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BEFORE THE STORM: KIERKEGAARD'S THEOLOGICAL PREPARATION FOR THE ATTACK ON THE CHURCH

Michael Plekon

Kierkegaard's public attack on the Church in Denmark in the last years of his life stands in marked contrast to so much else he wrote. The vehemence of the attack has remained perplexing, also the extent to which it was a rejection of abuses or of significant elements of Christianity. The essays seeks to examine an earlier stage of his developing criticism in order to better understand the radical writings of the last year and Kierkegaard's motives and intentions in the attack.

Therefore Christ as the prototype (*Forbilledet*) must be advanced, but not in order to alarm—yet it is perhaps an altogether superfluous concern that anyone could be alarmed by Christianity nowadays—but in any case not in order to alarm; we ought to learn that from the experience of earlier times. No, the prototype must be advanced in order at least to procure some respect for Christianity, to make somewhat distinguishable what it means to be a Christian, to get Christianity moved out of the realm of scientific scholarship and doubt and nonsense (objective) and into the realm of the subjective, where it belongs just as surely as the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, did not bring any doctrine into the world and never delivered lectures, but as the prototype required imitation, yet by his reconciliation expels, if possible, all anxiety from a person's soul.¹ *The Late Kierkegaard: Collision*

New readers of Kierkegaard and old alike experience shock with his last writings, those of the public attack on the Church in Denmark in 1854-55. In Kierkegaard's own description there is a "collision" (*Sammenstød*) and the language is tough, radical, and the criticism caustic.² It almost seems as though we are reading a new and very different author.³ His voice often appears to lack the elegance and complexity of the earlier writings. Some readers quickly lose interest, for there is no longer the sharp criticism of Hegel or the deft rendering of human emotion in such works as *Either/Or*, the *Philosophical Fragments*, the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *Fear and Trembling*, the *Concept of Anxiety* and the *Sickness Unto Death*. Even those within the Christian community of faith are likely to be disturbed, repelled by the diatribes against the Church and the stark vision of Christianity presented. The life of the Gospel appears to be solely a suffering-filled way of



the cross. Christ seems to give only human unhappiness and the Church is stuffed with fraudulent, self-seeking clergy. One would hardly suggest Kierkegaard's last essays and reading for prospective members of a parish, for those seeking Church growth, for seminarians and clergy, for any honestly searching in their spiritual lives. Or would one?

Precisely due to their uncompromising efforts to be honest, presenting Christianity in its most demanding form, the later writings of Kierkegaard are the most difficult, and in several ways. They do not appear to cohere, on first reading, with the rest of Kierkegaard's theological work. So wide has this distance been perceived that for some, the late writings, particularly the published attack on the Church, are judged as aberrations, the result of a breakdown — emotional, physical, even spiritual. Other appraisals have understood the radical integrity of the Christian faith in these polemical writings, but criticize the one-sided, partial statement, lacking in other complementary elements. Bonhoeffer, for example, heard the cross and not Resurrection in the late Kierkegaard.⁴ It has been necessary, therefore, for some to reject, or in a reductionist manner to explain away what Kierkegaard says in his last pages. Others have refused to accept these conclusions, recognizing a much more complex view and plan in the later Kierkegaard. I have in mind such scholars as Kresten Nordentoft, Bruce Kirmse, and Johannes Sløk.⁵

It has been argued that there is a continuity and coherence in these later writings, continuity with Kierkegaard's earlier theology and coherence with classic Christian teaching.⁶ One cannot read the late writings in isolation from the rest of his published writings and his journals. This is my perspective. Kierkegaard quite deliberately emphasized the cross in the published attack. He not only criticized the domestication of the Gospel and the weak, compromised life of the Church, its clergy and people, Kierkegaard even more strenuously proclaimed Christianity's rejection of the world, its values and life. Repeatedly the example of the crucified Christ is presented, the first and ultimate "witness to the truth," (*Sandhedsvidne*) or martyr. The action at the heart of Christian life is the imitation of Christ (*Christi Efterfølgelse*) and imitation precisely in "suffering for the teaching/Gospel" and "dying" from the world, from oneself, to God.

However, the "other side" of the Gospel, of Christian faith, is to be found in the late Kierkegaard, but he consciously silenced it, for the most part, in the late published writings.⁷ Even there it does dramatically appear, and with great power, in the midst of the polemical literature of 1854-55, in the sermon, "God's Unchangingness," preached earlier in 1851 and inserted, after no. 7 of *The Moment* and published in late August, 1855, only a little over two months before Kierkegaard's death on November 11, 1855. A great deal more is to be found in Kierkegaard's journals for these last years. And one can clearly trace this dialectical strategy of Kierkegaard quite openly, consistently and forcefully in a number of published works. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard affirms God's love for humankind, extending from the act of creation to all life and all human relationships. God lives in all his creation. God is the lover, and he is present in each person as "the sprout in the grain."⁸ Love, that, is, God, is there in every other heart. All Christian faith is built upon this "foundation" or "ground."⁹ In *Practice in*

Christianity, he begins to set out the confrontation between Christ and fallen, compromising humanity in both society and the Church. Bishop Mynster had no difficulty recognizing the challenge Kierkegaard posed. After his reading of *Practice*, Mynster abruptly cut off any further communication with Kierkegaard. *Practice in Christianity* is thoroughly Christological. Kierkegaard makes Christ the constant focus: the One who invites imitation is the One who presents scandal and offense in being crucified. Yet it is this same Christ who draws all to Himself in His death and resurrection. Kierkegaard is careful to present the whole Christ in this text.

The two late essays, *For Self Examination* and *Judge for Yourself* are linked to Kierkegaard's project of theological affirmation and attack in many significant ways. *For Self Examination* was published September 10, 1851, just about a year after *Practice in Christianity* (September 25, 1850). Termed "first series," *For Self Examination* was followed by *Judge for Yourself*, a "second series," written at some time in 1851-1852 but not published until 1876, thus, posthumously, by Kierkegaard's brother, Bishop Peter Christian. After these two essays, as Johannes Sløk describes it, Kierkegaard was silent in print until the public attack on the Church. This was launched in the newspaper, *Fædrelandet*, (*The Fatherland*) December 18, 1854, with the incendiary essay, "Was Bishop Mynster a 'witness to the truth,' one of 'the genuine witnesses to the truth' — is this the truth?"¹⁰ Kierkegaard may have been silent in publication but hardly silent or devoid of production. This opening essay was dated February 1854 but volumes of journal entries, drafts of articles, revisions, and notes were produced in the silent period. In the standard edition these run from vol. X-3 to XI-3, seven volumes of over 400 pages each.

For Self Examination and *Judge for Yourself* are intimate by their very titles. The words for "examination," (*prøvelse*), and for "judge," (*at dømme*), are quite close in meaning, suggesting trial, scrutiny, and evaluation, rendering a verdict. Both have the reflective "self" (*selv*) attached. *For Self Examination* is subtitled "recommended to the present age" (*Samtiden anbefalet*) and *Judge for Yourself* is subtitled, "For self examination, Recommended to the present age," identical to the title of *For Self Examination*. The structure of both is like that of Kierkegaard's other published discourses (*taler*). A passage of scripture is not just cited by presented in full, followed by a prayer, in most but not all cases, and then the text of the discourse follows. In most of his homiletic discourses, Kierkegaard not only employed scriptural texts but the liturgical lessons for a particular feast or Sunday. Thus, the first portion of *For Self Examination* is based on James 1: 22-27, not simply because this is the favorite text of Kierkegaard, but because it was the appointed epistle lesson for the 5th Sunday after Easter in the Danish Church's lectionary. So also the texts for the other two sections of *For Self Examination*. Acts 1:1-12 forms the epistle for the feast of the Ascension of Our Lord and Acts 2:1-12 the epistle for the feast of Pentecost.

Kierkegaard was not simply following the liturgical convention of his Church by employing these texts. He had a deeper motive. The three more specific texts or themes for the discourses are quite typical of his understanding of the demands of the Gospel, that is, Christianity's "hard

sayings." The many challenges the three discourses contain are expressive of Kierkegaard's growing conflict with the Church's teaching and enactment of the Gospel. This confrontation, already strong in his journals and to erupt later in the public attack, is presented in these discourses and deliberately linked with these particular scriptural passages and the feasts to which they correspond. Kierkegaard's motive is hardly a liturgical puzzle but rather a bold proclamation that the authentic Gospel contains the cross and the resurrection, suffering and joy, the following or imitation of Christ and the enjoyment of his blessing, the struggle to live the faith as well as the gift and help of the Holy Spirit. Put differently, Kierkegaard integrates the ascetic, suffering-filled, cross-dominated aspects of the Christian faith with the Paschal realities of Christ's resurrection, his ascension to "fill all things" and his sending of the life-giving Holy Spirit. These feasts are precisely the fulfillment of Christ's suffering and death, commemorated in Holy Week, particularly on Good Friday. Without the cross, without suffering for the Gospel by living in imitation of Christ, there can be no passing-over (*Pascha*) with Christ into the Kingdom of God, no resurrection. The Resurrection and transformation of the Christian are either meaningless or, as Kierkegaard argued, reduced to and equated with happiness and success in the world and life. In Bonhoeffer's later descriptions, "costly" discipleship would have been done away with by "cheap grace." More specifically, I want to examine some of Kierkegaard's theological groundwork for his later public attack as it proceeds in *For Self Examination* and *Judge for Yourselves*. My argument here is these texts and later in the polemics of the public attack, Kierkegaard maintains the fullness of the Gospel and of classical Christian theology. He was particularly intentional about this fullness, though strategic about emphasis, in the conflict with the Church. For in precisely that "moment" (*Øieblikket*) the fullness of Christian truth, he insisted, had to be stated and heard by the Church.¹¹ Further, there is an important but usually overlooked character to Kierkegaard's theological perspective. This is its "other side," its eschatological dimension.

Doing the Word

The times are different, Kierkegaard says at the very beginning of the first discourse of *For Self Examination*. It is no longer the time when Luther had to champion grace because of the exploitation of "good works." Now, in the modern age of the nineteenth century, long after Luther and the Reformation, the Apostle James (and his epistle) needed to be drawn forward,

...not for works against faith — no, no, that was not the apostle's meaning either — but for faith, in order, if possible, to cause the need for grace to be felt deeply in genuine humble inwardness and, if possible, to prevent grace, faith and grace as the only redemption and salvation, from being taken totally in vain, from becoming a camouflage even for a refined worldliness.¹²

Kierkegaard then uses the epistle of James passage, emphasizing not only the hearing of the Word but also the doing of it. After urging that the Scriptures be read and understood as personally addressed to the hearer, a "letter from my beloved" from God, Kierkegaard underscores the fearful reality that personal appropriation will radically change one's life.¹³ The story of David and Bathsheba and familiar parable of the good Samaritan are used to illustrate this.¹⁴ The very human option will be to situate the text historically, or to regard it with scholarly neutrality and thereby, with "slyness and cunning" to "exempt oneself" both from what the text says and the action it demands. Early on, Kierkegaard alludes to Mynster's oratorical skill, citing the bishop's description of "quiet hours" in church. But the real preacher, Kierkegaard claims, is a witness, a martyr, because his faith is restless and is "recognizable in his life," as well as in his preaching. It is not enough to hear the Word or even to scrutinize oneself in relationship to it.¹⁵ As Kierkegaard will put it later, one's understanding must become action and such action changes one's life.¹⁶

Christ the Way

The prayer at the start of the first discourse was addressed to the Father, the giver of every good and perfect gift, who helps each one who strives to act according to the Word. The second discourse's prayer is to Christ, the "eternal victor, who did not conquer your enemies in life but if death conquered even death."¹⁷ Kierkegaard prays that we might follow Christ, who is the way, and this is the discourse's theme. But one should note that before focusing upon Christ's way, which is suffering and death, Kierkegaard affirms the resurrection, that the ultimate destination is life, the goal of the way is victory. The procession of prophets, apostles, and martyrs on this way are even cited from the Church's ancient hymn, the *Te Deum*.¹⁸ In the discourse, Kierkegaard predictably, as in *Practice in Christianity*, puts forward Christ's humility and poverty, the increasing narrowness of his way to the cross and death. Kierkegaard even voices the reader's protest about such passion/death-dominated Good Friday talk, on, of all days, the completion of the Paschal season, the day of Christ's ascending to the Father.¹⁹ Rather than surrendering to "particular moods" on specific days, the "various essentials of Christianity" should be combined as far as possible.

Precisely on Ascension Day it ought to be brought to mind that his is the narrow way, for otherwise we could easily take (it) in vain. Remember, the way was narrow until the end; death comes between — then follows the Ascension. It is not at the midpoint on the way that he ascends to heaven; it is not even at the end of the way, because the way ends on the cross and in the grave.²⁰

End runs around the cross are routine in modern Christian preaching but impermissible nonetheless. Doubts about the ascension (or for that matter, the resurrection) are predictable in a scientific, empirically oriented culture.²¹ Kierkegaard's message is to go out and imitate Christ, (literally)

follow after him as the way. The normal sufferings and difficulties of life, serious and real as they are, are not the narrow way, though they may be faced in a Christian way. The truly narrow way is that of Christ. What happened to him will happen to you, if you hear and follow him: death and new life. Echoing Athanasius and other of the Fathers, Kierkegaard insists that Christ came down so that we might follow him up into the Kingdom of heaven. Kierkegaard thus skillfully knits together the elements of the paschal mystery, Christ's passing over and that of his follower — the kernel of the Gospel and of the Christian life.

The Spirit Gives Life

Lastly, Kierkegaard addresses the Holy Spirit in the prayer following the Pentecost account of Acts 2:1-12. The third discourse's theme is that the Spirit gives life. This is no magical act of direct vivification but the gift of new life because "death goes in between, dying to, (*at afdø*) and a life on the other side of death...this is what Christianity teaches."²² Paradoxically, the life-giving Spirit is the very one who kills, who commands then makes possible death first, and then life. The Spirit brings the faith that endures despite all that threatens to destroy, the hope that lives against all hope and the love, selfless, which is really God's.²³ Yet the Spirit can only bestow these gifts, in sum, the life with God, if a person has let go of the world and the self, in Kierkegaard's phrase, only if one "dies to" them. The severity of Christianity is appropriate to the seriousness, and I would add, the ultimate joy and peace of its goals — communion with God, the life of the kingdom. His concluding parable and prayer plead for us to allow the Holy Spirit to remove our power, our life so that we might be driven by God, given His spirit and life. Thus Kierkegaard concludes affirming the Spirit as giver of life, but not life as we know and want it, rather God's life, which requires death to self and the world.

Becoming Sober (and Intoxicated with God)

It is with this recognition, that human nature wants its own way, wants to be deceived, intoxicated, that Kierkegaard begins *Judge for Yourself*. The prayer before the first of the two discourses is directed both to the Father and to the Spirit. Kierkegaard's Trinitarian sensitivity is revealed in the prayer before the second discourse being addressed to Christ. The continuity between *For Self Examination* and *Judge for Yourself* extends even more deeply. I Peter 4:7 is from the 6th Sunday after Easter's epistle text, and, in fact, is in immediate proximity to both the feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost. And the Pentecost epistle, Acts 2:1-12, forms the setting in which the discourse begins, the apostles' intoxication in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Their Spirit-drunkenness is true sobriety over against the rational, good sense of the worldly mentality. "Becoming sober" is the theme of this first discourse exceeded only by the second and last discourse, "Christ as the prototype or no one can serve two masters."

The sobriety of the Spirit is to come to oneself in self-knowledge and before God as nothing before him, yet infinitely, unconditionally engaged.²⁴

There are echoes here from earlier works such as *Either/Or*, *Sickness Unto Death*, *Fear and Trembling*, and some of the *Upbuilding Discourses*. The self, so delicately dissected in the *Concept of Anxiety*, reappears here, always capable of double-mindedness and delusion. The sermon of the Jutland priest, from the conclusion of *Either/Or II*, is restated in the situation of the self-becoming sober as nothing, as transparent before God yet infinitely and unconditionally responsible.²⁵ A parable involving a coachman driving, used earlier in *For Self Examination* (as well as in other places) is also employed again. And Kierkegaard uses the disturbing story of the young seminarian and ordinand "seeking" a call in eminently practical, political, and church-bureaucratic fashion, only to preach his first sermon on "Seek first the Kingdom of God." Kierkegaard would use the story again, but of course his contemporaries would only hear it first well into the public attack on the Church, on August 30, 1855, in no. 7 of *The Moment*, one of the most vicious of his critiques of the clergy.²⁶

The destination toward which Kierkegaard is headed is Christianity's true intoxication and authentic sobriety, namely that all of one's knowledge and understanding must be realized in action, in the struggle to imitate Christ, to follow him. For Kierkegaard, such is the transformation or conversion, the *metanoia* of which Christ speaks in the gospels. From this point on in the discourse, the second half of it in fact, Kierkegaard turns from a proclamation of the Christ-like, Spirit-filled life to a startling indictment of the Church, particularly the clergy. Not only is the parable of the "seeking" candidate put forward. Much else that erupted in the literature of the public attack appears in the pages of *Judge for Yourself*, already completed sometime in 1851-1852. One can see why Kierkegaard did not publish this material when he wrote it. Phrases and images familiar from the articles in *The Fatherland* and *The Moment* are employed. Is Christianity's existence demonstrated merely by the one thousand ordained pastors of the Church? The priests "declaim, weep, pound the pulpit, 'assure,'" Kierkegaard observes, but the congregations cynically expect this. It's the pastor's job to so perform.²⁷ What Kierkegaard hammers at is the lack of connection between what the priest preaches and his life. For him, the clergy's titles of respect have to do with their social status and as such have no relationship to Christ and the apostles who were abused, even killed for what they preached. It was through the teaching of the Gospel, lived out by the witnesses, the martyrs, that the world was transformed. The Gospel was enacted, in suffering, under persecution. And so an "enormous working capital" of Christianity was created. But in time it was used up.²⁸ The suffering of the martyrs was drawn upon and used up by the proclaimers of the faith to their own advantage. But nothing remains and so, Kierkegaard says, it is back to the beginning, back to the original requirement — to die to oneself and the world so as to life, in Christ.²⁹ The Church and its leaders are in the business of buying and selling spiritual comfort. Any reader familiar with Bishop Mynster's sermons can hear him, in particular, being savaged in Kierkegaard's inimitable fury.³⁰ He wants rid of such sentimental "assurances" as Bishop Mynster preached and had published: "If it were required of me, I would be willing to forsake everything, sacrifice everything, for the sake of Christianity."

But Bishop Mynster never had to sacrifice anything. Rather he had risen to social prominence as an intellectual and cleric, becoming an important cultural voice and the Danish Church's primate.

So Kierkegaard concludes in a familiar form. All of this domesticated doctrine and worldly living must be confessed as other than real Christianity. Either one had to renounce it to suffer for the Gospel, or one should continue to cling to Christendom, but make the admission (*Indrømmelse*) that it was not Christ's Christianity, which is offensive to our inclinations.³¹ Action is necessary. The movement of conversion by one's own work is far preferable to the "assurances" of an empty doctrine of justification.³² Kierkegaard even imagines the reaction to his challenge, almost verbatim the response of Copenhagen's intellectual and ecclesiastical elites in 1854-55: "This is treason against us!"³³

Christ the Prototype: Preparation for the Attack

One might expect the entire project of these two works, *For Self Examination* and *Judge for Yourself* to end with Kierkegaard's quasi-clairvoyance and the confession of his own weakness and distance from true Christianity. Pages upon pages of his journals might suggest this, yet the actual conclusion is quite otherwise. The second and last discourse has as its scriptural text Matthew 6:24-34, the Gospel for the 16th Sunday after Pentecost in the older lectionary of the Danish Church, a Sunday which is not a special feast but smack in the middle of the time after Pentecost, "ordinary" time as some call it. It is the gospel of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, featured in an earlier set of three discourses published in 1849. Perhaps the passage's beginning: "No one can serve two masters..." forms an immediate bridge to the preceding discourse of *Judge for Yourself*. Yet the true core must be Christ's admonition to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. This is Kierkegaard's "prioritarian" theological perspective as Bruce Kirmmse has so insightfully described it.³⁴ While Kierkegaard proceeds, in this longest of all the discourses, through a contrast of what the two masters, the world and the Gospel, demand, his focus finally is not himself, nor the worldly Church but Christ the prototype, the exemplar, the model or pattern (*Forbilledet*), literally the proto-icon or image. Christ reveals absolutely what it is to serve only one master, the Father. Christ is the primal icon of communion between God and Man.³⁵ Kierkegaard is most Pauline here. Yet Christ is also the Redeemer, the one who saves us, lest we are crushed by the perfect image he presents of the meeting of the divine and the human.³⁶

Kierkegaard's vision has been already described as profoundly scriptural and liturgical. He brings together the cross, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost — the entire paschal mystery. He is not only negative, a critic of the human misuse of the Gospel, but also affirmative, a proclaimer of what the good news is, of the good that God both is and does. I have called this Kierkegaard's "incarnational optimism," and have claimed him to be a true teacher of the Church, in the classical, if not strictly academic sense. By these claims I mean that Kierkegaard, if read closely and comprehensively, cannot be located *outside* the principal teaching tradition of the

Church, but quite clearly *within* it. The positive thrust of his theology is rooted in what I have called the paschal, eucharistic and ecclesial foundations of his theological work — his adherence to the Trinitarian vision, to the goodness of God in creation, redemption and sanctification to the scriptures, sacraments, even the ordained ministry and the Church. Kierkegaard's attacks, as I have argued in other studies, are not on Christianity and the Church and her elements essentially. Rather, his offensive, particularly revealed by the force of his invective, is against the abuse and distortion of the sacred. Some of his most vicious passages, about baptism, the Eucharist, other rites, and the clergy show his deep regard and strong outrage.³⁷

To these claims I want now to add Kierkegaard's christological emphasis, the deep christocentricity of his later theological writing. It is not simply the theme or title of this final discourse which expresses the concern with Christ. Kierkegaard keeps pointing to Christ, like the figure of John the Baptist in the Isenheim altarpiece by Grünewald, and, in a remarkable manner, though he remains as a voice as author, he becomes unobtrusive, so decreasing in significance so that Christ may increase. Once again, the humility, poverty and suffering, the emptying of Christ is depicted.³⁸ Christ exists only to do the Father's will, to serve only One Master.³⁹ Christ does not just teach with words. His life, all of his action expresses his teaching.⁴⁰ To be a Christian, Kierkegaard claims, citing Luther, is to do good and suffer for this Gospel.⁴¹ It is to enter "a hostile collision with the whole world, with everyone."⁴² As with Christ, so with the Christian.⁴³

Any attempt to directly or immediately appropriate Christ will fail, and Kierkegaard faults his Church for precisely such reductions. The Son of God comes, but in poverty. He is a "colossal power," but he becomes nothing. He wants to draw all to himself, yet he must bring them grief, humanly speaking, and thus drives all but a few from him.⁴⁴ All of this appears as "lunacy," not what we consider God's methods, hence the charge against Christ of blasphemy.⁴⁵ Thus, his conviction, rather than Barabbas, as the more terrible robber, for Christ takes away all that humankind wants to cling to. Why? To torment them? Such cannot be and is not Kierkegaard's Christ. Yet for him as in the Gospel and teaching of the church, Christ comes to bring humankind back to Himself. As Kierkegaard shows in his exegesis of the lilies and birds from Matthew 6, God is for us, working for our good.⁴⁶ God provides sun, water, nourishment and growth. God spins and sews, sows and gathers into barns. People think they are the ones who struggle and accumulate, turning the whole world into a great barn. But the work is really God's.⁴⁷

The Gospel is not just poetry, Kierkegaard argues. The lily grows, the bird takes wing, the little boy (in a further illustration) huffs and puffs to drive the stroller, even though his mother provides the real push. So must the Christian grow, fly and work in imitation of Christ.⁴⁸ However, this is exactly what has been abolished or distorted in the history of the Church. Kierkegaard embarks on a familiar tour of this history of disintegration, from martyr-filled apostolic days to the wisdom of the patristic period and early middle ages, through the necessary revolt of Luther against the commerce of good works.⁴⁹ While Luther acted rightly, after him the decline

becomes an avalanche. There is no need recognized for good works at all, something that would have struck Luther as madness. All decisive action toward becoming a Christian, i.e., struggle to live with God a holy life, is eliminated. Knowledge about Christianity becomes decisive, not holy action, at least among those whom Kierkegaard has in mind, the intellectual and ecclesiastical elites. With the common people, it was far different, much more honest and real in the spiritual life.⁵⁰ The "professor," not the martyr, is the epitome of cultured Christianity.⁵¹ Yet it is precisely the "disciple" who must be the criterion, imitation and Christ as the prototype that must be affirmed.⁵²

There is little evidence of such in the Church and society of his own mid-19th century Denmark, for Kierkegaard. There are, to be sure, various accommodations to authentic Christianity. The Church and individual Christians will continue to use the language, liturgy, the rest of the Christian "idiom," but this will be no more than children playing dress-up in their parents' oversized clothes.⁵³ Talk goes on, even from the pulpit, about grace, salvation, reconciliation, yet with no recognizing of repentance, the need for grace, the terrible struggles and suffering that will come because of the Gospel. Most, if not all of modern society's "way of life" makes the basics of Christianity boring, unacceptable and even destructive to the majority of clergy and people. It is important to note here that the only public response to Kierkegaard's later public attack would come from Grundtvig and a few other clerics. In his sermons from 1854-55, and subsequently from 1855-61, in a catechetical series *Christian Childhood/Basic Teachings*, Grundtvig, then in his seventies, did take on quite a few of Kierkegaard's specific challenges, yet without deeper understanding of them and, quite apparently, with his own ecclesiastical motives in mind.⁵⁴

It is more striking, in the mainstream of churches today, to read that the physician has become the primary spiritual advisor. We would have to include, and appropriately, the range of other therapists who offer help. It is also disturbing to compare Kierkegaard's rendering of the average, ordinary (*almindelige*) kind of Christianity:

...a secularized life, avoiding major crimes out of sagacity than for the sake of conscience, ingeniously seeking the pleasures of life — and then once in a while a so-called pious mood...a more quiet enjoyment of life, of serving civic virtues, also occasionally thinking about God so that the thought of him is also included somewhat but never so deeply as to have the jolt of collision with the essentially Christian...⁵⁵

The essentials of Christianity are either viewed as boring or threatening, and in either case, they are rejected. Much of the blame for the slide of Christianity Kierkegaard lays at the feet of its teachers, the clergy. They preach a version that suits everyone's needs so well that the Gospel itself becomes unnecessary.

The good news of the Gospel is not to be foisted on people by means of demonstrations and reasons, demeaningly, as when a mother must

sit and beg her child to eat the good wholesome food, but he turns up his nose at it and does not really care to eat. No, the appetite has to be aroused in a different way — and then the glad news of the Gospel will certainly be found to be appetizing.⁵⁶

The different way, then, is Kierkegaard's dialectical strategy. He will unrelentingly pound out the truth of the Gospel that no one wants to hear, that Christ is the primal image of serving One Master, of seeking first the Kingdom, all by his work, the cross and the resurrection. Of this account of the Gospel, these two essays are full. And what of the reader? Imitation, being a disciple, transformation and action, suffering for the Gospel. These are the elements of the Christian life, in Kierkegaard's view.⁵⁷ He grants that such discipleship, that of imitation and suffering, is not what people want. In fact, it is offensive to the human mind and heart, and of this Christ himself was keenly aware.⁵⁸ Yet it is the only way to break out of the illusion that one is living Christianity. In fact, a first step would be the admission that one is far from being a Christian. It would be a great beginning and a break from the belief that most only can approximate Christianity.⁵⁹ It would be a negation of weakness and at the same time, an affirmation of Christianity's truth.

Kierkegaard ends with a postlude, "The Moral," a warning about "dabbling" and "flirting" with reform of the Church. Kierkegaard would rather hold to the Church, even with its many faults, than engage in the business of superficial institutional change. In a later note, during the public attack, March 7, 1855, Kierkegaard acknowledges his keeping *Judge for Yourself* unpublished out of regard for Bishop Mynster and the Church. Mynster was, at many places in *Judge for Yourself*, a thinly disguised target of Kierkegaard's criticism of the clergy who dilute the faith. The later Kierkegaard, of the public attack of 1854-55, speaks, by his own admission, "more decisively, unreservedly, truly," yet without any implication that his earlier voice (in *For Self Examination* and especially in *Judge For Yourself*) was untrue.

The Meaning and Problems of the Attack

Both *For Self Examination*, published in 1851 and the posthumously published *Judge for Yourself* are, like *Practice in Christianity*, earlier experimental, preparatory phases of Kierkegaard's endeavor to "introduce Christianity into Christendom." In studying the journal entries from just before and during Kierkegaard's 1852-1854 public silence, I have been impressed by the theological struggle and work going on in that time. Thus, as Howard Hong suggests, these discourses were part of Kierkegaard's "corrective," proposed though "without authority."⁶⁰ It is also clear, from the material from these texts later used by Kierkegaard in the public attack itself, that *For Self Examination* and *Judge for Yourself* were important parts of the preparatory effort, perhaps even trial runs. Kierkegaard's own tentativeness, his withholding of *Judge for Yourself*, the calls in *For Self Examination* for "confession" and "admission" were rooted in his reluctance to act publicly. There was also his continued hope

for some gesture from Bishop Mynster, as well as his deep turmoil over the political upheaval and changes of 1848. Johannes Sløk sees Kierkegaard's silence from 1852-54 closely connected with the scrambling for a new order, political, social, and even ecclesiastical in the years immediately after 1848, particularly in the government of the old conservative A.S. Ørsted, from April 1853 to December 1854.⁶¹

Bruce Kirmmse has pushed the significance of Kierkegaard's attack on both the Church and the social order of his Denmark even further. He argues that Kierkegaard here calls for not only the dis-establishment of the Church, the separation of Church and state, but rejects the Church herself as a collectivity intruding upon "New Testament Christianity's" appeal solely to the "single individual."⁶² Making sense out of the polemics of the attack on the Church, out of the negative, even anarchic and nihilistic stridency of Kierkegaard's voice in these last writings is most difficult, both on the basis of the texts he published and the journals he kept private. Both Kirmmse and Kresten Nordentoft recognize the radical character of Kierkegaard's thinking in the last years. But even on the basis of all these passages, Kierkegaard himself makes the task of interpretation even more complex, more difficult as was the promise of an earlier pseudonym. He offers sometimes-opposing viewpoints, apparently contradictory perspectives. He is also silent on important matters, and this not accidentally but intentionally.⁶³

In Kierkegaard's last published writings, the earlier sermon from 1851, "God's Unchangingness," becomes a crucial sign of his eschatological vision. For him the Gospel and even the Church are not exhausted by their earthly, weak, sinful proclaimers and embodiments. The Church may be overly domesticated to its culture and historical period. The clergy may be either witless or intentional in their conforming to bourgeois expectations, to passing modes of propriety and order. Even liturgical worship may be distorted to suit the tastes of attendees. But in all these "reductions" or corruptions, something true and good, yes, divine, remains. Kierkegaard rails against the hypocrisy of smug preachers and their audiences, but he does not deny the power of the word of God, which stands in judgment against both. He is vicious in ridiculing the social events that baptism, confirmation, even Holy Communion have become. Yet I have never found a line in which he denies the sacred reality of these sacramental actions. Though he boycotted the Sunday liturgy and "fasted" from the Eucharist for at least the last two years of his life and refused to receive communion on his deathbed, even from his life-long friend, Pastor Emil Boesen, there is nothing in either Kierkegaard's published writings or his journals to suggest he ever denied the saving presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist.⁶⁴ Pastor Boesen records Kierkegaard's vehemence, his refusal to budge from his choice.

We cannot debate it. Dying without receiving Holy Communion or receiving it from a layman I have made my choice. I have chosen. The pastors are civil servants of the Crown and have nothing to do with Christianity...Yes, you see, God is sovereign, but then there are all these people who want to arrange things comfortably for themselves.

So they get Christianity for everybody, and there are a thousand pastors, so that no one in the country can die a blessed death without belonging to it. Then they are sovereign, and God's sovereignty is finished. But he must be obeyed in all things.⁶⁵

This was Kierkegaard's position, less than a month before his death. When Boesen probed, concerned about his faith, Kierkegaard responded without hesitation to his asking if he believed in Christ and took refuge in him in God's name, "Yes, of course, what else?"

Bruce Kirmmse reminds us that by the public attack year of 1854, Kierkegaard finds even the Pentecost conversion of 3000 to be scandalous. No form of congregation or community appeared to him to be compatible with Christ's radical demand of discipleship.⁶⁶ And he observes that in the very last issue, number 10, of *The Moment*, not published till after death, Kierkegaard flatly says, "I am not a Christian." We cannot take this literally, Kirmmse however warns, for in the end Kierkegaard remained the indirect communicator, the man of many voices, the midwife to birth, referring the truth back to the reader from himself.⁶⁷ After all, he did tell Boesen that he expected to become an angel, to rise above the clouds singing, "Hallelujah!"

Dealing with the Negativity

When one surveys the landscape of the literature of the attack, admittedly Kierkegaard's negativity stands out. This is only augmented if one also looks the unpublished journal entries such as those to which Kirmmse points, as well as many others. This is what has caused such difficulty for the interpretation of Kierkegaard over the years, namely how does one reconcile the rest of his writings with this late, overwhelmingly negative perspective? While this negativity does not appear in the two discourses examined here, already during the time of their composition, there are appearances in the journals. Later some of these "hard sayings" would find their way into the numbers of *The Fatherland* and *The Moment*, while others would remain hidden, unpublished in the pages of his journals. It is as if Kierkegaard took aim and blasted away at virtually every aspect of ordinary human life in his society. Nothing escapes the barrage: marriage, family life, child-rearing, one's work and profession. In the journals where the criticism goes on entry after entry, the experience is of a relentless misanthrope, fearful that any human joy will be overlooked in his criticism. In the published versions, the numbers of *The Fatherland* and *The Moment*, the offensive is more explosive, the writing crafted to make the criticism all the more cutting. For me among the most difficult are not just those which unmask Mynster and Martensen or skewer the clergy as "cannibals," but the barrage of invective aimed at the rank-and-file faithful who attend church services, have their children baptized and confirmed, receive Holy Communion and even contribute financially. It is not enough to fire away at the ineffective shepherds. The flock also comes into the cross-hairs. Public worship, the sacraments, preaching, the very existence of the clergy and the Church as a community (*Menighed*): all is seemingly rejected by

Kierkegaard as a falsification, a degradation or erosion of Christ's call to the individual to imitate him in suffering. Long before Bruce Kirmmse's eloquent presentation Berndt Gustafsson faced the same negativity in precisely these terms.⁶⁸

The reality of Kierkegaard's negativity must be faced, not written off due to his depression or some other form of illness. It is not helpful to try to explain it away either. While it has been claimed that his severe understanding of Christianity is essentially a strategy, an exaggeration or inflation of the demands of discipleship to their extremes to offset the bourgeois domestication of the faith, I also think this reasoning is faulty. The critique of so many aspects of life, not just ecclesiastical arrangements, is so consistent, actually relentless, especially in the journals. I believe that there was a great deal of deliberation and planning involved in the critique as it developed over time. There was the delay in publicly criticizing Mynster for example, even when privately Kierkegaard had lost the last shred of respect for the man. Here too I would place the method behind *Practice in Christianity*, which does not mitigate the extreme demands of Christ while at the same time acknowledging human weakness and imperfection.⁶⁹ An "admission" that what was taken for respectable Christianity was not the reality would have been sufficient. For Kierkegaard such simple honesty (*Redelighed*) would have been in harmony with the scriptures' portrayal of both heroic witnessing and human failing.

Against the Church, for the Church

I have long agreed with Bruce Kirmmse that the dis-establishment of the Church from both her political and cultural positions of power was crucial for Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard affirms the government's responsibility for important tasks such as street lighting, but rejects unequivocally the centuries-old alliance between the state and the church, between politics and faith. For precisely this reason he found nothing of worth in Grundtvig's call for political dis-establishment of the church while seeking to maintain its support in Danish culture and society.

Kierkegaard was not the first but one of the most powerful proponents of what Niebuhr called "Christ against culture." And Kierkegaard meant not just against "high" culture, but also against any confusion or conflation of the Gospel with human life. Baptism's radical plunging of a person into Christ's death and rising has nothing to do with all the cuteness of a sweet infant, with the coziness of family life. For Kierkegaard the Eucharist, as Gustafsson emphasized, meant solidarity with the One who willingly went to death for the life of the world. It is communion with Christ "in the night in which he was betrayed," as the words of consecration begin. The Eucharist, as Kierkegaard's *Discourses at the Communion on Fridays* emphatically show, is a sharing of the life of God. Communion with Christ is blessing, joy, peace, and it is also communion with every other Christian. Nowhere, as noted earlier, can I find Kierkegaard ever rejecting the reality of this, in fact, the essential reality of the Gospel and the ways in which it is made visible, present. Does Kierkegaard's almost absurd criticism of Pentecost mean the negation of all he wrote in *Works of Love* and other

places about authentic relationship with the neighbor in God? Does he ultimately distance himself from the wonderful lines about God loving forth (*at opelske*) love in us so that we should always presume love in the other as the sprout" or "germ" in the grain (*som Spiren i Kornet*)? (WL, 216-219)⁷⁰ Is his vision of the Eucharist as fellowship with Christ and the community now denied? I do not believe this is so.

One could say is that in the attack Kierkegaard held onto perspectives that were opposed, possibly irreconcilable, at the same time. After all, he was an eminent dialectician who knew how to say one thing while apparently expressing something entirely different. One could also say that Kierkegaard continued to have the earlier perspective of, say, *Practice in Christianity*, insisting on the Gospel's singularity. He asserts only Christianity's incompatibility with social standards of happiness, notching up the demands of discipleship to radical, otherworldly heights yet all the while recognizing human weakness, our inability to measure up. I have long thought that the church historian and priest with many years of pastoral experience, P.G. Lindhardt, said it best if slightly mysteriously.

The Gospel of God's unchanging mercy towards the one who has nothing else upon which to fall back, this was Kierkegaard's only concern. His uniquely passionate attack on "the Church" must be understood in light of this.⁷¹

Kierkegaard is the relentless opponent, Lindhardt insists, of any ecclesiastical or religious ideology, but also the mortal foe of any critic who would simply make use of his polemics, without the painful honesty his attack demands. Anyone who would "use" Kierkegaard, he concludes, does so at great risk.

The Unchanging, Merciful God

Yet for all the attack's bitterness and his own stubbornness, in his last days of the attack and in his dying Kierkegaard did not lose hold of a God of infinite mercy. He clung to him all the more tightly. This is the icon of God presented in his "last sermon" — the loving and merciful giver of "every good and perfect gift" opening the Kingdom, not just at the end of time, after the grave, when all is past and gone, but already here and now.⁷² In every "moment" God remains present, his grace abundant, and it is here, to the merciful God that Kierkegaard, all through the struggle, says we must hasten.

For all the hesitation and silence, much was done, a great deal had already been said by Kierkegaard, not only in *For Self Examination and Judge for Yourself* but even beforehand, in *Practice in Christianity*. My argument is that not only in the many entries in the journals, but also in these works, Kierkegaard was strategically presenting a theological perspective at once most complex and yet complete, encompassing the whole of the Gospel. In the midst of his apparently one-sided polemics in the public attack, Kierkegaard does not renounce or lose this theological perspective, an eschatological vision of God's creation, of his identification

with humankind in the Incarnation and the Church, of his mercy and love for all in the Resurrection, in short of the *whole* economy of salvation.

Conclusion: Eschatological Perspectives

I have been led to think of a very strong link here between Kierkegaard and an apparently quite different and distant fellow theologian. I have in mind here the brilliant Russian émigré theologian and priest of our time, Sergius Bulgakov.⁷³ While most of his theological writing was singularly creative and controversial, it was for the most part affirmative, an attempt to engage the very basics of Christian faith with the consciousness and language of modernity. At the same time, however, this theological effort was a subtle yet wide-ranging and deep attack on the Church. Though separated by time he and Kierkegaard were kindred spirits. Not only did Bulgakov take aim at the fossilizing of ecclesial thought, he also was ruthless in his indictment of her narrowness and legalism in practice.

In his last book, *The Bride of the Lamb*, Bulgakov explored the consequences of God's having become human for the Church, for life in this world, even for life after death. Of the many insights that he offers, one relates most interestingly to Kierkegaard's own position towards the end of his writing in the attack, at the end of his life. Like Kierkegaard, Bulgakov had more than enough experience of the distortion of Christian teaching and of the weakness of the human dimension of the Church. The son of a priest, he lost his faith in the lifeless theology in which he was immersed in seminary. Bulgakov personally experienced both the sublime beauty of the faith in his father's poor cemetery church but also the worst of the failings of academic theology and the erosion of ecclesial life and spirit.⁷⁴ Yet, like Kierkegaard, he also recognized that the Church and the faith were more than the all too visible inadequacies and failings. Put most directly, the Church, for all her human weaknesses, was nevertheless divine, a doorway into the Kingdom, and an authentic encounter with God.

In the Incarnation, and most especially in Christ's death and resurrection, God has won out over evil, heaven has come to dwell on earth, and eternity pervades time. Despite all the failure of the shepherds of the flock of God, the pastors of the Church, despite the distorted version of the Gospel being preached, for Kierkegaard as for Bulgakov, there remains a Gospel, a Church that is the New Jerusalem, the kingdom without end.

Like Bulgakov almost a century later, Kierkegaard saw the decadence of the Church in his time. But he also saw beyond this, so eschatological was his vision. It was framed by his awareness of the Kingdom, that is, of God's presence despite the Church's very human failings. If Kierkegaard really does write off the Church so radically as some of his journal entries (and some scholars) might imply, he would then be writing off God as well. Since the Incarnation, since the appearance of the "humanity of God," who is Christ, there can be no salvation, no reconciliation except with the creatures, the human beings among God has come to dwell. This and not just the institutional framework, is what Kierkegaard understands as "Church." I would argue that he does not absolutely reject the Church, since Christ, the prototype (*Forbilledet*) not only requires imitation but also is the Savior (*Frelseren*) who reconciles God with each soul.⁷⁵ To conclude

otherwise, to see both the Church and the world as essentially lost, would be to affirm not the ultimate victory of the Resurrection but the final triumph of death, of the Evil One. Kierkegaard, like Bulgakov after him, and like the Fathers before them both, cannot and does not concede this.

Kierkegaard's publication of his 1851 homily, "God's Unchangingness" in August, 1855, just after no. 7, the most radical in *The Moment* on the Church and clergy, is in my opinion, not the only public sign of this "eschatological" vision, though perhaps the principal one. There are other echoes such as in number eight of *The Moment*, where the God of all eternity appears and it is a loving God who seeks us.⁷⁶ Other indications keep appearing in the late journals. Yet all the elements of this radical vision are already there in *For Self Examination* and *Judge for Yourself*: the continuing presence and mercy of God's humanity, Christ, in the Church, of the ultimate power of the Resurrection. These two texts, considered backwards from the polemics of the public attack, nevertheless move us forwards, in Kierkegaard's own much loved sense of movement. Already in them we see the fierce challenge he will make to the Church and to Christians, but also his ultimate faith in the Kingdom and God's peace and joy.

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NOTES

1. *For Self Examination/Judge for Yourself*, [hereafter FSE] Howard and Edna Hong, trans., *Kierkegaard's Writings XXI*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 209.

2. See *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, 2nd ed., P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr, E. Torsting, N. Thulstrup, N.J. Cappelørn (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968-1978), XI-2, A396.

3. FSE, 171.

4. *Letters and Papers from Prison*, rev. ed., Reginald Fuller, Frank Clarke et al., trans., (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 197-198.

5. On the varied interpretations of the later Kierkegaard, see Bruce H. Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), Kresten Nordentoft, "Hvad siger Brand-Majoren?" *Kierkegaards opgør med sin samtid*, (Copenhagen: Gad, 1973), Johannes Sløk, *Da Kierkegaard tav*, (Copenhagen: Han Reitzel, 1980) and *Kierkegaards univers*, (Copenhagen: Centrum, 1983).

6. Michael Plekon, "Kierkegaard, the Church and Theology of Golden Age Denmark," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34:2 (1983): 245-266, "Prophetic Criticism, Incarnational Optimism: On Recovering the Late Kierkegaard," *Religion* 13 (1983): 137-153, "Introducing Christianity into Christendom: Reinterpreting the Late Kierkegaard," *Anglican Theological Review* 64:3 (1982): 327-352.

7. Also see "Blessing and the Cross: The Late Kierkegaard's Christological Dialectic," *Academy* 39 (1983): 25-50 and "Protest and Affirmation: The Late Kierkegaard on Christ, the Church and Society," *Quarterly Review* 2:3 (1982): 43-62.

8. *Works of Love*, Howard and Edna Hong, trans. *Kierkegaard's Writings*, XVI, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 218.

9. See Kresten Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, trans. Bruce H.

Kirmmse, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978): 323-386 and Søren Kierkegaard. *Bidrag til kritikken af den borgerlige selvoptagethed* (Copenhagen: Dansk Universitets Presse, 1977): 168-183, 238-243. Also see Louise Carroll Keeley, "Subjectivity and World in Works of Love," in *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community*, George B. Connell and C. Stephen Evans, eds. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1991): 96-108.

10. *Kierkegaard's Attack Upon "Christendom," 1854-1855*, Walter Lowrie, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 5.

11. See my essay, "Kierkegaard the Theologian: The Roots of His Theology in Works of Love," in Connell and Evans: 2-17 and in "Kierkegaard and the Eucharist," *Studia Liturgica*, 22, 1992, 214-236.

12. FSE, 24.

13. FSE, 26-31.

14. FSE, 37-42.

15. FSE, 19.

16. FSE, 115-116.

17. FSE, 56.

18. FSE, 57.

19. FSE, 65.

20. FSE, 65.

21. FSE, 67-70.

22. FSE, 76.

23. FSE, 81-85.

24. FSE, 104.

25. *Either/Or, II*, Howard and Edna Hong, trans., *Kierkegaard's Writings IV*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 339-354.

26. *Kierkegaard's Attack*, 208-211.

27. FSE, 124.

28. FSE, 129-130.

29. FSE, 131-132.

30. FSE, 132, 135.

31. FSE, 133, 140.

32. FSE, 137.

33. FSE, 141.

34. Kirmmse, 294-297, 341-346.

35. Col. 1:15. See Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*. (Crestwood NY: Oakwood / St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990).

36. FSE, 159.

37. *Kierkegaard's Attack*, 203-232.

38. FSE, 160-164.

39. FSE, 165.

40. FSE, 191.

41. See *Luther's Works*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut G. Lehmann, (Philadelphia and St. Louis: Fortress and Concordia) 1958-75, 24: 315-316 and

41. : 164-165.

42. FSE, 169.

43. FSE, 191.

44. FSE, 171-179. This Christology was also forcefully stated earlier in *Practice in Christianity*, particularly the "offense" of the suffering-servant God-Man, Christ, and His power to draw all to Himself, as the Risen One. (PC, 145-262)

45. FSE, 175-176.

46. FSE, 179-184.

47. FSE, 184.

48. FSE, 187.
49. FSE, 192.
50. See Jørgen Bukdahl, *Søren Kierkegaard and the Common Man*, Bruce H. Kirmmse, trans. (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans), 2001.
51. FSE, 195-196.
52. FSE, 199.
53. FSE, 201.
54. See N.F.S. Grundtvigs *Værker i Udvalg*, 1-10, George Christensen and Hal Koch, eds. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1940-49) 7:1-273 (*Den Christelige Bornelærdom*) and P.G. Lindhardt, ed. *Konfrontation and Regeneration* [*Grundtvig's sermons in the Church Years 1854-55 and 1855-56*] (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1974, 1977).
55. FSE, 202-203.
56. FSE, 203.
57. FSE, 207.
58. FSE, 204.
59. FSE, 208.
60. FSE, xviii.
61. Sløk, *Da Kierkegaard tav*, 41-78.
62. "Out with it: The modern breakthrough: Kierkegaard and Denmark," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15-47 and "The Thunderstorm: Kierkegaard's Ecclesiology," *Faith and Philosophy* 17, 1, January 2000, 87-102.
63. See my essay, "Kierkegaard at the End: His 'Last' Sermon, Eschatology and the Attack on the Church," *Faith and Philosophy* 17, 1, January 2000, 68-86.
64. *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, collected, edited, annotated, trans by Bruce H. Kirmmse and Virginia R. Laursen, (Princeton University Press, 1996), 125-126.
65. *ibid*, 126.
66. "The Thunderstorm," 98-99. Also see his essay, "Out with it": The modern breakthrough: Kierkegaard and Denmark," in which the development of Kierkegaard's radical rejection of the Church is forcefully argued.
67. See Kirmmse's essay, " 'I Am Not a Christian' - a 'Sublime Lie'? or: 'Without Authority,' Playing Desdemona to Christendom's Othello," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, Paul Houe, Gordon D. Marion, Sven Hakon Rossel, eds. (Amsterdam/ Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 129-136.
68. *I den natt: Studier till Søren Kierkegaards förfallsteori*, (Stockholm: Diakonistyrelsens Bokförlag, 1962)
69. *Practice in Christianity*, *Kierkegaard's Writings XX*, Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, eds. and trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 67-68.
70. See Kresten Nordentoft's penetrating and beautiful examination of this view of love as "fundamental healing" in *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, 376-386.
71. "Søren Kierkegaards opgør med kirken," in *Øieblikket*, (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzel, 1961), 24.
72. I explore this image of God in a forthcoming essay, "The God of the Edifying Discourses."
73. On this brilliant but not well known theologian see Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century*, (NY: Macmillan), 1963; *A Bulgakov Anthology*, Nicolas Zernov and James Pain, eds. and trans., (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976); *Sergii Bulgakov : Towards a Russian Political Theology*, Rowan Williams, ed., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Soloviev, Bukharev, Bulgakov*, (Grand Rapids MI:

Eerdmans, 2001) and the chapter on him in my *Living Icons*, (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). One of his major works, also his last book is now available: *The Bride of the Lamb*, Boris Jakim, trans. (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

74. For the complexity and sheer adventures in his life, see the biographical material on Bulgakov in the studies by Nicolas Zernov, Rowan Williams, Paul Valliere and myself previously cited. The path of his fascinating life led him out of the Church and Christianity into political economy and Marxism and then back into a life of service as a priest and theologian. To top it all off, he was a person of great holiness, a mystic gifted with personal experiences of God which shaped his remarkable pastoral ministry. See Alexander Schmemmann's account of this in "Trois Images," *Le messenger orthodoxe*, 57, I, 1972, 2-20.

75. FSE, 209. Also see *Papirer*, X-1 A 279, 1849 entry 334 in *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, eds. and trans., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967).

76. *Kierkegaard's Attack*, 239-247.