27, 255-56 (Fragments, 61, 93). As such it declares itself to be "the absurd fact" (SV VII 177-78 [Postscript, 211]) or simply "the absurd" (p. 176 [210]).

ly is. So it is with the God-man. Immediately, he is an individual human being, just like others, a lowly, unimpressive human being, but now comes the contradiction—that he is God.

The idea is of course preposterous: "Humanly speaking, there is no possibility of a crazier composite than this, either in heaven or on earth or in the abyss or in the most fantastic aberrations of thought." The possibility of offense is therefore not to be avoided. It must be taken seriously and Kierkegaard—like Luther before him—seeks to do so by returning the σκάνδαλον to its rightful place in theology.
It has been maintained that SK's understanding of faith and offense is more intellectualistic than Luther's inasmuch as it derives from the logical contradiction posed by the incarnation. This is a misrepresentation not only of Kierkegaard but of Luther since the latter shares SK's Chalcedonian christology, fully acknowledging its absurdity from the standpoint of unregenerate reason. Conversely Kierkegaard shares Luther's estimate of the fallen status of all human faculties, not just reason. Above all, the incarnation shatters human pretensions to selfless love and in so doing strikes as firmly at the root of lex as of

34 Such is, again, Bohlin's contention: "Wenn er [SK] die Offenbarung nach dem Gesichtspunkt eines Schutzes gegen die Rationalisierung des Glaubens als 'Kreuz der Spekulation' bestimmt, an dem die Reflexion gekreuzigt und getötet werden soll, so legt er 'anti-intellektualistisch intellektualistisch' den Ton auf das Glaubensobjekt in der Bedeutung einer logisch metaphysischen Unsinnigkeit, die ohne jedes 'warum' geglaubt werden muß. Aber dadurch erhält der Glauben den Charakter eines intellektuellen, krampfhaften Festhaltens eines historischen Faktums, das eine unsinnige complexio oppositorum ist. Wenn er in gewissem Zusammenhang Gläubigsein mit dem Anerkennen Christi als Gott identifiziert, stellt er in der Tat irreligiös-dogmatisch die Anerkennung einer bestimmten Vorstellung von der Eigenart von Christi Natur als die notwendige Bedingung für die Gewiβheit von der Lebensgemeinschaft mit Gott auf" ("Luther, Kierkegaard und die dialektische Theologie," 176).

Bohlin's thesis is that SK's interpretation of Christian doctrine is governed by the overriding concern to maintain a radical diastasis between God and man. The controlling axiom of SK's theology is therefore the "infinite qualitative distinction." This axiom is said to manifest itself in the representation of sin as the time/eternity distinction and Christ as the one who mediates it in his own person (he being the single point at which the tangent [eternity] intersects the circle [temporality]). Bohlin's charge is that Kierkegaard, in attempting to refute idealism's monistic conception of Christianity, unwittingly waged the battle on ground marked by idealism. Consequently it is idealism—not biblical Christianity—that "frames" SK's presentation of doctrine, thereby giving it a metaphysical coloration. Herein does Bohlin see the fundamental difference between SK and Luther, whose cross theology was forged solely in the personal experience of sin-consciousness. While Bohlin is certainly correct about the influence of idealism upon Kierkegaard, its adverse effect has not been felt so much in a radical diastasis as in a radical similitudo Dei, as we shall demonstrate in chapter eight. Accordingly, SK's teachings about the paradox, faith and offended reason are not the real casualties of his receptiveness to idealism. Rather one must look to his anthropology (on which the human being is said to be a "synthesis" of the finite and the infinite) as the point at which idealism has exerted an anti-Pauline, anti-Lutheran influence.

35 Cf., e.g., WA 40 1 361 (LW 26, 227-28). Bohlin himself acknowledges this ("Luther, Kierkegaard und die dialektische Theologie," 277 n. 4), minimizing, however, the significance of "the metaphysical" in Luther's christology, even as he maximizes it in Kierkegaard's. Responding directly to Bohlin's claim that Luther's theology is "personal-experiential" in character without any admixture of the "intellectualistic," Walther von Loewenich writes: "Even if Luther simply borrowed these paradoxes from [Occamist] tradition, they still constitute an important ingredient of his theology, no less important than that which may be termed 'the line of experience'" (Luthers Theologia Crucis, 5th printing, rev. [Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1967], 82 [Luther's Theology of the Cross, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976) 74]).

36 In fact it is principally the will that has been deprived by the fall so that the difficulty in becoming a Christian lies not in the understanding, but in the doing. See SV X 173-74 (Christian Discourses, 178-79); SV XI 201-7 (Sickness unto Death, 89-96); SV XII 396-97 (Judge for Yourself, 115-17).
The difference between Luther's and Kierkegaard's understanding of faith and offense is accordingly more one of nuance than substance, and one cannot dismiss the relationship that obtains between their theologies of the cross on that basis.

In any case it cannot be denied that for Kierkegaard, as for Luther, the fundamental basis for offense resides in the hiddenness of God's revelation in Christ. To seek, via speculation, to eliminate the essential mystery that attaches to this revelation is to eliminate Christianity itself. At the heart of the speculative project is the desire to render Christianity inoffensive. The possibility of offense, however, is inseparable from Christianity: wherever Christianity goes it is accompanied by signs of offense. It cannot be otherwise when a holy God who is infinitely qualitatively distinct assumes our common humanity as his incognito. It is out of love that God behaves thus, and the very real possibility that his love may result in offense and perdition for the beloved constitutes his deepest sorrow.

---

37See especially "Love is the fulfilling of the Law" in Works of Love, 99-136 (SV IX 90-129). It is not ultimately the contrarationality of Christianity's teaching about the God-man that arouses offense, but the absoluteness of its ethic. The latter condemns our civil righteousness as altogether unrighteous (SV XII 105 [Practice in Christianity, 111]) and, offended, we seek to reduce Christianity's requirement to terms that allow us to "take heaven by storm" (SV XII 427-28 [Judge for Yourself, 154-55]). Hence it is that SK refers offense at Christianity not to the absurdity of its teachings, but to the seditious spirit of the human heart: "It is claimed that arguments against Christianity arise out of doubt. This is a total misunderstanding. The arguments against Christianity arise out of insubordination, reluctance to obey, mutiny against all authority. Therefore until now the battle against objections has been shadowboxing, because it has been intellectual combat with doubt instead of being ethical combat against mutiny" (Pap VIII A 7 [JP 1:778]; cf. Pap VIII A 331 [JP 3:3049]). Reason's inability to reconcile itself with the God-man is at bottom a refusal to accept God's decree concerning the depth of reprobation that afflicts the human heart and the consequences that this holds for the other human faculties. Once this depravity has been acknowledged, not only is the person able to admit to the limitation of his will and intellect alike, he feels the utmost need of a redeemer. Kierkegaard observes that only the anxious conscience "understands Christianity," only it "grasps the Atonement" (Pap VII 192 [JP 3:2461]). The paradox of the God-man is therefore not nonsense to the anxious conscience, but the sole remedy for sin that inspires it to venture everything (SV XII 106 [Practice in Christianity, 112]). Contra Bohlin, belief in the God-man does not ultimately have the character of a sacrificium intellectus for Kierkegaard, but a remedy for the anxious conscience.

38SV VII 179-81 (Postscript, 213-16).

39SV IX 191, 64, 190 (Works of Love, 193, 74, 192-93). SK's pronouncement of woes upon the one who purges the offense from Christianity's message is reminiscent of Luther's warning, that when the church's proclamation is no longer offensive to people, it has betrayed the gospel (WA 2, 601, 25 [LW 27, 387]).

40SV XI 227, 235, 237 (Sickness unto Death, 117, 125, 127-28).

41Ibid., 235-37 (126-28).
Yet there is no other way, for the possibility of offense is simultaneously the possibility—indeed, the indispensable condition—for faith. It is impossible to come to faith without having first undergone the possibility of offense, impossible to live by faith without overcoming the offense at every moment.\(^{42}\)

It should come as no surprise that Kierkegaard’s remarks concerning the scandalum are suggestive of Luther, for on the occasion of his first extended treatment of the subject ("Offense at the Paradox" in Philosophical Fragments), he explicitly declines the honor of having contributed anything new, simply referring the reader to, among others, Luther.\(^{43}\)

Still other points held in common will come as no surprise. When, for example, SK speaks of faith as "beginning precisely where thought stops" or as "leaving worldly understanding behind,"\(^{44}\) this certainly owes far more to Luther’s rejection of ratio vis-à-vis "things higher" than to Kant’s antinomies, which likewise dictate that room be left for faith. What is at issue for Kierkegaard is not a religion that resolves apparent contradictions within the limits of reason alone, but one that prostrates itself completely before a realm of being that is impervious to thought. Because SK insists that Christianity trades in irreconcilable

\(^{42}\)SV VII 510 (Postscript, 585); SV XII 38, 74, 133 (Practice in Christianity, 39, 76, 143). So close is the relation between faith and offense that Kierkegaard calls them the "happy" and "unhappy" passions with which the understanding encounters the paradox (SV IV 216 [Fragments, 49]). Because of their interrelatedness, SK will not speak of faith without also speaking of offense. The fact that large segments of a number of works are devoted to "offense" [SV IV 215-21 (Fragments 49-54); SV IX 189-94 (Works of Love, 191-96); SV XI 194-99, 223-41 (Sickness unto Death, 83-87, 113-31); and SV XII 66-134 (Practice in Christianity, 69-144)] signifies the centrality of this concept for a true delineation of faith.

\(^{43}\)SV IV 219 (Fragments, 53).

\(^{44}\)SV III 69, 103 (Fear and Trembling, 17, 53). Other texts on the mutual exclusivity of faith and understanding include SV IV 224 (Fragments, 59): "How, then, does the learner come to an understanding with this paradox, for we do not say that he is supposed to understand the paradox but is only to understand that this is the paradox"; SV VII 179 (Postscript, 214): "Suppose that it [Christianity] does not want to be understood and that the maximum of any eventual understanding is to understand that it cannot be understood"; p. 183 (218): "The only possible understanding of the absolute paradox is that it cannot be understood"; p. 495 (568): "The believing Christian both has and uses his understanding . . . in order to see to it that he believes against the understanding"; SV XII 365 (For Self-Examination, 82): "Faith is against understanding."
contradictions and yet is **the truth**, he has been charged with irrationalism, much as Luther has been accused of advocating a "theory of double truth." Yet neither charge is accurate.\(^{45}\)

But faith is not only against the understanding; it is also against experience. When Abraham received the command to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah, he had no unambiguous experience to which he could appeal: how could he be certain that his were not the delusions

---

\(^{45}\)B. A. Gerrish ("The Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science" in *The Old Protestantism and the New, Essays on the Reformation Heritage* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982], 171-73) has shown that Luther did not, in fact, advocate the putative "theory of double truth" (the view that a statement may be true in philosophy but not in theology, and vice versa). To be sure, in his *Disputation on the Proposition, "The Word was made flesh*" (1539) "Luther begins by affirming that the proposition 'The Word was made flesh' is true in theology, but simply impossible and absurd in philosophy (thesis 2)" (p. 171). Nevertheless, by careful analysis of the text Gerrish demonstrates that Luther has not set forth a theory of double truth, but rather one of **multiple discourse**. Luther's position is that "each of the various disciplines (professiones) operates with its own special discourse" (p. 172). Because the meaning of a proposition is fixed by the domain of discourse to which it belongs, it cannot be transferred to another domain and retain its original meaning; in the process of transference it becomes another proposition, the meaning of which is dependent upon the new context. Consequently, though the proposition "The Word was made flesh" is ostensibly the same proposition in theology and philosophy alike, it in fact is not, for different things are meant by the terms. Gerrish observes that by his theory of meaning Luther seeks "to give each discipline autonomy in its own 'sphere'"—an intent that is "not out of harmony with his general theological position, in which theology and philosophy are related to the doctrine of the two realms" (p. 173). F. Edward Cranz likewise grounds Luther's "realms of discourse" in his general doctrine of the two realms (*An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law, and Society* [Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1964], 66-67).

For his part, Kierkegaard has not advanced the theory of double truth; SV VII 262 (Postscript, 305) in fact explicitly rejects it. Neither has he advocated rank irrationalism. Notwithstanding his tenet that faith in the God-man is faith in "the absurd" and therefore tantamount to a "martyrdom of the understanding" (p. 195 [232]), Kierkegaard's intent has been to point out—contra Hegel!—the inadequacy of human categories (and their presumed dialectic) for dealing with divine revelation. In this connection, one may cite p. 495 (568), Pap X\(^2\) A 354 (JP 1:7), and Pap X\(^2\) B 79-80 (JP 1:10-11). In the second of these entries SK writes that "Christianity... turns the natural man's concepts upside down and gets the opposite out" (N.B., not in Hegelian fashion, i.e., according to a rational calculus). Kierkegaard stresses, however, that this complete overturning of human categories by no means entails "that 'the absurd' is not a concept, that all manner of absurda are equally at home in 'the absurd' or that it is nonsense." Pap X\(^2\) B 80 (JP 1:11) reinforces this contention by refusing to construe the absurd's constituent parts as flat-out contradictionaries in any ultimate sense (i.e., *sub specie aeternitatis*). Rather, their ultimate senses are incommensurable with what we, here and now, think them to be, thereby giving the appearance of contradiction: "The absurd is the negative criterion of that which is higher than human understanding and human knowing" (emphasis mine). One may therefore argue that SK, too, entertains a "theory of multiple discourse," and that he, too, relates it to the "two realms" (existence on the one hand, eternity on the other). Nevertheless, despite the impassable gulf that separates us from the ultimate sense of Christianity's terms, Kierkegaard clearly accords human discourse about God a relative coherence, for beyond its "impossible" axioms and imperfectly grasped terms there is a certain dogmatic precision to be won. *The Book on Adler*, for example, is just such an attempt "to get a clarity about certain dogmatic concepts and an ability to use them which otherwise is not easy to be had" (Pap VIII\(^1\) B 27, p. 75 [*On Authority and Revelation*, li]).
of a lunatic or the promptings of a devil? He could not. Hence, just as Luther could praise him for letting go of his understanding and allowing himself to be led like a blind man along the way, so too can Kierkegaard marvel at the manner in which he closes his eyes, plunging confidently into the absurd. Abraham is like a sleepwalker who securely negotiates the abyss. He is so because faith does not depend upon feeling nor is it an observable psychological condition. Faith perceives nothing at all, least of all its own existence. Yet, blind though it is, faith sees perfectly well in the dark.

If faith's verities do not merely transcend those of reason and experience, but in fact contradict them, then it is not a knowing. The further circumstance that faith can only ex-

---

46 "One approaches [Abraham] with a horror religiosus, as Israel approached Mount Sinai. What if he himself is distraught, what if he had made a mistake?" (SV III 111 [Fear and Trembling, 61]).

47 Ibid., 85 (34).

48 Ibid., 111 (61).

49 See ibid., 118 and 130 (69 and 82), where it is denied that faith is a feeling or a mood.

50 Pap IX A 32 (JP 1:255): "I cannot get an immediate certainty about whether I have faith--for to believe is, after all, precisely this dialectical suspension that is constantly in fear and trembling and yet never despairs; faith is just this infinite self-concern that keeps one vigilant in hazarding everything, this self-concern as to whether one also really has faith--and see, just this self-concern is faith. But what has brought such enormous confusion into Christianity is that at times one preaches dialectically, and at times as though faith were the immediate, the immediate certainty" (translation mine).

51 SV VIII 324 (Gospel of Suffering, 32): "When human wisdom cannot see a hand's breadth before it in the dark night of suffering, then faith can see God, for faith sees best in the dark." Cf. Luther, for whom it likewise applies that God leads in a way "that is not the way of the senses or of reason but of faith alone that is able to see even in darkness" (WA 5, 45, 30ff. [LW 14, 309]).

52 SV IV 227 (Fragments, 62): "It is easy to see then (if, incidentally, the implications of discharging the understanding need to be pointed out), that faith is not a knowledge, for all knowledge is either knowledge of the eternal, which excludes the temporal and the historical as inconsequential, or it is purely historical knowledge, and no knowledge can have as its object this absurdity that the eternal is the historical." See also SV VII 179-81 (Postscript, 213-16) where the claim that faith is not a knowing is advanced on the grounds that Christianity is an essential secret, the object of which is, in principle, hidden. This claim of Kierkegaard's that faith is not a knowing should be interpreted with the same caution as the similar claim that we encountered in Luther. Kierkegaard does not deny that a kind of cognition occurs in faith. His claim is that it is sui generis. This is evident from the first text cited, in which Kierkegaard takes up Lessing's distinction between "necessary truths of reason" and "contingent truths of history" (cf. SV VII 77 [Postscript, 97]). In its chief tenet (the Incarnation) Christianity involves neither. That is to say, it has as its object neither "eternal fact" nor "historical fact," but "absolute fact" which possesses characteristics of both (SV IV 262-63 [Fragments, 99-100]). This absurd hybrid cannot be known by any of the ordinary ways of knowing.
ist in the absence of experience and in defiance of the understanding [Christianity's scandalum!] marks it out as the most highly charged of passions. Kierkegaard compares it to being suspended over a depth of 70,000 fathoms of water; Luther, as we have seen, likens it to hanging from a cross, situated midway between heaven and earth. For both men faith is a leap, a dare that entails risk:

53 SV III 116, 166-67 (Fear and Trembling, 67, 121-22), SV IV 224 (Fragments, 59), and SV VII 107 (Postscript, 132) all identify faith as a "passion" (Lidenskab). The intent of this designation, according to Gregor Malantschuk (Fran og Bevet, Indledning og Gennemgang ved Gregor Malantschuk [Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Boghandel, 1980], 105), is to distinguish faith from "knowing" or "feeling" and to ally it with "willing" (or acting, yet not as though it were the will's own act, as we shall see). Malantschuk's interpretation is corroborated by the circumstance that offense, the opposite passion (SV IV 215-18 [Fragments, 47-51]), is not something that merely "befalls" one. It is, to be sure, something suffered, yet it is also willed (p. 215 [47]). As a proof that this is so Kierkegaard cites linguistic convention: one is offended and yet one takes offense. Accordingly, while passion involves being "carried away," one wills to be so transported—that is to say, passion contains elements of passio and actio alike. Close synonyms to Lidenskab include Subiektivitet (subjectivity) and Interesse (interest). SK writes: "Christianity is spirit; spirit is inwardness; inwardness is subjectivity; subjectivity is essentially passion, and at its maximum an infinite, personally interested passion for one's eternal happiness. As soon as subjectivity is taken away, and passion from subjectivity, and infinite interest from passion, there is no decision whatever" (SV VII 21 [Postscript, 33], emphasis mine). Although passion involves passio (being acted upon)—and hence, feelings—it is certainly more than feeling, and the fact that SK differentiates the two (p. 303 [350]) only confirms our preceding claim that faith is not reducible to "experience"; it is not a feeling of confidence, optimism and the like, perceptible through introspection. Indeed, insofar as faith is, in the first instance, an act of willing (actio wherein God is the agent), it can exist in the absence of experience. If one can take SK's thoughts on love (which is also a thing more affecting than affected) as an indication of his views on faith (indeed, he draws a parallel between the two in the text that we are about to cite), then faith is the divine source whence experience proceeds—a source that is, itself, not discernable precisely because it lies hidden in God—precisely as we learned from Luther (SV IX 12-14 [Works of Love, 26-28]).

54 SV VI 414, 437-38, 443 (Stages, 444, 470-71, 477); SV VII 114, 171, 195, 246 (Postscript, 140, 204, 232, 288); Pap VI B 18, p. 94 (JP 5:5792); Pap VII B 235, p. 194 (On Authority and Revelation, 157-58); Pap VII A 221, p. 145 (JP 5:5961); Pap VIII B 105,3; Pap IX A 94, p. 50; Pap X A 623, p. 447; Pap X B 494 (JP 2:1402); Pap X A 114, 290 (JP 2:1142, 4:4937); Pap X B 123, p. 163.

55 WA 1, 102, 39ff. A somewhat similar statement in Kierkegaard reads: "But suppose Christianity ... is inwardness, and therefore the paradox, in order to thrust away objectively, so that it can be for the existing person in the inwardness of existence by placing him decisively, more decisively than any judge can place the accused, between time and eternity in time, between heaven and hell in the time of salvation" (SV VII 180-81 [Postscript, 215]).

56 SV VII 78-85 (Postscript, 98-106). The "leap" is the category of decision (p. 79 [99]). As relates to Christianity, it is the decision of faith in the God-man. It cannot be arrived at on the basis of facts about Jesus' life—not even the resurrection—for from none of these (however remarkable they may otherwise be) can it be inferred that Jesus was God. Of that inference Lessing says: "If that is not a μετέβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος [transition to another category-sphere] then I do not understand what Aristotle understood by this designation. . . . That—that is the nasty wide ditch over which I cannot come however often and earnestly I have
Without risk, no faith. . . If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith. If I want to keep myself in faith, I must continually see to it that I hold fast the objective uncertainty, see to it that in the objective uncertainty I am "out on 70,000 fathoms of water" and still have faith.\(^{57}\)

The risk attaching to Christianity, however, is no calculated one that can be absorbed with a high degree of certainty as to a successful outcome. Such would be the case if Christianity merely traded in objective uncertainties. But in point of fact it trades in a supremely disquieting certainty: "the certainty that, viewed objectively, it is the absurd.\(^{58}\)

Faith, therefore, is the absolute antithesis to "shrewdness" that trades in probabilities. Even as he ventures, the believer does so with knowledge that, humanly speaking, he is going to his own destruction.\(^{59}\) Yet what makes this venture the more appalling is the fact...
that it is not a thing once done and forever put behind; no, it must be entered upon ever anew. Faith is "a task for a whole lifetime," its way "narrow, stony, and thorny until the very end." It cannot be otherwise since Christian existence is a passionate contending, not a possessing, a "becoming," not "being."

for to venture farther would be to risk the world's contempt—even outrage—for being too good. Shrewdness has the approval of the world, for it "knows cunningly how to give this appearance of the Good." But "good" it is not; on the contrary, "what the world admires as shrewdness is really an understanding with evil" (SV IX 272 [Works of Love, 266]). When SK speaks of venturing against the understanding, then, he primarily has in mind an ethical venture—a "decisive act" wherein there can first be talk of becoming a Christian. Here—and only here—is where God can "get hold of one" (Pap X A 396 [JP 1:188]). For when ethical earnestness, taking Christ as its paradigm, goes out into the world and acts as altruistically as possible, it inevitably collides with the world. It is at this point that the venturer begins to need help in order to hold out, not only against the world, but against himself, against the doubt that the error lies with him. Thus his ethical venture gives birth to religious need which finds its satisfaction in grace (Pap X A 284 [JP 1:513]. Cf. Pap X A 470 [JP 4:4933], X A 349, 459 [JP 2:1902, 2:1908], SV XII 459, 462, 464 [Judge for Yourself!, 190-91, 194, 196-97]). Contemporaneity with Christ the ethical paradigm is the "existential first step" that leads to faith. Through such contemporaneity, Christ comes to be seen for what he also is—the God-man in whom there is atonement for sin. Venturing "against the understanding" qua faith in the God-man and "venturing against the understanding" qua decisive action are complementary aspects of faith's dare. Accordingly, the importance of the former must not be exaggerated at the expense of the latter.

Once again we see the parallel with Luther, whose claim it was that the meaning of Christ's cross is disclosed only to those who themselves stand under the shadow of the cross and suffering. Contemporaneity with Christ's suffering is the necessary condition of beholding the Deus absconditus in passionibus. This, for Kierkegaard, does not occur through "imitation" as such; rather it takes place through the venture at imitation and the resultant failure and judgement. There faith is to be found, there the truth of Christian revelation: in the "soul's anxiety," in the "mortal danger of the spirit" that attends the ethical venture (SV X 243 [Christian Discourses, 249]). There is where Luther found it: in the decisive act, the ventured imitation, amid the "horror" of which he discovered "faith's blessed way out" (SV XII 462 [Judge for Yourself!, 194]).

SV III 59 (Fear and Trembling, 7) and SV VII 350 (Postscript, 404).

Kierkegaard's kinship to Luther in this regard is especially noticeable in his blistering attack upon the notion of a "Church triumphant" (SV XII 185-212 [Practice in Christianity, 201-232]). One could easily substitute theologia gloriae for ecclesia triumphants—either way, the heart of the matter is that Christendom has adopted the vain conceit that its time of strife is over. Against this overly realized eschatology SK asserts: "In this world Christ's Church can, in truth, only exist by contending, i.e., by fighting for its existence every instant" (SV XII 195 [Training in Christianity and the Edifying Discourse which 'Accompanied' it, trans. Walter Lowrie [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947], 207]; cf. SV IV 270 [Fragments, 108]). "The Church militant," he says, "is in process of becoming, established Christendom simply is, does not become" (SV XII, 194 [Training in Christianity, 206]; cf. Pap X A 552 [JP 1:593]). This view of Christian existence as perpetual becoming is grounded in SK's view of existence in general: "Existence is continually in the process of becoming." And again: "What is existence? It is that child who is begotten by the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is therefore continually striving" (SV VII 63, 73 [Postscript, 81, 92]). The similarity to Luther is great, whose theologia viatorum, as we earlier noted, derives from the temporal nature of existence and resultant primacy of becoming over being.
The fact that Christians are in a continual process of becoming means that truth can never assume the form of a finished result in this life; it ever remains a way to the truth--its moment by moment appropriation, in faith. Accordingly, "the certain spirit of faith" is not something got "once for all" but is a "daily" acquisition "which at every moment has within itself the infinite dialectic of uncertainty." The assurance of forgiveness of sins, to take but one example, never becomes entirely unproblematic in this life. It remains an inescapable paradox the ground of which lies in the circumstance that the poor existing human being is existing, that he is half-godforsaken even when in the inwardness of faith he is victorious against the understanding; . . . only eternity can give the eternal certainty, whereas existence has to be satisfied with the struggling certainty, which is gained not by the battle becoming easier or illusory but only by it becoming harder.

However little we may like this disposition of things, the fact is that a fighting certainty is the one thing needful--it alone delivers from the hubris to which our flesh is heir. Not only is no other certainty attainable within existence, every other certainty bolsters hubris. Kierkegaard gladly rejects them all--whether they issue from religious speculation or works-righteousness--precisely in order to make room for God's sovereign grace:

No, away from me pernicious security, save me, O God, from ever becoming absolutely sure, preserve me until the last in insecurity, so that then, if I attain blessedness, it might be absolutely sure that I receive it of grace!

---

62SV XII 190 (Practice in Christianity, 206). The fact that the eternal truth cannot manifest itself as a finished result to an existing individual owes to the circumstance that, qua existing or becoming, he cannot assume God's standpoint sub specie aeterni (SV VII 62-63, 67 [Postscript, 80-81, 86]). As a consequence, the eternal truth "must remain for him a paradox as long as he exists" (p. 169 [202]). It is quite impossible to attain to the objective certainty of a result; the only certainty that can be had is that of relating to this inaccessible--and therefore uncertain--result in truth ("The objective uncertainty, held fast through the appropriation of the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an existing person"--p. 170 [203, slightly amended]). This, as we saw earlier, is tantamount to a definition of faith, except that in the case of Christianity the truth is not merely an "objective uncertainty," but the absurd itself (p. 176 [210]).


65SV X 211 (Christian Discourses, 219), translation mine. The text continues: "The true . . . expression that it is by grace is precisely the fear and trembling of insecurity. There lies faith . . . precisely just as far from despair as from security." The underlying tenet of this passage is that the certainty of salvation is not based upon any quality that one finds within oneself, but rather upon the acknowledgement of God's righteous
The circumstance that, for Kierkegaard, Christian certainty has particularly to do with the forgiveness of sins gives a still closer indication of why it must be a \textit{fighting} certainty. It will be recalled that, for Luther, Christian "becoming" was a "becoming righteous"—i.e., the \textit{process} of ever repenting, and ever being justified. This process was characterized by the \textit{uncertainty} of becoming insofar as it entailed the continuing presence of unrighteousness as the terminus a quo of the movement. The same applies for Kierkegaard:

It is eternally certain that it will be done for you as you believe, but the certainty of faith, or the certainty that you, in particular, believe, you must win at every moment by God's help, consequently not in some external way. You must have the help of God to believe that you are saved by baptism; you must have the help of God to believe that in communion you receive the gracious forgiveness of your sins. . . . Be it done for you as you believe. But everything in you which is of flesh and blood, of timorousness and attachments to the earthly, must despair that you cannot get an external certainty, a certainty once for all, and, in the most convenient way. You see, it is the striving of faith in which you get occasion to be tried every day.\textsuperscript{66}

While fallen human nature must despair of getting an unambiguous certainty, it has its own continuing vitality to thank for this. In the place of such certainty God dispatches a "penitential preacher," the anxious conscience, that keeps the believer "awake in uncertainty so that he longs for certainty." This certainty God, alone, can give.\textsuperscript{67} And because it is God who

\textsuperscript{66}SV IX 359 (\textit{Works of Love}, 348, amended). Note the direct quote from Luther as well as the concept of daily appropriating one's baptism.

\textsuperscript{67}SV X 194, and especially p. 196 (\textit{Christian Discourses}, 201 and 203): "The [penitential] preacher in his inmost parts can help him to become attentive, help him to seek with personal concern the certitude of the Spirit, when God's Spirit witnesseth with this man's spirit that he loves God. But God alone can give him this certitude."
gives it, it is more certain than that which human possibilities afford. But as already noted, the Spirit's witness does not come without the individual first having ventured "out into the dangers and decisions where faith comes into existence." The most reliable intelligence," says Kierkegaard, "is to be had in mortal danger."

What is the nature of the faith that is born of danger? If the danger is that of entering into contemporaneity with Christ in his cross and suffering, then faith will be a personal act of "seeing" (autopsy) that discerns the concealed presence of the deity in this lowly, servant-form. Such a condition is miraculously conferred in the moment by God himself. The moment, an atom of time filled with eternity, recreates the person such that he becomes a

---

68 SV VII 440 (Postscript, 506) and Pap X A 481 (JP 3:3608). SV X 177 (Christian Discourses, 182) expresses admirably the absolute conviction that faith possesses amid the uncertainty: "There is no assurance so heartfelt, so strong, so blissful, as that of faith. . . . Faith is the assurance, the blissful assurance which is found in fear and trembling. When faith is seen from the one side, the heavenly side, one sees in it only the bright reflection of blessedness; but seen from the other side, the merely human side, one sees sheer fear and trembling."

69 SV X 243 (Christian Discourses, 249). God's bestowal of faith and its certainty presupposes that one has ventured a "decisive act," where God can get hold of one--Pap X A 470 (JP 2:1902), X A 349 (JP 2:1908), and SV XII 459 (Judge for Yourself!, 190-91): "Venture a decisive act; the proof does not precede but follows, is in and with the imitation that follows Christ." In such a situation of danger one has not the luxury of doubting--one has no choice but to trust, and that trust is not betrayed. This applies not only at the beginning, but throughout the Christian life: first the exposure of oneself to danger, then the Spirit's witness (whose witness is: that it is blessed to suffer--Pap X A 593 [JP 4:4688]; X A 37, 72, p. 79 and 79, p. 90 [JP 4:4346, 6:6837 and 3:3774]). Texts detailing the priority (first the suffering, then the certainty) include Pap X A 365 (JP 2:1658): "For truly, one must be far out before one is actually served by the witness of the Spirit, one must essentially be in the process of becoming spirit" (translation mine). Cf. also X A 360; X A 472, 588, 620, 660; X A 37, 49 (JP 2:1657; 6:6792, 2:1661, 4:4690, 4:4694; 4:4346, 2:1662). SK argues for an existential, as opposed to intellective, kind of certainty: "Is there not, according to the N.T., but one proof, a single one, that one has a conviction: that one's life expresses it?" (Pap X B, 227 [JP 3:3580], translation mine); "The demonstration of Christianity really lies in imitation" (SV XII 352 [For Self-Examination, 68]); "The Christian thesis is not intelligere ut credam [I understand in order that I may believe], nor is it credere ut intelligam [I believe in order that I may understand]. No, rather it is: act according to the command and orders of Christ; do the will of the Father--and you will come to faith. Christianity in no way lies within the sphere of intellectuality" (Pap XI A 339 [JP 3:3023], slightly emended).

70 SV IV 233 (Fragments, 70). "Autopsy" literally means "seen by oneself" (from αὐτός, self + ὑποθέτημαι, to see). Faith penetrates through from the Deus absconditus (the lowly servant) to the Deus revelatus (the God-man).

71 Ibid., 227-30 (62-64). "Faith itself is a wonder [Under]," in respect of which the believer owes God absolutely "everything." Cf. SV III 100, 116 (Fear and Trembling, 51, 67), where faith is designated "a marvel" (et Vidunder) that no one can achieve on his or her own strength.
new creature." To be sure, Kierkegaard does not himself use this expression that, admittedly, is constructed in parity with Luther's simul iustus et peccator. Nevertheless, throughout the authorship Kierkegaard operates with an ontology according to which Christianity is the bringing forth of the new nature (variously designated

72SV IV 190 (Fragments, 21). All continuity, all identity of the new creature with the old is absent, thanks to dialectic of "the moment" (Gieblíkket). This concept is used by Kierkegaard in two senses. One is the general ontological sense with which The Concept of Anxiety concerns itself: the moment is the "medium for coming into existence [Tilblivelse] as this is developed in Fragments' "Interlude" (Per Lønning, "Samtidighedens situation." En studie i Søren Kierkegaards kristendomsforståelse, [Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1954], 48). Such "coming into existence" occurs in freedom; its occurrence cannot be explained by any antecedent condition (cf. Hume's analysis of causality). It is what Plato called τὸ ἐξ ἐκφύσεως (the sudden). The moment, as having to do with coming into existence, is time qualified by being. As such it is an anticipation of eternity, "the first reflection of eternity in time, its first attempt, as it were, at stopping time" (SV IV 358 [Concept of Anxiety, 88]). "The moment" as Kierkegaard develops it in Fragments, however, is something different. Lønning writes: "In The Concept of Anxiety, the moment comes into consideration as the space in which the person [through freedom's choice] posits himself as synthesis of time and eternity, in Fragments the moment is the place where 'the God in time,' that very special synthesis of time and eternity, meets the person and compels offense or faith" (Samtidighedens Situation, 48). One might only add that insofar as the person to whom God reveals himself in the moment becomes a new creature by an act of divine freedom, this "coming into existence" in the moment in its pregnant sense shows itself to be in close parity with the general ontological sense.

73SV VII 500 (Postscript, 573, emended): "The issue continually dealt with here was: how can a historical point of departure be given etc. In Religiousness A there is no historical point of departure. The individual merely discovers in time that he must presuppose himself to be eternal. The moment in time is therefore swalloled up by the eternal. In time, the individual reflects upon his being eternal. This contradiction is only within immanence. It is different when the historical is outside and remains outside, and the individual, who was not eternal, now becomes eternal, and therefore does not reflect on what he is but becomes what he was not, and, please note, becomes something that has the dialectic that as soon as it is it must have been, because this is the dialectic of the eternal.--What is inaccessible to all thinking is: that one can become eternal although one was not eternal."

Immanence's version of the same paradox (that the eternal is present in and under the temporal) is elaborated earlier in the Postscript (e.g., pp. 63, 73, 149, 182 [82, 92, 180, 217]). It differs from Christianity's version in that it regards eternity as incipiently present at every step of the way. Now, SK's rendering of the Christian paradox--eternity as coming to be for the first time with the new birth--seems problematic insofar as it denies eternity to those who have not experienced the new birth. This formulation brings SK into ostensible conflict with his own anthropological premises on which even unregenerate individuals are said to be a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal (SV IV 355, 358-59 [Concept of Anxiety, 85, 88-89]). The fact that SK sees no conflict here can only owe to his understanding of eternity in the Christian sense as realized eternity. The "eternity" of the unregenerate person is ever unrealized--it remains but a bare possibility. Accordingly while immanence correctly postulates that human beings are existing spirits whose task it is to realize the synthesis of time and eternity within themselves, it is wrong in thinking that they possess this possibility without further ado. Only with the bestowal of the condition in the moment are they able to realize their true nature qua "spirit." Much more will be said of Kierkegaard's anthropology in chapter eight.
"being," "eternity," "infinitude") into time.74 In the Postscript the negative consequence of this is generally drawn—viz., that since we continue to be children of temporality and becoming we can at no point assume the status of pure Being, sub specie aeterni. But the positive consequence is that we do catch a glimpse of eternity in time, even if this eternity is eschatologically conceived owing to the fact that eternity, when qualified by time, always assumes the aspect of the future.75 This view of Christian existence as simul aeternalis et temporalis, while conceived along idealist lines, provides a structural analog to Luther's understanding of the Christian's dual status as visible sinner possessing invisible righteousness. In Luther the faith that perceives the hidden reality is, as we have seen, also eschatologically conceived as hope. Together with Paul, Luther and Kierkegaard maintain that what we now see "as in a mirror darkly," we will one day see face to face, faith having been done away with. But until then we have a dual status and are in the process of transition from the one reality to the other. It is faith that ever effects this transition, penetrating from the visible through to the invisible, from the temporal to the eternal.

---

74SV IV 352 (Concept of Anxiety, 83): "The Christian takes the position that non-being is everywhere . . . as the temporal forgotten by the eternal; consequently, the task is to do away with it in order to bring forth being." Cf. SV IV 190 (Fragments, 21), cited above: "In the moment, a person becomes aware that he was born, for his previous state, to which he is not to appeal, was indeed one of 'not to be.'" The continuous process of transition from non-being to being is already described in religiousness A: "In existence, where the existing person finds himself, the task is . . . whether he will be so kind as to exist. As an existing person, then, he is not supposed to form existence out of the finite and the infinite, but, composed of the finite and the infinite, he, existing, is supposed to become one of the parts" (SV VII 364 [Postscript, 420, slightly emended]).

While we postpone in-depth discussion of SK's use of the terms "eternity" and "infinity" until chapter eight, we take occasion here to note that these are inspired by German idealism. In no way do they belong to Kierkegaard's Lutheran heritage. This will, in the late authorship, lead to consequences quite anathema to Luther—viz., the destruction of the finite and the temporal by the infinite and eternal, and hence a denial of the goodness of creation. Yet if we prescind from this for the moment, it is clear that SK's adaptation of idealist anthropology serves the purpose of restating the Lutheran conception of a constantly effected transitus between one's empirical condition (totus peccator) and one's actual condition in Christ (totus iustus). By means of this transitus an empirical process of sanctification is set into motion whereby one becomes partim peccator—partim iustus. SK describes this as "becoming spirit," or realizing the "eternal" all the while remaining in the "temporal."

75SV VII 262 (Postscript, 306): "For an existing person, is not eternity not eternity but the future, whereas eternity is eternity only for the Eternal, who is not in a process of becoming?" See also p. 368 (424) and SV IV 359 (Concept of Anxiety, 89).
This circumstance leads to Anfægtelse, the possibility of offense as experienced by the believer. For Kierkegaard as for Luther, the condition for the possibility of faith and Anfægtelse alike is God's hiddenness. In the absence of any immediate experience of God, the believer must relate to him in faith by means of a decisive venture undertaken on his own responsibility. This most problematic state of affairs persists as long as life lasts, leading SK to designate Anfægtelse "the essential continuance" of religious suffering. The lack of immediacy is itself grounded in God's transcendent majesty. Not only does that majesty defy every attempt at direct perception or comprehension, it is experienced by the one who draws near in faith as an almost intolerable suffering. In relating to God, therefore, Anfægtelse is not to be avoided; it must be faced "head on" in the "daring of faith" that trusts in God and Christ. The pain and potential offense of having to do with God will be twofold. First, because the decisive venture lies at the heart of all commerce with the hidden deity, the believer will repeatedly be called upon to expose himself voluntarily to suffering.

---

76 Pap XI 2 422 (JP 1:731); SV XII 104 (Practice in Christianity, 109). Anfægtelse = Anfechtung.

77 The difficulty that the lack of an immediate (sensible) relationship to God occasions vis-à-vis determining the sort of venture that is required of one is explored, e.g., in Pap IX A 32; X 1 A 88, 95, 96 (JP 1:255; 2:1922, 4:4479, 3:2898).

78 SV VII 400 (Postscript, 460).

79 Pap X 1 A 279 (JP 1:334): "I constantly return to this dialectic: Christ comes into the world in order to save men, to make them eternally happy . . . and yet Christianity itself teaches that to be a true Christian is, humanly speaking, to be the most wretched of all, that consequently Christianity makes a person, humanly speaking, more wretched than he would otherwise be. This I have understood only in this way, that there is a collision between the divine and the human qualities, that . . . to be drawn up so high, is for a human being the greatest possible suffering, just as it would be for an animal if it were treated as a human being or if it were required to be a human being" (cf. SV XII 60 [Practice in Christianity, 63]). And again: "If for only one single day Christ had expressed what it is to be absolute spirit, the human race would have blown up" (Pap X 1 A 86 [JP 1:347]). And yet again: "I doubt . . . that there lives a single person who in the remotest way has any impression of, or could hit upon wanting to relate to [the Unconditioned, or Being-in-and-for-itself] . . . which naturally could only be done by obeying unconditionally, by willing to let oneself be annihilated, if one will; for the unconditioned is, after all, lethal for the relative being, and only by means of this killing, enlivening" (Pap XI A 205 [JP 4:4918], translation mine). A multitude of similar texts can be cited on the suffering of having to do with God's majesty or absolute nature, and the Anfægtelse arising from this. I cite but a few: SV XII 110-11 (Practice in Christianity, 116-17), Pap X 1 A 456, 487, 570 (JP 4:4680, 4:4949, 4:4682); Pap X 1 A 39 (JP 2:1433).

80 Pap X 1 A 95; X 1 A 637 (JP 4:4378; 4:4023).
and danger only to be dogged by doubts as to whether this particular venture was really commanded by God at all: it could be an act of hubris, in which case the bitter recompense that the believer expects to follow as a matter of course will not issue from the world, but from God himself. Next, even if the venture has been commanded, the possibility of offense will again confront the believer, for in that case God's demeanor will not be one of sheer love, but rather, sheer cruelty.

The fact that Anfregtelse derives from the very nature of the God-relationship causes Kierkegaard to refer it to God rather than to the devil. In this he agrees with Luther without

81 Pap IX A 392 (JP 1:964): "Anfregtelse is precisely the suffering of the voluntary: whether one has not ventured too much," it is the misgiving as to whether "the whole thing might really be lunacy" (Pap X A 22 [JP 4:4372]). That is to say, with each venture whereby one puts oneself beyond the pale of human help, one must wonder whether one has put God to the test in an illicit way (Pap X A 95 [JP 4:4378]). Anfregtelse is the sense that one ought to return to the purely human, repenting of what is, in the decisive sense, the more Christian; it is the sense that one should repent of the pride that may have motivated one's having ventured so far out, for pride is what becoming decisively involved with God (Christianity) resembles in a moment of weakness (Pap X A 182 [JP 4:4376]). Concerning this issue of faith's deceptive resemblance to presumption and Anfregtelse's qualms as to whether egoism is the ultimate motivation for the venture see also: SV X 157-58 [Christian Discourses, 160]; Pap IX A 21 [JP 1:610]; Pap X A 411, 509, 584 [JP 4:4379, 4899, 6:6808]; Pap X A 43 [JP 4:4950]). Abraham is, of course, the prototype of the anfregtet venturer. In contemplating the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, Abraham places himself above the universally human (paternal duty toward one's son). In the moment of Anfregtelse, therefore, he must wonder whether the act that he contemplates is an act of self-arrogation rather than faith. Johannes de Silentio writes: "The person who gives up the universal in order to grasp something even higher--what does he do? Is it possible that this can be anything other than an Anfregtelse? And if it is possible but the individual makes a mistake, what salvation is there for him?" (SV III 60 [Fear and Trembling, 110]). Abraham's is an extreme case (though not totally without parallel to the Christian's quandary as to what it means to "hate" his family--SV X 186 [Christian Discourses, 193]). One thing, however, that Abraham's venture has in common with every venture is the characteristic ambiguity as to whether it is God who has put the individual to the test by commanding the venture, or the individual who puts God to the test by essaying what has not been commanded.

82 SK notes that the high price that Christianity exacts of human beings has occasioned the charge that it is "misanthropic, as indeed the early Christians were called odium totius generis humani [haters of the human race]. The connection is this. In relation to what the natural man . . . regards as love . . . Christianity resembles a hatred of what it is to be a human being, the greatest curse and torment upon what it is to be human. Indeed, even the more profound person can have many weaker moments when to him it is as if Christianity were misanthropy" (SV XII 111 [Practice in Christianity, 117]). Cf. Pap X A 155, 547 (JP 1:547). This is so because in the eyes even of God's beloved "phenomenally it must appear as though God sided precisely with the opponent whom he lets have power--and this in every respect--to maltreat this person; . . . phenomenally it constantly appears as if the opponents were God's beloved, were those with whom he sided, all the while that this person comes to suffer worse than any criminal at the hands of those mighty, highly regarded persons, etc.; . . . phenomenally [God's love] will be expressed by [the beloved one's] coming to suffer more and more the more he holds to God (quite as if God were constantly leaving him more and more in the lurch)" (Pap X A 49 [JP 2:1662], translation mine). Cf. also Pap X A 487, 488, p. 307, and 593, p. 410 (JP 4:4949, 6:6794, and 4:4688).
having recognized it. He refers to **Anfægtelse** as the "divine repulsion in the quid nimis [too much]," "the response of the boundary against the finite individual." In contrast to **Fristelse** [alluring temptation] that beckons from beneath, **Anfægtelse** [deterrent temptation] repels from above. It is "the Nemesis over the [the person's] strong moment." Just when one seems to be on the verge of establishing an absolute relation to the absolute, then "it is the higher that, seemingly envious of the individual, wants to frighten him back." The similarity to Luther's way of speaking about the predestinating God wearing the devil's mask is striking. Yet like Luther, Kierkegaard does not impute actual devilishness or cruelty to God. **Anfægtelse** is that strict upbringing to which Christians are subjected in order that their innate anxiety and distrust of God may be transmuted into faith's spontaneity that regards everything with good cheer and confidence.

As we have seen, it is the voluntary nature of Christian suffering that constitutes an indispensable condition of **Anfægtelse**; and as we shall later see, it is Luther's presumed failure to have recognized the voluntary nature of Christian suffering that earns SK's sharpest

---


84Pap X¹ A 22 (JP 4:4372); SV VII 399 (Postscript, 459). The definition, it will be noted, is given within the categories of religiousness A.

85In **Fristelse** one's lower nature is the target of the alluring power. In **Anfægtelse** the situation is otherwise. There one's better nature is repelled [i.e., anfægtet] by the paradoxical aspect that the relationship with God assumes—and this, while being tempted [fristet] by none other than the ethical (SV III 160 [Fear and Trembling, 115]). The latter circumstance, of course, only serves further to compound the repellency (N.B.: I am indebted to Walter Lowrie for the terminology "alluring temptation" and "deterrent temptation"—see For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourselves! and Three Discourses 1851, trans. Walter Lowrie [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1944], 44).

86SV VII 399 (Postscript, 459).


88Other texts stressing the voluntary character of **Anfægtelse** or Christian suffering in general include: SV X 181-82 (Christian Discourses, 187-88); SV XII 104 (Practice in Christianity, 109); SV XII 351 (For Self-Examination, 66-67); SV XII 458-62 (Judge for Yourself!, 189-94); Pap X¹ A 260 (JP 6:6385); Pap X² A 43 (JP 4:4950); Pap X³ A 459 (JP 2:1908).
rebuke. 89 Now the correlation that Kierkegaard draws between voluntariness and Anfegtelse appears to be at odds with Luther's narrower understanding of Anfegtelse as having to do with dread of the predestinating deity. Yet Kierkegaard himself can present Anfegtelse in terms similar to Luther's, 90 a circumstance that raises the question of whether the two understandings do not have more in common than meets the eye. The common thread between SK's broader, and Luther's narrower, understanding of Anfegtelse is certainly the hiddenness of God's intention toward the individual. In each case the possibility is confronted that God may be willing the person's downfall—in the one case, by permitting his self-destructive, willful venture, in the other, by ignoring his agonizing despair over sin. Moreover, in the latter instance the Anfegtelse can only have come about as a result of the individual having ventured to get involved with God in the first place—a venture the advis-

89Pap X² A 263 (JP 3:2509); Pap X¹ A 43 (JP 4:4950). Kierkegaard is not consistent in his evaluation of Luther—see SV XII 461 (Judge for Yourself!, 193). One must assume, however, that the private view expressed in the journals is the more authentic one. Regin Prenter has correctly observed that this view—on which Luther is supposed to have been unclear about the voluntary nature of Christian suffering, thereby encouraging later orthodoxy to abandon it—is simply incorrect. It rests upon a confusion of SK's concept, "voluntary sufferings," with Luther's notion, "self-chosen works." The reason that Luther rejects the latter is not that they are voluntarily incurred, but that they are incurred with a view to becoming righteous (this, as well as that they are not works that God has commanded!). Hence SK misinterprets Luther and finds a lack of clarity where there is none (see Regin Prenter, "Luther and Lutheranism," in Kierkegaard and Great Traditions, vol. 6 of Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana, ed. Niels Thulstrup and M. Mikulová Thulstrup [Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1981], 161-62).

90We have already seen that the daily appropriation of the forgiveness of sin constitutes nothing less than "the striving of faith in which you get occasion to be tried every day" (SV IX 359 [Works of Love, 348]). Clearly, then, Anfegtelse can have to do with the anxious conscience. This becomes apparent from a multitude of other texts. For example, we are told that at the root of Anfegtelse lies the fear that a given situation is a test sent by God with the intent that one shall fail (Pap X² A 493 [JP 2:1401]); Anfegtelse is said to have to do with sin's legacy of dread that fears (Pap X¹ A 637 [JP 4:4023]) and that consequently gives birth to new sin (Pap IX A 331 [JP 4:4368]); the anfegtet person does not really believe that Christ will deliver him from temptation (Pap X¹ A 477 [JP 4:4375]). And so on. Of particular interest is what SK terms a "seldom" and "difficult" Anfegtelse: that of the person who, try as he might, cannot find a "gracious God" (Pap X¹ A 790 [JP 2:1421]). Of it SK says, "the one dangerous thing is to let go of God; even if his wrath were to remain over one throughout one's entire life, this would not be nearly so dangerous [as to let go of God]." One is reminded of the immense comfort that Luther drew from the first commandment—viz., that his very relationship to God as Lord—if not as Savior—required him unconditionally to fear God as his God. Because of this commandment Luther knew that, whatever his eternal destiny, his relationship to God could not be broken.
ability of which was questionable from the outset. The only possible triumph over one's misgiving lies in the continued venture. So we see that Kierkegaard's and Luther's respective understandings of Anfægtelse are not so far removed from one another after all.

In fact, both kinds of Anfægtelse have something else in common: both evince a basic attitude of incredulity that balks at the grandiosity of the thought that one should really be able to comport oneself on such intimate terms with God. In the absence of any immediate assurance that this is so, everything that the individual does in faith must needs have the appearance of the most prideful audacity. And indeed, apart from the standpoint of faith there really is no sure criterion that faith's daring is not sheer presumption. Consequently, the only means of overcoming Anfægtelse is that very faith the reality of which Anfægtelse calls into question. SK writes: "Anfægtelse can only be fought by the rashness of faith, which charges head-on." Such faith is a marvel, and its champion a hero. In this Luther and Kierkegaard are fully agreed.

While Anfægtelse is that form of suffering that specifically derives from the hiddenness of God, it is but one of several kinds of religious suffering. Nevertheless, it is related to all of the other kinds, adding a potentiating factor to them insofar as the divine

---

91 The questionability of this venture is signaled by the offense that accompanies Christ wherever he goes. Getting involved with him means undergoing the possibility of offense—Anfægtelse—that is inseparable from becoming a Christian. So great are the sufferings that lie in store for the would-be Christian that only the anxious conscience can constrain one to involve oneself with Christ in this way (Pap X A 133 and 190, p. 137 [JP 4:4018 and 1:496]—especially the latter, which warns: "If, humanly speaking, you desire good and happy days, then never get involved in earnest with Christianity"). The first suffering to be encountered is, of course, precisely the Höllenfahrt of the anxious conscience. This is not something that happens willy-nilly, but only by choosing to allow oneself to get involved.

92 The crucial text on this cause of Anfægtelse is to be found in SV XI 195-99 (Sickness unto Death, 83-87): "There is so much talk about being offended by Christianity because it is so dark and gloomy, offended because it is so rigorous etc., but it would be best of all to explain for once that the real reason that men are offended by Christianity is that it is too high, because its goal is not man's goal, because it wants to make man into something so extraordinary that he cannot grasp the thought" (p. 195 [83]).

93 Pap X A 95 (JP 4:4378).

94 Abraham is, in fact, an entire category removed from every ordinary human hero, and that, because of his faith that believes by virtue of the absurd: "The dialectic of faith is the finest and most extraordinary of all; it has an elevation of which I can certainly form a conception, but no more than that . . . the marvelous I cannot do—I can only be amazed at it" (SV III 87 [Fear and Trembling, 36]).
intent behind the respective suffering remains hidden from the sufferer. This is certainly true of the martyrdom of sin-consciousness, the torment of which is not so much the grief of repentance as the uncertainty whether the penitent's pleas are heard by a gracious God. Similarly, the reprisals of flesh against spirit and falsehood against truth only intensify with each step that is taken toward God. The more earnestly that one seeks to mortify the flesh and testify to the truth, the more resistance and persecution one encounters. God's essential concealment in sufferings becomes the more fearfully apparent, adding a new suffering to that with which one already contends. The unrecognizability of his visage together with the realization that one may have voluntarily exposed oneself to affliction and danger without his sanction only generates new suffering.

Now all of these further forms of suffering are addressed by Kierkegaard, just as they were by Luther. We have seen that already within the confines of universal piety Kierkegaard thoroughly explores the ethical act of repentance—the suffering that obtains here is the increasing discovery of guilt and moral incapacity. Kierkegaard himself knew the besetting terror of guilt-consciousness as few moderns have, his protracted struggle to experience the forgiveness of sins and release from melancholy offering a close parallel to Luther's own experience. Like Luther he conceived of the withering assaults of conscience as an excruciating death that one must endure in advance of any quickening. God's opposition to sin, he writes, "weighs more heavily ... than the sleep of death"; it effects "an annihilating abasement" that prevents one from being able to lift up one's eyes. Yet wonderfully, such abasement yields the possibility of exaltation:

To be exalted to God is possible only by descending. . . . For self-accusation is precisely the possibility of justification. . . . Before God 'to wish to justify oneself,' that precisely is to denounce oneself as guilty; but before God to smite oneself upon the breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' that precisely is to justify oneself, or rather it is the condition for God's pronouncing thee justified.

95 SV XI 266 (High Priest-Publican-Woman Who Was a Sinner, 374).
96 Ibid., 268 and 266 (376 and 374).
97 Ibid., 268 (376).
The instrument of the sinner's abasement is of course the law; and because the very law that brings low simultaneously provides the condition for elevation, Kierkegaard gladly accedes to its authority:

If I am to be involved with God . . . flunking out every day, it is true, but still being involved with God . . . then I must also countenance that the requirement is the unconditioned. . . . O God in heaven, above all never rescind the unconditioned requirement. . . . No, let it above all remain the unconditioned requirement! . . . I can . . . nevertheless continue to be related to you, for . . . I let the unconditioned requirement incessantly transform into worthless rags and wretchedness myself and what I have become. . . . [So] let the annihilation, the inner annihilation before God, have its terror, have its pain.

From the preceding texts it appears that the law that brings low is rather more than a mere condition for elevation; it seems in some sense actually to effect what it conditions. In order for this to occur faith must present. And so it is: inasmuch as the law succeeds in humbling the sinner it already is codetermined by faith. In this way the humbling itself is effectively an exaltation, and its instrument--the law--is a paradoxical manifestation of the gospel:

But can something that is intended to humble--can it be too lofty? Or if someone feels it to be too lofty for him, is it not because he has placed himself in a wrong relation to it so that by putting himself in a wrong place he receives the pressure in a wrong place and the requirement crushes him instead of humbly exerting a pressure that lifts up in joy over and in bold confidence through grace? . . . What, then, does lifting up mean? Is not all lifting related to the pressure of humiliation? But can there be too much pressure toward humiliation--in that case complaining could be interpreted to mean that the lifting up was too high. In the physical world it is indeed the case that lifting can be done by means of a weight--thus if someone mistakenly thought he was supposed to lift the weight instead of being lifted by the weight--well, then he is crushed. But it would not be due to the weight but to him. So it is with the unconditioned requirement; if I am supposed to lift it, I am crushed. But this is not the intention of the Gospel. Its intention is that by means of the requirement and my humiliation I shall be lifted, believing and worshiping--and then I am light as a bird. What lifts up more, the thought of my own good deeds or the thought of God's grace? And when that lifts up the most, so that one is most

---

98SV XII 438-39 (Judge for Yourself!, 166-67). Cf. SV X 102 (Christian Discourses, 101-2): "For what is the edifying? . . . [T]he edifying first is . . . the dismaying . . . Where there is nothing at all dismaying and no dismay, there is nothing at all edifying and no edification. There is forgiveness for sin, that is edifying, the dismaying thing is that there is sin; and the degree of the dismay in the inwardness of sin-consciousness corresponds to the degree of edification."
blessedly dizzy—I wonder if it is not when my best deed is changed before God into something base and grace becomes all the greater.99

The tenet of the theologia crucis that the sinner's exaltation proceeds by way of humiliation is given a somewhat different formulation when SK declares the need of God to be the only true motivation for loving him:

99SV XII 427 (Judge for Yourself!, 153). This text has affinities to a postil with which SK was familiar (Christ's changing water into wine, John 2:1-11). There Luther rejoices that the law demands so much. He would not have it any other way. On the contrary, he would deeply regret it if the law asked any less since its transformation into the "wine" of the gospel would be less sweet. In this passage Luther brings gospel into a close relationship to law by assigning it a double office: first, it interprets the law spiritually ("For the gospel comes... and expounds the law's meaning in the most perfect way and tells us that everything that is ours is nothing but sheer sin"), and second, it offers grace and comfort (Martin Luther, En christelig Postille, sammen­‐
dragen af Dr. Morten Luthers Kirke- og Huspostiller efter Benjamin Lindners tysksamlede Samling udgivet i ny dansk Oversættelse af Jørgen Thisted, 2 vols. [Copenhagen: Wahlske Bogadling, 1828], 1:158). This stands in contrast to usual practice of the mature Luther, who prefers to speak of a two-fold office of law, identifying the gospel solely with the offer of grace (F. Edward Cranz, An Essay on the Development, 99).

In general, the younger the Luther, the closer the connection that is made between gospel and law. In the Dictata super Psalterium the gospel is designated by such terms as "the spiritual law," "the law of grace," "the law of Christ." Its difference from Mosaic law consists in the fact that it "not only obligates, but also gives the grace to meet the obligation" (An Essay on the Development, 15). This means that justification is based on an observance of law whereby one is actually made righteous (i.e., made righteous in part, one's lack of righteousness being compensated for by the nonimputation of sin). In the previous chapter we called attention to this early sanative view. Because it not only predicates justification in general, but also that component which involves the nonimputation of sin, upon an incipient actual righteousness, the burden of having to be righteous continues to weigh upon the Christian psyche. This is true despite Luther's abandonment of the Dictata's nominalistic presupposition of justification ("God grants his grace to those who first do what lies within them") and his discontinuance of such usages as "law of grace." Because Luther's depictions of justification and justifying faith remain those of the Dictata, the Lectures on Romans continue to evince a close association between gospel and law: to be justified means to be made righteous, if in ever so slight a degree; to have saving faith means to possess humility. And because faith "formed" by humility is what ultimately justifies, faith must be directed first and foremost at the word of judgement that consigns to hell.

Now Luther's early understanding of justification is certainly not Kierkegaard's. The young Luther's outlook is strongly Augustinian, justification being predicated upon an actual justice that is wrought in the sinner. Nevertheless like him, Kierkegaard tends to blur the distinction between law and gospel. Subjection to the law and assent to its righteous judgement—"that precisely is to justify oneself, or rather it is the condition for God's pronouncing thee justified." The intention of the gospel "is that by means of the requirement and my humiliation I shall be lifted, believing and worshiping." This is significant. What the mature Luther would call "law" Kierkegaard calls "gospel": the gospel's means are the requirement and the humiliation, not the promise and the trust! Through faith's directness at the word of judgement God intervenes so that this word of judgement becomes a word of promise, and the faith that had hitherto inspired fear becomes fiducia. The conclusion lies close at hand that, where the mature Luther seeks to separate law and gospel as far as possible, the young Luther—and Kierkegaard with him—seeks to bring them as close as possible (see Cranz, An Essay on the Development, 180, with reference to Johannes Heckel's Luther interpretation). As such, Kierkegaard's presentation of the theologia crucis bears a clear affinity with that of the young Luther, at least as regards the crucial matter of law-gospel.
It may seem so natural that in order to love God one must raise oneself to heaven where God dwells: the best and surest way, however, to love God is to remain on earth. It may seem so lofty a thing to love God because He is so perfect, it may seem so selfish to love Him because one needs Him: yet the latter way is the only way in which a man can in truth love God. Woe to the presumptuous man who would make bold to love God without needing Him! . . . Thou shalt not presume to love God for God's sake; thou shalt humbly understand that thy life's welfare eternally depends on this, and for this reason thou shalt love Him. 

Anfægtelse and the conscience's annihilation before God are of course not the only sufferings to afflict the pious. As we learned from our overview of the stages, there is yet another determinant of universal piety, that of dying to immediacy [Afdeen fra Umiddelbarheden]--mortificatio in Luther's terminology. Because the believer lives in the sphere of immediacy (or "the finite," as Johannes Climacus can also call it) he is absolutely enmeshed in relative ends and must struggle to disentangle himself through renunciation [Forsagelsen]; only thus is it possible to enter into--and by fits and starts, sustain--an absolute relation to the absolute. The fact that this suffering, as a qualification of inwardness rather than misfortune, is actively incurred leads SK, already within the parameters of religiousness A, to stress the voluntary nature of religious suffering. "Dying to" is a form of self-annihilation, a voluntarily incurred martyrdom. Nonetheless, even within religiousness A all meritoriousness is excluded since the acknowledgement of God's abso-

---

100 SV X 190-91 (Christian Discourses, 197). SK is clearly inveighing against a form of the theologia gloriae in this text. A similar invective is to be found in SV XI 278 (High Priest-Publican-Woman Who Was a Sinner, 384). While the need of God is not identical to self-love (and certainly need not imply it) Kierkegaard does nevertheless recognize a proper self-love based not upon selfishness, but--so one must assume--creaturely reverence toward the Creator (SV IX 26-27 [Works of Love, 39-40]). In this he differs from Luther, who flatly denies that self-love can be selfless and therefore rejects the notion in any straightforward sense. Christ's command is to "cease loving yourself and, forgetting yourself, love your neighbor." "True love for yourself is hatred of yourself. . . . Therefore he who hates himself and loves his neighbor, this person truly loves himself" (WA 56, 516-18 [LW 25, 512-14]).

101 "The religious person, in his human lowliness, is bound in the finite with the consciousness of the absolute conception of God" (SV VII 420 [Postscript, 484]).

102 Ibid., 375-86 (431-45).

103 Ibid., 401, 441 (461, 507-8).
luteness already entails man's nothingness, i.e., his total incapacity to do anything—including to "die to."\(^{104}\)

Now this particular form of suffering is also proper to Christianity. SK writes: "Wherever Christianity is, there is also self-renunciation, which is Christianity's essential form."\(^{105}\) Such self-renunciation is necessary in order to purge every last vestige of willfulness from the Christian:

The fact is this. When God is to love a person, and a person is to be loved of God, then this person qua selfish will must be totally annihilated. This is to "die to," the most intensive agony. But even if the religious person is willing enough according to his better will, he can neither immediately nor entirely get his will, his subjectivity, thus into the power of his better will: indeed, the former, after having initially offered the most desperate resistance, constantly remains on the prowl, seeking to disturb the entire upheaval by which it was dethroned.\(^{106}\)

Because the lower self that Christianity seeks to extirpate is so exceedingly tenacious, the Christian's entire life must be devoted to bringing it into subjection, and this occurs by a process of "dying to." Yet this voluntarily incurred selfannihilation is not ultimately the work of the Christian (any more than it was simply the work of the pious individual in religiousness A). On the contrary, it is the Spirit who kills, in so doing, giving life:

This life-giving in the Spirit is not a direct heightening of the natural life in a person in immediate continuation from and connection with it—what blasphemy! . . . [N]o, it is a new life, literally a new life—because, mark this well, death goes in between, dying to, and a life on the other side of death—yes, that is a new life. Death goes in between; this is what Christianity teaches, you must die to. The life-giving Spirit is the very one who slays you; the first thing the life-giving Spirit says is that you must enter into death, that you must die to.\(^{107}\)
Kierkegaard goes on to describe the nature of this "dying to" as a leave-taking, not only of one's selfishness but of the world itself since the severance of ties with former issues in just such a severance with the latter. As we earlier noted, such a leave-taking is most excruciating: at issue is a clash between what it means to be a holy God and what it means to be a sinful man:

There is, namely, an infinite chasmic difference between God and man, and therefore it became clear in the situation of contemporaneity that to become a Christian (to be transformed into likeness with God) is, humanly speaking, an even greater torment and misery and pain than the greatest human torment, and in addition a crime in the eyes of one's contemporaries.

As indicated in this citation, however bitter it may be, "dying to" is not the Christian's final suffering (though, to be sure, it is final insofar as it continues to the very end, quenching all zest for life, thereby preparing the individual for eternity). To Afdøen is added yet another form of suffering, one that comes from without: maltreatment at the hands of one's contemporaries. Characteristically SK conjoins these two forms of suffering, calling them the "double danger," and even refers this teaching to Luther. And to be sure,

---

108 SV XII 361 (For Self-Examination, 77).

109 SV XII 60 (Practice in Christianity, 63).


111 "Deny yourself--and then suffer because you deny yourself." And again: "There is self-denial only when there is a double danger. . . . [T]he second danger, the danger of suffering because one denies oneself, is the decisive qualification" (SV XII 196 and 204 [Practice in Christianity, 213 and 222]). Cf. SV IX 182-87 (Works of Love, 185-90) and SV XII 472-73 (Judge for Yourself!, 206-7).

112 SV XII 440 (Judge for Yourself!, 169): "This is Christian piety . . . to deny oneself in order to serve God alone--and then to have to suffer for it--to do good and then to have to suffer for it. It is this that the prototype [Christ] expresses; it is also this, to mention a mere man, that Luther, the superb teacher of our Church, continually points out as belonging to true Christianity." This text and Pap X A 125 (JP 3:3677) make it a point to attribute the teaching of "the double danger" to Luther. And with justice. When one peruses the collection of Luther's sermons that Kierkegaard owned and regularly read for edification, passages of this sort are not atypical. In the sermon on the Gospel for the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, for example, Luther speaks of "how far a Christian's life surpasses the natural life. In the first place it disdains itself. In the second place it thirsts after disdain. In the third place it reproves everything that will brook no disdain, and thereby incurs all the world's opposition. In the fourth place it is disdained and persecuted because of this disdain and reproof. In the fifth place it does not account itself worthy to suffer any persecution" (En christelig Postille, 1:512-13). In like manner, in his sermon on the Gospel for the first Sunday after Christmas Luther warns: "To bless Christ . . . is quite a high and rare deed, and this by reason of the fact that Christ and human nature are totally at odds
the two forms do belong together, for not only does the practice of dying to oneself and to the world evoke the world's enmity, this very entry into conflict with the world--clearly foreseen as it is by the Christian--itself amounts to a further stage of "dying to."

The question of course arises as to why self-denial--or what is identical with it, love of neighbor--should evoke so violent a reaction. Really, the answer is not difficult: such self-denial on behalf of one's neighbor constitutes a tacit judgement on the world's selfishness. By selflessly loving one's neighbor one acknowledges the lordship of the

with each other. He, namely, condemns everything that the world chooses, gives cross and tribulation, takes away all pleasure, riches and honor, and teaches that everything that the world's people concern themselves with is sin and folly. See, no one can or will tolerate this from him. Therefore they curse, mock, and persecute Christ and all who belong to him. There are precious few Simeons to be found who bless him. But the world crawls with those who curse him and wish him all evil, disgrace and misfortune. For whoever is not inclined willingly to disdain all things and prepared to suffer all manner of evil, he does not bless and praise Christ for long, but is offended at him, oh so quickly! Thus is Simeon, as a preacher of the cross and an enemy of the world, in this blessing that he wishes upon parents and child, a great and high example of praising and honoring Christ in the despised, accursed and rejected form that he formerly had in his own person and still does have in his members who, for his sake, must suffer poverty and ignominy, death and accursedness, without anyone aiding them or caring about them, let alone blessing them" (En christelig Postille. 1: 108).

113Pap VIII A 127 (JP 1:1046, slightly amended): "Even if I achieve nothing else, I nevertheless hope to leave very accurate and experientially based observations concerning the conditions of existence. In this regard I am now convinced above all that these conditions are always essentially the same. . . . On my schema a young person should be able to see very accurately beforehand, just as on a price list: if you venture this far out, then the conditions are thus and so, this to win and this to lose; and if you venture out this far, these are the conditions, etc." Or Pap VIII A 145 (JP 1:315): "Please, simply choose, and you do not need to guess; the specific conditions of existence can be calculated very well. If you will unconditionally risk everything for the good--then you will be persecuted, unconditionally persecuted, tertium non datur." Cf. Pap IX A 392 (JP 1:964).

114In other formulations of the "double danger," Kierkegaard identifies love of neighbor as that for which the Christian is made to suffer. Cf. SV IX 74 (Works of Love. 83-84): "He . . . who will love his neighbor, . . . such a person easily becomes like the one who does not fit in with earthly existence, not even with so-called Christendom; he is readily exposed to attacks from all sides." To love the victim of injustice is a thankless task--not only is one regarded as a traitor by one's peers, it often happens that one is misunderstood and reviled by the very one whom one wishes to help (pp. 76 and 80-81 [86 and 90]). The person who is willing to involve himself with his neighbor in this way "is always exposed to double danger" (p. 82 [91]). Hence Christian love of neighbor cannot be practiced without self-denial. We need only recall an earlier cited passage from Luther's Treatise on Good Works in order to recognize the essential relationship that obtains between the two.

115Ibid., 350-51 (339-40): "From what has been developed here it is easily seen that the conclusion is by no means correct which without qualification concludes: he who praises love must himself be or become loved--[not] in a world which crucified him who was love, in a world which persecuted and liquidated so many witnesses to love." On the contrary, such a person is regarded as unlovable, for "without requiring anything of anyone, by rigorously and earnestly requiring much of himself," he is "a reminder that there is such a requirement. In his company the excuses and escapes do not look very good. . . . In his company one cannot
God who has commanded such love and, in so doing, passes judgement upon the world's mutiny against him. One does not perpetuate the mutiny by saying, "I cannot stop it; the others must." On the contrary, by unconditionally obeying, the solitary individual expresses for his or her own part "that God exists and is the only master."\textsuperscript{116} By such absolute devotion to this single master one makes oneself utterly heterogeneous to the world. The world cannot understand the Christian's fealty to a master whose claims are so exaggerated.\textsuperscript{117} The natural mind regards authentic Christianity as high treason against what it is to be human and Christians as traitors that cannot be punished too severely,\textsuperscript{118} for they are bent upon dissolving all natural bonds, dismantling all alliances among people, branding all manifestations of human love as collusions in self-love.\textsuperscript{119} To exalt oneself in this way above what it is to be human is the height of arrogance. Accordingly, Christian love is simply take his ease; even less does he help one adjust the pillow of ease by temporal or even by good-natured pious indulgence." Cf. p. 122 (130).

\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., 114 (122).

\textsuperscript{117}SV XII 442 (\textit{Judge for Yourself!}, 170).

\textsuperscript{118}SV XII 416 (\textit{Judge for Yourself!}, 140). Cf. SV XII 111 (\textit{Practice in Christianity}, 117) and Pap X\textsuperscript{1} A 155, 547 (JP 1:547), all previously cited.

\textsuperscript{119}SV VII 510-11 (\textit{Postscript}, 585-86); SV IX 47-62, 94-129 (\textit{Works of Love}, 58-72, 103-36); SV X 186 (\textit{Christian Discourses}, 193); SV XI 157 (\textit{Sickness unto Death}, 45); SV XII 366-67 (\textit{For Self-Examination}, 83-85); SV XII 380, 441-43 (\textit{Judge for Yourself!}, 96, 169-72). There is an irreconcilable conflict between what the world, and what God, understands by love: "The facts are these: extreme self-love the world also calls selfishness; the self-love of a group the world calls love; a noble sacrificial high-minded human love, which still is not Christian love, is ridiculed by the world as foolishness; whereas Christian love is hated and detested and persecuted by the world." (SV IX 116 [\textit{Works of Love}, 124]).
denounced as the most intolerable egoism and blasphemy against God.\textsuperscript{120} Its fate in the world is to be hated, mocked and crucified.\textsuperscript{121}

As with Luther, then, so too with Kierkegaard: Christian love is inevitably persecuted in this world.\textsuperscript{122} This was true at the time of Christ, and it is true \textit{today} regardless of the present age's pretended enlightenment. For the world has not, nor does it ever, change—it remains at all times essentially evil.\textsuperscript{123} Because persecution is the ineluctable fate of the Christian in the world, Kierkegaard can write: "Being a Christian is neither more nor less . . .

\textsuperscript{120}SV IX 116 (\textit{Works of Love}, 123-24); SV XII 55, 82, 182 (\textit{Practice in Christianity}, 58, 86-87, 197); Pap X\textsuperscript{2} A 508. Such was, of course, the accusation brought against Christ: "How to get rid of him? . . . There is nothing else to do but to defend oneself against him by means of the category of guilt, by denouncing his life as being the most appalling egotism, the most shocking arrogance. But this is not sufficient; he is too strong for the human race. Then there is only one thing left! We human beings, . . . we will circumspectly draw back to the category 'God,' and from that location we will aim at him and direct our attack against him with God on our side; it has been found—that he blasphemes God. So that will be the charge!" (SV XII 446 [\textit{Judge for Yourself!}, 176]).

\textsuperscript{121}SV XII 367 (\textit{For Self-Examination}, 84).

\textsuperscript{122}The fact that Luther considered persecution to be the decisive index of the genuineness of one's Christian commitment was not lost upon Kierkegaard—in Pap X\textsuperscript{1} A 125 (\textit{JP} 3:3677) SK remarks: "Luther says that to a Christian life belong faith, works of love, and then persecution on account of the faith and love (the place is marked in my copy of his sermons). He says also in another place (that is similarly marked in my copy) that where there is no persecution, there is something wrong with the proclamation." Over and over again SK stresses the essential relationship of persecution to Christianity—e.g., SV IX 184 (\textit{Works of Love}, 187): "People look upon the world's opposition as an accidental relationship to Christianity rather than as an essential relationship: opposition may perhaps come, but it may also, perhaps, never arise. But this view is altogether unchristian . . . Christianly, the opposition of the world stands in an essential relationship to the inwardness of Christianity." Cf. SV XII 417, 440-41 (\textit{Judge for Yourself!}, 141, 169-70) and Pap IX A 325, 392 (\textit{JP} 3:2643, 1:964).

\textsuperscript{123}SV IX 185 (\textit{Works of Love}, 188): "If anyone, therefore, can prove that the world or Christendom has now become essentially good . . . then I will also prove that Christian self-renunciation is made impossible and Christianity is abolished." P. 350 (339): "Even if conditions are no longer so extreme and inexorable that witnesses to the truth must give up blood and life: the world has nevertheless not become essentially better; it has merely become less impassioned and more petty." SV XII 212 (\textit{Practice in Christianity}, 232): "It is . . . untruth, this talk whereby people flatter the human race and themselves that the world is advancing. The world is going neither forward nor backward; it remains essentially the same, like the sea, like the air, in short, like an element. It is, namely, and must be the element that can provide the test of being a Christian." Pap VIII\textsuperscript{1} A 145 (\textit{JP} 1:305): "The fact that Christ was crucified cannot mean that the Jews happened to be demoralized at that time and that Christ therefore came, if I dare say so, at an unfortunate moment. No, Christ's fate is an eternal fate, it indicates the human race's specific gravity, thus will it befall Christ at all times" (translation mine). Cf. Pap VII\textsuperscript{2} B 270, p. 310, l. 11; Pap VIII\textsuperscript{1} A 127 (\textit{JP} 1:1046); Pap X\textsuperscript{1} A 346 (\textit{JP} 1:168); SV X 227-31 (\textit{Christian Discourses}, 234-37); SV XII 473 (\textit{Judge for Yourself!}, 207).
than being a martyr; . . . every true Christian is a martyr. And lest it be thought that this is meant only figuratively--i.e., that the days of physical martyrdom are past--SK speaks of his own very real peril as a preacher of repentance within "Christendom":

The situation could, however, easily become fatal. The situation is neither more nor less than that Christianity has been abolished in Christendom, and that Christendom nevertheless will still not give up the claim of being Christian. If I were to fight over doctrines--Oh, it is not likely the conflict would become so dangerous, at least in our time when tolerance is so broad or when indifference is honored in the name of tolerance. No, what is involved in Christendom's abolition of Christianity is: self-denial, renunciation of the world, etc.--about such things it does not want to hear a word and yet wishes to be Christian. And to have to speak of this could easily become fatal.

So certain is Kierkegaard that martyrdom will be the fate of the Christian who does not strike any compromise whatsoever with the world (Pap X A 340 [JP 2:1901]) that he can assert: "There is only one consistent conception of Christianity, and that is to be slain for the sake of the truth, to become a martyr." Like Luther, he sees a day approaching when Christianity will again rise up, powerful in the possibility of offense; but "blood will again be required . . . that of the martyrs, these mighty deceased ones who are capable of what no living person . . . is: to force a raging mob into obedience just because this raging mob was permitted, in disobedience, to slay the martyr."

We may, as we did in the case of Luther, summarize our treatment of suffering in its various forms by stressing that these eminently practical phenomena possess epistemologi-

---

125Pap X A 460 (JP 1:383). Cf. Pap X A 460 (JP 1:516) where SK observes that in order to disabuse Christendom of the colossal delusion that it is Christian, a battle will have to be joined "more horrible than when Christianity came into the world." This battle will claim martyrs, the only difference being that these "will not bleed as formerly because they are Christians--no, it is almost insane!--they will be put to death because they are not Christians." SK had, as early as 1847, publicly expressed the conviction that the true preacher of repentance would be put to death by his hearers (SV XI 81-82 [Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises, 121]). He reaffirms this again in 1848 in his Christian Discourses (p. 195 [SV X 189]) and Practice in Christianity (pp. 116-17 [SV XII 110]).
127SV IX 190 (Works of Love, 193), previously cited.
128Pap IX B 20, p. 317.
cal import: they serve as marks of the God-relationship. Insofar as they seem to indicate the opposite—viz., the sufferer's God-forsakenness—they are part and parcel of the theology of the cross's cognitive principle that God ever reveals his presence under its opposite. Already within religiousness A this is the case. There suffering is said to constitute the essential expression for ethico-religious pathos, which is the pathos of action.\textsuperscript{129} It is, of course, paradoxical that a passive determinant such as suffering should characterize an active posture on the part of the religious individual.\textsuperscript{130} The fact that it does so is taken by Johannes Climacus as an indication that, within the religious sphere, the positive is recognizable by the negative.\textsuperscript{131}

The principle that the positive is recognizable by the negative applies equally to Christianity, though it undergoes some modification in the aftermath of the ostracization that SK suffered as a result of the "Corsair affair."\textsuperscript{132} An interesting initial formulation of how

\textsuperscript{129}SV VII 375 (Postscript, 432).

\textsuperscript{130}Attention has already been called to the fact that religiousness A's suffering is active (i.e., voluntary) in nature, for otherwise it would be on a par with adversity, misfortune, etc., which "befall" one. The active character of religious suffering is, of course, not outwardly apparent. Such internal sufferings (the cultivation of guilt-consciousness, the strenuous efforts at dying to self and world, and the conflicted state of mind as to whether these voluntarily incurred woes do not constitute a kind of presumption) are not betrayed by the slightest outward appearance of suffering (on the contrary, the "knight of the hidden inwardness," as Climacus calls him, gives every appearance of being a philistine who enjoys the comfortable appointments of this earthly regime while giving nary a thought to the spiritual one). Such a religious sufferer has "the comic" as his incognito (ibid., 439-44 (455-11)). He "lets himself be constrained by his surroundings to do what the dialectical inward deepening requires of him—to place a veil between people and himself in order to guard and protect the inwardness of his suffering and his relationship with God. This does not mean that such a religious person becomes inactive; on the contrary, he does not leave the world but remains in it, because precisely this is his incognito. But before God he inwardly deepens his outward activity by acknowledging that he is capable of nothing" (p. 440 (506)).

\textsuperscript{131}The reader will recall that revelation is marked by secrecy, eternal blessedness by suffering, the certitude of faith by uncertainty, easiness by difficulty, truth by absurdity" (ibid., 375 (432, amended slightly)). This theme that the positive is recognizable in the negative is a frequent one in the Postscript: see pp. 396, 457, and 465 (455, 524, and 532), especially p. 457 (524): "The religious continually uses the negative as the essential form. Thus the consciousness of sin definitely belongs to the consciousness of the forgiveness of sin. The negative is not once and for all and then the positive, but the positive is continually in the negative, and the negative is the distinctive mark" (emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{132}At the time of the writing of the Postscript SK did not view persecution as a form of religious suffering on account of its accidental character; such suffering "can come and it can be absent" (ibid., 394 (453)). His public confrontation in the name of human decency with The Corsair (a widely-circulated scandal sheet), however, taught him otherwise: disinterested ethical action necessarily brings persecution in its train. From
he applies this principle to the Christian "witness to the truth" is to be found in "the book on Adler" (English title: On Authority and Revelation). There he works out the dialectic of "the special individual" (one chosen by God to pronounce judgement upon established Christianity), noting that this dialectic possesses two moments, one stemming from Aristotle, the other from Christianity. With regard to the former, it is well-known that Aristotle's teleological mode of consideration presupposed that nature strives toward a τέλος, thereby tending to express the rule, and accordingly, to produce what is normal. Whatever is different and does not fulfil its appointed τέλος falls into the category, τὸ τέρατος. Hence, for Aristotle, the special individual constitutes "the wonder"—yet this in the Greek sense of what is abnormal, deformed, imperfect.

Next, turning to the Christian moment of the dialectic, Kierkegaard observes:

We, however, as Christians, are accustomed to regard "the wonder" as the extraordinary, as higher than the norm, as above the universal. Yet the wonder's true dialectic is precisely the unity of these two moments. Hence Christianity must be to the Greeks folly. For the fact that the God revealed himself in suffering was precisely this paradox. Suffering is the abnormal, is weakness, and yet it is the negative form for the highest; the straightforward form is beauty, power, splendor, etc., but that the highest should have its adequate form in the straightforward form shows precisely that the highest is not the extraordinarily highest. The wonder's dialectic is, in one sense (the Greek sense), to be lower than the universal, and only then, in the paradoxical sense, to be higher than the universal. The wonder is not the universal and then a little bit more, no, the wonder is lower than the universal, and only then higher.\(^{134}\)

\(^{133}\)"Portent," "marvel," "wonder" or anything serving as an omen, such as a monster or strange creature.

\(^{134}\)Pap VII\(^2\) B 235, pp. 66-67.
Kierkegaard goes on to say that the special individual will possess no straightforward superiority over the universal, but rather, a **suffering** superiority; he or she will be a unity of abasement and exaltation. This is, of course, supremely the case with Christ. Yet Kierkegaard is ever at pains to stress that it applies with equal aptness to the one who bears his or her own cross in imitation of Christ:

> Just as the essentially Christian always places opposites together [the theology of the cross's coincidence of opposites!], so the glory is not directly known as glory but, just the reverse, is known by inferiority, debasement—the cross that belongs together with everything that is essentially Christian is here also. The Christian cross is not a superficiality, externality... a decoration, a cross in a medal. No, seen from one side it is quite literally, fearfully literally, a cross, and no eye sees the cross and the star [that was present at Christ's birth] combined in a higher unity, so that the radiance of the star is perhaps diminished but the suffering of the cross also becomes somewhat less excruciating. From the other side, conversely, the star is seen, but the star is not worn (a later invention!); alas, it is the cross that is carried (see the Gospel!), the badge of the order and the distinctive mark. This is and always has been and always will be an offense to the understanding.\(^\text{135}\)

The identification of Christ's cross with that of the Christian brings us to the role that the important notion, imitation [*Efterfølgelse*], plays in Kierkegaard. As the above citation indicates, it is in bearing their own cross in daily suffering that Christians come to experience the identity of abasement and exaltation that was present in Christ. This is not unlike what we observed in Luther. Kierkegaard is persuaded that his emphasis upon the Christian's

\(^{135}\)SV VII 434 (*Judge for Yourself!* 161). Bruce Kirmmse notes that "this is an attack upon the Hegelian speculation, which sees the Christian opposites bound together in a synthetic 'higher unity.' And this is at the same time a broader blow directed at the entire status-seeking Christian haute bourgeoisie, for whom there was no higher reward than to be awarded the "Knight's Cross" [Ridderkorset], worn by all the luminaries--Mynster, Heiberg, Martensen, both Ørsted's, etc.--and which was, literally, a large and glorious star containing a cross" (Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990], 432). Kierkegaard's reference to the cross as "the badge of the order and the distinctive mark" is, however, more than a satirical reference to membership in Denmark's royal order of knights; it is simultaneously a reference to *On the Councils and the Church*, in which Luther identifies possession of the holy cross as one of the seven "marks" of the church (WA 50, 628 [LW 41, 164]). Kierkegaard was familiar with this writing (see Pap IX A 7 [JP 2:1845]) and on the basis of that familiarity draws a stark contrast between the meaning that the cross possessed in Luther's theology, and the meaning that it had come to possess in the decadent Lutheranism of Kierkegaard's day.
imitation of Christ in suffering reproduces Luther's fundamental intent.\textsuperscript{136} And to be sure, from his reading of Luther he knew that the latter \textit{did} regard Christ as \textit{exemplum} as well as \textit{sacramentum}.\textsuperscript{137} For Kierkegaard, as for Luther, imitation is \textit{not} to be construed as meritorious or as contributing to justification in any way. Nonetheless it is incumbent upon every Christian to be an imitator of Christ, first, because Christ called for \textit{disciples}, not admirers, and second, because it is through imitating him that we are brought low and compelled to flee to him, there finding grace.\textsuperscript{138}

Now, despite the convergence of attitudes as regards suffering discipleship that undeniably exists between Kierkegaard and Luther, it must again be pointed out that Luther found the concept \textit{conformitas cum Christo} preferable to that of \textit{imitatio}; the former expresses more adequately for him the hidden \textit{divine} operation that effects the unity of abasement-exaltation in the believer, and in so doing guards against any incursion of moralism into the Christian life. In using the concept, \textit{Efterfølgelse}, to bring contemporary Lutheranism back into consonance with its reformation ancestry Kierkegaard may unwittingly have run the risk of just such moralism. This is a matter of no small importance that will have to be considered at a later point. For now, however, we content ourselves with the positive aspect of Kierkegaard's notion, \textit{Efterfølgelse}: like Luther's \textit{conformitas cum Christo}, it removes the theology of the cross from the realm of mere cognitive theory (and hence from the danger of being just another theology of \textit{glory}), and transports it into the hard realm of \textit{praxis}. By its emphasis upon praxis, Kierkegaard's theology of the cross combats the danger

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{136}SV XII 461 (\textit{Judge for Yourself}, 193): "Let us not forget, Luther did not therefore abolish imitation, nor did he do away with the voluntary, as pampered sentimentality would like to have us think about Luther. He affirmed imitation in the direction of witnessing to the truth and voluntarily exposed himself there to dangers enough." Throughout nearly all of the authorship SK blames Lutheranism, not Luther himself, for the abolishment of works and imitation—see Pap X\textsuperscript{2} A 30 (JP 3:2503) and Pap X\textsuperscript{3} A 510 (JP 3:2528).
\item \textsuperscript{137}In his postils Luther frequently maintains that Christ must be \textit{both} gift and example to the Christian (e.g., \textit{En Christelig Postille}, 1:xiii, 15, 24 and 2:97). In the previously cited journal entry (Pap X\textsuperscript{2} A 30 [JP 3:2503]) SK applauds this identification of Christ as gift and example, using it to justify his emphasis upon \textit{imitation} vis-à-vis contemporary Lutheranism. The latter, he says, has fastened solely upon Luther's emphasis upon Christ as gift (an emphasis that was entirely justified in its day) and, content with faith's "hidden inwardness," merely plays at Christianity (\textit{Spilfægteri}).
\item \textsuperscript{138}SV XII 464-66 (\textit{Judge for Yourself}, 197-99). Also Pap X\textsuperscript{2} A 30 (JP 3:2503) and SV XII 314 (\textit{For Self-Examination}, 24).
\end{itemize}
of grace being "taken in vain" within the Lutheran context.\textsuperscript{139} It there takes on the function that Luther's theology of the cross had possessed within an earlier, Catholic context. Doing away the "objective" mode of consideration in which grace is the product of a mechanically efficacious sacrament that demands no personal involvement, Kierkegaard's theology of the cross forges an indissoluble bond between the presence of grace in the life of the believer, on the one hand, and contemporaneity with Christ's cross and suffering, on the other. As such it fully embodies the spirit of its theological ancestor.

\textsuperscript{139} Again, SV XII 314 (\textit{For Self-Examination}, 24).
CHAPTER THREE
JOHANN GEORG HAMANN AS LIKELY MEDIATOR
OF LUTHER'S THEOLOGIA CRUCIS TO KIERKEGAARD

In the introduction I stated that the question how Kierkegaard came to adopt a theological framework so similar to Luther's begs for an answer. It is of course possible that no relationship of dependence obtains whatsoever—the relationship might simply be one of affinity. Moreover even if Kierkegaard has been dependent upon an antecedent figure for the cross elements of his theology, it is possible that the predecessor was not himself beholden to Luther. In a journal entry from 1850 we encounter the following reference to Pascal:

Pascal writes in a letter to Mademoiselle Roannes (on the occasion of little Perrier's healing at Port Royal by a miracle): Only for a few people, and seldom, does God emerge from the secrecy of nature that hides him. Prior to the Incarnation he has kept himself hidden beneath it. Then he has hidden himself all the more inasmuch as he shrouded himself by being man. For he was more recognizable as long as he was invisible. Now he has hidden himself still more deeply in the sacrament. All things are veils that hide God; but the Christians should recognize him in everything, and we have him to thank all the more for having revealed himself to us in sufferings while hiding himself from others. . . .

Here is the dialectic that Joh. Climacus advances: a revelation [or] the fact that it is a revelation is recognized by its opposite: that it is the mystery. God reveals himself—this is recognized by his hiding himself. Consequently, nothing of that which is straightforward.¹

Might it be that SK has read and been influenced by Pascal at an early date? Probably not, for the journals indicate that SK began reading Pascal at about the time of his initial study of Luther (1847). Either he has discovered an affinity with both thinkers long after the initial formation of his thought, or he has been exposed to a mediating influence much earlier on.

¹Pap XⅢ A 626 (JP 3:3110), translation mine.
Another entry from 1850 yields a clue as to who such a mediating influence might have been. In that entry we read:

Erasmus concludes a letter to Zwingli with these words (cited by Hamann, vol. 3, p. 145): "videor mihi fere omnia docuisse, quae docet Lutherus, nisi quod non tam atrociter, quodque abstinui a quibusdam enigmatis et paradoxis."

I think of my lesser relationships. Scharling is likewise of the opinion that Martensen has urged that Christianity is an existence-relationship and contended for its ethical side just as strongly as I, presumably with the exception of some paradoxes, and that it is not tam atrociter.²

It is noteworthy that Kierkegaard identifies his own theology with the paradoxes of Luther and that his impression of the latter has come, on this occasion at least, via Hamann (1730-88). No less a Luther scholar than Heinrich Bornkamm has observed that Hamann engaged in repeated study of Luther's works throughout his life and was "the best Luther expert of his day."³ What was the nature of his Luther-interpretation? Was it anything like SK's, as the above citation would seem to indicate? In his study on Hamann and Luther, Fritz Blanke cites the very Hamann-text that Kierkegaard does in order to contrast Hamann's Lutherbild with that of the Enlightenment. The latter's proponents viewed Luther as the hero who had inaugurated the liberation of individual conscience from external authority. They viewed themselves as Luther's successors, whose task it was to purge "the gold of religious and moral autonomy in Luther" from the anti-intellectual "dross" that afflicted it.⁴ In a word: the Enlightenment's Luther was the champion of reason's autonomy. Hamann's Luther, by contrast, was very different:

How does Hamann describe the faith of Luther? In one place he illustrates what is most important to him in Luther's religion by means of the contrast between Luther and Erasmus. Erasmus had written to Zwingli in 1523 (August 31), saying that he believed himself already to have taught almost everything that Luther taught, with the exception of Luther's riddles and paradoxes. Hamann adds, however, that these Lutheran paradoxes are precisely what especially pleases him, the Magus.

²Pap X¹ A 69, translation mine.


⁴Fritz Blanke, "Hamann und Luther," in Hamann-Studien, Studien zur Dogmengeschichte und systematischen Theologie, vol. 10 (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1956), 44.
What does he understand by these paradoxes of Luther? He cites one such: *Theologus gloriae dicit malum bonum et bonum malum*; *Theologus crucis dicit id quod res est*. This Luther citation is the twenty-first thesis from the Heidelberg Disputation in which Luther distinguishes two types of theology, the *theologia gloriae* (i.e., that of Catholicism) and the *theologia crucis* (i.e., his own). The *theologia crucis* teaches that one experiences God's love in his wrath, God's mercy in his punishment, that consequently one must apprehend God in his opposite; the *theologia gloriae*, however, thinks that God's qualities can be recognized in a direct, unbroken way.

That Luther's God revealed in Christ is simultaneously a hidden God, that God, according to Luther, conceals his revelation of love in the appearance of the opposite—this Hamann has perceived to be the heart of Luther's faith. Lutheranism for him is faith in the eternal God's entry into time, an entry that is both an abasement of God and therefore an offense to the one who thinks naturally.\(^5\)

One need not confine oneself to this citation in order to receive this impression of Hamann's Lutherbild. His writings are replete with it, for it was precisely this provocative Luther—the one who revelled in paradoxes and absurdities—who helped early on to shape Hamann's theological attitudes vis-à-vis those of the age. Dissatisfied with its Zeitgeist but without a compass by which to chart a new course, Hamann had withdrawn from his studies at the university and set out from his native Königsberg in the employ of his friend and prospective brother-in-law, Berens, on a business venture to London. The venture ended in failure and Hamann experienced some of the darkest days of his life at this time, until, through intensive reading of the Bible, he underwent a conversion experience. While still in London (1758-59) Hamann wrote his *Biblische Betrachtungen* in which he contemplates the paradox that, when God reveals himself, he does so in the form of a servant.\(^6\) Upon his

---

\(^5\)Ibid., 45-46.

\(^6\)See Fritz Blanke, "J. G. Hamann als Theologe," in *Hamann-Studien*, Studien zur Dogmengeschichte und systematischen Theologie, vol. 10 (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1956), 31. Blanke writes that this *Knechtgestalt* of revelation is one of Hamann's central ideas. The lowliness of God in Christ illustrates (albeit uniquely) the general principle that God always abases himself when he reveals himself (p. 30). This is already true of God's authorial activity in creation (which is the language of God). And it is true of his activity in Scripture. The *Biblische Betrachtungen* begin as follows: "Gott offenbart sich, der Schöpfer der Welt ein Schriftsteller—Was für ein Schicksal werden seine Bücher erfahren müssen?" (N 1, 9). On Blanke's summary, Hamann describes that fate as follows: "Andere Schriftsteller mussten das Buch, es gehört, eben, weil es ein Buch ist, in die Hände von Kunstleuten und Kritikern, sie mussten es besonders scharf und gespannt, weil ja Gott der Verfasser sein soll. Und was ist ihr Urteil? Sie lächeln, spotten, tadeln. Dieses Buch soll das höchste Wesen geschrieben haben? Wäre es so, dann hätte sich das höchste Wesen philosophischer ausdrücken, es hätte auf die Kunstregeln und den Zeitgeschmack Rücksicht nehmen müssen und seine Offenbarung vor allem nicht an das Volk der
return to Königsberg in 1759, Hamann found his father's collection of Luther's works and
began to read them assiduously. It was an avocation that was to continue throughout his life,
though the reading was to be concentrated about two periods in particular: 1759-60 (the
outset of the first period of Hamann's authorship, in which he unleashed his campaign
against the Enlightenment) and again in 1780 (the beginning of his third period of activity).7
Blanke observes that what Hamann found in Luther at the time of his initial encounter
"seemed to have issued from his own heart." Hamann's letters were "full of effusions of
astonishment over this and over the fact that this Luther was so little known."8 Hence-
forward Luther became Hamann's mentor in confronting the "new scholasticism and new
papacy" of the day--the speculative rationalism and moralism that presumed to adjudicate
dummern Juden binden dürfen. So rufen sie aus. Hamann aber antwortet: Die Schriftsteller und Philosophen
würden auch in jeder andern Offenbarungsweise Gottes Fehler gefunden haben. Sie haben ja überhaupt keine
Offenbarung nötig. Sie sind die Gesunden, die des Arztes nicht bedürfen" (Blanke, "J. G. Hamann als
Theologe," 31). Of the reason why God has chosen to conceal himself in such lowliness, Hamann can reply
that it simply pleased him to do so and that his motive must remain inscrutable to us (NI, 10). But he can also
give a twofold reason for God's paradoxical deportment: God has hidden his loftiness in lowly servant-form
in order to make himself repugnant to the wise and proud with whom he will have no truck (NI, 158). Yet at
the same time he seeks to break their arrogance and thereby establish the condition whereby his self-revelation
can be received (NI, 100): "Er hat sich selbst gedemütigt und will, dass wir uns unter die Tatsache beugen
lernen, dass das Göttliche auf Erden in Niedrigkeit einhergeht. Als Gebeugten, d. h. Glaubigen, kann er uns
seine Gnade offenbaren" (Blanke, "J. G. Hamann als Theologe," 33; cf. Erwin Metzke, J. G. Hamanns Stellung
[Halle (Saale): Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1934], 153-54). The similarity to Luther's description of the divine
economy is of course striking, despite the fact that at the time of the writing of the Betrachtungen Hamann has
not yet encountered Luther.

8Ibid., 59. In a letter from this period Hamann writes: "Was für eine Schande für unsere Zeiten, dass der
Geist dieses Mannes, der unsere Kirche gegründet, so unter der Asche liegt. Was für eine Gewalt in der
Beredsamkeit und Auslegung--was für ein Geist der Auslegung--was für ein Prophet! Wie gut wird Ihnen (an
G. E. Lindner gerichtet) der alten Wein schmacken und wie sollten wir uns unreiner Geschmacks
schämen. Was sind Montaigne und Baco, diese zwei Abgötter des witzigen Frankreichs und tiefen
Englands gegen ihn!" Blanke comments that at the time of this letter Hamann had been reading nothing but
Luther for weeks on end while caring for his sick father. When asked by his friends what he was doing to pass
the time, his response was: "Ich lutherisire." It is illuminating to note that the young Kierkegaard has read these
very same letters from 1759-60 (the Roth edition, vol. 1), citing them frequently and with enthusiasm in his
early journals and later in the published works. The inference lies close at hand that by his exhaustive reading
of Hamann he, too, has been led to "lutherisiren!"
biblical revelation by its own infallible counsels. In the Enlightenment's autonomy of reason Hamann saw a new version of the old theologia gloriae. Not surprisingly, in combating it he fixed upon the paradoxes of the theologia crucis which he himself had discovered in London and in which he had subsequently been confirmed by Luther. It was precisely this aspect of Luther's theology—the one that had been so objectionable to "rationalists" such as Erasmus—that especially pleased Hamann, and in his turn, Kierkegaard.

The question arises whether Kierkegaard met with this general theological approach during his initial encounter with Hamann, which occurred while he was yet a student. We know from his journals that his reading of Hamann was by and large concentrated in two

---

9 Naturally the Aufklärer thought the charge preposterous, for they perceived themselves to be Luther's successors against any and every form of "popery" that would defraud individuals of autonomy. Nevertheless, Hamann regarded the labels, "crypto-catholicism," "crypto-jesuitism" as completely applicable to them: "Da nun die Aufklärung die Religion mit Moral gleichsetzte, also die guten Werke zur Grundlage der Einigung mit Gott machte und zugleich glaubte, wir dürften, statt von der Offenbarung zu leben, Gott mit der Vernunft erdenken, so traf nach Hamann auf sie die Definition des Katholizismus zu. Dazu kam das Unfehlbarkeitsbewusstsein der Aufklärung, ihre hierarchische Herrschafts- und ihre Bibelfeindschaft, alles Züge, die sie in des Magus Urteil mit dem Papsttum gemeinsam hatte. Die Aufklärung ist ihm 'der wahrhaftige Papst' und als solcher antilutherisch, ob sie es will oder nicht. Gerade weil die Aufklärer als die am meisten antikatholische Gruppe ihrer Zeit erscheinen, wird der Magus nicht müde, ihnen selbst verkappten Katholizismus und damit Abfall von Luther vorzuwerfen und ihnen die Vorwürfe, die sie dem Katholizismus machten, mit ebensolchem Rechte zurückzugeben. Die Berufung der Rationalisten auf die Reformation bezeichnet er als 'Reformationsschwindel'. Man hat den Eindruck, dass für Hamann das Aufklärungspapsttum ein weit gefährlicherer Feind des Luthertums als das wirkliche Papsttum ist. Der wirkliche Papst ist von aller Augen, aber das Papsttum des Rationalismus ist versteckt und nicht sofort als solches zu erkennen. Darum wendet der Magus die ganze Kraft daran, dem Kryptokatholizismus der Aufklärung die Maske herunterzureissen" (ibid., 48-49).

10 This identification was founded upon Hamann's conviction that the assumption of reason's health is bogus—it has been corrupted by sin and its absolutization is but an indication that this is so. Metzke writes: "Die 'Gesundheit der Vernunft' ist das 'τρόπον της φυσικής της θητείας' (R IV 441). Die 'gesunde Vernunft' ist eine 'Einstellung' (R I 438), eine 'Chimäre' (R II 421), ein 'Götze' (R IV 324, vgl. auch R II 181ff., 347ff., 367ff.)—ebenso wie der 'gute Geschmack' und die 'schöne Natur' (R II 421, 492). Die Gesundheit der Vernunft ist der wohlfeilste, eigenmächtigste und unverschämteste Selbstraum, durch den alles zum voraus gesetzt wird, was eben zu beweisen war! (R IV 324, vgl. 323). Man baut auf den 'unmöglichsten und übertriebensten Postulaten' auf (R IV 124). Man hat einfach die 'gesunde Vernunft' 'usupiert' und ein 'Vorurteil' in ein 'Gesetz' verwandelt (R VI 43), wobei es letztlich das Ich ist, das man 'durch Abstraktion zur allgemeinen Vernunft vergöttert' hat (R IV 306), wie man auch jeweils den eigenen Geschmack, den Geschmack einer bestimmten Zeit, zu dem Geschmack erhoben hat (R IV 492). Durch diese Grundvoraussetzung aber und ihre Verabsolutierung wird der Vernunftdogmatismus sanktioniert und 'alle freie Untersuchung der Wahrheit gewalttätiger als durch die Unfehlbarkeit der römisch-katholischen Kirche ausgeschlossen' (RIV 324)" (Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 159-60). In contrast to the Enlightenment's optimism concerning man, one observes in Hamann the most profound pessimism: "Nichts als Nachlässigkeit, Untreue und Betrug ist der sich selbst gelassene Mensch bei den besten Naturgaben und Neigungen!" (R I 518).
periods, one early (1836-39), and one late (1850).\textsuperscript{11} Ironically, it is possible that the Magus was first brought to the young Kierkegaard's attention by none other than Hegel, who in 1828 had written an article reviewing the first volumes of the Roth edition of Hamann's \textit{Schriften}. The article was subsequently reprinted in Hegel's collected works in 1835.\textsuperscript{12} Hamann is first mentioned in a journal entry dated September 10, 1836 (Pap I A 100 [JP 2:1539]). The interesting thing about this entry is that it is added as an afterthought to a much earlier entry, Pap I A 95 (JP 1:416), dated October 19, 1835. The earlier entry had been written at the time of the young Kierkegaard's abandonment of faith. To persons on the outside of Christianity (among whom he, at that time, numbered himself) faith gives every appearance of being an idée fixe such as Don Quixote's, in which Christians nourish themselves until they at last become immune to every doubt, every counterproof. Conversely Pap I A 99 (JP 3:3247), written at about the same time, describes how the world appears to the Christian: it is trapped in sin so that it cannot regard the gospel as other than stupid and offensive. In short, a complete lack of understanding obtains between the Christian and the world. If this gulf between faith and reason is to be spanned it can only occur by a desperate leap, writes Kierkegaard. The addition that he makes to these entries in 1836 ratifies this view, only \textbf{now} he regards such mutual unintelligibility as an evidence of Christianity's transcendence and recreative power. It is in this context that Hamann is adduced:

\begin{quote}
Regarding a Christian's view of paganism, cf. Hamann, vol. 1, pp. 406, 418 and 419, especially p. 419: "Nein--wenn Gott selbst mit ihm redete, so ist er genöthigt das Machtwort zum voraus zu senden und es in Erfüllung gehen zu lassen--Wache auf, der Du schläfst." From p. 406 one observes the complete misunderstanding that exists between a Christian and a non-Christian inasmuch as Hamann responds to one of Hume's objections "Yes, that is precisely how the matter stands."\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11}Pap I and II contain many references to Hamann, and in Pap IX B 33,3 (from 1848) Kierkegaard speaks of "the time of my Hamann reading," referring to a journal entry (Pap II A 420) from 1839.


\textsuperscript{13}Pap I A 100 (JP 2:1539), translation mine. The contexts for the two Hamann citations that occur in this entry are as follows: In the first, Hamann states that the Christian is to the natural man as the waking person is to the somnambulist. "A dreamer may have images more vivid than a man who is awake, may see more, hear and think more than he, may be conscious of himself, dream with more orderliness than a waking man thinks, may be the creator of new objects, of great events. Everything is true for him, and yet everything is
Hamann's conception of faith as contrarational and a miracle has reinforced SK's prior conviction of a gulf between Christianity's and paganism's world-views. The difference is that now he regards faith's possibility as deriving, not from the power of an illusion, but from God.

From this first entry pertaining to Hamann we may infer that he was of inestimable importance in helping lead SK back to Christianity. Walter Lowrie writes: "Undoubtedly the factor which most profoundly influenced this change of mind was Hamann. I am inclined to say that he is the only author by whom Søren Kierkegaard was profoundly influenced." Ronald Gregor Smith writes that "between Johann Georg Hamann (1730-88) and Søren
Kierkegaard (1813-55) there was an extraordinary connection. Hamann indeed was the figure who more than any other of modern times influenced Kierkegaard both in the form and content of his authorship and also, at a deeper level, in his very existence.\textsuperscript{16} The influence on the form of SK's authorship is evident. In all likelihood it was from Hamann that Kierkegaard learned of the concept and method of "indirect communication."\textsuperscript{17} Hamann published none of his writings under his own name, and hence was a more consistent practitioner of the maieutic method than was Kierkegaard.\textsuperscript{18} Like Kierkegaard, his style is witty, ironic, humorous; like him he is desirous to seem a more contemptible person than he really is in order not to fall prey to his own ironical assaults upon the moralism of his opponents.\textsuperscript{19} In this he has no doubt been instructed by Socrates, for whom he has as ardent a fervor as does Kierkegaard.\textsuperscript{20} Yet Socrates is more than a model of maieutic art and irony, for these formal elements of his deportment are but ancillary features of his chief


\textsuperscript{17}Steffen Steffensen ("Kierkegaard und Hamann," 410) observes that Hamann's employment of "indirect communication" in the Socratic Memorabilia provided a pattern for Kierkegaard's own. Though ostensibly directed at a wider audience, the work was in fact intended for Hamann's friends, Berens and Kant, whom he was seeking to convert from rationalism to faith. Since conversion was his aim, Hamann knew that his role could not be one of direct persuasion. Placing himself, instead, at the deity's disposal as a "midwife," he seeks only to give place to God to do his work. In passing, we note that the idea of respecting the freedom of other persons, and using only such means as are consistent with their freedom to induce them to embrace the truth, is strongly held by Fichte and may likewise have contributed to SK's conviction about indirect communication--see Fichtes Werke, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, 11 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 2:311 (The Vocation of Man, trans. William Smith [La Salle, IL.: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1955], 166-67).

\textsuperscript{18}Smith, "Hamann and Kierkegaard," 63-64.

\textsuperscript{19}Metzke (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 226-27) quotes the following passages: "Eine strenge Moral kommt mir schnöder und schaler vor als der mutwilligste Spott und Hohn. Das Gute tief herein, das Böse heraustreiben--schlechter scheinen, als man wirklich ist, besser wirklich sein, als man scheint; dies halte ich für Pflicht und Kunst" (R VI 339). And: "Soll ich sagen: Ihr Heuchler! Das kann Gott tun durch sein Wort und seinen Geist, ich nicht, ich bin selber einer."

\textsuperscript{20}In fact, Hamann's work in praise of Socrates, Socratic Memorabilia, almost certainly inspired Kierkegaard's own interest in the Greek philosopher, the first fruit of which--but by no means the last--was SK's doctoral dissertation, The Concept of Irony. Of the connection between Hamann's Socrates and Kierkegaard's, Erwin Metzke writes: "Daß Hamanns Sokratesauffassung christlich ist, ist offenbar. . . . Wie Hamann hat auch Kierkegaard seine geistige Stellung an Sokrates zu bestimmen gesucht,--nicht ohne tiefe innere Sach-zusammenhänge mit Hamann" (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 158 n. 1).
aim, which is self-knowledge. Here, too, a remarkable convergence exists between Socrates, the Magus, and Kierkegaard. Directly traceable to Hamann’s penchant for self-knowledge that is concrete, personal, and divinely conferred is the anti-systematic character of his writings. For Hamann a system is "already in itself an obstacle to the truth." Hence he has

21 All three are "existential" thinkers in the sense that they have self-knowledge as their aim—in § 1 of Brocken Hamann writes that "alle unsere Erkenntniskräfte die Selbsterkenntnis zum Gegenstand haben" (R I 131). Further, all three are impenetrable enigmas to themselves. Hamann agonizes over this repeatedly: "Wie ist es möglich gewesen, daß man mich hat für einen klugen, geschweige brauchbaren Menschen halten können, wo es mir niemals möglich gewesen, mich, was ich bin und sein kann, zu entdecken" (R I 184; for other texts see Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 140-43 and 215-17.) One is reminded of SK's remark about Socrates: viz., that though eulogized "as the person who knew man best—he nevertheless admitted that . . . he still was not quite clear about himself, whether he . . . was a more curious monster than Typhon or a friendlier and simpler being, by nature sharing something of the divine" (SV IV 204 [Fragments, 37]). For Hamann and Hamann's Socrates, however, as for Kierkegaard and Luther, self-knowledge can only occur via divine revelation. "Die Erkenntnis unser selbst," Hamann writes, "ist nicht in unserer Macht" (R I 133). "Alles ist Labyrinth, alles Unordnung, wenn wir selbst sehen wollen" (R I 80). Yes, the more deeply reason probes our nature, "desto größer ist das Labyrinth, in das sie sich verliert" (R I 103). Knowledge of ourselves is to be had only through Christ and the Scriptures (see Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 143-44). Such self-knowledge, the seat of which is the conscience, does not occur except by a "Höllenfahrt" (R II 198): "Wenn wir zur Selbsterkenntnis gelangen, wenn wir von ungefähr uns selbst in unserer wahren Gestalt zu Gesicht bekommen, wie wünschen, wie fühlen, wie ängstigen wir uns" (R I 82; see Metzke's discussion, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 216).

From the foregoing it is apparent that Hamann, like Kierkegaard, is strongly Lutheran in his thinking. And his philosophy, like Kierkegaard's, is existentialist inasmuch as his concern is with "the meaning of his own existence" and with a personal approach to theology that is grounded upon an "I-Thou relationship," a relationship that takes place between God and "the concrete person," not between God and "humanity" in general (Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 126 and 129). For Hamann homo sum constitutes "das Fundament aller übrigen Verhältnisse" (R VII 145), and by it he means "nicht irgendeine Idee 'Mensch', sondern sehr konkret mich in meiner 'kleinen Welt, in der ich lebe' (R V 192, G 109)” (Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 215).
no choice but to express himself in "fragments," even entitling one of his works, *Brocken*. Kierkegaard follows suit in order to demonstrate his own antipathy to "the System," in the process conferring lavish praise upon the Magus.\(^{23}\)

As is evident from the citations already given, Hamann's influence upon the content of Kierkegaard's authorship would seem to be as great as his influence upon its form. His attack upon rules and systems of thought is at bottom an attack upon reason that, by its hubris, has cut itself off from divine revelation and now seeks to take heaven by storm. If we look at those Hamann-texts that Kierkegaard specifically cites, it is clear that his attack upon reason and insistence upon faith in a paradoxical revelation are influenced by Hamann, though the degree of influence is not always easy to determine.\(^{24}\)

course shares Hamann's dismay over modern man's insurrection against divine authority.

\(^{23}\)SV VII 210-11 (*Postscript*, 250). SK's polemic against Hegel's system naturally goes deeper than mere antipathy. It, too, rests upon manifestly epistemological grounds. In the *Fragments* the ultimate truth about God and man is ascertainable by personal revelation alone. In the *Postscript* SK is at pains to demonstrate that reality in general cannot be comprehended in thought. In particular its temporal character makes it elusive and renders abstract knowledge approximative at best. At its deepest core existence is a mystery that announces itself to reason via paradox. All of these themes are to be found, in their own way, in Hamann. Of the mysterious and paradoxical character of reality, Metzke writes: "Das wahre Sein liegt überhaupt im Verborgenen. . . . Das Geheimnis ist die der ratio nicht verfügbare Offenbarung des wahren, des göttlichen Seins (R II 158, 276; vgl. R I 86, 100). Geheimnis und Gott gehören zusammen (R IV 326). Das Geheimnis ist die Sprache der Transzendenz. Es ist 'Gottes Finger' (R VI 7), die offenbare Gegenwart des Transzendenten selbst. Eine spezifische Form, in der das Geheimnis dem Denken in Denken selbst aufrichtig entgegengesetzt ist der Widerspruch. Zugleich aber bezeichnet er einen bestimmten und eigenen Charakter der Wirklichkeit selbst" (*Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie*, 169-70). Of the temporal quality that helps render reality impervious to reason, Metzke writes: "Zu einer weiteren zentralen Erschütterung der Herrschaft der ratio führt Hamanns Aufdeckung des Zeitlichkeitscharakters der Wirklichkeit. Für die rationalistische Philosophie ist das Sein in seinem Wesen und seinen Prinzipien zeitlos. An diese Zeitlosigkeit ist zugleich die Unbeschränktheit und Absolutheit der Herrschaftsansprüche der ratio geknüpft. . . . An diesem Punkt--Überspringen der Zeitlichkeit--muß daher die Frage nach dem Verfügungsrecht der ratio . . . neu aufbrechen, sobald die wesenhafte Zeitlichkeit der Wirklichkeit wieder entdeckt wird. Das eben geschieht durch Hamann" (p. 174). In sum: "Es sind vor allem drei Grundtatsachen, auf die Hamann immer wieder zurückkommt: 1. der Geheimnisscharakter der Wirklichkeit, 2. der Widerspruchscharakter der Wirklichkeit, 3. der Zeitlichkeitscharakter--., ein Jedes nicht als negative Irrationalität verstanden, sondern als positiver Seinscharakter" (p. 167).

\(^{24}\)Steffensen has enumerated most of the texts to which SK had demonstrable exposure ("Kierkegaard und Hamann," 399-400). Kierkegaard seems to have been drawn to the letters, citing, for example, the Hamann- Herder correspondence particularly often. His predilection for the letters makes it difficult to determine the precise scope of Hamann's influence, for Kierkegaard has obviously not commented upon each and every letter that he read. Moreover he has cited relatively few of Hamann's writings. These include the *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* (see SV IV 276 and SV VII 487, both of which cite R II 12), *Gedanken über meinen Lebenslauf*, which contains Hamann's account of his conversion (see Pap I A 233 which cites R I 172), *Fünf*
The Socratic Memorabilia, however, has doubtless played a considerable role in Kierkegaard's view of reason, faith and revelation. That work proceeds from the assumption that God has not left himself without a witness in paganism. Socrates is for Hamann, as for Kierkegaard, a prophetic precursor whose teachings point to those of Christ, even if they can only be truly grasped in the light of Christ. The significance of Socrates lay in the fact that he recognized and proclaimed the limits of human wisdom, indeed, the impotence of all human knowing, thereby preparing the way for Jesus. . . . What Socrates taught is also an essential part of Jesus' message, except that Jesus deepened the Socratic preaching of ignorance still more and completed it with the preaching of faith. Therefore insofar as he freed the people from the deification of knowledge, Socrates led them to a truth that he himself did not know, a truth that lay in concealment, a secret wisdom, the service of an unknown God.

Hirtenbriefe das Schuldrama betreffend (see Pap II A 12, p. 15 which cites R II 412ff., Pap II A 12, p. 16 which cites R II 424ff., Pap II A 102 which cites R II 434, and SV VI 131 which cites R II 424ff.), Leser und Kunstichter (see SV I 218 which cites R II 397), and either Wolken or Des Ritters von Rosencreuz letzte Willensmenung (see Pap III B 20, which is a citation either of R II 95 or R IV 23). In addition to the Hamann-citations mentioned, the editors of the Papier find one other possible allusion--Pap II A 259 seems to refer to the opening words of Kreuzzüge des Philologen (R V 105). In addition to these texts, Steffensen contends that it can be rendered probable that Kierkegaard read Konxomplex since he cites the notes to this writing. Lars Bejerholm believes, on the basis of the parallels that he sees between The Concept of Anxiety and Aesthetica in nuce, that SK has read the latter and been influenced by it as regards language's divine origins ("Meddelelsens dialektik". Studier i Søren Kierkegaards teorier om språk, kommunikasjon och pseudonymitet [Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962], 43). One can make the same argument about Brocken, owing to the parallels that it affords to positions that SK has taken vis-à-vis self-knowledge and self-love. Walter Leibrecht writes that "Søren Kierkegaard . . . redet von Hamann als seinem 'einzigen Lehrer'. Wie Hegel studierte er die Werke Hamanns sorgfältig, und es war während der Lektüre von Hamanns Biblische Betrachtungen, daß Kierkegaard seine 'große Wende' erlebte" (Gott und Mensch bei Johann Georg Hamann [Gütersloh: Carl Bertelsmann Verlag, 1958], 12). I have not been able to locate the source for Leibrecht's claims, and consequently cannot attest to their veracity, though it would seem likely that SK did read Biblische Betrachtungen since it occurs early in vol. 1 of the Roth edition. It seems to me that one cannot foreclose the possibility that SK read Hamann exhaustively. Commenting in Pap VI A 6 (JP 2:1557) on a particular statement of Hamann's, SK remarks: it "occurs twice in the third and in the fifth volumes. I have marked them in my copy." The further fact that he has adopted a great many of Hamann's favorite citations and expressions as his own also testifies to his intimacy with the Magus (see Wilhelm Rodemann, Hamann und Kierkegaard [Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1922], 34).


26 Ibid., 34. We might note in passing that Socrates' likeness to Christ extends to the prophet's fate that he suffered as well. Hamann is of the opinion that God's messengers will be persecuted: "Wie man den Baum an den Früchten erkennt, so weiß ich, daß ich ein Prophet bin, aus dem Schicksal, das ich mit allen Zeugen teile, gelästert, verfolgt und verachtet zu werden" (R I 441). Metzke writes that "das eben gehört zum Wesen des Publikums, des 'Man' einer Zeit, daß es das, was schlechthin anders ist als es selbst, nicht hören und verstehen
How does Hamann conceive this relationship between ignorance and faith? In the Socratic Memorabilia he contends that we can only regain a true relationship to reality through a complete renunciation of reason’s claims to knowing. In place of reason Hamann establishes faith as our point of contact with reality, and an immediate one at that. Owing to its immediacy, faith’s certainty is unsurpassed; it has no need of reasons, since it does not have its basis in reason.  

While Hamann stresses Socrates’ ignorance in order to illustrate that kann und will, daß es den, der die 'Wahrheit, die im Verborgenen liegt', verkündet, ablehnen muß. Kampf und Martyrium, das ist deshalb notwendig das 'Schicksal des aus der Welt der Wahrheit Gesandten (R I 441)" (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie 157-58). From this derives Hamann’s contempt for "the public." Playing upon the Bible’s designation of John the Baptist as "a voice crying out in the wilderness," he speaks of "eine Stille und eine Stimme; die Stimme eines Predigers, dem das Publikum eine Wüste ist, in der mehr Herden als Menschen wohnen. Wer Ohren hat zu hören, der höre" (R II 100). Metzke observes: "bei Hamann finden wir die Grundmotive für Kierkegaards Kampf wider die Anschnauungen der Zeit (ebenso wie Hamann rennt er ja an gegen das 'Publikum', die 'Menge', das 'Man" (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 158 n. 1).

Elsewhere in describing the immediate certainty that faith confers, Hamann can quote Luther directly: Faith is a "lebendig, geschäftig, tätig, mächtig Ding . . . ganz anderes, das weit unmittelbarer, weit inniger, weit dunkler und weit gewisser als Regeln uns führen und erleuchten muß" (R II 430). Metzke writes that "in der einfachsten Wahrnehmung steckt ein Glauben. 'Das Dasein der kleinsten Ursache beruht auf unmittelbarem Eindruck, nicht auf Schlüssen' (R VII 419) . . . . Glaube und Wirklichkeit gehören in unmittelbarer Korrelation zusammen. Dieser ursprüngliche natürliche 'Zusammenhang' 'zwischen Sein und Glauben' fehlt nur dann, 'wenn ich das Band der Natur entzweigeschnitten habe' (G 577). Deshalb ist der 'Unglaube' das 'erste Element unserer verkehrten Denkungsart' (G 370)" (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 192-93). Faith, for Hamann, is a gui generis element that is as necessary to cognition as are perception and inference. One perceives an evident parallel to Hume, who finds it necessary to establish belief as that upon which our knowledge of causation rests. Indeed, Hamann writes: "Ich habe ihn [Hume] studiert, ehe ich noch die Sokratischen Denkwürdigkeiten schrieb, und meinen Glauben eben derselben Quelle zu verdanken" (G 492f., 506). One also perceives a parallel to Hamann’s younger contemporary, F. H. Jacobi (1743-1819). Jacobi’s "philosophy of faith" likewise grounds knowledge upon "belief," by which is understood an immediate conviction of the sensory and supersensory things that are revealed in perception. Because "belief" delivers to us the real objects whose interrelationships "intellect" subsequently discerns, it is prior to, and in no need of, rational demonstration (for more on Jacobi’s epistemology the reader is referred to B. A. Gerrish, "Faith and Existence in the Philosophy of F. H. Jacobi" in Witness and Existence: Essays in Honor of Schubert M. Ogden, ed. Philip E. Devenish and George L. Goodwin [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989], 106-39). For his part Kierkegaard acknowledges the primacy of belief over knowledge: it is upon belief that our knowledge that a thing has come into existence rests (Fragment’s "Interlude"). In this he is probably indebted in some measure to all of the figures above, and in addition, to Johann Gottlieb Fichte. In Book III (entitled "Belief") of The Vocation of Man Fichte rejects skepticism, grounding knowing upon belief, declaring it to be the "organ" by which we apprehend reality (Fichte’s Werke, 2:253 [The Vocation of Man, 99]). Related epistemological themes that occur in Fichte and recur in Kierkegaard include: the endlessness of reflection and the paralysis of action that it engenders (2:252-
knowing does not have its basis in reason but that, on the contrary, reason must be gotten out of the way in order that real knowing can occur, he also stresses Socrates' daimon in order to illustrate that knowledge of "the truth that lies in concealment" can only be had via divine revelation. This latter tenet renders the conclusion inescapable that the general ontological and epistemological position that Hamann assigns to faith in the Socratic Memorabilia ultimately rests upon theological premises (specifically theologia crucis ones) and Metzke is quick to point this out:

53, [98-99]); Ernst and Interesse as basic to life, keeping us captive to our first belief (not rational grounds!); systems of thought as extinguishing these (2:253, 2:255 [99, 102]); a resolution of the will (faith) as that which checks reflection, allowing us to admit as knowledge the testimony of our first belief (2:253-54 [99-100]). While we defer in-depth discussion of SK's relation to Fichte until chapter eight, it lies beyond doubt that he has been significantly influenced by the latter—not only in these matters, but in a great many others.

Metzke quotes the following passages that illustrate both chief points: "Der Gegensatz, auf den es ankommt und der den Glauben als unmittelbares und fundamentales Seinsverhältnis exponiert, ist scharf herausgesetzt. Gerade im Zerbrechen der ratio, im Scheitern aller Ansprüche des Menschen, im Vergehen der 'natürlichen Weisheit', im Durchbruch durch alles, was selbstverständlich und natürlich ist, wird der Boden gewonnen für das neue Seinsverhältnis und Wirklichkeitsverständnis, das radikal anders, 'gleichgültig gegen das, was man Wahrheit hieß', ist (R II 40) und das deshalb der in sich befangenen ratio immer verschlossen und unverständlich oder doch mindestens fremd und 'sonderbar' bleiben muß: 'Wie aber das Korn aller unserer natürlichen Weisheit verwesen, in Unwissenheit vergehen muß, und wie aus dem Tode, aus diesem Nichts, das Leben und Wesen einer höheren Erkenntnis neugeschaffen hervorkeime; so weit reicht die Nase eines Sophisten nieht' (R II 38). Aus der Tiefe des 'Nichts' entspringend, d. h. unableitbar, ist das neue Verhältnis zur Wirklichkeit da. Und in ihm bricht die Wirklichkeit in einer Tiefe auf, die nicht mehr bedingt ist. In dieser Tiefe wurzelt das 'Genie', das alle Bedingtheiten, 'Gesetze', 'Kunstregeln' zerbrechen muß (R II 38). Aus dieser Tiefe sprach des Sokrates 'Genius' (R II 38), sein 'Damon' (R II 39), 'auf dessen Wissenschaft er sich verlassen konnte, den er liebte und fürchtete als seinen Gott, an dessen Frieden ihm mehr gelegen war als an aller Vernunft der Ägypter und Griechen, dessen Stimme er glaubte, und durch dessen Wind . . . der leer Verstand eines Sokrates so gut, als der Schoß einer reinen Jungfrau fruchtbar werden kann' (R II 38). Hier ist die 'Wahrheit, die im Verborgenen liegt' (R II 42)-----wir begegnen dem 'θεoς' (R II 95)" (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 191-92).

A number of theologia crucis ideas are touched upon here: fallen reason's blindness to God's presence about it (witness Hamann's comment in the Introduction: "Doch vielleicht ist die ganze Historie . . . gleich der Natur ein versiegelte Buch, ein verdecktes Zeugnis, ein Rätsel, das sich nicht auflösen läßt, ohne mit einem anderen Kalbe, als unserer Vernunft zu pflügen" [N II, 65]), faith's facility in grasping "the truth that lies in concealment," the notion that such truth is divinely revealed, but only after the person has died to his understanding—all of these are explicitly present. In addition Metzke notes (p. 192, n. 1) that Hamann's insistence upon the slaying of "natural wisdom" and breaking through what is self-evident helps to explain the converse proposition that he makes elsewhere—viz., that certainty is the enemy of faith—i.e., yet another theologia crucis tenet ("Gewißheit hebt den Glauben auf"—R V 277, similarly R I 425). Certainly Kierkegaard has learned this, too, from Hamann. In 1849 he writes: "Hamann rightly declares: Just as 'law' abrogates 'grace,' so does 'to comprehend' abrogate 'to have faith.' It is, in fact, my thesis. But in Hamann it is merely an aphorism; whereas I have fought it through or have fought it out of a whole given philosophy and culture into the thesis: to comprehend that faith cannot be comprehended or (the more ethical and God-fearing side) to comprehend that faith must not be comprehended" (Pap X2 A 225 [JP 2:1559]).
Faith can only be this power . . . because for Hamann it is at the same time "faith in God" (R I 226, 219) in which God himself acts . . . , which God himself "effects and gives" (R I 226, 219). This faith, which is obedience to God (cf. G 264 . . . ), which seeks "the honor that is God's alone" (R II 466), which annuls all "self-righteousness" and which places the person unconditionally under God (R I 394, 483), is the "victory that has overcome the world" (R VII 460, . . . ). This, however, is the "faith" of Paul, the "faith" of Luther--just as even already in the Socratic Memorabilia Christian-Pauline convictions form the core of . . . the notions concerning "ignorance" that provide the foundation for "faith" (R II 37, 40, 50, among others).29

We have observed that Hamann's admiration of Hume owes to the epistemological primacy that the latter assigns to faith: "Hume is ever my man for he at least ennobles the

---

29Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 193). Metzke's remarks concerning the theological basis of Hamann's faith concept have a further import: they indicate that Hamann's denial of epistemological significance to reason is likewise theologically motivated. With Luther, Hamann can contend that "der Satan bemächtigte sich nicht nur unserer sinnlichen Werkzeuge und Kräfte, sondern auch der Vernunft selbst" (R I 82). The effect of sin has been the corruption of human nature at its root ("das Gift der Sünde [ist] im Blut und Herzen"--R I 165) and reason is unable "die Bosheit unseres Herzens gut zu machen" (R I 66). None of our drives or inclinations have remained untouched: "Wieviel Schlacken sind in den besten unserer natürlichen und künstlichen Triebe! Wie verderben muß der Boden sein, der die beste Weizensaat zu Trespe macht und verwandelt! Wie leicht ist es der Natur selbst auszuzeichnen!" (R I 183). Least of all have our mind and will been spared: "Sind Vernunft und Freiheit nicht die edelsten Gaben der Menschheit, und beide zugleich die Quellen alles moralischen Übels?" (R VII 342). Accordingly, "das Gute hängt nicht von uns ab" (R VI 229) and we are most deluded when we believe ourselves capable of good. Metzke writes: "Gerade in den höchsten Kräften und Gaben des Geistes ist das Böse verborgen: im selbstsicheren und selbstgerechten Vertrauen auf sie ist es wirksam. Gerade in diesem 'Vertrauen auf mich selbst' bestätige ich nur, daß der Mensch 'authentisch leben und sein eigener Herr sein' will (R VII 342), daß er, was immer er auch tut und erstrebt, seinen 'Eigenwillen' (R VII 353), seiner Ichsucht verhaftet bleibt, nicht von ihr loskommt, so daß alles das, was für mich zeugen soll, meine 'redlichen Absichten', meine 'guten Werke', mein 'guter Wille' mir nur zum Gericht werden (vgl. R I 176, 330). Hier liegen die Grundspannungen und Grundnote, die 'Klappen', an denen Hamann 'selbst gescheitert' ist (R I 172)" (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 225).

If the power of sin is so radical, so all-embracing, then a divine ac: of recreation is man's only hope: "Nicht auf eine natürliche Entfaltung, Entwicklung des Menschen darf man sich also verlassen, sondern ein Umbruch, ein Umschaffen des Menschen, wie es Hamann an sich selber erfahren hatte, ist nötig. Das aber vermag nur Gottes Schöpfertat. 'Gott schaffe in uns allen ein neues Herz' (G 57). Denn 'Gott allein' kann 'Neues hervorbringen' (R I 116, R IV 95). Gott allein kann sagen: 'Ich mache alles neu' (G 385). Nicht 'Tugend', 'Handlungen', 'gute Werke', 'Vernunft', sondern eine 'neue Kreatur' und 'Wiedergeburt' sind die Fundamente des sittlichen Lebens (R III 254, R V 47, R VI 19, R VII 58, G 51 und R II 156-59)" (Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 226). "Unsere Würde," writes Hamann, "hängt nach besseren Begriffen nicht von Verstand, Willen, Tätigkeit ab--sondern bleibt das Geschenk einer höheren Wahl--nicht mehr ein angeborenes, sondern erworbenes--auch nicht selbsterworbenes noch selbständiges--sondern schlechthin abhängiges" (R VII 287, R IV 41).
principle of faith and takes it up into his system." 30 The problem with Hume is that he fails to apply his own principle in that sphere where it matters most, viz., "things higher." 31 Yet as Metzke notes, a far greater difference separates the two thinkers, for their conceptions of faith are fundamentally different. For Hume belief is a derived relationship arising from perception and custom, and hence is variable in degree. It is linked to probability—when probability waxes, so too does belief. For Hamann, on the other hand, faith is a primitive relationship, an immediate (God-given) access to reality that transcends reason's poor powers. 32 Probability as adjudicated by reason has nothing to do with faith, but everything to do with subordinating truth to human opinion. "Indeed, a certain improbability belongs essentially to the truth." 33 Contra Hume, faith's ability primitively to grasp the nature of reality has its ground in its humble receptiveness to God's self-revelation. Hence Metzke can assert that

Hamann's "realism" is rooted in the affirmation of reality as given creation, rooted therefore in a faith in God that is totally irrelevant to Hume's purposes, receiving from this the unconditionedness and absoluteness that we seek in vain in Hume—precisely because Hume's belief is simply a psychological-theoretical concept, whereas Hamann's 'faith' is the Christian-Pauline πίστις. 34

---

30 R VI 187. Hamann prizes Hume because of the rigor with which he presses his logic to its conclusion: either immobilizing skepticism or honest admission of one's reliance upon belief notwithstanding its insupportability. "Ein Geist zum niederreil3en, nicht zum bauen, darin besteht der Ruhm eines Hume" (RI 356). Hume falls, according to Hamann, "in das Schwert seiner eigenen Wahrheiten" (RI 405-6).

31 "Der attische Philosoph Hume hat den Glauben notig, wenn er ein Ei essen und ein Glas Wasser trinken soll... wenn er den Glauben zum Essen und Trinken notig hat: wozu verleugnet er sein eigen Prinzipium, wenn er über höhere Dinge als das sinnliche Essen und Trinken urteilt!" (RI 442).

32 Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 195-96.

33 Ibid., 182.

34 Ibid., 197. To what has been said concerning Hamann's subordination of reason to a religious faith that has the improbable, even the absurd, as its object, the caveat must be added that Hamann does not regard knowledge and science as utterly without purport: "Die Wissenschaft ist vielmehr eine 'edle Gabe Gottes' (RI II 221, vgl. RI I 127). 'Die Zeugnisse der menschlichen Kunst, Wissenschaft und Geschichte dienen alle zum Siegel, zum menschlichen Siegel der Offenbarung, und man hat als Christ so wenig Ursache, dieselben zu versäumen und aufzuheben, als Paulus, seinen Überrock in Troas im Stich zu lassen' (RI I 119). Ebenso hat man nun verstanden werden als ein dringender Ruf zur prinzipiellen Selbstbesinnung der Wissenschaft auf ihre Gefahren angesichts bestimmter übertriebener Ansprüche und bestimmter Versäumnisse der Wissenschaft seiner Zeit. Ebenso hat man nun verstanden werden als ein dringender Ruf zur prinzipiellen Selbstbesinnung der Wissenschaft auf ihre Gefahren angesichts bestimmter übertriebener Ansprüche und bestimmter Versäumnisse der Wissenschaft seiner Zeit. Ebenso hat man nun verstanden werden als ein dringender Ruf zur prinzipiellen Selbstbesinnung der Wissenschaft auf ihre Gefahren angesichts bestimmter übertriebener Ansprüche und bestimmter Versäumnisse der Wissenschaft seiner Zeit. Ebenso hat man nun verstanden werden als ein dringender Ruf zur prinzipiellen Selbstbesinnung der Wissenschaft auf ihre Gefahren angesichts bestimmter übertriebener Ansprüche und bestimmter Versäumnisse der Wissenschaft seiner Zeit.
This being the case, Hamann is not at all disconcerted by the improbability that attaches to Christianity's articles of faith. We have already observed the glee with which he greets Hume's recognition of the contrarationality of Christianity and the enthusiastic reception that this receives in the young Kierkegaard (Pap I A 100). In another entry from the time of SK's initial encounter with Hamann to which we have already referred, viz., Pap I A 237 (JP 2:1540), SK writes concerning the Magus's view of reason and faith:

It is a quite interesting parallel that Hamann makes between the law (Moses' law) and reason. He namely goes right at Hume's tenet: "die letzte Frucht aller Weltweisheit ist die Bemerkung der menschlichen Unwissenheit und Schwachheit". . . "Unser Vernunft," Hamann then says, "ist also eben das, was Paulus das Gesetz nennt--und das Gebot der Vernunft ist heilig, gerecht und gut; aber ist sie uns gegeben uns weise zu machen? Eben so wenig als das Gesetz der Juden, sie gerecht zu machen, sondern uns zu überführen von dem Gegenteil, wie unvernünft unsere Vernunft ist, und dass unsere Irrthümer durch sie zunehmen sollen, wie die Sünde durch das Gesetz zunahm."


The first quotation (from a letter of Hamann's) is quite in line with the moral of the Socratic Memorabilia. Though a God-given good, reason is not, of itself, able to make us wise. One must rather speak of the "spiritual" use of fallen reason--viz., to make us aware of the limits of our understanding, thereby pointing the way to the revelation that is received by faith. Reason's ultimate goal, "by its own admission, is that which cannot be declared, cannot be
The second Hamann-text that SK cites (concerning the improbability of faith's articles) finds its way at a later date into Philosophical Fragments (viz., at the conclusion of "The Absolute Paradox," where SK sets forth the themes of God's hiddenness and the absurdity of revelation to reason). So too does Hume's unwitting affirmation (he regarded it an accusation) of Christian faith as "the miracle," as well as yet a third Hamann-text that Kierkegaard has come upon while a student. Now such statements concerning the improbability of Christianity's articles of faith and the poverty of reason in grasping them presuppose an important principle of Hamann's that was previously touched upon under the rubric of the "servant form" of God's revelation--viz., the necessary condescension whereby the transcendent deity reveals himself in the baseness of creation, the human word, and the son of man. Hamann calls this juxtaposition of loftiness and lowliness the "principium coincidentiae oppositorum" and with it we come to the very heart of his ontology and epistemology:

For the dimension of religious reality the "contradiction," the "paradox," (a concept that Hamann, too, knows and uses, and that sheds light upon the inner connection between Luther, Hamann and Kierkegaard) is virtually constitutive. "Precisely herein consisted the mystery of the divine wisdom, in uniting things that canceled each other, that contradicted each other, that seemed to annihilate each other." We stand here before "truths that by reason of their make-up must be a folly and an offense to the natural man" (R IV 331, cf. IV 259), before "symbols of contradiction" (R VI 12) such as the unity of God's "forgiveness" and "judgement" (R I 369), the "transfigu-

---

35 G 7. Metzke (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 187) cites other related passages: "Die Vernunft ist nicht dazu gegeben, dadurch weise zu werden, sondern eure Torheit und Unwissenheit zu erkennen, wie das mosaische Gesetz den Juden" (R I 442); "Die Vernunft ist heilig, recht und gut; durch sie kommt aber nichts als Erkenntnis der überaus sündigen Unwissenheit. . . . Niemand betrüge sich also selbst" (R II 100); "Ich habe es bis zum Ekel und Überdruss wiederholt, daß es den Philosophen wie den Juden geht und beide nicht wissen, weder was Vernunft noch was Gesetz ist, wozu sie gegeben: zur Erkenntnis der Sünde und Unwissenheit, nicht der Gnade und Wahrheit" (G 48).

36 All three occur in SV IV 219 (Fragments, 52). In the third text (R I 497) Hamann asserts that he would rather hear the Word of God from a pharisee against his will than from an angel of light. This text is frequently cited by SK (Pap II A 2 [JP 2:1542], II A 12, p. 16 [JP 1:265], II A 105 [JP 2:1693], III A 49 [JP 2:1722], and Pap V B 6,1 [Fragments supp., 195-96]). Frequently he conflates it with another text that involves Balaam's ass--see Pap II A 12, where the citation runs: "He [Hamann] would rather hear wisdom from Balaam's ass than from the wisest man, rather from a pharisee against his will than from an apostle or angel." The fact that this citation is so frequently mentioned by SK owes, in my view, to the pithiness with which it expresses Hamann's principium coincidentiae oppositorum, a topic to which we now turn.
ration of humanity in deity and deity in humanity" (R IV 330), the communicatio of
divine and human idiomatum" (R IV 23), the "πάντα Θεία and ἐνθρώπινα
πάντα [everything divine and everything human]" (R II 95, also R IV 23) that
signifies paradoxical unity for Hamann, not mystical coalescence! In the revelation
of God the highest and the lowest, the mightiest and the weakest form a "unity," are
immediately one. 37

This paradoxical coincidence of opposites (which is already prefigured in the Delphic
oracle's choice of Socrates as its servant--see R II 26) Hamann can call the "wisdom of the
contradiction" (R II 81)--a wisdom that is "the death and the hell of living worldly wisdom"
(R II 91). While the contradiction can be made to disappear, this happens "not through ratio,
not through the person, but through God alone, and that in so paradoxical a fashion that the
contradiction itself is affirmed as truth (R IV 330, R VI 183, R VII 125f., RN II 30). Further
heightened the 'contradiction' qua reality-principle cannot be." 38 Fritz Blanke describes the
opposition of this principle to (fallen) reason in terms that are strikingly reminiscent of
Luther:

Wherein does the difference between faith and knowledge lie according to Hamann's
view? The answer was already given ... where we said that the peculiarity of faith
is that it sees through the veils of revelation. The natural man sees only the earthly
shells and is vexed by them; the believer, however, sees in them the divine content.
He views both together, the lowly and the exalted, the earthly and the heavenly. For
faith, therefore, opposed things coincide. What to philosophical thinking is perverse,
yes, nonsense and mockery, what to the unbeliever seems exaggerated--this is
meaningful to the believer. The principle of contradiction does not apply for him.
Rather faith's cognition is ruled by the law of the coincidentia oppositorum. 39

Hamann is clear about the fact that it is the revelation of transcendence that
constitutes the contradiction--such self-revelation cannot but entail self-contradiction since

37Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 171-72. On p. 172, n. 1, Metzke lists a wealth of Hamann-
texts that deal specifically with the incarnation's paradoxes.

38Ibid., 173. Of the absolute centrality of the "principium coincidentiae oppositorum" to Hamann's
understanding of reality, Metzke writes: "Dies Prinzip, das er auf Giordano Bruno zurückführt (R VII 414; R
VI 301)--den eigentlichen Ursprung bei Nic. v. Kues kennt Hamann nicht--, hat ihm 'jahrelang im Sinn gelegen'
(R VI 183). In ihm glaubt er das Grundprinzip für das Verständnis der Wirklichkeit--und der Widersprüche in
ihr wie in der Vernunft--zu haben. 'Diese Koinzidenz scheint mir immer der einzige zureichende Grund aller
Widersprüche und der wahre Prozeß ihrer Auflösung und Schlichtung, aller Fehde der gesunden Vernunft und
reinen Unvernunft ein Ende zu machen' (R VI 183)" (p. 173).

it is the manifestation of the transcendent in the familiar. This just is the "servant form" of revelation:

God is absolute transcendence. He is "supra nos" (R VI 58). He is the "hidden," "invisible" one, the "incomprehensible" one, "the great and unknown" "GOD" (R I 99, 502; R II 259, 283; R IV 136, 142, 145, 197; R VI 58; R VII 66; . . . G 56, 659). There is an "infinite misrelationship of man to God" (R VII 59 . . . ). God is the "transcending" and "annihilating of all human concepts" (R I 63, 124; R VIII a 5). Withdrawn from our every power of disposal, indeed "bringing to naught" our every intent to exercise disposal (R VI 30), he is "in the most real sense an individual" that can be understood "by no other measure than that which he himself gives" (R VII 418). Every human measure must be shattered. Even in their ultimate, highest statements "philosophy" and "theology" can only be "τυποθείγματα, σκιαλ and ἀντίτυπα" [signs, shadows and antitypes] (R VI 123).40

Proceeding from God's transcendence and--this transcendence notwithstanding--his self-revelation, Hamann draws the consequences that Luther before him drew, and that Kierkegaard subsequently does:

The way proceeds not from humans to God, but only from God to humans, and to be sure, in such a way that God acts in opposition to human reckoning and expectation. "The will of God occurs when ours is broken" (G 531). The "Spirit of God" communicates itself by "pulling down the heights of our reason" (R I 88). Therefore God's revelation is ever at once veiling and "disguising" (R II 208) and his will ever "secret will" . . . "It is God's honor to conceal a matter (R I 441, R VII 204, G 547; cf. R I 99). It is the "qualification" of revelation to be "contradiction," "offense," "outrage," "foolishness" (cf. R I 55, 85, 87, 99, 138, 218; R II 207, 373, 476; R IV 259, 329, 331; R VI 12, 14; R VII 57; K 87; G 246). God intentionally manifests himself so that he "demeans" himself, so that he chooses "the ridiculous--the driveling--the ignoble" (R II 207), so that he appears in "servant form" (R I 50, 450; R II 207, 296) and so that he unveils himself the most profoundly--and incomprehensibly--as "God on the cross" (R II 302; R III 255; R IV 331; R VI 12, 14).41

This being so, "God alone can here open the 'eyes.'"42 "Only to those who are called does the divine power and divine wisdom become manifest, and this call depends not upon the will of the flesh, nor of a man, nor of blood" (G 246, 514). Metzke writes that it is God who

---

40Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 253.

41Ibid., 254.

42Ibid. Metzke elaborates: "'In solcher Verkleidung die Strahlen himmlischer Herrlichkeit zu erkennen', dazu 'gehören freilich erleuchtete Augen' R II 207f. Solche Augen erblicken 'eine Gottheit, wo gemeine Augen den Stein sehen' R VII 49" (p. 254, n. 6).
creates, destroys, creates anew. . . . 'Rebirth' and 'new creature' become (as once before with Luther) fundamental categories of anthropology and ethics (R III 253f.). 43

In view of the central role played by the coincidentia oppositorum in Hamann's thought, it is imperative to determine whether this principle has impressed itself upon the young Kierkegaard during his initial study of Hamann. It would seem that it has. In Pap II A 78 (dated June 3, 1837) he registers his approval of the "humorous" point of view (humor having to do with the ludicrousness--for the initiate!--of incongruous entities juxtaposed) that Hamann has so rightly discerned in Christianity. SK writes:

The humoristic sense that in general resides in Christianity is expressed in the principal tenet that the truth is hidden in the mystery (ἐν μυστηρίῳ αὐτοκρυφην), where it is not merely taught that the truth is here found in a mystery (an assertion that the world, by and large, is more inclined to hear since there have often enough arisen mysteries while the ones initiated into them then, in turn, immediately regarded the rest of the world in a humoristic light); but that it is even hidden in the mystery, which is precisely the life-view that humorizes to the highest degree over the world's cleverness; generally the truth is revealed in the mystery.

Insofar as Christianity does not separate out the Romantic from itself, however much Christian cognition may increase, still, it will continually always remember its origins and therefore know everything ἐν μυστηρίῳ.

The humoristic in Christianity also appears in the statement: my yoke is light and my burden not heavy; for it certainly is after all--is heavy for the world in the highest degree, the heaviest that can be imagined: self-denial.

The Christian's ignorance (this purely Socratic viewpoint as, for example, in a Hamann) is naturally also humoristic; for wherein does it reside but in this, that by forcing oneself down to the lowest standpoint one looks up (i.e., down) upon the ordinary view, though in such a way that behind this self-deprecation there lies an elevation of oneself in high degree.... In this way the miracle also plays a great leading role in this life-view, not by reason of the mighty one who is procured by its means for Christianity; but because all of the most profound ideas of all the wise men are thereby (for this standpoint) brought to naught alongside Balaam's prophe­sy­ing ass. Hence the more insignificant that the miracle is, if I may say so, or the less its effect as regards the historical development--yes, even to the extreme that this viewpoint tempts God, so to speak, i.e., desiring a miracle for the sole purpose of causing professors of physics difficulties--the more does it rejoice over it. Yes, I

---

43Ibid., 255. Hamann denies the existence of a free will that is poised between good and evil, able to choose either. Metzke observes that he roundly criticizes Robinet when the latter "tries to escape onto the 'rocking horse' of an 'equilibrium' of good and evil": "Sollte nicht das Gute mit dem Bösen in der Natur im Gleichgewicht stehen? Ja, sollte—2?" (R II 244, cited by Metzke, p. 226). Elsewhere Metzke remarks that the radicalness of Hamann's "solus Deus" is reminiscent of Luther (p. 133).
suppose that it will rejoice the most over the transformation of wine into water at Cana. Yes, when it rejoices over the miracle of Christ's resurrection, then it is not the true Easter joy, but much more enjoyment over the Pharisees and their soldiers and their enormous stone before the tomb. Hence this viewpoint dwells ever so gladly upon the crib, the rags in which the child was wrapped, the crucifixion between two thieves.44

A few other themes remain that Kierkegaard has demonstrably, or with high probability, taken over from Hamann. One is the elevation of the "passions" to a place of preeminence over reason.45 Another is the identification of anxiety as that which signifies our spiritual provenance.46 And finally there is the notion that the truth is not a finished

44 Päp II A 78 (JP 2:1682), translation mine. Another early text that refers to Hamann's principle of the coincidence of opposites (more specifically, that of the communicatio idiomatum) is Päp II B 20 (Concept of Irony, supp., 445), where Kierkegaard observes that "the dogmatic thesis around which everything turns in Hamann [is] πάντα Θεία καὶ ἀνθρώπινα πάντα [everything divine and everything human]."

45 See, e.g., the motto of Either/Or I, "Is reason alone then baptized, are the passions pagans?" (SV I iii [Either/Or I, 1]), which is taken from Edward Young, whom Hamann likes to cite. Of the human faculties Hamann gives primacy to the heart ("Das Herz schlägt früher als unser Kopf denkt"--R VII 264f.). By contrast, reason is the "zufälligste und abstrakteste Modus unserer ganzen Existenz" (R IV 328). It subserves the heart; indeed, every function, whether intellectual or vital, depends upon the heart ("Denken, Empfinden und Verduern hängt alles vom Herzen ab" [R III 382]). Hamann calls the heart the "primum mobile." Since it is the seat of the emotions ("Ein Herz ohne Leidenschaften, ohne Affekt, ist ein Kopf ohne Begriffe, ohne Mark"--R I 494), these are the wellspring of action, the creative force of life. While it is clear that SK (like the romantics) has been influenced by Hamann as regards the primacy of the passions, he seems to have been not at all influenced by their correlate: sensuousness. Yet Hamann is at pains to affirm both, for both are intrinsic to "die Bejahung der vollen leibhaftigen Realität des menschlichen Lebens--wider alle Einschränkungen, Begrenzungen, Verkürzungen der ratio" (Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 223). This being the case, Metzke is certainly correct when observes that, despite the key role that Leidenschaft plays for SK, it is "completely deprived of natural qualities" (p. 219). But more on this shortly.

46 In Päp II A 235 (JP I:1020 from 1842) Kierkegaard writes: "Hamann makes a remark in the sixth volume of his writings, p. 194, that I can use even though he has neither understood it as I wish to understand it, nor thought any further about it: "Diese Angst in der Welt ist aber der einzige Beweis unserer Heterogenität. Denn fehlte uns nichts, so würden wir es nicht besser machen, als die Heiden und Transcendental-Philosophen, die von Gott nichts wissen, und in die tiefe Natur sich wie die Narren vergaffen, keine Heimweh würden uns anwenden. Diese im pertinenten Unruhe, diese heilige Hypochondrie." Kierkegaard does subsequently make use of this Hamann-text at the conclusion of The Concept of Anxiety (SV IV 427 [Concept of Anxiety, 162]). Metzke writes, concerning the sense in which Hamann intended this text, that the phenomena, "anxiety in the world," "homesickness," and "impertinent unrest," indicate that our being is not exhausted by "being in this world." Our lack of fulfillment here points to an invisible reality, another world, to which we belong (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 228). On Kierkegaard's use of the concept, "anxiety" is a presentiment that we are spirit, i.e., free beings. If we will but attend to it and allow it to do its work in us, conjuring up dread
result, but is rather a "way," a mode of existing in which the transcendent, though not visibly present, announces itself in concealed form as a "becoming." In contrast to this hidden operation of God within us, we find ourselves in a posture of "fear and trembling" because of the judgement that we are fleeing.\(^47\)

The preceding comparison leaves little doubt that Kierkegaard has been influenced by Hamann; the question that has not been resolved is precisely to what extent. Unfortunately, without a far more rigorous investigation than I can undertake here, it is impossible to answer that question adequately.\(^48\) Torsten Bohlin was surely correct in asserting that, possibilities (as the hypochondriac allows his imagination to do so), anxiety will in the end educate us, by faith, to rest in Providence.

\(^{47}\)Metzke writes: "Das menschliche Dasein ist also in seinem Leben in dieser Welt noch nicht in seinem eigentlichen Sein, sondern ist noch 'in der Mache' (G 16), ist 'noch unterwegs' (R II 216). Unser Leben ist kein fertiges, in sich ruhendes, sondern wesenhaft ein Noch-nicht-sein, ein *Werden*, nicht im Sinne eines sich auflösenden Verströmens, einer unbestimmten Lebensdynamik überhaupt, sondern im Sinne einer zielgerichteten Bewegung, ein Werden, das ein 'Weg' ist, dessen Telos--das wozu wir unterwegs sind--schon verborgen gegenwärtig da ist" (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 229). He notes that while Hamann can himself urge that "Wahrheit ist freilich Weg und Leben" (R VII 147), he must hark back to Luther for his most powerful expression of this idea: "Dieses Leben ist nicht eine Frommkeit, sondern ein fromm *werden*, nicht eine Gesundheit, sondern ein gesund *werden*, nicht ein Wesen, sondern ein *Werden*. Wir sind's noch nicht, wir *werden's* aber. Es ist nicht das Ende, es ist aber der Weg; es glüht und glitzt noch nicht alles; es fegt sich aber alles" (R VI 127). Behind Hamann's "theology of the wayfarer" lies the Pauline dictum, "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3, cited in R II 159, R IV 285, G 16, R III 185, 254). Behind it lies Luther's *simul*, wherein Christians are in the process of being conformed to what they already are in a hidden way, and what they one day manifestly will be: "Jenes zukünftige dem 'Werden' seine Erfüllungbringende Sein, das noch 'verborgen', 'noch nicht erschienen' ist, aber erscheinen wird, so gewiß erscheinen wird (R II 159!), daß es schon die Gegenwart erfüllt und bestimmt, ist das Kommen Gottes, ist die prästantia dei" (Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 230). But until the consummation of these things faith has "die Form eines steten *Werdens* und *Kämpfens*" (Blanke, "J. G. Hamann als Theologe," 39). It is born of extraordinary danger and pursues blessedness in constant fear and trembling (§6 of Brocken: "Wenn man erwägt, wie viel Stärke, Gegenwart des Geistes, Geschwindigkeit, der wir sonst nicht fähig sind, uns die Furcht einer außerordentlichen Gefahr giebt: so begreift man, warum ein Christ dem natürlichen sichern Menschen so sehr überlegen ist, weil er mit beständiger Furcht und Zittern seine Seeligkeit sucht" (R I 147).

\(^{48}\)Such a study would presuppose a thorough survey of Hamann's entire authorship, and on that basis identify probable *allusions* (conscious or unconscious) to works not explicitly cited by Kierkegaard. It would also determine more closely the extent of indebtedness to the works that are cited. I have had to confine myself, for the most part, to SK's direct citations of Hamann. Additionally I have gone farther afield and presented a compend of *theologia crucis* notions that are to be found in Hamann. The idea here is that if Kierkegaard has read more in Hamann than his citations indicate (as I believe one may safely assume), then he has in all probability encountered these notions. To demonstrate that this is so, however, one would have to possess an exhaustive acquaintance with Kierkegaard's sources (i.e., the Roth edition and the Hamann-Jacobi correspondence that SK also owned), and on that basis identify the likely allusions.
notwithstanding the strong **presumption** of a defining influence exercised by Hamann at an early stage of Kierkegaard’s intellectual formation,

any obvious traces of an influence from Hamann upon Kierkegaard’s dogmatic viewpoint cannot . . . be demonstrated in Kierkegaard’s own writings. A series of citations and allusions can, in this connection, certainly come under consideration. But it is striking that the places that Kierkegaard reproduces or refers to, as a rule, do not at all command consideration as any of Hamann’s central or principal decisive thoughts, but rather have to do with more or less peripheral thoughts and incidental reflections, and that Hamann’s actual chief works either did not receive any attention at all, or in any case only scant attention: Golgotha und Scheblimini, *Æsthetica in nuce*, *Apologie des Buchstabens H*, *Biblische Betrachtungen und Brocken* are thus not named once. It is, in other words, far easier to demonstrate points of similarity and contact between Hamann’s and Kierkegaard’s psyches and religious views than to show the presence of a religious theological influence of the former upon the latter.\(^49\)

Bohlin is quite correct in his contention that Kierkegaard does not cite from many of Hamann’s most important works, and that many of the things that have drawn his attention are peripheral thoughts that do not belong among Hamann’s principal ideas. Nonetheless, it is clear that a number of *theologia crucis* themes are present among the works that SK has, with certainty, read (e.g., the *Socratic Memorabilia* and the letters from around 1759). It is also clear that Kierkegaard has commented upon some of these themes, even if his comments are far fewer in frequency than we would wish. It therefore seems to me that Bohlin’s restraint regarding the postulation of direct influence, admirable as it may be, does not give sufficient weight to the evidence that *does* exist.

One thing is certain. During a brief but tempestuous period of his youth Kierkegaard was exposed to romanticism and speculative theology, the result of which was shipwreck to his faith and moral anarchy. During this period he no doubt longed for a mentor who could show him the way out of his despair. He found him in Johann Georg Hamann. The fascinating thing about Kierkegaard’s struggle with a regnant philosophy and unexpected experience of being reclaimed by historic Christian faith is that they largely recapitulated Hamann’s own. Himself in need of a mentor in combatting the corrosive ideas of the Enlightenment,

\(^{49}\) *Kierkegaards dogmatiska åskådning i dess historiska sammanhang* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokförlag, 1925), 49. Bohlin’s is a restatement of Wilhelm Rodemann’s results and conclusion (see Rodemann, *Hamann und Kierkegaard*, 32-33).
Hamann had harked back to Luther. In particular, he had fixed upon the very aspect of Luther's theology that Erasmus had found objectionable—the paradoxes—in order to counter the speculative rationalism and moralism of his own day. The clear implication is that to the extent that Kierkegaard's attack upon romanticism and speculative idealism was inspired by Hamann, its ultimate intellectual progenitor was Martin Luther. This means that while he was as yet quite ignorant of Luther's own writings, Kierkegaard was nevertheless already an unwitting intellectual descendant of the reformer.

Be this as it may, it seems equally clear that Kierkegaard's theology of the cross diverges from that of Luther and Hamann on an absolutely critical point: viz., on its stance toward corporeality. While Kierkegaard urges the incarnation's paradoxicality as a check upon the grandiose pretensions of human rationality, he does not simultaneously contend for its sacramentality—the idea that creation is a fit vessel to bear the divine. As a consequence he is prone to what is, at its best, a world-denying asceticism, and at its worst, out and out Manichaeism—a fact that has been clearly recognized by scholars who possess acquaintance with both Kierkegaard and Hamann. For Hamann the tenet of the corporeality of spirit

50Metzke observes that, in respect of his affirmation of "immediacy," Hegel is the truer disciple of Hamann: "Kierkegaard, der in einem prinzipiell andern Sinne als Hegel ein geistiger Erbe Hamanns ist und sich daher zugleich als scharfester Antipode Hegels fühlen kann, vollzieht die bei Hamann latent gebliebene Scheidung zwischen einer bloß ästhetischen und einer substantielleren, letztlich christlich-religiösen Unmittelbarkeit, verliert aber in diesem Zerlegen—Hegel und der Romantik seinen Tribut entrichtend—jene unproblematische und ursprüngliche Unmittelbarkeit, die Hamann im Sinne hatte" (Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 207).

Ronald Gregor Smith ("Hamann and Kierkegaard") writes: "For Hamann the key to Christian existence is . . . God's continuous and absolute condescension. The connection between God and the world is not broken" (p. 61). For Kierkegaard matters are otherwise: "In the strength of the paradox he denied the world" (p. 64). Smith goes on to observe—rightly in my judgement—that "the deep difference between the two at this point might well be summarized in their respective attitudes to Luther. 'Ich lutherisiere', said Hamann once, and he never left the Lutheran fold. Kierkegaard on the other hand became increasingly critical of Luther" (p. 64). Smith notes that while the Christian's heterogeneity to the world "is undoubtedly inherent in living in an evil world," this "is not the last word . . . The last word is found in the reality of the being of God for the world in Christ, in such a way that the world is not destroyed but affirmed, re-affirmed" (p. 67).

Along the same lines Walter Leibrecht remarks that for Kierkegaard and Hamann alike, "Christus ist die Mitte des Glaubens . . . und beide betonen die Niedrigkeit, die 'Demut' göttlicher Offenbarung. Aber hier ist nun auch der entscheidende Unterschied: Kierkegaard wurde schließlich durch das ihm eigene Verständnis des Kreuzes Christi zu einem asketischen Christentum getrieben, in dem das Gesetz nun doch wieder das Evangelium zu überwiegend scheint. Bei Hamann ist der gekreuzigte der Triumphierende . . . Im Kommen Christi sieht Hamann nicht das Nein, sondern das Ja Gottes zu seiner Schöpfung. In Christus ist der 'wahre Mensch' offenbar geworden, d. h. durch ihn werden wir zu unserem wahren Ursprung und damit zu echter Ursprünglichkeit befreit, zu wirklichem Menschsein" (Gott und Mensch bei Johann Georg Hamann, 13). The strong difference that exists between SK and Hamann can be illustrated by the latter's understanding of the
is nothing less than an Archimedean principle.\(^51\) If at times he revels in it with almost Bacchic exuberance, this owes not to a quasi-Romantic worship of nature on his part, but to his creation- and revelation-faith.\(^52\) In this respect Hamann's sense for the implications of the theology of the cross for a theology of nature manifest much greater fidelity to Luther

---

1 Blanke writes: "Das eine Prinzip, von dem [Hamann] beherrscht ist, ist das des Geistleiblichen. Hamann ist von der Ueberzeugung erfüllt, dass alles Geistige, ehe es für den Menschen fassbar wird, eine sinnlich . . . fassbare Form, d. h. einen Leib annimmt. . . Wir haben also den Geist nie unmittelbar, sondern immer in konkreter geschichtlicher Form. Hamann hätte das Nietzschewort sich aneignen können, dass der 'reine Geist eine Lüge sei'" ("J. G. Hamann als Theologe," 11). This idea of the corporeality of spirit furnishes the primary theme of *Esthetica in nuce*, the occasion of which was contention of the Old Testament critic, Michalis, that the Old Testament's language was too pictorial to have been given by God. Michalis deemed only an abstract language that had been divested of all sensuous elements to be worthy of God (Blanke, "J. G. Hamann als Theologe," 13). In response, Hamann contends that because we are sensuously determined, God must make use of sensuous determinants when speaking to us (N II 198). Matters cannot be otherwise since "Sinne und Leidenschaften reden und verstehen nichts als Bilder" (N II, 197). The underlying premise of this, however, is that God has not considered the sensuous-corporeal to be beneath himself; he has created us as corporeal spirits and himself speaks to us in whatever sensuous medium he chooses, whether it be the physical sounds of human language, or the phenomena of nature or events of history. Indeed God himself has not shied away from becoming a man. Accordingly, the human and the divine do not exclude each other, but belong together: "Menschliches und Göttliches schliessen sich ja bei Hamann nicht aus, sondern gehören zusammen. Finitum capax infiniti!" (Blanke, "J. G. Hamann als Theologe," 15).

---

2 See Metzke (*Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie*, 202) who acknowledges the frequency with which Hamann sets "Mutter Erde" in a position of seemingly equal rank with "Vater Gott," speaking ardently of its "Orgien und Eleusinischen Geheimnissen (R II 267ff.), even proclaiming himself to be "Pan." Metzke, however, points out that "dies Eintreten für das elementare Leben mit seinen drängenden und zuzugenden Kräften, seinen Instinkten, Trieben, Begierden und Affekten, seiner ganzen vitalen und sinnlichen Fülle steht bei Hamann in engem inneren Zusammenhang mit seinem Christentum, mit seinem lebendigen und kraftvollen Schöpfungs- und Offenbarungsglauben." Hence, though justly regarded the father of *Sturm und Drang*, Hamann himself was no romantic.
than does Kierkegaard's. The fact that Kierkegaard has not chosen to hallow corporeality in the manner of a Luther or a Hamann almost certainly derives from his pietistic heritage which, in a curious point of convergence with the Enlightenment, purges the natural drives from its view of man. Kierkegaard's own spiritualistic tendencies, combined with his embrace of German idealism's notion of transcendental subjectivity and its dialectical development, land him in a variant of idealism toward the end of his authorship that can only be described as Neoplatonic or quasi-gnostic. These elements of his thought, though kept in check by the theologia crucis elements during the first period of the authorship, themselves come into the ascendancy in the late period and influence his view of life under the cross in a decisive way.

---

53 As in his Hamann-study, so too in his Luther-study does Erwin Metzke, a philosopher by vocation, prove to be a capable theologian. I refer to his work that explores the implications of Luther's eucharistic teaching for his understanding of corporeality. On that teaching the finite is regarded as being fully capable of comprehending the infinite (finitum capax infiniti), the eternal Word making itself present without remainder in incarnate form. Metzke points out that this eucharistic doctrine is really a consequence of Luther's theology of the cross: "Es ist ... ein Vorurteil des Menschen, daß Gottes Wirken lediglich geistig, lediglich innerlich sein müsse, als wenn es Gottes Ehre widerspräche, ja eine 'schande' wäre, 'daß er sollte bei uns sein hier auf erden in allerlei not der sünden und des todes' (WA 26, 437). Gott selbst, dessen Art es ist, sich so zu offenbaren, daß die 'hochmütigen, klugen geister' sich stoßen (WA 23, 255), bejaht und sucht vielmehr den Menschen in seiner leiblich-kreatürlichen Existenz, die als leibliche 'genähret, gemehret underhalten' wird zum 'ewigen leben'. Wie kann man da meinen, 'daß der leib nicht sollte fähig sein der gabe gottes, welche ist das ewige leben' (WA 23, 235). Und wie kann man, da Gott selbst sich in der Fleischwerdung und in den Sakramenten an das Irdisch-Sichtbare und Elementhafte bindet, darüber, wie die Spiritualisten, die 'hase rümpfen' und sagen: 'es ist kein gott da' (WA 23, 73)' (Sakrament und Metaphysik. Eine Lutherstudie über das Verhältnis des christlichen Denkens zum Leiblich-Materiellen. Schriftenreihe lebendige Wissenschaft, Heft 9 [Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1948], 22).

54 Metzke, Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie, 293.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE APPROPRIATION OF GRACE AS ITSELF GRACE

In view of the striking similarity that exists between Kierkegaard's and Luther's theological frameworks, it is highly doubtful that Kierkegaard could have entertained a teaching on grace at odds with Luther's. Luther embodies a "turning point in the development of religion." With him entered the recognition that the Christian ideal is so infinitely sublime that all human efforts at resembling it are either "a demented nullity" (afsendig Intet) or, at best, "a reverential jest" (gudfrystig Spøg). Hence, the teaching about Christ as prototype "can no longer [as in the Middle Ages] . . . occupy the first place. Faith comes first, Christ as the gift."¹

This notwithstanding, it may be questioned whether the presentation that is given by Johannes Climacus in the Postscript allows for any teaching on grace whatsoever insofar as it characterizes Christianity's religiosity as a potentiated form of that which is already present within religious immanence; indeed, insofar as the latter is subsumable under what are essentially ethical rubrics, Christianity would seem to be--in certain crucial respects--little more than a special case of the ethical. Hermann Diem makes what amounts to this very accusation when he charges Kierkegaard with incorrectly subsuming Christian communication under general ethical communication--a methodological error that, Diem contends, leaves Kierkegaard no choice but to reverse the relationship between grace and imitation in such a way that the latter becomes the requirement for the former.² This comes as no

¹ Pap X² A 207 (JP 2:1135).

surprise for, Barthian that he was, Diem merely follows the master's lead in contending that Kierkegaard lays down an existential interpretation of the human condition as the necessary groundwork for efficaciously proclaiming the gospel. Is such a charge accurate? Does the reception of grace, for Kierkegaard, depend upon a prior level of existential or ethical attainment that is achieved independently of grace?

In order to answer this question we must first begin with the fundamental distinction that Climacus makes between aesthetic and ethical ideality in the Postscript. Within the aesthetic sphere possibility is higher than actuality. Hence,

---

3Of those theologians who have gone through Kierkegaard's school and—most importantly—graduated from it, Barth writes: "Sie fanden den Trost der so kümmerlichen Christen, der auch der Trost der ganzen Welt und so auch ihr eigener Trost ist, statt in irgend etwas, was der Mensch von sich aus für Gott sein und tun könnte, in dem, was Gott in der Majestät seiner freien Gnade für ihn und mit ihm getan hat, noch tut und wieder und endgültig tun wird. Sie konnten die Theologie von dort aus weder offen noch heimlich mit einer Existentialphilosophie vertauschen, sie weder direkt noch indirekt den Strukturen einer solchen anpassen" (Karl Barth, "Kierkegaard und die Theologen," reprinted in Hermann Diem. sine vi - sed verbo. Aufsätze - Vorträge - Voten. Aus Anlaß der Vollendung seines 65. Lebensjahres am 2. Febr. 1965, ed. U. A. Wolf, Theologische Bücherei, vol. 25 [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1965], 9 ["Kierkegaard and the Theologians," Canadian Journal of Theology 13 (January 1967):65]). Implied in Barth's remarks is that SK's theological method—in particular, his assumption of an existential dialectic as integral to the process of becoming a Christian—denies the reformation insight into humanity’s status corruptionis and thereby rejects the absolute priority of God's sovereign grace. Eberhard Jungel has dealt at length with the existential dialectic as Kierkegaard developed it himself, as well as the use to which it was put in the theologies of Brunner, Gogarten and Bultmann ("Von der Dialektik zur Analogie. Die Schule Kierkegaards und der Einspruch Petersons" in Barth-Studien [Zürich-Köln: Benzinger Verlag, 1982], 127-79). The latter theologians saw in SK's existential dialectic a necessary apology for faith, and hence, an indispensable prolegomenon to theology itself. For his part, Barth rejected the tenet "daß eine theologisch relevante vortheologische existentielle Interpretation menschlichen Daseins möglich ist, innerhalb deren dann auch der Glaube als Möglichkeit oder gar Notwendigkeit menschlichen Existierens aufgewiesen wird" (p. 176; see also pp. 142-43, 160-61 and 171). Jüngel points out, however, that Barth's criticism was aimed not so much a Kierkegaard as at the Kierkegaard-interpretation of his earlier confederates: "Barth unterscheidet sich ... von den anderen dialektischen Theologen und—wenn nicht sogar von Kierkegaard selbst, so doch—von ihrem Kierkegaardverständnis, insofern er die Unbeweisbarkeit und Unbegründbarkeit des Glaubens an die Menschwerdung Gottes auch nicht existenz-dialektisch mit der These plausibel machen kann und will, daß die Subjektivität die Wahrheit ist" (p. 175). For his own part, Jüngel denies that Kierkegaard ever sought to render belief in the incarnation plausible through advance deepening in subjectivity: "Allerdings gilt es zu beachten, daß Kierkegaards Existenzdialetik zwar die menschliche Existenz als Ort und damit als Verifikationshorizont göttlicher Offenbarung einschärft, damit aber nicht einer untheologischen Begründung des Glaubens das Wort reden will. Verifikation und Begründung sind zu unterscheiden!" (p. 171). Nor did SK conceive of such deepening as effecting any fundamental change in the human predicament independently of grace: "Die Bedeutung, die Climacus dem Satz 'Die Subjektivität ist die Unwahrheit' gibt, gleicht der berühmten Behauptung Luthers, Paulus habe in seinem Römerbrief die Sünde groß machen wollen, damit es zur Erkenntnis der Rechtfertigung des Sünder durch die fremde Gerechtigkeit Gottes komme" (p. 168). It is the task of this chapter, however, to confirm these claims through detailed exegesis of the relevant texts!
If falling in love is interpreted esthetically, it holds true that the poet's conception of falling in love is higher than anything actuality offers. The poet can have an ideality compared with which actuality is but a weak reflection; for the poet, actuality is merely an occasion that prompts him to abandon actuality in order to seek the ideality of possibility.  

It follows that it is a misunderstanding to be concerned about actuality from the aesthetic point of view. "Esthetically and intellectually, it holds true that only when the esse of an actuality is dissolved into its posse is an actuality understood and thought." The situation is precisely the reverse with regard to the ethical. There actuality is higher than possibility: "Ethically, it holds true that possibility is understood only when each posse is actually an esse." Hence the ethical "specifically wants to annihilate the disinterestedness of possibility by making existing the infinite interest." Ethics' concern is not that the ethical demand be thought--as one possibility among others--but that it be actualized. Because we have our being in the concrete medium of existence rather than abstract possibility, our task as existing individuals is essentially the ethical one of actualizing the possible.

---

4SV VII 336 (Postscript, 388).
5Ibid., 279 (324).
6Ibid.
7Ibid., 275 (320).
8A word is in order on SK's use of the word "ethical" to denote the actualization of possibility, for this would seem to include all possibilities--even manifestly evil ones. Judge William is the first pseudonym to elaborate this understanding of the ethical, and he does so with full awareness that it constitutes only its formal condition. Yet within the formal condition of "choosing" there is also contained the material one: the right choice. Judge William writes: "Rather than designating the choice between good and evil, my Either/Or designates the choice by which one chooses good and evil or rules them out. Here the question is, under what qualifications one will view all existence and personally live. That the person who chooses good and evil chooses the good is indeed true, but only later does this become manifest" (SV II 153 [Either/Or II, 169]). In answer to the question of how the bare act of choosing ultimately manifests itself as "choosing the good," Judge William observes that, in choosing, one chooses de facto to acknowledge oneself as free (pp. 191-93 [213-16]), but that this in turn inevitably means: the acknowledgement of oneself as responsible, and therefore, as guilty (pp. 222-23 [247-48]). Implicit in Judge William's broad understanding of the ethical as choice or the actualization of possibility, is the narrow understanding of it as duty and the failure to live up to duty. There is, of course, a missing premise involved: viz., that duty--and concrete duty, at that--is a thing that is posited along with freedom; that just as all human beings are cognizant of their freedom, so are they cognizant of their duty. Judge William takes this premise to be self-evident. Of the ethical subject in the narrower sense as duty-bound (and derelict in his duty), he writes: "He will teach himself the particular duty and will without avail seek enlightenment on it from anyone else, and yet here again he will be an autodidact just as he is a theodidact, and vice versa" (pp. 242-43.
This is why Climacus regards the ethical and the religious spheres as being

[270-71]). It appears from this citation, as from others cited earlier (chap. 2, n. 4), that SK's is a "divine command" ethic (Pap IV C 72 [JP 1:894]), the specific content of which is, or can be, known to all free subjects (Poul Lübecke seems to give such an interpretation of SK's moral philosophy, though he does not explicitly attach the label—see "An Analytical Interpretation of Kierkegaard as Moral Philosopher," in Kierkegaardiana, 15, ed. Joakim Garff, et al. [Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1991], 93-103). The very universality of ethical knowledge is surely part of what Kierkegaard means when he asserts that there are no "geniuses" when it comes to the ethical (Pap X I A 430 [JP 1:975]; cf. SV XII 221 [Practice in Christianity, 242]). The ethical is "the most certain of all" for anyone who cares to examine himself in its mirror. It "is the only certainty, to concentrate upon this [yields] the only knowledge that does not change into a hypothesis at the last moment, to be in it [yields] the only secure knowledge, where the knowledge is secured by something else" (SV VII 126, 125 [Postscript, 153, 152, slightly amended]).

Because Kierkegaard does not regard practical reason as self-legislating, one must distinguish his position from Kant's. Yet it is less easy to distinguish it from Fichte's. Notwithstanding that Fichte regards the individual ego as but a manifestation of the transcendental Ego, he nevertheless denies that individuals bring forth duty from themselves. In The Vocation of Man we read: "I assume ... a law of a spiritual world—not given by my will nor by the will of any finite being, nor by the will of all finite beings taken together, but to which my will, and the will of all finite beings, is subject" (Fichtes Werke, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979], 2:295; The Vocation of Man, trans. William Smith [La Salle, IL: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1955], 149). This law from without is immediately present in each person's conscience in the form of specific duties. Because of its immediacy, they are never in doubt concerning what they are to do (Fichtes Werke, 2:258, 263, 284 and 309 [Vocation of Man, 105, 111, 135 and 165]). Though the practical law pertains to the supersensible realm, it is more certain than the theoretical laws governing this sensible realm. Because the Eternal Will has produced the latter as the field for its practical activity, and continues at every moment to reproduce it via our theoretical faculties, it is the certainty that grounds every other certainty (2:259 [106]). While we, as sensuous creatures, cannot divine this supersensuous order in which moral causes produce commensurate moral effects, we are obliged to secure such effects for the future life by the performance of duty here and now. Moreover, we are obliged to disregard any adverse empirical effects that may accrue to our acts here and now, being motivated solely by consideration of duty (2:264, 282, 284-85, 310 [111-12, 133, 135-37, 166]).

It is evident that Fichte's ethic corresponds to Kierkegaard's in terms of duty's absolute unconditionedness, the immediate certainty attaching to it, and its autodidactic, yet also theodidactic character. Still other similarities might be mentioned. These must await the more complete statement of Kierkegaard's relation to Fichte to be given in chapter eight. Of interest in the present context is the purely formal character of each man's ethic. For Fichte, the transcendental Ego is simply "unlimited activity" or "infinite striving" that freely (albeit blindly) strives for self-realization. To accomplish this it must first limit itself through the production of Non-Ego. From this theoretic activity emerges the system of finite egos and non-egos that we know as the natural world. The world is not an end in itself; it is but the field for the Ego's practical activity. In it a determinate moral order grows up, and through the free actions of finite beings within that order the Ego attains to practical self-definition. Yet the goal of such practical activity is, in the first instance, wholly undefined. So, too, is Judge William's initial choice of self. At the outset it is the mere exercise of abstract freedom. Only subsequently does the self find itself in possession of concrete freedom and specific duties, for in "choosing itself" the self chooses itself in all its facticity—quite analogous to the transcendental Ego's self-objectification via the theoretic and practical deductions of consciousness. For Kierkegaard and Fichte alike, the formal definition of ethics as "actualization of the possible" implicitly contains the closer, material determinants of the existing natural and moral orders.
essentially related to one another\(^9\) and, the tripartite division of the spheres notwithstanding, depicts life's most basic choice as a simple "either/or": either to maintain an aesthetic-intellectual pseudo-existence by declining to choose (and take responsibility for) a life-possibility, or to enter ethico-religious existence by choosing the life-possibility that these spheres present (and, as already indicated, there is only one such possibility--Judge William's premature closure with the ethical notwithstanding, his categories are already religious ones). The very medium of existence-actuality itself--dictates that the individual's task will be ethical in the broad sense of actualizing possibility. Accordingly, his actualization of the religious possibility will be an ethical task.\(^10\)

Now, the possibility that is presented by the religious sphere (religiousness A) is that of the relationship with God, and its actuality is the appropriation of such via resignation, renunciation, and repentance. It is by means of resignation (Resignationen) that one determines whether one has an absolute relationship to the absolute, and therewith to an eternal blessedness. Resignation, through the medium of imagination, "visits" the would-be religious individual in his immediacy, showing him what can happen in life. If he shrinks back from the eventualities that resignation conjures up, then he may be certain that he is not yet willing to give up everything for the sake of his relationship with God. Climacus puts it

---

\(^9\)SV VII 252 (Postscript, 294).

\(^{10}\)This is, incidentally, the meaning of Climacus's claim that Christianity is not a doctrine but an existence-communication. "Understanding is the maximum with regard to a doctrine. . . . With regard to an existence-communication, existing in it is the maximum and wanting to understand it is a cunning evasion that wants to shirk the task. . . . [T]o become a Christian is the maximum, to want to understand Christianity is open to suspicion. . . . The relation of possibility is the maximum with regard to a doctrine; actuality is the maximum with regard to an existence-communication; wanting to understand an existence-communication is wanting to transform one's own relation to it into a relation of possibility (ibid., 321-22n [371-72n]; cf. SV XII 409 [Judge for Yourself!, 131]).

The fact that Christianity is an existence-communication and not a doctrine does not, however, rule out its objective content. In SV VII 328-29n (Postscript, 379-80n) Climacus acknowledges that Christianity is a doctrine in the sense that it is to be actualized in existence. Nevertheless, this is something very different from being a doctrine in the sense that a speculative tenet is. In the latter case the difficulty lies with understanding the teaching; in the former it lies with existing in it. Climacus's rejection of the term "doctrine" (Lære) as applied to Christianity is, accordingly, a rejection of the sense that this term had assumed in the intellectualistic nineteenth century (and, no doubt, possesses yet today). He contends that it is sheer artifice to interpret his denial that Christianity is a doctrine to mean that it is without content. On the contrary, "when a believer exists in faith, his existence has enormous content, but not in the sense of a yield in paragraphs" (pp. 329-30 [380]).
ever so bluntly: "He is not relating himself to an eternal happiness."\(^{11}\) This conjuring process does not occur once and for all at the beginning of the religious life but is an abiding feature of it, for it is resignation's task at all times to keep watch that an absolute relation is being maintained.\(^{12}\)

But resignation is only the "initial" expression of religious pathos for, having discovered the points at which one clings to immediacy, one must die to them (afdrage) by a painful process of renunciation (Forsagelsen) if one is to enter into the absolute relationship.\(^{13}\) Such suffering, as we learned in chapter two, Climacus calls the "essential"

---

\(^{11}\) SV VII 341 (Postscript, 393). Cf. pp. 342 and 352-53 (394-95 and 406-7). Insofar as one prizes relative relationships above one's relationship with God, one demotes the latter to relative status; any relationship to God for whom he truly is—the absolute One—is consequently lacking.

The critical role played by resignation in determining where one stands in one's relationship with God, and hence in providing the unconditional point of departure for that relationship, is observable throughout the authorship. Always, the notion of seeking out "the terrible" is involved, though the term Resignationen itself is not always used. In Fear and Trembling, the knight of infinite resignation is said to advance to meet the terrible via the imagination, and to preserve the experience of this encounter in his memory (SV III 85 [Fear and Trembling, 33-34]). In The Concept of Anxiety, anxiety is said to wean the individual from finitude (and educate him unto faith) by envisaging terrible possibilities that take "away from him absolutely all that any fate could take away" (SV IV 425 [Concept of Anxiety, 160]). And in Stages on Life's Way we are told that "the person who wills religiously must have receptivity precisely for the terrible; he must open himself to it." Here it is melancholy (Tungsind) that is serviceable (SV VII 349-50 [Stages, 374-75]).

\(^{12}\) SV VII 344 and 348 (Postscript, 397 and 401).

\(^{13}\) If everything were decided on paper, one would start on the ideal task at once; but in existence the beginning must be made by practicing the relation to the absolute τέλος, and taking power away from immediacy. . . . The actual individual is, after all, in immediacy, and to that extent is actually in the relative ends absolutely. Now the individual begins, not, please note, by simultaneously relating himself absolutely to the absolute τέλος and relatively to the relative ends, because by being in immediacy he is exactly reversed, but he begins by practicing the absolute relationship through renunciation. . . . In order to relate himself to the absolute τέλος, the individual must have practiced renunciation of relative ends, and only then can there be any question of the ideal task: simultaneously to relate oneself absolutely to the absolute, and relatively to the relative. Not prior to this, because before this has been done the individual is continually more or less immediate and to that extent relates himself absolutely to relative ends. And even when he has surmounted immediacy, with his victory he is nevertheless again in existence and thereby again hindered from absolutely expressing the absolute relation to the absolute τέλος (ibid., 374-75 [431-32]).

The use of the expression, "to practice" (at indeye) is noteworthy here, for it occurs in a later, specifically Christian context: Practice in Christianity (Indovelse i Christendom). As always, what is present at an earlier stage of existence is to be met with at a later stage in sublated (ophevet = aufgehoben) form. Within Christianity, as within universal piety, one must acquire the relationship with God through practice. Yet (as we indicated in the previous chapter) already within religiousness a this process of acquisition is conceived as being nonmeritorious. So, too, within Christianity. There, as we shall see, Indovelse means something rather more than simple renunciation or "dying to," though, to be sure, it contains this moment. It means also: to become practiced in the flight to grace with each new failure at "dying to."
expression of religious pathos since it is voluntarily, rather than accidentally, incurred. Yet as we also learned, the appropriation of the relationship with God does not herewith move forward toward a triumphant conclusion. Rather, by engaging in the struggles of resignation and renunciation, one only succeeds in discovering guilt, the "decisive" expression of religious pathos. Thus does the third moment in the actualization of the religious possibility enter in: repentance, the eternal recollection of guilt qua total determinant of one's being.

The consciousness of guilt is the expression for the fact that one is related to God, even though it ostensibly signifies only the misrelation. Climacus writes:

Even though the consciousness [of guilt] is ever so decisive, it still is always the relation that carries the misrelation, except that the existing person cannot get a firm hold of the relation because the misrelation continually places itself in between as the expression for the relation. But on the other hand, they still do not repel each other (the eternal happiness and the existing person) so that a break establishes itself as such; on the contrary, it is only by being held together that the misrelation repeats itself as the decisive consciousness of essential guilt, not of this or that guilt.\footnote{SV VII 464 (Possexcrit, 531-32). Cf. p. 467 (535-36).}

It is important to note that within religiousness A it is the misrelation that continually signifies the relation. Guilt is not something that applies to this or that act, so that once it has been repented of one's condition qua guilty is dispatched. Such thinking (which lay behind the invention of penance) does not get at the essential nature of guilt. No, only by eternally recollecting one's guilt—not seeking to atone for it—does one acknowledge its all-embracing magnitude.\footnote{Recollection's eternal storing up of guilt is the expression for existential pathos, the highest expression, even higher than the most inspired penance that wants to make up for the guilt (ibid., 469-70 [538]).} Thereby does one retain a negative relationship to the absolute despite one's continual failure to establish the positive relationship (relating absolutely to it, but relatively to relative ends).

On the other hand, it is equally important to note that within religiousness A it is nevertheless always the relation that sustains the misrelation for, as we saw in chapter two, this ceases to be the case with the advent of the consciousness of sin where the breach is made absolute. To this we shall turn shortly. For now, however, the point to be made is this: within the sphere of universal piety the relationship with God constitutes an ethical task
insofar as it entails the realization of the religious possibility via resignation, renunciation, and repentance. In this crucial respect paradoxical religiousness is no different. It, too, is the realization of the religious possibility, even incorporating the very moments just mentioned. As such, it falls within the domain of the ethical.\(^{16}\) Matters cannot be otherwise. The Christian, too, is an existing individual—his medium of existence is actuality; and as Climacus constantly points out, an existing individual cannot assume a standpoint outside existence—by existing he necessarily is actualizing this or that possibility. What applies to the existing individual therefore applies to the Christian mutatis mutandis: his existence qua Christian is an ethical realization of an existential possibility, the relationship with God, as this is more closely defined by Christianity.\(^{17}\)

---

\(^{16}\)For example, the eternal recollection of guilt must be present in order to appropriate Christianity's paradoxical satisfaction of sin. Climacus writes: "Recall that the forgiveness of sin is the paradoxical satisfaction by virtue of the absurd. In order merely to become aware of how paradoxical it is, the eternal recollecting of guilt as the highest expression must come in between, lest the spheres be confused and the essentially Christian be chattered into childish categories of the forgiveness of sin, which belong where the ethical has not emerged, even less the religious, and still less the Christian" (ibid., 470n [538-39n, emphasis added]). Climacus further observes: "Religiousness A must first be present in the individual before there can be any consideration of becoming aware of the dialectical B. When the individual in the most decisive expression of existential pathos relates himself to an eternal happiness, then there can be consideration of becoming aware of how the dialectical in the second place (secundo loco) thrusts him down into the pathos of the absurd. Thus it is evident how foolish it is if a person without pathos wants to relate himself to the essentially Christian, because before there can be any question at all of simply being in the situation of becoming aware of it one must first of all exist in religiousness A" (p. 486 [556-57]).

All of this corroborates the earlier enunciated principle that, as far as the life-spheres are concerned, the earlier ones are not superseded by the succeeding ones, but are "taken up" into them. Cf. p. 336 (388, emphasis added): "If the religious is truly the religious, has passed through the ethical and has it in itself, then it cannot forget that religiously the pathos is not a matter of singing praises and celebrating [the religious hero]... but of existing oneself."

\(^{17}\)The added qualification of pathos that Christianity's dialectical determination brings does not eliminate the strenuousness of appropriation of the religious possibility, but only intensifies it. Climacus writes: "Religiousness A is the dialectic of inward deepening; it is the relation to an eternal happiness that is not conditioned by a something but is the dialectical inward deepening of the relation, consequently conditioned only by the inward deepening, which is dialectical. On the other hand, Religiousness B... or paradoxical religiousness... or the religiousness that has the dialectical in the second place, makes conditions in such a way that the conditions are not the dialectical concentrations of inward deepening but a definite something that qualifies the eternal happiness more specifically... not by qualifying more specifically the individual's appropriation of it but by qualifying more specifically the eternal happiness, yet not as a task for thinking but as paradoxically repelling and giving rise to new pathos" (ibid., 485 [556]; cf. pp. 488 and 333-34 [559-60 and 385-86]).
Does the fact that Christianity falls within the purview of ethics and can be characterized as a striving and appropriation of the relationship with God mean that the concept of grace is effectively excluded? It does not if we take Climacus's exposition of sin seriously—an exposition that so transforms the meaning of the ethical that one is forced to invoke a distinction such as Vigilius Haufniensis's between "first" and "second" ethics. In The Concept of Anxiety we read that, whereas ethics sets the individual the task of bringing ideality down into actuality, dogmatics, with its doctrines of sin and hereditary sin, precludes this possibility and proposes instead to raise man up from actuality to ideality, presumably through the Atonement. At this point ethics enters in again, but not with the renewed demand that the ideal be brought into actuality. "The new ethics . . . sets ideality as a task, not by a movement from above and downward but from below and upward." That is to say, "This ethics does not have its ideality in making ideal demands; rather, it has its ideality in the penetrating consciousness of actuality, of the actuality of sin." The import of Haufniensis's remarks seems to be that second ethics' task is, through the consciousness of sin, to appropriate the grace that makes possible the person's elevation from the actuality of sin to the ideality of redemption and new life.

There is nothing in Climacus's development of the sin-concept that would contradict this. As was mentioned in chapter two, he describes sin as a condition wherewith each and every individual "is suspended from the ethical in the most terrifying way, is in the suspension heterogeneous with the ethical." By an act of freedom, man has forfeited the very freedom that was the indispensable condition for realizing the ethical. Thus did occur a qualitative transformation of originally created human nature. Climacus defines this transformation in the most radical terms possible, as we have seen. Sin is an essential alter-

---

18 SV IV 290-92 (Concept of Anxiety, 17-19).
19 Ibid., 293 (20).
20 Ibid., 292 (20).
21 Chap. 2, n. 9 (SV VII 226 [Postscript, 266-67]).
22 SV IV 185-87 (Fragments, 15-17).
ation of the person. It is not merely a "a change of the subject within the subject himself," but "a change of the subject himself." Sin is the "loss of continuity" with oneself, an existence-determination on which "to be" means "to be another than one was."

This stands in sharp contrast to what obtained in religiousness A. There, although guilt was an abiding feature of the individual, he nevertheless remained the same individual, for it was he who discovered his own guilt. With the introduction of sin in religiousness B, however, a different state of affairs is brought about. Sin is no accidental attribute the predication of which leaves the subject fundamentally unchanged. The capacity for relatedness to God--the one truly critical defining factor of man's status integritatis--has been forfeited because of sin. From this SK apparently infers that the nature that was originally created by God has been altered in essence (this is the most radical consequence that can possibly be drawn from Lutheran orthodoxy's denial of any remaining point of contact with God). In its place, another nature (a sin-nature that has, as it were, only an accidental resemblance to man's original nature) has come to be. How do we know this to be the case? It is a consequence of the appearance of the deity in time. The fact that God must confer, in time, (a) the awareness of the identity change to which the sinner is not himself privy, and (b) the condition for relatedness to himself, therewith making of the sinner a new creation, means that the person has hitherto been alienated from this inalienable attribute without which he is not, properly speaking, himself.

---

23SV VII 174 (Postscript, 207, emphasis added).
24Ibid., 509 (584).
25Ibid., 502 (576).
26Ibid., 508-9, 464, 502 (583-84, 532, 576).
27Ibid., 464 and 466 (532 and 534).
28SV IV 188 and 190 (Fragments, 18 and 21).
29In Fragments Climacus seems to describe the qualitative changes wrought by sin and the new birth in a less pointed manner than in the Postscript. He notes that "when the learner is untruth . . . but is nevertheless a human being, and he now receives the condition and the truth, he does not, of course, become a human being for the first time, for he already was that; but he becomes a different person, not in the jesting sense--as if he became someone else of the same quality as before--but he becomes a person of a different quality or, as we
Accordingly, there can be no question of man, as he is, actualizing the "possibility" for relatedness to God. With the advent of Christianity that possibility has been shown no longer to exist. But if this is so, there can be no talk of the ethical—at least, not as it was hitherto understood. The priority of grace is so firmly established that "the ethical" qua actualization of ideal possibility must, if it is invoked at all, signify something other than it did within immanence. Yet as we have seen, the ethical is sublated, not abrogated, by Christianity. The appropriation of the relationship with God via resignation, renunciation, and repentance is preserved, indeed, rendered still more arduous by Christianity's paradoxical determinations. How is this possible? The answer to this question is of crucial

---

30 Christianity has made the way the most difficult of all; and it is only an illusion, which has ensnared many, that Christianity has made the way easy, since, quite the contrary, it has come to the rescue of people only by a beginning that makes everything far more difficult than ever before. If a pagan has merely caught a glimpse of the absolute good, then Christianity has helped—by the absurd. If one omits this, then everything has indeed become much easier than in paganism; but if it is held fast, then everything is far more difficult, for it is easier to cling to a weak hope in one's own strength than to gain certainty by virtue of the absurd. . . . Christianity] requires that the individual existentially venture everything (the pathetic); a pagan can also do this. . . . But then it requires that the individual also risk his thought, venture to believe against the understanding (the dialectical). . . . [T]his is the absolute venture. Existentially to struggle through life on the strength of an immortality's 'if' might seem laborious enough, and to acquire a proof through the Resurrection, an enormous ease—were not the proof itself the most difficult thing of all. To gain everything by a mediator does seem easy enough by comparison with paganism, where the wise, by his greatest exertion, achieved but little; but suppose that the very fact that there is a mediator is the most difficult thing of all! To gain everything by a gospel is surely easy enough—were not the very fact that there is a gospel the most difficult thing of all. By God's strength, to be capable of doing anything is surely easy enough—were not one's incapability of doing anything, oneself, the most difficult thing of all, so difficult that, I dare say, there are few in any generation who can truthfully say that, day in and day out, they even become moderately aware that a person is capable of
importance for it not only provides the key to Kierkegaard's teaching on grace, but further exemplifies the role that the cross qua cognitive principle plays in Kierkegaard's thought.

Here, as before, we find ourselves in a situation in which visible reality runs counter to the invisible reality signified by revelation. Visibly we are confronted with the existing individual's infinite interest in his relationship with God, and his stupendous efforts at actualizing it. Invisibly we are confronted with the deity's actualization of that relationship in complete independence of the individual's capabilities, for these are wholly lacking. Because we are simul aeternalis et temporalis we cannot simply prescind from the latter in orthodox affirmation of the former; that would be to take up the theology of glory's illicit standpoint sub specie aeternitatis. No, we can only affirm the former in conjunction with the latter, as concealed under it. Our experience of the relationship with God can come to us in no other way than via ethical appropriation of possibility over time, for grace does not annul the conditions of existence.

nothing at all" (SV VII 372-73 [Postscript, 428-30], translation mine).

Herrmann Deuser (Dialektische Theologie: Studien zu Adornos Metaphysik und zum Spätwerk Kierkegaard [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1980], 262-67) has interpreted Kierkegaard as providing Luther's formula, simul iustus et peccator, with an ethical, social, political, and christological context apart from which it all too easily takes on the purely metaphysical standpoint of extra nos [outside of us], sub specie aeternitatis [under the aspect of eternity]. He observes that while, for Kierkegaard, it is true that we are completely righteous in God's sight even as we continue to be sinners in our own sight, a collision is constantly taking place between these two aspects. The locus of that collision is our very temporal existence that is in the process of being transformed. Hence it impossible for us to prescind from our station in existence--one that is characterized by a concrete situation and the call to decisive action in obedience to Christ--and to assume God's standpoint where the warfare is complete. On my own view, Kierkegaard's particular concern as regards the Lutheran simul is aptly expressed in the formula, simul aeternalis et temporalis, with the stress upon temporalis, for it is there that the strife to appropriate the grace that is already ours, sub specie aeternitatis, occurs.

What is said of religiousness A where the principle, "Subjectivity is truth," reigns, is also true, mutatis mutandis, of religiousness B as regards appropriation of the relationship with God over time: "But precisely because the subject is existing, the 'how' that is subjectively emphasized is dialectical also with regard to time. In the moment of the decision of passion, where the road swings off from objective knowledge, it looks as if the infinite decision were thereby finished. But at the same moment, the existing person is in the temporal realm, and the subjective 'how' is transformed into a striving that is motivated and repeatedly refreshed by the decisive passion of the infinite, but it is nevertheless a striving" (SV VII 170 [Postscript, 203, emphasis added]). In keeping with the temporal nature of subjectivity's striving to lay hold of an objectively uncertain relationship with God, Climacus offers the following definition of the truth: "An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth that is for an existing person." This definition, though given with a view to the appropriation of the relationship with God within religiousness A, applies equally well to its appropriation within religiousness B. All that is needed is to specify
Nevertheless, this appropriation is not of man's possibility after the fashion of first ethics, but God's possibility after that of second ethics. As already mentioned, second ethics sets actuality as a task. Yet, unlike first ethics, "it does not have its ideality in making ideal demands; rather, it has its ideality in the penetrating consciousness of actuality, of the actuality of sin."

That is to say, the ethical task that Christianity sets the sinner is not that of overcoming sin, but rather, of deepening his own consciousness of it. The struggle with the anxious conscience—together with faith's venture—constitutes the indispensable condition for the realization of God's possibility. This is what man "does" within the medium of existence in appropriation of the relationship with God.

**The paradox is that he does not do these things by his own powers.** The ability to hold fast to the consciousness of one's sin (the anxious conscience qua precondition for forgiveness) is the work of grace; similarly the ability to pray for grace—and to receive, in faith, the grace thus requested!—are themselves gifts of grace. Kierkegaard writes:

> At the altar thou art able to do nothing whatever, not even to hold fast the thought of thine unworthiness, and by that to make thyself receptive to the blessing. . . . Oh, no, thou art able to do nothing whatever, not even to keep thy soul alert to the consciousness that thou art completely in need of grace and blessing. As another supported Moses when he prayed, so must thou at the altar be supported by the blessing when thou art to receive the blessing, it must support thee in its embrace while it is imparted to thee.³⁴

Kierkegaard observes that the Christian "receives everything by God's grace—even grace itself; he understands that he cannot do without God's grace even in praying for His grace."³⁵

---

³³SV IV 292-93 (Concept of Anxiety, 20).
³⁴SV X 316 (Christian Discourses, 308). Cf. SV V 102 (Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, 322): "When he goes into the house of the Lord, he knows very well . . . that he himself is capable of nothing at all, not even of inducing a devotional mood, and consequently God must be present if he is actually moved."
³⁵"Han tager Alt af Guds Naade—ogsaa Naaden; han forstaer, at han end ikke kan undvære Guds Naade for at bede ham om hans Naade" (SV X 68 [Christian Discourses, 67, the translation given being slightly amended]).
In support of this most Lutheran tenet concerning the absolute priority of grace in the believer's preparation for, and receipt of grace, SK cites two texts from the Psalms:

"His grace precedes the Christian" (Ps. 59:10) [precedes in the sense of doing for him first the very thing that he proposes to do], so that he may will to be satisfied with God's grace, and it "follows" him (Ps. 23:6), so that he may not have willed in vain, and blessedly, never regret that he was satisfied with God's grace.36

In no uncertain terms, then, Kierkegaard contends that whatever the Christian has in mind to do in actualization of the relationship with God, it has already been done for him by grace. This should not surprise us for, as we have seen, "faith itself is a wonder [Under]" that effects the new birth. In respect of the miraculous passage from "not to be" to "to be" that is accomplished by faith, the believer is said to owe God everything.37 He cannot appeal to himself for anything, for he--properly speaking--does not exist: it is God who summons him forth into being from nonbeing! Referring to the related tenets that (a) faith is a condition conferred by God without any reference to the agency of the person himself, and (b) that sin and rebirth involve a loss of continuity of that person with himself, Johannes Climacus writes:

The existing person must have lost continuity with himself, must have become another . . . and now, by receiving the condition from the God, becomes a new creature. The contradiction is that becoming a Christian begins with creation's miracle [Mirakel], and that this happens to one who is [already] created, and that this notwithstanding, Christianity is proclaimed to all people, whom it must regard as nonexistent, since the miracle by which they should come into existence must intervene.38

Clearly SK's conception of sin and rebirth as involving a breach in the person's identity requires that God be the sole agent in the sinner's rebirth, for the person himself can initiate

---

36"Hans Naade kommer den Christne i Forkjebet" (Ps. 59, 11.), at han maa ville nøies med Guds Naade, og 'følger efter' (Ps. 23, 6.), at han ikke forgjeves maa have villet, og saligt aldrig fortryde, at han nøiedes med Guds Naade" (SV X 69 [Christian Discourses, 68], translation mine). For the bracketed explanation of "kommer den Christne i Forkjebet" (inserted because the single word "precedes" fails to convey the entire meaning of the Danish expression) see C. Molbech, Dansk Ordbog indeholdende det danske Sprogs Stammeord, 2d ed. (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandling, 1859), s.v. "Forkjeb."

37SV IV 230, 226 and 188 (Fragments, 65-66, 61 and 19). Cf. SV III 100, 116 (Fear and Trembling, 51, 67), where faith is similarly designated "a marvel" (et Vidunder) that no one can achieve on his own strength.

38SV VII 502 (Postscript, 576), translation mine.
nothing. Hence it is with unimpeachable consistency that Johannes Climacus maintains that God's bestowal of faith precedes all man's willing.\textsuperscript{39}

It is agreed, therefore, that Kierkegaard assigns absolute priority to grace in every aspect of conversion. Yet at the same time he denies that grace is something that simply happens to the individual independent of his subjectivity; no, the exercise of that subjectivity is itself integral to the operation of grace. Commenting on the parable in which Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a pearl of great price for the sake of which the merchant sells all that he has (Matt. 13:45-46), Kierkegaard calls attention to the interconnectedness of the subjective and the objective:

The remarkable thing about the kingdom of heaven being compared to a person: one would, after all, suppose that the kingdom of heaven was something outside, into which the person was then taken up. But the kingdom of heaven is indeed also "within you"--hence it can be compared to the person. The unity of the subjective and the objective--that the most objective kingdom of heaven, that it is compared to a person.

Yet Kierkegaard goes on, not to develop a synergistic understanding of human cooperation with grace, but rather, the absolute priority of grace's operation in the individual:

He found a very costly pearl--and yet he went off and sold everything that he had and bought it. But if he found it, then he didn't need to sell anything--in order to buy it; it was in that case, after all, his. Here one sees the true Christian proportions. It is grace, you cannot buy it, acquire it through effort--it must be given (just as he had to find the pearl)--and only then can it be bought, only then can you sell everything that you have in order to buy it.\textsuperscript{40}

We see, then, that the sole efficacy of God's grace, which is present in and under our efforts at appropriation, does nothing to relieve us of the responsibility for such appropriation, nor does it diminish the strenuousness that this undertaking involves. This is a point that Kierkegaard is ever at pains to make. He observes that "Christianity requires everything, and then,\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39}Now if we assume that . . . the teacher himself [God] provides the learner with the condition [for receiving the truth, i.e., faith], then the object of faith becomes not the teaching but the teacher, for the essence of the Socratic is that the learner, because he himself is the truth and has the condition, can thrust the teacher away. . . . It is easy to see then . . . that faith is not an act of will, for it is always the case that all human willing is efficacious only within the condition" (SV IV 227-28 [Fragments, 62-63, the latter bolding being added for emphasis]).

\textsuperscript{40}Pap X\textsuperscript{2} A 50 (JP 4:3936), translation mine. Cf. Pap X\textsuperscript{1} A 165 (JP 3:2873).
when you have done that, it requires that you understand that you are nevertheless saved solely by grace. This is divine grace, different than the human conception of grace.\textsuperscript{41}

Now, owing to the audience that Kierkegaard addresses--a decadent Lutheranism that has taken grace in vain by ignoring the subjective component of its operation--he rightly emphasizes the indispensability of \textit{appropriating} grace. Yet his constant injunctions to imitate Christ, to die to oneself and world, etc., frequently give the impression that these are activities that Christians themselves initiate--to which the assistance of grace is \textit{conditionally} added. A closer examination, however, reveals that the matter is not so simple. Take the matter of "dying to"--an exercise that one suspects that Barth and company have construed as being a \textit{preparation} for grace and consequently anathematized. Of it SK writes:

\begin{quote}
Christ dies in order to save you--yet on the condition that you "die to"; "But then nothing at all is gained," someone will say. How so? Has nothing been gained? For even if you were to "die to" ever so much, it surely would not follow that, at death, you would enter into the eternal blessedness that Christ has acquired for you. But you say: "When one has entirely 'died to,' then he is also pure spirit and has essentially found that rest that Christianity offers, and so nothing has been gained at all by Christianity." Answer: let us suppose that it were so; in that case, however, one thing remains: that you are not able entirely to "die to" without Christ's help; indeed, without his help you are not even capable of beginning the task.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

The use of the word "condition" (\textit{Betingelse}) in the above entry notwithstanding, "dying to" is not a \textit{quid pro quo} that \textit{we} undertake, in exchange for which Christ saves us. Clearly it is conceived as something that \textit{Christ} does in and through us--something that in turn constitutes an indispensable element in the economy of salvation along with the anxious conscience, repentance, and faith. Consequently--during the early and middle periods at least--as frequently as SK may bid \textit{us} imitate Christ in dying to self and the world, he does so on the presupposition that it is \textit{God} who ultimately accomplishes this work in us.

\textsuperscript{41}Pap X\textsuperscript{3} A 353 (JP 2:1480), translation mine.

\textsuperscript{42}Pap X\textsuperscript{3} A 352 (JP 3:3753), translation mine. In addition to illustrating the primacy of grace in all that the Christian does, this journal entry also illustrates the offensiveness of Christianity's grace teaching--viz., that it should require so much of the human being, all the while declaring his efforts to be intrinsically worthless. At bottom, SK's imagined interlocutor denies that those efforts are in fact worthless, retorting instead that the \textit{grace} that Christianity offers is.
Having issued this warning against adjudging Kierkegaard guilty of works-righteousness when he insists that human activity serve as the indispensable locus for and criterion of grace,\(^{43}\) we urge anew that this insistence be understood in terms of the theology of the cross. From that perspective SK's demand that human striving serve as the criterion of grace comes as no surprise: if our deliberations on the theologia crucis have taught us anything, it is that God's saving work will always be hidden, being made manifest only indirectly under an alien work. Human activity in the economy of salvation is just such a mask for God's activity. But if this be so, then human and divine agency are inseparable aspects of one and the same reality; the individual's visible efforts at appropriating grace are of one piece with the invisible operation of grace that occurs in and through them. Certainly this is how Luther sees the matter. Karl Holl writes:

Continual humility or, as he can also say, continual repentance, is what Luther demands of the Christian. He thereby strongly emphasizes . . . the earnest work of the will that belongs to true repentance. But while he is stressing the necessity of one's own efforts of will, he nevertheless rigorously maintains that only the divinely effected repentance is genuine. Just as he acknowledges only that self-knowledge as sincere that originates under the pressure of the divine sentence of condemnation to which the person accedes, so too he considers the power to turn away from oneself, i.e., the new will, to be a gift that the person must first, in fierce struggle, request of God.\(^{44}\)

---

\(^{43}\)It is a warning that--though unfortunately all too rarely--one does find in the Kierkegaard literature. Of Kierkegaard's claim that God's justifying action must find its locus in human activity (i.e., suffering discipleship) if Christendom is not to be guilty of disingenuously appealing to the former as an ideological justification for the total absence of the latter, Hermann Deuser writes: "Wenn Kierkegaard über Luther hinaus Handlung und Situation als Kriterien des simul fordert, so darf nicht der Fehlschluß folgen, diese seien--nach Luthers Terminologie--unter die Rubrik der guten Werke zu rechnen, oder Kierkegaard entwickele gegen Luther einen tertius usus legis, der doch die Dialektik zur Aufhebung brächte; sondern Situation und Handlung entsprechen dem simul insgesamt, geben ihm als 'Situation der Gleichzeitigkeit' den christologischen, ethischen und gesellschaftspolitischen Rahmen, von dem abgelöst ein Handeln Gottes wie die menschliche Relationsbestimmung von Gott her nicht mehr auszusagen sind, ohne in Unverbindlichkeit oder christliche Ideologie zu verschwimmen. Das hat Kierkegaards Reaktion auf das Bestehende seiner Zeit konsequent vorgeführt, und deshalb mußte er auf der Unversöhnlichkeit, dem Leiden, dem Opfer und der Nachfolge so lange beharren, bis das Bestehende die Kraft gefunden hätte, sich von daher also ideologisch durchsichtig zu werden. Deshalb darf man nicht den Spieß umdrehen und nun Kierkegaard Werkgerechtigkeit vorwerfen wollen, sofern es ihm um die Gnade ging, die in der bestehenden Christenheit falsch lokalisiert war" (Dialektische Theologie, 266).

\(^{44}\)Karl Holl, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewißheit" in Luther, vol. 1 of Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte, 4th and 5th printing (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1927), 142. The emphasis is Holl's, whose point regarding the paradoxical convergence of divine and human agency in conversion provides an apposite
There can be no doubt, in the light of the texts that we have already reviewed, that Kierkegaard sees the relationship between God's gift and man's appropriation of the same in an identical manner. Grace is necessarily a hidden reality. What is visible is religiousness under ethical determinants—with, N.B., the necessary Christian qualifications. As we have seen, the latter, so far from removing the pathos of appropriation that already attaches to religiousness A, only serve to potentiate it by demanding the most strenuous efforts, all the while denying any intrinsic worth or effectuating power to them. This paradoxical state of affairs arouses offense (the sign of the cross!) and in so doing validates Christianity's understanding of grace as the divine understanding.

The offensive element of this divine understanding of grace is precisely that the ethical component of general religiousness does not fall away with the advent of grace; on the contrary, it asserts itself with a vengeance. Accordingly, in those very contexts in description not only of Luther but of Kierkegaard.

45 "If, for the moment, I were to leave out of account all the more specific dogmatic qualifications regarding the Spirit's participation, etc., I could then define rebirth as follows: it is immediacy won ethically [i.e., qua task, Opgave]. Ethics, or rather the ethical, is the axis about which it turns, and then, from there, the swing is into the dogmatic" (Pap X 1 A 360 [JP 1:972, translation mine]).

46 "Whatever pertains to Christianity always has a reduplication within itself. When 'grace' is connected with my living in a carefree, merry manner, then grace is taken in vain. Grace is connected with the fact that I, too, shall 'die to,' which the Prototype simultaneously expressed all the while that the Prototype's suffering and death was grace's acquisition. I, too, shall 'die to'—and then, nevertheless, he saved by grace. The human concept of grace is: now you shall get off scot free, therefore it is grace. The Christian concept is: no, you shall suffer and suffer—and then be saved by grace. One can easily see offense's criterion. It can already be an offense to the natural man to have to hear of grace inasmuch as he wants to justify himself. 'But very well,' he says, 'then let it be grace; I will humbly receive it, but in that case I also want to be free.' Oh no, says Christianity, you will come to suffer and suffer—and then you shall nevertheless humble yourself under the circumstance that it is by grace that you are saved" (Pap X 3 A 278 [JP 3:3681], translation mine).

SK underscores the offensiveness of the notion that it is by grace apart from works that we are saved by comparing the one who does much in appropriation of grace (i.e., the witness to the truth) with the one who does little (the rest of us): "Ah, if you are living happily in a beloved home, if your wife is devoted to you with all her heart and all her strength, if your children give you joy, then consider what it means to go on living day after day in this peace and quiet, salutary for a person's soul . . . , and consider that this is your daily life—and then think of the witness to the truth! . . . [I]f, to put it briefly and aptly, your life is a quiet daily pleasure—ah, his life was a painful daily suffering—then you both die and you are equally blessed! . . . Consider this, and, is it not true, you surely will say to yourself what I say to myself: Whether I now will not actually venture that far out or whether I pamper myself so that I do not venture out at all, one thing I will do, no matter how much I otherwise have to do: I will take the time to recall those glorious ones every single day. Oh, to me it seems a flagrant wrong that we two will both be equally blessed! But in any case my life is going to be a recollection of them!" (SV XII 312-13 [For Self-Examination, 22-23]).
which SK urges the absolute primacy of grace, he is careful to present the corresponding passivity of the human subject in the most active terms possible. To do otherwise would be to remove the cross from Christianity’s proclamation of grace! As an example of this modus operandi one may look to SK’s exposition of Luke 7:47, Jesus’ forgiveness of the woman who was a notorious sinner. Kierkegaard writes:

What, then, is it this woman did from whom we are to learn? The answer is: Nothing, she did nothing at all; she practiced the high, rare, exceedingly difficult, genuine womanly art of doing nothing at all, or of understanding that with respect to finding forgiveness she herself was able to do nothing. "How easy!"--yes, were it not that precisely the easiness is the difficulty. Verily he that subdueth himself is greater than he that taketh a city. Greater than he that sets everything in commotion just for the sake of doing something himself, is he who in relation to God and with respect to receiving forgiveness of his sins, can keep quite still, so as in godly fear to let God do all, understanding perfectly that in this respect he himself is able to do nothing at all, that everything a man himself is able to do, though it were the most glorious deed, the most astonishing, is in this respect infinitely nothing, that it is (if, indeed, it is something which, humanly speaking, is really good, and not the pitiful self-deception of the cunning heart) so far from contributing even in the least degree to acquire for him in the remotest way the forgiveness of sins, that it far rather puts him in a new debt, a new debt of gratitude to the infinite grace which in addition to everything else permitted him to succeed in this. No--oh, pitiable aberration, or frightful presumption, that such a thought could occur to a man in the remotest way!--no, with respect to obtaining forgiveness of sins, or before God, a man has no power to do anything; how could this be possible, since even in relation to the least thing, a man, humanly speaking, has no power, except by God’s help.47

47 SV XII 256-57 ("The Woman That Was a Sinner" in "Training in Christianity" and the Edifying Discourse Which 'Accompanied' It, trans. Walter Lowrie [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947], 268-69). In all, SK wrote three discourses treating of Luke 7:47—the discourse cited above, written under SK’s own name and accompanying Anti-Climacus’s Practice in Christianity (1850); another discourse (one of the cycle, “Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays”), similarly written under SK’s own name and appearing roughly contemporaneously with Anti-Climacus’s other work, The Sickness unto Death (1849); and finally, a third discourse (included in the cycle, “Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays”) appearing on the same day as My Activity as a Writer (1851), both written under SK’s own name. The general pattern in all of these discourses is to emphasize the personal appropriation of grace while denying that any capability on the part of the person—or resultant merit—attaches thereto. While perhaps not adequately expressing the strenuousness of the believer’s passive appropriation of grace, Martin Thust nevertheless correctly observes: "Mit seinem Handeln drückt der Glaubende nur aus, daß er in Wahrheit nicht handelt, sondern nur auf Jesus blickt, mit dem ihm alles geschenkt ist (Röm. 8, 32). Das ist der Klang, der in der Eingangspredigt der "Einübung" und in den Abendmahlsreden immer wieder ankiingt" (Søren Kierkegaard. Der Dichter des Religiösen. Grundlagen eines Systems der Subjektivität [Munich: C. H. Beck’sche Verlagshandlung, 1931], 358). One wonders whether Thust does not have reference to all three of the discourses on Lk. 7:47—the one quoted above (though he refers to it as "der Eingangspredigt der Einübung") as well as SV XII 273-80 ("The High Priest"—"The Publican"—The
Already in the *Postscript*, within the context of religious immanence, we encounter the notion of endeavoring to acquire what one already possesses. While such acquisition would appear to be the easiest of tasks, really it is the most strenuous possible, involving the maintenance of a passive posture toward what is already given. Operating under the assumption that one is immortal yet, qua temporal being, must nevertheless become such, Climacus asks, "What does it mean to become immortal?" Can one (a) "do anything in order to become immortal," does one (b) "become immortal automatically," or is one (c) "immortal but can become that?" Clearly the first two possibilities are raised only rhetorically; it is the final one that Climacus favors. If immortality is a thing that one becomes "as a matter of course" then

the highest in life [immortality's acquisition] turns out to be like a ridiculous undertaking, so that the passion of freedom . . . is assigned only the lower tasks but has nothing to do with the highest, not even negatively, since a negative action in relation to the highest would in turn certainly be the most strenuous action—namely, after having enthusiastically willed to the utmost of one's ability to do everything, then to learn that the highest is to maintain oneself at every moment merely receptively toward precisely that which one would so infinitely gladly do something to acquire.\(^{48}\)

To regard immortality as a thing that one becomes "as a matter of course" is, within religiousness A's context, the equivalent of "taking grace in vain" in Christianity's context. One already is immortal and can, therefore, contribute nothing to its acquisition; nevertheless one must, in freedom, become what one already is through the most taxing passivity.\(^{49}\)

---

\(^{48}\)SV VII 145 (Postscript, 175, amended and emphasis added).

\(^{49}\)Remember, the sphere of religious immanence is that of the soul's pre-existence (immortality). While this tenet is capable of definitive proof if one has recourse to the phenomenon of recollection (Plato's *Meno*), Johannes Climacus represents Socrates as continually repudiating this speculative temptation in recognition of the fact that his station is in existence—a circumstance that prevents him from distractedly assuming a status *sub specie aeternitatis*. While Socrates contends as an article of faith that he is immortal, his station in existence nevertheless compels him to become such through appropriation of what he already is, over time.
In precisely the same manner, from Christianity's point of view one is, from the outset, the beneficiary of grace; accordingly, one does nothing at all. This notwithstanding, one is not relieved of the task of acquiring that of which one finds oneself already in possession. Hence, though the Christian be the patient of grace's operation, he is as well the agent of its acquisition. How may two such conflictive tenets be reconciled? Only by application of the cognitive principle of the theology of the cross: God's grace, as seen from its antipode—human experience—necessarily has the appearance of the most stupendous striving. It is the very translation of divine grace into the terms of existence that so alters its visage. Nevertheless it remains grace, and as such, retains its priority over the Christian's appropriation of the same. Martin Thust writes:

The appropriation of the divine gift is itself a gift, and one understands Kierkegaard falsely if one construes it unambiguously as a free act of the person. Instead one must speak of a charisma of appropriation through which God gives in advance to the individual what he subsequently makes his own. . . . When Kierkegaard everywhere in his religious discourses demands the forceful application of the will, he himself reckons in earnest with the divine grace that has already in some way grasped his reader and made him capable of this action. For there can be no doubt that Kierkegaard absolutely distinguishes the natural immanence of the human from the transcendence of the divine: here exists an unbridgeable abyss over which no human being, by his own powers, can pass. The passage between these two worlds takes place . . . in a paradoxical, preconditioned act, an act that, in an irreconcilable way, ambiguously signifies an act of the person, and yet again, not his act, but the action of God. 50

50 Søren Kierkegaard: Der Dichter des Religiösen, 367. Though it does not have conversion as its focus (the focus is on the already sanctified will that practices self-renunciation), SV IX 343 (Works of Love, 333) nonetheless addresses the issue of the convergence of grace and human activity: "Precisely this becomes the blessing, disturbing contradiction: to have one all-powerful as co-worker. For one all-powerful cannot be co-worker with you, a human being, without its signifying that you are able to do nothing at all; and on the other side, if he is your support, you are able to do everything. The strenuousness lies in the simultaneity of the contradiction so that you do not experience the one to-day and the other to-morrow; the strenuousness lies in this that the contradiction is not something you are conscious of once in a while but something you must be conscious of every moment."

Even Torsten Bohlin, who considers SK a synergist, grants that one must speak of a paradoxical convergence between faith qua divine operation and faith qua human activity in Kierkegaard. Bohlin maintains, however, that SK's well-nigh exclusive emphasis upon the indispensable role of human activity has obscured for him the primacy of God's activity and prevented him from attaining to "the jubilant cheerfulness of Luther's faith" (in the process landing him in synergism). Bohlin writes: "Forgiveness, at the same time that it is regarded by Kierkegaard as a gift of God, is comprehended under faith, and . . . faith, even if it is always regarded according to its innermost nature as a work of God, nevertheless is always overwhelmingly presented not from God's point of view or as a reception from the human side of God's own love life, but
We see, then, that the objectivity of grace is manifest here on earth in only one way: viz., as human subjectivity. The solely effectual operation of grace is identifiable only as the individual's highly extenuating efforts, amid repeated and overwhelming Anfechtungen, at its appropriation. In the strong language of Luther: the Christian "cannot possess the heaven of community with God without repeatedly making the descent into hell which takes place when he doubts and even despairs of God's grace." Intrinsic to the Christian's despair of God's grace is offense at that grace: i.e., at its repellent aspect. Luther and Kierkegaard recognize this alike. Consequently, their stress upon the strenuous efforts involved in appropriating grace does not constitute a tacit denial of grace's primacy, but an acknowledgment of its presence under a mask—their teachings on grace, alike, urge the necessity of penetrating that mask in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. One aspect of grace's sub contraria specie, however, is the very struggle for its appropriation. Here, too, faith is incumbent. Faith alone can—and must—descry in the opus alienum of appropriation, and the sufferings attendant to it, the opus proprium in which God effects his saving purpose for us. More than this, the act of appropriation is itself faith, the hidden work of God in us, for faith not only victoriously transforms our strivings and sufferings so that these

from the human point of view as an expression for human activity and the will's own striving. . . . [T]he determination of faith from the standpoint of human activity has, in reality, come to influence the understanding of forgiveness' content as well, so that its character as a new creation and new orientation of the will, effected by God, has not received its just due. It is not the case with Kierkegaard, as it is with Luther, that faith never sees itself but only sees God and his work in everything; and while the jubilant cheerfulness in Luther's faith is conditioned by the fact that faith elevates itself so as to see with God's eyes and comprehends itself through and though as God's action in man, the case is the reverse with Kierkegaard—faith's inward gazing upon itself has stood as a hindrance in the way of the joyous confidence and cheerfulness and inevitably led to the circumstance that the awareness that the person really is renewed and is privy to Christ's dominion has never been able to break completely through" (Kierkegaards dogmatiska åskådning i dess historiska sammanhang [Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokförlag, 1925], 484-85). As will become evident in the latter part of this work, I share Bohlin's view that such a displacement occurs in the later Kierkegaard.


52 Eduard Geismar writes: "In Luther findet Kierkegaard endlich einen Menschen, der ihm kongenial ist im Verständnisse dessen, daß die 'Vergebung der Sünden' sowohl die Bekümmernis wie das Gericht enthält; und er verweilt wieder und immer wieder dabei, daß es bei der lutherischen Lehre von der Gnade immer auf den Kampf des gehegten Gewissens ankommt, das zu der Aneignung dieses 'Für dich' vordringt" ("Wie urteilte Kierkegaard über Luther?" Luther Jahrbuch 10 [1928]:3-4).
come to assume the aspect of God's solely effectual grace; faith is God's activity under the aspect of human freedom.
CHAPTER FIVE
KIERKEGAARD'S TEACHING ON THE WILL:
LIBERUM ARBITRIUM OR SERVUM ARBITRIUM?

If the previous chapter's account of Kierkegaard's teaching on grace is correct we are faced with the antinomy that man can do nothing in the economy of salvation—it is God who effects everything, including the human being's receptivity to the operation of grace. This notwithstanding, it is maintained that the person is responsible for receiving grace, and this, in such a way that his real—not illusory—agency is affirmed. That Kierkegaard maintains both elements of the antinomy is abundantly clear from a journal entry such as the following:

This is the law for the relationship between God and man in the relationship with God.

DIVISIO

There is an infinite, yawning, qualitative difference between God and man. This means, or the expression for this is: the person is able to do absolutely nothing; it is God who gives everything; it is he who enables the person to believe, etc.

This is grace, and this is Christianity's major premise.

SUBDIVISIO

Notwithstanding the fact that there could, of course, be nothing, unconditionally nothing meritorious in any action whatever, any more than faith could be meritorious (for in that case the Divisio or major premise is annulled, and we are, after all, here in a minor premise), it is nevertheless essential to dare in a childlike way to be involved with God.¹

While it is the case that Kierkegaard affirms both aspects of the above antinomy, I have chosen to highlight those texts that assert the sovereign dominion that grace exercises

¹Pap X ¹ A 59 (JP 2:1383). Translation mine.
in the life of the individual. It seems only right to do so since the other element of the antinomy is, to use Kierkegaard's own expression, "after all, . . . a minor premise." This notwithstanding it is easy enough, when reading Kierkegaard, to have one's attention directed to precisely that premise—viz., to the agency that is demanded of the individual in relating to God, and to the accountability and freedom that are the inevitable correlates of moral agency. For the texts in which Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms stress this aspect are legion. Indeed, the above entry itself lays the stress on the "minor premise" since exclusive emphasis upon the "major premise" can all too easily become an endorsement of "living entirely as one pleases, with a worldly view of life," or of "leading a religious still life without duly coming out into the dangers."

Here as elsewhere, it is imperative to remember that Kierkegaard's statements are not motivated so much by an interest in dogmatic definition as by a predominantly practical intent. His remarks about human agency and responsibility within the context of the relationship with God, therefore, should not be taken to be dogmatic formulations of a synergistic position. Just as we earlier found that Kierkegaard's emphasis upon the ethical aspects of Christianity did not constitute a revocation of the Lutheran teachings on sin and grace, so too we may here suspect that his accentuation of human agency by no means constitutes a revocation of the Lutheran teaching regarding the bondage of the will. Yet not a few notable Kierkegaard scholars have maintained just this. Eduard Geismar, the very scholar who, above all others, has called attention to the role that the theologia crucis plays in Kierkegaard's thought, has written: "We must, however, point out a significant difference between Luther and Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard would not have been able to write De Servo Arbitrio." Similarly, Emanuel Hirsch has maintained that Kierkegaard's teaching on grace

---

2"Kierkegaard und Luther," Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie 25 (Oct./Nov. 1929):234. Geismar's statement is endorsed by Viggo Mortensen, who charges SK with having misinterpreted the doctrine of justification in a synergistic direction ("Luther og Kierkegaard," in Kierkegaardiana IX, ed. Søren Kierkegaard Society by Niels Thulstrup [Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1974], 194). Heinrich Traugott Vogel, too, detects a clear synergistic strain in Kierkegaard's thinking. This he traces to SK's "anthropological point of view," in contrast to which he finds a predestinarian strain devolving from SK's "christological point of view." While these two points of view uneasily coexist for much of the authorship, Vogel finds that the latter is increasingly overpowered by the former so that Kierkegaard ends by preditating grace upon human initiative ("Christus als Vorbild und Versöhner. Eine kritische Studie zum Problem des Verhältnisses von Gesetz und Evangelium im Werke Sören Kierkegaards," [Inaugural diss., Humboldt University, Berlin, 1968], 74-76, 94,
is Lutheran, but his teaching on the will Erasmian.\(^3\) For his part, Torsten Bohlin totally concurs in this judgement.\(^4\) Because Hirsch has given the most detailed schema of SK's "synergism," it is to it that we now turn.

Hirsch bases his interpretation on the fact that, in the confrontation with Hegel, Kierkegaard was led to assert on the one hand the "yawning abyss" that separates the life of grace from that under the law in sin, but on the other hand, personality and freedom. "With the one notion he stands on the side of the Lutheran teaching on grace as over against the Erasmian attenuation of grace and, with the other, on the side of the Erasmian teaching on freedom as over against Luther's teaching on bondage."\(^5\) This disparity presented Kierkegaard with a task for thought, the solution to which he had worked out by 1840-41, according to Hirsch. It is during this period that we encounter a journal entry in which Kierkegaard declares synergism to be the principle of Christianity.\(^6\) On the basis of an examination of this and other texts, Hirsch develops a point by point schema of Kierkegaard's "synergism." The freedoms that Kierkegaard is said to accord the will are freedom in the act of sin,\(^7\) freedom in the act of recognition of sin,\(^8\) and freedom in cooperating with grace;\(^9\) divine intervention is assigned to but a single point, that of regeneration through the conferral of faith. Hirsch summarizes this schema in the following way:

Faith qua immediate consciousness has as its presupposition a new, original beginning that is sovereignly implanted by God in the person who recognizes his

---

\(^3\)Kierkegaard-Studien, Zweiter Band, Drittes Heft, Erste Studie (Vadus/Liechtenstein: Topos Verlag, 1978), 129 [575 in continuous pagination].

\(^4\)Kierkegaards tro och andra Kierkegaardstudier (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokforlag, 1944), 182.


\(^6\)Pap III A 118 (JP 4:4004).

\(^7\)Ibid.

\(^8\)Pap III A 39 (JP 2:1100).

\(^9\)SV XIII 380 (Concept of Irony, 313).
sins—a beginning that only later, in reflection and action, opens into freedom; . . . there-fore grace, in which we receive forgiveness and conversion, is the breaking of the divine into our life from beyond our thinking and willing. Kierkegaard's synergism therefore leads through the decision for the consciousness of sin along the way up to the portal of grace and, through the free acceptance of the divine that discloses itself to us, once again along the way from the portal of grace out through life. He leaves in between, however, one point, the "hidden one" of "spiritual birth."  

Against such an interpretation two things can be urged. The first is that it is exegetically unsound. Per Lønning observes that it is based on a limited selection of texts in which the concept of freedom seems to be understood from a psychological perspective. To this may be added that they all derive from a very early date, and Hirsch himself makes the admission that the synergistic element in Kierkegaard's thinking thereafter increasingly loses its force in relation to the element of grace. The three youthful texts

---

10 Kierkegaard-Studien, Zweiter Band, Drittes Heft, Erste Studie: 130 [576]. Hirsch's text reads as follows: "Die beiden Seiten [i.e., freedom and grace] finden sich so zusammen, daß der Glaube als unmittelbares Bewußtsein einen von Gott in dem seine Sünden Erkennenden souverän gesetzten neuen ursprünglichen Anfang zur Voraussetzung hat, der erst nachträglich in Reflexion und Handlung zur Freiheit aufgeschlossen wird, daß also die Gnade, in der wir Vergebung und Umkehr empfangen, der jenseits unsers Denkens und Wollens stehende Hereinbruch des Göttlichen in unser Leben ist. Der Synergismus Kierkegaards führt also durch die Entscheidung fürs Sündenbewußtsein auf dem Wege bis vor Tor der Gnade, und durch das freie Aufnehmen des sich uns erschließenden Göttlichen auch wieder auf dem Wege vom Tor der Gnade durchs Leben hindurch. Er läßt dazwischen aber einen Punkt, den 'verborgenen' der 'geistlichen Geburt'."


12 Certainly this holds true for the published authorship. To be sure, Vogel (supra, n. 2) contends that a synergistic element comes strongly to the fore in the late Kierkegaard (i.e., the journals from about 1851-52 on). Yet if one prescinds from this late development, confining one's attention to the published works (which conclude in 1851), it is clear that grace possesses ascendancy over human willing in SK's presentation of faith. Hirsch's admission that this is so is particularly noteworthy in view of the fact that he so strongly maintains SK's "synergism" from beginning to end: "Es bleibt . . . in den ersten pseudonymen Schriften noch unklar, in welchem Sinne der Glaube, der als eine freie leidenschaftliche Bewegung des Individuums geschildert wird, auf der Gnade beruht. Nur das ist schon jetzt ganz eindeutig, daß 'in Kraft des Absurden' aus der ästhetischen Perspektive des Pseudonyms in die christliche Übersetzt heißt: 'in Kraft des unbegreiflichen schlechthinigen Wunders der versöhnenden Gnade,' daß also bei Kierkegaard über den Glauben die synergistische Aussage mit einer, die die Gnade als die mindestens die Glaubens-möglichkeit schenkend schaffende ehr, zusammensteht und ihr gegenüber mehr und mehr an Kraft verliert. Ruttenbeck, S. Kierkegaard 1929, S. 219ff., hat diesen Tatbestand gut beobachtet, freilich nach meinem Urteil viel zu sehr in die Paradoxie des Prädestinationismus, den Kierkegaard mit seiner theologischen Reflexion ablehnt, umgebogen. Selbst wenn man bedenkt, daß Kierkegaard die Aussagen über den Glauben als Willensakt je länger je mehr eingegrenzt hat, das bleibt doch, daß die vor der Gnade stehende, von der Gnade vorausgesetzte Wahl der Verzweiflung bei Kierkegaard ein schlechthin freier Akt ist . . . und das Gleiche gilt vom Gehorsam.
upon which Hirsch's interpretation is built are hardly compelling. The first one (Pap III A 118 [JP 4:4004]) declares synergism to be Christianity's principle, citing sin as an instance of the freedom that Christianity assigns to the individual. Yet not even the most orthodox Lutheran would dispute that sin, in the first instance, is a free act; nor would he dispute that the person, having once become the slave to sin, nevertheless continues to be regarded under the determinant of freedom, for otherwise his sin would no longer be construable as sin. Yet if these facets of Kierkegaard's "synergism" are all that can be inferred from the text cited, then it is utterly unserviceable as proof that Kierkegaard was synergistic in the proposed Erasmian sense. Hirsch's second text (Pap III A 39 [JP 2:1100]) asserts that the consciousness of sin and the assurance of the forgiveness of sin are not products of prior states of consciousness. They do not belong to a psychological chain of cause and effect at all, but arise spontaneously as acts of freedom. Yet just who the agent behind these free acts might be is not disclosed. Finally, the third text (SV XIII 380 [Concept of Irony, 313]), despite its strong appearance of synergism, is not without ambiguity. There Kierkegaard speaks of "the synergism that assists the deity" but, as the context seems to indicate, means thereby that the person is not an impassive instrument of grace, but that the new will is personally engaged in what grace effects. "The finite is, of course, the Nichtige," Kierkegaard writes,
"but there is nevertheless something in it, and something to that something." Again, no champion of Lutheran orthodoxy would take issue with this. Still other (later) texts that Hirsch might have mentioned, but did not, appear to approach conversion from the "psychological perspective" referred to by Lønning. As such, they too fail firmly to establish SK's synergism. Hence it is certainly possible to conclude with Valter Lindstrøm that, when Kierkegaard does use the word "synergism" in the early texts, he has another meaning in mind than the usual one.

The second thing that may be urged against Hirsch's interpretation is its untenability from a logical standpoint. Lindstrøm points out that "it should be impossible to imagine a person who is Lutheran in his teaching on grace but Erasmian in his teaching on freedom if . . ."

15SV XIII 380 (Concept of Irony, 313), translation mine. The context of this passage is SK's analysis of Solger, for whom "moral qualifications have no validity; all finitude together with its moral and immoral striving vanishes in the metaphysical contemplation that sees it as nothing" (SV XIII 380 [Concept of Irony, 312-13]). Against this Kierkegaard objects: "It is indeed true that moral virtues have no worth in and by themselves but only in the humility that allows God to evoke them in us; and it is indeed true that human vices can be canceled only by God and not by one's own powers; but by no means does this say that one is to lose oneself metaphysically and in the one case to disregard the synergism that assists the deity and in the other case to disregard the repentance that does not let go of God" (Hong translation, slightly amended). SK's point seems to be (a) that though human moral distinctions and strivings lack validity in the sight of God, man himself must accord them a certain validity, and (b) that the person is, in any case, not an impassive instrument of grace.

16SV XII 149-50 (Practice in Christianity, 159-60) is a much later text that could be read as a declaration of synergism in the classical sense since it speaks of Christ's work in drawing the person as a "composite" [Sammensat] act in which the individual cooperates by means of a choice [et Volg]: "With regard to the iron when it is drawn [by the magnet], there is no question and can be none of any choice. But one self can truly draw another self to itself only through a choice—thus truly to draw to itself is a composite." While the notion of "choice" [arbitrium] goes beyond what Luther will admit as belonging to the will's powers, SK by no means has in mind the choice of a disinterested free will. As we shall shortly demonstrate, he has rather in mind the personal engagement of one who is already in the process of being drawn to Christ (something more akin to Luther's voluntas). A psychological perspective underlies two "synergistic" statements from the Edifying Discourses as well (SV V 128, 147 [Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, 352, 375]). In them SK refers to the Semi-Pelagian maxim, "Do what you can for God, and he will do for you what you cannot do," as a "beautiful saying." Yet this is hardly an endorsement of synergism. Indeed, it is possible to employ the language of "doing what lies within one," all the while assuming that prevenient grace stands behind such "preparation for grace." Aquinas, for example, does so.

17If we first examine the content of the word, 'synergism,' it is surely apparent that this word in Kierkegaard receives another content than the usual one, on which God's gracious will and the human will are conceived as complementing each other . . . Kierkegaard's claim that since a moment of freedom is present along with sin, sin demonstrates Christianity's synergistic character, shows clearly that he does not intend to profess synergism in its classical sense' (Stadiernas teologi. En Kierkegaard-studie [Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1943], 353).
one is to attribute any consistency to his view.\textsuperscript{18} As we have already seen, Kierkegaard's teaching on grace corresponds to a teaching on sin so extreme that it ostensibly places him in the company of Matthias Flacius. Nor has this fact escaped Lindström's notice, for he remarks that, so far from being a synergist, "one could in fact sooner maintain that Kierkegaard is in the ranks of Flacius since the latter maintained that the person's will is not merely passive like a stick toward grace, but that it is positively hostile toward God."\textsuperscript{19} One would be very surprised indeed, then, were one to discover that SK was so inconsistent as to espouse Lutheran doctrines of sin and grace, but a synergistic doctrine of freedom. Yet just such inconsistency is what Bohlin attributes to Kierkegaard.\textsuperscript{20} Is it possible that there is substance to this charge?

The only way in which it could be possible were if Kierkegaard espoused a \textit{liberum arbitrium} conception of the will, for this is ultimately the basis upon which synergism rests. In its classical Lutheran form, synergism teaches that unregenerate man's will, though so enfeebled by sin as to be incapable of \textit{initiating} the process of conversion, can nevertheless be a \textit{forthcoming} factor in it. To be sure, the Holy Spirit must first have "made the beginning and . . . called us by the Gospel." But once the offer of grace has been extended, the free will by its own natural powers can meet God and to some degree—though only to a small extent and in a weak way—help and cooperate and prepare itself for the grace of God, embrace and accept it, believe the Gospel, and by its own powers cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the continuation and preservation of this work within us.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 352.


\textsuperscript{20}Kierkegaards tro, 182-83.

\textsuperscript{21}As described in the Formula of Concord's Solid Declaration, art. II, par. 77 (Theodore G. Tappert, ed. and trans., The Book of Concord [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959], 536). The whole of article two is essential for understanding the synergists' teachings and orthodoxy's response. So too are the texts of the dispute's original participants: Erasmus's \textit{On the Freedom of the Will} and Luther's \textit{On the Bondage of the Will}. An excellent discussion of the position of Erasmus, as well as that of Luther, is to be found in Brian Gerrish's essay, "Piety, Theology, and the Lutheran Dogma: Erasmus's Book on Free Will" (in The Old Protestantism...
The synergists' picture of the will is really that of a pair of scales: if only enough "weight" is added to the deficient side (through the preaching of the Word and prompting of the Spirit), a balance will be struck so that man's natural volition will be in a position to throw its own weight to one side or the other and determine the outcome. Thereafter the natural volition continues to require the Spirit's assistance to make up for what it lacks. That is to say, grace continues to cancel out the deficit of the will's natural ability, "zeroing out" the scales so that it can choose the good.

Against the tenability of such a picture of the will, we have Kierkegaard's own testimony at an early point. In one of his first treatments of the issue (in 1840, one year prior to Hirsch's "synergism" entry) Kierkegaard likens the problem of freedom to that of consciousness. Just as consciousness is not an empty form such that one could commence one's philosophy without presuppositions (such a tabula rasa is nowhere to be found), so too is freedom always qualified by its content from the outset:

The circumstance that philosophy has to begin with a presupposition must not be regarded as a defect but as a blessing; hence this an sich also becomes a curse of which philosophy can never be quit—it is this conflict between consciousness as the empty form, as the retained image of the fleeting object, that corresponds to the same problem in freedom: how the contentless arbitrium that, like the weight-scale, has nothing to do with the content but, as infinitely abstract elasticity, maintains itself victorious and indifferent to all eternity, how this becomes positive freedom—here, too, a presupposition is encountered because this liberum arbitrium is actually never to be found but, already, the very existence of the world provides it [i.e., the presupposition].
From this point on the material determination of freedom, on the one hand, and the nonexistence of liberum arbitrium, on the other, are tenets consistently maintained by Kierkegaard. During his reading of Leibnitz's Theodicee in 1842-43, for example, Kierkegaard registers the following remark: "A perfectly disinterested will (equilibrium) is a nothing, a chimera; Leibnitz demonstrates this superbly in many places." In Either/Or, under the guise of Judge William, he characterizes "the true, positive freedom" as that which chooses the good and is determined by it to such an extent that the evil is utterly excluded from it; such freedom, he stresses, is not to be confused with liberum arbitrium. Likewise, Vigilius Haufniensis conceives freedom to be the outcome of an immediate, unhesitating choice of the good; such freedom "knows nothing of the evil." Only with the fall into sin are good and evil posited as co-possibilities. But with the fall, this difference between good and evil comes to be experienced in concreto—i.e., as evil. Liberum arbitrium, on the other hand, "is found nowhere." The latter, so-called freedom—which postulates "a moment to choose between good and evil, a moment when freedom itself is in neither the one nor the other"—is not freedom at all, but a "meaningless reflection." In like manner, wherever one turns in Kierkegaard's writings one encounters the denial that freedom is ever indifferent to the object that it chooses; either it immediately chooses the good and is materially determined by that choice, or it has chosen the evil and become irrevocably stamped thereby.

It is therefore not at all surprising that Kierkegaard, under the guise of Haufniensis, endorses the dogma of original sin, the import of which just is that fallen man's will is bound by sin. To be sure, after the fall man continues to be characterized by freedom as well. It cannot be otherwise, since freedom constitutes the condition for sin's continued entry into

---


24SV II 157 (Either/Or II, 173-74).

25Not even at the moment prior to the fall! Haufniensis writes that liberum arbitrium "no more existed in the world in the beginning than in a late period, because it is a nuisance for thought" (SV IV 320 [Concept of Anxiety, 49]).

26Ibid., 380-81 (111-12).
the world. Yet such freedom is more accurately designated "freedom lost." Of the two possible formations in sin that Haufniensis identifies, the less serious one--anxiety about the evil--just is "the bondage of sin" wherein one finds oneself in an unfree relation to the evil, while the other formation--anxiety about the good--is a corresponding unfree relation to the good. 27 The fallen individual's freedom has thus received a negative determination. It is still freedom, but--N. B.--freedom materially qualified by sin. Freedom is so understood in the other pseudonyms as well. When Climacus speaks of freedom (within religiousness A), he does so in connection with guilt. "Guilt . . . is freedom's expression as this can be in the ethico-religious sphere, where the positive is recognizable by the negative, freedom by guilt, and not directly recognizable aesthetically: freedom recognizable by freedom." 28 Even Judge William, for all his talk of choosing oneself qua free being, 29 understands this in precisely the same sense. To be sure, freedom, for him, entails making a choice--an apparently positive determination. Yet the self that is chosen is guilty, and his act of choosing is consequently an act of repentance. The ethical expression for freedom simply is repentance. 30 Not a word is spoken of a positive capability. Not even from the point of view of Judge William's "ethical optimism" is man "free" in this way. 31

The negative characterization of freedom of course becomes still more severe as we move into the sphere of the paradoxical-religious. In the Fragments Climacus asserts that man has forfeited his freedom through a free, but irrevocable choice--"he uses the power of freedom in the service of unfreedom since he is, after all, freely in it, and in this way the

---

27Ibid., 387 (119).

28SV VII 466 (Postscript, 534), translation mine.

29SV II 193 (Either/Or II, 215).

30Ibid., 194 (216).

31The sermon that Judge William encloses as an afterword to his letters reinforces this interpretation. Behind the Judge's civil rectitude and advocacy of responsible choice lies the recognition of man's incapability vis-à-vis "things higher." The sermon title expresses the thought as follows: that, "in relation to God, we are always in the wrong."
consolidated power of unfreedom grows and makes him the slave of sin.\textsuperscript{32} As an explanation for how such a bondage of the will could have come about, Climacus harks back to a time "when a man could buy freedom and unfreedom for the same price, and this price was the free choice of the soul and the surrender of the choice. He chose unfreedom." Any subsequent "exchange" of unfreedom for the original, forfeited freedom has become impossible for, "the curious thing about unfreedom is that once it is purchased it has no value whatsoever, even though one pays the same price for it."\textsuperscript{33} It is illuminating to note that the "purchase price" of freedom (or unfreedom, as the case may be) is identified as the free choice of the soul \textbf{and the surrender of the choice (Valgets Hengivelse)}. The latter words are pregnant with meaning. While full discussion must be deferred until later, we can here adumbrate our result by saying that freedom and unfreedom are purchased, alike, by the \textbf{relinquishment} of freedom to one of two powers--to God or to sin. Freedom exists only as materially determined by its object.

A second point to be made concerning Climacus's understanding of the negative qualification that attaches to fallen man's freedom is that it is not mere bondage to unfreedom, as though the will would gladly cleave unto God if only it had the power to do so (\textbf{that is the synergists' position}). No, we read that the place wherein fallen man has taken his abode--the untruth--"is not merely outside the truth but is polemical against the truth."\textsuperscript{34} Both factors--that man \textbf{cannot}, and that he \textbf{will not}, will the truth--must be taken together

\textsuperscript{32}SV IV 187 (\textit{Fragments}, 17), translation mine. Cf. Pap $X^4$ A 173 (JP 4:4047) as well as Pap $X^4$ A 175 (JP 2:1268), in which entries SK agrees with Augustine that the loss of the ability to choose the good "is sin's punishment--and is, again, sin. The concept of sin traps in every way. It is not something external so that the punishment is another thing; no, the punishment, though punishment, is nonetheless, again, sin" (translation mine).

\textsuperscript{33}SV IV 186 (\textit{Fragments}, 16).

\textsuperscript{34}SV IV 185 (\textit{Fragments}, 15). This may well be the text that Lindström has in mind when he draws the earlier-mentioned comparison with Flacius. Certainly Climacus's thesis is not unreminiscent of that for which Flacius contended during his Weimar Disputation against Strigel in 1560. There he argued that the person, at conversion, is not even capable of relating to grace in the manner of a wood-block or a stone. On the contrary, as a sinner, he is capable only of opposition toward God.
in order to reveal the full depth of his bondage to sin, as well as the severity of the expedient that is required in order to restore his freedom. Only God can confer the condition wherein man's will could be effectual. It almost goes without saying: not only is this condition (faith) "not an act of the will"--it is, in fact, conferred in spite of man's (perverse) willing.

35 Anti-Climacus, too, asserts both, referring the will's inability to its perversity--a perversity so complete that it cannot be known apart from revelation, and even then cannot be comprehended but must be believed (SV XI 205-7 [Sickness unto Death, 95-96]). Pap X2 A 437 (JP 4:4031) likewise observes both aspects of humanity's fallen condition, referring inability to perversity.

36 SV IV 227 (Fragments, 62-63).

37 In the passage cited, Climacus draws the rather weaker conclusion: "But if I do not possess the condition . . . then all my willing is of no avail, even though, once the condition is given, that which was valid for the Socratic is again valid." Our stronger conclusion shows itself to be justified, however, in view of the previously cited passage, according to which the learner is not merely outside the truth, but polemical against it. That statement clearly renders the force of the present one hypothetical: if there could be talk of willing at all, such willing could only be effectual within the condition. But of course, there can be no such talk.

Yet, if this is the preferred interpretation, what are we to make of religiousness A's stupendous efforts at "willing?" Texts such as SV III 98-99, 147 (Fear and Trembling, 48-49, 99) and SV VII 218 (Postscript, 258), in particular, create difficulties. These texts contend, on the one hand, that the person can use his own powers to renounce finitude, repent of guilt, and enter into despair; on the other hand, they contend that divine assistance is needed if the person is to return from this state of self-willed annihilation. In the light of such texts Gregor Malantschuk has observed that "the person can . . . attain to a negative freedom, i.e., amidst the greatest exertion he can disengage himself from his boundness to finitude; but he cannot attain to the positive freedom, viz., to actualize the good, since he does not have further powers remaining." In order for the person to "come further, he must be helped by the transcendent power" ("Guds Almagt og Menneskets Frihed," in Fra Individ til den Enkelte [Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1978], 219).

Admittedly, such texts do give the appearance of man doing first "that which lies within him," whereupon God intervenes, doing all the rest (again, in this connection see SV V 128 and 147 [Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, 352 and 375]). They seem to indicate that the person's own efforts have a limited, but necessary role in preparing him for grace. The ordo salutis seems to be: first the person's resignation, etc., then the divinely wrought miracle of grace. Nevertheless, if one inquires more closely into whether SK really does construe such acts of human religiosity as having intrinsic value, the answer is clearly, 'No.' Take the act of resignation. The very circumstance that Fear and Trembling's knight of infinite resignation remains mired in melancholy (the very antithesis to faith!) means that his negative freedom is not of the good. Malantschuk comes close to conceding this when he denies that man, by his resignation, can actualize the good. Yet he does not take the crucial, further step and deny that man's resignation is of the good. Kierkegaard himself however does recognize that resignation, repentance, and so on, if not taken up and blessed by God, are of the evil: witness the phenomenon of "crazed repentance" that Vigilius Haufniensis designates a "sophistry of sin"--one that can only be disarmed by faith (SV IV 384-85 [Concept of Anxiety, 116-17]). If this be the nature of purely human repentance, then in order for it to be taken up into the economy of salvation, it must become the tool of prevenient grace. The same can be said of all of the moments of religiousness A: resignation, renunciation, and repentance. While Johannes Climacus, for example, ostensibly presents "dying to" as a process of dying to self, it must not be forgotten that he is well aware that religiousness A's watchword, "Subjectivity is truth," gets turned on its head with the advent of religiousness B's teaching on sin: "Subjectivity is untruth." Accordingly, there can be no doubt that he regards religious self-denial as hopelessly leavened by sin's leaven. But if this be so, then it is not independently of grace, but by virtue of grace that the religious aspirant's deeply
In view of the sheer number and weightiness of the texts in which the tenability of the liberum arbitrium is denied and the bondage of the will asserted, there can be no doubt that any cooperation with grace on the part of unregenerate man is excluded. Indeed this is what we would expect, given the fact—to which Hirsch himself has called attention—that, over against Hegel, Kierkegaard was compelled to stress the qualitative breach that separates man from God. All of man's capabilities vis-à-vis "things higher" must be denied—above all, the will. Just as sin has effected a change in human intellective capability with the consequence that God's truth has become all-too transcendent, so too has it effected a like change in human volition: man cannot will that which transcends his power of willing, and such have the things of God come to be. Were matters otherwise—were sin's outcome not the complete derangement of man's will but only an attenuation of its powers in relation to the good—then we would be back in "the Socratic." The will would be essentially disposed toward the good, and its disinclination therefore explainable in terms of accidental factors, such as ignorance. Likewise, any factor occasioning its reorientation would be accidental. Man would be in immanent possession of the truth. Such a teaching on the will would be at complete odds with Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity vis-à-vis speculative idealism. Clearly, the broad lines of his thought are just as incompatible with synergism as were those of Luther's, for both are marked by sharp diastasis.

On the other hand, as Hirsch has also noted, Kierkegaard was obliged to insist upon human freedom contra Hegel—again, in order to secure the qualitative distinction between God and man. If freedom is denied to human beings, then a monergism results that is quite indistinguishable from monism. In order to defend against this tendency toward monism that issues from the misguided attempt at securing God's omnipotence at the cost of human freedom, Kierkegaard was at pains to point out that true omnipotence, so far from negating human freedom, actually demands it. In Pap VII A 181 we read that the ability to make another being free constitutes a necessary qualification of omnipotence:

flawed efforts at salvation achieve any salvific significance. The resignation, renunciation, repentance—and, ultimately, despair—in which they end, because qualified by sin and unfreedom, cannot be conceived as cooperation with grace. Any significance that they may have must be due strictly to their "co-optation" by grace. But in that case, what we have is not "synergism" or "preparation for grace," but grace's self-preparation in human subjectivity.
By far the greatest thing that can be done for a being, greater than all that one can make it to be, is to make it free. In order to be able to do just this, omnipotence is required. This seems strange, since it is precisely omnipotence that must make dependent. But if one will consider omnipotence, one will see precisely therein the further qualification of being able to withdraw itself again in omnipotence's expression in such a way that, by virtue thereof, what has come into being through omnipotence can thereby be independent.  

Not only is the ability to render a being free a necessary feature of omnipotence, Kierkegaard regards it as the most awesome of qualifications attaching thereto:

This is the incomprehensible thing: that omnipotence is not only able to bring forth the most impressive of all—the world's visible totality—but is able to bring forth the most fragile of all—an independent being over against itself; hence: that omnipotence, which with its prodigious hand can rest so heavily upon the world, can also make itself so light that what has come into existence receives independence. It is but a paltry and mundane conception of the dialectic of power that imagines power to be all the greater in relation to the degree in which it can compel and make dependent. No, Socrates understood it better, viz., that the art of exercising power is precisely to make free.

If it were not already sufficiently clear that human freedom is less a limit upon God's omnipotence than a demand of it, Kierkegaard drives home the point with still more clarity by considering the negative consequence that the denial of freedom would hold for our conception of God. For this purpose he turns to the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo which, he contends, is an assertion not only of God's omnipotence but of man's freedom. Kierkegaard bids us consider the doctrine's alternative: "If man had the least self-subsistence over against God in advance (in respect of materia), then God could not make him free." Such self-subsistence would, in effect, be an expression of monistic dependence upon God's substantia, and would render true freedom impossible. The upshot is that the prerogative of creating a free being belongs solely to the Creator ex nihilo, and is his definitive characteristic. Conversely, the attribution to man of anything less than freedom is tantamount to the denial of God's ability to create ex nihilo; and this is, in effect, to deny his power really to create at all.

The doctrine of man's freedom is, therefore, necessary to Christianity; it is just as profound an expression of God's exaltedness as is the doctrine that man can do nothing apart from grace. Although the two doctrines seem to deny each other, the affirmation of the one to the exclusion of the other results in the denial of that which each seeks, on its own strength, to affirm. In order to effect their common end, then, both must be affirmed together—however much this conflicts with human reason. An emphasis upon grace that would neglect man's freedom issues in a monism that denies God's power to create entities distinct from himself; in effect, it makes of all things an ultimately homogeneous divinity and therewith posits the dependency of God upon his own creation. Conversely, an emphasis upon freedom that would neglect God's grace issues in a monadism wherein man assumes the status of a demi-divinity. The former makes of him "god" and the latter "a god." In either case, the qualitative distinction between the human and the divine vanishes and God is reduced to immanence.

The emphatic manner in which Kierkegaard insists upon man's real freedom before God becomes more understandable in this light (as does Luther's own insistence upon some kind of freedom—if only a freedom in bondage). Hence, in a journal entry that touches upon the already-mentioned problematic of freedom vs. fatalism, Kierkegaard rules out the possibility of an infinite regress that would refer each and every act of human subjectivity to a prior act of God. At some point subjectivity must be affirmed in its own right if we are to avoid fatalism. In SV X 182 (Christian Discourses, 187-88) it is asserted that there is one thing that God cannot take away from a person—the voluntary—and that this is precisely what Christianity requires. In Pap X2 A 428 (JP 2:1261) Kierkegaard expresses his wonder "that God can concede to man so much that he, with regard to himself, can want to speak almost like a suitor... 'Will you have me, or will you not,' and then wait one single second for the answer." Of man's own role in dying to immediacy until at last he feels disgust for this life, thereby making himself fit for eternity, Kierkegaard writes in Pap X12 A 439 (JP 6:6969) that this is the sole work of freedom:

39Pap X2 A 301 (JP 4:4551).
Only freedom can do it, but the surprising thing is to be able to express oneself by thanking God for it, as if it were God who did it. And in his joy over being able to do this, he is so happy that he will hear absolutely nothing about his having done it, but he gratefully attributes all to God and prays to God that it may stay that way, that it is God who does it, for he has no faith in himself, but he does have faith in God. Likewise SV XII 160 (Practice in Christianity, 171) and Pap X3 A 25, 29 and 79 (JP 3:3769, 3770 and 3774) all maintain that salvation is a matter of free choice to which God can force no one—not even if he uses the most forcible of means. Such texts emphasizing man's role in salvation abound. How are they to be reconciled with the "bondage" texts that emphasize the priority and sole efficacy of grace?

In order to answer this question we must inquire more narrowly into the precise relationship that obtains between grace and human freedom in Kierkegaard's thought. Here, as before, the theology of the cross provides our clue. It will be recalled from what was earlier said about the theory of the stages that despair was the motive force behind the passage from one stage to the next. The ethicist in Either/Or, after having pointed out to his young friend the despair that is endemic to the aesthetic way of life, drew for him the self-evident conclusion: "But when one knows this, and you certainly do know it, then a higher form of existence is an imperative requirement." It was the aesthete's own despair, then, that was to propel him on to the ethical. In like manner, the ethical way of life was shown to be despair in virtue of the unrealizability of its requirement. Thus was the stage set for the leap to the religious whereby one was at least able to relate to God negatively via resignation, renunciation, and repentance. The travail of the religious life, though great, was not unbearable for at least one could sustain a relationship to God. With the revelation of sin all of this changed. The way forward was barred, yet so too was the way back: one could not return to immediacy (except by virtue of the demonic) for reflection had deprived one of one's taste for life (Quidam). Only at this point of extreme necessity—and not before—did

---

40 This remarkable journal entry (the last one penned by SK before his death) does, in my estimation, reflect a fundamental shift toward synergism. Yet the weight of the evidence prior to the final period indicates that SK has not always ascribed so much to man, and so little to God.

41SV II 174 (Either/Or II, 192).

Christianity present itself as "the radical cure." The timing was critical, for no one would willingly get involved with Christianity unless so compelled by the consciousness of sin. The progression of the stages, therefore, resembled a kind of funnel in which one's possibilities became more and more limited until, at last, they had been reduced, really, to but one: either Christianity . . . or despair.

See, this is Christianity. If you are not conscious of being a sinner to the degree that, in the anxiety of the anguished conscience, you dare not do otherwise than commit yourself to Christ—then you never will become a Christian. Only the agony of the consciousness of sin can explain the fact that a person will submit to this radical cure. To become a Christian is the most terrifying operation of all—all. But as little as it could occur to a person who only felt slightly indisposed to submit to the most excruciating operation, just so little could it occur to a person to get involved with Christianity if sin did not torment him beyond measure.43

Such is Kierkegaard's characterization of the way in which one comes to embrace Christianity. It is the way of the Höllenfahrt of the consciousness of sin. The relationship to Luther's theology of the cross is unmistakable. Yet if his reader should, notwithstanding, miss the implicit reference, Kierkegaard obliges him by elsewhere making the connection explicit. Having, in Part I of Practice in Christianity, described the enormity of the suffering to which Christ invites the person whose suffering seems already unbearable, Anti-Climacus poses the question:

"But if the essentially Christian is something so terrifying and appalling, how in the world can anyone think of accepting Christianity?" Very simply and, if you wish that also, in quite a Lutheran way: only the consciousness of sin can force one, if I dare to put it that way (from the other side, grace is the force), into this horror. And at that very same moment the essentially Christian transforms itself into and is sheer leniency, grace, love, mercy. Considered in any other way Christianity is and must be a kind of madness or the greatest horror. Admittance is only through the consciousness of sin; to want to enter by any other road is high treason against Christianity.44

---

43Pap X A 190, p. 137 (JP 1:496), translation mine. This theme appears at a very early point in Kierkegaard's thinking—Pap I A 89 and 99 (JP 1:415 and 3:3247) already refer to Christianity as "the radical cure." Moreover, it continues throughout (Pap X A 240, p. 402). Faith, on SK's understanding, simply is despair's category (SV VII 167n [Postscript, 200n]).

44SV XII 64-65 (Practice in Christianity, 67-68, slightly amended). Emphasis added.
"To want to enter by any other road" than that of the consciousness of sin--this, says Anti-Climacus, is Majestæts-Forbyrdelse, it is boundless presumption that offends against God's majesty, in a word, it is the way of glory. Christianity bars every such essay by way of glory precisely by means of the humiliation of the consciousness of sin. The matter cannot be otherwise for, as we have seen, to become a Christian is to undergo "the most terrifying operation of all"--one that lasts an entire lifetime. But if the very process of becoming a Christian is itself so far from being a via gloriae that it is rather a protracted suffering that is to be shunned at all cost, then neither can the way that leads to Christianity--viz., the consciousness of sin--be a via gloriae. In point of fact, it is the greater bane of the two. And it is because sin's illness is so great a bane that the consciousness of it becomes the supreme inducement for accepting Christianity's radical cure. The consciousness of sin is the means by which God forces the individual to get involved with Christianity. To recapitulate: seen "from the other side"--i.e. from this side where only cross and suffering are visible--"grace is force."

It is striking indeed to observe the frequency with which Kierkegaard attributes the acceptance of Christianity to this state of ultimate extremity in which the person who is cognizant of his sins finds himself. While, doubtless, few moderns can sympathize with the distress of a Luther or a Kierkegaard in this regard (in point of fact, few of Kierkegaard's contemporaries could so sympathize with him) Kierkegaard is in deadly earnest when, for example, at the conclusion of each of the discourses in Part II of the Christian Discourses, he asserts: "only sin is man's ruin." As far as he is concerned, sin is the only thing worth fearing; indeed, so fearsome is it that the consciousness of it constitutes a tentamen

---

45 Again I call attention to SV X 190-91 (Christian Discourses, 197) and SV XI 278 (High Priest--Publican--Woman Who Was a Sinner, 384) where the love of God for his own sake (his perfection, etc.) is branded as impertinence. Man's only real (and proper) motive for loving God is his need of him. Any presumed eros on the part of man for God is, in fact, the worst kind of presumption. Yet this need for God (at bottom, the need for forgiveness) is the "terrifying," the "disturbing," the "disquieting," as we learn in another of Kierkegaard's discourses on Luke 7:47 (SV XII 278 [Two Discourses at Communion on Fridays, 16]). In short, it is the dreaded way of the cross that only subsequently shows itself to be salubrious.

46 In addition to the texts already cited the following could, for example, be added: Pap IX A 414 (JP 1:493), Pap X A 133 (JP 4:4018), and Pap X A 467 (JP 1:503).

47 See, e.g., Pap VIII A 473 (JP 4:4012) and SV VII 37-38 (Postscript, 50-51).
The severity of which is rivaled only by that of death. Hence Kierkegaard can speak of the reckoning with Christianity as a thing that most people postpone until the moment of death.\textsuperscript{48} So painful is the recognition of one's own wretchedness that the specter of death itself is generally required in order to elicit it.\textsuperscript{49}

The sum of the matter, then, is that in not a few texts Christianity is presented as "the radical cure" to which the individual would never willingly consent did he not find himself in the throes of an illness still more dread. Add to these citations those which, though acknowledging salvation to be a free choice to which God can force no one--not even if he uses the most forcible of means--nevertheless describe grace as just those forcible means,\textsuperscript{50} and the conclusion becomes unavoidable that Kierkegaard's understanding of grace is one of God's uncompromising severity that all but inflicts itself upon the individual. Only on the other side of death--for it is through a life-long process of dying that grace leads the believer--does grace assume its true aspect.\textsuperscript{51} There is perhaps no stronger expression of this than Kierkegaard's final journal entry, wherein grace is said to be precisely those means by which God leads the person "to the highest degree of weariness with life." To this end, "in the final course of this life, God transforms himself, as it were, into sheer cruelty, with the most cruelly devised cruelty does everything to rob [the 'graced' one] of all zest for life."\textsuperscript{52} When God hears praise from a person who has been brought to this extreme point of weariness with life--i.e. praise for having been brought to this point--he says: "Here it is." Here is what God had been waiting for all along. Though the self-transformation of God into the visage of sheer cruelty is, in this entry, particularly assigned to the final course of life, it is nevertheless characteristic of grace's operation all the way through, for grace's ultimate object is to prepare a reluctant soul for eternity. One might say that the goal of

\textsuperscript{48}Pap X\textsuperscript{4} A 459 (JP 2:1908): "When a man becomes thoroughly unhappy, then Christianity tastes good to him. This is why most resort to Christianity at the time of death."

\textsuperscript{49}Pap X\textsuperscript{3} A 184 (JP 2:1137).

\textsuperscript{50}E.g., Pap. X\textsuperscript{5} A 25, 29, 79 (JP 3:3769, 3770, 3774).

\textsuperscript{51}SV XII 365-67 (For Self-Examination, 81-84).

\textsuperscript{52}Pap XII\textsuperscript{1} A 439 (JP 6:6969), translation mine.
grace's "alien work" is the *conformitas* of a soul that is not yet in a state of complete conformity with God's will. But this fact that the Christian's will is at odds with God's will can only mean that grace is a kind of *compulsion*.⁵³

In view of the foregoing, then, a picture emerges of grace as a kind of necessary severity to which God is driven in his role as parent who must deal with a willful child.⁵⁴ Corresponding to this picture of grace there emerges one of freedom as an initial *grudging* submission on the part of the child that, as the process of upbringing continues, increasingly comes to be *willing* submission. Casting light upon this and other aspects of Kierkegaard's concept of freedom is a journal entry dating from 1850, Pap X² A 428 (JP 2:1261). There he speaks of the person's choice of God as the choice that *isn't* a choice:

Is it not a strange but profound linguistic usage that one can say: there is absolutely no question here of any *choice*--*I choose* this and that. . . . Further, 

---

⁵³ Cf. Pap X⁴ A 620 (JP 4:4690). Granted, in *On the Bondage of the Will* Luther denies that God's operation upon the believer involves any kind of compulsion (WA 18, 634-39 [LW 33, 64-70]). What he is talking about in that context, however, is God's operation through the *gospel* whereby he creates in the person a new heart that delights in God's will. The context of SK's remarks about grace as compulsion is altogether different since he has in mind God's gracious operation through the law. Where the law is concerned, Luther will concurs that it does not change the heart, making it willing to do God's will; on the contrary, *either* it makes it ever more refractory and closed toward the gospel, or ever more miserable and aware of its need of grace. More than this, Luther will concurs that the law *continues* to exercise the latter office even *after* one has become a believer--see, e.g., his expositions of Gal. 3:23-25 and 4:3, which contrast the "time of law" with the "time of grace." There Luther identifies the "time of law" not simply with the period prior to Christ's advent, but with the *whole of this temporal life.* Likewise, he identifies the "time of grace" not simply with the period following Christ's advent, but with the new eon that is in the process of completion through the daily, hourly, yes, the *continual* advent of Christ (WA 40¹, 524-38 and 550 [LW 26, 340-51 and 360]). That is to say, the believer finds himself in *both* of these times, pressed by the law as well as emboldened by grace ("The Christian is divided in this way into two times. To the extent that he is flesh, he is under the Law; to the extent that he is spirit, he is under the Gospel" (WA 40² 526 [LW 26, 342])). But even the law serves a gracious function for the believer: it is the custodian that is given for our own good until we have reached the age of majority and been fully entrusted with the promise. Accordingly, the fact that SK depicts the law's constraining function as "grace" must not conceal the fundamental agreement that obtains between him and Luther. Luther, too, understands it as a "mask" of God's gracious intent toward the elect.

⁵⁴ Jørgen Bukdahl ("'Indømmelsen'. Dens plads i Søren Kierkegaards kristendomsforståelse og vækkelsesaktion," *Dansk teologisk tidsskrift* 26 [1963]:96-124) has drawn attention to Kierkegaard's recurrent use of the image of "upbringing" in describing the relationship with God (cf. the previous reference to the law's custodianship of the heir of grace!). Presupposed is the context of familial relations--*grace*--not that of a judge imposing sentence in a court of law. Hence, notwithstanding the *severity* that Kierkegaard is wont to attribute to his own gracious God in the latter's dealings with the Christian, this God is most certainly not the monk, Luther's, vengeful one. And yet, as we have maintained throughout, this God is the paradoxical deity of Luther the reformer, i.e., the God whose gracious will is concealed under cross and suffering.
Christianity can say to a person: You shall choose the one thing needful, but in such a way that there must be no question of any choice—i.e., if you blather on at length, then you are not actually choosing the one thing needful; it, just like God's kingdom, must be chosen first. So there is therefore something in relation to which there must not, and by definition cannot be, any choice, and yet there is a choice. Hence, precisely this fact—that there isn't any choice—is the expression for the prodigious passion or intensity with which one chooses. Can a more accurate expression be given for the fact that freedom of choice is only a formal determinant of freedom, and that precisely the accentuation of freedom of choice as such is the loss of freedom? Freedom's content is decisive for freedom to such a degree that the truth in freedom of choice itself is: there must be no choice, even though it is a choice.

Here, as before, true freedom is not principally characterized as "freedom-to-choose-between" (choice as entailing plurality of choices, with the formal possibility of selecting any of them), but as freedom materially qualified by its object—here, freedom as choosing, indeed, as already in a state of abandonment to, its raison d'être—God. Certainly the reason for this lies, in part, in the nature of freedom itself. If one examines freedom, one readily sees that it does not inhere in neutrality toward possible objects of choice, for such would be the deferment of choice—a condition implying either indifference or the anxious bondage of freedom to its possibility. On the contrary, freedom is only found in the passionate exercise (and surrender!) of freedom by means of the choice. Hence Climacus speaks of freedom's realized possibility as, perforce, an annihilated possibility, indeed, as the annihilation of every other possibility. Yet because the essence of freedom is to annihilate the possible through actualizing it, and because possibility is itself the condition for the possibility of freedom, it follows that the exercise of freedom necessarily entails the surrender of freedom—at least freedom of choice. Such is concrete freedom. It is characterized by content, and only incidentally so by its field of annulled possibility. But if that

---

55The translation is my own. Note that the phrase to which this footnote immediately attaches is incorrectly rendered in the Hong translation.

56Cf. Pap X A 177 (JP 2:1269). Also SV X 90-91 (Christian Discourses, 90). That true freedom inheres in the relinquishment of freedom we have already seen in SV IV 186 (Fragments, 16). The model for such freedom is that which the lover feels when he, in an act of utter abandon, relinquishes his freedom in his choice of the beloved (SV II 42 [Either/Or II, 45]).

57SV IV 245 (Fragments, 81).
content be God—the *summum bonum*—then it becomes even more imperative to speak of freedom as being characterized by its content or material determination. The surrender of freedom to Freedom-Itself can be nothing less than the true freedom. So slight a role does "freedom of choice" play in this choice that here there can be no question of any choice, or if you will, "the truth in freedom of choice is: there must be no choice, even though it is a choice."  

This is one thing to be noted from the above entry. Another is that freedom is lost by not immediately abandoning one's freedom of choice to the true, materially-qualified freedom while such is still to be found. Now this failure to abandon one's freedom of choice, and therewith oneself, to material freedom's object is, Kierkegaard tells us, directly related to a dallying flirtation with formal freedom's possibility:

> Freedom is real only insofar as it, in the same moment, in the same second that it (freedom of choice) is present, makes infinite haste to bind itself unconditionally by abandonment's choice—the choice whose truth is that there cannot be question about any choice.

> It is an incomprehensible wonder of almighty love that God can actually concede so much to a human being that He, for his part, can will to say, almost like a suitor . . . will you have me or not, and then wait a single second for the answer.

> Ah, but man is not so entirely spirit. He thinks: since the choice is left to me myself, I'll take some time and first really seriously consider this matter. Pitiful anticlimax! "Seriousness" consists precisely in choosing God immediately and "first." And so the person lies and conjures with a phantom: freedom of choice, whether he has it or whether he does not have it, etc.: and even scientifically? He does not notice that he missed freedom. Thus he perhaps amuses himself for a time with the notion of freedom of choice, until it again transforms itself and he becomes doubtful as to whether he has freedom of choice. And now he has lost freedom of choice as well. It is by a sheer tactical blunder (militarily speaking) that he confuses everything. By staring at "freedom of choice" instead of choosing, one loses both freedom and freedom of choice. It can never be regained by means of reflection; if it is to be gotten again, it must be by an intensified fear and trembling, evoked by the thought of having squandered it.

> The enormous thing that is conceded to a person is: choice, freedom. If you want to save and preserve it, there is only one way: by, in the same second, unconditionally and in complete abandon, giving it back to God, and yourself in it. If this sight of what is conceded you tempts you, if you give in to the temptation and look with selfish desire upon freedom of choice, then you lose freedom. And your

---

58 Accordingly, SK can speak of voluntariness as containing within itself "an inner urging" (Pap X³ A 24).
punishment then is to go about in a kind of bewilderment, boasting that you have—freedom of choice. Woe upon you, it is the sentence upon you: you have freedom of choice, you say, and you have not yet chosen God. So you become sick, freedom of choice becomes your idée fixe; in the end you become as the rich man who melancholically imagines that he is impoverished and will die of want: you sigh that you have lost freedom of choice—and the problem is merely that you do not grieve deeply enough, for then you would surely regain it. 59

In the preceding, we encounter a number of, by now, familiar themes: freedom's object as its principal determinant; freedom's preservation as inhering in the immediate and unconditional relinquishment of freedom to that object; and finally, fixation upon freedom of choice as the cause of man's abdication of true freedom, as the sorry remnant of his lost freedom. In addition to these familiar themes, however, there is something new—viz., the means by which freedom is restored: "intensified fear and trembling," grief that is deep enough. Hence Kierkegaard can say elsewhere in the present journal entry:

There must be no choice. . . . However strange it may then seem, one must therefore say that only fear and trembling, and only coercion, can help a person to freedom. For fear and trembling and coercion can master him in such a way that there is not any question about choice—and then one in all likelihood chooses the right thing. At the moment of death most people choose the right thing.

It will be seen that this "new" feature concerning the means by which lost freedom is restored is, in fact, the "old" picture of grace as a kind of constraining force that successively reduces the scope of man's formal freedom until he again experiences the urgency of

59 The above account of the loss of freedom corresponds closely to that given in The Concept of Anxiety. There the fall is said to occur, not through the alluring power of evil (the distinction between good and evil being given with the fall, not before it—SV IV 379-80, 315-16 [Concept of Anxiety, 111-12, 44-46]), but through the ambiguity of freedom itself. Via the intermediate term of anxiety (which is awakened by the simultaneously alluring and repelling character of freedom's indeterminate possibility—that of being able) freedom is said to become "ensnared in itself" (p. 320 [49]). The fall from freedom occurs straightway. Likening anxiety to a kind of vertigo that freedom experiences when it looks down into its own possibility, Vigilius writes: "Freedom succumbs in this dizziness. . . . In that very moment everything is changed, and freedom, when it again rises, sees that it is guilty" (p. 331 [61]). While stressing that the fall occurs in innocence, Haufniensis also points out that an element of selfishness is also involved: "In anxiety there is the selfish infinity of possibility, which does not tempt like a choice but ensnaringly disquiets with its sweet anxiousness" (p. 331 [61]). Moreover, freedom has the responsibility for having, in the first place, sustained the dizziness to which it was to succumb—Vigilius points out that the cause of dizziness in the person who gazes into the abyss "is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down" (p. 331 [61]). If we seek an answer to the question of how freedom could have been preserved from this fate, it is given in the above journal entry: "By in the same second, unconditionally and in complete abandon, giving it back to God."
the choice that isn't a choice. Through the deprivation of formal freedom (the elimination of all viable options, save one) man comes into possession of material—that is to say, real—freedom, and finds himself able willingly to choose that to which he had hitherto only grudgingly submitted. One kind of submission (viz., to sin) has been exchanged for another. The concept of the will underlying this presentation is not far removed from Luther's picture of the horse that is under one of two riders—the devil or God. Indeed, the previously cited texts—all of which asserted man's utter unwillingness to involve himself with Christianity were he not obliged to do so by the divinity's gracious application of a "goad"—only serve to confirm such an understanding of the will.60

These ideas—freedom qua total submission to God, and grace qua increasing constraint upon man's formal freedom in order that he may experience real freedom—are simultaneously present in a remarkable way in an utterance of the Quidam-figure in Stages on Life's Way. There, with regard to his choice of isolation and reserve, Quidam remarks: "Governance has made me captive.... Who would think twice about choosing a relationship of confidence, but my choice is not free. Here I am sensible of freedom only when in necessity I surrender myself and in the surrender forget it [i.e., freedom]."61 While this text derives from a stage in Quidam's religious development in which his choice cannot yet be said to be the joyous, grace-affirming "choice that isn't a choice" just discussed, it nevertheless accurately reflects the relationship between grace and human freedom: through the constraining operation of grace, man's will is transferred from the evil to the good so that he is able to choose the latter. To be sure, he was, in a manner of speaking, "forced" into choosing it (the alternative being perdition), but at some point this compulsion has undergone a Gestalt-switch, becoming the opportunity to choose the good. As a result of the wholehearted directedness of the will to this object of choice, all other such objects have

60Valter Lindström (Stadiernas teologi, 355-56) gives a similar account of the means by which man comes to choose God: whereas "Kierkegaard so often enjoins the demand of choice, decision, and inwardness, speaking of it as a human being's deed in sentences that sound so strongly synergistic that one gets the impression that it is man in his freedom who, by his own hand, makes the decisive turnabout," the fact of the matter is that he "does not choose to go to God without being forced, hence, without God choosing him."

61SV VI 328 (Stages, 351), bracketed interpolation mine.
fallen away; the necessity of choosing this one thing among others has ceased to be felt, or rather, it has come to be felt in quite a different way: as freedom, as the choice about which there is no question of any choice.

The preceding discussion of the relationship that obtains between grace and human freedom has now brought us full-circle to the question of Kierkegaard's purported "synergism." On the one hand, his claims concerning the will's subjection either to sin or to God are consistent with Luther's servum arbitrium teaching. On the other hand, the compelling nature of grace does not exclude the person's own, free response: he himself says "yes" to God--this answer is not extracted from him against his will. While this in itself does not contradict Luther's teaching, it would seem that another of Kierkegaard's contentions does: viz., that the outcome of man's choice, at some point, rests in the mystery of human subjectivity, not merely God's predestining grace. Are we not therefore faced with a modified form of synergism after all?

Certainly it is not a synergism on Hirsch's model, for which the operation of grace is limited to the narrow "portal" of regeneration. On Kierkegaard's model one would rather say that it is the operation of freedom that is so limited. Its "options" have been reduced to two: either God or despair. Its role has correspondingly been reduced to one: the choice of God or perdition. Upon choosing, the narrow maneuvering room of formal freedom opens up onto the much broader vista of Christian freedom, as Hirsch correctly indicates. Yet this new freedom is peculiarly understood as material freedom: free abandonment to the

---

62 Again, see Pap X^2 A 301 (JP 4:4551). N. Teisen (Om Søren Kierkegaard's Betydning som kristelig Tænker, [Copenhagen: J. Frimodts Forlag, 1903], 89) rightly points out that, Kierkegaard's Augustinian premises notwithstanding, "he left the attempt at squaring the circle to Augustine and his pupils (Luther and Calvin)." Kierkegaard could not subscribe to any one-sided predestination teaching for one very compelling reason: he "at every point takes the field on behalf of the ethical which, for him, is synonymous with having responsibility before God, and apart from which there is no seriousness in life. He upholds it over against speculation that would turn everything, including human thought and action, into the Idea's necessary movements" (p. 91). Kierkegaard "has clearly seen that the question is whether man is merely a thing or is intended for personality; whether he is a real self that, within certain boundaries, really can act, or whether he is merely acted through, a point of passage for the activity of nature or the absolute, universal power" (p. 90).

63 With the proviso that the freedom of the Christian is but one aspect of his experience, for he is also simul peccator. That is to say, he is obliged to experience "grace's" constraining power his whole life long, repeatedly passing through formal freedom's narrow portal.
will of God—in a word, to the controlling power of grace—again conceived as a necessity, but one that is now felt as enlarging, rather than constraining.

Despite Hirsch's inversion of the relationship between freedom and grace, we might nevertheless say with him that integral to this schema is "one point, the hidden one"—amending his statement, however, so as to read: of freedom. God's constraining grace brings the individual's will to the point at which it is in repossession of the ability to surrender itself instantaneously to God. This capability is not to be denied if Christianity is to avoid fatalism. Yet this renewed condition of freedom of choice is not to be understood as liberum arbitrium and hence, as the possibility for man's Mitwirken alongside, and independently of, grace. It should, rather, be understood on the model of the freedom that man possessed while yet in the state of innocence. Not even in that state was his will neutral; rather, it was in the good, possessing the potential for real freedom if only it would relinquish its freedom of choice by choosing God. Hence the reconstituted will that Kierkegaard has in mind is one that is in the good and whose activity is more accurately spoken of as an "Inwirken im Wirken Gottes." That is to say: Kierkegaard is no synergist in the sense of contending for the will's efficacy—however severely attenuated—indpendently of grace. In this he concurs with orthodox Lutheran doctrine; indeed, the agreement extends still further. On parity with the latter's rejection of double predestination through its referral of man's fall from grace to his own free choice, Kierkegaard likewise refers the destiny of the will that has been reconstituted by grace to its own choice. If it is possible to reject God in this condition of grace, then this is surely no greater a mystery than is the origin of evil in an originally good will. In any case, the mystery is not to be resolved by assigning man's fate solely to God's

---

64 SV IV 320 (Concept of Anxiety, 49).
65 I.e., the will that is in possession of "the condition" wherein it is again effectual—SV IV 227-28 (Fragments, 63).
67 The Formula of Concord, solid declaration, art. II, par. 66, 77.
68 Kierkegaard strongly applauds Julius Müller's definition of sin's essential nature as precisely "incomprehensibility" (Pap X V A 436 [JP 4:4030]).
predestining will. And if, for Kierkegaard, the decisive weight then seems to rest on man's decision, still this does not qualify his position as synergistic: he does not question the sole efficacy of grace whereby the human will is made effectual. What is at issue in the matter of salvation is whether man will again abdicate this condition by not immediately using it to choose God. Hence divine and human agency are, alike, operative in his salvation.

69 This, it would seem, is the import of Climacus's remark in the Fragments concerning the learner's indebtedness to the God for having endowed him with "the condition" (faith's autopsy). Climacus writes: "A teacher such as that, the learner will never be able to forget, because in that very moment he would sink down into himself again, just as the person did who once possessed the condition and then, by forgetting that God is, sank into unfreedom. If they were to meet in another life, that teacher would again be able to give the condition to the person who had not received it, but he would be another [viz., a judge] to the person who had once received it. After all, the condition was something entrusted, and therefore the receiver was always responsible for an accounting" (SV IV 187 [Fragments, 17-18, emended Hong translation with emphasis added]).

P. A. Rosenberg (Søren Kierkegaard, hans Liv, hans Personlighed og hans Forfatterskab: en Vejledning til Studiet af hans Værker [Copenhagen: Karl Schønbergs Forlag, 1898]) seems to allude to the above passage when he writes: "The condition' comes from 'the God,' and the individual receives it. But can the individual, then, not say 'No?' Why, yes, it is expressly stated that the individual can become 'guilty a second time' by rejecting the condition" (p. 95). Now, the phrase "guilty a second time" does not occur in the above-quoted passage in the Fragments, nor in any other, for that matter. Still-Rosenberg's imprecision in citing it notwithstanding--Climacus does in the above text speak of the theoretical possibility of regaining possession of the condition only to lose it again, this time irretrievably. This confirms our interpretation of conversion, not as God's one-sided conferral of "the condition" (faith's recognition of him behind his lowly servant form), but rather as a simultaneous provisional conferral of both "the condition" and "the condition for retaining that condition," if we may so speak. The latter must necessarily be the freedom by which the "autopsy" granted to man a second time is either retained or lost; otherwise, Climacus could not speak here of a sinking "down into himself again . . . into unfreedom."

A journal entry from SK's student years dealing with the Augustinian view of conversion (Pap I A 101 [JP 1:29] from 1837) seems to anticipate the hypothesis of a reconstituted will that can either choose or reject Christianity. It seems also to attest to the young Kierkegaard's idiosyncratic use of the term "synergism" to designate the will's capacity to choose God subsequent to rebirth. The entry reads as follows: "There is a chief contrast: Augustine and Pelagius. The first wants to crush everything in order to raise it; the second addresses man as he is. The first system therefore acquires three stages with respect to Christianity: creation--sin's fall and a state of death and impotence qualified thereby--and a new creation wherewith man is placed at the standpoint that he can choose, and thereupon--if he chooses--Christianity. The second system addresses itself to man as he is (Christianity fits into the world). From this one sees the importance of the theory of inspiration for the first system; from this one also sees the relationship between the synergistic and the Semi-Pelagian controversies. It is the same question except that the synergistic controversy has as its presupposition the Augustinian system's new creation" (translation and emphasis mine).

The idiosyncratic understanding of synergism to which this entry seemingly attests may have its roots in a misunderstanding of the Formula of Concord (art. II, par. 77), where the synergists are said to hold that the Holy Spirit makes "a beginning," whereupon the free will responds by its own natural powers (N.B. A certain familiarity with this text may be assumed since SK's notes to Clausen's dogmatics lectures of 1833-34 refer to it--Pap I C 19 [vol. 12, p. 121]). Clearly, such a "beginning" is not identical with Augustine's "new creation," and the fact that SK seems to understand it thus only reinforces the suspicion that what he understands by "synergism" is not what the original participants of the dispute understood. In addition to the apparent misunderstanding about synergism, the above entry also seems to contain a misunderstanding about
Kierkegaard puts the matter thus: "In heterodox fashion one must say that conversion precedes and conditions forgiveness of sins; in orthodox fashion one must say: the forgiveness of sins precedes and strengthens persons to be converted in truth."\textsuperscript{70} Per Lønning observes that "in the relationship between these two determinants Kierkegaard never managed to maintain any either/or. The person's full and unconditioned responsibility and the sole efficacy of God's love were, for him, equally indispensable aspects of Christianity."\textsuperscript{71}

Having said this, one thing more must be added lest we leave the impression by our schema that the relationship between grace's operation and human agency is utterly unproblematic. In the context of the just-cited statement, Per Lønning also notes that Kierkegaard "never allows the dialectic between law and grace to issue in an unambiguous determination of how God's and the person's activity in the work of salvation can intervene in, or condition, one another." That is to say, the "hidden point" to which we have regularly been alluding is not solely that of human freedom but its concurrence with divine grace (otherwise we would have the person's "Mitwirken," rather than "Inwirken im Wirken Gottes," all over again). This raises the question of predestination. With his emphasis upon individual freedom and responsibility, Kierkegaard is of course most readily interpreted as advocating foreordination based upon foreknowledge. As he demonstrates in the Fragments' "Interlude," knowledge of the future no more betokens necessity than does knowledge of the past.\textsuperscript{72}

Augustine. The latter does not maintain that a newly recreated will can choose God if it so pleases. Where the student, Kierkegaard, could have gotten these ideas is difficult to say, for his notes on Clausen's lectures contain no such historical inaccuracies.

\textsuperscript{70}\textsuperscript{Pap VII} A 167 (JP 2:1206), translation mine.

\textsuperscript{71}\textsuperscript{Samtidighedens situation"}, 201.

\textsuperscript{72}SV IV 243 (\textit{Fragments}, 80). In this SK is influenced by Boethius and Leibnitz—see Pap IV C 62 (JP 2:1245) and Pap V B 15,8 (\textit{Fragments}, supp., 211). Kierkegaard's own reasoning as to why no event—past, present, or future—happens with necessity is based upon the observation that the phenomenon of "coming into existence" [\textit{Tilblivelse}] is a qualification of being (viz., the transition from nonbeing to being), not of essence. In terms of modal logic, coming into existence is the transition from possibility to actuality. Necessity, on the other hand, is strictly a qualification of essence: the essence of the necessary is to be. Accordingly, the necessary does not come to be, it simply is. Or as Kierkegaard can express it: "Precisely by coming into existence, everything that comes into existence demonstrates that it is not necessary, for the only thing that cannot come into existence is the necessary, because the necessary is" (SV IV 237 [\textit{Fragments}, 74]).
Accordingly, predestination based on foreknowledge would give human freedom its due, while according a place to God's eternal counsel, as well.

There are problems, however, with imputing such a view to Kierkegaard. In the first place it does not accomplish that for which it is intended: it does not make God's eternal purpose the efficient cause of salvation. Instead of a concurrence of divine and human agency, what we have here is causal, though not chronological, priority being given the human will—precisely the reverse of real predestinarianism. Hence it is disingenuous to designate foreordination based upon foreknowledge by that term; "Arminian" or "Semi-Pelagian" are far more apt. Kierkegaard himself recognized precisely this difficulty with the position while yet a student. In a journal entry dating from 1834 (at which time he was intensely preoccupied with the issue of predestination because of his study of Schleiermacher) he writes:

When one explains predestination as merely being grounded in foreknowledge, then one comes to assume that man merits grace after all. This seems also to lie in Origen's words defending this theory in his commentary on Romans: the cause of foreordination lies in our own free will. Paul was determined for God's gospel! Why? Because he was worthy for this owing to his deeds, foreseen by God. ⁷³

One must assume that SK retained the awareness that a real doctrine of grace demands a real—not feigned—doctrine of election. Seldom is such a position attributed to him. Yet despite the pervasive judgement of scholars that Kierkegaard rejects the doctrine of predestination, ⁷⁴ if one will look closely at the evidence for all but the final period (1852-

Kierkegaard uses this reasoning to refute Hegel's claim that the historical process proceeds with necessity; nevertheless, it applies with equal felicity to any other fatalistic understanding of history—for example, one based on foreknowledge, such as Luther's (see WA 18, 614-20 [LW 33, 36-44]).

⁷³Pap I A 43 (JP 3:3546), translation mine. Use of the word "merely" is significant. A doctrine of predestination grounded merely in foreknowledge ends with salvation by merit. The door, however, is left open for predestination based on efficacious grace with foreknowledge of the person's free choice. This is the "convergence" of which we are speaking.

⁷⁴See Hirsch, Kierkegaard-Studien, Band 2, Heft 3, 44[646]n. 3; Lønning, "Samtidighedens Situation", 201; Malantschuk, Fra Individ til den Enkelte, 216. Clearly Kierkegaard does reject the notion of election qua caprice, accidental good fortune. Such an attempt to smuggle paganism's aesthetic conception of "fate" into Christianity is prevented by the latter's ethical qualification (Pap VII B 235, pp. 163-65 [On Authority and Revelation, 129-31]). There are no "Pamphiliuses of Fortune," no lottery winners in the religious sphere (SV VII 372, 374 [Postscript, 428, 431]). Yet it is far from clear that Kierkegaard's summary dismissal of "predestination aesthetically conceived" (and one would have to include the conceptions of Augustine, Luther and
55), one will discover that his opposition is not directed at the notion per se (i.e., its logical incompatibility with human freedom); rather, it is directed at a specific cast of mind that shows a predilection for it: desperate self-arrogation. Moreover, even his criticism of the dogma of predestination is not a criticism of the notion itself, but of its abuse qua dogma to minimize subjectivity and slacken (if not eliminate) striving. This being the case, one can legitimately ask whether a doctrine of election rightly conceived is not possible on the theological premises operative throughout the published authorship (i.e., one that humbly refrains from speculation and instead retains the subjectivity and striving).

The fact is that Frater Taciturnus can speak in Stages on Life's Way of "the humble expression of a doctrine of predestination," juxtaposing this in a favorable way with the same doctrine "arrogantly expressed." In the former instance one identifies oneself with the lost soul who is, in all observable respects, as good a person—yea, an even better person than oneself. Here the humble expression of the teaching on predestination is the confession of Calvin in this category) is a repudiation of the notion altogether.

---

75 SV VII 507 (Postscript, 582); SV VI 444 (Stages, 478); and Pap VII B 235, pp. 163-64 (On Authority and Revelation, 130).

76 So Pap XI A 180 (JP 3:3550). The late entry, Pap XI A 260 (JP 2:2058), too, seems to take this approach. It traces "the misunderstood trust in an election" (den misforståede tro paa et Naadevalg) to the unsustainable passion that is involved in relating to a future blessedness to which, on the NT's teaching, only a very few individuals attain. In order to relieve the extreme tension to which this "aristocratic" understanding of salvation gives rise, recourse is had to the doctrine of election. Such a doctrine of course remains aristocratic, and therefore in turn gives way to universalism. From this entry it is not clear whether the notion of election itself is attacked as a human invention whereby individuals first seek assurances for themselves, and subsequently for the entire human race, or whether the doctrine is regarded as sound but, owing to its misinterpretation and abuse (so as to diminish the passion that belongs to real faith), that trust in it is misplaced.

It seems, however, that another entry from about the same time (XI A 297 [JP 3:2551]) resolves the issue by rejecting election in toto. SK writes: "The notion that a person's eternal blessedness is to be decided by a striving in time, in this life, is so superhumanly heavy that it must kill a person more assuredly than direct sunstroke.... I now understand Augustine as having hit upon election precisely in order to avoid this difficulty" (translation and emphasis mine). The only obstacle to interpreting this as an outright rejection of the doctrine is that later on in this same entry SK rejects the use to which Luther put his teaching on grace (viz., to diminish striving) while affirming the teaching itself. The same may be true of Augustine's doctrine of election: Kierkegaard's opposition to it may be based on its practical effect in the life of the believer. Nevertheless, the overwhelming emphasis of the late journals is on man's striving, not God's gift. I believe that this reflects a fundamental shift in Kierkegaard's thinking on the role of divine agency in salvation—one that, as we shall see, corresponds to his heightened criticism of Luther.

77 SV VI 444 (Stages, 478). See also Pap IX A 77 (JP 2:1368).
an identical incapacity in oneself as was seen in him, and hence, a refusal to judge him. The arrogant expression of the same teaching, on the other hand, refuses to feel any sort of solidarity with him, consigning him instead to perdition without entertaining the possibility that de te narratur fabula: the tale is told of you.

Now it may be that Kierkegaard's enjoinment of the former attitude is not an endorsement of the doctrine of predestination per se, but rather of the piety that would humbly ascribe everything to God by its means. Nevertheless, a paradoxical concurrence of God's predestining agency and human freedom is by no means to be dismissed out of hand. Lønning is correct in maintaining that SK gives no "unambiguous determination of how God's and the person's activity in the work of salvation can intervene in, or condition, one another." As we have seen, Kierkegaard repeatedly affirms both aspects: even within religiousness A, Climacus's incitements to "appropriation" are qualified by the sobering consideration that "the individual is capable of doing nothing himself." This is also the

---

78 So, for example, Pap IX A 77 (JP 2:1368) and Pap XI A 439 (JP 6:6969). The latter entry, as we have already noted, probably does indicate a late shift to synergism.


Though Ruttenbeck claims that Kierkegaardian faith is an intractable antinomy, his presentation in actuality presses SK in the direction of predestinarianism: "Ist nun so fraglos der Glaube bei Kierkegaard paradox, enthält er ohne Zweifel eine Paradoxie in sich, so ist diese doch nicht so zu verstehen, als würde damit unmittelbar auch die wesentliche Gleichberechtigung des immanenten und des transzendenten Faktors behauptet" (p. 222). Ruttenbeck appeals to the Fragments' clear prioritization of divine freedom. There it is maintained that "der Glaube ist kein Willensakt; '... denn aller menschlicher Wille ist beständig nur effektiv innerhalb der Bedingung'. Damit soll nichts anderes ausgedrückt werden als dies: der tragende Grund der Immanenz ist und bleibt die Transzendenz. Jere steht in Abhängigkeit von dieser. Alle menschliche Freiheit ist nur relativ im Verhältnis zur göttlichen, wie überhaupt das Merkmal des Göttlichen die Absolutheit, das Kennzeichen des Menschlichen aber die Relativität ist" (p. 222).

80 SV VII 401 (Postscript, 461).
case with the journal entry with which the present chapter began: neither Christianity's major
premise ("The person is able to do absolutely nothing; it is God who gives everything"), nor
its minor premise ("It is nevertheless essential to dare in a childlike way to be involved with
God") brooks any compromise: Kierkegaard's theology of grace affirms both. But a doctrine
of grace that affirms the priority of divine agency at every step of the way logically entails
a doctrine of election by which God first determines to lavish his grace on the sinner, doing
so efficaciously.

The closest that Kierkegaard can come to saying how this occurs has been set forth.
Election is not an act of predestination effected by irresistible grace (God, a divine "potato­
sorter" as it were, the Christian a "lottery winner" in the religious sphere). No, God's "draw­
ing" is a "composite" that occurs through a "choice." The capability that SK accords the
reconstituted will so that it can choose (a) rests upon a prior and present possession of
grace that conditions its willing, hastening it to make this choice; and (b) is tantamount to
the ability to choose away the grace in which it stands (the latter eventuality being a
nominal one, the will already finding itself in the good and therefore utterly averse to the
evil). Kierkegaard therefore maintains the view that grace all but confers the habere ("all
but," for the will has only to ratify the good in which it stands), not merely the posse habere.
Nevertheless, the fact that sin can be found in a good will means on the other hand that grace
also confers the posse non habere: the will can choose to dispossess itself of the grace in
which it stands. Sin is, in fact, just the incomprehensibility that a will that has been made
to be good can be found to have chosen the evil. SK's position on free will and election
can therefore be likened to that of the Formula of Concord: on the one hand he affirms
God's election unto salvation but, on the other, he holds forth the possibility of the
individual's inexplicable choice of perdition. Kierkegaard's position, however, is in my
opinion the more satisfying of the two since it does not pay rhetorical tribute to God's
universal saving will, all the while effectively denying this by positing a limited elect.
Neither does he abolish free choice among the elect by ascribing an irresistible grace to them

81 Again, SV XII 149-50 (Practice in Christianity, 159-60).
82 Again, Pap X 1 A 436 (JP 4:4030).
(and them alone). For these reasons his answer to the problem of free will and election breaks new ground without landing him in the ranks of the synergists, even if it does leave one with the intractable problem of how an elect, fully possessed of grace and in the good, can nevertheless fall away.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## VOLUME ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A WORD CONCERNING SOURCES AND THEIR CITATION</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE. LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO. KIERKEGAARD'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE. JOHANN GEORG HAMANN AS LIKELY MEDIATOR OF</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUTHER'S THEOLOGIA CRUCIS TO KIERKEGAARD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR. THE APPROPRIATION OF GRACE AS ITSELF GRACE</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE. KIERKEGAARD'S TEACHING ON THE WILL: LIBERUM ARBITRIUM</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR SERVUM ARBITRIUM?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## VOLUME TWO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SIX. KIERKEGAARD'S CHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARD LUTHER</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SEVEN. CROSS WITHOUT RESURRECTION</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER EIGHT. THE ROMANTIC-IDEALIST ROOTS OF SK'S</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXISTENTIAL DIALECTIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER NINE. THE COMPROMISE OF LUTHER'S GRACE TEACHING IN THE POLEMIC</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST LUTHERANISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER SIX
KIERKEGAARD'S CHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARD LUTHER

As was pointed out earlier, Kierkegaard's first-hand knowledge of Luther did not begin in earnest until 1847-48. If one considers the fact that he had regarded his authorship as complete with the publication of the Postscript in 1846, it is not difficult to imagine his surprise when, upon opening a book of Luther's sermons more than a year later, he finds many of his own most basic convictions already expressed there. This anticipation of his ideas in the writings of the reformer is in fact far from surprising. As we have seen, J. G. Hamann may well have conveyed the essentials of Luther's theology of the cross to him while he was yet a student. Moreover, the overall import of his subsequent authorship was, after all, the manifestly Lutheran one of reinvigorating a dead orthodoxy with the vitality of subjective engagement—in a word, with faith. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard registers the surprise of his discovery in a journal entry dating from Advent, 1847:

Wonderful! The category "for you" (subjectivity, inwardness) with which Either/Or concludes (only the truth that builds up is truth for you) is Luther's own. I have never really read anything by Luther. But now I open up his sermons—and right there in the Gospel for the First Sunday in Advent he says "for you," on this everything depends.¹

That Kierkegaard should have been struck by this affinity with Luther at such a late date is somewhat enigmatic for, as we previously noted, he had already appealed to Luther as the champion of subjectivity in the Postscript.² Most likely it was the forcefulness of Luther's person that now captivated Kierkegaard as he began to read him for the first time,

²SV VII 317 (Postscript, 366). On the other hand, SK's relative ignorance concerning Luther is not all that surprising. As was noted in the introduction, very little of Luther was actually read at the Lutheran theological faculties of the early nineteenth century.
and this in turn caused an old awareness to dawn with new power. In any case, it was precisely this aspect of Luther's proclamation—his stress upon the necessity of personal appropriation: pro me!—that Kierkegaard found compelling at the time that he began to occupy himself in a serious way with Luther.\textsuperscript{3} Coming on the heels of the completion of the first half of the authorship, his self-immersion in Luther provided him with impulses that would prove determinative of the direction that the latter half would take, leaving its mark upon it at decisive points.\textsuperscript{4}

From the time of the above-quoted journal entry until his death Kierkegaard was an avid reader of Luther's sermons, which he owned in Danish translation. In fact it was these that quickly supplanted the sermons of J. P. Mynster as his primary source of devotional readings. While Kierkegaard also owned other works of Luther, he seems not to have read in them except cursorily. By far the vast number of journal references are to the Postiller.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{3}Torsten Bohlin, Kierkegaards dogmatiska åskådning i dess historiska sammanhang (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1925), 443.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 444. So significant was Luther's influence that Bohlin can write: "In fact, the presentation of the content of faith that Kierkegaard gives—above all in The Sickness unto Death, Practice in Christianity, Christian Discourses, and in the Discourses at Communion on Fridays published in 1849-51—cannot be understood if one does not attend to the fact that it is from the framework of Luther's understandings of sin and faith that he combats speculative philosophy's and theology's view of Christianity, as well as orthodoxy's 'custom-Christianity'" (p. 445).

\textsuperscript{5}A good account of Kierkegaard's reading of Luther is given by Regin Prenter ("Luther and Lutheranism," in Kierkegaard and Great Traditions, vol. 6 of Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana, ed. Niels Thulstrup and M. Mikulová Thulstrup [Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Boghandel, 1981], 122-26). In all there are about 250 references to Luther in the journals, testifying to Kierkegaard's intense preoccupation with the reformer after Advent of 1847 (p. 137). Only a handful refer to works other than the Postiller (p. 124). As Prenter indicates, the authenticity of these texts is somewhat questionable; consequently their value as a source for an accurate understanding of Luther is limited. Nevertheless, they were by no means unserviceable in providing Kierkegaard with a basis for discerning actual points of agreement and disagreement with the reformer (see Hayo Gerdes: Sören Kierkegaard, Gesammelte Werke, Die Tagebücher, trans and ed. Hayo Gerdes, 5 vols. (Düsseldorf/Köln: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1962-74) 3:327 n. 132a; relevant, too, are Eberhard Winkler's remarks concerning the Postillen: "Luther als Seelsorger und Prediger" in Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546. Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag, ed. Helmar Junghans [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983], 237-39). For a more thorough discussion of the authenticity of these texts the reader is referred to Luthers Werke in Auswahl, ed. Emanuel Hirsch (Berlin: Verlag von Walter de Gruyter, 1950), vol. 7, Predigten, vii-ix and 39-93, and to Gerhard Ebeling, Evangelische Evangelienauslegung. Eine Untersuchung zu Luthers Hermeneutik (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 11-43. Despite the obvious value that a study of the authenticity of individual Postiller would have in establishing the origins of any inaccuracies that may have existed in Kierkegaard's "Lutherbild," it would not alter the points of actual agreement and disagreement. Since the latter constitutes the primary concern of this investigation, consideration
Regularly he registers his response to the sermon that he happens to be reading at the time. During the first years that response is extremely positive, at times euphoric. Kierkegaard is amazed and emboldened by the difference he sees between Luther and Luther's church. He becomes aware that he has not said anything in his own authorship that could not have been said by Luther himself:

I could be tempted to take Luther's book of sermons and extract a great many sentences and ideas, all of which are marked in my copy, and publish them in order to show how far the preaching nowadays is from Christianity, so that it shall not be said that I am the one who hits upon exaggerations.

During this initial period of involvement, SK clearly regards himself as Luther's ally. His task as an author has, in effect, been that of defending Luther against the false and unchristian use made of him by Kierkegaard's contemporaries. Whereas Luther established the highest spiritual principle—that of inwardness—present-day Protestantism has used the "hidden" inwardness as a pretext for license in matters external with the result that it has sunk to the lowest form of worldliness. This Luther would never have tolerated, for it was of the former must be deferred.

That Kierkegaard's was a planned, regular reading of the *Postillen* in 1848 he himself reports in the journal entries for March 29 (Pap VIII A 612) and April 22 (Pap VIII A 642 [JP 3:2465]). In these places he states that he is reading Luther's sermons "efter Tour"—i.e., one after the other (see Pap X A 391 [JP 6:6666] from 1850 for similar testimony from a later year). While the journal entries from 1848 confirm the fact that he did, in fact, read the sermons in the sequence in which they occurred in the church calendar, his reading was not in synchrony with it.

Regarding Kierkegaard's enthusiasm during this initial encounter, Prenter writes ("Luther and Lutheranism," 137): "If Kierkegaard during his regular reading of Luther's sermons comes across a thought...which arouses his interest he will immediately write it down in his diary. 'A good observation by Luther.' 'This is brilliantly expressed by Luther. . . .' 'A most correct remark by Luther. . . , etc.' It is obvious that Kierkegaard feels that he has found a kindred spirit. At one point he sighs, 'What a relief to read Luther. There is a man who can really stay by a person and preach him farther out instead of backwards' (Pap VIII A 541 [JP 3:2464]). Elsewhere he exclaims: "O, Luther is still the master of us all" (Pap VIII A 642 [JP 3:2465]).

A similar entry is Pap X A 127 (JP 3:2516). A similar entry is Pap X A 403 (JP 3:2493) in which Kierkegaard toys with the idea of delivering verbatim a sermon of Luther's and, in response to the anticipated indignation of the clergy, asserting: "This is a sermon by Luther, word for word."

SV XIII 506 (*My Activity as a Writer*, 155).

his constant contention that the Christian must **suffer** for the doctrine in this world. Yet so transmogrified has the reformer's visage become that, in the minds of Kierkegaard's contemporaries, he stands for wine, women, and good times. Were Luther again to stride forth in today's context, he would confront the decadence of the church that hails him as its founder, drawing the Apostle James, and the latter's emphasis upon **works**, into prominence. Yes, Luther must again be brought to bear upon Lutheranism—but with the difference that his teaching be adapted to fundamentally changed circumstances. For this reason the true follower of Luther must now act in a manner diametrically opposed to the reformer, even enjoining a **return** to the monastery from which Luther broke out.

The sum of the matter, then, is this: while Kierkegaard's initial enthusiasm for Luther was due to the latter's demand that Christianity be **inwardly** appropriated, the two men's affinity did not end there. Bishop Mynster, too, "dwell unctuously upon the virtue of 'hidden inwardness'." No, what made Luther really different was his contention that such inwardness **cannot** remain hidden: it must entail consequences for the **outward** conduct of life. This fact constitutes the second main point of their affinity. Pap entry VIII 1 A 642 (JP 3:2465) in which Kierkegaard exclaims, "O, Luther is still the master of us all" has already been cited as an example of Kierkegaard's early enthusiasm for Luther. What was not mentioned at the time of that citation were the **reasons** for Kierkegaard's great

---

10SV XII 440 (**Judge for Yourselves**, 169).


13Ibid., 306-310, 314 (15-19, 24) and Pap X 4 A 349 (JP 2:1902) describe the changed circumstances of the church of Kierkegaard's day. Whereas the excess that Luther had to combat was a false understanding of works leading to the conceit of meritoriousness, the excess of Kierkegaard's day was a false understanding of faith leading to quietism and worldliness. Expressed somewhat differently, Luther's contemporaries wanted to hear only law; Kierkegaard's contemporaries would hear of nothing but gospel (Pap X 4 A 336 [JP 3:2527]).


16Pap X 4 A 489 (JP 3:2423). Faith may be invisible, but its fruits--love's deeds--are not. "In this Luther is, again, completely correct."
excitement. He had just been reading Luther's sermon on the Gospel about the ten lepers. Eduard Geismar observes that there are two features about this sermon that could not have failed to arouse Kierkegaard's enthusiasm. One is its presentation of faith as a life-long struggle wherein the believer affirms God's graciousness even in the absence of the experience of such; the other is its emphasis upon the world's hatred and persecution of the true Christian.\(^\text{17}\) Luther dwells at length upon the latter point:

Now we are never at ease except when we suffer. We live contrary to the way of the world: we are delighted by what arouses its aversion, we loathe this life, we aspire to our dissolution. We break out in loud speech and thus outwardly confess before the world what inwardly binds our hearts to God. This is nothing other than to incur all the world's hostility and to send for cross and death over and over again. For whoever will loudly give God honor and praise must just as loudly condemn all the world's honor and praise and declare its works and words to be nothing. . . . See, the world does not tolerate this. . . . You are commanded to be silent, and if you will not obey, they begin to gather wood for the bonfire. . . . See, it is in this way that all the prophets were killed, and Christ along with them. The world will not be regarded as foolish or unrighteous; but God cannot regard it in any other way; therefore, he sends his apostles and, through them, castigates it. And because they speak their mind, they must lay down their lives.\(^\text{18}\)

The correspondence between this account of the inevitability of suffering and martyrdom and Kierkegaard's own presentation of the same is striking. As we noted in our earlier discussion of Kierkegaard's theologia crucis, from a purely human point of view Christianity must appear to be the ultimate misanthropy: by demanding absolute fealty to God it, in effect, pronounces a curse and a plague upon being human.\(^\text{19}\) Consequently, those

\(^{17}\)"Wie urteilte Kierkegaard über Luther?" Luther-Jahrbuch 10 (1928):5. In addition to the two likely reasons for SK's enthusiasm that Geismar gives, two others certainly bear mentioning. First, Luther stresses that true, God-given faith does not doubt that it will receive good of God, but boldly asks for and expects his gifts despite the knowledge that it deserves nothing but his wrath. And second, Christ's gifts are lavished without any thought of recompense whatsoever. He demands nothing in return; what he gives, he gives out of sheer love and grace. As a later probable reference to this sermon seems to indicate (infra, n. 51), these aspects of it were just as important to SK as the ones we presently discuss. Indeed, the very date of this reference (Holy Week, 1848) confirms this (infra, n. 53).

\(^{18}\)En christelig Postille, sammendraget af Dr. Morten Luthers Kirke- og HUuspostiller efter Benjamin Lindners tyske Samling udgivne i ny dansk Oversættelse af Jørgen Thisted, 2 pts. (Copenhagen: Wahlsk, Boghandling, 1828), 1:512. Cf. SK's enthusiasm for the sermon on the gospel for the second Sunday after Easter which similarly teats of the true Christian's suffering (Pap X\(^1\) A 370 [JP 3:2491]).

\(^{19}\)Supra, chap. 2, n. 82.
who would submit to Christianity's demand are exposed to a **double danger**: not only do they hate themselves—they **are hated** by the world for it.20 The second danger ineluctably arises from the first. The world cannot tolerate this truck that the Christian has with the absolute for it is simultaneously a condemnation of its own self-indulgent absorption in the relative. Consequently, it will do away with the true Christian, just as it did away with Christ and his apostles. Although Kierkegaard is aware that this teaching must seem to be an incredible exaggeration to his contemporaries, he is also aware that it is he who has Luther on his side. The teaching of the double danger is Luther's own: Luther himself has declared that "to Christian life belong faith—works of love—and then persecution for the faith and love," maintaining furthermore that "where there is no persecution there is something wrong with the preaching."21

It is evident, then, that the praxis-aspect of Luther's **theologia crucis** made an enormous impact upon Kierkegaard at the time of his discovery of Luther during 1847-48;22 it constituted a second element of the affinity that he felt for the reformer. Yet it is equally clear that the epistemological-theoretical aspect (which actually constitutes the ultimate basis for why it must go ill with the Christian in the world) did not escape Kierkegaard's notice, either. Certainly it is at least implicitly present in the characterization of **faith** that Luther gives in the just-cited sermon on the ten lepers. Twice Luther quotes Heb. 11:1, commenting on the significance that God's hiddenness has for faith. The first citation reads as follows:

> The Epistle to the Hebrews says (11:1): Faith is a steadfastness in what is hoped for, a firm conviction about what is not seen. That is to say, faith keeps to things that it neither sees nor feels, whether inwardly or outwardly.23

---

20Supra, chap. 2, n. 111.


22Indeed, as early as 1846 Kierkegaard had been impressed by Luther's statement that "if one wishes to be a Christian, he must also wear the ceremonial court dress (the cross)." Not only did the statement receive notice in Kierkegaard's journal at the time (Pap VII↑ A 209 [JP 3:2462]), it found its way into the Gospel of Suffering, published soon thereafter (SV VIII 394 [Gospel of Suffering, 131]).

23En christelig Postille, 1:504.
In what must have been a powerful confirmation of his own ideas, Kierkegaard here discovers that, according to Luther, the only object that can be believed is one that is essentially hidden. Moreover faith, so far from being weakened by the hiddenness of its object, is incited thereby. It is for this reason that God purposefully leaves us in uncertainty about himself:

Precisely in this way does God, in general, strengthen and try the faith in us all. He gladly allows us to be in uncertainty as regards his intention toward us. Why? In order that we should commit ourselves entirely to his keeping. . . . This trial lasts as long as life itself; therefore faith, too, must be in the process of growth for just so long. For when God has tested us along one part of the way and caused us to know his gracious intent in one situation, he immediately moves on to a new trial and never ceases to strengthen our faith. . . . [T]he more God conceals his goodness . . . the more he leaves us in uncertainty as to how matters stand between us and him, the stronger we should become in faith. For faith is a steadfastness in what is hoped for, a firm conviction about what is not seen, Heb. 11:1.  

In yet another sermon of Luther's that made a great impression upon Kierkegaard, viz., that on the gospel for the first Sunday in Advent, Luther develops not only the notion of the diesseitig hiddenness of faith's object, but its absurdity. Of Christ the King's humble entry into Jerusalem, he writes:

Just as what one here sees, and is to believe, is nothing at all, but is sheer nonsense to all reason and nature: thus do we meet in all the articles of faith the same backwards view. Nor would it be any kind of faith at all if what faith esteems, and what the words indicate, were outwardly apparent. But it just is faith because the state of affairs does not seem to be what faith recognizes it to be and what the words say that it is. 

---

24 Ibid., 1:509-10.

25 Ibid., I:17-18. Cf. Luther's sermon for the day after Easter (1:273), which treats of faith's incomprehensibility and inaccessibility to speculation; see, too, his sermon on the pharisee and tax collector (1:467-82), which observes not only the contrariety of God's judgement, but its offensiveness to human reason. Kierkegaard notes his particular approval of these sermons in Pap X2 A 123 (JP 3:2504) and Pap IX A 427 (JP 3:3032). Noteworthy, too, is his praise of the sermon on the gospel for Epiphany ("Luther's sermon on the gospel for Epiphany merits being read again and again, especially its entire first part"), where Luther speaks of the offense that human expectation takes at Christ's pathetic appearance (cf. Kierkegaard, Gesammelte Werke, Die Tagebücher, 3:335 n. 282 pertaining to this entry, Pap X' A 297 [JP 3:2485]). Finally, the allusion to Luther's view of reason that occurs already in Fragments should not be forgotten: it is "a clod and a dunce" (SV IV 219 [Fragments, 53]).
Luther's employment of the theology of the cross as a principle of cognition is most striking in these texts. Revelation is not apprehensible via reason; so far from being "reasonable," its sub contraria specie is a scandal to reason. While it cannot be doubted that Kierkegaard has recognized this point held in common with Luther, what can be doubted is whether, from Kierkegaard's viewpoint, Luther has drawn the inevitable practical consequence of this theory of revelation by referring suffering directly to the relationship with God as the necessary, negative expression of God's good-pleasure. Apropos this matter, Kierkegaard writes the following in a journal entry dating from 1850:

In the sermon on the Epistle for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, Luther interprets Christianity as if in a certain sense it were the wrath of God. . . . He explains that . . . God has made folly of the world and wants to be loved under the cross and amidst lamentation. . . . The category is as follows: the relationship with God is not directly recognizable (Judaism) but inversely. The mark of offense is also here—to love God, not only when things go wrong . . . but when the opposition arises from the relationship with God itself, originates from one's relating oneself to God.26

This journal entry is most enlightening. Here we find confirmation of the fact Kierkegaard has not been unaware of the connection that Luther himself makes between the practical and the theoretical aspects of the cross. The fact that the Christian must suffer in the world follows directly from the essential character of revelation. In his transcendence, God is not directly knowable by human beings; if he is to reveal himself at all, it can only occur through an act of veiling. Indeed, because man's sinful nature inverts everything, this revelation appears to him sub contraria specie. From this it follows that God's love must be experienced by us as "wrath"--the wrath of the cross--and therefore as suffering. Kierkegaard's recognition of Luther's consistency on this point is important for, as we shall see, more often than not his subsequent accusations of Luther fasten upon an alleged inconsistency.

It may be helpful to pause at this point and to attempt to gather the aforementioned points into a Gestalt wherein they stand in a more apparent relationship to one another. In essence these three factors--the inward appropriation of Christianity in faith, outward suffering for the sake of the doctrine, and the negative dialectic of revelation--reflect the

convergence between the situation in which each man found himself and the theological response to which each was driven. This we had occasion to observe earlier when we noted that the situation of Kierkegaard and Luther alike was one of degenerate praxis in which the sacraments had come to be regarded as effectual ex opere operato. Because the praxis was, in both cases, closely allied to speculative frameworks that put God at the disposal of man, the attack upon "indulgences"--be they Catholic or Lutheran--necessarily entailed an attack upon the respective theologies of glory that disbursed them. For this purpose a framework characterized by radical diastasis was employed by Luther and Kierkegaard alike. By its means man's self-devised practical and theoretical approaches to God were cut off, and subjectivity was reinstated in their place. The latter reached a maximum within the new framework insofar as God's immediate unrecognizability sub contraria specie entailed not only the manifold internal sufferings characteristic of the indirect relationship, but also the undying enmity of a world thus disabused of its pretensions to divinityship and confronted with cross and suffering.

While this account explains much of the felt affinity that initially awakened Kierkegaard's admiration for Luther, it does not explain all of it. Any full explanation must needs explore the basis of their shared diastatic understanding of Christianity. This basis can be none other their shared view of the ethical. As we noted earlier, it was Karl Holl's contention that Luther's understanding of the ethical was determinative of his understanding of religion in a fundamental way since it led Luther to deny "the feasibility at all of an ethical striving that is directed to the unconditioned." Holl further observed that no less could be said of Kierkegaard. The fact that this is so is confirmed by Kierkegaard himself, who gave his unqualified approval to what he called Luther's "adult religion" of conscience:

Luther's teaching about faith really corresponds to the transformation that occurs when one becomes a man and is no longer a stripling; his teaching about faith is adult religion. When one is young, it still seems possible to achieve the ideal if one will only honestly, with all his abilities, strive; there is a childlike, if I dare say so--a peer-relationship--between myself and the prototype, if only I will it to the uttermost. Here lies the truth of the Middle Ages. It believed so piously that it would achieve

27"Was verstand Luther unter Religion?" in Luther, vol. 1 of Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1927), 24-25.
the ideal by actually giving everything to the poor, by entering a monastery, etc. But the religion of manhood is a power higher and can be identified by the very fact that it feels itself a stage removed from the ideal. Just when the individual is developing does God become for him more and more infinite, and he feels himself farther and farther from God. The teaching about the prototype, then, can no longer plainly and simply occupy the first place. Faith comes first, Christ as the gift. The ideal becomes so infinitely elevated that all my striving transforms itself before my eyes into a demented nullity if it is directed at resembling the ideal, or into a kind of reverential jest even though I am honestly striving. This is expressed in saying: I rest in faith alone. . . . Thus Luther is totally correct and is a turning point in the development of religion. 28

The perception of the unconditionality of Christianity's ethical requirement and of the impossibility of fulfilling it necessarily entail the doctrines of radical sin and grace. And as we have seen, it is precisely the extreme nature of the Lutheran teaching on sin that issues in the diastatic principle of cognition of the theologia crucis. Over and over again Kierkegaard applauds Luther's insight into the transcendent inaccessibility of Christianity's teaching on sin. Not only does that inaccessibility necessitate revelation; it defines the very character of revelation as the authoritative proclamation of transcendent truth, the paradoxical content of which cannot be understood, but must be believed.

The ultimate basis of Luther's and Kierkegaard's diastatic theology is therefore to be found in their ethical idealism. It is important to stress, however, that this rigorous understanding of the ethical is what incites their theological reflection, thereby giving rise to their diastatic thinking—not vice versa. Were the latter the case, their statements about the ethical would have the hollow ring of theoretical speculation, and in reading Luther, for instance, neither Kierkegaard nor anyone else would be struck by the trembling "forward thrust of his whole style . . . which continually seems to have behind it that thunderstorm of terror that killed Alexius and created Luther."29 That thunderstorm was none other than Luther's conscience, and the fact that it had its counterpart in Kierkegaard leads us to point out the final, and perhaps most significant, point of affinity that is to be found between the two men: their struggle with the anxious conscience.

28 Pap X2 A 207 (JP 2:1135), amended Hong translation.

29 SV VII 317 (Postscript, 366).
By Kierkegaard's own testimony, from a point early on in life he suffered from an unnamed "thorn in the flesh" to which the consciousness of guilt and sin was attached. Although he had in his early days sought to be rid of this affliction, he subsequently accepted it in resignation, thinking that it could not be taken from him. Indeed, he did not even have the courage to pray to this end because of the guilt that he felt in connection with it. His lot in life therefore became that of a "penitent," a "poet of the religious," and his authorship--initially entered upon with "an oppressed conscience"--served simultaneously as a diversion from melancholy and a quest for redemption. Thus did matters remain until August of 1847. Having just completed *Works of Love*, during the writing of which he had himself gained a profound impression of God's love, Kierkegaard began to feel something "stirring within" that hinted at a "metamorphosis." At this point it became his fast resolve to find myself and . . . to think through the idea of my melancholy together with God. In this way my melancholy may be lifted and Christianity may come closer to me. Up to now I have armed myself against my depression with intellectual activity that keeps it away--now, in the faith that God has forgotten in forgiveness whatever guilt I have, I must try to forget it myself, but not in any diversion, not in any distance from it, but in God, so that when I think of God I may think that he has forgotten it and in that way, myself, learn to dare to forget it in forgiveness.

30Pap X A 89, p. 104. Eduard Geismar gives a helpful, orienting discussion on the nature of the "thorn in the flesh" and the changing attitudes that Kierkegaard assumed toward it during the course of his life. Inasmuch as Kierkegaard was ever of frail physical constitution this affliction must have had a somatic, as well as psychic, basis. This led him more than once to consult his physician about the possibility of a cure. But interwoven with the somatic was Kierkegaard's profound morbidity of which, try as he might, he could not free himself. Still a third factor was his haunting sense of guilt for some sin or sins that he had committed, as well as recurring sinful thoughts provoked, against his will, by his anxious psychological condition. Most of the discussion that follows concerning Kierkegaard's struggle with this affliction is heavily indebted to Geismar's treatment (Søren Kierkegaard, *Hans Livsudvikling og Forfattervirksomhed*, 2 vols. [Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1927-28], vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 43-52, 79-87 and vol. 2, pt. 4, pp. 52-62).

31Pap VIII A 156 (JP 5:6011). These "early days" were no doubt those of his engagement.

32Pap X A 89, p. 104.

33Pap VIII A 250 (JP 5:6043).

34Pap VIII A 219 (JP 5:6032).

35Pap VIII A 250 (JP 5:6043). Cf. also the somewhat earlier entry, Pap VIII A 227 (JP 5:6035), in which Kierkegaard had already perceived, "a change in my nature is very clearly in process."
Henceforth, the Atonement and the forgiveness of sins had to be advanced.\textsuperscript{36} It was not enough, after the fashion of Mynster, merely to hope that one's sins would one day be forgiven; the forgiveness of sins must be made binding in time--this was the doctrine of the new creation.\textsuperscript{37} Such a temporal experience of forgiveness began to be a possibility for Kierkegaard with the dawning of the insight that God not only forgives sins, but forgets them as well. Moreover, Kierkegaard now dared for the first time to regard such an experience of forgiveness as entailing the redress, in this life, of that which had originally plunged him into despair--i.e., as overcoming his "thorn in the flesh."\textsuperscript{38}

It was eight months after Kierkegaard's premonition that a change was in the works that his break-through occurred. I refer to the Holy Week experience of 1848 in which Kierkegaard experienced the forgiveness of sins concretely as the lifting of his melancholy and extreme reserve.\textsuperscript{39} Admittedly this break-through had more the character of a foretaste than of a fait accompli, for five days later Kierkegaard dejectedly reported that his reserve could not be broken yet. As before, his belief in the forgiveness of sins extended only so far as a belief that, though they were forgiven, he must continue to bear the punishment of lifelong confinement to his prison of painful reserve. This notwithstanding, he did not foreclose the possibility of a higher faith--only that, "as yet, at least, I cannot come to such heights of faith, I cannot yet win such cheerful confidence of faith that I can believe that painful memory away."\textsuperscript{40}

So far from foreclosing the possibility of higher faith in the wake of his post-Easter relapse, Kierkegaard came to regard the fact that a miracle had not occurred as a renewed incitement to believe--against experience--that his sins were "entirely forgotten." Could he attain to such faith, the memory of his sins would lose their power to inspire anguish; he

\textsuperscript{36}\textsuperscript{Pap VIII A 229 and 284 (JP 5:6037 and 4:4011).}

\textsuperscript{37}\textsuperscript{Pap VII A 78 (JP 5:5928).}

\textsuperscript{38}\textsuperscript{Geismar, \textit{S\o ren Kierkegaard}, vol. 2, pt. 4, p. 59.}

\textsuperscript{39}\textsuperscript{Pap VIII A 640-41 (JP 5:6131-32).}

\textsuperscript{40}\textsuperscript{Pap VIII A 645 (JP 5:6133).}
would become "a new man," hardly recognizing himself again. Hence the resolve: "I must continually come closer and closer to the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins." Following almost upon the heels of this entry is one in which he states his conviction that belief in the forgiveness of sins just is the confidence that one's sin is forgotten in time, that God helps one in time. Anything less is resignation. And in the entry following he affirms that, since Easter, he has begun to hope—with intermissions—that it may be God's will to lift the elemental misery of his being. "That is, I now believe in the deepest sense."

For God all things are possible. This thought is now in the deepest sense my watchword and has gained a new meaning for me which I have never envisioned. Just because I see no way out, I must never have the audacity to say that therefore there is none for God. For it is despair and blasphemy to confuse one's own little crumb of imagination and the like with the possibilities God has at his disposal.

The above idea reappears in The Sickness unto Death. So too does the conviction that true faith expects God's help in time. In what is certainly a reference to Kierkegaard's earlier self, the pseudonym Anti-Climacus describes a "poet-existence verging on the religious" wherein an imagined poet-figure suffers secret anguish in some respect. He will not, in faith, humble himself under this "thorn in the flesh," taking it upon himself with the expectation of help, for he loves his anguish. Such an existence Anti-Climacus condemns as sin, "the sin of poetizing instead of being, of relating to the good and the true through the imagination instead of being that—that is, existentially striving to be that." Eduard Geismar elaborates this new self-understanding of Kierkegaard's in the following way:

He had suffered under "the thorn in the flesh," but had not comprehended the task that lay therein, namely this: by God, to hope for healing within temporality; he had therefore not taken suffering up as a task within temporality, but had merely hoped for eternity's healing. But this too, is despair; here the faith is lacking that for God all things are possible and hence, in the final analysis, a positive relation to finitude

---

44SV XI 151-53 (Sickness unto Death, 38-41).
45Ibid., 189 (77).
is lacking. The despair is therefore a form of what is elsewhere designated, "Infinitude's Despair Is to Lack Finitude." Kierkegaard had put up with "the thorn in the flesh" in this way and therefore, without any foothold in reality, felt himself thrust away from home and out into the infinitude of phantasy-life. But since the decision of August 1847 he had been on the right path: he had hoped for healing within temporality in the faith that for God all things are possible—yet this in the sense that the taking up of the struggle as a life-task contains a continual humiliation when the healing that one believed in has not yet succeeded. In this way can the two expressions alternate: believingly take upon oneself, and, humble oneself under.\footnote{Soren Kierkegaard, vol. 2, pt. 4, p. 60.}

The definitive understanding at which Kierkegaard had arrived as a result of his Easter experience, then, was this: one must "hope for healing at every moment and, at every moment that it does not occur, submit to 'the thorn in the flesh.'"\footnote{Ibid., vol. 2, pt. 4, p. 61.}

For the more profound person it is undoubtedly a kind of relief to get it settled and certain that help is not to be expected, that the task is to bear it in silence. But the task is also to hope against hope. This is precisely why day in and day out he repeats his suffering; every day he must hope—against the understanding—that God will nevertheless help him, and this he must endure year after year. This is what it is to be educated, to learn obedience.\footnote{Pap IX A 333, p. 191 (JP 4:4370, p. 261). In this connection an observation is in order. Quite different from the relief that derives from resignation to one's suffering is that which owes to the new point of view from which the forgiven individual regards his ongoing suffering. No longer does he look upon it as a punishment for sin, but rather, as a vicissitude of life (Pap X \textsuperscript{1} A 319 [JP 2:1222]; cf. Pap VII \textsuperscript{1} A 141 [JP 2:1205]). This changed aspect of suffering is made possible by the believer's continuing confidence in God's forgiveness, as is his hope in the possibility of the affliction's removal altogether. 48}

This resolution to the deep-seated problems of melancholy and the consciousness of sin was not what Kierkegaard had initially hoped for. Nevertheless a resolution it was, and one that, moreover, left room for faith. Indeed the healing power latent in this solution was considerable. In the months following his Easter experience Kierkegaard began to lay plans for a new work that would treat of the "Christian medical art." In it he planned to develop the thought that "heals radically":

Essentially this is the everlasting comforting thing about the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins: Thou shalt believe it. For when the anxious conscience begins to employ itself with heavy thoughts and it seems to one as if in all eternity it would be impossible to forget—then the word is, Thou shalt forget, thou \textit{shalt} stop thinking...
about thy sin, thou hast not only a right to stop, it is not merely that thou mayest make bold to pray to God for permission to dare to forget it; no, thou shalt forget, for thou shalt believe that thy sin is forgiven.\footnote{Pap IX A 176-77 (JP 6:6210 and 2:1217). The translation is Walter Lowrie's, found in his Kierkegaard, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 2:402.}

Henceforth this was the thought that would carry Kierkegaard forward: experience or no, it was his \textit{duty} to believe in the forgiveness of sins. Indeed, experience had not the slightest thing to do with the matter.

Whether Kierkegaard, in fact, ever attained to a full and abiding sense of forgiveness as the \textit{fruit} of faith's obedience is, at best, problematic indeed (see chapters seven through nine). Apropos this matter, however, an observation by Walter Lowrie does lend itself to consideration. Lowrie notes that

for a long while after the experience of Easter 1848 the entries in the Journal are largely concerned with reflections about the forgiveness of sins, but the other theme which emerges prominently is the question of direct communication. His reflections upon this subject were endless, but it is a proof of radical healing that his deeds had not to wait upon the termination of his reflections. He began at once to plan the outspoken books which he was to write during the course of this year.\footnote{Kierkegaard, 2:407.}

This observation is illuminating inasmuch as it suggests that the increasing directness of Kierkegaard's confrontation with established Christianity had as its correlate his own newly won, if tentative, sense of forgiveness. Indeed, we would expect no less in view of the integral relationship that obtained between Kierkegaard's melancholy and reserve on the one hand, and his consciousness of sin on the other. And in fact, this "proof of radical healing" that Lowrie advances is, to a degree, confirmed by the self-attestation of healing that Kierkegaard himself makes at the culmination of the second phase of his authorship (1853). There Kierkegaard retrospectively reviews the "turn" made in 1848, and the painfully won progress that he had made since that time vis-à-vis the sense of forgiveness and healing of his "thorn in the flesh":

The question became: was it not possible that this heterogeneity could be taken from me? Is not Christ a savior in this way?
So I swung in this direction. But then a new difficulty manifested itself to me. "Suppose that you do succeed in penetrating through in Christ's name," I said to myself. "Isn't it true that you will then, of course, thank him indescribably, and won't he then in return require of you that you follow him in the strictest sense, coming to suffer infinitely in this world as he suffered and died for you?"

I have been at a standstill here. It seemed to me that I could expect salvation and help only on this condition—and the condition itself frightened me away, especially when it should be considered as "the condition," for then it seemed to me that here there was—if I dare say so—a quibbling that did not correspond to my conception of "grace" in Christ.—I have struggled for a long time at this point, suffering unspeakably.

Now—God, oh God be praised!—now I understand it in a different way. No, Christ is not petty! We see, after all, also in the New Testament that, in relation to those whom he heals and the like, he does not oblige them, in return, to lay down their lives for him. No, no, he requires their thanks (the one Samaritan) and he does not even allow the one from whom he drove out the legion to follow him, even though that one asks to do so. No, Christ is not petty, and he does not haggle about price; no, it is grace, infinite grace: "Take and receive; thank me accordingly, as it appeals to your heart, but freely and cheerfully."^51

This remarkable account of Kierkegaard's experience of the gratuity of Christ's forgiveness and healing—written in February of 1853—is accompanied by an account of the "loosening of tongue" that had taken place during the years leading up to it—a period of SK's authorship in which he had confronted established Christianity with increasing directness, first under the pseudonym, Anti-Climacus, and later under his own name:

I am now at the point where I was when I introduced the last pseudonym. But now, how different! Humbled by means of a horrible school, I have also attained to cheerful candor—Oh, my God, I am not, at this moment, even equal to the task of writing down how, once again by your infinite love, everything has been designed to lead me to this blessed point. I myself wondered at that time whether I should not have stopped and desisted from introducing the last [pseudonym]; but I was so afraid that, in that case, I would later have it upon my conscience—praise God that I dared!

Yet I stop here; I am, at this moment, much too rich to be able to write down what I have suffered, as well as what extraordinary things have been done for me during the course of these last, otherwise frightfully painful years.^52

It would seem that the increasingly polemical middle period of SK's authorship did issue from his Easter experience of 1848 and its tentative breaking of his reserve, but that the

^51Pap X^2 A 89, pp. 104-5.

^52Ibid., p. 106.
struggle for forgiveness nevertheless continued to be an ongoing war of attrition, with long periods of time being spent in the trenches and only a few clarifying victories along the way. In any case, it seems difficult to dispute that some correlation is to be drawn between Kierkegaard's initial experience of the gospel in 1848 and his subsequent authorship.

If we now return to our comparison of Kierkegaard and Luther on this point, the latter's life-long struggle with conscience and the recurring Anfechtungen attaching thereto immediately come to mind. But the relationship between the two men is almost certainly not one of simple elective affinity—a circumstance seldom noted. While accounts of Kierkegaard's Easter experience abound in the literature, almost never is attention called to the fact that this experience of forgiveness occurred in the midst of his reading of Luther and may well have been a direct outcome of it. Recall the previously-cited journal entry: "Today I have read Luther's sermon according to plan; it was the Gospel about the ten lepers. O, Luther is still the master of us all." The entry is dated April 22, 1848—just three days after the Easter experience. The fact that Kierkegaard had for some time been going through Luther's Postiller in a planned program of devotional reading, as well as that his enthusiasm for Luther peaked at precisely this critical juncture, indicates the enormous role that Luther must have played throughout the process of healing that had begun in August of the previous year. Almost incontrovertible, therefore, is Eduard Geismar's conclusion that it was Luther who, at this time, brought Kierkegaard forward in his struggle for spiritual health.

---

53 Pap VIII A 642 (JP 3:2465). When one considers that SK read this sermon on the healing of the lepers in the glow of his own profound experience of healing, one will hardly escape the conclusion that its presentation of faith's boldness, and of the gratuity of God's gifts, made a deep impact upon him (supra, n. 17).

54 Recall that Kierkegaard's reading of Luther began in Advent of 1847, on which occasion he exuded similar enthusiasm—Pap VIII A 465 (JP 3:2463).

55 "Wie urteilte Kierkegaard über Luther?" 3. Gerhard Niedermeyer ("Ostern bis Pfingsten 1848, die Wende in der religiösen Krise Sören Kierkegaards, zugleich seine erste und entscheidende Berührung mit Luther," Luther, Vierteljahrschrift der Luthergesellschaft 9 [1927]:42-53) makes a similar claim: "Yes, Hamann had been the Moses of his life who had shown him the Promised Land. Now he finds the Joshua who leads him in, i.e., D. Martinus Luther" (p. 45). Unfortunately one seeks in vain in Niedermeyer's article for any closer elaboration of Luther's direct influence upon the healing events of 1848.
The nature of the help that was afforded Kierkegaard is not difficult to discern. In a \textit{Papirer} entry from 1848 he comments on Luther's sermon on the healing of the paralytic (Matt. 9:1-8):

"Your sins are forgiven"--this is what the Christians call to each other, with this call Christianity proceeds through the world, by these words it is known, just as a people, a nation is always known by the language it speaks. One person shouts these words to another just as a night watchman in chain-series shouts a watchword to the next one, etc.\textsuperscript{56}

Kierkegaard's comment is in response to Luther's remarks, at the close of the sermon, regarding the priesthood of all believers in pronouncing the absolution of sins, each to the other. In yet another place Kierkegaard praises the sermon's emphasis upon the forgiveness of sins as the Christian's sole piety.\textsuperscript{57} If we look more closely at this sermon we find that it contains a great many thoughts that must have been a balm to SK's anxious conscience. Luther begins by describing his own struggles to appropriate the teaching of forgiveness:

I myself have been an apprentice for so many years. I have preached, written, and read to the best of my ability. But I cannot boast of any mastery; to this very day I must be glad that I can go to school together with those who are beginning to learn for the first time.\textsuperscript{58}

This frank confession on the part of Luther regarding his own ongoing difficulty in appropriating the forgiveness of sins must have heartened Kierkegaard greatly. Having prefaced his remarks about forgiveness in this way, Luther proceeds to explain why the teaching of forgiveness is so difficult of appropriation. The root of the difficulty is, namely, that forgiveness is a category of \textit{transcendence}. This characterization--one that Kierkegaard warmly designates "a totality qualification"\textsuperscript{59}--is elaborated by Luther in the following manner:

It [works-righteousness] is so rooted in man that even those who have faith and know grace or the forgiveness of sins have difficulty enough fighting it. In short, to raise

\textsuperscript{56}Pap VIII\textsuperscript{1} A 664 (JP 3:2466).

\textsuperscript{57}Pap IX A 482 (JP 2:1218), written in late 1848.

\textsuperscript{58}En christelig Postille, 1:552.

oneself above the earthly righteousness and submit to this article transcends all human perception and reason, all skill and ability. And no matter how much one hears, no matter how much one can, oneself, say about it, nevertheless, the old vain conceit and innate frailty that would bring its own works before God, basing its blessedness upon them, ever remains in you.  

What is to be done in order to combat experience and reason, thereby attaining to the assurance of forgiveness? In answer to this question, Luther marshals the category of faith. It alone is man's means of access to the transcendent. One must believe the word of forgiveness:

But when he [the Christian] raises himself above this life and wants to have to do with God, then he must know that here neither his sin nor his piety apply. And even though he feels sins oppressing his conscience, and even though the law demands good works, he shall neither hear nor see anything of this, but answer undauntedly: "If I have sin, so too have I Christ's forgiveness; yea, I sit upon the throne where sins have no power to reach." It is this text and another one that follows shortly thereafter ("our piety before God has no other name than: the forgiveness of sins") that Kierkegaard has in mind when he praises Luther's understanding of forgiveness as the Christian's true piety. Only the righteousness that comes to us by faith from above suffices to quell the attacks of conscience:

You say: But what if I now feel sin day in and day out, what if my conscience now condemns me and holds before me God's wrath? Answer: Then you shall just learn that the Christian righteousness is nothing other than--the forgiveness of sins. This piety is again and again appropriated by the Christian against his experience of God-forsakenness: "Though I therefore feel nothing other than many and great sins, even so, they are not sins any longer." This struggle for appropriation--to return to the theme with which we began--is a task with which the Christian is never finished. He is ever angelochten, and ever, in faith, overcoming this Anfechtung.

---

60 Fa christelige Postille, 1:552-53.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 1:553.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 1:555.
Try and see for yourself how much you understand of this and whether it is really so easy and simple an art as unexperienced ones suppose. For if you understood it rightly, if you believed it rightly, then all calamities, death, and the devil would be nothing. But because you must still be bitten by sin—and bite back—must still dread death and hell and God's judgement, humble yourself only, give the Word the honor and say: "No, I have never yet really understood it."

In short: let each one examine his own heart; immediately he will find a false Christian that cherishes the vain conceit of having understood it before having learned the first ABC's thereof. True enough, it is soon heard and learned, it is not so difficult to talk about. But to appropriate it, to transfer it to one's own being so that it becomes life to the heart and comfort to the conscience—this is no human art.\textsuperscript{65}

Before leaving this sermon and its significance for Kierkegaard during the crucial year of 1848, we should note two other things. One is that Luther, like Kierkegaard, is emboldened by the thought that God not only forgives sins—he forgets them:

It is quite another matter when God forgives sin than when one person forgives another. To be sure, one can forgive his neighbor today, but hardly does the sun rise tomorrow until the neighbor's offense comes again to mind. . . . When, on the other hand, God forgives sin, it is a far higher thing for he condemns sin no more, he abandons all wrath, he thinks no longer upon the sin.\textsuperscript{66}

The second thing to be noted is that the gospel of forgiveness can only be appropriated by the anxious conscience since it is, after all, the gospel of the forgiveness of sins:

No one belongs to this kingdom unless his sins are revealed to him by the gospel. Otherwise he cannot appropriate these words: "Your sins are forgiven." To be sure, all hear the gospel; but not all take it to heart, for not all feel their sin. But the gospel preaches that everything that lies within us is sin. Therefore it also offers consolation—the forgiveness of sins is here. If it is to redound to my good, then the recognition of sins must precede it.\textsuperscript{67}

In Kierkegaard's day it was questionable whether in fact all "heard the gospel," for its presupposition was routinely suppressed: the proclamation of sins. With justice could Kierkegaard appeal to Luther in contending for the necessity of a prior preaching of law in order to provide the context (the anxious conscience) within which alone the proclamation

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., 1:555-56.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 1:554.

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 1:554.
of the gospel makes sense.\textsuperscript{68} So too could he argue that the proclamation of "grace" in isolation from the prior preaching of law amounted to neither more nor less than indulgence-peddling.\textsuperscript{69}

If we now return to our consideration of the path to wholeness that Kierkegaard trod during 1847-48, attempting to identify one notion that served as an Archimedean point in his struggle to find a gracious God, it seems to me that we are led to that of faith's cleaving unto forgiveness \textit{against} experience and the understanding. If we ask the further question, "How is such faith possible?" the answer is not far to seek: Thou \textit{shalt} believe in the forgiveness of sins.\textsuperscript{70} That is to say, while from its divine side faith is no "human art" but is the solely effectual operation of God, from its human side faith is \textit{obedience}. It is such by virtue of the fact that it is \textit{commanded}.\textsuperscript{71} We are commanded to stop trying to reason our way to faith: ours is simply to \textit{believe}. In this way doubt is preempted by \textit{authority}, the peculiar nature of which is that it brooks no questioning.\textsuperscript{72} Hence wherever doubt exists,

\textsuperscript{68}On Kierkegaard's contention that the law must be heard before the gospel's "good news" can be appreciated see, e.g., SV X 112 (\textit{Christian Discourses}, 111-12), SV XII 426, 467-70 (\textit{Judge for Yourself!}, 152, 200-203), SV XI 213 (\textit{Sickness unto Death}, 102), Pap XI\textsuperscript{2} A 305 (JP 3:3617), Pap VIII\textsuperscript{1} A 473 (JP 4:4012). In his controversy with the Antinomians, Luther not only asserted the necessity that law be preached prior to gospel in order to awaken the consciousness of sin, but that apart from such preaching there can be no understanding of forgiveness or grace (see Mark Edwards, \textit{Luther and the False Brethren} [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975], 174).

\textsuperscript{69}Pap X\textsuperscript{2} A 340, 618 (JP 2:1901, 2:1486); SV XII 409-10 (\textit{Judge for Yourself!}, 132); SV IX 190-91 (\textit{Works of Love}, 193). SK invokes Luther in the last-mentioned text: "Take away from the forgiveness of sin the battle of an anguished conscience (to which, nevertheless, according to Luther's excellent explanation, this whole doctrine leads), and then lock the churches, the sooner the better, or turn them into places of amusement which stand open all day long!" Kierkegaard compares the Lutheran church of his day to a company hawking life insurance: it "offers about the lowest price, while its insurance in all respects is just as safe, yes, probably even more secure, than that of Catholicism and other confessions which, however, make greater demands on the policy-holders" (Pap X\textsuperscript{2} A 460 [JP 1:516]).

\textsuperscript{70}Again we cite Pap IX A 176-77 (JP 6:6210 and 2:1217).

\textsuperscript{71}N.B., that faith is \textit{commanded} means that it is \textit{not} a matter over which the intellect is at liberty to dispose. Yet the exercise of faith surely \textit{does} require a specific cognitive state. Consequently, the fact that it is commanded indirectly attests that faith is not ultimately a matter of our doing, but is wrought by \textit{God} in us—-even if, in human terms, our response to the summons to believe is obedience. This being so, one ought \textit{not} understand SK's emphasis upon the duty to believe in an onerous, legalistic sense. But more on this shortly.

\textsuperscript{72}SV X 206-7 (\textit{Christian Discourses}, 213-14); SV XII 210-11 (\textit{Practice in Christianity}, 229-31); Pap VIII\textsuperscript{1} A 331 (JP 3:3049).
it shows itself to be insubordination, and the inability to believe is unmasked as the refusal to do so. As such, despair over the forgiveness of sins just is sin--indeed, it must be reckoned among the greatest of sins.

Geismar notes that this claim--along with another that SK makes in The Sickness unto Death, viz., that faith, not virtue, is sin's antithesis--is influenced by Luther. As regards the latter tenet, Luther's influence is unmistakable: we have already noted how SK applauds Luther's teaching that the forgiveness of sins is the Christian's sole piety, a piety that lies "far on the other side of sin--and virtue," and is grasped by faith. Likewise, Luther's influence as regards the former tenet is beyond dispute: Kierkegaard is wont to cite Luther as having enjoined submission to authority as the antidote to doubt and despair.

And certainly Luther does equate submission to divine authority with faith, referring the certainty of salvation to such obedience. Karl Holl writes:

Luther enjoins the believer to arise constantly from the feeling of penitence to the renewed certainty of justification. And he expressly declares this to be not only something that is permitted, but a strict duty. If he has barred the believer from placing his hope in the righteousness that is nascent within him, then he bids him, instead, to build all the more firmly upon the constancy of divine mercy. In [WA 56, 268, 21-23] he inculcates both, side by side, in the same sentence. After he has said: "[The truly pious ones] do not know when they are righteous, because they are righteous only by God's reckoning them such; but nobody knows his reckoning," he continues: "one shall ask and hope for it." One must not consider these last words as a toneless afterthought, nor overlook the fact that Luther says "shall" [debet] and not, for instance, "may" [licet]. He wishes to describe faith in the constancy of divine grace as duty in the full sense. For God's forgiveness is--and remains--a command

---

73 Pap VIII A 7 (JP 1:778); Pap VIII B 27, pp. 77-78 and VII B 235, pp. 140-150 (On Authority and Revelation, liii-liv and 107-118); SV X 89-91 (Christian Discourses, 88-90).

74 SV XI 224-26 (Sickness unto Death, 114-16).

75 "Wie urteilte Kierkegaard über Luther?" 13.

76 Pap IX A 482 (JP 2:1218), previously cited.

77 SV XII 352 (For Self-Examination, 68); Pap X A 324 (JP 3:2489).

78 Cf. with Pap IX A 177 (JP 2:1217) quoted above!
that man shall obey. Thus the person must believe ever anew that God regards him as righteous.\(^79\)

If we examine the conclusion to Luther's sermon over the gospel for the Monday after Easter—a text that Kierkegaard not only read but, as already noted, commented upon\(^80\)—we find just this teaching. There we read:

> When it comes to the Bible, the clever and contentious masters do not have one word to say. God has given other arts—be clever there, enter into lively discussion there, investigate and ask what is right and wrong there. When, on the contrary, it comes to Holy Scripture send all questioning and debating packing with the declaration: "God has said it, therefore I believe it! Here it is not a matter of debating "what" or "how." Here it is, "Be baptized and believe on the woman's seed, Jesus Christ, true God and man, believe that by his death and resurrection you have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life." Do not ask, "How is it possible?" Only believe—then you will feel how your heart burns within you. If, on the contrary, you would debate and question, "How does it all hang together?" then you have already removed yourself from the truth and from Scripture's correct understanding. These disciples do not debate, do not question, but bind themselves to the Word of the Lord Christ and hear what he says. Therefore the Word penetrates them with such might and their hearts become so illuminated that they no longer nourish the slightest doubt, but are as gay, ardent and glad as if they had passed through a fire.\(^81\)

---

\(^79\)"Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewißheit," in Luther, vol. 1 of Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1927), 143-44. The translation of the Luther text is Wilhelm Pauck's (Luther: Lectures on Romans, The Library of Christian Classics [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961], 124). The translation has been slightly amended: debet has been rendered "shall" rather than "must" in order the more sharply to convey Holl's point.

\(^80\)Pap X\(^2\) A 123 (JP 3:2504) and Pap X\(^1\) A 361 (JP 3:2358).

\(^81\)En christelig Postille, 1:273. It is to be observed that, although Luther is free with his use of the imperative in putting an end to fruitless questioning ("Be baptized and believe"), the ability to comply with this command comes from God. The disciples are able to "bind themselves to the Word of the Lord" only because this same Word has first been proclaimed to them with power. Then, by virtue of their faith, it "penetrates them with such might that their hearts become so illuminated that they no longer nourish the slightest doubt." In general it is characteristic of Luther that the Word (not the requirement!) works faith. This is true even of the early Luther, for whom the word of judgment works humility. Consequently, Holl's—and Kierkegaard's—emphasis upon the requirement of faith is perhaps a bit misplaced and, if not carefully qualified, can lend itself to legalistic distortion. Only if the requirement is understood in the light of the gospel, and therefore becomes a word of
In this passage Luther develops what Kierkegaard calls the "change into another category or kind" by withdrawing Christianity's truths from the genre of the indicative (the province of speculation) and translating them into that of the imperative (the domain of authority). Moreover, Luther applies this μετάβασις eis ἄλλο γένος to the doctrine of forgiveness in particular—it shall be appropriated in faith. And finally, he proclaims the certainty of salvation that derives from this transferral of the doctrine of forgiveness to another genus wherein "doubt" has no place, and hence, where uncertainty as to the reality of forgiveness cannot arise. Yet it is implicitly understood that the transferral from unbelief to belief that accompanies this Gestalt switch of forgiveness is divinely wrought by the proclaimed Word. As such, the Christian's certainty of salvation is by no means simply due to the imperative mood's grammar of unquestioning obedience. The fact that he finds himself in this new domain at all is a manifestation of the Spirit's presence and power. With this Kierkegaard, too, will agree, even if he finds particular consolation in the fact that faith is commanded.

Among the several notions in which Kierkegaard has been confirmed by his reading of Luther, then, there can be little doubt that these two have played the most crucial role in his spiritual healing: first, that the forgiveness of sins must be appropriated by faith again and again in the face of Anfechtung, and second, that such faith is not a luxury that is permitted the Christian, but a duty that is laid upon him. It is from such nonnegotiable obedience that the cheerful confidence of faith derives—N.B., not ἐν λόγῳ μόνον (the mere "grammar" of authority) ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ καὶ πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ (by the Spirit's activity through the Word of forgiveness). This notion that trust in God is commanded was Kierkegaard's greatest source of comfort in Anfechtung, even as it had been for Luther before him. Karl Holl was, of course, the first to observe the role that the commandment to believe played in Luther's own struggle for
spiritual health, and his analysis of the comfort that Luther drew from this ostensible word of law is instructive in helping us understand the comfort that Kierkegaard himself must have drawn. Holl observes that what sustained Luther in such extreme distress was something surprisingly simple. It was the first commandment. Again and again in his mortal anguish he clung to its opening words, "I am the Lord your God." He seized upon a commandment as the ultimate--precisely the commandment that judged him... and he seized upon it in order, first of all, honestly to affirm it along with the judgement resulting from it.

84 Valter Lindström (Efterföljelsens teologi hos Sören Kierkegaard [Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokförlag, 1956], 264-73), too, makes the connection between SK and Luther on this point, citing Holl's work as a basis for comparison as well (p. 265). Lindström rightly observes that Kierkegaard's emphasis upon Christianity's imperatives is intended to call attention to the fact that man's relationship to God must be one of absolute respect. Commands such as "You shall believe," "You shall love," are claims to God's unconditional sovereignty. Yet (as already mentioned) these are not the sorts of demands that can be met at will. One must first possess the requisite condition. Lindström therefore regards the fact that they are commanded as a tacit statement of the necessity of grace; to acknowledge their binding nature means not only to confess that God is due our unconditional obedience, but that we are dependent upon him for all that we do, including our compliance with the command. In this way the language of unconditional duty implicitly contains the unconditional promise that God will actualize his will in us. This promise becomes explicit in the command, "You shall believe in the forgiveness of sins." Accordingly, Lindström considers Kierkegaard's emphasis upon obedience to the first commandment not as evidence of his legalism, but of his evangelical faith. There is much to commend this position, and Lindström argues powerfully for it. Others disagree, for example Karl Barth, who sees in Kierkegaard's Works of Love a Kantian duty ethic (Die kirchliche Dogmatik [Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1932-70], vol. 4, pt. 2, pp. 886-87). I am persuaded that no easy answer to the question of Kierkegaard's purported legalism exists. He himself seems to suffer from a certain ambiguity on this point, as we hope later on to show.

85 "Was verstand Luther unter Religion?" in Luther, 73-74. Holl's unfortunate tendency to read Luther in moralistic terms finds expression in the first ellipsis: "Nowhere does it become so clear as here that the feeling of a 'shall' formed the foundation of his piety, and that duty toward God appeared to him to be the first among all duties." While feelings evoked by the law certainly did form a foundation of Luther's piety, they were not the foundation. One must rather speak of law and gospel. As we shall see shortly, only insofar as duty's "shall" was transfigured by the gospel, did it gain salvific significance for Luther.
judged him, the sharp awareness that it remained a commandment of God to him at all times. One must always obey him. Always, that is to say: even now when this seems totally impossible. Yes, even now. For when a commandment becomes difficult, then is precisely the right time to fulfil it. . . . Yet to obey the first commandment in such a situation and to "have God as one's God" as it demands, means also, as Luther now discovers, to believe that God, for his part, despite the judgement, keeps a firm hold on fellowship with the person; it means to recognize that God certainly does destroy the guilty one in judgement, but that he nevertheless wills to let him live before him. This includes, as a consequence, the hope of forgiveness. Thus does Luther see through the darkness and the storm of the divine wrath into the loving will of God; he perceives, as he wonderfully puts it, how God speaks to him "under and above the 'No,' the deep, secret, 'Yes.'"86

In a word: "out of the consciousness of the never-ceasing obligation toward God, the intimation of a just as indissoluble affiliation with God grows. Driven into the corner by the commandment, Luther comes to realize that he never falls out of the relationship with God."

Even if he had to endure the impending punishment for his sins, he would nevertheless not be released from the relationship of obedience to God. Even in hell the commandment to regard God as a--as his--God would still continue to exist for him. Thus does Luther fight his way in Anfechtung through to the highest rigorousness of the conception; he unwaveringly understands the relationship to God purely as duty and elevates this to the point of unlimited extension; but precisely the relationship with God that is thought out with such unmerciful rigor becomes for him again the solid ground upon which he can tread. The fact that God, even now, still commands something and commands precisely this, becomes for him the sign that God does not let go of him and that he therewith assumes a positive attitude toward him. Insofar as God--even vis-à-vis the condemned person--continues to enforce his commandment that he be regarded as a God, he, as it were, calls him into his service anew. This will of God therefore shows itself to be something new, unexpected, because the preceding judgement, in addition, continues to be preserved in its entire rigor.87

Holl goes on the observe that, ultimately, only that person who thinks well of God gives him the honor that is due him. To dispute in the midst of Anfechtung that God is love is to insult him--more than this, it is to deny that he is God. Thus the duty to honor God as one's own God ultimately provides the means for overcoming Anfechtung. "The person may overcome himself, may overcome his 'conscience,' may overcome the image of God that confronts him

---

86 ibid., 74-75.

87 ibid., 76.
in judgement, because he shall believe on that God who has good intentions toward him."\(^{88}\)

Paul Bühler rightly observes that the angefochten Christian can only find comfort in the first commandment insofar as it is not law, but gospel (and therefore implicitly points to Christ).\(^{89}\) Now, it is not clear that Kierkegaard sees the liberating presence of the gospel in the biblical injunction to believe in precisely the same way as Luther. Nevertheless, it is certain that the "shall" in "Thou shalt believe" vests the addressee with God-given authority for appropriating the forgiveness of sins on the basis of an already present reality: "Thy sin is forgiven."\(^{90}\) The commandment is not simply a word of duty (however liberating such might be by virtue of its unconditioned character); rather, it is a word of gospel, tacitly conferring the "thing signified" (the forgiveness of sin) along with "sign" itself (the command to believe). It is able to do this because it is grounded in the saving intent that God, who is absolute love, already has toward us when he says, "Thou shalt believe."\(^{91}\)

---

\(^{88}\)Ibid., 79.

\(^{89}\)Die Anfechtung bei Martin Luther (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1942), 121-22, 128. Bühler (and others) justly take Holl to task for contending that Luther finds in the first commandment some other basis for faith than Christ alone. As for Luther regarding this ostensible word of law not simply as law but, more importantly, as gospel, Bühler cites a multitude of Luther-texts (p. 122, n. 186); and clearly, even on Holl's presentation (which is decidedly moralistic in tone) Luther does interpret the first commandment in the manner of the Pauline paraenesis, i.e., as an indicative ethic based upon God's saving will. Because God continues to be my God even in the act of judging and condemning me, therefore I remain under obligation to honor him by trusting him. The "shall" is ever there: it remains my unconditional duty to honor God as my God, no matter what. But the added element of divine empowerment is also there: such trust is realizable on the basis of God's ongoing, gracious relationship to me. It is precisely the "shall" that leads me to joyful recognition of the "is" (and therefore, the "can") that is given along with it. This "is" of the gospel then, in turn, puts the "shall" in an entirely different light.

\(^{90}\)"Thou shalt stop thinking about thy sin, thou hast not only a right to stop, it is not merely that thou mayest make bold to pray to God for permission to dare to forget it; no thou shalt forget, for thou shalt believe that thy sin is forgiven" (Pap IX A 177 [JP 2:1217], Kierkegaard's emphasis).

\(^{91}\)Cf. Pap IX A 316, p. 178 (JP 2:2008) where, as regards the deep feelings of unworthiness and condemnation that overpower the Christian who is experiencing spiritual trial, Kierkegaard writes: "But one must not give in to this; one must strive against it, thanking God that he has commanded one that one shall pray to him, for otherwise one would hardly make it through the Anfechtelse. One must remember that God is love, the God of patience and consolation, and that he is not one to assume vain titles, but is absolute and is what he declares himself be in a far different manner than I am able to grasp. [One must remember] that he is not just as loving as the most loving person and then a little bit more, but that even the most loving person . . . is but a kind of caricature, who still does not resemble God's love any more than a monkey resembles man.
The saving significance of the commandment for Kierkegaard exhibits still further parallels to what we find in Luther. Bühler points out that the first commandment unites in an inextricable way both law and gospel. As such, it embodies the comforting insight that God's judgement is ultimately only a mask for his grace: the very God who kills by its means shows himself to be gracious precisely in so doing. Accordingly, the first commandment embodies the most fundamental insight of the theology of the cross ("under and above the 'No,' the deep, secret, 'Yes'") in a single, terse formula. Such an experience of law is, as we learned in chapter two, precisely Kierkegaard's own.

Finally, aside from the manner in which the first commandment leads to the recognition of the gospel (insofar as by its means God addresses one, irrevocably laying claim to him), indeed is that gospel in concealed form, there is a certain psychological comfort that Kierkegaard and Luther alike derive from it. Bühler notes that "Luther again and again testifies that the command to believe and to hope has helped him .... Thus does Luther report that, already while still a monk, the remark of a brother helped him: 'God himself commands that we hope. Why, then, should we not trust God, who commands us to hope?'" Bühler observes that

We can compare and illustrate what happens here with the invitation to the hungry person: Eat this fruit! Such a command can be a help to the hungry person who either did not see, or did not dare eat the fruit, so that he will now reach for it. To be sure, he cannot quell his hunger by means of the command alone, but only by means of the food. Yet the command has helped him to find the food. In just the same way the first commandment helps, not as mere demand, *qua* lex; but it points to Christ, to the...

---

92 Die Anfechtung bei Martin Luther, 125-26.

93 See the earlier discussion, supra, chap. 2, n. 99 (SV XII 427 [Judge for Yourself!, 153]). Cf. SV IX 357 (Works of Love, 346, slightly emended): "What is conscience? In the conscience it is God who looks at a human being so that the human being now must look at him in all things. . . . In this way God is the educator; his love is the greatest mildness and the greatest rigour. It is just as in nature, where heaviness is also lightness. The heavenly body swings easily in the infinite—by gravity; but if it gets out of its course, it becomes too light, and then the lightness becomes heaviness and it falls heavily—because of its lightness. In this same way God's rigour is mildness for the loving and humble, but for the hard-hearted his mildness is rigorousness."
gracious God, and commands the despairing one to eat this bread of life, to believe upon God's grace and help.  

There can be little doubt that Kierkegaard felt the commandment to approach God in faith as emboldening. Yet as we have seen, its power lay not only in the encouragement that it afforded but also in its nonnegotiability and implicit promise of divine actuation. It is the authority with which God commands that we appropriate the forgiveness of our sins that lifts from us the responsibility for giving them a second thought and vouchsafes that the matter is his concern and his alone—we are not so much as to question our own role in accepting such forgiveness, we are simply to accept it. This is the all-sufficiency of grace, it is the power of the gospel implicit in the commandment to have God as one's own God. Naturally, the mere existence of this commandment is not the ultimate guarantee that Anfechtung will be overcome. As Luther (and Kierkegaard) can attest: "I know a word that is the most difficult of all in the entire Scripture: namely, the 'your' in the first commandment." But this is, once again, only to affirm that the ability to lay hold of the commanded forgiveness lies not in the bare "shall," but in the "is" to which it points. It is ultimately God who effects what he has commanded—his command is predicated upon the new reality that he has wrought.

This concludes our survey of the affinities that drew Kierkegaard to Luther. These were affinities of which he was fully conscious; affinities through the cultivation of which he grew in the assurance of having been "sent out" by divine commission into conflict with official Christianity; affinities that, moreover, emboldened him to brave being thrust inward into painful encounter with himself, there finding the assurance of forgiveness. Not until he had attained mastery in the latter task could he proceed with complete assurance in the former one. And in both struggles Luther served as Kierkegaard's guide. Yet as we had

---

94 Die Anfechtung bei Martin Luther, 127-28.

95 To the aforementioned texts Pap IX A 192 (JP 3:3427) can be added: "The more one prays, the more certain it is that one's final comfort is this, that God has commanded that one shall pray; for God is so infinite that, at many a moment, one would otherwise hardly dare to pray, however much one would otherwise like to" (the translation is mine, the emphasis is Kierkegaard's).

96 WA TR 2, 2047, p. 303, l. 25.
earlier occasion to note, this initially strong feeling of spiritual kinship increasingly devolved into a sense of dissociation. The reasons for this falling-out, as well as its implications for Kierkegaard's final theological standpoint, it is now our task to explore.

In the introduction to this work we took note of the late Kierkegaard's opposition to Luther's presentation of law and gospel: "The way in which even Luther speaks of law and gospel still is not Christ's teaching."97 Such criticism is characteristic of the journal entries dating from 1854-55 and stands in sharp contrast to the generally positive attitude that had predominated up to that time. As previously noted, Luther had received the highest praise in SK's published works, which culminated in 1852 with Judge for Yourself! The change of heart that SK had about Luther during the last two years was due primarily to the recognition that the bargain struck with the world by later Lutheranism could not be attributed simply to its falling away from Luther--the seeds for this accommodation were already present in nuce in Luther himself. Kierkegaard points out three respects in which Luther compromised the rigor of New Testament Christianity: first, by one-sidedly emphasizing Christ as gift to the exclusion of Christ as example, Luther left himself open to being co-opted by secularity; second, by promulgating a "Jewish" piety that regards temporal goods as evidences of God's blessing Luther negated the message of the cross, viz., that Christianity is the voluntary letting go of this world and its goods, and the incurring of suffering for so doing; finally--and most seriously--Luther translated Christianity from God's interest into man's when he proclaimed its raison d'être to be "relief for afflicted consciences" instead of discipleship in the New Testament sense. The result of this revisionism has been nothing less than the perpetuation of a monstrous fraud as to what New Testament Christianity is, and an ongoing revolt against God. In the remainder of this chapter we shall discuss these charges in detail.

As regards the first point, we have seen that it was SK's earlier contention that Luther had been "totally correct and a turning point in the development of religion" precisely because he was the first to recognize that the teaching about the Model could "no longer

---

97Pap XI 1 A 572 (JP 3:2554), translation mine.
plainly and simply occupy the first place. Faith comes first, Christ as the gift. SK had applauded Luther for establishing "faith in its rights" at a time when the gospel had been transformed into a "new Law" wherein all had become "tortured, laborious." When Luther strode upon the scene works were "everything," with the result that "hypocrisy, the conceit of meritoriousness, and futility" were rife. Luther's subordination of imitation to faith justly acknowledged the singularity of Christ--a singularity so far removed from ordinary humans that his example can never be directly regulative. In recognizing this Luther showed himself to be, "next to the N.T., the truest figure." His attack upon monasticism was an attack upon the reversal of this priority--an attack that was more than justified in view of the abuses that issued from that institution, chief among them meritmongering.

---

98 Pap X² A 207 (JP 2:1135).

99 SV XII 306-7 (For Self-Examination, 15-16).

100 Pap X⁶ B 2, p. 6 (For Self-Examination, supp., 227), translation mine.


102 Among the abuses of monasticism, SK numbers its "fantastically exaggerated asceticism" (Pap X¹ A 213, X³ A 153 [JP 3:2484, 3:2518]) which included such practices as "scourging oneself, crawling on one's knees, standing on one leg, etc."--as if these were "true imitation" (SV XII 460 [Judge for Yourself!, 192]). Medieval asceticism tended in the direction of the sophistical and the legalistic, elevating trivial matters to the status of absolute significance (Pep X² A 94 [JP 1:177]). As such, ascetic practices became ends in themselves, displacing their intended telos, obedience to God (Pap X⁴ A 776 [JP 2:1893]). Accordingly, Kierkegaard relates the rise of medieval asceticism to the transformation of Christianity into an objective doctrine (Pap X¹ A 99 [JP 1:178]). "Outwardness" rather than "inwardness" had become the criterion of piety (SV VII 351 [Postscript, 405]). The further tendencies to which such exaggerated asceticism led were, on the one hand, anxious self-torture and, on the other, arrogant presumption (Pap X⁴ A 419 [JP 2:1485]). The tendency to attach an imagined meritoriousness to one's ascetic exploits was great (Pap X¹ A 558, X³ A 217, SV VII 351, XII 460 [JP 3:2513, 3:2521, Postscript, 405, For Self-Examination, 192]). This, in turn, led to the ultimate presumption that one person's presumed merits could be hawked to another (SV XII 460 [Judge for Yourself!, 192]). Kierkegaard, while specifically acknowledging the dangers attaching to asceticism (particularly that it can so easily become either a temptation to the conceit of meritoriousness or the cause of insanity!--Pap X³ A 342, X⁵ A 94, p. 108 [JP 1:14, 1:177]), nevertheless recognizes a true, Christian asceticism. It is self-denial (Pap X¹ A 326, p. 238 [JP 3:3728]), perseverance in a situation in which one could "sell out" ever so slightly and gain everything thereby (Pap X⁴ A 405, p. 245 [JP 3:2965]), it is suffering that has its ground in relating to the unconditioned--suffering that is, moreover, voluntarily incurred (Pap XI² A 161, p. 174, XI¹ A 181, p. 140 [JP 4:4057, 4:3881]).
So Luther reinstated faith in its rights and was justified in doing so on account of the misplaced emphasis that had come to be placed upon "imitation." Nevertheless, Kierkegaard hastens to add:

But let us not forget, Luther did not therefore abolish imitation, nor did he do away with the voluntary, as pampered sentimentality would like to have us think about Luther. He affirmed imitation in the direction of witnessing to the truth and voluntarily exposed himself there to dangers enough (yet without deluding himself that this was meritorious).^{103}

While Luther's teaching, like that of Paul before him, laid the infinite accent upon Christ's atoning death, nevertheless his life expressed imitation in the most rigorous sense--yet in such a way as to divert all attention from himself. Accordingly, the crucial thing about Luther was that he "once again gave the relationship its correct turn. . . . Imitation has to be there, but not in such a way that one becomes self-important because of it, or wants to earn blessedness because of it. No, grace is the decisive thing."^{104}

The problem is that later Lutheranism "misused Luther, completely left out imitation and took 'grace' in vain."^{105} This is, for a long time, a frequent refrain of Kierkegaard's. "Established Christianity has taken Luther in vain. . . . Luther rescued 'imitation, the imitation of Christ,' from a fantastic misunderstanding--but present-day Christendom has

^{103} SV XII 461 (Judge for Yourself!, 193).

^{104} Pap X^3 A 409 (JP 2:1877), translation mine.

^{105} Ibid.
completely secularized Luther, as if this were what Luther meant. Thus Kierkegaard can characterize the progressive distortion that has been foisted upon Luther as follows:

Those who were contemporaries of Luther, especially those who were closest to him, received at that time the powerful impression that he was a hero of faith, first of all, melancholy beyond all measure, then too, terribly tried by the most frightful Anfægteise, that he was the pious, God-fearing man who is essentially a stranger to the world.

Soon, however, the impression of Luther changed; he came actually to be perceived as a political hero and the catch-phrase under which he was remembered became: "Hear me, you Pope, I will be, etc."

Yet again the impression changed since the Pope had now been broken once and for all and Luther was perceived as a man of the world, full of gusto, and the life of the party; the catch-phrase under which he was remembered by clergy and laity alike became: wer nicht liebt Weiber, Wein, Gesang, etc. In quite common terms one could nowadays say that the perception is: the significance of the Reformation is that Luther instituted girls and wine and card-playing in their rightful place in the Christian church, as something essential to it, yes, as that which is truly perfect in opposition to the imperfect: poverty, prayer and fasting.

For his own part, SK admits that he has steered in the direction of Christ as example (as evidenced by his rallying cry, "Back to the monastery from which Luther broke

---

106 Pap X\(^3\) A 510 (JP 3:2528), translation mine. Pap X\(^1\) A 576 (JP 2:1792) similarly contends that Lutheranism has taken Luther's determination of the relation between faith and works in vain. Pap X\(^1\) A 213 and X\(^2\) A 558 (JP 3:2484 and 3:2513) assert that Luther acted in response to "a fantastically overdrawn asceticism," to "asceticism's misunderstood, puffed up conceit." In order to combat these errors Luther piously set forth the simple secular walk of life. Present day Lutheranism has not only removed Luther from the context in which his actions made sense, but removed the dialectical element of "imitation" so as to use him as a cover for its own worldliness and epicurism. As late as 1853 (Pap X\(^1\) A 139 [JP 2:1923]) Kierkegaard can still exclaim: "Oh Luther, who has been exploited in such a way by his adherents for a purpose the exact opposite of what he wanted, as you!" (translation mine). It is likely that at least some of SK's antipathy to Hegel stems from the fact that the latter extols Luther for having done away with monasticism's vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, installing kulturprotestantische equivalents in their stead: work and commerce, marriage and family, and participation in the ethical life of the state. With Luther the Christian religion passed completely over into a Christian culture, thus fulfilling a necessary precondition for Spirit's elevation to Absolute Spirit (see Steven Crites, In the Twilight of Christendom. Hegel vs. Kierkegaard on Faith and History [Chambersburg, Penn.: American Academy of Religion, 1972], 53-55). Kierkegaard does not deny that Luther has had a certain dubious "world-historical" significance--Hegel's interpretation is a strikingly accurate account of his fate in history. What Kierkegaard denies is that history--and Hegel--have treated him justly.

107 Pap X\(^3\) A 234 (JP 3:2524), translation mine.
out". He defends this modus operandi on the ground that Luther himself when confronted with the exaggerated abuse of Christ as example, accentuated the countervailing moment. Now that Christ qua example has fallen into oblivion and Lutheran piety has been reduced to "shadowboxing in the hidden inwardness," SK is convinced that this *exemplum* side of Christ must be brought to the fore once again, though--N.B.--in a different way than had occurred to Luther or the Middle Ages: viz., so as "to jack the price up so frightfully that the Model himself teaches people to flee to grace." This employment of Christ's example in order to drive people to grace is, of course, the spiritual use of the law; accordingly, SK believes that he has captured the spirit of Luther's theology in spite of all objections to the contrary: "I see very well how one could, precisely from Luther's stand-

point, mount an attack against me; but truly, I dare say that I, too, have understood Luther--and so I have, in addition, guarded against fooling about in a fog, as if everything were still as it was in Luther's day."
Expressed somewhat differently, Kierkegaard believes that he can preserve Luther's unalloyed gospel message while countering the contemporary indifference to works if only he may modify Luther's *ordo salutis* somewhat. Whereas "Luther orders it correctly as follows: Christ is gift--to which corresponds faith. Next he is model--to which corresponds imitation," Kierkegaard believes that "more accurately one may say: (1) Imitation in the direction of a decisive action by which the situation for becoming a Christian comes about. (2) Christ as gift--faith. (3) Imitation as faith's fruit." That is to say: Christ the *lawgiver* must first be brought to the fore so as to provide the occasion for SK's contemporaries to *try* to keep the law. Then in the wake of their failure to do so Luther's *ordo salutis* will make some sense. Seen in this light, "the teaching about the Model, rightly understood, comprehends everything"--i.e., both law and gospel.

One might sum up Kierkegaard's position during the period of his positive estimate of Luther (1848-53) by saying that a dialectical tension must be *reestablished* within Protestantism between law and gospel. Luther himself had been constrained to emphasize the latter in order to correct a dangerous abuse attaching to the former. While Luther's *theological* position on the absolute primacy of faith in Christ's atonement was quite correct (and therefore remains nonnegotiable), nevertheless his emphasis can, and must, be reversed in the light of the changed circumstances. It is in terms of *pedagogy* (not doctrine!) that law must now take precedence over gospel. Because the absolute primacy of faith has been

arms in baptism (which Kierkegaard ended by rejecting), a grace that, step by step, follows the person to the grave and which, for the one who surrenders to it in faith, becomes the *bearing* grace that alone makes it possible for man to strive for likeness" (Den christelige Ethik [Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1871], vol. 1, *Den almindelige Del*, 385-86).

---

111Pap X A 459 (JP 2:1908), translation mine.

112Pap X A 47 (JP 2:1857). The correctness of SK's belief that his Model/Redeemer distinction is *equivalent* to Luther's law/gospel one has been roundly disputed by Regin Prenter (infra, chap. 9, n. 61). For the time being we defer discussion of Prenter's criticism.

113SV XII 461 (Judge for Yourself!, 193), Pap X A 132 (JP 1:693), Pap X A 491 (JP 2:1909). In SV XII 314 (For Self-Examination, 24) SK strongly affirms the doctrinal priority that Luther gives to faith: "Lutheran doctrine is excellent, is the truth. With regard to this excellent Lutheran doctrine, I have but one misgiving. It does not concern Lutheran doctrine--no, it concerns myself: I have become convinced that I am not an honest soul but a cunning fellow. Thus it certainly becomes most proper to pay a little more attention to the minor premise (works, existence, to witness to and suffer for the truth, works of love, etc.), the minor premise in
proclaimed in such a way as to foster a dangerous abuse in its own right, the other dialectical moment must be brought to light, while not forgetting what has been learned from the past. SK can even call that other moment "the Catholic"--in relation to which "the Lutheran" must be viewed as a corrective.

Lutheran doctrine. Not that the minor premise should now be made the major premise, not that faith and grace should be abolished or disparaged--God forbid--no, it is precisely for the sake of the major premise, and because I am the kind of fellow I am, [that] it certainly becomes most proper to pay more attention to the minor premise in Lutheran doctrine.

On the errors of Catholicism not being repeated along with the reintroduction of Christ as Model, see, e.g., SV XII 464, 465 (Judge for Yourself!, 196, 197-98), Pap X I A 154 (JP 3:2481), X IV A 349 (JP 2:1902) and X IV A 491 (JP 2:1909). The errors that are to be avoided include not only meritmongering, but "laying a yoke upon consciences" and "ascetic self-torture" (Pap X IV A 349).

Regarding the matter of Lutheranism and Catholicism being dialectical counterparts to one another, and hence in need of one another, we cite Pap XI A 303 and 305 (JP 3:2544 and 3:3617--but cf. SV XIV 47; Pap XI A 28, 76 and 198 [Attack upon Christendom, 34; JP 1:711, 6:6863 and 3:2763]). In Pap XI A 305 Protestantism is said to need the presupposition that Catholicism provides: viz., "that we humans are a bunch of scoundrels" (p. 328). Luther knew that he was one; he knew it because the preaching of the law had come to rest like "a heavy yoke upon the people's shoulders," they having been threatened "from one generation to the next by death and judgement and hell" (p. 324). Such preaching, together with the anxiety that it provoked, provided the necessary presupposition for the Lutheran proclamation: "relief for the anxious conscience" (p. 325). This leads SK to speculate whether "Protestantism, or Lutheranism, is not actually a corrective," and whether "a great confusion has not come about by Protestantism having been made into the norm" (p. 324).

Apart from the (Catholic) preaching of law, the Lutheran principle, "relief for the anxious conscience," is meaningless and ends in the deformation that SK calls "spiritless worldliness" (p. 325). By contrast, the worst that can happen when the Catholic principle degenerates into its respective deformation is hypocrisy (p. 325).

This analysis is reproduced in the prior journal entry, as well (Pap XI A 303). SK writes of Luther that, "after twenty years of fear and trembling and Anfregtelse so ghastly that--mark it well!--there is scarcely one individual in any generation who has this experience: human nature, if one wishes to put it that way, reacts in him, and this fear and trembling becomes transfigured into the most blissful, the most blessed good cheer and joy: marvelous! But what happens now? This principle is now made universal in Protestantism: in this way, only in this way ... is Christianity to be preached. The enormously potent medicine--the effect of which is relief--that Luther, fighting in fear and trembling and Anfregtelse to the point of death, discovered in his extreme anxiety--this is to be proclaimed as the only thing and for everyone--and yet there is not one individual in any generation who is thus tried" (pp. 321-22). Whereas in Luther there was truth, SK asks whether his experience should be regarded as normative for the rest of us, and if not, then whether reassurance should really be the aim of most preaching. "Is it not enormously dangerous," he asks, "to universalize the Lutheran [concern], to give this knave within us the affirmation that what he needs is to be reassured, aha!" (p. 322). "Would society really be served," SK asks, "by a man who was as honest as honesty itself, so honest that it could not occur to him than anyone could want to steal--would society (or only just the thieves?) be served by him writing the laws, which naturally would bear the stamp of his assumption that theft does not occur?" (p. 323). In just the same way it is clear that Luther's prescription for the anxious conscience is not, without further ado, to be applied to the rest of us who enjoy all too easy a conscience. As Kierkegaard puts it in another journal entry: "He [Luther] is, for Christianity, a patient of the most extreme importance, but he is not the doctor; he has the patient's passion to express and to describe his suffering, and what he feels he needs as an assuagement. But he does not have the doctor's larger perspective" (Pap XI A 193, p. 153 [JP 3:2550]).
While this turn that Kierkegaard has given the matter has the appearance of increasing hostility to Luther's theological position, it is to be stressed that the real object of SK's critique is not Luther's position per se, but the manner in which he carried it through. Luther, on Kierkegaard's view, shares some of the responsibility for having been co-opted by secularity inasmuch as he incorrectly assumed that his own experience of the anxious conscience was normative and that every generation labored under the same burden of works-righteousness as did his own. This led him, in turn, to suppose that works could straightway be replaced by faith as the highest:

Oh, but Luther was no dialectician. He did not see the enormous danger connected with introducing something else as the highest, something else related to and presupposing a prior thing, [something else] for which absolutely no mechanism for accountability exists. He did not understand that he had furnished the corrective, that the tap should be turned off with the most extreme caution so that he not be made the paradigm without further ado. This is exactly what happened.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{116}Pap X\textsuperscript{3} A 217 (JP 3:2521), translation mine. Similar in tenor is Pap XI\textsuperscript{2} A 301 (JP 3:2543) in which SK asserts that we cannot, without further ado, begin where Luther left off--with the faith-principle--but must begin where he began (if not much further back!), with the principle of works. Only after having been tried by the...
Kierkegaard goes on to say that "in general Luther struck too hard. He should have done everything to rid . . . works of the notion of merit and, for the rest, let them stand."\(^{117}\) Here he is not simply criticizing Luther's false projection of his own spiritual condition onto everyone else and his consequent failure to attend to the prior preaching of law.\(^{118}\) Here he is criticizing the extreme mistrust that Luther has of works in general such that they come to assume a kind of second-rate status beneath faith.\(^{119}\) Also at work may be the conviction that, by allowing works to be absorbed into faith as its inevitable outcome, Luther gives too idealized a view of the Christian life--one that easily issues in too realized an ethic (viz., the antinomian one according to which, if only the faith is there, then the works are incipiently present as well, even if not observably and demonstrably so). In any case, one thing is certain: the strong suspicion that Luther casts over works of any kind leads him to omit something that is essentially Christian: the voluntary incurring of suffering through imitation.\(^{120}\)

This, in turn, brings us to the second element of SK's Luther-critique: viz., the charge that Luther undermines his own theology of the cross by entertaining a Jewish piety. This Kierkegaard defines in the following way: "Every existence where life's tension is resolved preaching of the law does Luther's result--justification apart from the works of the law--have validity for us."

\(^{117}\)Pap X\(^3\) A 218 (JP 3:2522), translation mine.

\(^{118}\)In levelling this charge it is of course manifest that either SK is not aware of, or does not adequately attend to, Luther's position vis-à-vis the antinomians.

\(^{119}\)In this regard even Torsten Bohlin can concede that "Christian love toward one's neighbor has not always been able to stand forth in Luther as something that is equally as divine as faith, but has received the appearance of possessing lesser worth than faith; and however strongly Luther may stress that love toward one's neighbor proceeds from faith, it has nevertheless not come to clear expression that love amounts to faith itself and belongs to the center of the relationship with God since love, to no less degree than faith, is ultimately a work of God in man." Bohlin goes on to say that "Kierkegaard--above all in Works of Love's presentation--clearly maintains that love cannot be disjoined from faith as something 'human' in contrast to faith, which is something divine, but that just as faith itself is love, so does love belong to the heart of the personal relationship with God and is most deeply seen as an outflow of God's own eternal love" (Kierkegaard's dogmatiska äskädning, 476-77).

\(^{120}\)Pap X\(^2\) A 263 (JP 3:2509); Pap X\(^3\) A 43 (JP 4:4950).
in this life is: Judaism. Christianity is: This life sheer suffering—[then] eternity."

Whence comes this charge? At a very early point SK becomes aware that however much Luther may stress the world's opposition to the Christian and the suffering that results therefrom, he nevertheless is not entirely clear that persecution must occur without intermission or abatement so long as one persists in expressing absolute allegiance to God. Accordingly it is impossible that one should enjoy good days in this life. Yet it is Luther's naive belief that the very felicitous relationships that must needs be absent from Christian experience may be there after all, and that when they are, they are evidences of God's favor. Luther lacks dialectical clarity about the Christian's relationship to temporality: on the one hand he warns of the double danger ("do good and then suffer for it") and on the other he speaks as though the world will reward the Christian's conduct of life.

The verity that it must go ill with Christians in this life, however, is deducible not only from their relationship to the world but from the very nature of the relationship to God. Here again Luther lacked dialectical clarity. On the one hand, there is the Luther of the theologio crucis for whom the mark of divine sonship is negative: God's seeming wrath upon those whom he loves; yet alongside this Luther is that other Luther for whom temporal blessing stands as the positive sign of God's favor. The source of this confusion SK finds in Luther's inadequate conception of God's majesty. By assigning to the devil all evil that befalls the Christian, Luther has treated suffering as an accidental feature of the relationship with God—it may be present or not, depending upon how much latitude God gives the devil in plaguing the Christian. Yet in point of fact, it is God's majesty that plagues the Christian—a majesty so exalted that it cannot be experienced in any other way than as suffering by

"relative" being. Consequently it is impossible that the one who has to do with God will "enjoy" this life.

The aforementioned factors, however, are not the only ones that contribute to Luther's optimistic assessment of the Christian's relationship to temporality. A further factor is his failure to go back beyond Paul to Christ, viz., to contemporaneity with Christ whence suffering—and offense!—necessarily proceed. Then, too, Luther's rejection of voluntary suffering points to yet another source of his "Jewish" piety. In denying the validity of such suffering, it is clear that Luther believes that Christ's kingdom can coexist with the kingdom of this world in such a way as to obviate the need for it; and in fact, Luther frequently enjoins obedience to temporal authorities as if no fundamental incompatibility existed between this and obedience to Christ. Here Luther's life was better than his preaching, for he voluntarily exposed himself to certain danger by attacking the Pope. So, too, must all Christians, whatever their walk of life. In a journal entry entitled, "Luther's Swing from the Monastery," Kierkegaard writes:

"Away," Luther cries, "away with all these presumed godly deeds such as fasting and the like: Let everyone remain in his calling—that is the true worship of God." But wait just a minute, dear Luther. So everyone is to remain in his position. But first of all, can every civil position be reconciled with Christianity?—e.g., take that of an actor. Great collisions lie dormant here. And next, how shall he live in his civil position—is civil righteousness per se, is it sufficient for a Christian? If not, then he must express the Christian ethic within his civil post: then he is—eins, zwei, drei—reduced to poverty and persecution. Seen from [Luther's] angle (in contrast to the monastic error) this swing looks so easy, but on closer inspection what enormous

---

125 Pap IX A 292 (JP 1:486), X A 487 (JP 4:4949), X A 39 (JP 2:1433) and, above all, XI A 130-31 (JP 2:1447-48). On the other hand, Luther is occasionally capable of pointing up (if imperfectly) both the necessity of suffering that issues from the world, and suffering the source of which lies in the relationship with God—Pap X A 579 (JP 4:4336).


127 Again, Pap X A 263 (JP 3:2509); Pap X A 43 (JP 4:4950). In these journal entries SK takes exception to Luther's warning against seeking out sufferings of one's own choosing, his admonishment to await those sufferings that God will bring in the course of one's worldly calling. It is Kierkegaard's contention that the Christian is never simply passive in his encounter with the world. On the contrary, he evokes (if not provokes!) its opposition with full awareness of what he is doing.

collisions lie dormant here since the characteristic state of affairs is, precisely, for that which is truly Christian not to fit in with this world. But Luther was no dialectician, ever seeing but one side of the matter.\textsuperscript{129}

Kierkegaard's complaint has to do with the fact that on the one hand Luther speaks of the necessity of conflict with the established order, and on the other he enjoins peaceful coexistence with it. Given so marked a disparity one is tempted to speculate whether the former stance does not reflect Luther's experience with the Pope, and the latter one his experience with the peasant and sectarian revolts against the reforms that he—in concert with the Lutheran princes—had instituted. The \textit{theologia crucis}, it would seem, belongs to the former context; the two kingdom teaching to the latter one. And there may well be a clash between these two theological views concerning the Christian's relation to society. Kierkegaard clearly opts for the former, first, because of the \textit{Spießbürgertum} that the two kingdom theory engenders,\textsuperscript{130} and second, because of the utter impossibility that the Christian could exercise his secular office in a Christian way without suffering the world's reprisal. No, Christ's kingdom will ever be at variance with the world's kingdom; accordingly one must choose in \textbf{which} one will participate. Should one choose to participate wholeheartedly in Christ's kingdom, one's participation in the worldly order will be short-lived, indeed.\textsuperscript{131}

Luther's very pact with secular authority affords yet another example of his "Jewish" piety. Again and again SK reproaches him for having politicized the Reformation. Luther was no true reformer inasmuch as \textbf{true} reform is a process of becoming inward, not railing

\textsuperscript{129}Pap X\textsuperscript{4} A 394 (JP 3:2541), translation mine.

\textsuperscript{130}SK writes: "Actually it is there that we come to begin again: with Luther. It went a bit too fast with collapsing secularity and piety together" (Pap X\textsuperscript{1} A 153 [JP 3:2518], translation mine).

\textsuperscript{131}Granted that Kierkegaard's two kingdom teaching has far more in common with Augustine's two city doctrine than with Luther's two government (\textit{Regimente}) one: Kierkegaard views activity in one's civil calling (whether it be marriage or work), not as participation in God's \textit{Reich mit der linken Hand}, but as complicity with a thoroughly corrupted \textit{civitas terrena}. Nevertheless, he \textbf{does} proceed to this conclusion by way of \textit{theologia crucis} premises (at least in part!), and therefore—it seems to me—rightly questions Luther's consistency in advocating \textbf{both} the cross- and two kingdom frameworks. But more on this later!
against the pope. 132 He got too mixed up in worldliness, and as a result, the fruit of the Reformation was politics and political development. 133 Luther occasioned enormous confusion because, though himself an individual extraordinaire (as every true Christian is obliged to be), he did not decline to found a party, but instead assembled others about him en masse. 134 Impatient that his reform-idea strike root, he accepted the princes' help and in effect became himself a politician. In so doing he violated the cardinal doctrine of religious communication: viz., that how a religious truth is introduced is every bit as important as what that truth is. The mode of a communication must reduplicate its content if it is not to end by negating it. Accordingly, the political is, and will forever remain, the archfoe of Christianity. Of this Luther exhibited but limited awareness. 135

Finally—and this is not unrelated to the preceding—Luther failed utterly as a reformer by not having become a martyr. 136 One can express one's allegiance to the unconditioned in but a single way: by being sacrificed for it. To form a party is to cease to express an


134 Pap X V A 121, p. 133 (JP 2:2046). As SK can also, in this same entry, put it: "The numerical is precisely what tramples down the unconditioned."


136 Pap XI A 61 (JP 3:2546). SK excoriates Luther for having accepted help from the politicians, claiming that he did "incalculable harm by not becoming a martyr." At the very least Luther should have made it known that his way of bringing about reform lay at a qualitative remove from that of the true reformer, who gets himself killed. By failing to make this admission Luther placed his imprimatur upon mediocrity and the category "reformer" was debased so as to denote someone who "gets himself out of a jam." Because the nerve center of Christianity—the reality of martyrdom—was severed, it henceforward became almost impossible to get a true reformer. Luther's legacy has been that "it is a nice world in which we live; therefore, to reform is to come away unscathed, for the world (which lies in the evil as Christianity teaches—and hence martyrdom) . . . wills the good, and therefore the reformer triumphs—yes, therefore Satan triumphs!" Similarly, Pap X V A 115 (JP 4:4220) asserts that Christianity became mired in politics' mud thanks to Luther's decision to accept human help rather than be martyred. He was the Christian hero "who blinked, certainly not from lack of courage; no, but prey to the conception that it is precisely godliness to rejoice over this life, faith in the unconditional worth of martyrdom went out" (both translations mine).
unconditional relationship to the unconditioned. By making this swing into worldliness instead of martyrdom (for which Luther, at life's end, reproached himself) he brought about a confusion between triumphing in a worldly and in a divine sense. For as we earlier saw, the quintessentially Christian way of triumphing is to triumph in such a way that one "goes under."

In concluding our remarks on Luther's "Jewish piety," it must be observed that Kierkegaard by no means wishes to deny (at least earlier on) that God is well-pleased with temporal life. Nevertheless, he recognizes that Christianity promises eternal, rather than temporal, blessedness. Whereas Judaism is a holding onto temporality in the expectation of God's reward in this life, Christianity is the voluntary letting go of temporal blessing for the sake of the gospel. In all of the aforementioned ways Luther exhibited a lack of clarity about this.

The third respect in which Luther must bear responsibility for what has become of the reformation that he inaugurated is the most serious of them all. It has to do, not merely with his lack of historical perspective or his confusion regarding the Christian's relationship to temporality; no, it has to do with nothing less than his redefinition of Christianity into terms that make it a watered down version of the New Testament. SK expresses this variously: Luther "knocked off" from Christian ideality, he lifted burdens instead of imposing them, he translated Christianity into man's interest rather than God's by making it a religion of comfort, and so on. In certain crucial respects the Lutheran doctrine is not.


139 Pap X A 509 (JP 5:4899). This is, after all, the only way in which the unconditioned can be served. Its victory is ultimately accomplished by my being sacrificed.

140 Pap VIII A 369 (JP 2:2599).

141 Pap X A 426, p. 273 (JP 1:843), X A 75 and 364 (JP 6:6503, 3:2511). In these texts SK praises Luther's (apparently momentary) grasp of the difference between Judaism's and Christianity's respective pieties. Note that in the latter entry SK connects Christianity's recommendation of the single estate with its view that God's reward is given in eternity, not in this life.
"excellent," is not "the truth"--contrary to SK's earlier representation. 142 The development to which we now turn is Kierkegaard's final one.

We begin with the formulation which has it that Luther "knocked off with respect to the New Testament's, particularly the Gospels', requirement for being a Christian." 143 Kierkegaard makes this claim on numerous occasions in the late journals, 144 and means various things by it. In Pap X A 88 and 96 (JP 2:1922 and 3:2898) it is made in the context of a discussion of the singularity of Christ. Whereas medieval piety--indeed, the Gospels--presented Christ as a paradigm according to which the Christian was to pattern his life, it was Luther's recognition that Christ's heterogeneity was so absolute that any imitation with the thought of resembling him was out of the question--hence the necessity of grace. In this regard Luther showed himself to be, "next to the N. T., the truest figure." Kierkegaard goes on to say that there is therefore, in one sense, in Luther a reduction with regard to what it means to be a Christian by comparison with the oldest Christians, in another sense there is an advance regarding the naïveté that an ordinary person, however sincerely he might desire it, can without further ado have the God-Man as his Model. Luther knocked off. What I blame him for is that he did not make this more strongly recognizable. 145 The "reduction" or "knocking off" 146 that Luther effected was a necessary one--indeed, it occurs already with Paul, for whom Christianity is not principally a matter of imitation of Christ the Model, but the receipt of grace from Christ the Redeemer. Accordingly, the "reduction" itself is not the problem (it is simply the form that Christianity must assume for us human beings). No, the problem is that Luther failed make it known that his

142 SV XII 314 (For Self-Examination, 24).

143 Pap X A 88 (JP 2:1922), translation mine.


145 Pap X A 96, p. 112 (JP 3:2898). Pap X A 88 (JP 2:1922) reads very much the same. SK writes: "I don't direct my objection against the reduction--this can be the case inasmuch as every step toward the ideal is a step backward--but then it must be noted and 'grace' be applied all the more strongly, that is to say, not in empty platitudes, but that there be a careful settling of accounts" (both translations mine).

146 At slaa af paa means to reduce one's asking price or one's demands.
presentation of Christianity was Christianity in man's interest, whereas Christianity in God's interest is set forth in Christ's life. The result of this failure, however, is that Christian proclamation (which should consist both of God's unconditional demand upon the Christian and the atonement) has been essentially altered. SK observes: "It is easy to see that Luther's proclamation of Christianity alters Christianity's life- and world view."

Precisely how does Luther accomplish this? The answer is: he accomplishes it by means of his ordo salutis:

The way in which even Luther speaks of law and gospel still is not Christ's teaching. . . . Luther distinguishes two parts: law and gospel. First the law, and then

147In Pap X4 A 499 (JP 2:1911) we read: "Christ's life is Christianity in God's interest. In the very moment that he dies, Christianity is translated into man's interest. 'The apostle' changes the Model essentially into the Redeemer. Herein, too, lies the fact that 'the apostle' posits heterogeneity between the God-Man and every other human being. The atonement, or the fact that Christ's life and death are the atonement, is the expression for the heterogeneity between him and every human being. 'Imitation' is in the direction of likeness. 'The apostle' follows him and is crucified--but he brings the atonement to bear as the essential thing, for otherwise the apostle would, after all, become a kind of Christ. And quite properly it is precisely that apostle who has not been witness to Christ's life, not lived with him, that later apostle, Paul, who most strongly emphasizes the atonement and almost overlooks imitation. In this way Christianity is translated more and more egoistically into man's interest in the church from generation to generation: the atonement reduces imitation to nothing or one dodges imitation entirely. In this way Christendom increasingly gets a bad conscience, and the notion that being related to God should mean suffering becomes completely foreign--[no, it is] the exact opposite, the sign of being related to God becomes good fortune and success--and so, Christianity is actually done away with" (translation mine).

In this entry, dating from 1852, we are apprised of the trend that SK's theology increasingly follows during the late period--a trend on which God's uncompromising standard comes to assume full parity--and then some!--alongside his grace. Indeed, already in a journal entry from 1850 (Pap X4 A 409 [JP 2:1877]) we encounter the above mentioned two-fold conception of Christianity--Paul's emphasis upon the atonement is called "Christianity for us human beings," whereas Christ's life on earth is "Christianity as no human being can endure it." In none of the entries cited, however, does SK deny the necessity of Christianity being translated "into man's interest" (here, cf. especially the last-mentioned citation where it is affirmed that "grace is the decisive thing"). Kierkegaard's grievance is not with that "reduction" on which Christianity is presented as God's forbearance and grace, but with the all too one-sided and duplicitous use that has subsequently been made of it. As we have seen in the previously cited journal entries, however, Luther bears some of the responsibility for this abuse insofar as he did not more clearly note that what he had effected was a reduction (albeit a necessary one). Indeed, as Pap XI A 572 (JP 3:2554) has it--and Pap X2 A 244 (JP 3:2507), dating from 1849!--Luther himself takes a wrong turn as a result of his one-sided enlistment of Paul as his standard for interpreting the gospels. He has not seen that Paul's theology was itself a reduction--hence when he fails to find the apostle's teaching in the gospels, he concludes: "Ergo, this is no gospel." Subsequently Luther, too, was made "into the absolute, and when one found the apostle to be stricter than Luther (which he, in fact, is) then one concluded: the apostle is wrong here, this is no true gospel. And in this way they have systematically, step for step, tricked (i.e., tried to trick) God out of the gospel, reversing the entire relationship" (translation mine).

the gospel, which is sheer mildness, etc. But this way it ends with Christianity becoming optimism, the goal of which is that it should go well with us in this world. That is to say, Christianity thereby becomes Judaism.\footnote{Ibid., p. 434, translation mine.}

Kierkegaard reproaches Luther for having altered Christianity, making of it a source of tranquility when, in fact, it is the ultimate of cause of unrest. The raison d'être that Luther has assigned to Christianity—that it exists in order to provide comfort to afflicted consciences—is purely an invention, as may be readily seen when it is compared with Christ's teaching.\footnote{Pap XI A 193 (JP 3:2550). Connected with Luther's revision of Christianity's true ordo salutis (suffering for the duration of this life, then eternal rest), is his revision of the way in which Christianity regards martyrdom and virginity: 'In the New Testament being a Christian is expressed by the apostles; to be a Christian is—as spirit—spirit's highest disquietude, impatience for eternity, sheer fear and trembling that is intensified by being, as it were, crucified love in this evil world, intensified by trembling before the day of reckoning when the Lord and Master shall come again and judge whether they have been faithful. When matters are thus—then to have to become a martyr, which Christ foretells of the Christian, is so far from being an intensification that it is rather an assuagement; for one might say that only such outward sufferings and, in the end, a martyr's death, can assuage, can soothe the agony of soul that the exertion of being a Christian in the New Testament's sense is. Hence martyrdom is not a cruelty, it is, on the contrary, what bodily sufferings are in relation to agonies of soul. On the other hand, it would have been cruel if Christ had said to the disciples: 'After my time you will have nothing further to do. See that you get married and that each and every one of you gets a respectable little occupation and scrounges some money together, be a nice person and go to church once a week and take communion three times a year.' In the New Testament, therefore, the one corresponds to the other: disquietude in the Christian demands martyrdom as a kind of assuagement—and martyrdom is what is demanded. . . . But soon disquietude was absent from 'Christendom,' this dead, spiritless mass. . . . [One found more and more that Christianity caused one trouble when one was to live peacefully and enjoy life— --and so, this finally finds its expression in Luther (who, for that matter, no doubt can have been in the right in contrast to the Catholic abuse). Luther comes up with the invention that Christianity exists in order to reassure. I have more than once remarked that Luther has altered Christianity. As I now see, Schopenhauer contends that, by altering virginity, Luther altered Christianity. I have also been of this opinion inasmuch as I have thought that Luther should have taken the utmost care that it became known that his marriage was an exception, a corrective. But that at which I have particularly aimed was that Luther has altered Christianity by altering martyrdom. So Luther turns Christianity right on its head. Christianity is to reassure, Christ came to the world in order to reassure, to which is then added, anxious consciences. This is as opposite to the New Testament as can be. Christ comes to the world in order to save a sinful world, a world that lies in the evil. But a sinful world truly does not suffer from an anxious conscience. Here what is needed is precisely to awaken disquietude" (translation and emphasis mine).}

Luther's interpretation, as it turns out, is not just a return to primitive Chris-

True Christianity, then, is not—at least not principally!—a matter of having a relieved conscience. It is rather following Christ's teaching (Pap XI A 199 (JP 3:3620)). And "his teaching is essentially this, his life. What he therefore says, is essentially this: Follow me; hate yourself; forsake all things; crucify the flesh; take up your cross; hate father and mother, etc. Furthermore: Ye shall be hated by all for my name's sake, etc. And finally: There is a day of reckoning in the next world where I am the judge" (translation mine).
tianity—no, it is a modification of it. And it is a modification that has its source in the fact that Luther—quite apart from his one-sided use of Paul—continually reasons on the basis of human considerations.

The turn that Luther gave the matter—Christianity must first and foremost reassure—is really in actuality the language of revolution even if couched in the greatest possible language of submission. The Christian demand drives human nature to its greatest extremity, then it reacts: we cannot, it is sheer mortal dread—Christianity must first and foremost work reassuringly. But actually a consideration is deceitfully added to the unconditioned in this kind of talk. And as soon as the unconditioned has a consideration added to it, or as soon as anything is assumed to be capable of interposing itself in the relation to the unconditioned such that the latter pays regard to a consideration, then it is no longer the unconditioned. Yet at the basis of Lutheranism actually lies this: that whether human beings can feel well off with it or not is ultimately decisive for determining what Christianity is; but then Christianity is not the unconditioned, God is then, after all, only a relative majesty. The law for what is revolutionary is given in Lutheranism.

Similarly, in Pap XI A 297 (JP 3:2551) we read:

Luther understood the matter as follows: no human being can endure the anxiety that his striving is to be decisive for an eternal blessedness or eternal damnation. "No, no," says Luther, "this can only lead to despair or presumption. And therefore (mark this well!) therefore (for Luther clearly alters New Testament Christianity by virtue of this 'otherwise humanity must despair') therefore, neither is it so. You are saved by grace; calm down, you are saved by grace—and then see to it to strive as best you can."

This is the turn that Luther gave the matter. I will not speak here of the wicked deception that this has become in later Protestantism. No, I will stick to Luther. My objection is: Luther ought to have made it apparent that he reduced Christianity. Furthermore, he ought to have made it apparent that that by virtue of which he continually argues is actually the human: otherwise we must despair. But strictly speaking, this argument is neither here nor there when the question is what the New Testament understands by Christianity; and strictly speaking, the fact that it could occur to Luther to argue by virtue of it shows that Christianity was not the unconditional sovereign for him after all, but that on the assumption that "otherwise a human being must despair" this sovereign must also give in. But I continually come back to this, that Luther should have made the true context apparent. According to

---

151 Pap X A 244 (JP 3:2507).

152 Pap XI A 194 (JP 3:2555), translation mine. The entry criticizing Luther's ordo salutis, too, attributes this revisionism of Christianity's true purpose to Luther's reasoning by virtue of human considerations (Pap XI A 572 [JP 3:2554]).
my concepts, those subjects are by no means rebellious who, when they honestly
cannot pay the taxes, say straight out to the monarch, "We cannot pay the taxes."
What they are not permitted to do, on the other hand, is to falsify the amount of the
tax, quietly making it less than it is—and then honorably pay it.153

This entry is valuable inasmuch as it levels two charges against Luther: (a) that he
reduced Christianity without making it known that this was what he was doing and (b) that
he reasons by virtue of "the human," thereby showing contempt for the unconditioned. As
is evident from the illustration of the honest subjects who admit that they cannot pay the
taxes, a "reduction" is, in one sense, entirely in order (viz., when mandated by God). Yet in
another sense it is not in order—viz., when we humans, reasoning on the basis of our own
interest, arrive at the conclusions that (a) Christianity must be sheer comfort and reassurance
because we say so, and (b) God's standard for discipleship cannot be what the New
Testament in fact says it is because it is entirely too difficult for us. In both respects Luther
has unwarrantably reduced Christianity, giving rise to the pretense that our comfortable,
bourgeois lifestyle meets God's standard without further ado. In a word: Luther has (a)
proclaimed grace improperly, out of a purely human interest and (b) failed to proclaim
authentic discipleship, the standard for which has been laid down by Christ and the apostles
in the New Testament.154


154 In Pap XI A 266 (JP 3:2556) we are told that the apostle expresses Christianity in God's interest whereas
Luther expresses it in man's interest. This is enlightening, for certainly the apostle, too, has need of grace—he
does not satisfy God's unconditional standard however much he may more closely approximate it. Accordingly,
when SK uses the term "Christianity in man's interest," he does not generally have in mind the necessary
reduction that grace implies. Rather, he has in mind human effeminacy/insubordination that reden1es God's
standard in such a way that it comes off looking quite good by comparison. This type of reduction is what SK
finds indefensible, for not only is it not effected by God (but by man and in the interest of man), it is effected
in all cunning as if God had mandated it. It is the latter feature, viz., that the reduction has been hushed up, that
galls Kierkegaard. Such, for example, is Luther's rehabilitation of marriage so as to assume the status of Chris­
tianity's preferred estate (cf. Pap XI A 243 [JP 3:3009]). Luther achieves this result, not on the basis of the
New Testament's teaching, but on the basis of "the numerical" (viz., that because only a few individuals can
live chastely outside of marriage, ergo marriage must be the preferred state). Of the true connection (viz., that
this is a reduction effected in man's interest owing to his lack of self-control), Luther and the symbolical books
make but the barest mention (Pap XI A 96 [JP 3:2898] and XI A 129 [JP 3:2616], referring to the Augsburg
Paul by no means sanctions marriage in the manner of Luther, it is to be noted that he nevertheless comes in
for like criticism. He, too, made a concession to the masses, "knocking off" from Christ's requirement of
celibacy; paying regard to human considerations, he made the unconditioned into something else—Pap XI B
By Luther's redefinition of Christian discipleship as a happy marriage and bourgeois walk of life devoid of the dangers of martyrdom; by his recasting of Christianity's raison d'être as, first and foremost, relief for anxious consciences: by these means Luther has essentially altered Christianity, reducing its demands upon the believer and, instead, placing human demands upon it. In short: Luther has translated Christianity into man's interest by continually reasoning on the basis that interest. As a result, he has thrown off yokes instead of imposing them as the true reformer ought. This is (again!) not to say that grace is not an intrinsic element of Christianity. Nor is it to say that Christianity, along with the infinite standard that it sets for discipleship, does not also offer comfort for afflicted consciences. It is merely to say that God is the one in whose interest Christianity has been established. As human beings we are unconditionally obliged to accept Christianity on God's terms, placing ourselves under his standard of discipleship while relying upon his unmerited grace. This is not, as Kierkegaard sees it, a matter of reinstating thralldom to the law. It is merely a matter of putting an end to our insurrection against Christianity and honestly admitting how matters really stand between us and it.

Seen in one light, the Luther-critique of the final years really is a critique of Luther and the ethos to which he gave rise. Yet seen in another light, it is not a departure from the reformer inasmuch as Kierkegaard continues steadfastly to maintain the cross as the decisive criterion of discipleship as well as unconditional respect for the unconditioned as the nonnegotiable watchword of the relationship with God. It is really Luther's own theology of

175 [JP 3:3213]).

155Pap X¹ A 154 (JP 3:2481), X² A 559 (JP 3:2514) and XI¹ A 134 (JP 3:2762). See especially the second mentioned citation where SK does not dispute the freedom from the law that Luther championed--his dispute with Luther lies in the fact that "he ought to have made it obvious that the freedom for which he fought (and in this fight he was in the right) leads to making life, the spiritual life, infinitely much more strenuous than it was before" (translation mine).

156Even in the entry in which Kierkegaard condemns Luther's "invention" (Christianity exists in order to comfort afflicted consciences--Pap XI¹ A 193 [JP 3:2550]) he adds: "Luther has suffered from an anxious conscience to a high degree, has needed healing: well and good. But is Christianity therefore to be transformed in toto into this: to reassure anxious consciences?" Cf. also Pap X² A 303, p. 322 (JP 3:2544): "In Luther it [reassurance] was the truth; but was it therefore also correct that it was made into the universal principle?" (translations mine).
the cross and ethical idealism—to which Kierkegaard adheres without the slightest com­
promise—that provide the basis for his final Luther-critique. Yet it is also the case that other
factors enter in as well—factors that give his final theological stance a rather less Lutheran
character. Already, the interpretation of grace itself as a kind "reduction" or "knocking off"
from God's absolute demand apprises us that a foreign point of view has insinuated itself into
Kierkegaard's thinking somewhere along the line.

It cannot be doubted that a deep-seated disagreement does obtain between
Kierkegaard and Luther: SK refers it to their divergent attitudes about the Christian's
relationship to the world, as we have seen. Yet if one seeks a complete accounting of
sources that contribute to his doctrine of the necessity of suffering in this life, then one must
look to other factors than the sheer rigor with which he develops Luther's theologia crucis.
At issue is not only the inevitability of the world's persecution of Christ and the Christian;
at issue is an altogether different understanding of corporeal-temporal existence than one
finds in Luther. For Luther, temporality and corporeality are not cast-away remnants of
God's creative will, irrevocably despoiled by the Fall; rather, they participate in the redemp­
tion effected by God's assumption of flesh and are fit vessels for his presence, here and now.
By contrast, the present world does not enjoy the proleptic fruits of redemption in the same
way for Kierkegaard. In part this is due to his well-nigh exclusive emphasis upon the cross—
an emphasis that is rightly prompted by his fear of landing in a too-realized theology of the
resurrection. And in part it is due to his conception of humans as being called to absolute
subjectivity—a conception that issues in a soteriology wherein spirit sloughs off flesh, and
eternity lays aside temporality. Both elements affect SK's view of life under the cross, and
with it, his understanding of grace. The product of their influence is a way of conceiving
grace that is at odds with the theologia crucis conception already discussed. While that con­
ception is too fundamental to be abandoned by Kierkegaard, it does nevertheless undergo
modification in a legalistic direction during the final period. It is to this latter development
that we now turn.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CROSS WITHOUT RESURRECTION

We indicated at the close of the previous chapter that the present world does not already enjoy the fruits of redemption in the same way for Kierkegaard as for Luther, adumbrating two reasons why this is so. One of them is SK’s fear of landing in a too-realized theology of the resurrection. His presentation of Christianity, after all, seeks to dispel the illusion that Christ’s cause has triumphed in history in such a way that the church can now take its ease as the ecclesia triumphans. The fear that he could contribute to the illusion rather than offer a countervailing influence leads Kierkegaard consistently to look away from the resurrection and to enjoin contemporaneity with Christ’s cross and suffering. Not surprisingly, this “remaining standing” at the cross (as though its true import were not to be found in the resurrection) lies at the heart of many a theological critique of Kierkegaard—not least among them, Karl Barth’s. Nearly all such critiques agree that SK’s portrayal of

1 Cf. Die kirchliche Dogmatik (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1932-70), vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 379-81; vol. 4, pt. 2, pp. 30-31 and 396-97. Barth warns in the latter two texts of “getting stuck” in an abstract theology of the cross and falling prey to a “false earnestness and profundity” that misguided conceals the fact that Christ’s enigmatic existence has another side than that to which the theologia crucis points; viz., the theologia resurrectionis, which is a theologia gloriae. Kierkegaard is tacitly accused in vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 379-81 of having instituted a mythical interpretation of Christianity by his contention that Christ’s experience upon the cross must be endlessly repeated in the lives of his disciples: Christ lebt und regiert in Ewigkeit und stirbt nicht wieder. Und in und mit ihm haben auch wir das Leben und nicht den Tod vor uns. Es ist der Weg Gottes des Vaters, des Sohnes und des Heiligen Geistes, der Weg des wahren Gottes nun einmal kein Cyklus, kein Weg der ewigen Wiederkehr, auf welchem das Ziel immer wieder Anfang werden müßte. Cyklisch, in ewiger Wiederkehr und auch den Menschen zu ewigen Wiederholungen, zu einem ewigen Hin und Her zwischen Ja und Nein, Gnade und Gericht, Leben und Tod auffordernd, ist der Weg des Mythus. Man sollte das Evangelium vom Weg des wahren Gottes nicht mythologisieren (auch nicht im Namen Kierkegaards oder Luthers selbst!) und also nicht im Sinn eines solchen Cyklus interpretieren und also das christliche Leben, den theologischen Gedanken, die kirchliche Predigt, Unterweisung und Seelsorge nicht jenem Ochsen gleich machen, der, an seine Stange gebunden, die Peitsche seines Herrn hinter sich, rundum trottend seine Mühe zu treiben hat.” Barth seems specifically to have in mind SK’s presentation of Christ’s alternately recurring aspect qua model, and hence, the Christian’s repeated subjection to the law’s usus elenchicus in Christ’s own person.

227
Christianity as unremitting suffering and effectively transforms it into a dour legalism. Not only this, Kierkegaard's exclusive preoccupation with the cross is said to land him in a veritable thicket of other doctrinal difficulties. Perhaps the most convincing demonstration that SK does consistently look away from the resurrection in his presentation of Christianity has been given by Siegfried Hansen. Because Hansen not only demonstrates this feature of Kierkegaard's thought with admirable persuasive force but systematically draws the relevant theological conclusions from it, we take his presentation as the basis for this chapter's initial discussion of the doctrinal integrity of SK's theology.

Hansen's work explores the role played by suffering in Kierkegaard's christology. Analyzing SK's picture of Christ, he finds that it is dominated by suffering--N.B., suffering of a singular sort. Hansen notes how, again and again, Christ is said by Kierkegaard to have come into the world in order to suffer, so that this becomes the content and meaning of his life. The reason why it could not be otherwise, as we have seen, is that Christ in his capacity as model willed to relate absolutely to God--a course of action that put him on a collision course with the world (Pap X \(2\) A 317 [JP 2:1859]). As a result he expressed what it means to die to the world, living out his life in poverty, contempt and persecution (Pap X \(3\) A 171 [JP 2:1864]), and he did so altogether voluntarily (Pap VIII \(1\) A 259 [JP 4:4602]). The same will be true of every Christian who enters into contemporaneity with him (Pap X \(3\) A 171 [JP 2:1864] and X \(5\) A 19 [JP 3:3768]). Accordingly, for Kierkegaard the imitation of

---

2 Again, Barth stands out. In addition to the text just cited we call attention to his 1963 Sonning prize address, quoted at the beginning of the introduction.


4 Ibid., 1. Hansen cites Pap VII \(2\) B 235, p. 159 (On Authority and Revelation, 126), VIII \(1\) A 273 (JP 3:3090), X \(2\) A 257 (JP 4:4645) and X \(3\) A 123 (JP 3:2967), but notes that the citations could be multiplied almost at will. He further observes that wherever the phrase occurs in Kierkegaard's manuscripts it is almost always underscored (Christus kom til Verden for at lide). Particularly instructive is SK's interpretation of Christ's final words from the cross: "'It is finished!' 'What?' 'The suffering'" (Pap IX B 11). Hansen asks: "Did Jesus have in mind his life's suffering when he, at the end, cried out: 'It is finished?' Is the suffering really the meaning of his life?" ("Die Bedeutung des Leidens," 10). Viggo Mortensen, following Hansen, raises the identical question (see "En redegørelse for, hvad der ligger i det Kierkegaardske pseudonym Anticlimacus's påstand, at kristendommen er og skal være det absolutte, og en undersøgelse af den i påstanden forudsatte kristendomsoptattelses forhold til Luther" [Aarhus Universitets prisopgave, 1971], 78).
Christ is virtually synonymous with voluntary suffering. Hansen rightly acknowledges that such imitation is not an exercise in works-righteousness since SK makes it clear that the one lesson to be learned from imitation is precisely that we cannot attain to God on our own powers. Sin-consciousness is the end-result of our every essay at imitation—which is as it should be since the purpose of imitation is none other than to lead us to Christ the Redeemer (Pap IX A 153 [JP 1:692]). It is then he who, in turn, lifts us up so that we can follow Christ the model anew (SV XII 423 [Judge for Yourself!, 147]).

Despite the fact that imitation has nothing to do with self-justification, an oppressive, if not legalistic, tenor can be detected in the above schema in view of its stipulation of sorrow as the sole locus for the encounter with Christ. The rule that Christ is to be found only in sorrow establishes, at the very least, the psychological predisposition to legalism insofar as such descriptive analysis easily takes on prescriptive force: suffering as not only the specific locus of the God-relationship, but the conditio sine qua non for it. Yet as constraining as this elevation of suffering to the essential feature of Christian existence may be (one must suffer in order to be contemporaneous with Christ, and hence, to know him), it is still not as constraining as the specific manner in which Kierkegaard conceives that suffering—a manner that displaces the emphasis onto self more radically still. On Kierkegaard's presentation Christ's suffering stems principally from his voluntary renunciation of self: he is the model of what it means to "die to" every selfish attachment to the world. By contrast, the New Testament portrays Christ as the model of compassion. Christ's is a suffering, the cause of which is not, as with Kierkegaard, the collision with the world, but the other person's need. The point of departure is not Christ, but the other person, the neighbor. Christ is portrayed as the one who sees the need (σέπιλα για φίλοι), takes it upon himself, and thereby removes it. Kierkegaard's concept of suffering is anthropocentric; the synoptics' concept of suffering proceeds from the neighbor. Kierkegaard's concept of suffering is passive—that of the synoptics is active. With Kierkegaard, the final result is the suffering; by contrast, with the synoptics, it is the neighbor's need that is resolved.

---

5 The preceding is a précis of part I, "Die Bedeutung des Leidens" (pp. 1-9).

according to the synoptics with Christ it is the help, the overcoming of the suffering. The Kierkegaardian concept of suffering is ultimately the expression for the evil of human beings; that of the synoptics, on the other hand, is ultimately the expression for the love of God in Christ that is moved to compassion.

Hansen's claim is that while Christ is presented as "model" in the New Testament, this is not in the incipiently legalistic sense in which Kierkegaard conceives it. Christ is not the model of the Christian who bids farewell to the world, he is not (at least not principally) the paradigm of misunderstood and persecuted love. His life does not represent the operation of a natural law of suffering that is intrinsic to the relationship to God—a law that transmutes ever so subtly into selfish preoccupation with such suffering. No, Christ is model in the sense of displaying to us the image of God, which is an image of sheer compassion. It is in this sense, insists Hansen, that Christ is the model for the Christian. Kierkegaard, he contends, has filled the New Testament conception, "model," with new extrabiblical content—content fetched from his own experience.

---

7 Ibid., 11. Other scholars concur that, for Kierkegaard, Christian suffering lacks the liberating directedness away from oneself, being undertaken with the self's salvation (via Afdaen) in mind. Among them are Viggo Mortensen ("En redegørelse," 88-90) and K. E. Løgstrup, who makes the bald assertion that in Kierkegaard "Christianity is made into law" (Opper mod Kierkegaard, [Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1967], 46). Knud Hansen calls attention to the overwhelming significance that "dying to" assumes during the final decade of Kierkegaard's life ("Der andere Kierkegaard. Zu Sørens Kierkegaards Christentumsvorverständnis," in Søren Kierkegaard, ed. Heinz-Horst Schrey, Wege der Forschung, vol. 179 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971], 128). Like Siegfried Hansen and the others, he observes its irreconcilability with suffering in the evangelical sense.


While Hansen's speculation about the biographical origins of SK's concept of suffering may be true enough, he is surely wrong when he insists that suffering in the New Testament has its meaning only insofar as it is directed to others. Kierkegaard is not the only one who is guilty of a certain one-sidedness; Hansen, too, is guilty, and of a characteristically Lutheran one-sidedness at that. In the Synoptic gospels and Paul's letters it is clear that suffering is the hallmark of the present age—an age in which the eschaton has already been entered upon. It is the age of messianic woes. Hence in I Cor. 7:26 Paul can speak of "the present distress," in Rom. 8:18 of "the sufferings of this present time," in 2 Thess. 2:7 of the fact that the mystery of lawlessness is "already at work." And when, in Colossians 1:24 he speaks of completing, in his own flesh, what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, the intent seems to be that a certain measure of suffering must be completed by Christ's church before the end of the age arrives (for further discussion, see Dale Allison, The End of the Ages
If Kierkegaard's understanding of "model" is qualified in the quasi-legalistic manner described above, we should not be surprised to learn that his view of "imitation" is similarly qualified. As we have seen, the imitation of Christ has to do with voluntary suffering. K. E. Løgstrup cautions that such suffering is Christian only when it is "caused to flow outward to the neighbor." When this is not our motive we are, by default, attempting "to bring God's good pleasure down to ourselves." Løgstrup asserts: "We cannot make suffering and death into required works without making them into works by which we would earn salvation," further adding: "We see this with all the clarity that one might desire in Kierkegaard." That is to say: Løgstrup finds in the a priori necessity that SK assigns to suffering the very same consequence that Hansen does—a tendency to legalism. This means that, in the end, the Christian who would imitate Christ assumes suffering not out of concern for his neighbor's

Has Come. An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985], 62-65). Suffering in the New Testament, then, largely has an eschatological significance. And a certain ineluctable necessity is attributed to it—just as in Kierkegaard!

In the same way Hansen is also guilty of a one-sidedness as regards Christ's role as "model." Christ is not simply a model of the divine compassion that spontaneously issues from the hearts of those who have been liberated by the gospel and now know the "freedom of a Christian." Such a model would require no imitation. Yet as Allison points out, the early church surely understood Christ as the moral exemplar whom Christians are actively to imitate. Irenaeus refers to Christ as an "example of piety, righteousness, and submission" (Adv. haer. 2, 22, 4). Ignatius enjoins: "Be imitators of Jesus Christ, as he was of his Father" (Phil. 7, 2). Paul writes: "Become imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Frequently in the New Testament Christ is held up as model to be imitated (John 13:15 and 34; 15:12; 17:16; Heb. 11:1-4; 13:12-3; 1 Pet. 2:21; 3:17-8; I John 2:6). Allison notes that in Matthew's gospel Christ is presented—unlike the pharisees—as the one whose life perfectly embodied his teachings. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ pronounces a blessing upon the meek, the merciful, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. He teaches nonreprisal when one is the target of evil, and so on. And throughout the narrative of the gospel Christ embodies all of these teachings. This leads Allison to regard Matthew's gospel as, in some sense, a hortatory biography—i.e., a biography intended to inspire early Christians to moral endeavor. Hence what was true of biography of a not so distant past is true of Matthew's gospel: "Biography is a type of literature which, more than any other, touches close upon morality" (quoting André Maurois. For this and the other references cited, as well as fuller argumentation, see Dale Allison, "Matthew: Structure, Biographical Impulse and the Imitatio Christi" in The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck, ed. G. Van Segbroeck [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992], 1208-21).

We see, then, that the Christ of the New Testament is model in the sense that he is to be actively imitated, not simply one to whom we are to be passively conformed. This of course does not necessarily absolve Kierkegaard of the charge of legalism. It may well be that he does, as charged, portray the imitation of Christ in a manner that neglects the enabling presence of grace. And it may well be that his understanding of suffering is motivated by certain biographical—and as we shall see, metaphysical—factors. Nevertheless, his emphasis upon the inexorable necessity of suffering as well as upon the task of imitatio Christi are biblical, and provide a necessary corrective to Luther's one-sided exegesis.

9Løgstrup, Opger med Kierkegaard, 51. Emphasis added.
well-being, but out of the priority (and hence, merit) that the suffering enjoys in its own
right. And the facts, indeed, bear this supposition out. Kierkegaard's operative axiom is ever
that God is to be found only in suffering. But if this is so, then specifically Christian love
should be identifiable by the suffering that attends it. For Kierkegaard this is indeed the case:
Christian love is distinguishable from every other kind of love by the misunderstanding and
hatred that it occasions in the person one seeks to help. The curious corollary of this is that
love is demonstrably Christian precisely when it does not redound in any straightforward
sense to the neighbor's good. Naturally the suffering is not the only criterion that a deed
is Christian. Kierkegaard is well aware it must also be done for the neighbor's sake if it is
to deserve that name. Yet the malice by which my deed is repaid is precisely the indicator
that it has been performed for my neighbor's sake. It is none other than an angry refusal on
his part to enter into the suffering that I set before him when I offer him the relationship to
God as his possibility.

From the foregoing it is apparent that when suffering itself is made into the criterion
of the relationship to God and Christian love, then it has a clear tendency to displace the
love that alone makes a good deed truly good. Once this has happened the suffering assumes
complete priority and the accent falls away from the outward directedness of one's acts.
From here we are but a short step away from regarding our suffering as its own end,
imagining as it were: "All the better that I am misunderstood and maligned by the one to

10SK's rationale is this: were it clear from the outset that a deed of mine would redound in human terms
to my neighbor's good, then I could count upon his gratitude and in that case my motive could be impugned.
Hence only when I am certain to be reviled for my deed is it demonstrably good. Logstrup caricatures SK's
position wildly when he contends that actual misunderstanding and revilement are what constitute a deed as
Christian for Kierkegaard (ibid., 54-55: "If Christian love is received, then it is immediately no longer
Christian, just as surely as the one who receives it no longer repays it with hatred and persecution. . . . With
Kierkegaard love, if it is to be Christian, becomes contingent upon whether the other person, be he a stranger
or a loved one, becomes one's enemy"). This is a patent misrepresentation of Kierkegaard, for misunderstanding
and malignancy are but "results," and results are ever morally indifferent to SK—he would never regard them
as constitutive of a good act, let alone a Christian one.

11"When the person who is the object of Christian love misunderstands it as hate, then this is due to the fact
that . . . it makes him unhappy. Since the unhappiness that attaches to being a Christian consists, from first to
last, in coming to be hated and persecuted, then Christian love consists in helping the other person to come to
be hated and persecuted. By whom? By the one whom he, in turn, loves, and who will, in turn, repay his love
with hate and persecution since it consists of a love that would help him come to be hated and persecuted"
(ibid., 54; see also pp. 46 and 168-69).
whom I show love. Their revilement not only demonstrates that my efforts at dying to self are sincere, it is my means of imitating Christ, my model.\textsuperscript{12} As he did with the concept, "model," Siegfried Hansen contrasts the inward focus of SK's understanding of "imitation" with the outward focus that this concept has in the New Testament:

The follower has received a new Lord and therewith a new center, a new meaning and content for his life. Bonhoeffer justly emphasizes that imitation frees the person from all human rules, from the hard yoke of man's own laws, concerns and miseries. Hence he can further say that imitation is joy: the way of imitation with Christ is a way that is merciful beyond measure. The call to imitation is grace: I may follow! The liberation of which Bonhoeffer speaks is not simply a being set free from the world, but a new condition of being free for the world. The follower has been set

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{12} Torsten Bohlin, too, draws the conclusion that the neighbor in the end serves as a means to the end of achieving one's own salvation. He can even document this from the Works of Love, ostensibly that work of Kierkegaard's that deals with the Christian's deportment toward others most intimately of all. Bohlin writes: "In the final analysis love to one's neighbor seems to be subordinated to self-denial, to the notion of the person's individual purification and perfection. The neighbor, we read, is this something by which selfishness is to be tested. 'As far as thought is concerned the neighbour or other need not even exist. If a man living on a desert island formed his mind according to the command, he could by forsaking self-love be said to love his neighbour'" (SV IX 25 [Works of Love, 37]). Think of it: a man could be said to love his neighbor even if he lived on a deserted isle! In this work "where Kierkegaard goes to the greatest length that he possibly can in the direction of the 'social' ... fellowship is legitimated, foremost, as a means of realizing what belongs to the ego, be it ever the highest spiritual goal" (Bohlin, Kierkegaard's tro och andra Kierkegaardstudier [Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1944], 126-27).

Knud Hansen detects in Kierkegaard this same subordination of the neighbor's good to one's goal of personal salvation through virtuosity in suffering: "Für Kierkegaard ist es der Verzicht, der das Zentrum seiner Aufmerksamkeit bildet. ... Etwas anderes als diese selbstbewußte Selbstverneinung kennt Kierkegaard nicht. Spricht er von der Selbstverneinung, so hat das niemals eine Beziehung zu dem Mitmenschen im evangelischen Sinn, ist es niemals etwas, das mit einem Sich-offnen für einen anderen umschrieben werden kann; es ist nicht um eines anderen willen, daß man sich selbst verneinen soll, sondern um seiner selbst willen; denn nur durch die Selbstverneinung kommt das Selbst dazu, sich selbst in seiner höchsten Potenz zu ergreifen. Die Selbstverneinung ist so gar keine wirkliche Selbstverneinung, sie ist nur der Verzicht auf alles, was das Selbst an die Welt bindet, aber ein Verzicht durch den das Selbst frei gemacht wird zu einem mit Hilfe der Selbstverneinung verstärkten Selbstgefühl. Gott lieben ist für Kierkegaard auch identisch mit der Selbst liebe" ("Der andere Kierkegaard," 138-39).

While Hansen's judgement may seem harsh, it is nevertheless borne out by the evidence. Exemplary is Pap XI A 148 (JP 2:2053): "Does not Christianity make me into an enormous egoist, or does it not develop my egoism altogether abnormally inasmuch as it terrifies a human being by the greatest nightmare, bringing him to be concerned solely with his own salvation, completely without regard for the possible weakness, imperfection of all the others? ... [I]Is it not as though Christianity were to make him into an enormous egoist when it forbids him to delay himself by wanting to help them, and on the contrary, continually orders him farther and farther out, by which he surely will even throw those contemporaries into confusion, perhaps even cause them to kill him so that they even incur the greatest guilt? To this the answer must be: 'The truth' cannot comport itself in any other way ... [I]f what motivates [the person] is concern for his soul's salvation, then he bears no responsibility, then the responsibility rests upon Christianity, upon Governance, who then will also lead everything to the best outcome" (translation mine).
free by Christ for new tasks. The outward turn into the world, toward one's neighbor, can now be made on the basis of closeness to Christ. On the other hand, Kierkegaard's imitation is never outward, but ever inward, i.e., turned toward itself. This form of imitation circles tortuously about itself all the time, killing and annihilating itself ever anew since it, after all, knows of nothing else than "dying to" and having to suffer. The positive meaning of imitation, the liberating outward turn is lacking in Kierkegaard.  

Siegfried Hansen observes the same inwardly directed, self-annihilating tendency in Kierkegaard's *contemporaneity* concept as well. This is not surprising since, "for Kierkegaard, it is but another expression for imitation." Because the attempt to imitate Christ's...
perfect self-renunciation cannot but fail, "Kierkegaard's contemporaneity crushes the person but does not help him along." By contrast, the New Testament understanding of contemporaneity entails much more than the imaginative transferral of oneself back into Jesus' time; it involves the experience of his saving presence here and now in our time (I Cor. 6:17). It is with the risen and exalted Lord that the believer is united. Any number of New Testament texts support this—for example, Rom. 5:10: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." To which life does Paul here refer—that of the lowly Jesus, or the exalted Lord? The answer is clear from the next chapter: "The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God" (Rom. 6:10). In the following verse we encounter the formula, εν Χριστῷ [in Christ], which, along with εν πνεύματι [in the Spirit], is characteristic of Pauline thought. Hansen, however, observes that "the circumstance of having been determined by the πνεύμα is completely missing from the Kierkegaardian concept of contemporaneity. Yet thereby it is led by itself ad absurdum, for a genuine contemporaneity with Christ is not thinkable without the πνεύμα."17

Defending Kierkegaard on this point, Heinrich Traugott Vogel charges Hansen with having construed the phrase, εν Χριστῷ, in a manner that imputes to the New Testament 'SIbid., 13. 17Ibid. To be sure, Kierkegaard does have a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to testify to the believer that it is blessed to suffer—Pap X A 593 (JP 4:4688); X5 A 37, A 72, p. 79, A 79, pp. 89-90, A 81, p. 92, A 82, p. 95 (JP 4:4346, 6:6837, 3:3774, 4:4700, 4:4478). In this way the Spirit comforts the Christian, further assisting his efforts at "dying to." This means, however, that SK's pneumatology is taken up into the schema of suffering discipleship outlined above; it is enlisted in the attempt positively to characterize suffering that otherwise lacks positive attributes, in the process itself receiving a negative characterization (the suffering, for all its "blessedness," nevertheless retains its passive character, egocentric focus, and negative occasion in the mob's hostility). Moreover to the extent that the Spirit represents or effects contemporaneity with Christ, it is with the pre-Easter Christ, the model of such suffering; any association with the exalted Christ is—as we shall see—conspicuously lacking. Accordingly, SK's understanding of the category, εν πνεύματι, like his understanding of εν Χριστῷ, is not simply synonymous with the New Testament's. SK's pneumatology, like his christology, is controlled by his conception of suffering.
Kierkegaard, he says, is correct in contending that contemporaneity with the exalted Lord can come only through the abased Christ, and hence, is contemporaneity with both. Vogel's problem with Kierkegaard lies elsewhere, viz., in the latter's strict division of Christ's earthly history into two parts: his life during which he was solely model, and his death in which he effected humankind's redemption. Although contemporaneity with the abased Christ embraces both parts of Christ's earthly history—and hence signifies contemporaneity with model and redeemer alike—such contemporaneity does not, in Vogel's view, adequately overcome the split between these two highly differentiated aspects of Christ that SK has introduced. Vogel writes:

---

19Vogel writes: Kierkegaard's "profilierte These lautet: Christus ist in seinem Leben nur oder doch vor allem Forderung und erst in seinem Tode Gnade. Diese Eigentümlichkeit bietet den Ansatz, das Leben des Erniedrigten zum allgemeinen Ideal zu machen, weil sie die Forderung von der Verheißung trennt. Wir halten diese These darüber hinaus für einen der entscheidenden Schlüssel zur Erklärung der Spätenentwicklung von Kierkegaards Theologie" (ibid., 179). As proof of this sharp identification of Christ's life with a demand that is virtually devoid of grace, Vogel cites, among others, the following journal entries: "Christ as model is still a form of the law, yes the potentiated law, which is also why Christ's suffering is the strictest judgement upon the world and the race, for there was not a single person who would bear with him. . . . To be contemporaneous with Christ is the strictest examination possible; should it be our perpetual state, then the Jews were under a milder judgement under the law. But then Christ dies—and his death is the atonement: here is grace. . . . As long as Christ is visibly present as model, he cannot prevent himself from becoming judgement. His life, therefore, has a double side: he is model—ther he dies, and now he is transformed, he becomes forever 'grace,' also in relation to our imperfect striving to resemble the model" (Pap X² A 451 [JP 2:1654]). And again: "With regard to contemporaneity with Christ qua standard, one must however remember . . . that Christ's death is, after all, the atonement, and that grace actually dates from it in one sense; as long as Christ lived grace did not exist in this way—his own life is, after all, for him, too, a trial; he himself was tried. . . . In another sense the whole of his life is grace; as the Scriptures say, grace and truth were revealed in Christ" (Pap X² A 361 [JP 2:1862], translations mine).
As regards content, the question is whether Kierkegaard understands imitation first of all as grace, the fellowship of sufferings in the power of the resurrection, whether he sees the walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4) as grounded entirely in the resurrection of Christ even if it also bears the form of the cross in imitation. Because of the combination of both aspects, the question is identical to whether imitation is understood entirely as "fruit of faith and of gratitude." And this is precisely what cannot be said with such unequivocalness. Herein too, no doubt, lies the uneasy feeling that has prompted Hansen's critique.20

Vogel locates the problematic element of Kierkegaard's understanding of contemporaneity in his failure to regard the earthly life with which we are to be contemporary in the context of the atonement, not (as with Hansen) in his failure to move beyond that life directly to participation in Christ's exalted state. The Pauline notion of "being in Christ" must involve that of "dying with Christ." In this Kierkegaard is right. Yet it also involves the reality of the atonement--a reality qualifies our "dying" as gracious. Any interpretation of contemporaneity such as Kierkegaard's that periodizes the life of Christ--construing him as the suffering and dying one but neglecting the resurrection wherewith his death is attested as atoning--lacks the present reality of redemption by which a truly empowering experience of contemporaneity is possible. This seems to be the thrust of Vogel's critique of Kierkegaard. And notwithstanding his difficulty with Hansen--viz., that the latter, in his view, unwarrantably regards the moment of "dying with Christ" as having been altogether superseded by "being in Christ"--Vogel does share the opinion that SK's failure to regard Christ's life as gracious owes to its having been disjoined from the resurrection. SK consistently "looks away" from the resurrection in which the atoning significance of Christ's death first comes to light, leaving the follower in an impossible situation of contemporaneity with an ever accusing ideal.

To sum up: from the foregoing it becomes evident that Kierkegaard is not to be reproached for having accentuated Christ qua exemplum--the age's exclusive emphasis upon Christ as sacramentum doubtless warranted such a corrective measure. No, the problem is that on SK's presentation the believer's contemporaneous imitation of Christ the model is unqualified by the Christ the redeemer's enabling presence. Christ qua exemplum lacks the

20"Christus als Vorbild und Versöhnung," 199.
necessary qualifying determinant of sacramentum; imitation is enjoined absent redemption. Siegfried Hansen seeks further to demonstrate the presence of such a distortion in Kierkegaard's christology by documenting his failure to assign any redemptive role to the risen and exalted Lord in the believer's present life. To anticipate: any such role is consistently consigned to the future.

He begins with the risen Lord. Most suggestively, he observes that throughout the entire corpus of SK's published writings the Easter fact is not extensively treated a single time. For example, in none of his seventy-eight discourses does Kierkegaard take an Easter pericope as his text. Indeed, the very word, "Easter," occurs but five times in the entire Samlede Værker, the word, "resurrection," but twenty, and in all of the places that the terms do occur the Easter event is not the principal theme of discussion but is touched upon only in relation to another thought that is of greater significance to Kierkegaard.21

Secondly, Hansen observes that Kierkegaard omits mention of the resurrection and ascension in virtually every enumeration of the principal events of Christ's life. Ever is the cross depicted as its terminus ad quem and Pilate's "Ecce homo" pronounced anew so as to reinforce the image of Christ as the prototype of suffering.22 This astonishing truncation of the gospel narrative is enacted so that Christ's passion might find its real sequel in the sufferings of his followers. Consistent with this intent, neither Easter nor Pentecost fall within Kierkegaard's purview as being the terminus a quo of the church. The fact that suffering constitutes the only legitimate continuation of Good Friday means that the disciples' rebirth and renewed purpose to suffer must follow directly from that unparalleled event. And so it does on Kierkegaard's revised narrative. Hansen cites two texts in confirmation of this--first, Pap X¹ A 417 (JP 4:4326):

But what is it, really, that explains that transformation whereby the apostles, who, forsaken and despondent only a few days prior, now suddenly gained faith and courage and resolve to venture their lives and their all for Christ's sake? One

---

22Ibid., 14-15. Hansen cites SV XI 197 (Sickness unto Death, 85), SV XIV 28 (Attack upon Christendom, 20), Pap X¹ A 12 (JP 2:1220) and X⁴ A 135 (JP 4:4667), but adds that the references could be multiplied almost at will.
answers: the communication of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and seeks precisely by this transformation to demonstrate that a miracle must intervene.

Meanwhile, though, another side of the matter must be brought to light. As long as Christ was with them they could not really give up the earthly expectations (as Christ says—he had to depart in order for the Spirit to be able to come). When he then died the death on the cross and was buried: then it became real for them; every earthly hope was now lost—and here lies their rebirth. Christ's most solemn assurances about his suffering and death, they do not help; the fact that it is he who says it, that he stands there in person, precisely this causes them not really to be able to believe it. It must become real... .

That is to say: spirit can only be communicated indirectly. As long as he was personally with them, however clearly he might say it, they would nevertheless misunderstand it—only when he was dead, only then did they themselves become spirit and understand him. The situation must be present.

And so it goes with every person. It is the difference between understanding according to possibility (an understanding is always a misunderstanding) and understanding in actuality. . . . It is impossible to become spirit in "possibility." Only when it becomes actuality and every earthly hope really is lost: then is [one] reborn so as truly to understand what he, to be sure, from the beginning had understood somewhat, and yet in such a way that a misunderstanding was latent therein.

Thus does spirit coalesce qua spirit, and now comes into possession of the pure powers of spirit. It perhaps looked easier in possibility, but really it became easier in actuality, because spirit now is essentially in pure unity with itself.23

On this account, the disciples' spiritual quickening seems to be essentially a result of the crucifixion, not the resurrection:

In truth, therefore, not Easter—let alone Pentecost—is the hour of birth of the Christian Church, but already the cross, and in fact this time not as forgiveness of the sins of the world, but as the seal upon Christ's word concerning his own suffering. Because the disciples saw the consistency of the sufferer, because they had been made to experience that he was, to the very end, the abased and suffering one, therefore they believed upon him and were now able to proclaim him to the world.24

One sees a remarkable shift of emphasis in the explanation that Kierkegaard gives for the disciples' bold proclamation at Pentecost—a shift that transfers the accent from the victorious resurrection of Christ (which he also predicted to his disciples) to the proven veracity of his warnings concerning the approaching cross (warnings that, upon their materialization, became meaningful for the disciples, emboldening them to take upon

23Pap X I A 417 (JP 4:4326), translation mine.

themselves the same fate). A similar account is to be found in Pap X⁴ A 498, where SK attributes the intrepidity of the apostles and first Christians to the "momentum" that was imparted them by Christ's suffering:

What now helped the apostles and the first Christians cheerfully to suffer for the truth was that they were propelled forward, so to speak, by Christ's life. Christ was, after all, the Holy One—that stood eternally certain for them; and his suffering was so present to them that so, too, was the realization that suffering is the mark of the relationship with God. See, from this came good cheer.

But, as mentioned, what helped the apostles and the first Christians was Christ's life, suffering and death. He, the Holy One, he could unconditionally render this truth certain for them: viz., that suffering signifies absolutely none other than the inwardness of the relationship with God; ergo it is not repulsive, but attractive.

This explanation attributes the apostles' boldness to their realization that suffering is the mark of the relationship with God; this knowledge having been vouchsafed them by Christ's own experience, they could advance to meet their fate with good cheer. In refuting it Hansen appeals to the New Testament's testimony concerning the disciples' state of mind following the crucifixion: John 20:19 tells us that they hid themselves behind locked doors "for fear of the Jews." Such anxiety, Hansen notes, was "precisely the opposite of good cheer. Without the Easter event, there would never have come to be apostles from the disciples on Easter eve!" He adds that to entertain any other notion is not merely an exegetical, but a psychological impossibility. Yet Kierkegaard involves himself in just this when he sets forth suffering, rather than the resurrected Christ, as the foundation of the apostolic office.

From Kierkegaard's tortured account of the disciples' transformation it becomes apparent he remains standing at the cross, either unable or unwilling to find the way forward to the resurrection. Hansen likens his situation to that of the disciples on Easter eve: completely transfixed by the cross, Kierkegaard seems not to have an inkling of the resurrec-

---

²⁵Pap X⁴ A 498, translation mine.

tion to come. Yet his demonstrable neglect of the risen Lord is not the only index of his failure to assign a truly redemptive role to Christ in this life; it is complemented by his equally striking neglect of the exalted Lord:

When Kierkegaard remains standing beneath the cross of Christ, not finding the way to the resurrected One, then it is clear from the start that the exalted Lord can hold no significance for him. And in fact: if one gathers together everything from the writings and journals that Kierkegaard has said about the ascension and the exalted Lord, then one comes to a quite similar result as with Easter: to be sure, Kierkegaard, in a purely intellectual way, stands by the traditional dogma of the church fathers as regards the ascension and the "sedet ad dexteram Patris"—but it means nothing to him, has not become existential for him.

Of the "vanishing few" references that Kierkegaard does make to Christ's exaltation, his discourse for the festival of the Ascension stands out precisely by reason of its refusal to address this subject. Kierkegaard uses the greater part of the discourse to recount the sorrowful events of Christ's life and death so as to show that he was, and remains, the narrow way to the Father. When at last Kierkegaard arrives at the Ascension—which is treated with the greatest dispatch—he imagines the objection of a disgruntled listener: "Perhaps you are saying, 'Yes, and this is what you should have talked about today instead of talking almost as if it were Good Friday.' Ah, my friend, are you the kind of person who precisely on the hour and day can fall into a particular mood...? Precisely on Ascension Day it ought to be brought to mind that he is the narrow way, for otherwise we could easily

---

27 In particular Hansen is struck by the special affinity that Kierkegaard seems to have felt for Peter. On several occasions Kierkegaard speculates what it must have been like for Peter following his denial of Christ (Pap X I A 173, X I A 149 and VIII A 130 [JP 3:3232, 3:3234, and 1:462]). On one of them he marvels at the grace that was shown the fallen disciple, exclaiming, "O infinite mildness, of which I am almost afraid lest it deceive me into taking it in vain. It is almost this that disquiets me most about Christianity—its mildness; I become so afraid that I might take it in vain" (Pap X I A 149 [JP 3:3234], translation mine). To this Hansen emphatically replies: Kierkegaard was not one to take grace lightly. The extreme caution that he exercised with grace was not simply a deliberate measure, prompted by the fear of taking grace in vain. Rather, SK's anxiety was of a different sort, what he elsewhere describes as anxiety about the good (SV N 386-420 [Concept of Anxiety, 118-54]). That is to say, his reluctance to lay hold of grace was grounded in the fear of giving up his melancholy self-absorption. Hence in contrast to Peter, who "found the way out" of his inner prison of guilt and remorse and "was able to proclaim the resurrection of his Lord at Pentecost, Kierkegaard does not find this way" ("Die Bedeutung des Leidens," 17, emphasis added).

take Ascension Day in vain. Thereupon Kierkegaard launches--for the remainder of the discourse--into an inquiry into why present day Christians hanker after the glorified Christ, whereas the earliest Christians felt no such need:

Those whose lives are marked by imitation have not doubted the Ascension. And why not? In the first place, because their lives were too strenuous, too much expended in daily sufferings to be able to sit in idleness keeping company with reasons and doubt, playing evens or odds. For them the Ascension stood firm, but because their lives were so active and on the narrow way they perhaps seldom thought about it or dwelt upon it. The situation was like that of a soldier who owns a splendid uniform; he is aware that he has it, but he almost never looks at it, because his whole life is spent in daily battle and risks, and therefore he has a plain everyday uniform in order to move about properly. In the same way, those whose lives were marked by imitation were convinced that their Lord and Master ascended into heaven.

The sum of the matter is that Kierkegaard takes the festival of the Ascension as an occasion, first, to remind his audience that Christ's earthly existence was nothing but one extended, uninterrupted Passion, and second, to censure his audience's effete preoccupation with the Christ of glory. To the at best infelicitous analogy whereby Kierkegaard relegates Christ's Ascension and glorification to an unnecessary appurtenance to the Christian life, Hansen can only exclaim:

The knowledge of the exalted Lord as "extra uniform" of the follower that hangs unused in the closet because one cannot use it in daily battle! This word characterizes Kierkegaard's relationship to the exalted Lord, characterizes as no other his eschatology, too. . . Eternity, the exalted Lord, are, for Kierkegaard, things purely future in a chronological sense. Apart from occasional comfort (cf. the occasional anticipation at eternity's "extra uniform") they have no effect on the suffering-filled present. Aside from the hope of one day being permitted to be with him, Kierkegaard has no personal relationship to the exalted one. He has simply a--certainly very personal--relationship to the crucified one, the abased one. With him he is contemporary--but the contemporaneity does not extend to the exalted Lord; on the contrary, this is rejected: the exalted one keeps silence; the abased one, alone, makes the demands.

---

29 SV XII 349 (For Self-Examination, 65).
30 Ibid., 352 (68-69).
This striking avoidance of Christ in his glorified state is typical of Kierkegaard. In discounting its relevance for the Christian life here and now SK believes that he follows Christ's own lead. While he walked the earth Jesus repeatedly called attention to his lowly estate, deliberately forcing his future exaltation into a position of secondary importance. Suppression of Christ's glorified state remains expedient so as to prevent the relationship of the "follower" from degenerating into that of the "admirer." Because imitation is everything, "everything that might become a danger to it must--in one way or another--be left out of account. Even the exalted Lord." The problem with this proceeding--however well intended it might be--is that it does violence to the New Testament, which teaches that "the future, paradoxically, is already there," the \( \alpha \iota \omega \nu \ \omicron \tau \omicron \omicron \varsigma \) [present age] is, in curious fashion, already pervaded by the \( \alpha \iota \omega \nu \ \mu \epsilon \lambda \lambda \omega \nu \) [coming age]. Thus, for the New Testament, the exalted Christ is simultaneously...

---

32 In addition to the Ascension day address, S. Hansen adduces two others that amply illustrate this. In Practice in Christianity SK sharply dichotomizes the abased and exalted Christ, for all practical purposes dispensing with the latter. Striking is his discussion of Christ's invitation: "Come here to me, all you who labor and are burdened, I will give you rest." Though it is true that Christ "is the same today and yesterday," nevertheless these words of invitation were uttered by the one who "lived eighteen hundred years ago in his abasement and is not changed until his coming again. He has not yet come again; therefore he still continues to be the abased one who, it is believed, will come again in glory. What he has said and taught, every word he has spoken, becomes eo ipso untrue if we make it appear as if it is Christ in glory who says it. No, he is silent; the abased one is speaking" (SV XII 22-23 [Practice in Christianity, 24]). As if to offset this strict dichotomization, Kierkegaard also stresses the unity of Christ (p. 150 [160]). Yet Hansen observes that he immediately "tears this unity asunder" (see p. 151 [161]), thus leaving "the impression that he attaches such great importance to it because he himself senses that he destroys it" ("Die Bedeutung des Leidens," 20).

Yet another example of Kierkegaard's suppression of the exalted Lord is his rendering of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem: this, SK observes, cannot really have been an event having the character of a coronation--Christ was much too despised for that (was he not, after all, compelled to seek out his friends among tax collectors and sinners since no one else would have anything to do with him?) "No, when he makes his entry this cannot be understood along the lines of esteem, but more as a commotion" (Pap XI A 163 [JP 6:6368]). Hansen observes that this resort to false exegesis (Christ went "out of compassion, not because he would otherwise have had no social contacts") is calculated "to allow this text to show nothing of the splendor of the Lord" ("Die Bedeutung des Leidens," 21).

33 Kierkegaard observes: "As soon as [Christ] speaks of his glory . . . he also immediately adds as an antidote [Modgift] that he will suffer, and then to this he adds: blessed is he who is not offended" (Pap VIII A 381 [JP 3:3025], translation and emphasis mine).

future and present. This is of course the fundamental import of the Pauline concepts, \( \varepsilon \nu \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \phi \) and \( \varepsilon \nu \pi \nu \varepsilon \mu \alpha \tau \iota \), previously mentioned. Citing Gerhard Kittel, Hansen contends that "the \( \delta \kappa \omega \lambda \omicron \omicron \upsilon \theta \epsilon \iota \nu \) [following after] of the disciples before Easter is superseded by the condition, \( \varepsilon \nu \kappa \rho \iota \tau \theta \) [in the Lord], after Easter":

On this basis it is no accident that the word \( \delta \kappa \omega \lambda \omicron \omicron \upsilon \theta \epsilon \iota \nu \) is used only in the Gospels, that there is agreement as to its use in all four Gospels, and that they restrict the relationship signified by it to the historical Jesus. In the Epistles other expressions are used in which the emphasis falls on the relationship to the exalted \( \kappa \omicron \rho \iota \omicron \zeta \) and His \( \pi \nu \varepsilon \mu \alpha \). As regards Kierkegaard's fear of noncommittal admiration issuing from the Christian's relationship to the exalted one, S. Hansen contends that the very title, \( \kappa \omicron \rho \iota \omicron \zeta \), prevents this. On the basis of the New Testament one can and must speak of a Lord triumphant in history. Because the church is his servant, the very possibility of freedom from obligation is foreclosed. The triumph that the church, by virtue of her relationship to Christ, enjoys here and now inevitably turns into the confession of her Lord.

A final doctrine in which SK's "remaining standing" at the cross makes itself felt is that of the church. Hansen observes that the risen Christ is the presupposition for the church; hence the absence of any relationship to him should entail the absence of any relationship

---

\(^{35}\text{Ibid., 22.}\)

\(^{36}\text{Ibid. This is the claim that provokes Vogel's charge that Hansen entertains too realized an eschatology.}\)

\(^{37}\text{TDNT, s.v. "\( \delta \kappa \omega \lambda \omicron \omicron \upsilon \theta \epsilon \iota \nu \". The import of Kittel's statement is that \( \delta \kappa \omega \lambda \omicron \omicron \upsilon \theta \epsilon \iota \nu \) is so strongly connected with a literal following after Jesus in the manner of rabbi and disciple that the concept is restricted to the Gospel accounts and in an active form (i.e., following after). No substantive form of the word develops during the time of the composition of the New Testament such as we have in German [Nachfolge] or Danish [Efterfølge]. It is on this basis that Kittel observes that "it is no accident that the word \( \delta \kappa \omega \lambda \omicron \omicron \upsilon \theta \epsilon \iota \nu \) is used only in the Gospels." This however is not to say that what "following after" entails--participation in Jesus' salvation and his fate--is dropped from early church piety as Hansen seems to indicate when he says that \( \delta \kappa \omega \lambda \omicron \omicron \upsilon \theta \epsilon \iota \nu \) is superseded by the concept, \( \varepsilon \nu \kappa \rho \iota \tau \theta \). While the emphasis outside the Gospels may fall upon the relationship to the exalted Lord, this in no way negates the necessity of dying and suffering with Christ, as we earlier pointed out. Hence the notion of being in fellowship with the exalted Lord does not invalidate that of following after him in a figurative sense. Nevertheless Hansen's point holds true that relationship to the exalted Lord is absent in Kierkegaard and as such he conceives eschatology altogether futuristically rather than proleptically.}\)

\(^{38}\text{"Die Bedeutung des Leidens," 23.}\)
to his body. Conversely, the Christ with whom Kierkegaard seems best acquainted is Christ the model. The only possible relationship with him is imitation through suffering. But as Kierkegaard makes clear, concentration on "the collective" is inimical to the category of imitation, which relates to the individual. Isolation is the element in which discipleship breathes, and suffering is the instrument by which people are individualized and driven into isolation. The primary such suffering is sin, which isolates as no other category can, leaving each person—qua individual—to turn personally to God. Moreover the unavoidability of collision with the world—even with one's own flesh and blood—also isolates absolutely.

39Ibid.

40Pap X A 369 (JP 2:1906): "One fastens all the attention on the race, congregation, church—in short, on a collective; thus does the category, 'the individual,' go by the board; Christ relates to this collective, but not in such a way to the individual, and with 'the individual,' which goes by the board, so too does 'imitation' go by the board, for imitation relates categorically to the individual" (translation mine).


42Pap X A 14 (JP 4:4050): "That Christianity relates unconditionally to isolation (the individual) can also be seen from the fact that Christianity's presupposition constantly is: the consciousness of sin, that it begins by proclaiming the forgiveness of sin. But the consciousness of sin is what isolates unconditionally. . . . Even the most exceptional human misfortune and suffering is not so isolating—by being human beings the others, too, participate in it, and it ends, after all, with death which does not really [i dybeste Grund] concern personality's essence. Only sin is what isolates unconditionally. My sin does not concern a single person but me, and concerns my personality at its deepest root [i dybeste Grund]." Kierkegaard ends the entry by stipulating that "Christianity's condition, sine qua non, [is] isolation, the individual" (translation mine).

From this journal entry it is clear that while the consciousness of sin isolates the sinner before God, thus leading to forgiveness, he is not thereby freed from further isolation. On the contrary, he is driven into the ever deepening isolation that is the signature of spiritual existence. It cannot be otherwise if isolation is to be Christianity's conditio sine qua non.

The net result of SK's extreme emphasis upon imitation in suffering is a strong doctrine of the individual, but not of the church.\footnote{This is one of the principal reasons that Karl Barth's initial ardor for Kierkegaard slackened, leaving behind hardly a trace. In a retrospective account he writes: "Wie war das nun eigentlich mit jenem Einzelnen, um dessen Existenz sich bei Kierkegaard so ziemlich alles zu drehen scheint? Wo bleibt in seiner Lehre das Volk Gottes, die Gemeinde, die Kirche—wo deren diakonischer und missionarischer Auftrag—, wo ihre politische und soziale Aufgabe? Was bedeutet es, daß Kierkegaard in der Auslegung des Gebotes: 'Du sollst Deinen Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst!' mit Augustin und der Scholastik (gegen Luther und Calvin!) darin einig war, daß es eine der Nächstenliebe vorgeordnete Liebe des Menschen zu sich selbst geben müsse? Wie seltsam, daß wir, die wir doch eben von einer intensiven Beschäftigung mit dem Christentum in seinem Verhältnis zur sozialen Frage herkamen, gerade in diesem Punkt—daß wir gegenüber Kierkegaards so ausgesprochenem Heilsindividualismus—nicht sofort bedenklich wurden!" ("Dank und Reverenz," Evangelische Theologie 23 [1963]:340-41 ["A Thank You and a Bow: Kierkegaard's Reveille," Canadian Journal of Theology 11, no. 1 (1965):6]).}

In the end, the concept of the individual in imitation shows itself to be "absolutely foreign to community, dismissive of community."\footnote{One theologian who never suffered any illusions on this point was Ernst Troeltsch: "Mit seiner Theologie des absoluten Moments gibt es keinen Pfarrer, keine Gemeindeverwaltung, keine Mission und keine Predigt der Erziehung und Seelenleitung" ("Ein Apfel vom Baume Kierkegaards," in Anfänge der dialektischen Theologie, ed. Jürgen Moltmann, Theologische Bücherei, vol. 17 [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963], 2:139). Troeltsch, however, saw merit in Kierkegaard's radicalism, regarding him as the preeminent exemplar of a specific religious type: "Das Beispiel Kierkegaards kann zeigen, wie ein rein von religiösen Interessen aus entworfenes Programm aussehen würde: kirchenfeindlich, kulturfeindlich, ungeheuer einseitig und leidenschaftlich, eine völlige Beiseitesetzung aller ausserreligiösen Lebensinhalte" (Gesammelte Schriften [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912-25], 2:105).}

To be sure, passages do exist in which...
Kierkegaard ostensibly defends the notion of the "congregation." Yet it is revealing that such passages define the congregation as a collection of individuals qualitatively understood (i.e., individuals who, in their service of "the idea," have broken with their contemporaries, bidding farewell to the world, thereby becoming individuals in the true sense). By contrast, "the mob" or "public" is a collection of "individuals" in the purely quantitative sense—persons with no identity distinct from "the others." What binds the congregation (or any true society) together is the shared situation of being qualitative individuals, passionately related to the same idea. Such individuals find themselves joined in opposition to every other bond that would disturb their qualitative individuality, and this polemical stance toward the greater society of humans, too, is a defining feature of the congregation. To this definition of the Christian community Siegfried Hansen objects: "But this is no

We see, then, that the late "gemeinschaftsfremd, gemeinschaftsabweisend" notion of the individual in imitation is but a further development of what is already present at a much earlier stage of the authorship. With an ineluctable logic Kierkegaard proceeds from a position in the Postscript that advocates a fundamental pretense of self-disclosure (a manifestly unethical position that SK nevertheless seeks to justify and universalize on religious grounds) to the conclusion that the company of others and "diversion" are, at best, concessions made to human weakness—concessions that one is gradually supposed to "work his way out of" (Pap IX A 315-16 [JP 2:1377 and 2:2008]). The measure of the person is, in the final analysis, "how long, and how far out can he endure being alone, without [entering into] an understanding with others" (Pap XI A 415 [JP 2:2067]).

Siegfried Hansen cites Pap X 2 A 390 and 478 (JP 3:2952 and JP 4:4175). Yet he also points out that the position of Anti-Climacus is an outright rejection of the very idea of a congregation (SV XII 204-5 [Practice in Christianity, 223]). Though Kierkegaard himself, at the time of writing Practice in Christianity and these other "positive" entries on the congregation, considered Anti-Climacus's position an "intensification" calculated to awaken the church from its torpor (Pap X 2 A 366 [Practice in Christianity, supp., p. 345]), there is no mistaking its import: the church militant recognizes no congregation whatever—it is composed only of individuals engaged in individual strife. Here— as we shall see—one is best served by the assumption that Anti-Climacus speaks the true mind of Kierkegaard, for it is Anti-Climacus who has gone on in advance, developing a still nascent line of thought with a consistency that Kierkegaard himself has not yet been prepared to accept.


Pap X 2 A 478 (JP 4:4175). SV XIV 153 (Attack upon Christendom, 127)—a much later text—also apprises us that "the concept, 'Christian,' is a polemical concept, one can only be a Christian in contrast or by way of contrast" (slightly amended). Here the ground of contrast is not referred to qualitative individuality per se, but to absolute love of God, which absolutely devalues every other love: "So it is also in the New Testament: to God's desire to be loved, which essentially is a relationship of contrast or opposition in order to raise love to a higher power, corresponds the fact that the Christian who loves God in contrast and opposition to other men has to suffer from their hate and persecution." It will be noted that this text does not relate conflict to the concept of "congregation," but rather to that of "Christian." The tacit message is that "the polemical" ultimately serves not to define "congregation," but to dissolve it—along with every other human relationship!
community at all, for there is nothing here that binds; on the contrary, one is polemically disposed against everything that is connected with bonds. Imitation binds to Christ, to be sure, but not to others.49

It seems to me that he is right. Though the members of such a communion share the common idea of the imitation of Christ as individuals, we have seen that the very nature of imitation is to exclude the collective. Hence only the shared polemical stance toward the world remains to provide a basis for communion. Such a communion can be nothing more than an adventitious association of individuals brought together by the world's animus. But more than this, this outwardly polemical posture must in the end rebound onto the congregation itself, dissolving even its accidental union, for this just is the inexorable logic of "the polemical." And indeed, this is what happens.50 "The polemical" is allowed to disband what little cohesion does obtain among fellow Christians—even among Christian husband, wife and child—since even a limited cohesion is debilitative of qualitative individuality and unconditional love for God.51

The attempt has been made to interpret Kierkegaard's statements about the church as a purely corrective measure without dogmatic intent.52 While this may have been


50Pap XI A 396 (JP 4:4730) reiterates that God wishes to be loved "by way of contrast" and that "the collision with the others" is Christianity's specific suffering. Yet this time Kierkegaard adds that, even if the world consisted of nothing but Christians—real Christians!—if one really loved God, one would "nevertheless come into collision with the others."

51Of SK's ambivalence toward marriage and friendship—even when praising them!—Torsten Bohlin (Kierkegaards tro, 126) writes: "The idea that 'the social,' communal life as such, should be placed in connection with a final goal, the kingdom of God, is utterly foreign to Kierkegaard. Here, too, he expressly defends the civil arrangement of marriage. But however zealous he may seem in this defense, he goes on to acknowledge that Christianity "has misgivings about romantic love and friendship and he falls back upon Paul's words that it is better to get married than to burn (SV IX 54-55 [Works of Love, 65])." For Kierkegaard, romantic love is fundamentally irreconcilable with being a Christian. So too, is friendship. A range of texts indicating the former includes: Pap II A 244 (JP 3:2578), VIII A 663, p. 315 (JP 2:1215), X A 158 (JP 6:6306), SV VII 149-51 (Postscript, 179-81); SV XII 111 (Practice in Christianity, 117). Pap X A 508 points up the irrelevance of friendship to the one who would save his own soul; it also calls attention to the inevitability of collision with one's own flesh and blood.

Kierkegaard's original aim, Hansen contends that we must ask quite another question: whether he has not, in fact, effected a dogmatic shift, saying "a clear 'No' to any church at all." Kierkegaard's point of departure is widely divergent from the New Testament, where "the exalted one is present in his σωμα, the church. The correlate to the κριος Χριστος is not the individual, but the congregation, the εκκλησια, the σωμα του Χριστου. There are no individual Christians outside of the σωμα-community founded by Christ. The individual members of this body signify, individually seen, absolutely nothing." Hansen goes on to say that though Kierkegaard regarded the individual as the corrective to a "church" become quantitative, such a church "is not reformed by ranging a qualitative concept of the individual against it, but only by going back to the New Testament's qualitative concept of the congregation." Yet Kierkegaard has rejected any such concept. This becomes abundantly clear in those texts in which he expresses misgivings about the New Testament church itself. In an entry entitled, "A Nota Bene That Prompts Misgivings," (Pap XI A 189-90 [JP 2:2056-57]), he writes:

Those 3000 who, at Pentecost, were added to the congregation en masse--is there not here, precisely at the very beginning, a questionable state of affairs? Shouldn't the apostles have had misgivings as to how it could be that these thousands became Christians all at once? Hasn't something human happened to the apostles who, still keenly aware of their despairing condition at Christ's death when all was as if lost, now, overwhelmed by joy at the effect that they produced, forgot what Christianity really is, forgot that if true imitation is to be Christianity, then such enormous conquests as 3000 at one time will not wash?

It is so enormously difficult, for there is a curious meeting of two notions, almost as when two people meet one another in a narrow passage where they cannot get by each other. In Christ Christianity is in the direction of intensity, that is to say, it is pure intensity; the apostles' task seems to be in the direction of propagation, the greater the propagation, the better. But to the same degree that I accentuate the intensity I halt the propagation--and yet it was, I should think, true Christianity that the apostles were to propagate.

In Christ Christianity is the individual, here the single individual. In the apostles it is straightway--congregation. But by this means Christianity is transferred

54Ibid., 26.
55Ibid.
into quite another concept-sphere. It is also this concept that has become Christianity's ruin. To this concept owes the confusion of states, lands, peoples, kingdoms that are Christian.

And it is a question as to whether the principle that one should hate oneself, which is after all Christianity's, is not so anti-social that it cannot constitute congregation. In any case, one will from this standpoint gain a true view of what nonsense state churches, people's churches and Christian lands are.\(^{56}\)

It is of course a precipitate act to lay to the apostles' charge the entire history of Christianity's decline, contending that the mass conversions of Pentecost and genesis of the

\(^{56}\)Cf. SV XIV 193-94 and 351 (Attack upon Christendom, 159-61 and 282-83), the former being a close rendition of the passage quoted above, and the latter being a defense of its scathing criticism of the apostles' modus operandi in disseminating Christianity. In similar fashion Pap XI\(^1\) B 175 (JP 3:3213) charges the apostles with having been far too eager to aid Christianity's cause by gaining adherents (SK cites Paul's concession as regards marriage, an institution that Christ had strictly forbidden). Because of their deference to "numbers" the apostles allowed themselves to be taken hostage by the mob, and in so doing allowed Christianity to go out of the world almost before it had even come in. Pap XI\(^1\) A 482 (JP 3:3042) charges the apostles with having introduced an optimistic world view that was at odds with Christ's "absolute pessimism." Because they entertained the possibility of remaining in this evil world without being martyred, they formed congregations. Pap XI\(^1\) A 10 (JP 4:3836) expresses the same sentiment concerning the apostles, asserting that Christianity's notion of voluntary martyrdom is so anti-social that it is necessarily prohibitive of association. Insofar as the apostles themselves constituted a society this cannot have been based upon the shared notion of the necessity of martyrdom; rather, "they were a society as regards the willingness to be sacrificed if it could not be otherwise, but in addition, a society to prevent the need of this, if possible." SK goes on to charge them with having banded together out of a continuing attachment to finitude.

In still other entries that do not specifically single out the apostles as the culprits behind Christianity's deformation qua church, the notion of the congregation is scorched and the possibility of association among Christians dismissed out of hand. Pap XI\(^1\) A 226 (JP 4:4341) declares the concepts of society, church and congregation to be nondeducible from the concept, "spirit." In fact the church is said to exist "precisely because we are neither in truth, nor are pure spirit. 'Congregation' is an accommodation, an indulgence that pays regard to how little we are, or can endure being, spirit." So, too, entries such as Pap XI\(^1\) A 489 and XI\(^1\) A 47 (JP 3:2732 and 1:559) assert that Christianity is diametrically opposed to "propagation," having solely to do with the "intensive" (the individual). The "extensive" (churches) are, by contrast, destructive of this. Or continuing this spatial metaphor, in Pap XI\(^2\) A 51-52 (JP 3:3099-3100) we read that God must have his abode in the phenomenon that is of the least possible compass--"the wretched, single, poor, forsaken individual"--and even this locus is, so to speak, too spacious for him; it must be negated in order to accommodate his presence. Consequently, he is all the less to be found in the "greater" phenomena (i.e., churches) that men have constructed.

In all of the above entries we catch a glimpse, not only of the late Kierkegaard's hostility to the NT teaching of the Church, but of his theory of Christianity's continuous decline beginning with the apostolic proclamation (the Pauline translation of Christianity "into man's interest"--an example of this--was discussed in the previous chapter). Other texts in which Kierkegaard enunciates this interpretation of Christian history include: Pap XI\(^1\) A 415 (JP 2:1644), a relatively early (1849) statement of it; Pap XI\(^2\) A 340 (JP 2:1901) which designates the history of the Church a history of peddling indulgences; Pap XI\(^1\) A 388 and 446 (JP 2:1647 and 1648) and SV XIV 233 (Attack upon Christendom, 194-95) which define the history of Christianity as the process of the degradation of its idea and its eventual conversion into total nonsense. The sum of the matter is that "throughout Christianity's many centuries there is not to be found a single proclamation like Christ's" (Pap XI\(^1\) A 434, pp. 429-30 [JP 2:1940], translations mine).
church had their foundation, not in the exalted Lord's spiritual presence as the Scriptures affirm, but in the apostles' all too human impatience for "results." Yet this is what Kierkegaard does, and the only thing that can have prompted him to venture upon so dangerous a course was what he perceived to be a greater danger still: that the individual and imitation would go by the board if any quarter were given to community.\textsuperscript{57} Hansen concludes his piece with the observation that the seeds of Kierkegaard's final dismissal of community lay all the way back in his earliest conception of suffering:

\begin{quote}
Here the consequences of denying the significance of the exalted Lord for this temporality, and wanting to know and acknowledge Christ solely as the one who lived in suffering, become manifest in a remarkable way. For consistent with this, one falls into the isolation of one's suffering, one's sins, from which one cannot emerge by oneself. Only Christ as the exalted one is able properly to convey to the person fellowship with his neighbor; only he can make a member of the body out of the individual. This possibility: that a member of the body should come to be out of the individual, has not been seen, still less actualized, by Kierkegaard.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

In my judgement Hansen has admirably made his case. The ultimate reason for Kierkegaard's rejection of Christian community is not didactic (the need for an "intensification" to rouse the church from its lethargy). Nor is it historical-sociological (the observation that, once introduced into Christianity, the collective tends to supplant the individual, thus causing imitation to fail away). Yet neither is it simply personal-psychological (to wit, SK's melancholic predisposition to an "Easter eve" mentality). No, as befits a thinker there is an ideational component as well, viz., the necessary connection between temporal existence and suffering. While Kierkegaard's proclivity to this view may have its roots in his personal suffering, the idea itself comes to assume foundational importance for his thought. So powerful is it that it causes him publicly to discountenance the apostles' missionary methods and church planting activities. So powerful is it that it results in his condemnation of not only of the church, but of marriage and family as divinely ordained institutions. In addition, then, to the sundry factors that have been named as contributive to Kierkegaard's preoccupation with the cross and consequent failure to attend to redemption

\textsuperscript{57} Again, Pap X\textsuperscript{4} A 369 (JP 2:1906).

\textsuperscript{58}"Die Bedeutung des Leidens," 27.
as a present reality that confers a new dimension upon existence, there is an ideational factor that must be considered. It is none other than SK's metaphysically determined view of existence in general, and Christian existence in particular, as suffering.

This means that Kierkegaard's "remaining standing" at the cross is no mere accident of his personality that just happens to color his thought. Neither is it simply a calculated "shock tactic." To be sure, for compelling personal and didactic reasons Kierkegaard has felt himself moved to accentuate the suffering Prototype's cross at the expense of the triumphant Redeemer's resurrection. These factors contribute to the theological outcome that the grace of which SK speaks must needs remain so deeply concealed beneath the cross that it can only with difficulty emerge. Were they the only factors at work in the later Kierkegaard's thought, then the charge of heterodoxy that Hansen levels at him would largely miss the point. But because there is coupled to SK's personal and practical concerns an ideational component that leads him flatly to reject church, family, and apostolic authority, Hansen's charge cannot be dismissed. A substantive redirection of dogma does occur in the later Kierkegaard, and it is to the underlying cause of that redirection that we now turn: Kierkegaard's fundamentally gnostic anthropological premises. It is these that ultimately provide the explanation for the view that all existence is isolation and suffering; it is these that dictate that the believer's station must ever be beneath the cross; it is these that account for the absence of redemption's fruits in this life.
Kierkegaard is ever regarded as a lonely voice crying out in the wilderness against nineteenth century humanity's pretensions to divinity. The suggestion that he himself might have been a child of his age, imbued with its heady intoxication, seems quite implausible. Yet this is precisely what the work of certain scholars—above all Wilhelm Anz—has shown. To be sure, Anz concedes that "Kierkegaard has seen through transcendental subjectivity's presumptuous phoniness. Our cognitive faculties do not possess the comprehensive horizon of the world Spirit within which the world--the 'other' of ourselves—is rich in content and like us." Nevertheless Anz observes that

for Kierkegaard there is no other thought schema than that of absolute subjectivity. Here he moves in a completely naive manner in the intellectual climate of romantic-idealist philosophy. What Hegel would attain by means of the transcendental subjectivity of Spirit—the identity of I and not-I—Kierkegaard expects of existing, absolute subjectivity, the self. Only now the not-I is restricted to the natural conditions of empirical subjectivity.1

---

The pervasive influence of idealism has far-reaching consequences for Kierkegaard's anthropology, soteriology, and other Christian doctrines. While these consequences are present in latent form at the very beginning of the authorship, they do not become fully manifest until the end, at which time SK's idealist premises gain the upper hand over the restraining influence previously exercised by his Lutheran tenets. It is the intent of this chapter to demonstrate the indebtedness of SK's existential dialectic to German idealism; to elucidate its consequences for a range of theological issues (most of which were treated in anticipatory fashion in the preceding chapter); and lastly to set the stage for the final account of Kierkegaard's teaching on grace that is to be given in the concluding chapter.

Fundamental to the romantic and idealist philosophies of early nineteenth century Germany was the Cartesian self-consciousness. In Descartes, the "subjective turn" of modern philosophy was decisively taken. Whereas from the time of Plato the world had provided the focal point of epistemology (its order being fixed and discernible by mind), by the time of Descartes autonomous human reason had assumed priority. The existence of the self and the world are mediated by subjectivity (Descartes' second and sixth Meditations). The laws governing the world, though metaphysically grounded in God's nature, are secondarily grounded in the innate ideas and a priori laws implanted by God in the thinking subject. Hence, while the Cartesian ego is not the creator of reality, it does reproduce it in its own experience. At every turn subjectivity is conceived as the crucial factor that not only mediates, but in some sense produces, experience.

The Cartesian point of departure in subjectivity or consciousness and its attendant dichotomization of the world into subject and object are the legacy to all who follow. This dichotomization that Descartes bequeaths to his successors is again and again overcome by the productive function that is accorded to subjectivity. While Locke, for example, rejects Descartes' notion of innate ideas, he nevertheless retains his representative theory of perception: ideas and impressions are immediately cognized, not the things themselves. And like Descartes, Locke finds that certain "secondary qualities" are productions of the observer's mind that do not inhere in the objects themselves. This productive activity of consciousness

(p. 258, n. 15).
is, in turn, expanded by Berkeley to embrace "primary" as well as "secondary" qualities. Objects have no existence independent of perception. There are no material substances possessed of properties, for such are the property of the soul. Accordingly, the external world is a production that exists only in the mind of the perceiver (and God). Hume, of course, takes this skepticism as regards substance or being a step further, denying that soulish substance is anything but a fabrication wrought by customary associations of thought. In Hume's phenomenalism we are deprived of anything but the contents of consciousness. And while Immanuel Kant will not indulge in skepticism as to the existence of the transcendental ego behind subjectivity, he is constrained to admit that this being behind thought is inaccessible to perception. Demonstrating instead its a priori necessity, he goes on to develop a full-blown account of the constructive activity of its faculties of intuition and understanding. And once again, the phenomena that result therefrom are the products of consciousness, not the actual things-in-themselves.

Yet none of the above solutions to the Cartesian dichotomy of subject and object, thought and being, proved satisfying. Behind the constructed "phenomenon" there remained (except in Hume's epistemology) an occult "noumenon" that was inaccessible to thought, unless as a postulate. Moreover, Kant's postulation of such an entity seemed to violate his own tenet about the inapplicability of the categories of the understanding to what lies beyond possible experience. Consequently the idealists rejected the postulate as invalid and instead regarded reality as the product of thought alone. In so doing they made the turn from the merely constructive activity of thought to its creative activity, in effect transforming Kant's critical philosophy into a thoroughgoing idealism. Because the individual finite ego could not ascribe to itself this creative function, it had to be referred to a supra-individual, absolute ego. The entire order of being was accordingly regarded as a production of transcendental subjectivity writ large. How had the idealist philosopher arrived at this metaphysical standpoint? Answer: by strict application of the Kantian conception of philosophy.

For Kant the metaphysics of the future is a transcendental critique of human experience and knowledge. . . . It is the human mind's reflective awareness of its own spontaneous formative activity. In metaphysical idealism, however, the activity in question is productive in the fullest sense . . . and this activity is attributed,
not to the finite human mind as such, but to absolute thought or reason. . . . That is to say the Kantian theory of knowledge is inflated into a metaphysics of reality.²

Frederick Copleston notes that the transformation of Kant's epistemology into a full-blown metaphysic entailed changes of great moment. One such change was the conferral of objective reality upon abstract notions of logic. Another was the ascription of objective status to the principle of teleology:

If with the elimination of the thing-in-itself the world becomes the self-manifestation of thought or reason, the Kantian distinction between the a priori and the a posteriori loses its absolute character. And the categories, instead of being subjective forms or conceptual moulds of the human understanding, become categories of reality; they regain an objective status. Again, the teleological judgment is no longer subjective, as with Kant. For in metaphysical idealism the idea of purposiveness in Nature cannot be simply a heuristic or regulative principle of the human mind, a principle which performs a useful function but the objectivity of which cannot be theoretically proved. If Nature is the expression and manifestation of thought or reason in its movement towards a goal, the process of Nature must be teleological in character.³

Now, the purpose that is present in nature is discernible to the idealist philosopher since he, too, is a production of transcendental subjectivity and, as such, a participant in its unfolding teleology. What is remarkable, however, is that infinite subjectivity attains to the awareness of its own teleology through the finite mind of the human observer. This is again a consequence of the strict application of the Kantian conception of philosophy:

Though it is a paradoxical statement, . . . the closer idealism kept to Kant's idea of the only possible form of scientific metaphysics, the greater was its confidence in the power and scope of philosophy. For if we assume that philosophy is thought's reflective awareness of its own spontaneous activity, and if we substitute a context of idealist metaphysics for the context of Kant's theory of human knowledge and experience, we then have the idea of the rational process, which is reality, becoming aware of itself in and through man's philosophical reflection.⁴


³Ibid., 22. As regards a priori categories and relations, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel all employ a logical apparatus whose elements are vested with ontological—not merely noological—significance. In particular, the empirical relation of cause and effect is assimilated to the logical one of antecedent and consequent (ibid., 23-24). This gives rise to the systematic, deductive character of their thought. Hegel takes this to its extreme in the development of his logic.

⁴Ibid., 25.
Such are the broad lines of the idealist completion of modern philosophy's "subjective turn." This turn received penultimate form in the critical philosophy of Kant; Fichte was the first of Kant's successors to undertake its further development. His relationship to Kant is particularly close inasmuch as he seeks to uphold the primacy of practical reason and is convinced that a consistent idealism is the only means of doing so (the ego acting freely, rather than being acted upon by things-in-themselves). Fichte's point of departure is, accordingly, the transcendental ego that Kant had posited as the condition for the unity of experience in the first Critique. In agreement with Kant, Fichte denies that we possess an intellectual intuition of an entity behind consciousness. Nonetheless he contends that we do intuit an activity within consciousness and that Kant's transcendental ego is just such pure activity or doing. As the ground of consciousness the transcendental ego is not itself conscious; it can only come to exist for itself "by an activity directed at an activity,"
5 viz., the aforementioned intuition. Thus does it "posit itself" in an original, absolute way.6 Such self-positing presupposes consciousness, which in turn assumes the subject-object relation. Consequently, in order to posit itself pure ego must first posit non-ego. Expressed somewhat differently, the unlimited activity that constitutes absolute ego must limit itself by positing "a divisible ego as over against a divisible non-ego."7 From this arises a multiplicity of finite egos and non-egos that mutually limit and qualify each other.

Fichte's theoretical and practical deductions of consciousness detail the emergence of this reciprocal limiting activity. The theoretical deduction attempts to explain the finite ego's consciousness of limitation from without (i.e., its sense of being acted upon, and hence unfree). Because such limitation cannot ultimately derive from non-egos (the thing-in-itself having been eliminated) it must stem from the productive power of imagination that is operative at the infra-conscious level of pure ego. It is this which generates "non-ego" in the first place, as well as the forms of intuition (space and time) wherein a field of distinct egos

---


6Ibid., 1:98.

7Ibid., 1:110.
and non-egos can arise. The powers of understanding and judgement in turn establish the
concepts and universal judgements by which objects can come to exist for consciousness.
Lastly, the power of reason enables the finite ego to exist for itself qua subject. By such self-
reflection the infinite ego itself begins to achieve self-transparency.⁸

The practical deduction of consciousness, on the other hand, attempts to explain the
finite ego's consciousness of itself as free and acting upon non-egos. It, too, proceeds from
the intuition of pure ego as unlimited activity, in particular, qualifying it as an infinite striving. Copleston observes that this conception of the ego's activity

implies overcoming, and overcoming requires an obstacle to overcome. Hence the
ego must posit the non-ego, Nature, as an obstacle to be overcome, as a check to be
transcended. In other words, Nature is a necessary means or instrument to the moral
self-realization of the ego. It is a field for action. Fichte does not, however, proceed
directly from the idea of the ego as striving to the positing of the non-ego. He argues
first that striving takes the determinate form of infra-conscious impulse or drive
(Trieb).⁹

This conception of the transcendental ego as a bare "force" or "drive" is consistent with
Fichte's original characterization of it as unlimited activity. Nevertheless the moral
overtones that are so apparent in the further determination, "infinite striving," are latent at
this initial stage, for this force "exists 'for the ego' in the form of feeling" and "the feeling
of force and the feeling of hindrance go together."¹⁰ That is to say, non-ego is already
present to ego at the rudimentary stage of feeling, present in such a way that it is experienced
as a constraint that is to be overcome. From this derives the primacy of the practical deduc-
tion of consciousness over the theoretical one:

It is clear enough that for [Fichte] the ego is from the start the morally active ego.
That is to say, it is potentially this. And it is the actualization of the ego's potential
nature which demands the positing of the non-ego and the whole work of the
productive imagination. Behind, as it were, the theoretical activity of the ego lies its
nature as striving, as impulse or drive. . . . Thus the two deductions are complemen-
tary, though the theoretical deduction finds its ultimate explanation in the practical.

---

⁸Copleston, Modern Philosophy: Fichte to Hegel, 72-75.
⁹Ibid., 75.
¹⁰Ibid., 75-76.
In this sense Fichte endeavours to satisfy in his own way the demands of Kant's doctrine of the primacy of the practical reason.\footnote{Ibid., 77.}

The upshot of the practical deduction of consciousness, is the \textit{moral} determination of the ego as infinite striving. "The essential nature of the ego," Fichte writes, "consists in a tendency to self-activity for the sake of self-activity."\footnote{Fichtes Werke, 4:29.} If this be its nature, the ego must be \textit{free}, or conversely, subject to the \textit{law} of self-determination. From this convergence of freedom and duty derives the fundamental principle of morality: "The free being ought to bring its freedom under a law, namely the law of complete self-determination or absolute independence."\footnote{Copleston, \textit{Modern Philosophy: Fichte to Hegel}, 87 (citing Fichtes Werke, 4:59).} This definition of duty is purely formal; yet by the operation of the productive imagination it takes on material content, the world presenting itself as the "instrument for the fulfilment of our duty, sensible things appearing as so many occasions for specifying the pure ought."\footnote{Copleston, \textit{Modern Philosophy: Fichte to Hegel}, 88.} Hence it is through the positing of the world and the moral vocations of finite egos that the infinite Will comes to realize its nature as infinite striving. The only proviso to be added is that this infinite striving "is unable to rest in any particular satisfaction or group of satisfactions. . . . [The] goal always recedes. Indeed, it must do so, if the ego is infinite or endless striving."\footnote{Ibid., 76.}

The early Schelling, and Hegel after him, adopt Fichte's notion of a transcendental Ego that posits alien realities as part of its self-positing activity and quest for self-transparency. They also adopt his view that such self-transparency occurs in and through the human spirit (in particular, through the transcendental philosopher). Given this basic outlook, "it would be natural [for Fichte] to conceive the infinite Life as expressing itself immediately in objective Nature as a necessary condition for the life of the human spirit. In other words,
it would be natural to proceed in the direction of Hegel's absolute idealism."\textsuperscript{16} Fichte declines to take this step, steadfastly asserting that the world has reality only for consciousness (even as, for Kant, the phenomenal world exists only in and for consciousness). This Schelling denies. Yet his \textit{System of Transcendental Idealism} (1800) regards the philosophy of nature not as a denial of transcendental idealism, but a complement to it.\textsuperscript{17} One may begin with nature and show how it develops into self-comprehending Ego, or one may begin with Ego and show how it comes to represent itself in nature. Either approach presupposes the Absolute, that identity of Subject and Object that differentiates itself into objective Subject-Object and subjective Subject-Object. These ostensibly distinct activities are in reality identical since each represents the activity of the distinctionless Absolute, considered under different aspects. Consequently, though the progression is from nature to spirit, or increasing consciousness, no priority can be assigned to the philosophy of nature or transcendental philosophy.\textsuperscript{18}

In addition to the correlation that is drawn between the history of consciousness on the one hand, and the philosophy of nature on the other, Schelling's transcendental idealism differs significantly from Fichte's in another respect— one that is likewise rooted in the conception of Ego as Subject-Object. This difference is reflected in the architectonic of the \textit{System of Transcendental Idealism}. The work begins by following the pattern established


\textsuperscript{17}A word on the term "transcendental idealism" is in order since it can mean different things depending on which transcendental philosopher one has in mind. In the case of Kant the designation refers to the imposition of forms and categories upon the contents of experience, and the imposition of unity upon this ordered manifold by the "I" of apperception. While the idealists after Kant ascribe powers to subjectivity of which he had not dreamt, their point of departure remains the "pure I" concealed behind consciousness, and productive of it. In this sense they are all transcendental idealists.

\textsuperscript{18}See Walter Schulz's introduction to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, \textit{System des transcendentalen Idealismus}, ed. Horst D. Brandt and Peter Müller, Philosophische Bibliothek, Band 448 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992), xxiii-xxv. Schulz summarizes the thrust of this work as follows: "Das Allumfassende entwickelt sich als objektives Subjekt-Objekt, d. h. als Natur, bis zum Geist, dem subjektiven Subjekt-Objekt, so daß dieser nun die Natur in sich selbst zu konstruieren vermag. Schelling hat in der Zeit des 'Identitätssystems', also in den Jahren von 1801 bis 1806, diesen Ansatz näher ausgeführt, und zwar unter der Fragestellung, wie das Absolute sich zu dieser Bewegung verhalte, und das Ergebnis dieser Besinnung ist die Einsicht, daß das Absolute an ihm selbst als 'Identität' oder 'Indifferenz' von Subjektivem und Objektivem über jede Entwicklung erhaben ist" (p. xxv).
by Fichte—a theoretical deduction of consciousness followed by a practical one, with
primacy being assigned to the latter. Yet the primacy enjoyed by practical consciousness
cannot be ultimate, for the goal of transcendental idealism is the Ego's grasp of itself as
absolute Identity. Therefore Schelling's idealist interpretation of practical philosophy is
followed by treatments of teleology and artistic production. The Ego objectifies itself in
nature and the work of art. Yet because the latter production bears the impress of both
freedom and necessity, it yields the most complete impression of the Ego, one transcending
the distinctions, conscious/unconscious, free/determined. Hence the goal of transcendental
idealism has been reached. The intellectual intuition with which it began (the transcendentental
apperception of Ego as self-positing activity, Subject productive of itself as Object) has led
it through the stages of Ego's self-objectification to the point where the initially contentless
intellectual intuition has been fleshed out in an aesthetic intuition. Both forms of intuition
deliver to us the Ego as **absolute Identity**:

"But how is this absolutely non-objective entity to be evoked before consciousness
and understood—which is necessary if it is the condition of understanding of all
philosophy?" The answer that Schelling gives is: this absolutely Identical can be
grasped in intellectual intuition, yet it is not objective in this immediate vision. The
unity is rendered objective, first and only, in the work of art. Hence—so Schelling
continues—the aesthetic intuition is the intellectual intuition become objective, and
art is "at once the only true and eternal organon and document of philosophy. ... Precisely
for this reason is art the highest thing to the philosopher, for it opens up to
him the Holy of Holies, as it were, where in eternal and primordial union there burns
in one flame, as it were, that which is separate in nature and history, and must
eternally shun itself in life and action, just as in thought."20

---

19 Like Fichte, Schelling regards the Ego as "activity directed toward pure self-determination," i.e., self-
actualizing will that becomes conscious of itself as such through a demand (see Schellings Werke, Münchner
Jubiläumsdruck, ed. Manfred Schröter, 6 vols. and 6 supp. vols. [Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagshuch-
handlung, 1927-28 and 1954-59], 2:573-74). Hence he contrasts the Ego's initial theoretical determination qua
nature or "slumbering Spirit" with its subsequent, **practical** determination qua self-determining activity, or
conscious Spirit. He regards the unfolding of this practical determination as a process of creation of "second
nature." Though the Absolute is pure identity, its unfolding in history is an endless striving toward the
establishment of a perfect moral order. Herein one sees a parallel to Fichte. Then too, as with Fichte, the
spiritual reality guiding this historical process ("Providence") is hidden, concealed under—and at the same time
manifest in—increasingly rationalized forms of political society.

20 Schulz, introduction to System des transzendentalen Idealismus, xliv (quoting from Schellings Werke,
2:627-28).
Hegel further elaborates this general approach in his absolute idealism—even as Schelling is having second thoughts about it. By the latter's report, Hegel takes credit for ideas that he, Schelling, had been the first to discover.\textsuperscript{21} The most crucial of these is that the Ego is both Subject and Object—a fundamental contradiction that works itself out in a process that is "completely immanent, in which the Ego [is] occupied only with itself, with its own contradiction, posited within itself, simultaneously to be Subject and Object, finite and infinite."\textsuperscript{22} This contradiction provides the impetus for the dialectical development of Spirit—the "Zu-sich-kommen des Ich"—that occurs in two stages: a "transcendental past" prior to the emergence of consciousness, and a "transcendental history" after it.\textsuperscript{23} The specific epochs within these stages are a function of the limits imposed by the Ego upon itself at a given time. The late Schelling contends that this method "was peculiar to me, indeed, so natural that I almost cannot pride myself on it as an invention, but precisely therefore can I least of all let myself be robbed of it, or permit another person to pride himself on having invented it."\textsuperscript{24} With this assessment Walter Schulz agrees:

Schelling considered the conception of a dialectical development of Spirit as his, not Hegel's, contribution, and when one surveys Schelling's early history, one will have to admit that he is right, since already in the Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre [1796-97] Schelling had placed the idea of a "history of self-consciousness" at the center, in order then to extend it in the philosophy of nature to the idea of an objective development from the unconscious to the conscious.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{21}What follows is to be found in Schelling's Vorlesungen zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie from 1827 (Schellings Werke, 5:71-270). Schulz discusses the text in his introduction to the System des transzendentalen Idealismus, pp. xxvi-xxviii.

\textsuperscript{22}Schellings Werke. 5:167. The System of Transcendental Idealism also describes the fundamental contradiction that grounds the Ego in terms of a conflict between two activities—one infinitely self-producing ("centrifugal") and the other self-limiting ("centripetal"). Cf. Kierkegaard, SV XI 143 (Sickness unto Death, 29-30).

\textsuperscript{23}Schellings Werke, 5:163-64.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 5:166.

\textsuperscript{25}Introduction to System des transzendentalen Idealismus, xxviii.
Certainly, significant differences do distinguish Hegel's absolute idealism from Schelling's philosophy of identity. The truly salient one consists in Hegel's elevation of the Ego from its quasi-mystical abyss of unknowability in Schelling's philosophy to the stature of an entity fully transparent to Reason: der Begriff. Hegel's Absolute is not "pure identity" or "simply indifference." Rather it is identity in difference. What is taken up into a higher unity is retained, not abrogated. Accordingly, the dialectical development of the Notion is a process of attainment to ever greater conceptual specificity. Hegel's is a patently rationalized form of idealism. Whereas Fichte began and ended with a practical conception of the Ego (viz., its self-realization in action), and whereas Schelling made but a tentative foray into the theoretical (its self-representation in art) only to lose his way in indeterminacy, Hegel plants his feet firmly in the theoretical sphere, supplanting mere representation with full-blown ratiocination. The Absolute is "self-thinking Thought" that has its point of departure in the Notion and comes to ever fuller manifestation in Nature and Spirit. Because the Absolute is theoretical—indeed logical—in character, it is "essentially a result." The enormous divergence of idealism's ending from its beginning thus announces itself. One key element of that divergence is the loss of the ethical, a "result" for which Kierkegaard and the later Schelling alike roundly condemn Hegel. Another is the complete elimination of transcendence from the idea of God.

---

26 In the Preface to The Phenomenology of Spirit Hegel roundly criticizes Schelling's view of the Absolute. To maintain that the Absolute is the annulment of all difference is effectively to consign it to "the abyss of vacuity," passing it off as "the night in which, as they say, all cows are black" (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe, ed. Hermann G. Glockner, 26 vols. [Stuttgart: Frommann, 1927-40], 2:21 and 22).


28 Theunissen, "Die Dialektik der Offenbarung," 143.

29 This, too, becomes a focus of critique for Kierkegaard and the later Schelling. In his system of identity Schelling already expresses high regard for the Absolute's transcendence. After exchanging it for his positive philosophy he insists all the more on the essential hiddenness of God, typically speaking of God's "reserve" and "retirement," even in the act of revelation. (In part this has to do with the later Schelling's conviction that it is man, not God, who has been subject to a fall that has concealed God; it is therefore man who needs God in order to achieve self-understanding, not vice versa. And in part it has to do with the transcendence that has, in
In shifting consideration from the idealists to Kierkegaard, it must be noted that, whatever the similarities, SK does not ascribe to human subjectivity the grandiose power of positing itself and its world in an original way. Nonetheless, he does ascribe to it a great many features reminiscent of transcendental subjectivity. One may take as an example the Socratic paradox that subjectivity is truth. This paradox has to do with ethico-religious truth and is a corollary of its peculiar nature. Because ethico-religious truth makes a claim upon our very being, the condition of being in the truth entails more than mere cognition—it involves actualization or appropriation of the life-possibility that is set before us. Hence there is a sense in which we become the producers of truth and reality, for the demand that is ever put to us by ethico-religious truth is that we introduce it into existence, making it our truth, our reality. SK appeals to Socrates as the originator of this epistemology insofar as Socrates understood that the truth of personal immortality was tantamount to the demand that it be lived out and appropriated here, in existence, where the flux of becoming renders even so certain a thing as eternity eminently uncertain. Acknowledging the claim that immortality had upon his life, Socrates allowed it to transform his inner being into an incessant, passionate striving that was itself truth. He deliberately refused to avail himself of the theoretical possibility that was his—viz., that of inferring immortality from the doctrine of recollection. Consequently Socrates became the father of a new way of knowing and a

---

30SV XI 128 (Sickness unto Death, 13) and SV II 242 (Either/Or II, 270). SK's conception of the self as a "derived relation" echoes Schelling's notion of "derived absoluteness."

31One notes a debt to Fichte, for whom infinite striving is the ground of truth—inchoate truth, as it were. Fichte's influence is particularly evident in SV VII 72-73 (Postscript, 91-93), where it is asserted that the Socratic thinker "is continually striving . . . striving infinitely." It cannot be otherwise since existence itself "is a striving . . . directed toward the infinite, is a process of infinitizing, which is the highest pathos." Yet Kierkegaard modifies this Fichtean conception along Christian lines when he denies that it is "a continued and perpetually continued striving toward a goal without reaching it."
new kind of truth: knowing achieved by an inward turn, and inner truth produced by self-activity.

Notwithstanding the difference that separates the ways of theoretical speculation and existential praxis, Wilhelm Anz points up the far greater similarity that unites the two. He notes that Kierkegaard has completely reinterpreted Plato’s Socrates, setting him within the modern philosophical context. For Plato it is the Κόσμος that gives meaning and criteria for our moral activity. Because the Κόσμος is present to νοῦς (the faculty of intellectual intuition), human beings are able to apprehend the nature of things. Truth resides in "the perceptibility and . . . the presence of the An-sich-Seienden."32 Because man is able to discern the eternal order of the Κόσμος, he is able to imitate it in his conduct, and in so doing attain to what is right and true.33 By contrast, for Kierkegaard truth resides in "the transparency of the self that is responsible for its behavior."34 It is self-awareness that mediates truth, subjectivity that brings forth its own true reality.35

The debt to the Cartesian self-consciousness is evident, and the proximity to the idealist thinkers—in particular, the ethical idealist, Fichte—is close indeed. Yet the characterization of truth as subjectively produced applies to them all:

There is no fixed, lasting truth. There is no An-sich-Sein (the eternally true, just, etc.). The true is now no longer simply to be found, to be brought forth from its concealment to manifestation, rather, it is first to be produced by us. It is therefore our creation. However we conceive of it—whether as scientific knowledge, as objective Spirit, or as our self-understanding: ever does the truth originate from our rational or comprehending freedom and is therefore subjected to a constant change.

. . . For [Hegel and Kierkegaard] it is a foregone conclusion that there is truth only


33 Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 70-71.


35 SV VII 207 (Postscript, 242): "Truth is the self-activity of appropriation." SV IV 404-5 (Concept of Anxiety, 138): "Truth is the work of freedom, and in such a way that freedom constantly brings forth truth." And again: "What I am speaking about is very plain and simple, namely, that truth is for the particular individual only as he himself produces it in action."
through human beings, that man, his freedom and his reason, is the one reality that is accessible to us and that we therefore have to proceed from it in our knowing.\footnote{Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 71. Friedrich Hauschildt, following Emanuel Hirsch, more aptly refers SK's idea of the self-production of truth to Fichte: "Kierkegaard führt zustimmend den 'Hauptsatz der Philosophie Joh. Gottlieb Fichtes' an, daß die Freiheit 'fort und fort die Wahrheit erzeugt'" (Die Ethik Sören Kierkegaards [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshus Gerd Mohn, 1982], 78). The parallels between Kierkegaard and idealism—to be developed throughout this chapter—include themes common to all three idealists. Nevertheless, the manner in which SK employs them seems most reminiscent of Fichte—so much so that Hirsch can contend that SK reinterprets Fichte romantically, ascribing to the individual what Fichte attributes to the transcendental ego (Kierkegaard-Studien, Zweiter Band, Drittes Heft, Erste Studie [Vadus-Liechtenstein: Topos Verlag, 1978], 29-30 [475-76 in continuous pagination]). Hirsch points out that Kierkegaard has encountered Fichte prior to the other idealists (p. 25 [471]), mentioning him as early as September 29, 1834 (Pap I A 22 [JP 3:3545]), March 16, 1835 (Pap I C 50 [JP 2:1186]) and July 29, 1835 (Pap I A 68 [JP 5:5099]). Both of the latter citations reveal acquaintance with Die Bestimmung des Menschen, and Hirsch makes much of the impact that this work has had upon the young Kierkegaard. That impact is quite evident from the several allusions that one finds to it in the notable 'Gilleleje entry' of August 1, 1835 (Pap I A 75 [JP 5:5100]). One is struck by that entry's ethical fervor: "What I am really lacking is honestly to come to terms with myself concerning what I am to do, not what I am to know, except insofar as a knowing must precede every acting. It is a matter of understanding my vocation [Bestemmelsel], seeing what the divinity actually wills that I shall do; the essential thing is to find a truth that is true for me, to find that idea for which I will live and die. And what would it profit me if I devised a so-called objective truth, if I worked my way through the philosophers' systems ... if it did not have any deeper significance for me and for my life" (translation mine). One finds similar motifs, even similar sounding phrases, in Die Bestimmung des Menschen. For example: "Es gibt nur Einen Punct, auf welchen ich unablëssig alles mein Nachdenken zu richten habe: was ich thun solle, und wie ich dieses Gebotene am zweckmassigsten ausführen könne. Auf mein Thun muss alles mein Denken sich beziehen, muss sich als, wenn auch entferntes, Mittel für diesen Zweck betrachten lassen; ausserdem ist es ein leeres zweckloses Spiel, ist es Kraft- und Zeitverschwendung und Verdüngung eines edlen Vermögens, das mir zu einer ganz anderen Absicht gegeben ist" (Fichtes Werke, 2:257-58 [The Vocation of Man, trans. William Smith (La Salle, IL.: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1955), 104]). The likeness of ethical temper, even of specific turn of phrase, can hardly be an accident: "Es ist klar, [Kierkegaard] hat Fichtes Lehre von der ichhaften, allein im tathaften Gehorsam zu greifenden Wahrheit ergriffen" (Hirsch, Kierkegaard-Studien, Zweiter Band, Drittes Heft, Erste Studie, 29 [475]). As striking as the correspondence between this passage and the Gilleleje entry is, many other equally striking correspondences exist. We have elsewhere noted the parallels that obtain between Kierkegaard's and Fichte's ethical theories (chap. 4, n. 8), and their respective depictions of faith as a sui generis element of knowing (chap. 3, n. 27). We shall have occasion to point out still other correspondences during the course of this chapter. For the time being, however, we confine ourselves to the issue of truth, and to the observation that Kierkegaard seems to owe two of his central tenets concerning it to Fichte—first, that it is a product of subjectivity, and second, that how one relates to what one knows is infinitely more important than what one knows. The reader is referred to Fichtes Werke, 2:257 and 2:254 (The Vocation of Man, 104 and 100). And lastly, one other observation is in order: viz., that the correspondences between Kierkegaard and Fichte are perhaps all traceable to SK's early perusal of this sillage, slim volume. Hirsch writes: "Man hat sich oft gewundert über die innere Verwandtschaft Kierkegaards und Fichtes, die durch allen Gegensatz immer wieder durchbricht in Kierkegaards Denken und Geschichte: noch im letzten Streit erinnert seine ethische Herbigkeit an Fichtes leidenschaftliche Unerbittlichkeit mehr als an die sokratische Ironie. Man hat diese Berührung um so seltsamer gefunden, als Kierkegaard aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach von Fichte außer der "Bestimmung des Menschen" keine Zeile gelesen hat" (Kierkegaard-Studien, Zweiter Band, Drittes Heft, Erste Studie, 30 [476]).}
The critical role played by human consciousness in producing one's world, and thereby grounding one's knowledge of it, is the common property of Kierkegaard and the idealists as modern thinkers. Yet it is not so much the awareness that the world, truth, etc. are mediated or in some sense produced by subjectivity that constitutes their commonality; rather, it is the absoluteness, the sovereignty that they all unabashedly ascribe to subjectivity on the basis of that awareness. All draw the conclusion that ultimately is to be drawn from modern philosophy's "subjective turn," viz., that subjectivity is the ontological prius of everything else, it is the quantity that merits philosophy's undivided attention.

Modern self-consciousness's demand that we accept only that truth which is self-developed, that reality which is self-positied, is just as alive in the existential dialectic as in Hegel's speculative idealism. . . . Both [Kierkegaard and Hegel] are able to make their most basic experience understandable only within the horizon of, and by means of, the Cartesian self-consciousness. There is truth only in and through human self-consciousness; "being" is only mediated through consciousness. Even the infinite life of the world Spirit is tied to its being experienced in and through man, to its being expressly posited through his thinking and doing. Without subjectivity as the sphere of its truth and its actualization, the Absolute would not be Spirit, i.e., power that wills and comprehends itself. All "being" manifests and reveals itself in man, and something corresponding to this applies to Kierkegaard's existing person or existential spirit as well: that, alone, is true which has entered into the understanding and decision of the person, becoming a moment of his self-understanding. "Being" is tied to the understanding and deciding person.

Quite certainly there remains, within these same basic categories, the contrast between Kierkegaard and Hegel: the metaphysical presupposition that bears Hegel's speculative dialectic is the infinite life of the world Spirit that brings forth all reality but first becomes self-comprehending subjectivity in man. The dialectic of existence, on the other hand, is devised in order to preserve the independence of the person before God in the midst of this infinite life. Yet Kierkegaard does not shy away from ascribing to the existing spirit a comparable metaphysical power that formally (naturally, not materially) corresponds to the power that Hegel had ascribed to the world Spirit. The existing spirit has the power to create its own reality. It is eternal or infinite insofar as it is capable of power over itself and insofar as it also actually exercises it. But when being, truth, and meaning are tied to the existing person, then man has a truly metaphysical significance. And such is, indeed, also the case. Not in the scientific Enlightenment, not in cultivated humanity, not even in specula-
tive idealism, but first in the existential dialectic has rational self-consciousness’s tendency to absoluteness and sovereignty reached its extreme.  

The absolute sovereignty of subjectivity is also at work in romanticism’s creative genius who, in Gefühl, discovers and actively gives birth to the infinity of the inner life. In this regard the romantic is no different than the idealist. By means of the imagination subjectivity heightens and idealizes mundane experience, and in the process discovers that

37 Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 73-74. Emphasis added. Cf. the following text of Kierkegaard’s that designates finite subjectivity the absolute, referring the power of positing itself to it: “I myself am the absolute; I posit the absolute, and I myself am the absolute. But in other words with exactly the same meaning I may say: I choose the absolute that chooses me; I posit the absolute that posits me—for if I do not keep in mind that this second expression is just as absolute, then my category of choosing is untrue, because it is precisely the identity of both. What I choose, I do not posit, for if it were not posited I could not choose it, and yet if I did not posit it by choosing it, then I would not choose it. It is, for if it were not I could not choose it; it is not, for it first comes into existence through my choosing it, and otherwise my choice would be an illusion. But what is it, then, that I choose? . . . I choose the absolute, and what is the absolute? It is myself in my eternal validity” (SV II 191-92 [Either/Or II, 213-14]). The "absolute self" of which Judge William here speaks is the concrete historical self, but with the added qualification: that it is free (pp. 192-93 [214-15]). “It is the total aesthetic self that is chosen ethically.” The one who chooses himself in this manner “remains himself, exactly the same that he was before, down to the most insignificant feature, and yet he becomes another, for the choice penetrates everything and changes it. Thus his finite personality is made infinite in the choice in which he infinitely chooses himself” (pp. 199-200 [222-23]).

While the term, "the absolute," is reminiscent of Schelling or Hegel, Kierkegaard’s use of it is closer to Fichte: Judge William is working with a model of the self as unqualified freedom whose task is the ethical one of bringing itself completely under the law of self-determination, converting everything that belongs to its facticity ("non-ego," as it were) into its own act and thereby producing itself. One’s natural capabilities are part of that facticity. So, too, is the social matrix into which one is born (one’s family, nation, and the specific moral vocations attaching thereto). On Judge William’s ethic, all of these provide the instrument for the self’s fulfillment of duty qua absolute self—they are the occasions for further specification of unqualified freedom’s “pure ought.” Exactly the same applies for Fichte. He, too, has the individual produce by an act of freedom what has already been given by nature (though nature is already—unknown to the finite ego—his own production insofar as he is a manifestation of infinite Ego): “Die Urquelle alles meines übrigen Denkens und meines Lebens, dasjenige, aus dem alles, was in mir, und für mich und durch mich seyn kann, herfliesst, der innerste Geist meines Geistes, ist nicht ein fremder Geist, sondern ist schlechthin durch mich selbst im eigentlischsten Sinne hervorgebracht. Ich bin durchaus mein eigenes Geschöpf. Ich hätte blind dem Zuge meiner geistigen Natur folgen können. Ich wollte nicht Natur, sondern mein eigenes Werk seyn; und ich bin es geworden, dadurch dass ich es wollte” (Fichtes Werke, 2:256 [The Vocation of Man, 102-103], emphasis added). This astonishing similarity of ethical outlook has not only led Emanuel Hirsch, but other scholars as well, to maintain that it is Fichte, not Hegel, who has exercised the greatest influence on Kierkegaard (e.g., Hauschildt, Die Ethik Sören Kierkegaards, 242, and Helmut Fahrenbach, Kierkegaards existenzdialektische Ethik [Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1968], 165).

it is "absolutely superior to all the world, even its own experiences; for the shifting experi-
ences are but the occasion for engendering ever anew the one experience of one's own infini-
ty." Yet in order to transcend mundane experience and become cognizant of its
superiority to it, the romantic consciousness must first detach itself from that experience.
This it does through irony, which denotes "a particular relationship of the subject to reality
as given: he liberates himself from it, destroying it as far as he is concerned so as to be in the
free suspension of possibility, positing a new beginning out of his inwardness." The
romantic mindset

believing that the ego, qualified by irony, possessed the power to bind and loose
everything. It allowed it critically to destroy the whole of existence, even its own
given individuality; it made it into a nothing, without past, without task, and along
with all this, it believed itself capable of bringing into life the highest divine poetry:
our life as our creation, as our poem, in relation to which we create and poeticize
with ever unfettered freedom.

This sense of inner infinity and ironic detachment from factual reality "served the aesthetic
and intellectual culture of romanticism. Kierkegaard, in his youth, felt himself to belong to
it." This notwithstanding, SK was also aware that such unfettered inwardness "falls prey
to boredom since feeling loses every content, without, however, coming free from itself and
its unsatisfied yearnings. A true person must let himself be limited by finitude, and hence,

---

39 Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 16. Kierkegaard shares Fichte's view--upon which the
romantics draw--that imagination is "infinitizing reflection," and that as such it possesses primacy over all other
cognitive capacities (SV XI 144 [Sickness unto Death, 30-31]).

40 Hirsch, Kierkegaard-Studien, Erster Band, Zweites Heft, 102 (230).

41 Ibid., 103 (231). Cf. Kierkegaard's own description of romantic irony, SV XIII 348 (Concept of Irony, 275-
76).

42 Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 16. As we noted in the introduction, Hirsch is of the
opinion that romanticism, not Hegelianism, was what most attracted Kierkegaard in his student days.
Consequently SK's doctoral dissertation, The Concept of Irony, is more aptly regarded as a critical
confrontation with romanticism than as a statement of youthful Hegelianism (Kierkegaard-Studien, Erster
Band, Zweites Heft, 100-102 [228-30]). With this Anz concurs: "Kierkegaard ... ist ... nie so Hegelanhänger
gewesen, wie er unter dem Einfluß der Romantik stand" (Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 30). And
again: "Kierkegaard weiß sich den Romantikern näher als Hegel; denn sie haben Sinn für die unendliche
Innerlichkeit und für die Unersetzlichkeit der Individualität" (p. 33).
by the definite relations of life, otherwise nothing will matter to him any longer. And when nothing is serious for him any longer, then neither is anything true for him.\textsuperscript{43} Consequently Kierkegaard recognized that he was confederate with Hegel in criticizing romanticism's latent nihilism. What separated them was the manner in which Hegel proceeded against the romantics.

As we learn from SK's appraisal in The Concept of Irony, Hegel's notion of irony was forged in response to that of Friedrich Schlegel.\textsuperscript{44} Hegel reproaches the latter for having "wrenched the Fichtean thesis on the constitutive validity of the ego out of its metaphysical context."\textsuperscript{45} In attributing to the individual that which belongs to the Absolute, Schlegel and the romantics had subverted every positive determination of society--custom, religion, morals, polity--and in so doing attempted the reversal of the gains made by Objective Spirit.

In contrast to irony thus conceived, Hegel sets forth irony as practiced by Socrates. Socrates used irony in order to expose the relativity of cultural norms;\textsuperscript{46} as such, irony afforded the culture critic a vantage point superior to that possessed by his contemporaries. Yet were this all that the Socratic irony afforded, then there would be nothing to prevent the enlightened critic's freedom vis-à-vis conventional authority from turning into sheer arbitrariness.\textsuperscript{47} But Socrates's position, according to Hegel, was not all negativity; it contained an element of positivity (at least formally) insofar as Socrates "moralizes." That is to say, from the standpoint of subjective morality\textsuperscript{48} to which Socrates has attained via irony, he

\textsuperscript{43} Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 16. Cf. SV XIII 356 (Concept of Irony, 285) which presages Either/Or in identifying the boredom that besets romantic irony.

\textsuperscript{44} SV XIII 339 (Concept of Irony, 265).

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 341 (268). In this connection Kierkegaard quotes Hegel, Sämtliche Werke, 20:184. Anz quotes a similar passage from Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik: "... der Standpunkt der Ironie ... ist aus der Fichteschen Philosophie hervorgegangen ... Alles im Ich wird betrachtet als ein durch Ich, ein von mir Gesetztes ... Alles ist mein Produkt und gilt nur, insofern ich es gesetzt sein lassen will, und ich kann es ebensogut aufheben. Alles Moralische, Wahrhafte, Sittliche, Göttliche ist bloß ein Schein, kein Sein, ist nur von mir hervorgebracht" (Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 17 n. 21).

\textsuperscript{46} Sittlichkeit, or unreflective virtue based upon custom and natural observance.

\textsuperscript{47} SV XIII 305-6 (Concept of Irony, 228).

\textsuperscript{48} I.e., Moralität, an ethical posture based not upon custom, but upon individual reflection or conscience.
seeks to confer upon his actions the form of universality.49 Hegel sees in Socrates's conception of "the universal" a formal principle of positivity, as well as negativity50—one that allows Socrates once again to arrive at specific duties:

In the 'universal' lies, for Hegel, the transition from moralizing subjectivity to the existing orders of Objective Spirit. Subjectivity is truly 'universalized' only when the 'universal' consists not only in the form of the cultivated consciousness, but in the content as such. This is the case when subjectivity qua this particular individual conceives and freely acknowledges Objective Spirit as the truth of all things. Then it understands that Objective Spirit, which corresponds to the thinking of all things, also expresses the nature of all things. True morality [Sittlichkeit] is 'substantial' morality. The merit of the 'moralizing' Socratic subjectivity is that it has embarked upon the way to this fundamental experience.51

Kierkegaard of course rejects Hegel's interpretation of the Socratic irony. It does not contain an incipient element of positivity that affords access to incontrovertible duties within a "total system of reality." Socrates' moral posture is ever one of striving toward the idea of the Good.52 It is not a provisional stage on the way to full consciousness of human institutions as embodiments of Objective Spirit. In endorsing the existing forms of the state, jurisprudence, and so on, Hegel has in fact negated human freedom; he has robbed individuals of the very independence needed to attain to Socratic self-understanding.

The sum of the matter is that while Kierkegaard rejects the romantics' excessive emphasis upon the infinity of the human spirit as experienced in imagination and irony, he also rejects Hegel's unimaginative, unironic boundness to finitude. The task of the individual

---

49SV XIII 305-6 (Concept of Irony, 227-28). Universality is, after all, the essence of the ethical as far as Hegel is concerned. Hegel recognizes that "Wille als mein Wille ist eo ipso ein besonderer Wille, und als solcher hat er ... die Tendenz, eben die eigene Besonderheit zum Prinzip zu erheben, das heißt nach Hegel, böse zu sein. Der allgemeine Wille, oder, wie Hegel sagt, der Begriff des Willens ist dagegen die Vernünftigkeit, wie sie in der Sittlichkeit erscheint. Dieser allgemeine Wille ist nichts anderes als die Ordnung und als solche das Gute" (Walter Schulz, Philosophie in der veränderten Welt [Pfullingen: Verlag Günther Neske, 1984], 730).

50SV XIII 308-9 (Concept of Irony, 231-33).

51Anz, Kierkegaard und die deutsche Idealismus, 18.

52"[Socrates'] life was a continual arriving at the good and having others arrive ... But precisely because he only arrived at it, had being-in-and-for-itself only as the infinitely abstract, he had the absolute in the form of nothing. By way of the absolute, reality became nothing, but in turn the absolute was nothing ... Hegel has ignored this" (SV XIII 311-12 [Concept of Irony, 235-36]).
is to reconcile both aspects of his nature. The young Kierkegaard regards Goethe as the contemporary figure who has best achieved this synthesis, for he has learned the use of irony qua mastered moment. A review of Goethe's production reveals that the tragedies befalling the Goethean hero are the result of his failure to attain to the desired synthesis. Werther, for example, is so driven by his longing for the "eternal moment" of harmony with "the whole" that he is led to renounce human society (including his beloved) with its prosaic concerns, and instead choose death in solitude. Werther shows that unity with the divine is not to be sustained on the basis of the exaltation of feeling alone; on the contrary, as Goethe demonstrates in the ode, das Göttliche, nature must needs appear "unfeeling" and societal life "accidental." In both das Göttliche and Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahren, the eternal is made present in ethical activity:

In it the person is capable of the impossible, capable of conferring duration upon the "moment" and thereby holding fast to the unity of the infinite and the finite. When the noble person who is aware of his own infinite life enters helpfully into the life of another, then he preserves within himself that same eternity by whose formative powers Nature proceeds: he creates living order itself, unites, preserves, promotes, and is, in such activity, the "model" both for himself and for others--i.e., the visible guarantee of that felt unity. Whoever acts thus remains within his origins and can complete himself therein.

The perfecting of the personality occurs in the renunciation of "the continual exaltation of feeling"; it occurs in the entry into "the given relationships of life, adapting to them, bearing this life circle along with oneself and, as much as lies within one, promoting it."

Goethe's humane morality is not grounded in a revealed divine command or a definite moral law. It has, rather, to do with the completion of the personality. The soul, by its natural essence, swings between two poles. In this movement lives, as it

---

51 Ibid., 389 (325).
52 I am indebted to Anz (Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 20-22) for the review and analysis that follows.
53 Ibid., 22.
were, the breath of the soul, which without infinite liberation would be narrow and dead, and without limitation in the finite would be empty.\textsuperscript{56}

On the \textit{Lebensweisheit Goethes} the person \textbf{for his own sake} acts ethically, limiting himself and binding himself in freely assumed service so as not to fall victim to romantic irony.\textsuperscript{57} Anz observes that this repeatedly effected synthesis of the infinite and the finite within the individual is what Kierkegaard has in mind when he speaks of "the Idea."\textsuperscript{58} This synthesis is--provisionally--the product of irony qua mastered moment, as we have seen.\textsuperscript{59} It is noteworthy that on Goethe's conception of the integrated personality it is \textbf{sovereignly acting subjectivity} that posits the synthesis that makes up its own reality.\textsuperscript{60} Whatever the

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 22 and 23. The assumption of one's specific life conditions and duties accruing thereto is, of course, characteristic of \textit{Either/Or}'s Assessor Wilhelm. Only in so doing does one escape A's aesthetic nihilism and assert the self "in its eternal validity." One sees in Assessor Wilhelm's life-view precisely this movement between two poles, the "infinite" and the "finite," that is constitutive of Goethean selfhood.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., 25.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., 23. Anz further notes that this result of \textit{The Concept of Irony} has entered into subsequent writings as "a settled formula" (pp. 57-58). See, e.g., SV II 279 (\textit{Either/Or II}, 311) and SV VII 63, 72-73, 264, 267-68, 339, 364 (\textit{Postscript}, 82, 91-92, 308, 312-13, 391, 420).

\textsuperscript{59}With precisely Goethe in mind, SK writes: "To be controlled in this way, to be halted in the wild infinity into which it rushes ravenously, by no means indicates that irony should now lose its meaning or be totally discarded. On the contrary, when the individual is properly situated--and this he is through the curtailment of irony--only then does irony have its proper meaning, its true validity. . . . [N]o genuinely human life is possible without irony. As soon as irony is controlled, it makes a movement opposite to that in which uncontrolled irony declares its life. Irony limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality, content: it disciplines and punishes and thereby yields balance and consistency." On the other hand irony directs itself with equal disciplining force against finitude: it "rescues the soul from having its life in finitude even though it is living energetically and robustly in it" (SV XIII 390 [\textit{Concept of Irony}, 326]).

The significance of mastered irony notwithstanding, even in \textit{The Concept of Irony} Kierkegaard is clear as to its ultimate \textbf{inability} to effect the desired synthesis of the personality. In the end (SV XIII 393 [\textit{Concept of Irony}, 329]) SK appeals to \textbf{humor}, whose assaults are more devastating than irony's, tending in the direction of sin-consciousness. In removing every last pretension to self-sufficiency, humor clears the way for \textbf{Christianity}'s reconciliation.

\textsuperscript{60}"Bei Goethe gleichen sich Endliches und Unendliches aus. Das einzelne Tun ist sinnvoll und erfüllt nur als Gestalt der unendlichen Lebensfülle der Seele; die alle Endlichkeit übersteigende Tiefe und Weite des Lebensgefühles 'ist' nur, wenn sie in einzelnes Tun als gestaltende, bildende Kraft eingeht. Darin zeigt sich, daß es keinen feststehenden 'objektiven' Maßstab gibt, demgemäß sich die Ausgleichung vollziehen könnte; sie selbst ist der Maßstab, oder was Maß ist, das bildet sich je neu im individuellen Handeln. . . . Die humane Wirklichkeit ist insoweit schließlich doch unsere Tat, durch die wir 'dem Augenblick Dauer verleihen'. Dieses Tun enthält eine verborgene Souveränität und darin die Freiheit, von der einen zur anderen Erfahrung hinüberzugehen" (Anz, \textit{Kierkegaard und die deutsche Idealismus}, 26-27). Naturally Kierkegaard rejects certain aspects of Goethe's \textit{Lebensweisheit}. Though Goethe makes use of the category, "subjectivity," he ignores its
differences between the romantic and idealist understandings of the ego, this basic theme is a shared one and has been largely retained by Kierkegaard (with, N.B., the necessary Christian modifications—viz., the added confinium of humor as well as the religious stages).

The parallels between Kierkegaard and romanticism and idealism, however, are by no means exhausted once the broadly shared theme of self-constituting subjectivity has been pointed out. Just as in all of the above versions subjectivity constitutes itself as a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, so too does it constitute itself as a synthesis of temporality and eternity. There is a parity of concepts here. "Infinity," as we have seen, designates for Kierkegaard and the romantics alike existing subjectivity's ability to enter the realm of ideal possibility, transcending its mundane experiences and life conditions via the imagination and irony; finitude, on the other hand, is the vessel that bears this idealizing subjectivity—it is the arena for its self- and world-forming powers. Similarly, "eternity" and "the moment" ("an atom of eternity") designate subjectivity's power to take up what belongs to itself potentially—i.e., what it ideally can be under the conditions circumscribed by existence—and to transform such potential into its own reality. In a word, eternity is self-presence.

Kierkegaard describes... the moment as an "atom of eternity." The meaning of this formula seems to me to be: God, as the eternal one, is in absolute command of his nature. His potentia is completely realized. Therefore he is pure present. As the one who is absolutely in command of himself, God is Spirit. The existing subjectivity emulates the absolute personality of God. It, too, is spirit, and as such, strives to be in command of itself, to transform whatever is already at hand into its own deed or its own responsibility. However, it is never continually in command of itself, but only now and then, from moment to moment; and in that respect the moment, as the point of this power over oneself, is an "atom of eternity."62

61Hauschildt, in accordance with his Fichtean interpretation of Kierkegaard, designates infinity "das Faktum, daß der Mensch sich als permanente Selbsttätigkeit vollziehen soll, die nicht bei ihren Produkten stehenbleiben darf" (Die Ethik Søren Kierkegaards, 74). This is entirely correct since "self-activity" and "infinite striving" are synonymous expressions of the Ego's most fundamental character.

62Anz, "Fragen der Kierkegaardinterpretation I," 41. Cf. Anz, "Philosophie und Glaube bei S. Kierkegaard," 92-93, where the finite person is said to emulate the infinite Person in virtue of the sovereignty that subjectivity possesses vis-à-vis the realization of its potential: "Gott wird hier als unendliche Person das Vorbild des menschlichen Personseins. Hierin besteht die Gleichheit von Gott und Mensch. . . . Gott ist Geist, das heißt bei Kierkegaard: Gott ist sich mit seinem ganzen Vermögen stets gegenwärtig. Diese vollkommene Selbst-
When Kierkegaard speaks of the self as absolute, it is this capacity sovereignly to dispose over itself, to enact within itself these synthoses that he has in mind, not some lesser capacity.⁶³

Beyond the notion of a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, that SK shares with the philosophy of absolute subjectivity in its various forms, we may elaborate upon yet another notion held in common—that of "spirit," a term that designates not only subjectivity's freely self-constituting activity, but the self-consciousness deriving therefrom.⁶⁴ To constitute oneself—as is evident in what has been said heretofore—means to become fully present to oneself (as opposed to absent qua unenacted possibility).

---

⁶³"Wir sind ontologisch souverän... Daß wir nicht irgendeine Freiheit haben, sondern nur im Augenblick zu Augenblick uns frei entscheiden, uns frei verantworten und auch unser Verstehen verantworten, nur als diese punktuelle Unruhe der Existenz sind wir Person. Diese sich selbst denkende und wollende Einheit der Person heißt Geist" (Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 62). Other scholars give related understandings of what SK means by "spirit." Alastair Hannay, for example, writes: "The individual's decision to believe... that its relation to something in time is a relation to the eternal-in-time, is what Kierkegaard means by the individual's 'becoming' infinite (or eternal). In the interests of consistency this cannot, of course, mean that by this decision the individual in fact acquires an 'eternal determinant'; the break with immanence is definite and the practical solution has to be found within the framework established by that break" (Kierkegaard [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982], 39-40). Hannay's contention that Kierkegaard cannot possibly intend an eternal determinant by "becoming eternal" surely attenuates the force of the two realms paradox (Luther's simul teaching or the Pauline εἰκόνος conception) that SK wants to affirm. But leaving aside this specifically Christian paradox, it seems clear that SK's schema of absolute subjectivity commits him to understandings of eternity and infinity that amount to rather more than "a relation to" the eternal or the infinite. The individual is these things according to potential inasmuch as he is a derived absolute with the (ostensible) power to dispose freely over his own being.

⁶⁴"Wir sind ontologisch souverän... Nur indem wir auf Augenblick zu Augenblick uns frei entscheiden, uns frei verantworten und auch unser Verstehen verantworten, nur als diese punktuelle Unruhe der Existenz sind wir Person. Diese sich selbst denkende und wollende Einheit der Person heißt Geist" (Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 62). Other scholars give related understandings of what SK means by "spirit." Alastair Hannay, for example, writes: "The individual's decision to believe... that its relation to something in time is a relation to the eternal-in-time, is what Kierkegaard means by the individual's 'becoming' infinite (or eternal). In the interests of consistency this cannot, of course, mean that by this decision the individual in fact acquires an 'eternal determinant'; the break with immanence is definite and the practical solution has to be found within the framework established by that break" (Kierkegaard [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982], 39-40). Hannay's contention that Kierkegaard cannot possibly intend an eternal determinant by "becoming eternal" surely attenuates the force of the two realms paradox (Luther's simul teaching or the Pauline εἰκόνος conception) that SK wants to affirm. But leaving aside this specifically Christian paradox, it seems clear that SK's schema of absolute subjectivity commits him to understandings of eternity and infinity that amount to rather more than "a relation to" the eternal or the infinite. The individual is these things according to potential inasmuch as he is a derived absolute with the (ostensible) power to dispose freely over his own being.
This in turn means to become "transparent" to oneself—to come into possession of full self-consciousness. But in this conception of human subjectivity the fingerprint of idealism is palpably present. What SK imputes to human subjectivity is precisely what Hegel and the other idealists ascribe to absolute subjectivity: the attainment of total self-presence through external, self-positing activity:

Here...we encounter the...common element in the thought of Kierkegaard and Hegel. What Hegel says about absolute Spirit—that it is the ground of all temporal events, which must be understood as its emergence into actuality—Kierkegaard says of individual persons: the individual person is, in principle, absolute spirit; as such, he is the ground of temporal action. In and with it, the individual steps into existence. Indeed, if we may understand by "eternity" the ever identical, continuous ground that determines the course of temporal events, then the human, absolute spirit is eternal. It is the power that, in all action, is now present. Therefore Kierkegaard speaks as a matter of course of human existence as the eternity that enters into existence, or that "becomes." And he speaks here not in a derivative sense of God, who as the eternal is present in conscience, but in an entirely original sense of eternity as the self-presence in which the existing person—at least according to the emphatic demand—possesses himself and is absolute spirit because he is, in himself, the unity of the temporal and eternal. Eternity is self-presence.

Kierkegaard, of course, couches all this in a Christian form. The self is explicitly said not to posit itself all by itself, but to have been posited by another: the demand that we comport ourselves as absolute subjectivity is understood in the sense that we are to be like God, imitating him by freely becoming in actuality that which we already are according to potential—not that we are God. Nevertheless this understanding of the human being owes far less to Christianity than to transcendental idealism. Certainly the language is idealism's ("spirit," "synthesis," "eternity," "infinity"). So, too, is the fundamental ontological point of departure in subjectivity. The telos of its development is the same: complete self-actualization and self-awareness. Even the dialectic shares significant points of commonality—a point that is of sufficient interest that it bears attention in its own right.

---

65See SV XI 128, 142 (Sickness unto Death, 14, 29).


67The term "dialectic" is particularly troublesome since it can mean many things and is often used without much precision. In his study of the dialectical structures in SK's authorship, Steven Dunning offers the basic clarification that "Kierkegaard's primary dialectical concern is with the relation of the subject to the object, not
For Hegel, the general movement of the Idea (i.e., transcendental subjectivity's potential self-actualization and self-presence) involves first of all its self-estrangement—one might say exitus—into that which is other than itself. This occurs in its positing of external Nature, a state of immediacy that at every level expresses the Idea's self-differentiating unity. At the conclusion of natural development (i.e., organics) Spirit emerges. Emergent Spirit or Soul is, to begin with, immersed in Nature and not yet in possession of consciousness. Once, however, it has awakened and the subject-object distinction has become explicit (consciousness), there occur successive attempts to incorporate objects into the self, as belonging to the self (self-consciousness). These ultimately end in the acknowledgement of the independence of other finite, free selves, i.e., in universal self-consciousness. Hence the end-result of the development of Subjective Spirit is a subjectivity that is intersubjective, and therefore objective. With the appearance of such intersubjectivity, the stage is set for Objective Spirit, i.e., Spirit that has yet again externalized itself in a new exitus, forming a world of human institutions such as morality and the State. With the advent of the State, or Second Nature as Hegel calls it, Spirit finally possesses the requisite condition for full self-consciousness; no longer confined to individual subjectivity alone, it becomes

with the essential nature of the object as such." Hence Kierkegaard's is a "dialectic of inwardsness—of concepts developing within consciousness" (Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Inwardness, 7). Dunning identifies four ways in which opposed concepts can relate: (1) through a dialectic of contradiction in which "relief from the negative relation is denied"; (2) through a dialectic of reciprocity in which a third moment affirms "a reciprocal relation between the opposite poles... but in such a way as to preclude further development"; (3) through a dialectic of paradox in which "a genuine unity is achieved, but one that accentuates rather than supersedes the contradiction between the two poles"; and (4) through a dialectic of mediation, where the third moment is conceived as "more than a reciprocal stalemate or a paradoxical unity of two contradictory poles. Mediation is a union in which a third step takes the opposites up into itself as aspects or moments within a new reality. In this process, each pole loses its negative character in relation to the other and is thereby fulfilled in its true nature as positively related to the other. Most important, the new third can now embark upon its own course" (pp. 6-7). Though Kierkegaard is justly renowned for the dialectic of paradox, and Hegel for that of mediation, Dunning contends that Kierkegaard possesses an extraordinary talent for Hegelian dialectics (p. 263, n. 9). Others point out the same. Michael Theunissen observes that the analysis of the self given in The Sickness unto Death, pp. 13-14 (SV XI 127-28) cannot be understood apart from Hegelian negation theory ("Kierkegaard's Negativistic Method," in Kierkegaard's Truth: The Disclosure of the Self, ed. Joseph H. Smith, Psychiatry and the Humanities, vol. 5 [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981], 399). The issue of dialectics in Kierkegaard and Hegel is extraordinarily complex. In what follows I simply want to call attention to the correspondence that exists between their respective "phenomenologies of spirit." Each traces a progression in consciousness, identifying similar stages along the way, even if the mechanism for transition ("leap" vs. "mediation") is different. By "existential dialectic" I have in mind this odyssey of the existing individual spirit.
increasingly aware of itself as universal and infinite. Such "Second Nature" marks the final externalization of transcendental subjectivity. From this state of objectification, Spirit completes its reditus as Absolute Spirit. This occurs in three stages, each of which is marked by increasing self-awareness. The first is the stage wherein Absolute Spirit is present to itself in the form of immediacy or pure sensuousness--Art. Thereupon follows the representational form of consciousness (pictorial or metaphorical thought) that is characteristic of Religion. And lastly, there is the fully reflective form of thought--Philosophy. In the Philosophy of Spirit transcendental subjectivity attains to the full self-actualization and self-understanding that was incipiently present in the Idea.

This pattern is strikingly similar to what we find in the existential dialectic. In The Concept of Anxiety we are told that man's initial state (innocence) is one of "immediate unity with his natural condition." Consequently, he "is not qualified as spirit"--rather, "the spirit in man is dreaming." "Spirit is present, but as immediate." Spirit's first dim presentation of itself comes as the bare "possibility of being able" (the as yet undeveloped "Idea") and this is experienced as objectless anxiety. As yet there is no reflection upon experience, no distinction between self and world. With the fall into sin, however, all of this changes. Sexual differentiation, and with it the distinction between soul and body that had hitherto been latent, now become manifest. Spirit is said to "posit the synthesis, but in order to posit the synthesis it must first pervade it differentiatingly." At this point the synthesis exists in the form of a contradiction that is to be overcome. That is to say: spirit, hitherto an unconscious unity, has undergone differentiation and self-estrangement qua body. It is

SV IV 313, 315 (Concept of Anxiety, 41, 43). The analogy to Hegel's "emergent Spirit," or "Spirit sunk in Nature" is transparent. It is to be noted, however, that Hegel has drawn upon Schelling, whose designation for Nature is "slumbering Spirit." SK's terminology is almost identical to the latter's.

So, too, does temporality for the first time become manifest, and with it, the time/eternity distinction.

Ibid., 319 (49).

Ibid., 320 (49). The "contradiction" is all the greater inasmuch as sin's entry into the world results in sensuousness' degradation into sinfulness (p. 329 [58]).
ostensibly the task of spirit to reconcile this contradiction, taking its elements up into a higher unity as occurs in the Hegelian contrast of Spirit and World.72

The history of the human spirit after its fall into sin (and out of unqualified immediacy) is a history of the mounting reflectedness of its anxiety. Whereas Adam's anxiety was absolutely without determinate object, the congenital anxiety afflicting his descendants is more and more a "something." In part this is due to the greater sensuousness that is theirs owing to their origination in the sex act. It is at the moment of conception that spirit feels most estranged from itself.73 A second reason for the greater reflectedness of anxiety is due to the cumulative sinfulness of the race.74 Because sinfulness ever qualifies the sensuous as sinful too, the cumulative yield of the race's sinfulness is an ever stronger presentiment of sensuousness's sinful taint.75 The result is that after Adam every person, from the point of conception onward, experiences anxiety in an increasingly reflected form.

Thus the history of the race is a history of the progressive consciousness of its state qua anxious, and hence, of itself as emergent spirit. SK illustrates this by an analysis of the Hellenistic, Hebrew, and Christian eras. For the Greeks the indeterminacy of anxiety's object (freedom's as yet undeclared possibility) was epitomized by Fate, an obscure power that was none other than spirit conceived as external to itself.76 That is to say, for the Hellenes spirit was as yet in a state of self-estrangement and had not, in the deepest sense, posited itself as spirit. For the Hebrews, on the other hand, the object of anxiety was more determinate: it was the possibility of guilt. This remained an ambiguous determination—the fact that the Jewish sacrifices had to be constantly repeated testified to their lack of clarity about their

72 The similarities hitherto detailed corroborate Walter Schulz's claim that SK's analysis of the fall (the event by which one becomes a person) is guided by Hegelian categories (Philosophie in der veränderten Welt, 390). Yet Schulz observes a key difference between SK and Hegel: the proposed synthesis never actually occurs.

73 SV IV 334, 341 (Concept of Anxiety, 64, 72).

74 Ibid., 323 (52).

75 The same may be said of temporality, mutatis mutandis. It, too, becomes qualified as sinfulness at the moment of the fall. And like the moment of procreation, the moment of death marks the point at which spirit feels itself to be the farthest from completing the synthesis, and hence, the most anxious (ibid., 362-63 [92-93]).

76 Ibid., 366 (96). This is a precise analog of Hegel's unhappy consciousness.
relationship to guilt. There was a gain in self-consciousness on the part of the Jews, and hence of spirit; nevertheless anxiety's objectlessness was only somewhat abated insofar as spirit was aware of itself only according to its possibility. With Christianity this changed. Freedom discovered its determinateness in the absoluteness of the totality of guilt. As such, spirit's self-estrangement was removed but at a terrible price. Kierkegaard applies this schema of the race's progressive self-awareness to the individual on the ground that each and every individual is an embodiment of the race. Accordingly the entire race's development is recapitulated by the individual—if he progresses that far. Modern "spiritlessness" SK likens to Greek naïveté, except that it is moving in a direction away from becoming spirit.

The movement toward increasing consciousness that Hegel attributes to the Absolute is, as we see from the foregoing, transferred to the race and the individual by Kierkegaard. The resemblance of the existential dialectic to that of Hegelian idealism, however, does not end here. The notion of subjectivity "going forth" into objectivity and "returning" as enhanced subjectivity (with the various stages of development along the way "taken up" into the succeeding ones) is very much in evidence in Judge William's portrait of the development of the ethical personality. The Judge tells us that the person who has chosen himself ethically has not only chosen to be an "objective self" in the sense of taking up and ratifying his specific concretion by an act of freedom—this is merely to be a "personal self."

77 Ibid., 373 (103-4).
78 Ibid., 377 (108-9).
79 Ibid., 373-78 (104-10). The notion of the individual as "concrete universal," too, is Hegel's.
80 Mark Taylor calls attention to Kierkegaard's periodization of individual and world history according to stages of consciousness. Yet he is mistaken when he claims that no other commentator, save Gregor Malantschuk, has recognized this Hegelian tendency (Journeys to Selfhood, 79 n. 30). Wilhelm Anz's recognition antedates them both: "Trotz aller Polemik gegen Hegel behält Kierkegaard in seinen Schriften doch Hegelsche Horizonte bei. Er entkleidet die Hegelsche Philosophie ihrer metaphysischen Motive, bewahrt aber in existenziellisierten Form ihre Fragen. Wie Hegel periodisiert er die Geschichte nach dem Maßstab der Selbstreflexion, d. h. der Selbsterfassung der Freiheit. Das Sein der Geschichtsepochen hängt ab vom Bewußtsein. Vgl. z. B. die im 'Begriff der Angst' vorausgesetzte Periodisierung der Geschichte in Griechentum, Judentum, Christentum. . . . Hier wird jedesmal die Selbsterfassung der Freiheit zum Prinzip, nach dem die einzelnen Epochen der Geschichte ausgelegt und der Gang der Geschichte geordnet wird" (Anz, "Fragen der Kierkegaardinterpretation I," 46).
The ethical self has also become objective in the much larger sense of entering into "the universal":

The self that is the objective is not only a personal self but a social, a civic self. He then possesses himself as a task in an activity whereby he engages in the affairs of life as this specific personality. Here his task is not to form himself but to act, and yet he forms himself at the same time, because, as I noted above, the ethical individual lives in such a way that he is continually transferring himself from one stage to another. He transfers himself from personal life to civic life, from this to personal life. Personal life as such was an isolation and therefore imperfect, but when he turns back into his personality through the civic life, the personal life appears in a higher form. The personality appears as the absolute that has its teleology in itself.81

---

81SV II 235-36 (Either/Or II, 262-63). Judge William speaks of the "identity" that obtains between the isolated and the public self. Intended is the identity of "subjectivity" (the individual ego as freely self-positing activity) and "objectivity" (its externally manifest form in a moral vocation) — one is tempted to say, of "inner" and "outer" (p. 232 [258-59]). The judge also speaks of the ethical personality as taking "the form of the unity of the universal and the particular" (p. 236 [264]). Here we have something akin to Hegel's conception of the individual as the concrete universal. Yet in the case of Hegel the emphasis is upon the universal, i.e., upon the finite ego's subjection to the universalizing tendency of Objective Spirit. By contrast, in the case of Kierkegaard the emphasis is upon the particular. This may be seen from the fact that the so-called universalizing tendency is not grounded in broad human institutions such as Sittlichkeit or the State (see Hauschildt, Die Ethik Søren Kierkegaards, 32 and 36-37), but in individual duty: "As a particular individual, I am not the universal, and to require it of me is unreasonable; consequently, if I am to be capable of performing the universal, I must be the universal at the same time as I am the particular, but then the dialectic of duty resides within me" (SV II 237 [Either/Or II 264], emphasis added). Notwithstanding the contrasts of subjective/objective, inner/outer, particular/universal, and their ongoing dialectical process of sublation into ever higher syntheses (which has led Taylor and others to claim that the Judge's ethic is Hegelian—see, e.g., Journeys to Selfhood, 243), one senses in this definition of duty a Kantian-Fichtean understanding of the ethical autonomy of the individual ego—autonomy that in turn entails participation in existing moral vocations whose common goal is a universal moral order. The difference from Fichte is, of course, that the individual's moral activity is not subsumed under transcendental Ego's self-positing activity: Christianity's God has no need to "posit" himself. Accordingly, Kierkegaard transfers the task of self-positing directly to the individual, whose self-forming deeds are then assimilated to a divinely pre-ordained moral order. Despite the assumed convergence of the individual's self-positing activity with that of other individuals in a universal moral order, the referral of the moral imperative of Fichte's transcendental Ego to the individual ego (viz., bringing itself under the law of complete self-determination or "choosing itself") gives the Judge's ethic a formal character that ultimately allows "the universal" qua material determinant of duty's "pure ought" to fall by the wayside, elevating the individual qua "exception" to a position of ethical legitimacy, even pre-eminence. That is to say, Kierkegaard, like Kant and Fichte before him, has difficulty maintaining concrete duties in the face of his purely formal principle of morality—the realization of absolute subjectivity (cf. Hauschildt, Die Ethik Søren Kierkegaards, 32, 38-39, 41-42). But of course some material content must fill the void, and that content is ultimately—as we shall see—the imitation of God in his absolute subjectivity. But because Christianity's God, unlike Hegel's Absolute, is by definition nontemporal, noncorporeal and nonfinite, a schema of transcendental subjectivity based upon Christian theism will perform move in the direction of world-denial. Indeed, this is already true of Fichte's system inasmuch as the present spatiotemporal realm and its institutions is but a staging ground for entry into the future moral order. Consequently our task in this life is to renounce this life. But more on this later.
The elements of Judge William's dialectic are familiar: the subjective self is "the absolute," possessed of a teleology that only comes to full realization through a provisional exitus into objectivity. The subsequent reappearance of subjectivity via the reditus of enhanced self-understanding is in a "higher" form, with the intervening stages having been preserved notwithstanding their supersede. This has led Wilhelm Anz to conclude that "Kierkegaard has Hegel's Spirit-concept in the schema. The absolute 'I' sublates the negation of itself, the 'not-I' and thereby becomes identical with itself. Spirit is the negation of negation." To this assessment Anz adds the ominous warning: "With the existentializing of absolute subjectivity there arises a situation that, in its consequence, is no less questionable than is the 'transcendental idealism' of the Hegelian philosophy of history." It is to this consequence that we now turn.

One of the greatest difficulties that Anz sees in the use of absolute subjectivity as point of departure for a Christian anthropology is the transferral to human beings of attributes that have traditionally been reserved to God. This results in the blurring of the capabilities proper to each. The self-positing freedom of which SK speaks is a case in point, for it is at times difficult to distinguish whether he is speaking of God or man. The same may be said of the predicates "eternity" and "infinity." The imputation of such attributes to humans has serious theological consequences, for by their use Kierkegaard is "precisely not in the position of being able to bring to clear expression the qualitative difference between God and man vis-à-vis idealism, however much he might want to." Anz

82 Anz, "Fragen der Kierkegaardinterpretation I," 50.
85 Anz, Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus, 31-32.
raises the disturbing question as to whether SK's employment of these concepts is at all theologically correct: "In the self-evident manner in which Kierkegaard uses [them] does he not fall victim to precisely the age against which he contends? Does he not act against his own theological intention?"  

Of course the attribution to human beings of traits belonging to God is indispensable if one views as their purpose the imitation of God in his self-positing subjectivity. And as far as Kierkegaard is concerned the ultimate ethical demand is that all human beings imitate God by freely bringing forth into being what they are according to potential. This however, as Anz notes, is medieval scholasticism's *analogia entis* out-done--"out-done" because whereas the scholastics' *analogia entis* assumed a similarity within a still greater dissimilarity, Kierkegaard assumes "a direct imitation of the infinite person by the finite one." He does so by claiming for human subjectivity sovereignty over what can count as truth. And he does so by claiming for human subjectivity sovereignty over the world (making whatever is "given" into my own act). Kierkegaard's conception of the two-fold sovereignty that inheres in subjectivity in turn leads him into a two-fold dogmatic distortion. 

The most basic--and serious--distortion arises out of the notion that autonomous subjectivity in some sense produces truth. The classical understanding, as we have seen, is that *νοέω* merely discovers the truth that is already given in the *κόσμος*. For Kierkegaard, by contrast, ethico-religious truth is *what I cause to be true for me*. As such its object must lend itself to existential appropriation, for otherwise it could never become true in this pregnant sense. Accordingly, the proper object of ethico-religious truth is identifiable by its ability to engender inwardness. Such an object sets itself apart from objects of purely

---

87 Ibid., 31. Schulz makes a similar point when he observes the theological questionability of portraying the *Fall* as something positive--the coming to be of the person (Philosophie in der veränderten Welt, 389-90).

scientific or historical interest inasmuch as the latter engender the very opposite disposition: objective detachment. But if the ability to incite inwardness is the criterion of the proper object of ethico-religious truth, this means that the inwardness itself is the criterion of what is to count as the appropriate object of such truth. Subjectivity contains within itself the condition for the possibility of truth, it contains within itself a criterion of truth that is **not** to be gotten from its object. Certainly, to this subjective index of truth there corresponds an objective one—viz., the paradox, since the paradox alone is able to incite the inwardness. Nevertheless the bare paradox is but the **incitement** to inwardness (one might call it its necessary condition). It does not guarantee the actual presence of inwardness, and as such cannot serve as the index of truth in the pregnant sense (appropriation). Pure subjectivity alone is the index for such truth. And ultimately only that which is **capable** of subjective appropriation can count as a candidate for ethico-religious truth. It is the subjective criterion, the inwardness, that validates the objective one, the paradox **not vice versa**.

Anz notes that Luther, like Kierkegaard, made appropriation into a theological category. Indeed, we have previously noted SK's equation of his own subjectivity principle ("Only the truth that builds up [i.e., has been appropriated to one's edification] is true for you") with Luther's *pro me*. But Anz further observes that SK's use of subjectivity as an **epistemological** principle (the criterion of what can count as true in any religiously relevant sense) makes of it something very different than Luther's *pro me*, for it ends by accepting or rejecting traditional dogmas on the basis of their value in inciting subjectivity.

Has Kierkegaard simply repeated this Lutheran understanding [that Christ is only truly understood when understood as *Christus pro me*]? As far as I can tell: No, even though he desires nothing more than the appropriation of what is known in the "objective" statements of Scripture. . . . The matter does not stop at the simple obedience of faith in relation to the Word, but goes so far as the dialectical consider-

---

89"Die Offenbarung ist . . . nicht wahr als objektiver Vorgang, vielmehr der Akt des Glaubens gibt dem Gegenstande des Glaubens die Möglichkeit, sich als wahr zu erweisen" (Anz, "Philosophie und Glaube bei S. Kierkegaard," 102). "Glaube ist Reproduktion, Rekonstruktion. Glaubenssubjektivität erschafft nicht willkürlich ihren Gegenstand aus dem Nichts, sie ist aber auch keine bloß passive Hinnahme des Paradoxes, sondern sie 'nacherzeugt', sie ist Tätigkeit" (Hauschildt, Die Ethik Sören Kierkegaards, 67, referring to SV IV 250 [Fragments, 86]).

90See the beginning of chapter 6, which refers to *Pap VIII* 1 A 465 (JP 3:2463).
ation as to what in the Word can be the object of faith and what cannot. Appropriation therefore contains within itself a critical reflection foreign to Luther. It reflects not only upon the content of the dogma, but also upon the fact that only the dogma's existential intent can be the object of faith. Here we encounter a faith that keeps only to the existential intent of the dogma, thereby in fact abandoning to the critique of objectifying reason the statements about creation, miracles, and the salvation history at work in the church. Here faith is made into a miracle in a new way. A tradition that has been made entirely profane and exposed to reflection is, in the object of faith, transformed into the act of faith. . . . In and with [the individual's] faith, the truth of faith first constitutes itself.

Does it not turn out here that the act of faith (fides qua creditur) becomes lord over the content of faith (fides quae creditur)? The "what" of faith is posited by the "how" of existence. Does not the ontological sovereignty of faith come to predominate vis-à-vis the content of faith? So far as I understand Kierkegaard: Yes!91

The claim that subjectivity produces the truth of what is believed (even if it be false!) might seem to be gainsaid by the Postscript's revocation of the thesis, "Subjectivity is truth," by the counterthesis, "Subjectivity is untruth." Yet the thrust of the counterthesis is that, since we are sinners, we are not capable of willing the kind of subjective relationship to the paradox that is requisite to the production of truth. This, however, does nothing to alter the fact that such a relationship, were it possible, would be productive of truth. And indeed, once the miracle of faith has transpired subjectivity again comes into possession of this

truth-making quality. And once again, only a faith-object that is suitable to the incitement of subjectivity is suited to become true in the pregnant sense. Whatever is not paradoxical does not pass muster (subjectivity's critical function) and is, in turn, consigned to the acids of modern reflection (autonomous reason's critical function). It may fall away from the core of Christian dogma or not--its fate is a matter of indifference. We see, then, that subjectivity's critical function makes possible the ultimate rejection (observed in the previous chapter) of the dogmas pertaining to apostolic authority and the church. Indeed, insofar as **individual subjectivity** is vested with the aforementioned critical function we are not surprised to see these two traditional bearers of doctrinal authority--apostolic office and episcopate--relegated to a status well-nigh of insignificance. More than this: in the absence of these "objective" authorities we are not surprised to see other dogmas fall by the wayside as well.92

Among them are all of those doctrines dealing in some fashion with creation. Not surprisingly, the significance that SK assigns to creation is only such as is possible within his schema of absolute subjectivity. As previously explained, because absolute subjectivity is spirit like God, it strives to be in command of itself, transforming whatever is "given" into its own deed. As such the deed of the person takes the place of *vööç*, or *intellectus*, as regards the attainment of truth. Anz contrasts the place that is assigned to the world on such a scheme with the place that it occupies in classical thought:

> As *intellectus* man looks upon the whole of the world that possesses its order within itself and understands himself within it. He cannot become aware of its *ordo* without seeing himself with his orderedness and security and, at the same time, his limitation and need. Because he as man is exposed to change, corruption and error, he remains

92This bears upon Barth's charge of anthropocentrism raised at the beginning of chapter four. There the charge was deflected through a consideration of Kierkegaard's deeply held Lutheran premises. But we have since become aware of the just as deeply held idealist ones, and these give credence to the Barthian charge. The mature Barth, as we know, came to Emanuel Hirsch's conclusion that Kierkegaard was the nineteenth century's most consistent representative of Schleiermacher and "the most thoroughly reflective completion of Pietism" (Barth, "Dank und Reverenz," *Evangelische Theologie* 23 [1963]:341 ["A Thank You and a Bow: Kierkegaard's Reveille," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 11, no. 1 (1965):6]. Cf. Emanuel Hirsch, *Sören Kierkegaard,* in *Geschichte der neurn evangelischen Theologie im Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Bewegungen des europäischen Denkens* [Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1951] 5:453-54). In respect of subjectivity being the arbiter of dogma Kierkegaard is akin to Schleiermacher, yet with the notable difference that for latter it is the piety of the **community** that serves this function.
directed to a truth that preserves and guides him and lets him see. The acceptance of this truth excludes from the outset reflection upon one's own absoluteness. If we visualize the opposition of both points of view we can perhaps gain a clearer awareness of the consequences of the "deworldization" [Entweltlichung] to which the existential dialectic attains. The deworldization of absolute subjectivity releases subjectivity not only from its "accidental finitude," but simultaneously takes from it reference to the world's grounding and ordering truth. Finitude therefore only becomes accidental since it can no longer be understood within such a truth.\(^93\)

It is contended that, because SK gives absolute subjectivity priority over being-in-the-world, an Entweltlichung occurs in his thought. No longer does a divinely instituted world order provide the horizon for the interpretation of Being. Rather, self-reflection does this. And because subjectivity ceases to be grounded in a world-ordering truth, it loses its essential relationship to the world. Ultimately, the finitude in which subjectivity finds itself becomes entirely expendable. Let us trace this chain of consequences.

That the former consequence really does occur is evident from the late Kierkegaard's proscriptions against marriage, family, and congregation. These institutions constitute the very bedrock of social order. From the conventional Judeo-Christian point of view, the second table of the law divinely sanctions them and provides for their continuance. Yet the law is not the highest instance for Kierkegaard, but in reality only a superseded Sittlichkeit since the subjective individual is commanded directly to imitate God:

Since subjectivity is sovereign in relation to the world it can have no other measure than its own absoluteness. Kierkegaard knows of the divine "Thou shalt," to be sure. This "Thou shalt," however, is neither the order of Being of the Platonic philosophy nor the law of the Old and New Testaments that situate the person in intraworldly

\(^{93}\) Anz, "Fragen der Kierkegaardinterpretation I," 48-49. On finitude becoming "accidental" on the schema of absolute subjectivity, see SV II 233 (Either/Or II, 260). Louis Mackey finds the same tendency to acosmism, and the same source: Kierkegaard's absolutization of freedom. "The world is only a cluster of possibilities for [Kierkegaard], and as such does not offer him matter, content, locus, opportunity, or exigence for action--these he must generate out of his own freedom. Kierkegaard was rightly apprehensive about the kind of objectivism that threatened to dissolve human individuality in the non-human world, the race, the state, or some other collectivity. But his fear of coalescence and his will to preserve freedom untrammled led him to sweep away all order, participation, and community. His insistence that the question of the reality of the world is ethically irrelevant, and that only an indirect possibility-relation holds between the ethical subject and other realities, implies a sort of freedom that is separative only and is not supported by the cosmos" ("The Loss of the World in Kierkegaard's Ethics," 613). And again: "The Kierkegaardian individual is existentially--in his ethical reality--a-cosmic if not a-theistic. He is infinitely free. But because it is without limitation--by the relative objectivity of the world or the absolute objectivity of God--his freedom is empty of everything but indeterminate possibilities" (p. 617).
relationships before the will of God. It says to the worldless I nothing more than "Thou shalt be like God. Thou shalt be absolute subjectivity."94

This "ought" of absolute subjectivity, "Thou shalt be like God," prompts the question as to what this means in the human context. If for the late Kierkegaard it does not involve marriage, family and community relationships guided by the principle of the love of neighbor (Christ's summation of the second table of the law), then it probably has never really meant this, even in those earlier texts that speak of ethical duty as the obligation to realize det Almene [the universal]. But if not this, what does it mean? It is clear that for Kierkegaard, for whom den religieuse Undtagelse [the religious exception] gains an increasing normativity, it involves Afdoen, "dying to" every attachment to this life. And with this we arrive at the second consequence that the deworldization of absolute subjectivity entails: the willed negation, as opposed to sublation, of finitude. Ultimately Kierkegaard's "characteristic superhumanity" derives from his demand of absolute subjectivity.95

94 Anz, "Philosophie und Glaube bei S. Kierkegaard," 92-93. Cf. SV XI 143 (Sickness unto Death, 29-30) where we are told that the self according to potentiality "does not actually exist, is simply that which ought to come into existence. Insofar, then, as the self does not become itself, it is not itself; but not to be itself is precisely despair" (emphasis added). This text clearly presents the primary task of existing subjectivity as that of positing itself realiter, and so becoming absolute subjectivity. This is the exceedingly abstract task of finite subjectivity attaining to moment by moment self-presence on the pattern of God's self-presence. In theory this involves the free assumption of concretion, and hence, of the ethical relationships in which one finds oneself. Nevertheless, these are entered into not for their own sake, but for the sake of rectifying absolute subjectivity's demand. As such, ordinary Sittlichkeit stands in a precarious relationship to the higher calling of "spirit" and is in the end lost. Accordingly, Anz attributes to SK's existential dialectic as great an ethical confusion as that attributed by SK to Hegel ("Fragen der Kierkegaardinterpretation 1," 50-51)! Interestingly, Mackey does the same: "Kierkegaard's ethical thought, even in its religious dimension, rests on an acosmism as pretentious as the idealism of Hegel" ("The Loss of the World in Kierkegaard's Ethics," 618). Moreover, Mackey assigns the source of this pretentiousness to the same overdrawn similitudo Dei that Anz has identified as the culprit: "Now I do not wish to deny that there is a moment of absoluteness in human freedom: the capacity of man, recognized by Augustine and most other theologians, to utter a radical and final Yes or a radical and final No to the claim and the grace of God. Nor would I deny that Kierkegaard is the connoisseur without peer of this religious crisis, with its terrible testimony to the reality of God--and its equally terrible temptation: eritis sicut Deus. It seems to me that his understanding of subjectivity often succumbs to the temptation, and confuses the potentia absoluta divina with human freedom in a way that is close to demonic" (p. 617).

Now, the charge that dying to finitude has been SK's true ideal of "spirit existence" all along might seem difficult to sustain in view of those texts already cited in which its free acceptance is enjoined. In the early formulations of the existential dialectic does not Judge William insist (contra romantic nihilism) that it is freedom's task to assume the whole of one's concretion? Nature, or immediacy, is to be taken up and preserved on the way toward becoming spirit. So, too, is community and its ordered relationships. Mastery over one's accidental finitude by no means designates liberation from it in the early writings. Nevertheless, for all Kierkegaard's talk about the "equilibrium" of the erotic and the ethical or about a dynamic "synthesis" between soul and body, eternity and temporality, finitude and infinity, there are hints that what is intended is the revocation, not the sublation, of the countermoment. One may cite, for example, Judge William's assertions at the end of Either/Or II that "every person is an exception" and that such exceptionality can lead to one's becoming "an extraordinary human being in a nobler sense" since what is lost by way of extensiveness can be won "in intensive inwardness." The hidden agenda as early as Either/Or II seems to be that of not realizing the universal, but rather, achieving an "intensive inwardness" in isolation from the others. The "married man" of Stages (presumably, Judge William met with again) confirms this, for by now all coyness is gone as regards the real path to becoming "spirit":

I do not say that marriage is the highest, I know a higher; but woe to him who would [leap] over marriage without justification. . . . It is easy to see in what direction that feigned sally away from life must occur. It must occur in the direction of the religious, in the direction of spirit, in such a way that being spirit makes one forget that one is also man, not spirit alone like God.

---

96SV II 297-98 (Either/Or II, 331-32).
97SV VI 161 (Stages, 169). From SV VII 151 (Postscript, 181) we learn that the Stages's "married man" is, in fact, Judge William and that he has been aware of the problems involved in realizing det Almene in marriage all along. SV VII 149-51 (Postscript, 179-81), as a matter of fact, raises serious reservations about whether the erotic component of marriage can be reconciled with "the true religious infinitizing" that spirit must undertake. Johannes Climacus speaks of it, not as an aid, but as an impediment, and a serious one at that.
If we ask why the attainment of "spirit" might require the annihilation of finitude ("forgetting that one is also man"), this too is made clear in texts dating from the early part of the authorship. We are told in The Concept of Anxiety that sin made its entrance into the world in the first place when subjectivity, in attempting to posit the synthesis and thereby attain to spirit, became "dizzy," and laid "hold of finiteness to support itself."98 From that point on sensuousness and temporality came to signify sinfulness.99 Although they are not themselves sinfulness, "sin makes [them] sinfulness."100 The qualitative distinction of sin, as it were, occasioned a rift between time and eternity, between animal-being and spirit-being.101 The (at this point unstated) implication is that these came to be irrevocably despoiled by the fall and that dying to sin now perforce means: dying to sensuousness and temporality. But more than this, there is evidence in The Concept of Anxiety that creaturliness in its pre-fallen state was never good in the sense contended by Judeo-Christian theology.102 It was there for the sole purpose of revocation, not incorporation, by spirit, for Vigilius Haufniensis writes: "Had Adam not sinned, he would in the same moment have

---

98 SV IV 331 (Concept of Anxiety, 61).
99 Ibid., 363 (93).
100 Ibid., 342-43 (73).
101 Of this bifurcate ontology Walter Schulz writes: "Die menschliche Struktur ist grundsätzlich widersinnig. Ich bin als Leib ein Teil der Welt, genauer der Naturwelt ... und ich bin als Geist zugleich welttranszendent. Ich kann diesen Widerspruch nicht aufheben, und dies besagt: ich muß an ihm leiden. Der Mensch ist zur Angst nicht nur verdammt, sondern auch verpflichtet, denn nur in der Angst erfährt er und bestätigt er seine widersinnige Seinsstruktur. Die Wunde der Negativität ist daher offen zu halten" (Philosophie in der veränderten Welt, 397-98). From the later period cf. Pap XII A 592 (JP 1:88): "The human being is a synthesis; but as 'spirit' is being introduced, it splits the compound of the synthesis and puts [it] together like a vertical angle. From this derives the circumstance that the more spirit, the stronger the reaction of flesh and blood, and from this derives actually what the apostle talks about, what cannot enter into the harmonious synthesis." (The translation is mine. The reference is most likely to 1 Cor. 15:50, "I tell you this brethren: flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.") One may state the matter as follows: where Hegel is able to mediate the elements that have fallen into self-estrangement in the self-positing of spirit, Kierkegaard is obliged to let them stand. Having consigned temporality and corporeality to "sinfulness" (rather than treating them as casualties of sinfulness) reconciliation is out of the question (even via the paradox) and the dialectical unity of the person destroyed.

102 Schulz in fact intimates as much when he describes man's ontological structure as "absurd" (widersinnig)—quite apart from its qualification by sin!
passed over into eternity." If the revocation of finitude was intended for subjectivity in the state of innocence, how much more so now that it has come to signify sin!

Given this evidence from the early part of the authorship, there can be little doubt that finitude is an accidental accoutrement that is to be sloughed off in the process of becoming spirit. It is, at the very best, a provisional stage in spirit's career that is to be entirely superseded. The consequences of the imposition of the schema of absolute subjectivity in its Kierkegaardian variant upon Christian theology should by now be clear. For one thing, the doctrine of the goodness of creation is irreparably compromised. This becomes evident when SK couches the Christian's duty in terms of dying to temporality

---

103 SV IV 363 (Concept of Anxiety, 93). Adam's sin consisted in using his freedom to "lay hold of finitude" rather than renounce it. God created and preserved the world for just this purpose (Pap X² A 241 [JP 2:1399]). Løgstrup writes: "Man has received earthly existence only in order to die to it. . . . Because eternity is everything, temporality is nothing" (Opger med Kierkegaard [Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1967], 57).

104 Earlier we observed that existence is a striving "directed toward the infinite," "a process of infinitizing" (SV VII 72 [Postscript, 92], emphasis added). While existence is a child begotten by both "the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal," it is not a friendly synthesis of the two. On the contrary, it is a process of "becoming" through "struggle" (p. 73 [92-93]). And this means: becoming more infinite. Kierkegaard is explicit about this: "As an existing person . . . composed of the finite and the infinite, he . . . is supposed to become one of the parts, and one does not become both parts simultaneously, because one is that by being an existing person" (p. 364 [420]). Of course the question arises, "How is it possible to divest oneself of finitude so long as one is situated in existence?" The answer is, that though nominally one remains in the finite and the temporal, one's goal is to have these only as a veneer, an accident, an incognito, all the while that one is becoming infinitized and assuming ever more of the eternal. This is the "hidden inwardness."

It is to be noted that we find in Fichte the same tendency to forsake the temporal and finite in favor of the eternal and infinite. Like Kierkegaard, he enjoins asceticism and renunciation of the world: "Den Sinn, mit welchem man das ewige Leben ergreift, erhält man nur dadurch, dass man das Sinnliche und die Zwecke desselben wirklich aufgibt und aufopfert für das Gesetz, das lediglich unseren Willen in Anspruch nimmt, und nicht unsere Thaten . . . . Erst durch diese Verzichtsteilung auf das Indische tritt der Glaube an das Ewige hervor in unserer Seele, und wird isoliert hingestellt, als die einige Stütze, an die wir uns noch halten können, nachdem wir alles Andere aufgegeben, -- als das einige belebende Princip, das unseren Busen noch hebt und unser Leben noch begeistert. Wohl muss man, nach den Bildern einer heiligen Lehre, der Welt erst absterben und wiedergeboren werden, um in das Reich Gottes eingehen zu können" (Fichtes Werke, 2:292 [The Vocation of Man, 145]). Fichte calls those persons who, for ethico-religious reasons, forsake this life "practical transcendental idealists": "Diejenigen, die da sagen durften: Unser Bürgerrecht ist im Himmel, wir haben hier keine bleibende Stätte, sondern die zukünftige suchen wir; diejenigen, deren Hauptgrundsatz es war, der Welt abzusterben, von neuem geboren zu werden, und schon hier in ein anderes Leben einzugehen, -- setzten ohne Zweifel in alles Sinnliche nicht den mindesten Werth, und waren, um des Ausdruckes der Schule mich zu bedienen, praktisch transcendental Idealisten" (2:308 [164]).
rather than to sin. This implication of his anthropology he does not find at all disturbing since Christianity itself forbids the enjoyment of creation. Indeed, the view that creation is something to be enjoyed by man is a Jewish teaching. This distinction between Christian and Jewish attitudes toward creation of course has a Marcionite ring to it; accordingly, it comes as no surprise that some have observed a gnostic bias on the part of

105Because Kierkegaard's anthropology opposes pairs of a synthesis: body/soul, finitude/infinity, and temporality/eternity, and identifies one element of each pair with sinfulness, the cancellation of that element becomes imperative. Striking is the absence of a category such as "flesh" to denote the orientation of the whole person away from God. In its stead corporeality, temporality, and finitude assume that function. As such Kierkegaard shows himself to have far more in common with ancient idealism than with Pauline and Lutheran thought. His anthropology has been influenced by idealist ontology and, as a consequence, so too have his hamartiology and soteriology. "Dying to" is necessary to salvation, but this is not conceived in the first instance as dying to sin, but to temporality, to that which is earthly (Pap X A 19, 25, 142 [JP 3:3768, 3:3769, 3:3097]). As such the denial of self becomes tantamount to the denial of life (Legstrup, _Opgør med Kierkegaard_, 43). "That Christianity is paradoxical can easily be seen from this one thing alone, that to the question, 'What is life's purpose, what is the task?' it answers: 'To die to. To die to.' That is to say, God created this world of living things and put man in it and deposited in man this enormous zest for life, and life's significance and task is: to die to, to die to!" (Pap X A 142 [JP 3:3097], translation mine). Cf. SV XIV 265 (Attack upon Christendom, 224): "This is what God wills . . . , He would have the life out of everyone that is born, have him transformed into a deceased person, one who lives as though dead." Why so? Because of the intractable gulf that SK's ontology assumes between time and eternity at the outset.

106Perhaps you are saying, 'But it is after all God himself who has created this world with all its loveliness and joy, so it is really a self-contradiction on his part that Christianity then comes along and transforms everything into sin and makes the demand that of "dying to."' To this I have, in a certain sense, nothing to answer--such does not concern me. If only it stands fast that it is Christianity's teaching, then I have nothing to do with such objections. But beyond this, is it not a self-contradiction on your part to accept a holy scripture that is God's Word, accept Christianity as divine teaching--and when you happen upon something that cannot be reconciled with your head or your feeling, that you say, 'It is a self-contradiction on God's part, instead of it being a self-contradiction on your part since either you must entirely reject this divine teaching, or entirely get used to it as it is?"--Pap X A 260 (JP 3:2888). Cf. Pap X A 482 (JP 3:2437): "'But,' I hear someone say, 'is not the God whom I am to love . . . the same God who has created all of this splendid world? How, then, could it be contrary to his will that I love it, rejoice in it, in his gifts? Do not the sparrow and the lily so rejoice, and all of nature with them?' To this Christianity must answer, 'Nonsense.' In the first place, do you know whether the lily and the sparrow also rejoice? In the second place, if you can rejoice in the same way as the lily and the sparrow, then please, do so. But you cannot. For the sparrow and the lily and all of nature's life are simply compounded--the sparrow is no two-fold nature, no synthesis, for it there is no either-or . . . . Only man is a two-fold nature. And further [as regards] this entire world of which you speak--it is questionable whether God can be said to have created it, all of this culture-world which is a human work. 'But then is not man the most miserable of creatures, destined from God's hand to be unhappy, or to be obliged to make himself unhappy?' To this I must answer: this is not at all what is at issue. What is at issue is: what is Christianity's view" (translations and emphasis mine). Finally, Pap XI A 199 (JP 1:729): "Listen to the newborn infant's cry in the hour of birth--see the death struggle in the final hour--and then declare whether what begins and ends in this way can be intended to be enjoyment."

Kierkegaard against corporeality. In the late Papirer such a bias becomes particularly apparent. In reading the following entry, for example, one could be forgiven if one thought that one were reading a paraphrase of Plato's myth of the cave.

This is Christianity's view. Man is a fallen spirit. And as, for example, in Russia a nobleman who has committed an offense is put among the troops as a simple man as his punishment, in the same way the fallen spirit is put in that slave get-up, which is the body, and sent to this penal institution, which is the world, on account of his sins.

But just as those common folk among whom the nobleman was put do not notice that it is a punishment but are well satisfied, the same goes for these countless battalions of spiritless animal-creatures among whom the Christian was put; they are very delighted and satisfied, find it to be just a splendid world, regard the slave get-up as a costume to deck themselves out in, find it splendid to eat, drink, crap, propagate.

We have, if you will, the exitus-reditus schema that we observed in Hegel and the early Kierkegaard, only here it bears far greater resemblance to Neoplatonism than anything else. Earthly life is a "penalty of suffering" imposed upon fallen, immortal spirits; the body is a slave outfit, the world a penal institution—a notion that occurs repeatedly in the final years. The world is said to "have come into existence through a falling away from God, exists against his will . . . is a world of freedom that freely fell away from him and that he wants to have back. This world, as far as God is concerned, is lost—that is once and for all decided. Everyone who is born merely increases the masses of the damned." From this .

---


109 Pap XI 1 A 209 (JP 6:6881), translation mine.


111 Pap XI 2 A 434 (JP 2:1940), translation mine. Kierkegaard was not alone among his contemporaries in possessing Neoplatonist tendencies. Influenced by Jacob Boehme, both Franz von Baader and Schelling referred the sensible world's existence to a cosmic Fall. Kierkegaard owned some twenty volumes by von Baader, five by Schelling, and possessed some knowledge of each thinker while yet a student (see H. P. Rohde, ed., The Auctioneer's Sales Record of the Library of Søren Kierkegaard [Copenhagen: The Royal Library, 1967], items 391-418 (by von Baader) and 763-67 (by or about Schelling).
bleak view of the utter incorrigibility of corporeal existence there derives the special criminality of procreation.\textsuperscript{112} However great Christ's satisfaction for sin may be, it does not extend to the sin of knowingly bringing other immortal spirits into this realm where they must suffer existence as animal-creatures and in the end, in all probability, go to their damnation.\textsuperscript{113} The late Kierkegaard is very explicit in his contention that redemption is not for this corporeal life. On the contrary, the elect few are saved from this life. This happens once they have satisfied the purpose for which they were given life in the first place: viz., "to be brought to the highest degree of weariness of life."\textsuperscript{114}

A second fatality of the schema of absolute subjectivity is traditional Christian ethics. We have previously noted how participation in the institutions that define public morality (marriage, family, congregation, vocation) is supplanted by individual duty to attain to absolute spirit. This loss of a universal Sittlichkeit results from the loss of reference to a world-grounding and ordering truth, as previously observed. In Lutheran dogmatics such universal morality has traditionally been understood by the designations, "orders of creation" and "law in its first use." Law, in this sense, denotes the creative will of God, with which man is commanded to live in conformity. The fact that this aspect of ethics goes by the board for Kierkegaard is eloquent testimony to the absence of significance that creation possesses

\textsuperscript{112}Pap XI\textsuperscript{2} A 202 (JP 3:3970); SV XIV 254, 264-65 (Attack upon Christendom, 214, 223).

\textsuperscript{113}Pap XI\textsuperscript{2} A 242 (JP 4:4051).

\textsuperscript{114}Pap XI\textsuperscript{2} A 439 (JP 6:6969), emphasis added. Pap XI\textsuperscript{1} A 565 (JP 1:728), and again, SV XIV 265 (Attack upon Christendom, 224). I would be remiss not to point out the similarity to Arthur Schopenhauer. Like Kierkegaard, he had nothing but scorn for Hegel. Somewhat like Kierkegaard, he considered life the original sin, and moreover, its own hell and punishment (SK considers the giving of life to be the sin). Like Kierkegaard, he advocated quenching the will to live through willed suffering and annihilation. And like Kierkegaard, he consigned the individual to the most complete isolation. The later Kierkegaard was not unaware of the similarities, though he found them overshadowed by even greater differences: Schopenhauer's Indian point of departure, his mendacity in recommending ascetic withdrawal without practicing it, and his view that this life just is suffering. (If this is so, then asceticism, which enhances the suffering, is really a perverse kind of eudaemonism, says Kierkegaard. In opposition to this SK contends that life is enjoyable, that Christian asceticism has the point of extinguishing the enjoyment, thereby causing life to be suffering.) Commenting on this similarity-in-difference, Kierkegaard prefaces a journal entry as follows: "A. S. (Remarkably enough, I am named: S. A. We are also surely inversely related.) is undeniably an important author; he has greatly interested me, and I have been surprised to discover, in spite of a total disagreement, an author who touches me so much" (Pap XI\textsuperscript{1} A 144 [JP 4:3877]; cf. Pap XI\textsuperscript{1} A 181 [JP 4:3881]).
for his thought.\textsuperscript{115} SK's anthropology envisages an abstract self that freely disposes over the world and itself; sovereignty is vested in isolated, "deworlded" subjectivity.\textsuperscript{116} This totally ignores, as K. E. Løgstrup has pointed out, the "sovereign manifestations of life" (e.g., compassion and trust) that spontaneously well up in us, and make us what we in fact are, if not otherwise hampered by calculation.\textsuperscript{117} When Kierkegaard contends that abstract subjectivity is left to its own experimentation with itself, experimentally to construct itself,.

\textsuperscript{115}Mortensen, "En redegørelse," 175-76.

\textsuperscript{116}This same acosmism--in its own way--holds true of Fichtean subjectivity. While Fichte may seem to give greater weight to intersubjectivity than does Kierkegaard (e.g., Fichtes Werke, 2:316-17 [The Vocation of Man, 173-74]), the intersubjective moral universe is really the affair of Infinite Will--each person has enough to do with the observance of his or her particular duty. As frequently mentioned, the natural and intersubjective domains possess importance only insofar as they provide the instrumentality and field for the Ego's free, self-positing activity. And in this respect, finite subjectivity is no different than infinite subjectivity. It operates as a microcosm unto itself, its self-productive activity mirroring that of the Ego: "Ohne Aussicht auf irgend einen begreiflichen und sichtbaren Zweck, ohne Untersuchung, ob aus meinem Willen irgend etwas Anderes erfolge; als das Wollen selbst, soll ich gesetzmässig wollen. Mein Wille steht allein da, abgesondert von allem, was er nicht selbst ist, bloss durch sich, und für sich selbst seine Welt" (2:290 [142]). Cf. 2:311 (167).

\textsuperscript{117}Løgstrup, Opgørm Kierkegaard, 95-96: "Kierkegaard did not give the sovereign manifestations of life a thought. And this is no accident. He is forced to ignore them in order to maintain self-reflection's role. For that the manifestations of life are sovereign means that in them the person is--as a matter of course--himself. The person does not need to reflect upon his own act of making himself independent, he does not need to reflect upon the act of becoming himself, he has only to realize himself in the sovereign life-manifestation--then does the life-manifestation, not reflection, see to it that the person is himself. Kierkegaard is mistaken when he supposes that only by means of a religious reflection can the person solve the task of becoming a self, as if we were not fitted with sovereign life-manifestations that solve the task for us. . . . But what has become of the sovereign life-manifestations? If they are not to be found in Kierkegaard, then something must be found in their stead! And so there is--namely, philistinism. The sovereign manifestations of life are swallowed up by conformism, drowned in that existence wherein the one apes the other. The alternative with which Kierkegaard everywhere operates is either to live in relation to the infinite idea, or to live in conformity. The demands that are made upon us are either eternity's or conformity's. . . . But the alternative is false. The sovereign life-manifestation, too, has a claim upon us and can have it because it is definitive; it is not we who first form it out of indeterminate mental abilities."

And again, (p. 102): "The capital error in Kierkegaard--which the existentialists, those philosophical as well as theological, have inherited--is that he and they with him reserve solely to the individual's choice, decision, and freedom the power to make life definitive, as if our existence were not already in advance something definitive in each of its so to speak anonymous life-manifestations. What alone is up to the individual's choice, decision and freedom is either to fulfill that which is definitive, is already there in advance with the sovereign life-manifestation wherein the individual consummates himself--or to disregard that which is definitive."
he in reality advocates either affectation or outright dishonesty.\textsuperscript{118} The result is the inclosing reserve [\textit{Indesluttethed}] that, on his view, can only be overcome by delivering oneself up entirely to the eternal's miraculous intervention. But because this solution is abstractly conceived, lacking every reference to "the possibilities for healing that factual life offers with its possibilities for spontaneous unfolding of life" in the created orders, the reserve is only deepened. Such possibilities "lie beyond Kierkegaard's perspective since the factual, the temporal and earthly life has nothing to do with eternity. It exists only to be sacrificed, not to be lived."\textsuperscript{119}

But as we have also observed, specifically Christian love of one's neighbor also goes by the board. Certainly this does not \textbf{appear} to be the case when one reads certain works of the middle period. For example in the discourse, "The Joy of It--That the Poorer Thou Dost Become, the Richer Thou Canst Make Others," we encounter what seem to be straightforward statements of Luther's "faith active in love." We are told that the spiritual goods--faith, hope and love--cannot be selfishly kept to oneself; rather they inexorably communicate themselves to others.\textsuperscript{120} Likewise in \textit{Works of Love} the essence of Christian love is said to be that of "loving forth" love from others, and in so doing, building them up.\textsuperscript{121} The discourse, "You shall Love Your \textbf{Neighbor}," designates Christianity "the true ethic"\textsuperscript{122} precisely because there is nothing of preferential love, and hence egoism, in it. On the contrary, Christian love seeks selflessly to benefit all without distinction. On the other hand,

\textsuperscript{118}Ibid., 101-2: "The person that Kierkegaard describes says: When I speak and act, I experiment with my speech and action, I am not in my reply or action, I am always outside it. But this is impossible; one of two things happens. Either he is, in his speech and action itself, the affected person that he is. Affectation has become his second nature. And it is a vain conceit in which he is ensnared when he believes that, because he puts on an act, he is outside his speech and gestures, as if his affectation were only a play while he himself is supposed to remain outside it, intact--i.e., unaffected. He is deeply involved in his affectation, not merely with skin and all, but with himself. Or the person is notoriously outside his reply or action as the liar, hypocrite and deceiver who pretends that his reply or action is true, sincere and honorable."

\textsuperscript{119}Ibid., 103-4.

\textsuperscript{120}SV X 119-28 (\textit{Christian Discourses}, 119-28).

\textsuperscript{121}SV IX 201-15 (\textit{Works of Love}, 199-212).

\textsuperscript{122}Ibid., 53 (64).
it has also been observed that such nonpreferential love is enjoined principally for the sake of one's own relationship with God. To be sure, the elimination of the distinction "mine" and "yours" accrues to the neighbor's good. Yet Kierkegaard characterizes this not so much as an act of love intended to benefit the neighbor (this is, as it were, an incidental result) as an act of self-renunciation whereby God is won. Nonpreferential love is presented as but another instance of dying to temporality's ensnaring relationships, by which proceeding one more and more attains to "spirit."

In journals of the later Kierkegaard this tendency naturally becomes more pronounced. Again and again "dying to" is presented as the principal Christian duty. Christ himself provides the paradigm for this. To be sure, he died in order to redeem us. And equally certain, he alleviated earthly need. Yet it is Christ's exemplification of what it means to exist as spirit under the conditions of existence, not his embodiment of selfless love, that captivates Kierkegaard. The alleviation of human need in which Christ engaged while on earth, for example, is entirely subordinated to his embodiment of "absolute spirit" before us humans. Christ came, we are told, in order to introduce the qualification, "spirit." In his role as model he expressed what it means to have died to the world: "For Christ did not lecture about dying to the world, rather he himself is, existentially, what it means to die..."
to the world.\textsuperscript{127} The collision that he evoked was the collision between temporality and eternity,\textsuperscript{128} between "animal-being" and "spirit-being."\textsuperscript{129}

Within the framework of absolute spirit, then, Christian ethics ceases to be a matter of faith active in love, and even less a matter of conformity to God's will within the orders of creation. Instead, Kierkegaard's idealist premises lead him to exchange Luther's ethic of vocation for an \textit{imitatio} piety that is of unparalleled rigor: imitating God in his perfectly realized subjectivity. Luther's ethic is regarded as an adulteration of true Christianity.\textsuperscript{130} Certainly Kierkegaard's critique of Luther's two kingdom teaching is mounted in part on the basis of his ethical rigorism and commitment to the \textit{theologia crucis}. Yet we see that there is another dynamic at work as well—one that is most \textit{unlutheran} in its origins.\textsuperscript{131} Here

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{127} Pap X\textsuperscript{3} A 171 (IP 2:1864).
\item \textsuperscript{128} Pap XI\textsuperscript{2} A 130, p. 142 (JP 2:1447): "The suffering, that it must be, is bound up with God's majesty. His majesty is so infinite that only the paradoxical can designate it or be the expression for it, and the paradoxical is: to be so majestic as to have to make the loved one miserable. . . . The suffering is bound up with the fact that God and man are qualitatively different and that the collision between temporality and eternity within temporality must yield suffering" (translation mine).
\item \textsuperscript{129} Pap XI\textsuperscript{2} A 246, p. 256 (JP 4:4359): "Spirit put together with an existence as animal-creature yields suffering, the more spirit the more suffering" (translation mine).
\item \textsuperscript{130} Pap X\textsuperscript{4} A 394 (JP 3:2541).
\item \textsuperscript{131} The best light that is to be put upon SK's rejection of life within the orders of creation stems from the observations on the \textit{theologia crucis} broached in chapter six. There it was argued that it is impossible for the Christian to exercise a secular office in a Christian way without suffering the world's reprisal. While, for his part, Luther can certainly envisage such conflicts in practice, he will not admit of any conflict \textbf{in principle} between the performance of secular and religious duty. God cannot possibly have intended the annulment of his Old Testament laws concerning national, congregational, and family life by a new standard of conduct proclaimed by Christ. Rather, by means of the one God rules with his "left hand," by means of the other he rules with his "right." On Luther's view, Christ's demand that his followers renounce all earthly goods (including family ties) was intended to be fulfilled, not by an actual external disavowal of family but by an \textit{inner} process of renunciation—an \textit{absconditum} whereby one possesses, but as though one does not possess. Accordingly, all the while that one remains externally bound to family and other relationships (per God's law in its first use) one secretly withdraws from these and so fulfills Christ's command. Thereby the Pauline injunction, "having nothing and yet possessing all things," is realized (see Werner Elert, \textit{Das christliche Ethos} [Tübingen: Furch-Verlag, 1949], 343 [\textit{The Christian Ethos}, trans. Carol J. Schindler (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 262]).

Kierkegaard himself held this position early on (cf. \textit{Fear and Trembling}'s "knight of faith" who makes the double movement of resignation and faith, as well as the \textit{Postscript}'s "knight of the hidden inwardness" who relates absolutely to God while relating relatively to everything else). Luther's two kingdom ethic, in fact, fit well with Kierkegaard's view that inward appropriation of the relationship with God is incommensurable with
above all it becomes exceedingly clear that while Kierkegaard has brilliantly deployed Luther's theology of the cross in order to secure Christianity from speculative idealism's pantheistic melding of God and man, this same idealism (in transmuted form) has reasserted itself with a vengeance, the *theologia crucis* having been only partially deployed. Where Kierkegaard has drawn but one lesson from the incarnation, viz., that it is an offense to reason, Luther has drawn a second: that corporeality has borne the divine and thereby demonstrated its commensurability with it. This truncation in meaning that the incarnation

outward expression. But as becomes evident in later writings, the mature Kierkegaard decisively rejects the two kingdom teaching. In part this is due to his awareness of the "fig leaf" that the hidden inwardness had become for Lutheranism's "refined epicurism." But more seriously, it is due to his realization that the Christian's inner heterogeneity is not only incommensurable with outward relationships, but incompatible with them. His thinking seems to be as follows. Although the fallen world continues to be God's creation, held in a state of preservation by the restraining influence of God's law, this law has itself been taken captive to the powers of destruction and assumed its place among them. Luther and Paul share this view, at least as regards the law's second use: sin has taken the proclamation of the law as an occasion to awaken evil desire within us; accordingly, the law can only reveal the presence of sin and in so doing condemn—it has no transformative power. But Kierkegaard sees this as true of the law in its first use as well (it, too, has come to signify "sinfulness," to recall SK's claim regarding temporality and sensuousness). The orders of creation, though preserved after the fall, are preserved in an impaired state. Hence Kierkegaard poses the question: is it not inconsistent of Lutheran ethics to consider faith and renunciation an absconditum that does not come into conflict with the law in its first use when the latter does not represent the orders of creation as God established them, but as sin has corrupted them? And what of Luther's teaching that the Christian must needs suffer the world's opposition? If he had held it with consistency, he would have affirmed that the world has ensnared itself in the orders of creation so that these are now so vitiated by egoism that the Christian cannot but come into conflict with them. Certainly Christ and the apostles did, and this is proof that the true Christian will, too. Accordingly in *Judge for Yourself!* (p. 170 [SV XII 441]) Kierkegaard makes much of the fact that Christ had no bond of connection—not with a wife nor mother nor brothers—not even with his disciples, since to do so would be to disobey the commandment to serve God alone.

While this account has recourse to Kierkegaard's *theologia crucis* premises in attempting to explain his rejection of the law in its political use, those premises cannot explain the extreme position in which he lands so that all human society is denied and "the theological horizon of creation lost" (Anz, *Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus*, 77-78). In the final analysis recourse must be had to Kierkegaard's idealist understanding of the person as isolated, "deworlded" subjectivity. Wilhelm Anz writes: "Die Geistesexistenz Kierkegaards ist ganz ungeborgen, sie kennt nur den absoluten Aktus des Existierens, in dem alle vorausliegende Wesenheit negiert wird. Gemessen an diesem Maßstabe muß jede Weise natürlicher Humanität, also das Erotische und die Ehe, und muß die geschichtliche Gemeinschaft, also Staat und Gesellschaft . . . den Sinn verlieren, den sie innerhalb des zweckmäßigen Ganzen einer Welt hatten, die immer noch als Analogie zur Schöpfung verstanden werden konnte. *Jedst erst werden christliche Geistesexistenz und humanes Dasein unvereinbar, jedoch nicht deshalb, weil Kierkegaard der radikale Christ ist, als den wir ihn kennen, sondern weil er das Grundprinzip des modernen Denkens: das absolute (d. h. das aus sich selbst beginnende und seiner unbedingt mächtige) Selbstbewußtsein in die christliche Gewissenserfahrung mitbringt und, von ihr angetrieben, überspannt. Nunmehr ist der Mensch zu einem Wesen geworden, das nicht leben und nicht sterben kann, weil es nirgends mehr Geschöpf sein darf und überall der Schöpfer seiner selbst sein muß" (pp. 74-75, emphasis added).
undergoes in Kierkegaard's thought is due, at least in part, to his retention of the framework of absolute subjectivity in his anthropology. But this retention—and its resultant recasting of man all too much in God's image—could have been avoided if the incarnation's sacramental character had been seriously addressed at the outset.

In any case, from the extremeness of the similitudo Dei that Kierkegaard's anthropology presupposes there devolves the most overtaxing effort to emulate God's absolute subjectivity. Anz observes: "This infinite actualization on the part of the person is—Kierkegaard says so himself—an Überspanntheit. The human being is not equal to the infinity of his person; he cannot be at all equal to it." This being the case, an ineluctable suffering attends the human being's stupendous efforts at imitating God. Here we have the ideational component of which we spoke at the conclusion of the preceding chapter when we summarized the sundry factors that were responsible for Kierkegaard's remaining standing at the cross. Kierkegaard cannot get beyond Easter eve for the simple reason that his conception of "spirit existence" will not allow him to. Nothing but the most unremitting striving and suffering is possible within the framework of absolute subjectivity. This absurde Übermenschlichkeit Anz considers to be "the internally necessary consequence of the existential dialectic." It is a consequence that, as we shall see in our concluding chapter, has a fateful bearing for Kierkegaard's grace teaching. Anz, points the way in which that teaching must tend when he observes:

---

132 The insignificance that SK accords the world is not simply traceable to his absolutization of the self in the manner of idealism—it owes to his pietistic disdain for vulgar corporeality as well. It is the latter that, at least in part, prompts Kierkegaard to exchange a romantic version of idealism for one that is Manichaean in outlook.


134 Pap X I A 279 (JP 1:334): "I constantly return to this dialectic: Christ comes into the world in order to save men, to make them eternally happy... and yet Christianity itself teaches that to be a true Christian is, humanly speaking, to be the most wretched of all, that consequently Christianity makes a person, humanly speaking, more wretched than he would otherwise be. This I have understood only in this way, that there is a collision between the divine and the human qualities, that... to be drawn up so high, is for a human being the greatest possible suffering, just as it would be for an animal if it were treated as a human being or if it were required to be a human being."

The more earnestly the believer recognizes in Christ the "Ideal"—Ideal means, however, the unity of the temporal and the eternal put to every person as his task—the more must the relationship of believing obedience (the acceptance of judgement and grace) be transformed into a relationship of contemporaneity or imitation. Contemporaneity can, within the horizon of the existential dialectic, mean nothing other than spirit-existence, life in the absolute moment. Kierkegaard has drawn this consequence. In his late journals the teaching of forgiveness appears as a "Christianity in man's interest" that stands lower than "Christianity in God's interest," or the contemporaneity in which the spirit-existence stands with God. Such a spirit-existence is a higher order of human being since it has overcome the contradiction between spirit and body; it is, as Kierkegaard says, "burnt out into spirit" [Pap X A 483 (JP 6:6683)]. Such "superhuman" spirit-existences cause Christianity to be true for the first time; they bring forth existential truth out of the doctrine.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 104-5.}

From this conception of authentic Christianity as "spirit-existence" there issues an understanding of grace as "indulgence"—a rather late development in Kierkegaard's thought that signals the revocation of Luther's teaching on grace. This is not a development that Kierkegaard had, in the beginning, intended.\footnote{Anz cites Pap X A 246 (JP 2:1852): "I must now be very careful—or rather, God will be very careful—that I not be led astray by gazing all too one-sidedly upon Christ as model. It is the [first] dialectical moment in relation to the next one: Christ as gift, as that which is granted us (to recall Luther's standing division). But dialectical as my nature is, it ever seems at the moment of dialectical passion as though the opposite notion did not exist at all—and then it comes, precisely for the first time and the most powerfully" (translation mine).} Nonetheless, "in the polemical defining of the opponent, as soon as grace is interpreted as 'world' [i.e., as continuing attachment to the world], as renunciation of existential truth, the dialectic gains a compelling force against which Kierkegaard's own original knowledge of grace and forgiveness is unable to resist."\footnote{Anz, "Fragen der Kierkegaardinterpretation I," 69.} It is the nature and extent of this revocation of Kierkegaard's earlier grace understanding that we seek now to make clear.
CHAPTER NINE
THE COMPROMISE OF LUTHER’S TEACHING ON GRACE
IN THE POLEMIC AGAINST LUTHERANISM

We have observed that the later Kierkegaard considers Luther’s ethic of vocation an adulteration of Christianity’s true ethic: the imitation of Christ, who was absolute spirit. We indicated that the reformer’s teaching on grace also comes increasingly under attack as encouraging craven attachment to the world. Luther’s recognition of the enormity of Christianity’s requirement and the necessity of grace resulted in a "knocking off with respect to the New Testament’s, particularly the Gospels’, requirement for being a Christian." Compliance with the unconditional demand laid down by Christ in the New Testament was no longer recognized as feasible. The criticism that Kierkegaard directs at Luther is not that he arrived at this true insight (God’s standard being, after all, unattainable). It is rather that he recast Christianity in terms that toned down its demand and moreover implied that God had been forced to abandon his standard in order to accommodate human incapacity. On

1Pap X 88 (JP 2:1922). This "knocking off" meant that Christianity was translated from "God's interest" (Christ's perfect life) into "man's interest" (the atonement)--Pap X A 499 (JP 2:1911)--resulting in a deemphasis of imitation. The reader is referred to the concluding section of chapter 6 for detailed discussion of this aspect of SK's Luther-critique.


3"Luther understood the matter as follows: no human being can endure the anxiety that his striving is to be decisive for an eternal blessedness or eternal damnation. 'No, no,' says Luther, 'this can only lead to despair or presumption. And therefore (mark this well!) therefore (for Luther clearly alters New Testament Christianity by virtue of this "otherwise humanity must despair") therefore, neither is it so. You are saved by grace; calm down, you are saved by grace--and then see to it to strive as best you can'" (Pap XI A 297 [JP 3:2551]). Not only did Luther unwarrantably reduce Christianity by representing it principally as reassurance rather than unconditional demand, he did away with martyrdom and celibacy thereby domesticating what did remain of Christianity's demands, rendering them attainable to the one who "strives as best he can." That is to say, Luther effected a reduction of Christianity both in absolute and in relative terms, and did so on the basis of "human" considerations to which God had no choice but to accede.

302
his own authority Luther rescinded Christianity's absolute standard, prematurely exempting himself and his hearers from a judgement that should extend for the duration of life itself. In so doing, he epitomized the seditiousness of the human spirit that, reasoning by its own lights, sets itself up as absolute in the place of God.\footnote{Pap XI$^1$ A 297 (JP 3:2551), XI$^1$ A 572 (JP 3:2554) and XI$^2$ A 194 (JP 3:2555). Cf. Pap XI$^1$ A 87 (JP 3:3618).}

Despite his criticism that Luther usurped the divine prerogative by taking it upon himself to reduce Christianity's demands, and despite his criticism as to the substance of the Lutheran reduction (Christianity as, foremost, reassurance and a tranquil domestic life), Kierkegaard nevertheless expresses agreement as to the need for a reduction. Yet it is precisely this characterization of grace as a "reduction" (or "indulgence" as he is wont to call it) that begs for clarification, for it flies in the face of Kierkegaard's repeated denunciations of "reduction" and "indulgence peddling."\footnote{E.g., SV XII 410 (Judge for Yourself!, 132), Pap X$^1$ A 460 (JP 1:516), and Pap X$^4$ A 340 and 618 (JP 2:1901 and 2:1486).} More disturbingly, it seems to imply that the gospel is tantamount to a scaling down of Christianity's requirement—one that effectively leaves the Christian in a state of continued subjection to law, albeit an attenuated law. Such talk of "reduction" immediately arouses Lutheran suspicions. What Luther effected was not a reduction of the New Testament's requirement for being a Christian, or a "scaling down" of what could realistically be expected of human beings. What he effected was none other than a total abrogation of what could be expected, the total rescission—not reduction—of what God requires of man for justification. What is the meaning of this strange use of terms by Kierkegaard, who contends that God's "indulgence" occasions no change in his absolute standard, it remaining the standard by which we are judged and impelled to flee to grace for our righteousness in toto? Why does Kierkegaard himself speak of a scaling down? It is the aim of this concluding chapter to elucidate this confusing state of affairs by placing the later Kierkegaard's remarks about grace within the soteriological framework of absolute spirit.

We shall discover that grace in that context does not signify the perfect righteousness that we receive from God here and now, but rather a provisional indulgence that God grants us from striving in accordance with the demands of absolute spirit.
Certainly Kierkegaard is against indulgences in any crass sense of that term. For example, he spares Bishop Mynster no criticism for having suppressed Christianity's ideal requirement, "reducing" it in effect to that of bourgeois rectitude. In so doing, Mynster had sought to absolve himself and his hearers of all responsibility for submitting to divine judgment. Similarly, Kierkegaard can fault Luther for having "reduced" the New Testament requirement to that of "striving as best one can" in the context of one's secular calling while relying upon grace for acceptance with God. Luther's recourse to grace was based upon the purely human consideration that "otherwise a man must despair." Consequently he threw off Christianity's unconditioned requirement that must judge the Christian for the duration of his life unless rescinded by God himself. "Reduction" as practiced by Mynster or even by Luther therefore signified the suppression or passing over of Christianity's unconditional requirement which, on Kierkegaard's contention, should be proclaimed in all its rigor and received with the humble admission that it is too high for us humans.

On the other hand, Kierkegaard can speak positively of Luther's "reduction" when understood in the context of such proclamation and admission. As we have seen, some provision must be made for human incapacity. While Christianity's demand may in no way suffer attenuation, neither can the compliance of human beings be realistically exacted. "Reduction" in this sense can mean nothing less than total abrogation or rescission of the requirement as Luther understood it. Kierkegaard agrees on the necessity of such rescission in absolute terms: if we are to be saved at all, it can only be by grace, sheer grace. Moreover, he can also agree on the need for a reduction of Christianity's demands in relative terms: the tasks put to one Christian cannot be identical to those put to another. It is just such a divinely authorized relaxation of Christianity's standard relative to the specific individual

---

6Pap X² A 75 (JP 6:6503).
8Again, Pap X⁵ A 88 and 96 (JP 2:1922 and 3:2898).
that Kierkegaard has in mind when he employs the term "indulgence" in its "positive" sense.⁹

On that usage "indulgence" signifies not Luther's notion of a total and complete abrogation of Christianity's requirement, but a partial dispensation from it. Numerous texts from the Papirer employ the term "Indulgents" in this sense. In each instance it designates an arrangement whereby one is released from striving in accordance with Christianity's strictest demands.¹⁰ Still other texts speak of the same kind of relaxation of Christianity's standards,

---

⁹It is to be noted that the expression, "indulgence"--like "reduction"--is generally used by Kierkegaard in a pejorative manner. Yet Kierkegaard always uses the term Aflad in such contexts (Danish Lutheranism's typical designation for Catholic indulgences), thereby distinguishing it from indulgence in the positive sense (Indulgents). As for the expression, "knocking off" or "reducing" (at slaa af paₚ), Kierkegaard uses it in connection with the "good" and "bad" reduction alike. That he nevertheless makes a distinction is reflected in a statement such as the following: "The truth is that the official proclamation has inadmissibly knocked off"--Pap X² A 483 (JP 6:6683), emphasis mine.

¹⁰Pap X² A 184, p. 146 (JP 6:6528): "What [Anticlimacus] has to say is something that we human beings would rather have consigned to oblivion. But yet it must be heard. Not as though everyone should do it or that blessedness should be made dependent upon whether I do it--oh, no. I acknowledge, after all, that my life does not express this either; but I humble myself under it, I consider [my life] an Indulgents, and my life has unrest."

Pap X² A 241, p. 182 (JP 2:1399): "That of which all Christendom and I have need is for one to step forward who, by being thoroughly strict toward himself, dared to be strict toward us so that we could be prompted to strive as well as to appreciate the Indulgents."

Pap X³ A 72 (JP 2:1476): "The requirement is the universal, what applies to all, the standard by which each is to be measured. The requirement is therefore what is to be proclaimed; the teacher's task is to proclaim the requirement, and so to cause unrest; he dare not reduce the requirement. The Indulgents is not to be proclaimed, neither can it be proclaimed since it involves entirely different things for different people and is their inmost private understanding with God. The proclamation of the requirement is to drive the people to God and Christ in order to see about finding out what Indulgents they need, what they dare pray for by way of Indulgents before God, all the while that the requirement's proclamation constantly keeps them close to God."

In this entry God is said to be "the only Dispensator over grace." A Dispensator is one who is authorized to grant a dispensation or make a special allowance.

Pap X³ A 187, p. 148 (JP 1:174): "It is my conviction (and I have never understood Christianity in any other way) that as strict as it is, it is also just as lenient. It is not granted to everyone, and neither is it unconditionally demanded of everyone, that he should live in poverty and abasement in the strictest sense. But he must be honest, he must sincerely confess that such a thing is too high for him and then in childlike fashion rejoice over his more lenient conditions since in the final analysis grace is the same for all. . . . As little as my own life resembles an ascetic's, just so little have I in the remotest way obligated any other person to lead such a life or passed judgement on a single person for not doing so--I who have, only in so small a way according to my powers, sought to obligate myself a little bit, and in any case have sought to make an admission concerning myself, and being mindful from the beginning that I am without authority. I have no suggestion to make as regards the religious establishment, not a single one. I am of the opinion for that matter that it can go on as it is if only each and every one, before God, would make an admission and force himself to remember it. But to my way of thinking what has demoralized Christendom and particularly Protestantism is that a clergy that is in conformity with worldliness down to the slightest particular has, instead of confessing that Christianly speaking it is an Indulgents, reversed the relationship and made this worldliness into something that is
albeit in other terms. For example, Pap X⁴ A 64 (JP 2:1492) refers to grace as a sort of ad hoc arrangement that is reached with God concerning the extent of one's liability to keep Christianity's demands. Here "grace" is simply a dispensation that one seeks from God—a dispensation over which God exercises sole disposal. Other forms of expression as well indicate a graded continuum along which Christians are ranged as regards the degree of

'Christianly speaking' far higher and truer than the true renunciation, i.e., truly living in poverty and abasement. The world has seen through this and this is why the clergy is without influence."

Pap X⁴ A 347 (JP 2:1787): "Christian order of rank: (1) If you possess means and would be perfect, then give everything to the poor. (2) If you possess means and would apply it toward one or another beneficial undertaking, this too is good. (3) If you possess means and would use it for the enjoyment of life—but mark it well—in an admissible way: well, Christianity tolerates this. (4) If you are to acquire—then Christianity would rather that you restrict yourself to the necessities in order to have all the more time for religious purposes rather than using a lot of time on acquiring in order to have all the more to consume. Christianity is suspicious of the acquisition of money. At the same time, Christianity is still lenient if you will understand it as an Indulgents that you are allowed to use so much time on acquiring. But if you make acquisition into life's serious concern, then you have fallen away from Christianity."

Pap X⁴ A 437 (JP 3:3318) Regarding Christianity's requirement to suffer for the truth and maintain heterogeneity to this world: "The most lenient suggestion seems to me that one, at the very least, submit to it being said without anyone therefore being condemned, but that every individual, like I myself, be directed to grace and Indulgents."

Pap X⁴ A 377, p. 223 (JP 6:6778): Concerning the challenge that Practice in Christianity's "Moral" presented to the religious establishment: "This is the formula for an established Christianity: it is an Indulgents. 'grace' must be brought to bear here. If the establishment does not view itself in this way, if it does not bring grace to bear here, then we are in disagreement." (Translations mine)

⁴⁴Pap X⁴ A 64 (JP 2:1492): "'Grace'—The Christian requirement is infinite. It must be proclaimed. Everyone must, as concerns grace which also is to be proclaimed, apply to God himself and come to a personal understanding with God in his own conscience concerning where and how he resorts to grace. But I have no right to say to another person whose life does not express the requirement, 'Put your mind at ease by means of grace.' No, no, grace is the prerogative of God's majesty; God alone has the right to say to the individual, 'There is grace.' It is mine to proclaim that there is grace, infinite grace, but I dare not [decide] for another person where he dare apply grace so as to diminish striving or offer reassurance in that respect. The matter is different in relation to a dying person, for there is essentially no question of a striving for him. But this is the frightful deception that runs throughout all of Christendom: that the human authority has taken possession of 'grace' and now trades in it, at times selling it for money, at times winning loveliness and esteem among people by confirming them in their carefree enjoyment of life—for there is, after all, grace. No, no! This is the Christian exertion that must not be altered: that every person, as regards grace, must apply to God, come to an agreement with him, and that no person shall dare want to be an intermediary between God and another person as regards grace. Hence the infinite requirement is to be proclaimed—in order to chase the people, each and every one, to God— for there (so, too, does the proclamation, after all, sound) there is grace, but no person has the right to say to another: spare yourself, there is after all grace. But as stated, grace has been regarded in Christendom as an enormous deposit, a sort of testamentary deposit over which we people then mutually dispose. It is forgotten that God is not a deceased person—he lives and he reserves to himself the right to be the only one who disposes over grace. To him and him alone must every individual therefore apply. And every Christian proclamation must refer the individual to him, for there is grace, infinite grace⁴⁴ (translation mine).
observance that is required of them. For example, Kierkegaard can employ the notion of a "Christian order of rank" (christelig Rangforordning) in this regard. Atop the order are those who are "true Christians in the strictest sense"--i.e., those who have not compromised with the world in any way and have therefore given themselves up to martyrdom. By comparison the rest of us have "been let off more easily."\(^{12}\) We belong to the ranks of "the Christians on the more lenient terms."\(^{13}\) SK includes himself under this head, acknowledging that he, like most people, wants to be a Christian "on as easy terms as possible."\(^{14}\) The easiest terms of all are those on which one acknowledges Christianity's unconditional demand and admits that one's failure to strive in accordance therewith is "not really Christianity at all" but "a very toned-down conception, something distantly related to Christianity."\(^{15}\) In all of these texts what is at issue is the notion of "getting off easier" by means of grace.\(^{16}\)

Even this rather substantial catalogue of terms, however, does not exhaust the means by which Kierkegaard develops the notion of grace qua "dispensation." The concept "grace

---

\(^{12}\)SV XII 208 (Practice in Christianity, 227). Cf. Pap X\(^3\) A 296 (JP 6:6761) where SK contrasts "Christians in the stricter sense" (those for whom Christ is Prototype in the stricter sense) with "Christians in the attenuated sense" (those for whom he is Prototype only in the sense of "humbling in the direction of inwardness"). Cf. also Pap X\(^3\) A 656 (JP 3:2958) where he challenges each and every one to ask himself the question: "Dare you, here before God, dare you claim that you are a true Christian in the strictest sense? I guarantee that there is not a single one. Each one says: 'No, good Lord no, I flee to grace and am in a relationship of striving'" (translation mine). The notion of "what it means to be a Christian in the strictest sense" is first broached in the "Moral" of Practice in Christianity (p. 67 [SV XII 64]); that of being "essentially Christian" (a relationship of strict imitation in the situation of contemporaneity) a couple of pages prior.

\(^{13}\)Pap X\(^3\) A 187 (JP 1:174), quoted above as regards those who do not live in poverty and abasement. See also Pap X\(^3\) A 654 (JP 4:3829).

\(^{14}\)Pap X\(^3\) A 483 (JP 6:6683). Cf. Pap X\(^3\) A 272, p. 181 (JP 6:6389) where SK confides, "I believe, without saying too much about myself, that I am about the lowest of the lowest, in the eighth class."

\(^{15}\)SV XII 417-18 (Judge for Yourself!, 141-42). Cf. pp. 464-66 (196-99) and 473 (207).

\(^{16}\)Pap X\(^3\) A 560 (JP 3:3757): "Really to renounce this entire life, to stake everything solely upon a future life so that one only gets trouble and toil and sufferings in this life--this is the most strenuous existence. Now then, perhaps someone finds this too difficult--well, then one sees to it that one gets off more leniently by means of grace, by praying for oneself, etc. But what have human beings come up with? They have come up with the impudent invention that staking everything in this way upon a future life is a very imperfect existence . . . the perfect is the easier, or the easier is in addition the more perfect. See, this is an impudent rebellion against Christianity--and it is here that one must step in. This other lie is the dangerous one . . . This lie is namely that of taking Luther's entire work in vain, it is that of transforming of Luther's spirituality into insolent worldliness" (translation mine).
at the first place" that he coins in the late journals likewise suggests such an understanding inasmuch as it can be applied in order "to spare with respect to the utmost of striving." And still other expressions point in the same direction. For example, Kierkegaard can refer to grace as a "concession" shown by God to man's weakness. He can call it a "mediation for which one must pray"—i.e., a moderation of Christianity's demand. He can speak of "Christianity in God's interest" as "the true Christianity" by comparison with which "Christianity in man's interest" is a "toned down accommodation."

If one seeks the point in Kierkegaard's published works at which grace is depicted as indulgence for the first time, the "Moral" to Practice in Christianity immediately comes

---

17Pap X A 446 (JP 3:2559): "The more that a person stands by God, the closer that he comes to him, the more that he wills as God wills—then the more severe everything becomes, the more he suffers in this world. That this is so is certain. This is Christianity, is spirit, it lies in God's majesty, it cannot be otherwise. That God is nevertheless—or rather, precisely here—infinitesimal, infinitesimal love is just as certain. Oh, blessed are those glorious ones who are able to endure having to do with God in this way. That their salvation nevertheless also is 'grace' is equally certain; for this is again the expression of majesty: no one can be saved, except by grace. But these glorious ones do not have grace at the first place, their lives express the exertion of spirit in the strictest sense; and while they themselves acknowledge before God that they are saved by grace, we others should bow deeply before them. Then comes the next relationship. A person acknowledges how frightful it is to come quite near to God (which is nevertheless God's demand), but confesses his weakness, confesses that he dare not—at least as yet—and so inserts 'grace' in at the first place so that grace is also permitted to spare [him] as regards the utmost of striving. With this, too, God in his infinite love will involve himself—but then he wills honesty, truth, wills that one shall confess how matters stand. One shall humbly confess straight out that the problem lies deep in me, that I am afraid to be spirit in the strict sense and therefore withdraw a bit. The problem with the sermon is this rubbish about me 'wanting to so very much.' Nonsense. No, it is I who would rather not—and this God will forgive me in 'grace.' Infinite love that he is—he will even have to do with a person on this condition."
Cf. Pap X A 43 (JP 6:6832), infra, n. 31, where "all of us in Christendom who have some Christianity" are said to apply grace "at the first place—not merely 'grace' in relation to the past, but grace in relation to the demanded venture"—in order to exempt ourselves from it. Kierkegaard notes: "And then comes the rub, that then God nevertheless wills to have to do with us." Cf. also SV XII 418 (Judge for Yourself!, 142) where Kierkegaard speaks of "introducing grace in another place, namely, for coddling myself in human sympathy for myself." (All translations but the last are mine.)

18Pap X A 393 (JP 4:4894) speaks of praying to God that he not "be too hard on" one, requesting whether specific things "might not be conceded [indrommes]"—and then, for the rest, abiding by his decision. Pap X A 658 (JP 2:1415) too speaks of "concession," only here it is the institutionalized church that is the Concession—given "on account of our frailty." The church is said to have come about by each individual, at one or another point, having "struck a compromise [slaaet af] in respect of being a Christian in the strictest sense."


to mind.21 There the lifting of the demand is represented as indefinite, if not permanent, in
duration based upon its proclamation together with the bare (but sincere) admission of one's
distance from it. Increasingly, however, Kierkegaard came to regard dispensation so
conceived as illicit, for its terms--bare admission without the slightest attendant effort in the
direction of discipleship--made of it crass indulgence [Aflad].22 In offering dispensation
on those terms Kierkegaard had, in effect, announced a "spiritual moratorium" on striving
with which he was not comfortable.23 Hence he subsequently modified his position to that

21SV XII 64 (Practice in Christianity, 67): "And what does all this mean?" It means that each individual in
quiet inwardness before God is to humble himself under what it means in the strictest sense to be a Christian,
is to confess before God where he is so that he still might worthily accept the grace that is offered to
every imperfect person--that is, to everyone. And then nothing further; then, as for the rest, let him do his work
and rejoice in it, love his wife and rejoice in her, joyfully bring up his children, love his fellow beings, rejoice
in life. If anything more is required of him, God will surely let him understand and in that case will also help
him further. . . . But this is required of everyone, that he before God shall honestly humble himself under the
requirements of ideality." Cf. Pap X A 184 and X A 377 (JP 6:6528 and 6778), cited above, which describe
the dispensation offered by Practice in Christianity precisely as Indulgents. See also the second discourse of
Part III of Christian Discourses, which anticipates Practice in Christianity's "Moral" (SV X 188-89 [Christian
Discourses, 194-96]). The latter text, as illuminated by Pap VIII A 572 (JP 3:3744), expresses the conviction
that God extends to most individuals dispensation from striving in accordance with ideality's demand: "The
requirement is for all; but only of some individuals is it required in particular" (translation mine).

22"My earlier thought was: 'If the establishment can be defended at all, then this is the only way: by bringing
judgment upon it poetically (hence by a pseudonym) and then by drawing upon "grace" raised to the second
power so that it would become Christianity, not merely finding forgiveness for the past through grace, but
through grace finding a kind of indulgence [Aflad] from the imitation of Christ proper and the exertion of being
a Christian proper. In that way truth will enter into the Establishment after all, it will defend itself by
condemning itself, it will acknowledge the Christian requirement, will for its own part make an admission
concerning its distance (and that, without being able to be called a striving in the direction of drawing closer
to the requirement) but it will flee to grace, "also with respect to the use that one makes of grace." . . . Now,
on the contrary, I am quite assured of two things: both that the Establishment is, Christianly speaking,
untenable; that each day that it exists is, Christianly speaking, a crime. And that one is not permitted to draw
upon grace in this way" (SY XIV 80-81 [Attack upon Christendom, 54-55], translation mine).

It is interesting to note that Judge for Yourself!, written three years prior to this public retraction of
Practice in Christianity's "Moral" but four years after the "Moral" itself, still offered the "Morals" lenient terms
of dispensation--though one must suppose with far less ingenuousness. No doubt this accounts in large part for
why SK never published that work during his lifetime. The offer there reads: "Yes, Christianity is lenient, in
the form of an admission--note this well: in the form of an admission!--it can spare the single individual much
when he humbly admits his own condition, can also spare him this truly Christian venturing when he humbly
admits his own condition" (SY XII 384 [Judge for Yourself!, 101-2]). It is to be noted that the demand that
Kierkegaard makes in Judge for Yourself! is once again particularly leveled at the clergy (pp. 405-7 [126-29]
and 479 [212]).

23Eduard Geismar [Soren Kierkegaard, hans Livsudvikling og Forfattervirksomhed, 6 vols (Copenhagen:
G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1927-29), 4:111 and 116] goes so far as to express doubts about Kierkegaard's original
sincerity in offering such terms of dispensation. Nor are his doubts totally without foundation. Two years after
of a provisional lifting of ideality's demand based upon the ceaseless struggle of conscience to determine whether dispensation is to be sought at all in a given situation.\textsuperscript{24} Indulgence, so conceived, applied solely to each individual and was based upon his progress in Christianity, and hence, upon individual capability.

Clearly the background for this "indulgence" understanding of grace is Kierkegaard's "parent-child" model of divine-human relations: God must provisionally suspend all or part of the requirement as an accommodation to the "child's" level of development. The requirement ever exists, but compliance with it is not immediately demanded; indeed, its ramifications are not fully made known at the outset.\textsuperscript{25} The sum of the matter is that in imputing grace qua "reduction" to Luther and in speaking of it as though it were a kind of "indulgence" himself, Kierkegaard is not deriding these concepts per se, but rather the failure to safeguard their integrity by placing them within a framework wherein Christianity's full requirement is proclaimed and its hearers are actively engaged in the task of striving to attain to maturity--i.e., spirit.

the publication of Practice in Christianity. Kierkegaard acknowledged that the conditions that he had set forth in the "Moral" for compromise with the establishment had been, from the outset, only tentative, and their tenability, dubious at best. In his own mind, they were subject to almost certain supersedure from the very beginning (Pap X A 639 [JP 4:4524]).

\textsuperscript{24} Pap X A 64 (JP 2:1492), supra, n. 11, as well as Pap X A 72 (JP 2:1476), supra, n. 10. Pap X A 593, pp. 411-12 (JP 4:4688) describes the rhythm and incremental progression that the Christian life assumes as a result of the provisional dispensation: one strives to the point of pain in one's attempts at "dying to," then gives way a bit--convalescing, as it were--only to renew the exercise, strengthened by the previous exertion. Pap X S A 39, p. 43 (JP 2:1433) warns of being too impatient to do without the proffered indulgence: "As always, I say to myself and to everyone: do things gently; if it becomes too difficult for you, then move down into a lower relationship with God, yet in such a way that you again begin where you left off. You are not under law, though, but under love" (translation mine).

\textsuperscript{25} A human being is a frail creature, not able like the God-man to know everything in advance, from the first moment, his suffering and the certainty and necessity of his downfall, and yet capable of living day after day, quiet, devoted to God, as if only everything good were in store for him. A human being must be handled gently, and that is why a person is given his task little by little; he is little by little pressed more and more firmly into the greater and greater effort of the test and examination" (SVXII 172-73 [Practice in Christianity, 186]). Anti-Climacus goes on to describe the Christian's "upbringing" in the manner of a parent-child relationship. It is a process of gradual acclimation to the rarified air of spirit. Jørgen Bukdahl has demonstrated the vast importance that this notion has in SK's understanding of divine-human relations ("'Indrømmelsen'. Dens plads i Søren Kierkegaards kristendomsforståelse og vækkelsesaktion," Dansk Teologisk Tidskrift 26 [1963]:96-124).
It is apparent that Kierkegaard's concept of "upbringing" or "training" in Christianity stands in close relation to the idealist soteriology outlined in the previous chapter. The link between the two is not to be denied: in Pap X² A 219 (JP 2:1473) Kierkegaard freely trades between the "sociological" terms of the training metaphor and the "ontological" ones (temporality and eternity) of the idealist schema.²⁶ Moreover the net result as regards the grace concept is the same: on both metaphors grace is described as a temporary dispensation or "indulgence" from meeting ideality's demands.²⁷ It is clear that this understanding of grace that increasingly manifests itself in the latter half of the authorship derives from the understanding of man as emergent spirit (or metaphorically, as emergent "adult") who must

²⁶ "Actually 'grace' relates to the composite of temporality and eternity that man is. When a solid is rotated all too rapidly spontaneous combustion can result. So, too, when eternity's and ideality's demand bursts in upon a person in a flash and requires itself of him--then he must despair, go crazy, etc. In such a condition he must cry out to God: 'Give me time, give me time.' And this is grace--this is after all why temporality is called the time of grace. In eternity one cannot actually speak of grace. But temporality, you see, precisely in one sense agony--and yet divinely speaking it is the time of grace. Faith, which relates to and resorts to grace, passes through salvifically. In faith there is rest. Faith relates to grace, and see, now exactly the opposite thing occurs: now there is, in one sense, absolutely nothing to hurry about--everything has, after all, already been done. Here lies the atonement, satisfaction for sins. Only thus can a wretched human being be kept striving. For in order to have the courage to strive he must rest in the blessed assurance that everything has already been decided, that he has conquered--in faith and by faith. So he begins to strive; but faith, relating to grace, is ever immediately ready to strengthen him patiently to strive, ever giving time, the time of grace. Oh, but if a human father (or mother) already has difficulty enough accommodating himself to his child, what a wonder of patience for God in heaven ... to have patience with a human being's--striving!" (translation mine).

²⁷ "In Pap X² A 241 (JP 2:1399) where the "upbringing" and idealist schemata are again simultaneously present God is said to exhibit fatherly patience--Indulgents--toward the "child" whom he is slowly but successively weaning from enjoyment of the created world. Yet at any moment he could place the child over into a "stricter division," requiring him to become "spirit" in earnest. Similar in tenor is Pap X² A 473, pp. 295-96 (JP 1:251): "Yet God is, you see, also in this way infinite love--not suddenly, as it were, all at once assaulting a human being and demanding of him that he be spirit, for then a human being would have to perish. No, he handles ever so gently, it is a slow operation, an upbringing; there come many moments where [the person] gets a breather, where God in a finite way strengthens the patient--but then onward. And there is one thing that God requires unconditionally at every moment: honesty, that he not reverse the relationship and demonstrate his relationship with God or the truth of his cause by pointing to good fortune, success, and so on--no, the opposite is the case: that he confess that this breather is given on account of his weakness, as an Accommodation on the part of God, something that he also will perhaps have to do without at a later moment--in order to come further. Moreover, the honesty is required at every moment of the patient that he immediately put it down as a debit in his relationship with God each time that he uses his shrewdness to procure a little alleviation, a little relief--that he then, for heaven's sake, not become cocky on account of his shrewdness--for then the God-relationship vanishes altogether and he may perhaps become one of those unhappy ones for whom everything succeeds in this world--because God's punishment is upon them so that he has absolutely nothing more to do with them" (translation mine).
progressively revoke every tie to the finite, the temporal and the corporeal, but who needs time to do this.

However "gentle" or "lenient" this way of conceiving grace may be (for it is love that deals thus with the child, be it now sternly, now indulgently), it seems to me that it dichotomizes law and grace in a way that tacitly revokes the latter. At any time either forgiveness or the modified demand obtains. When "indulgence" is declared, then the requirement— at least a portion of it—is provisionally put out of force. Kierkegaard considers such a temporary reprieve from striving in accordance with ideality's highest demands to be mercifully devoid of law and aptly applies the synonym that so smacks of antinomianism: "indulgence." Yet by positing this type of "grace" he has dissolved the simul relationship that obtained in the theologia crucis (the atonement as continually present under the law's accusation, rescinding its demand qua demand without abrogating its intent). In its place Kierkegaard has installed an alternating sequence wherein at one moment grace silences the law's accusations, but at another moment the law (albeit mitigated) annuls grace. Contrary to his intention, in place of the alternatives, either an easy conscience or a stultify-

28 Clearly the conferral of full satisfaction for sin through the atonement does nothing to remove God's demand per se. On the contrary, such satisfaction is given precisely that the demand may be fulfilled—a thing that "the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do" (Rom. 8:3-4). Luther interprets this Pauline teaching to mean that the law cannot be fulfilled so long as it is experienced as law. What the atonement does is to rescind the law qua law, and establish a gracious striving born of the Spirit in its stead. Yet the atonement does not rescind the law qua God's gracious will for our lives.

29 N.B., Luther, too, knows of alternating seasons of law and grace. Like Kierkegaard, he considers these a practical necessity of the Christian life, not its ideal status. In his exposition of GsL. 3:23-25 and 4:3 he contrasts the "time of law" with the "time of grace." The latter is ushered in by the "advent of Christ," an event that must occur not once in the Christian's life, but daily, hourly, yes, continually (WA 401, 524-38 and 550 [LW 26, 340-51 and 360]) because of the tenacity of the flesh in which the law finds repeated occasion to reassert itself; consequently its tyranny over the conscience must constantly be overcome by faith (WA 401 526 [LW 26, 3432]). This similarity to Kierkegaard is matched by yet another one, for Luther acknowledges that the law, despite its terrors, serves a gracious function: it is the custodian given for our own good until we shall have reached the age of majority and been fully entrusted with the promise. That is to say: it is given to rebuke our flesh, denying it free reign and driving us to grace. With the introduction of SK's category, "indulgence," however, the similarities end, for this category ascribes to the law a gracious function that is nowhere to be found in Luther: the proffered indulgence is said to reassure, not accuse. Luther would deny that this is possible. As an attenuated form of law, indulgence can only accuse—it cannot extend the "time of grace" wrought by its precursor, forgiveness. Where Kierkegaard advocates recourse to indulgence on the heels of forgiveness, Luther advocates continued recourse to forgiveness. He can do so because, contra Kierkegaard, he regards Christ's atoning office as never forsaking the Christian, not even when concealed under the aspect of law that the impending venture so readily assumes.
ing rigorism, the category "indulgence" in its own poor way affords both. Yet it ineluctably tends in the direction of the latter. Under the guise of rescinding Christianity's absolutely unattainable demand it lays down a moderately unattainable one. Moreover, because indulgence from the full force of the law is only provisional, rigorism is certain to win the day, Christianity coming to stand under the sign of the law. In the end there is no respite from fulfilling the highest demands of "spirit." 30

The "indulgence" or "upbringing" metaphor for grace that we have hitherto traced is to be located during the first half of the late period, between 1848 and 1852. After 1852 we still find it, but with the difference that the term, "Indulgents," is replaced by the designation, "grace at the first place" (Naade paa første Sted). This new notion is to be understood in connection with its companion concept, "grace at the second place." The latter grace has to do with the past--it is forgiveness for sin already committed--whereas the former one pertains to the future, specifically to our response to the renewed demand that comes on the

---

30Per Lønning writes: "Where Kierkegaard has gone awry ... seems to be that, by his talk of grace as 'indulgence,' he entirely overlooks the fact that the gospel makes man's impotence and God's sovereign love into the principal—and in relation to the law, new—point of departure. Thereby he stands in danger of making the gospel into a second rate Christianity, while the law's demand, or even more accurately, the demand for discipleship, becomes what is primary and actual. It is not said straight out that in order to be a Christian one must fulfill this demand; it is not even said straight out that it might be possible for anyone to fulfill it. But with this the possibility is nevertheless opened that the demand, as primary and principal Christianity, can come to force the joyous message into the shadow to an ever increasing degree" ("Samtidighedens Situation," En studie i Søren Kierkegaards kristendomsforståelse, [Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1954], 195).

Now an entry like Pap X A 219 (JP 2:1473) might seem to give the lie to the contention that law gains the upper hand on this schema, for SK is after all very explicit in acknowledging that "there is, in one sense, absolutely nothing to hurry about—everything has, after all, already been done. Here lies the atonement, satisfaction for sins. Only thus can a wretched human being be kept striving. For in order to have the courage to strive he must rest in the blessed assurance that everything has already been decided, that he has conquered—in faith and by faith." It is clear, though, that grace here means Christ's death and righteousness that ever and always satisfies the law's demand; it does not mean the "time" that is granted the individual for bringing himself into compliance with that demand through its provisory rescission, as the context would indicate. It seems that in this entry Kierkegaard is mixing two paradigms that are fundamentally incompatible. On the one paradigm it holds true that only by means of the full satisfaction for sins can the wretched human being be kept striving. On the other paradigm the opposite conviction is expressed: that only if the wretched human being's feet are "kept to the fire" (with remissions) can he be kept striving. The fact that the former schema is ostensibly affirmed does not preclude its tacit subversion by the latter.
heels of the forgiveness just received (hence the alternative designations: "grace in relation to the future," or "grace forwards," vs. "grace in relation to the past," or "grace backwards"). 31

31Pap X\(^2\) A 43 (JP 6:6832): "It is not true, as mockers and freethinkers boldly assert or as semi-cultivated people despairingly or rebelliously sigh or rage, that no such Spirit exists who, when one calls upon him, entirely recreates a person, renews him, gives him strength for renunciation, every manner of renunciation. No, that is not how it is. Such a Spirit really does exist. But the fact is that, for the one who understands this, it is so terrifying to call upon this Spirit that he dare not, especially one who from childhood on is pampered by grace, pampered by everything being sheer leniency. For he must in this way get quite another God-concept, oh, and his prayer must become quite another than that to which he was accustomed from childhood on and which was such a blessed thing to him. Take a picture. There is a winged horse, for example--more than winged, of infinite speed. If you but mount it, then you are in one second more than a world's distance from this world and its way of thinking and its life and its conceptions, and the understanding of your contemporaries. The freethinkers, the mockers, the semi-cultivated people attract attention by denying that such a horse exists--all under the deceitful hypocrisy that if there were such a horse they would surely be ready to mount it. I speak otherwise, I assume--in order to stay with the picture--that such a horse exists, but I dare not mount it. Oh, and here lies the difficulty for all of us in Christendom who, however, have some Christianity. We are not able to deny that such a horse exists, that it is only waiting for us to abandon ourselves to it: then it would surely take care of the rest. Oh, but we dare not. And then here comes the rub, that God will nevertheless have to do with us. And it is in this manner that I think that in Christianity one applies 'grace' at the first place--not merely 'grace' in relation to the past, but grace in relation to the demanded venture. But as said, it is so infinitely difficult for one who has been brought up in Christianity from childhood on to come out of this since he is pampered by 'grace'--and 'grace' nevertheless is and remains that by which a person is saved, even the apostle."

Pap X\(^2\) A 44 (JP 2:1919): "Imagine a person who is aware of his guilt and offense. For a longtime he goes about in quiet despair and broods repentantly over it: then he learns to flee unto grace--and everything, everything, everything is infinitely forgiven him. Blessed! But just as he now, as it were, walks out of the sanctuary where he heard this word of grace, closes the door behind him and now is to begin, what happens? Let's see. Just as this infinite grace was proclaimed to him, it was also said to him, 'Now begin a new life'--and, oh, he found this demand to be so reasonable that he felt, in inexpressible gratitude, that this did not even need to be said to him. Now, then, he is to begin. Now introduce ideality's demand (and now it was, after all, an entirely new life that he was to begin): in the very same moment he cannot move a muscle, but no matter what he undertakes he assumes much more than a new guilt, for that which he does, be it even his best, is nothing but wretchedness in relation to the ideal. So in the same moment that he, so to speak, closed grace's door and went out full of the holy purpose to begin a new life (ah, blessedly moved by the thought that now, since everything was forgiven him, now he must never ever come into that condition again): in the same minute, in the same second, he is in the process of beginning upon a new guilt--under the form of doing the best that he can do. He must then in the same second, go back again and knock on grace's door. He must say, 'Infinite grace, oh, have mercy on me for already being here again and having to ask for grace; for I understand that in order to find peace and repose, in order not to perish in hopeless despair, in order to be able to breathe, in order to be able to exist at all, I not only need grace for the past, but grace for the future.' See, this is grace at the first place that I am talking about. And 'the Spirit' is there for this purpose. And the Spirit is the Comforter. He is not merely quickening, giving power to 'die to'--but also the Comforter in relation to 'imitation.' Christ is the Redeemer. This is constantly in relation to the past. But in the same instant he is 'the Pattern' for the future. Oh here, then, comes the difficulty. For measured by the criterion of 'imitation' this first step of my future will again cause me to need the Redeemer--indeed, I cannot even come to begin because I am choked by anxiety. So 'the Spirit' is the Comforter."

Pap X\(^2\) A 96 (JP 3:2828): "In order for a person to be able to express the unconditioned unconditionally he must have an immediate relationship to God--God must say to him in concrete what he is to do so that
he is exempted from all responsibility with regard to what his task is, what he is to do, so that he is completely without compunction if God commands him, for example, to fast for ten days which turn out to be lethal, etc., etc. It is different with us ordinary people who have no immediate relationship to God but must ourselves see about finding out what we are to do in concreto, on our own responsibility. . . . From this one sees that the New Testament is not regulative for us ordinary people without further ado. That is to say, those existences that the New Testament presents are an entire quality different from being an ordinary person. Here the doctrine of 'grace' breaks forth. When I do not have an immediate relationship to God such that he in concreto tells me what I am to do in concreto, then in order to find rest and peace for my soul I must have grace at the first place. Grace at the first place! What frightful sufferings and struggles does this word call to mind! And yet I would not wish a single one of these sufferings away; for God be praised and thanked that I have, in one sense, found it so difficult to become aware of grace--one can take it in vain all too easily. But it is right: grace at the first place, grace concerning the future, not merely concerning the past. What does grace at the first place, grace in relation to the future mean? It means: since I am only an ordinary person and do not have an immediate relationship to God but must, on my own responsibility, see about finding out (in concreto) my task, what I am to do--then I must use my understanding as best I can and be responsible in this regard, and on the other hand, even if I use it to the best of my ability, ah, this is nonetheless folly--ergo I must have grace at the first place if I am not, quite literally, to go crazy or else despair. Luther is, next to the New Testament, the truest figure. What does Luther express? Luther expresses a halt, an act of reflection. In him humanity or Christendom reflects upon the fact that between the God-man and us other human beings--indeed, between the apostle and us other human beings--there is a qualitative difference and that 'grace' must therefore be brought to bear. The first Christians, the old church fathers, did not understand matters in this way; they naively went right after imitation. Honor and praise be unto them! But at the basis of all their striving, though, there is a failure to see that there is a qualitative difference between the God-man and an ordinary person, that an ordinary person cannot (even if he ever so sincerely wanted to) or dare not altogether straightforwardly and as a matter of course decline his life according to this paradigm. There is therefore, compared to the oldest Christians, in one sense a reduction [Slaaen af] in Luther as regards what it means to be a Christian. In another sense there is an advance as regards the naïveté that an ordinary person, however sincerely he might desire it, can have the God-man as his pattern as a matter of course. Luther effected a reduction [slog af]. What I reproach him for is that he did not more strongly make this known."

Pap X A 101 (JP 2:1493): "An immediate God-relationship; Grace at the first place or forwards; that which is objective. So we ordinary people do not have an immediate God-relationship [and] cannot therefore unconditionally express the unconditioned [but] constantly also need grace forwards since even the most sincere beginning is always an imperfection as compared with ideality's demand [and] consequently, as it were, a new sin. Hence, grace at the first place. But then the need is again felt all the more deeply for something objective. And this is offered, after all, in the sacraments, in the Word, though not magically. [in the margin: cf. the next page: Grace at the first place]."

Pap X A 103 (JP 2:1494): "Grace at the first place. This applies even in relation to what is objective--the sacraments and the Word. Take the Lord's Supper. As I now think about wanting to go to the altar--well, I confess that I have not hitherto succeeded in going to the altar worthy. I regret this. Grace is offered me. This is grace at the second place, grace backwards, in relation to the past. But now I am to go once again to the altar--am I now worthy? Dare I now say, 'I am worthy?' And yet this must be required of me out of gratitude for the grace in relation to the past, must it not? See, there we have it! The sacrament promises and certifies grace to me, but I must have grace in order to dare to make use of the sacrament. It cannot be otherwise unless I have an immediate relationship to God so that he immediately says to me, 'You are to go to the altar at 4 PM today,' for then I have no responsibility. As with the Lord's Supper, so would it also be shown to be with baptism were we not baptized as children. At what point do I dare say that now I am worthy to receive the baptism that will assure me of grace in relation to the past? See, this is why in earlier times they postponed baptism for as long as possible. Tertullian warns against rushing into baptism. But already Basil, for example, encourages one to let oneself be baptized, the sooner the better. In general every understanding
One is tempted to identify "grace at the second place" and "grace at the first place" with distinctions that Kierkegaard makes elsewhere—viz., "grace" and "grace in relation to grace," or "grace" and "grace' in relation to the bad use I make of grace." Yet the concept pairs are not equivalent: the latter pairs refer to the almost instantaneous recourse that must be had to forgiveness for the unworthy use made of forgiveness. That is to say: they refer to repeated applications of what Kierkegaard comes later to call "grace at the second place," grace that is given after the fact of sin. Nevertheless, these other distinctions are not of Christianity was, in the most primitive time, marked by imitation, but also by resting in the naïveté that an ordinary person can have the God-man as pattern in this way without further ado. One postponed baptism for as long as possible; one supposed that baptism only rendered satisfaction for the past, that satisfaction for the later sins must be rendered by good works, that martyrdom secured the forgiveness of sins even better than baptism" (translations mine).

32SK distinguishes between "grace" and grace "in relation to the use of grace" in the Preface to Practice in Christianity (SV XII xv [Practice in Christianity, 7]). In addition one may cite:

Pap X2 A 198 (JP 2:1472): "The fact is, grace is not a cut-and-dried provision, settled once and for all. One needs grace again in relation to grace. Consider a person to whom grace is promised—the gracious forgiveness of all his sins, God's compassion. Well and good, but tomorrow is a new day, as is the day after tomorrow, and perhaps he will live another fifty years. Now comes the difficulty: does he from this moment on, at every moment, use grace worthily? Ah, no. So grace is again needed in relation to grace. The easiest thing is to die. The difficulty is to live. In grace everything is intensively concentrated—death's situation is yet another moment. But if I am to live, then the infinite decision again becomes dialectical as in this relationship: that grace is needed in relation to grace."

Pap X2 A 451-52 (JP 2:1654-55): "Christ as model is still a form of the law. Yes the intensified law.... But then Christ dies—and his death is the atonement: here is grace. The Holy Spirit whom Christ will send is now actually the one who grants dispensation by means of grace—the grace that Christ acquired. From this comes the title, 'the Comforter.' A person will, you see, not only need grace in relation to the past. That is how one usually thinks of it. It goes as follows: 'All your sins are forgiven, satisfaction has been made.' Well and good. But if I do not die tomorrow it will soon become evident that, despite 'grace' having been bestowed on me, I am very far from having been pure and perfect since that time. To that extent, therefore, the matter has become even worse. For before I received the grace, I at least always had the comfort that there was still grace. But now I have even misused the grace. Ergo, I again need 'grace' in relation to the bad use I make of grace; and so on, ad infinitum. Grace is the infinite wellspring—and the Holy Spirit the one who grants dispensation, the Comforter—the Comforter also in this regard, that Christ as Pattern is, after all, a demand to which no human being is equal. As long as Christ is visibly present as Pattern he cannot prevent himself from becoming judgement. His life, therefore, has a double side: he is Pattern—then he dies, and now he is transformed, he becomes forever 'grace,' also in relation to our imperfect striving to resemble 'the Pattern.' Note: It was therefore a profound consideration when in the earliest time one would not let oneself be baptized until one lay upon one's deathbed. One understood that, humanly speaking, Christianity is the life-view for which only one situation is favorable: that of death. The difficulty appears when one is to strive. One postpones the reception of grace until [the striving] is past. Then one receives it. Now satisfaction has been made for everything. Then one dies blessedly. But this is either melancholy or, I suppose, it is even worldly shrewdness that takes Christianity in vain" (translations mine).

This last entry speaks of repeated applications of forgiveness ("'grace' in relation to the bad use I make of grace") referring to the Holy Spirit as our Comforter in this regard. Yet it is at the same time a reference to
unrelated to the "grace at the first place"/"grace at the second place" one in that they seek a solution to the dilemma that our need of grace remains as great in the aftermath of forgiveness as it was prior to it. In the case of "grace at the first place," however, there is a recognition that some sort of grace other than forgiveness is requisite vis-à-vis the future.

What is the premise that prompts Kierkegaard to identify a species of grace that is distinct from forgiveness and has exclusive application to the future? It seems to be that each time we call upon God for forgiveness, Christ's atonement wipes clean the slate of the past. Yet it can only be invoked in relation to the past. It can do nothing to remove or moderate the requirement that immediately reasserts itself on the heels of the forgiveness just received. Neither can it afford forgiveness for guilt that is to be incurred in the future--
such guilt is, as it were, guilt for which there is no remedy as yet (though such remedy will be available at such time as it is needed). Still, some sort of grace is needed in order that we not be overcome by anxiety at the prospect of the guilt that our new efforts are bound to incur. This Kierkegaard calls "grace at the first place." What is it?

In Pap X A 44 (JP 2:1919, supra, n. 31) we are told that "grace at the first place" is comfort for the future, derived not from Christ the Redeemer but from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is said not only to quicken us, empowering us to "die to," but to relieve the anxiety that would otherwise prevent us from even beginning upon this task. He is "Comforter" in the sense that he stands in as surrogate for Christ the Redeemer, whose visage perforce becomes that of Christ the Pattern in the wake of forgiveness. The all important basis of the comfort that the Spirit affords remains unclear (e.g., whether it rests upon the assurance of future forgiveness, or upon a scaling down of what is required of us). However, it is evident from Papirer entries following this one that "grace at the first place" has to do with the a priori impossibility of knowing what is required of one, and hence denotes a necessary reduction in Christian ideality.35

Notwithstanding that "grace at the first place" is a reduction, it by no means induces quietism but rather action undertaken on one's own responsibility, and with it, humble flight to grace. Consequently, far from being "indulgence" in the crude sense, "grace at the first place" contributes to recurrent striving, subjection to law in its spiritual use, and authentic constantly forgiveness for the past by virtue of grace, but not exemption from the future, not exemption from striving--and mark this well--so that this becomes serious, my life being ordered in such a way that I can come to strive."

Pap XI A 242 (JP 4:4051): "All talk about Christ having made satisfaction for original sin is no proof at all that Christianity wills the propagation of the race. For all atonement and satisfaction is surely ever backwards, not forwards. As in relation to actual sin, if one's sin were to steal, then the Atonement renders satisfaction for the past, but this surely does not mean that one can steal as much as he pleases in the future. And the same applies to the satisfaction for original sin--it surely does not mean that the person can now in the future make merry to his heart's content as regards propagating the race. No, Christianity blocks this with the single estate. 'There is satisfaction for your father's guilt by which you came to be,' it says. 'But stop now. Satisfaction does not mean that should have an entirely free pass in this regard'" (translations mine).

appropriation of grace qua forgiveness. 

"Grace at the first place" operates like Indulgents

---

56 Pap X^3 A 88 (JP 2:1922): "Christ is the Pattern. This is true and is no doubt what must be especially enjoined in our day. But neither is he the Pattern in such an entirely straightforward way, for he is heterogeneous by an entire category to what it means to be a human being pure and simple. And yet he is the Pattern. What does this mean? It means that in being the Pattern he is moreover intended to teach us how we need grace. At bottom it is this transformation, or the successive stages of this transformation, that constitute the motive force in the history of Christianity. In the same measure that one more and more becomes aware of how infinitely ideal the Pattern is (indeed, that it is a quality heterogeneous), in that same measure must grace be brought more and more to bear. By contrast in the earliest period, and naively so in the Middle Ages, one went right after imitation and copying the Pattern. Luther then called a halt. I am now in the situation of thinking it necessary to introduce grace at the first place, as I call it. And what I actually take exception to as regards Luther is that he did not more definitely and clearly note, with regard to his understanding of grace, that there was a reduction of the New Testament's, and particularly the Gospels', requirement for being a Christian. It is not against the reduction that I direct my objection--this can be the case inasmuch as every step forward toward the ideal is a step backward. But then it must be noted and 'grace' be introduced more strongly, that is to say, not in empty platitudes, but that there be a careful settling of accounts. Not even 'the apostle' is an entirely straightforward pattern. That is to say, I or a person cannot order my life in conformity with his life completely as a matter of course. . . . If a person who does not have an immediate relationship to God . . . wants to copy him as a matter of course, then this is a crime. The apostle himself must, in a certain sense, humanly shudder at what he does qua apostle; but he has nothing more to say than: God impels me to do it. And yet 'the apostle' is the pattern. But the fact that the pattern is thus an irregularity has certainly been arranged by God both in order duly to intensify the people in the exertion of imitation and in humility, and to test and judge the presumptuous one who would, as a matter of course, resemble the pattern. No, the patterns cannot be copied as a matter of course. And in general, the older that the world and human race become, the more intellectually developed it becomes. But the more intellectually developed it becomes, the more ideal its conceptions of God and the God-man also become; but the more ideal these become, the more difficult imitation becomes and the more one must be pressed in the direction of fleeing to grace. . . . The latter is what I have wanted and do want: I want to introduce the Christian requirement, imitation in all its infinity in order to press in the direction of grace."

Pap X^3 A 95 (JP 4:4479): "An immediate relationship to God--ordinary humanity. . . . We human beings do not ordinarily have an immediate relationship to God. His will is proclaimed to us in abstracto in his Word, etc., but I am not told (this concrete I), 'You are to do this and that under these concrete circumstances.' No, each individual must, so to speak, translate God's command in concreto. And this happens, among other things, with the aid of the understanding. Every ordinary person . . . is responsible in this way for using his understanding and for how he uses it. Consequently, is a person to use his understanding also in relation to doing God's will? Why certainly. To want to venture in such a way that one's understanding must say to one, 'This is certain destruction,' is to force oneself upon God, is to intend to have an immediate relationship to God, . . . is to tempt God. But if a person is to use his understanding in this way, do we not then have complete worldliness that uses its understanding egoistically, as well as cowardice? No. As regards the latter, it is after all clear enough that a person is by no means exempted from venturing just because it seems to him that he is venturing out into his destruction. No, when one ventures destruction can be possible. That is what is called "venturing." As regards the former, Christianity teaches after all that a person is to hate himself, and really there is no danger that he will come to use his understanding egoistically. Meanwhile, no ordinary person can venture in the same way as the one who has an immediate relationship to God. He dare not; indeed, he shall not. For the one who has an immediate relationship to God is exempted from all responsibility and has merely to obey the orders. If the orders are to rush to his destruction: he is not responsible. Since on the other hand every ordinary person bears a responsibility not to rush into certain destruction, and since it can in turn be difficult for him to discern where it is certain destruction and where not, and since he shall nevertheless venture and also hate himself--there is here an enormously difficult situation that can at every moment really teach a person to
in that it denotes dispensation from striving in accordance with Christianity's strictest demands. Where "grace at the second place" (forgiveness) reassures us with regard to our past failings, "grace at the first place" reassures us as regards our future ones by scaling down what is expected of us. Such a scaling down is necessary because we cannot in principle know what God's actual expectations are unless he reveals them to us in concreto. As with Indulgents, it is presupposed that God's expectations are not simply identical with ideality's highest demands; in a concession to our frailty he does not hold us accountable for all of spirit's demands, all at once. By limiting what is required of us he empowers us to strive to the very best of our ability. In a word: "grace at the first place" continues the "training" metaphor, not altogether rescinding spirit's demand that we "die to," but instead offering a moderation of it while duly keeping us in striving. As with Indulgents, its abuse at the hand of Christendom is roundly criticized: it was never intended by God to be a pretext for exempting ourselves from all striving. The possibility of this abuse notwithstanding, Kierkegaard remains convinced of the need of some such "grace" since, unlike Christ and the apostles, we ordinary individuals have no immediate relationship to God such that we could know his will with complete certainty. Our lack of immediate instruction dictates that we use our understanding as best we can and, for the rest, that we not be held too strictly to account for our failure to venture in accordance with Christianity's strictest demands. "Grace at the first place" therefore constitutes a "reduction" of Christianity's demand to a point at which ordinary individuals without an immediate relationship with God can be held responsible.

feel that he needs grace. At times it can even be necessary to spare oneself and in this way to use one's understanding—but then one must immediately report this to God" (translations mine).

37Pap X A 27, 43, 68 (JP 2:1918, 6:6832, 3:3773), supra, nn. 31 and 34.

38Pap X A 88, 95, 96, 101 (JP 2:1922, 4:4479, 3:2898, 2:1493), supra, nn. 36 and 31. See also Pap X A 617 (JP 4:4951), where "resting in 'grace'" means not daring the radical venture since, for the ordinary individual, the immediate relationship to God that would justify this is lacking.

39Pap X A 88 and 96 (JP 2:1922 and 3:2898), supra, nn. 36 and 31. SK's statements about grace for the future are not without a certain ambiguity. I have come to the conclusion that he means something akin to "indulgence" by them. To be sure, a few texts admit of the possibility that he means the assurance of future forgiveness. As previously mentioned, Pap X A 44 (JP 2:1919), supra, n. 31, can mean this, though it is by
The bifurcation of law and gospel that we observed in Kierkegaard's *Indulgents* conception is manifestly present in his "grace at the first place" one, for the latter rubric is but another designation for attenuated law. Because grace qua forgiveness applies only to the past, another kind of grace is needed for the future.\(^{40}\) We are told that such grace is the antidote to the anxiety that the individual experiences when, upon joyfully and gratefully departing the sanctum of forgiveness, he is at once confronted with Christian ideality and his own incapacity. At such time Christ ceases to be the Redeemer (for he is such incessantly only in relation to the past), becoming solely our Prototype, and another figure, the Comforter, comes to dispense "grace for the future."\(^ {41} \) But is such "grace forwards" a real antidote to the revisitation of law in the person of the Prototype? Is not, rather, the withdrawal of Christ the Redeemer and his forgiveness an event that leaves us hopelessly no means clear that it does; and Pap X\(^2\) A 451 (JP 2:1654), supra, n. 32, is likewise ambiguous about the "comfort" that the Spirit affords vis-à-vis future striving. Certainly a number of texts assert that forgiveness is granted--even despite one's refusal to venture at all (e.g., Pap X\(^2\) A 446 and X\(^5\) A 43 [JP 3:2559 and 6:6832], supra, nn. 17 and 31). The question however is this: can one count on this being so in advance, or is this to presume upon grace? My sense is that Kierkegaard wants to rule out the very possibility of an advance resort to forgiveness lest we coddled human beings make all too ready use of it. In this regard we do well to heed Pap X\(^2\) A 27 (JP 2:1918), supra, n. 34, where grace "directed to the past" is said to forgive, but directed to the future, to restrain (holde igjen) so that grace is not "taken in vain." This function of reining in presumption, together with the fact that, in Kierkegaard's mind, the expectation of forgiveness just is presumption, leads me to believe that he does not intend "grace at the first place" in this sense. Moreover, the praise that he accords Tertullian and the earliest Christians concerning the postponement of baptism (Pap X\(^2\) A 452 and X\(^5\) A 103 [JP 2:1655 and 2:1494], supra, nn. 31 and 32) offers an indication that forgiveness is not to be presumed upon for the future at all--not even by a Tertullian!

In addition to these considerations I regard one other as completely compelling: viz., that throughout his life Kierkegaard was obsessed with what God expected of him by way of the voluntary venture. This was the more important issue than forgiveness itself, and one is inclined to think that it was so because, despite his better understanding, he predicated forgiveness upon it. In order to demonstrate the centrality of this issue one need only recall the passionate self-revelation of Pap X\(^2\) A 96 (JP 3:2828), supra, n. 31: "When I do not have an immediate relationship to God such that he in concreto tells me what I am to do in concreto, then in order to find rest and peace for my soul I must have grace at the first place. Grace at the first place! What frightful sufferings and struggles does this word call to mind?" This was the crucial issue that Kierkegaard had to have decided in order to avoid taking grace qua forgiveness in vain. In lieu of accurate intelligence concerning God's precise will for him, grace at the first place served the function of reassuring him that he was being held to a lesser standard than Christ and the apostles, that if he strove in accordance with that lesser standard he would not be taking grace in vain and thereby shutting himself off from the possibility of forgiveness. Clearly this is something very different from the expectation of forgiveness. And just as clearly, it is a resort to law in order to gain reassurance about one's prospects for forgiveness.

\(^{40}\) Pap X\(^2\) A 452; X\(^5\) A 27, 44, 68, 103 (JP 2: 1655; 2:1918, 1919, 3:3773, 2:1494), supra, nn. 31, 32 and 34.

\(^{41}\) Pap X\(^2\) A 44 (JP 2:1919), supra, n. 31.
bereft of comfort? And is not the anxiety that ensues heightened still further by the circumstance that one can never be sure that the venture (or lack thereof) that one undertakes on one’s own responsibility really is rendered acceptable by "grace at the first place?" For how can one be sure when exempting grace leaves ordinary individuals in the dark as to what their "orders" are, and hence, as to whether an exemption is, in fact, in order—for it is presumed that we have orders from God from which we have not been exempted—orders for the transgression of which there is no recourse to forgiveness, at least not "in the first place."

How different this is from Luther's teaching. Far from being brought to a full stop in the wake of forgiveness and besieged by anxiety at the prospect of new sin for which the present forgiveness does not apply, Luther maintains that the Christian can venture forth in the confidence that every act done in faith is acceptable to God; he needs no other grace than the forgiveness that renders every act pure in God's sight. Granted, this is an ideal

---

42Pap X5 A 95, p. 110 (JP 4:4479), supra, n. 36.


44See Paul Althaus, The Ethics of Martin Luther, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 5-6: "Just as God—paradoxically—accepts me as righteous and looks upon me with favor even though I am and remain a sinner, so God also accepts and approves my works. Empirically, what the Christian does is never so good as to be right and acceptable in the sight of God, for man's sinful nature continues to contaminate everything he does. Nevertheless, the deeds are right in the sight of God because in his grace he approves them—even as he approves the man who in faith lays hold of his wondrous grace and favor. It is by virtue of this justifying 'yes' of God that the Christian is given, through faith, a good conscience about his works. In and of itself, in an immanent sense, his conscience is not good; it only becomes a good conscience in a paradoxical way—through the word of forgiveness, God's act of justification. Christian behavior, therefore, however imperfect and sinful it may be in and of itself, is good because it is grounded in the assurance of a prior 'yes,' in that divine approval which the Christian does not have to seek because it has already been given. This is why the Christian can go ahead and act in confidence and joy, even though his works are still impure and imperfect. It goes without saying that in all this Luther is thinking of men who are trying to obey God's commands. He is not speaking of intentional disobedience but of obedience, however fragmented and defective that obedience may be in actuality." Althaus cites a number of Luther texts in which it is maintained that, through the act of justification, God is able to regard the believer's imperfect works as good: WA 39, 188 (LW 34, 304-05), WA 6, 205 (LW 44, 24), and WA 39, 204: "All the works of men are evil and sinful, but God considers the works of the righteous to be good." This is possible because of faith: "Faith is the highest work because it blots out these everyday sins and still stands fast by never doubting that God is so favorably disposed toward you that he overlooks such everyday failures and offenses" (WA 6, 215 [LW 44, 37]).
possibility; though every Christian has it, none are able to implement it as they might wish. Nonetheless, on Kierkegaard's presentation even the possibility of such cheerful confidence is excluded and he is forced to rely on a milder form of the law for reassurance.

What is it that, at the deepest level, separates the later Kierkegaard's teaching on grace from that of Luther? Motivated by the fear of grace being taken in vain, SK has adopted the view that grace is not "a cut-and-dried provision, settled once and for all." If by this Kierkegaard merely meant that the grace of forgiveness must continually be appropriated in faith, there would be no dispute. But he does not simply mean this, for he is suspicious about the manner of its appropriation, whether the grace thus appropriated is applied in such a way as to redouble one's efforts at striving, or to spare oneself altogether. He is, of course, aware that every use of grace is unworthy and itself in need of grace. Yet some applications are more unworthy than others. The use of grace as a carte blanche for engaging in whatever conduct one pleases is unconscionable—hence the notion that the atonement and forgiveness can ever be brought to bear against past abuses of grace (which now lie beyond human remedy), but that such forgiveness cannot be presumed upon for future ones (which do not). God is the sole dispenser of grace, and the grace that he gives he gives as needed and at his discretion. The insufficiency of past bestowals of grace for future needs creates a graceless present. Whether "grace for the future" is then mobilized in the attempt to mitigate the law's crushing demand is a matter of small consequence. It remains law all the same.

---

45 This includes Luther, who himself recognizes that in moments of Anfechtung every shred of confidence falls away. H. G. Haile mentions an occasion recorded in the Table Talks (TR 2, 222, 19-23) on which Justus Jonas was marvelling at Paul's surety of faith. Interrupting him, Luther replied: "I don't think he believed as firmly as he talks. I cannot believe as firmly either, as I can talk and write about it" (Luther, An Experiment in Biography [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1980], 305).

46 Pap X² A 198 (JP 2:1472), supra, n. 32. Cf. Pap X² A 223 (JP 2:1474) where, contrary to the commonly held assumption that "grace" is a dead decision, once and for all," SK contends that it is "an advance" upon which one must repeatedly draw during the course of striving.

47 Pap X² A 451 (JP 2:1654), supra, n. 32.

48 Pap X¹ A 72 and X² A 64 (JP 2:1476 and 2:1492), supra, nn. 10 and 11.
Heinrich Traugott Vogel, too, perceives a "graceless present" in SK's portrayal of the Christian life. He, however, attributes it to the extreme disjunction that is to be found in Kierkegaard's christology between Christ's office as exemplum and his office as sacramentum. On that christology Christ is represented as being principally demand during his life. Grace comes into play only with his death. This, together with the fact that Kierkegaard treats contemporaneity with the abased (i.e., pre-Easter) Christ as "imitation" or "Christianity in the strictest sense," means that the situation of contemporaneity must needs be bereft of grace. Thence derives the characteristic rhythm of the Christian life that one finds in Kierkegaard: imitation of Christ the Pattern followed by flight to Christ the Redeemer. The "split personality" that Christ assumes on this schema leaves the Christian repeatedly forsaken by grace. To this it must be said that Kierkegaard surely does his best to maintain the identity of "Pattern" and "Redeemer": these are aspects of one and the same Christ that, though experienced sequentially, are present simultaneously. Moreover the Pattern is frequently portrayed as assuming an initially gracious aspect owing to the forgiveness bestowed by the Redeemer. Nevertheless SK's periodization of Christ's life into


50 "Christ as Prototype is still a form of the law, indeed the law intensified," Kierkegaard writes (Pap X² A 451, p. 321 [JP 2:1654]). Christ's life on earth was "the proclamation of law" (Pap X² A 615 [JP 2:1884]).

51 Pap X² A 361 (JP 2:1862), 451 (JP 2:1654), X³ A 276 (JP 2:1867), 278 (JP 3:3681), 409 (JP 2:1877), 615 (JP 2:1884), 712 (JP 2:1888). These texts verify the observation made in chapter seven that Kierkegaard allows no hint of Christ's risen and exalted state (both of which testify to his office as Redeemer) to show through in his earthly life. Not only is Christ's exaltation irrelevant to his life in its exemplary function, it all too easily distracts from contemporaneity with it.

52 In Pap XI A 492 (JP 2:1934) we read: "The Prototype[,] as it were, kills all, for no one attains to it. The Redeemer wants to save all."

53 Naturally, the gracious aspect at some point undergoes a Gestalt switch and comes to crush the imitator. But a great many texts speak of the Prototype's graciousness: SV X 47-48 (Christian Discourses, 45-46), SV XII 423 (Judge For Yourself!, 147); Pap IX A 153 (JP 1:692); X³ A 279 (JP 1:334); X² A 47 (JP 2:1857), 170 (JP 1:349), 219, p. 166 (JP 2:1473); X² A 378 (JP 2:1875), 615 (JP 2:1884); and especially X² A 491 (JP 2:1909), one of SK's strongest statements of Luther's "gratitude ethic." Here the Pattern is graciously qualified by the Redeemer so that striving becomes a joyful possibility. In this entry there no hint of any need for "grace at the first place." Rather the atonement is what is needed at every moment so that one's striving is not transformed into an agonizing anxiety in which a person, as it were, 'burns up' and then comes least of all to
exemplum prior to his death and sacramentum subsequent to it, and his identification of the situation of contemporaneity exclusively with the former does adversely affect his understanding of the Christian's experience of Christ. The Redeemer makes his appearance in the aftermath of the failed situation of contemporaneity with the Pattern (in order then to grant comfort and forgiveness), not in its midst. In its midst Christ is conceived as exemplar of the demands of absolute spirit.\

strive." SK speaks of the blessed freedom from merit that comes from "not being driven" by any demand at all, but instead being afforded grace ("Nothing in the sense of severity is demanded," he says; "rather, all is grace").

54This is apparent from other Pattern/Redeemer texts. Pap X^2 A 170 (JP 1:349) presents the Pattern as in no way gracious, but as crushing demand. Here the dichotomization of Christ's two aspects is by all appearances absolute, the one in no way qualifying the other. Pap X^2 A 44 (JP 2:1919) expresses this disjunction with the utmost clarity: "Christ is the Redeemer. This is constantly in relation to the past. But in the same moment that he is thus the Redeemer for the past, in that same moment he is 'Pattern' for the future" (without any hint of his redeeming office). The relationship to such a Pattern is, as Pap X^2 A 276 tells us, one of obligation to imitate him. "Imitation" in this entry is not qualified as gracious owing to the continuing presence of Christ the Redeemer: on the contrary, it is couched quite simply in terms of obligation, pure and simple. But this can only lead to the Pattern's immediate assumption of an horrific aspect, as is illustrated by Pap X^5 B 241 (JP 2:1863). In that entry the Redeemer is said, in the first instance, to help the Christian to resemble the Pattern. Accordingly, the Pattern's visage is rendered gracious by the Redeemer. But in the very moment that one commits oneself to the thus transfigured Pattern ("casts himself into the Pattern's arms")—in that same moment the Pattern assumes an horrific visage from which the would-be imitator "again shrinks back."

From this brief survey of Pattern/Redeemer texts it is apparent that at times Kierkegaard conceives of the Pattern as qualified by the Redeemer so as to be "gospel"—but at times not. Naturally the fact that, in the latter instance, the Pattern is not gracious can signify that the law ever exercises its theological use, condemning Christians at such times as they fail to lay hold of Christ's atoning work by faith. Yet it is clear that SK's strict division of Christ's life and work into Pattern and Redeemer, together with his strict application of the Redeemer's work solely to the past, effectively prevents one from laying hold of that work in the present (intentionally so, so as to preclude the abuse of "grace"). As such it insidiously moves Kierkegaard in the direction of well-nigh continual subjection to law. No longer is one allowed at every moment to perceive God's 'Yes' under and behind his 'No.' That perception is ever restricted to after the fact of sin. Worst of all, it is Christ himself who repeatedly speaks the 'No,' and only belatedly counters this condemnation with his 'Yes.'

In strictly periodizing Christ's life and death in such a way as to equate his life with "the proclamation of law," Kierkegaard has fallen into what Luther would regard as the most egregious of errors. It is one against which he strenuously warns: "Therefore Christ is not Moses, not a taskmaster or a lawgiver; He is the Dispenser of grace, the Savior, and the Pitier. In other words, He is nothing but sheer, infinite mercy, which gives and is given. . . . If you let Him be depicted to you any other way, you will soon be overthrown in the hour of temptation. The highest art among Christians is to be able to define Christ this way; it is also the most difficult of arts. For it is very hard for me, even in the great light of the Gospel and after my extensive experience and practice in this study, to define Christ as Paul does here [Gal. 2:20]. That is how much this teaching and noxious idea of Christ as the lawgiver has penetrated into my bones like oil. On this score you younger men are much more fortunate than we older ones. You have not been imbued with these noxious ideas with which
This conception is not only contrary to Luther for whom Christ the Redeemer is ever present, graciously qualifying Christ the Pattern; it is contrary to the New Testament which portrays Christ's life in relation to his entire work, above all his atoning death. The humanity of Christ is not humanity pure and simple; rather it is existence "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3) for the sake of sinful humans. Christ is not simply human ideality, not simply "absolute spirit," not even simply the lex impleta [the law fulfilled]. Rather, he is the lex pro nobis impleta [the law fulfilled for us].\textsuperscript{55} The exemplary life of Christ is ever qualified by the atoning death of Christ--one may not prescind from the latter in one's lavishment of attention upon the former. Naturally, the unity of these aspects is grasped solely by faith. Where faith is present Christ will never simply appear in the guise of law, but in that of the law fulfilled for me. Only the failure of faith can lead to a Christ that is purely an ethical ideal.

Vogel's critique of Kierkegaard and my own are not unrelated. Vogel notes that "vis-à-vis imitation that is based on a rigid, almost cruel picture of 'dying to' and suffering, grace now takes on the function of a least possible 'indulgence' from the full realization of imitation. But the factors of grace and imitation that have been disjoined on [SK's] formulation can hardly be brought back together again except at the cost of one of them."\textsuperscript{56} Vogel is certainly correct in attributing the emergence of grace qua "indulgence" to SK's frequently graceless portrait of imitation. And he is correct in referring the gracelessness of imitation to the disjunction between Christ as Pattern and Christ as Redeemer. Yet it seems to me that Vogel has not adequately made clear the reason for this disjunction. He refers it to the strict periodization of Christ's life whereby Christ becomes the Redeemer and source of grace only after his death. This does not, however, get to the heart of the matter for, as we saw in

---

\textsuperscript{55}Vogel, "Christus als Vorbild und Versöhnler," 179.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 220.
chapter seven, the periodization of Christ's life and neglect of the risen and exalted Redeemer serve the purpose of isolating the individual in the presence of the Prototype and thereby preventing grace from "being taken in vain." This is the ultimate reason for the disjunction. And this selfsame motivation also underlies the tenet that forgiveness can only be claimed after the fact of sin: here, too, consideration of the Redeemer must be deferred so as to safeguard imitation. The striking absence of the Redeemer in the moment of contemporaneity as well as the unavailability of forgiveness in the moment when confronted by spirit's demand, in turn, create the need for a second kind of grace--"indulgence" or "grace at the first place"--in order to render that demand to some extent tolerable.

SK's two "lines" of thinking as concerns grace lead to a confusing state of affairs. On the one hand a great many of his utterances are genuinely Lutheran. There is no hint of legalism in them, for talk of "striving" is set within the framework of Luther's "gratitude ethic" wherein faith perceives God's "Yes" behind his "No" and spontaneously gives birth to acts of imitation. On the other hand one finds the other tendency as well: viz., the

---

57 It may be added that the introduction of "indulgence" or "grace at the first place" concomitant to the withdrawal of forgiveness vis-à-vis future striving only further deepens the gulf between the "Redeemer" and "Pattern" aspects that Kierkegaard otherwise wishes to hold together. Where forgiveness and the atonement recede into the past, so too does "the Redeemer," leaving one face to face with "the Prototype" in all its gracelessness. Consequently the introduction of "indulgence" or "grace at the first place" renders the split in Christ's dual aspect all but irreremediable.

58 A short sampling, indeed, would include Pap X2 A 208 (JP 1:983), 239 (JP 2:1475); X2 A 322-23 (JP 1:1139-40), 602 (JP 2:1883), 667 (JP 2:1886), 767 (JP 2:1892), 734 (JP 1:993); Pap X4 A 12 (JP 2:2533), 352 (JP 2:1903), 459 (JP 2:1909), 491-92 (JP 2:1909-10); Pap X5 A 8 (JP 2:1489), 54 (JP 2:1490), 58, p. 61 (JP 3:3772), 62, p. 68 (JP 3:3530). All of these texts either repudiate servitude to the law or maintain that the receipt of grace issues in liberating gratitude and that this is the only true ground for imitation. I quote a representative text: "What does Christ require? First and foremost, faith. After that: gratitude. This gratitude is the disciple's 'imitation' in the stricter sense. But even the weakest Christian nevertheless has this in common with the strongest disciple--viz., that the relationship is one of gratitude. 'Imitation' is not a demand of the law, for then we would have legalism again. No, imitation is the stronger expression for gratitude in the stronger person. Imitation is not a demand of the law by which a wretched person is to torment himself. No, such a forced imitation is even contrary to Christ. He would, if he otherwise found gratitude in such a person, no doubt say to him, 'Don't let yourself get carried away, take your time, and in any case let it come as a joyful fruit of gratitude, for otherwise it is not "imitation." Indeed, one would even also have to say that such a dreadfully forced imitation would rather be a grimacing mimicry" (translation mine). From the published works, cf. SV IX 97 (Works of Love, 106): "Christ is the end of the law.' What the law was unable to produce--as little as it could save a man--that Christ was. Whereas the law with its demand thereby became the destruction of all, because they were not what it demanded and only learned to recognize sin through it, Christ became the law's destruction because he was what it demanded. Its destruction, its consummation--for when the demand is
tendency to separate grace from imitation, whether by the deferral of the appropriation of forgiveness until after one has dropped under the burden of imitation, or by the practical "bracketing out" of the exalted Redeemer from christology. The intent, as mentioned, is to prevent grace from being taken in vain. But these expedients presuppose that in order for it not to be taken in vain, one's feet must be "kept to the fire" of the infinite requirement and from there be repeatedly driven to grace. This is really exactly the opposite of Luther, for whom grace is taken in vain if it is followed by the renewed tyranny of the requirement.

The fact that SK should fasten upon the requirement for the purpose of assuring that grace not be taken in vain no doubt is due to personal factors: his strict upbringing and the congenital sense of guilt that plagued his family. But it also is due to ideational ones: his unique understanding of "absolute spirit" as an overdrawn superhumanity that it is incumbent upon human beings to strain toward. Not surprisingly Torsten Bohlin has asserted that despite SK's replication in his own person of Luther's "reformational experience, it has not been possible for him to appropriate, and still less, to give expression to, the entire content of that experience." As a contributing factor from the purely ideational standpoint Bohlin cites SK's "abstract metaphysical point of view of the religious problem." There can be little doubt that the understanding of man as emergent "spirit" has influenced SK's christology, contributing to his identification of Christ as exemplar of "spirit" pure and simple. Latent in such a christology is already a tacit dichotomization of requirement and grace, for its one aspect (Christ qua Model) is fully self-contained, being derived from fulfilled, the demand exists only in the fulfillment, but consequently it does not exist as a demand."

59 The norm is: for every higher degree of grace, law must also be made more rigorous in inwardness—otherwise the whole secular mentality rushes forward and takes 'grace' in vain. And this is precisely what happened in the Reformation" (Pap X A 230 [JP 2:1484]). And again: "O, how the people have been weakened by this doctrine of grace!" (Pap X A 618 [JP 2:1486]). And again: "A rigorous proclamation of the law can result in demoralization, but the most dangerous demoralization is and continues to be the demoralization brought about by the use of grace" (Pap X A 7 [JP 2:1488]). And finally: "No striving can acquire an eternal blessedness. Therefore it is by 'grace.' Here comes the danger once again lest 'grace' have a numbing, paralyzing, soporific effect—because it is after all vain to strive since it is, after all, by grace" (Pap X A 640, p. 460 [JP 2:1431]). Translations are mine.

60 Kierkegaards dogmatiska åskådning i dess historiska sammanhang (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokforlag, 1925), 487.
premises that are exclusively philosophical-anthropological in nature. The requirement, "absolute spirit," and its embodiment, Christ, cannot but be viewed simply as requirement, simply as ethical ideal on such a schema; they can in no way be qualified by grace given this philosophical point of departure. And absent such qualification, both the requirement and its concrete exemplification can easily be identified with the law, pure and simple, that in its spiritual use drives to grace; more than this, they can readily be put to the use of forestalling the abuse of grace. But on such a formulation of Christianity's requirement (to which the teaching of grace is, as it were, grafted on) the tendency to legalism is endemic: in its purely philosophical form it is a quasi-Neoplatonic progressus toward the telos of "absolute spirit." While the christological teaching of Christ as Redeemer may seek to remedy this situation by making Christ the bestower of the "condition" for truth and identifying grace as the motive force for striving, its premises derive from elsewhere and are distinct from Christ the Model's existential-dialectical ones. Consequently there is nothing to assure that the marriage of frameworks will not dissolve. That such a dissolution does in fact occur is quite evident from SK's later talk of grace as a provisory indulgence from meeting spirit's demands. With Luther, on the other hand, the matter is far different for Christ the Model already belongs to the sphere of gospel from the outset.61

Whether one accepts this explanation for Kierkegaard's tendency toward legalism or not, there can be no doubt that something has impaired his ability personally to appropriate grace and to enter upon discipleship with gladness. He himself occasionally confesses the

---

61 Regarding this Regin Prenter writes: "We insert a question as to Kierkegaard's interpretation of Luther. Has Kierkegaard rightly interpreted Luther's view of the relation between law and gospel in comparing it or even identifying it with his own distinction between Christ as example and Christ as redeemer? Do Luther and Kierkegaard really presuppose the same conception of law—not to speak of the interpretation of the gospel? This is certainly not the case. Anyone who is familiar with Luther's thoughts on law and gospel will be startled when he learns that according to Kierkegaard the whole content of the law is Christ as example, i.e., the imitation of Christ. According to Luther Christ as example does not belong to the realm of the law at all, but solely to that of the gospel. In the realm of the law, Luther would say, Christ is exclusively the redeemer who has fulfilled the demand of the law on our behalf, the reconciliator who delivers us from the slavery under the law. The content of the law is the commandment of perfect love of God, i.e., unconditional faith and obedience" ("Luther and Lutheranism," in Kierkegaard and Great Traditions, vol. 6 of Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana, ed. Niels Thulstrup and M. Mikulová Thulstrup [Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Boghandel, 1981], 142-43, emphasis added). We see from this that Luther's understanding of law and of gospel alike derive from the christological point of view previously enunciated by Vogel: viz., that Christ is the lex pro nobis impleta.
difficulty that he has had grasping the gratis character of grace. On other occasions he seems less cognizant of this difficulty. At such times he betrays the disquieting tendency to view the receipt of grace as the incurrence of a new, heightened obligation to respond in kind. From such clues it seems impossible to escape the conclusion that Kierkegaard has

62 In Pap X A 352 (JP 2:1903) and X A 89, pp. 104-5 Kierkegaard testifies to his longstanding struggle to grasp the gratis character of grace, openly acknowledging the "quid pro quo" understanding of grace and imitation to which he is prone. Similarly, in Pap X A 784, pp. 493-94 (see next note) he writes of his heightened sense of obligation because of grace. And in Pap X A 324 (JP 2:2027) he acknowledges his tendency "too often" to regard Christ as an examiner who looked on to see how far he could get striving by his own powers. As an earlier cited passage of Luther's indicates, he was plagued by the same tendency.

63 In Pap X A 224 (JP 1:984) SK speaks of an obligation (Forpligtelse) that is incurred by the gratis receipt of forgiveness. Unlike the ordinary concept of a will and testament (where the heir may do as he pleases with his inheritance), in the realm of spirit obligation comprises an essential element of the testator/heir relationship. Where no sense of obligation to strive is felt, grace has been received "in vain." In Pap X A 103 (JP 2:1493), supra, n. 31, the receipt of grace is similarly said to place one under the obligation, out of gratitude, to live worthily in the future.

In Pap X A 784, pp. 493-94 (JP 2:1482) SK addresses the difficulty that grace compounds one's sense of obligation rather than liberating one from it. His solution is to regard the increased sense of obligation as good, instilling a heightened sense of inadequacy and need of grace. Notably absent is any other sense but obligation and spiritual poverty: "Grace sharpening the law's demand. This can also be seen in this way: precisely inasmuch as grace is shown me and I am pardoned, precisely herein lies the requirement of, in turn, exerting myself all the more. . . . But here it applies that if I am not to drive a wretched person totally mad this must again be taken as inward deepening in grace, more and more intensely understanding how deeply I need grace. Incidentally, it is easy to see, as I have so often said, that the moment of death is the easiest situation for becoming a Christian or receiving grace since here the difficulty regarding the new striving falls away. If I am to live, then there must begin a striving. This should be all the purer precisely in consideration of the grace that I received for the past. But see, soon or even immediately it becomes apparent that this [striving] too is in need of grace, and again in need of grace because it is so imperfect after having received grace. And so the matter is intensified. What does this mean? It means that one can respond in one of two ways: either in such a way that one nevertheless imagines himself to attain to perfection by his striving, or in such a way that one understands more and more deeply how much he needs grace. If I were to define Christian perfection I would not say that it is perfection in striving but that it is precisely the deep recognition of the imperfection of one's striving, and therefore precisely the deeper and deeper awareness of one's need of grace--not in relation to this or that, but the infinite need, infinitely for grace. Yet how easily can this again be taken in vain!" (translation mine).

In the above entry Kierkegaard puts his finger on the pitfall to which he is prone when it comes to grace. The grace that he receives can, so far from liberating him, place him under an even greater onus to satisfy the law's demand. This pitfall can only be avoided by acknowledging one's moral bankruptcy at every point, one's "infinite need, infinitely for grace." Yet Kierkegaard is not able to do this, for his understanding of grace as something disbursed retroactively and in quanta does not allow him to. Instead he must first have recourse to law (in the form of a scaling back of its demand--i.e., grace qua indulgence) and only after his failure to measure up even to this attenuated version of Christian ideality is he permitted recourse to the complete satisfaction for sin that is alone commensurate to an "infinite need, infinitely for grace." Yet that satisfaction is exceedingly short-lived since it applies only to the past and, concurrent with its expiration, the law again reappears in intensified form lest the grace "be taken in vain." This explains why SK's sense of spiritual poverty can never give birth to a sense of spiritual riches. He has no resting place in grace where such
interpreted his own existential dialectic framework in a legalistic manner (progress in becoming "spirit" being motivated by the unrelenting requirement of straining toward ideality, rather than resting in grace). To this the proviso must be added that this schema, though legalistic, is not meritorious, for while it assumes that progress can and should be made in becoming "spirit" in this life, the person is not thereby justified: progress does not consist so much in advancing ever closer to the ideal as in coming to a deepened awareness of one's need of grace. This corresponds to Kierkegaard's constant repudiation of the notion of merit. Ever so subtly, Kierkegaard has retained the spirit of legalism. Law, under the guise of "grace" (indulgence), continues its domination of conscience. Yet this occurs without the "payoff" of legalism, merit.

We return to our narrative of the development of the late period. The issue with which Kierkegaard is grappling in his deliberations on "grace at the first place" (viz., that of how to prevent Luther's grace teaching from being taken in vain) is certainly a difficult one. He confesses during this period that he no longer quite knows what to pray for; his only prayer is that it might be made clear to him in what sense "grace" is to be applied. One thing he knows: Christianity's requirement must, at the very least, be brought to bear so that one can really come to feel to what degree one needs grace and therewith recognize how great riches are to be found, but is instead immediately whisked away to a new confrontation with law.

---

64 Pap X¹ A 734 (JP 1:993) and 784 pp. 493-94 (JP 2:1482), above. See also Pap X¹ A 186 (JP 1:77), SV VII 459-60 (Postscript, 527) and numerous other places where Kierkegaard avers that true piety is signaled by retrogression into ever deeper sin-consciousness, not straightforward progress in holiness.


66 E.g., Pap X¹ A 353 (JP 2:1480): "Christianity requires everything, and when you have done this, it requires that you shall understand that you are nevertheless saved simply and solely by grace" (translation mine). Such a conception of grace runs counter to that of the world, which reasons thus: "If it is to be works--fine, but then I must also ask for the legitimate yield I have coming from my works, so that they are meritorious. If it is to be grace--fine, but then I must also ask to be free from works--otherwise it surely is not grace. If it is to be works and nevertheless grace, that is indeed foolishness" (SV XII 308 [For Self-Examination, 16-17]).

67 Pap X² A 81, p. 93 (JP 4:4700).
a debtor one is to it.⁶⁸ As one might surmise, however, the solution to the question of how grace is to be applied becomes less elusive to him over time—and less Lutheran. Indeed, during the last two years his understanding of grace undergoes yet another metamorphosis with the result that grace is conceived almost exclusively as the opportunity that we human beings have, in this life, of voluntarily suffering the hell and punishment that we have coming to us (this world being neither more nor less than a penal institution) in exchange for eternal salvation.⁶⁹ Such "infinite grace," as Kierkegaard calls it,⁷⁰ sounds remarkably like law and would seem to represent the ultimate triumph of gnostic tendencies in his thought. By the time Kierkegaard pens his final journal entry,⁷¹ it is evident that the point has been reached in his own life at which grace qua "indulgence" or "reduction" has finished its work. Through the relentless visitation of suffering punctuated by periods of dispensation, God has brought him to that point of taedium vitae that is the hallmark of preparedness for eternity. It is a rare grace, reserved for the few who are to be saved, and one that sets the stage for the final realization that God is, and has been all along, sheer love. The one who can confess this at the very moment that God has transformed himself into the most diabolically devised cruelty has become as an angel, so qualified by spirit is he. By contrast, the majority of human beings remain so forsaken of grace that they live out all their days as animal-creatures, full of the zest for life. Kierkegaard refers to the process of purification of spirit via suffering in those who are being saved as their "punishment."⁷² Whether he means this literally is difficult to say.⁷³ A literal interpretation would of course land Kierkegaard in works-righteousness, as would the apparent synergism that is expressed in the entry in

---


⁷³ Cf. entries dating from 1852-53 (Pap X⁵ A 6 and 29 [JP 3:3770]) where the sense is figurative.
question. However, a remnant of Lutheran-sounding entries in the final Papirer volumes (which, it must be said, are not terribly compelling) render a definitive judgement difficult.\(^{74}\)

Yet the question of whether Kierkegaard, in the end, utterly disavowed the Lutheran doctrine of grace is perhaps of no such great moment. If, as this writer believes, the legalistic tendencies that became increasingly pronounced during the latter half of the authorship were not a function of the training-schema per se, but its interpretation within a conceptual matrix tending toward Neoplatonic ascent, then that schema--and the great works of the late authorship that embody it--may well prove serviceable in illustrating a vital aspect of Luther's own teaching on grace. The aspect to which we have reference is namely the "partial aspect" of the simul iustus et peccator formula.

Wilfried Joest and others have developed this element of Luther's thought at length, observing that justification is by no means a merely forensic matter for Luther; rather, God's declaration of righteousness begins straightway to make inroads into the person's empirical condition so that one can speak of his becoming "partim iustus - partim peccator."\(^{75}\) This "partial" or progressive aspect of Christian existence is controlled by the "total" aspect whereby Christians are ever already in full possession of complete righteousness, or "totus iustus - totus peccator." That is to say, Christians' real righteousness is an outgrowth of their repeated appropriation of total righteousness through faith. Joest writes:

Through the command that calls him to works, the "old man" becomes aware of his impotence and is driven to where the fullness of what he lacks, and of which he is incapable, is given: this is the training [Einübung] of faith. To the "new man," the command turns into the gospel that shows him at concrete points of reality what he can and may do out of the fullness that has been granted him: this is the performance [Ausübung] of faith that can only occur when I--as the old man that I still am, and time and again am at the moment that the command encounters me--first let myself


\(^{75}\)Wilfried Joest, Gesetz und Freiheit, das Problem des Tertius usus bei Luther und die neutestamentliche Parabene, 3d ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1961), 55-82. Joest is by no means the only scholar to have stressed this. The reader is referred to chap. 1, n. 43 for a discussion of the relationship between imputed and imparted righteousness in Luther's doctrine of justification. There the centrality of the notion, faith "in-formed" by Christ, is pointed out. Christ's real and effectual presence in the believer through faith entails both a total righteousness coram Deo, and real, if partial, righteousness coram hominibus.
be called to training [Einführung]. The "exercise" [Übung] is not a continuous advance to perfection from a still imperfect beginning, but rather a constant return to the beginning that contains the completion in itself. 76

This way of conceiving the rhythm of the Christian life bears a remarkable similarity to Kierkegaard's, as outlined in Practice in Christianity. Einführung, or Indøvelse in Christianity [acquisition through practice] is not, for Kierkegaard, a process of advancement in holiness that occurs through one's efforts at imitation (Ausübung or Udøvelse); rather it is a process of learning to flee rightly unto grace, humbled by the law. 77 Faith being thereby strengthened, performance ensues, the deficiency of which eventually prompts us to flee to grace anew. These two elements taken together—Indøvelse and Udøvelse—constitute the Christian's "upbringing" (Opdragelse) in Christianity.

Notwithstanding the nascent backdrop of aspiration and ascent that announces itself indirectly in the "spiritual moratorium" pronounced in the "Moral," the motive force behind the progressive aspect of Christian existence in Practice in Christianity is not "Udøvelse" (imitation of the Prototype). It is, rather, the ongoing spiritual use of law together with faith's reception of God's declaration of righteousness. That is to say, the partial aspect of Christian existence is controlled by the total aspect whereby the Christian is already, at the outset of his striving, in full possession of righteousness. In Practice in Christianity the framework is not an Aristotelian one in which virtuosity in discipleship is acquired through "practice." Imitation is not the controlling factor, but rather the flight to grace. In Practice in Christianity the Lutheran concept of grace still dominates the moralistic one of provisional dispensation. Constant recourse to forgiveness amid judgement is what constitutes virtuosity in being a Christian.

The sum of these deliberations upon Kierkegaard's notion of "upbringing" or "training" is that this notion captures something vital in Luther's own understanding of justification. Together with the recognition of the centrality of the cross in the Christian life,

76Ibid., 120.

77SV XII 62 (Practice in Christianity, 65): "It is along that way that you must go in order to learn and to practice [Indøvelse] resorting to grace" (emphasis added). Not without interest (in view of our previous reflections) is the sentence's conclusion: "... in such a way that you do not take it in vain."
it serves to forestall any misuse of grace that would lead to a "religious still-life without venturing out into the dangers." Kierkegaard need not have resorted to the notions of repeated declarations of forgiveness for past sins and provisional indulgences from future striving. Though Lutheranism's abdication of the task of realizing Christian ideality surely merited Kierkegaard's critique, such a critique could well have been mounted from the standpoint of Luther's teaching on grace, not shifted in aim and directed at that teaching. For, far from such abdication receiving the blessing of a presumed teaching of Luther's on cheap grace, it is immediately avenged by his teaching on law. And the law that becomes operative in such a circumstance inspires the very fear that Kierkegaard seems to have hoped to inspire by his teaching on God's extreme chariness with grace.

---

78 Pap X¹ A 59 (JP 2:1383).
79 E.g., Pap XI¹ A 134 (JP 3:2762).
80 "So gehört die Furcht, die der noch verbleibenden Sünde gebührt, auf die Seite des Gesetzes, das um eben dieser Sünde willen sein tödendes Amt weiter übt. Wie das Gesetz, so bleibt auch die Furcht, um je und je von Evangelium her überwunden zu werden. Der Christ lebt zwischen Furcht und Gewißheit nicht in einem Zwischenzustand, in dem er nur erst halb getrostet, halb noch gefährdet wäre, sondern in der steten Bewegung des Glaubens vom ganzen Bedrohtsein zu der ganzen Gewißheit. Bevor er zum Handeln, Kämpfen und Gehorchten antritt, muß diese Bewegung je schon vollzogen sein. Die Furcht vor der Sünde hat nur eine mittelbare Beziehung zu seinem Gehorsam; sie ist durch den Akt des Glaubens von ihm getrennt" (Joest, Gesetz und Freiheit, 123).
81 I.e., the teaching that grace is a quantity dispensed—or withheld—in quanta, and at God's pleasure. Such a teaching, as previously noted, is calculated to leave individuals at the mercy of the requirement (by leaving them at the mercy of God's decision to grant or withhold grace), and so, keep them in striving. Closely related to this doctrine of limited grace is SK's equally grim doctrine of limited salvation: "Christianity begins as follows: One is saved, perhaps only one among millions, one in the entire world. Now we have: We are all saved, all, dogs and cats almost so, too" (Pap XI¹ A 260, p. 210 [JP 2:2058], translation mine). Cf. Pap X¹ A 658 (JP 1:540). In fairness to Kierkegaard, it must be said that he has not always felt this way: recall Pap X² A 428, p. 305 (JP 2:1261), where he speculates that, at the moment of death, most people choose the right thing. On balance though, the later Kierkegaard is persuaded that nearly all belong to the massa perditionis—including his beloved Regine, a belief that he finds difficult to reconcile with his heart. Consequently he is tossed back and forth between two opinions: "The N.T. obviously rests on the assumption that there is an eternal perdition and—perhaps not one among millions is saved. We who are brought up in Christianity, we live in the assumption that we will all surely be blessed. There are moments when it seems to me as though I must lay hold of the former and then, in God's name, break with everything. I consider it, then there is one thing that prevents me: her. Of this kind of Christianity she has not an inkling. If I lay hold of it, go through with it, then there is a difference of religion between us. 'But how can you then doubt that this means that you are not to understand Christianity in this way'—this is what every person will say. Oh, but the N.T. is a frightful book; for it reckons just this kind of collision to belong to true Christianity. Thus do I fight. And then again there are moments when everything seems so infinitely lenient to me, when I am inclined to think that my task is neither more nor less
Having said this, it must be stressed that the doctrine of grace set forth in the present chapter has been distilled from Kierkegaard's later utterances. Throughout most of his authorship Kierkegaard's attitudes are profoundly Lutheran. It is clear, in fact, that until the last year or two of his life SK regarded himself as a successor of Luther's on the ground that he was bringing to awareness a signal aspect of Luther's theology that had fallen into obscurity, namely, its orientation to the cross. For Kierkegaard as for Luther, grace is ever hidden under suffering and judgement. What frequently gives the appearance of legalism in Kierkegaard is often nothing more than the proclamation of law in its spiritual use for the purpose of inspiring the flight unto grace. Kierkegaard's intent is certainly not that of turning Christianity into law. Nor is it that of reintroducing merit along with imitation—an eventuality that is clearly anathema to him. Still one must ask whether he has not—against his own best intentions!—brought back into Christianity "the dread of not having done enough" and therewith the insidious notion of human initiative—even of merit—in the ways already indicated. Indeed, one must wonder if his tendency to identify Christ qua Model almost exclusively with the law in its spiritual use, rather than with gospel, does not seriously compromise "the freedom of a Christian." Certainly the portrayal of the Christian life as faith's moment by moment overcoming of despair—its intrepid reliance upon the Redeemer punctuated by episodes of Anfægtelse—is a realistic one. But it is not the optimal one. The optimal one is one wherein Christ's example emboldens, not daunts.

---


83 SV XII 465 (Judge for Yourself!, 197-98).

84 Consider an entry such as Pap X A 445 (JP 4:4333) which asserts that "the question in relation to Christianity is ever how far a person is to be transformed in the direction of becoming spirit before he dare appropriate grace." Our problem, Kierkegaard continues, is "this confounded rubbish, this weakness in which we others are caught up which causes us to spare ourselves much too much, and to rest in grace too early, and to rest in it from striving instead of resting in it to ever renewed striving" (translation mine).
Despite these shortcomings, Kierkegaard's application of the theology of the cross is a defining moment in the history of Lutheranism. In it, Lutheran theology's self-critical moment comes to expression. Sparked by impulses gained from his tradition, Kierkegaard undertook a critique of that tradition, in particular, of the theologia gloriae into which it had degenerated with the emergence of scholasticism and the established, territorial church. To deny the authentically Lutheran character of Kierkegaard's enterprise is to deprive Lutheranism of the critical vantage point of which it is perennially in need if its understanding of grace is not to degenerate into indulgence and its praxis into quietism.
WORKS CITED

I. Primary Sources

Throughout this dissertation references to the journals and published works of Kierkegaard are given for the Danish and English versions, respectively. The Danish citation is given first, followed in parentheses by the corresponding English citation whenever this exists. All references are given in abbreviated form.

A. Kierkegaard's Works in Danish


B. Kierkegaard's Works in English Translation


C. Kierkegaard's Works in German Translation


D. Other Primary Sources


_____. Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1924.


D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. 90 vols. Weimar, 1883-.

En christelig Postille, sammendragen af Dr. Morten Luthers Kirke- og Huuspostiller efter Benjamin Lindners tydske Samling udgiven i ny dansk Oversættelse af Jørgen Thised. 2 pts. Copenhagen: Wahlske Boghandling, 1828.


II. Secondary Sources


____. "Wie urteilte Kierkegaard über Luther?" *Luther-Jahrbuch* 10 (1928):1-27.


Hoffmann, Bengt. *Luther and the Mystics: A Re-Examination of Luther's Spiritual Experience and His Relationship to the Mystics*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976.


----. "En redegørelse for, hvad der ligger i det Kierkegaardske pseudonym Anticlimacus’s påstand, at kristendommen er og skal være det absolutte, og en undersøgelse af den i påstanden forudsatte kristendomsopfattelses forhold til Luther." Aarhus Universitets prisopgave, 1971.


---


Vogelsang, Erich. Luther und die Mystik." Luther-Jahrbuch 19 (1937):32-54
