SØREN KIERKEGAARD

TRANSLATED BY WALTER LOWRIE

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

Concluding Unscientific Postscript

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KIERKEGAARD'S

CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

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Translated from the Danish by

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Completed after his death
and provided with Introduction and Notes by

WALTER LOWRIE

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Dedicated to the Memory of
Professor Frederick J. E. Woodbridge
a Great Teacher

FOREWORD

THIS publication of the concluding *Unscientific Postscript* by Søren Kierkegaard, marks not only the first English translation of the greatest work of the Danish thinker, but it also marks the last work of its translator, whose devotion to Kierkegaard began with his accidental discovery of this same work in a public library nearly forty years ago. As a young graduate student in philosophy, not wholly oriented in his thought, he chanced upon this volume in the original Danish. He took it home with him, and in the course of the next twenty-four hours devoured it. That discovery marked a crisis in his intellectual and spiritual development: he had found a philosopher who could guide him in his thinking, one with whom he had many things in common—a talent for dialectic, a feeling for literary expression, and, above all, a burning passion for intellectual honesty. Nothing else ever exerted so profound an influence upon him as did the writings of Kierkegaard in whose thought he was to saturate himself for the rest of his life. Indeed, for a time he was forced to lay this reading aside in order to free himself from too close an adherence to Kierkegaard's style. But always Kierkegaard was a living force to him, and I think it doubtful whether a student ever passed through his classes without hearing him allude not once but many times to some phase of Kierkegaard's thought.

Not for many years did he trust himself to attempt to translate for publication any of Kierkegaard's works. So keen was his sensitivity for the delicate nuances of Kierkegaard's literary expression, that he was his own most severe critic in his attempt to reproduce in English not merely Kierkegaard's thought but his unique poetic style, and never did he attain a form that fully satisfied him.

For many years, his was a lone voice crying in the wilderness, for though Kierkegaard's works had long been known in Germany and France, even his name was practically unknown to English-speaking people. Then some eight years ago Dr. Walter Lowrie of Princeton, burning with a dynamic enthusiasm for the Kierkegaardian literature, returned to this country, and began his crusade for an English edition of Kierkegaard's works. Under this stimulus, and encouraged by the cooperation of one more aggressively active than himself, Mr. Swenson completed his translation of the *Philosophical Fragments,* and then took

up in earnest the translation of the *Postscript.* This he felt to be peculiarly his task, since the *Fragments* and the *Postscript* constitute Kierkegaard's chief contributions to philosophical thought. Perhaps, too, he felt that he was discharging a debt of gratitude in the translation of the work which had initiated him into Kierkegaard's thought. Unfortunately, owing to ill health and the press of academic duties, along with his excessive meticulousness already alluded to, he was not able to complete it, and died leaving about one-sixth of it unfinished.

Dr. Lowrie at once most generously volunteered to complete the translation and supervise its publication. For this I owe him a debt of gratitude which words but poorly express. I know, however, that for him his best reward is the consciousness that he, more than any other one man, has ensured the publication in English of nearly all of the more important works of Søren Kierkegaard.

I also wish to thank Mr. Brandt of Princeton University Press for his very sympathetic cooperation in making this publication possible, to acknowledge gratefully the conspicuous aid received from the American-Scandinavian Foundation, and to express to Miss Hanna Astrup Larsen, Literary Secretary of the Foundation, and to Professor Robert Herndon Fife of Columbia University, my appreciation of their diligence in reading the proofs.

LILLIAN MARVIN SWENSON

EDITOR'S PREFACE

BESIDES a sense of personal loss at the death of David F. Swenson on February 11, 1940, I felt dismay that he had left unfinished his translation of the *Unscientific Postscript*. I had longed to see it published among the first of Kierkegaard's works in English. In the spring of 1935 it did not seem exorbitant to hope that it might be ready for the printer by the end of that year. For in March I learned from Professor Swenson that he had years before "done about two thirds of a rough translation." In 1937/38 he took a sabbatical leave from his university for the sake of finishing this work. Yet after all it was not finished —partly because Professor Swenson was already incapacitated by the illness which eventually resulted in his death; but also because he aimed at a degree of perfection which hardly can be reached by a translator. At one time he expressed to me his suspicion that perhaps, as in the translation of Kant's philosophy, it might require the cooperation of many scholars during several generations before the translation of Kierkegaard's terminology could be definitely settled. I hailed with joy this new apprehension, which promised a speedy conclusion of the work, and in the words of Luther I urged him to "sin boldly."

But already (as is now apparent) high blood pressure was rendering it doubly difficult for him to make the thousand decisions involved in a meticulous translation. He died leaving the translation unfinished. Fortunately, it was more nearly finished than I had hoped. In asking me to complete the work, Mrs. Swenson furnished me with a carefully rewritten copy of the manuscript. My part therefore is reduced to small proportions. Besides furnishing the Introduction and the Notes in the Appendix, I have only had to translate the last 77 pages of the text, and pages 152-67 which had been accidentally omitted in the translation of the earlier part. Emphatically, this book is Dr. Swenson's. Even in the part for which I am responsible, I have been scrupulous not to use the terms I prefer but the locutions he had chosen.

This compliance is not irksome to me, because of the veneration I feel for Professor Swenson as a philosophic thinker and as a man—more expressly as a Christian man. From the moment when I first ventured upon the dubious task of trying to make Kierkegaard and his works known and appreciated in England and America, Professor Swenson

has been my firm support. Although he was younger than I, he was far better acquainted with Danish, and far more profoundly versed in the thought of Kierkegaard, with which he had been passionately occupied for more than thirty years. I have recently been reviewing the letters exchanged with Professor Swenson in the course of barely five years. Including copies of my letters, there are one hundred and forty-two of them, for the most part long letters, carefully thought out. On this account I am the more vividly conscious of the great debt I owe him. I am impressed at seeing how much give and take there is in these letters. That is to say: I was well aware how much he had to give; but, as he was a severe critic, I am surprised now to note, on reviewing the whole correspondence, how much "take" there was. The cause of Kierkegaard has suffered by the death of David Swenson a very serious setback, and that at a time when our collaborators in England are immobilized by the war.

There was only one point where I was disposed to balk in following Swenson. I had fiercely combatted, both by letter and by word of mouth, his use of the word "reason" as the translation of *Forstand*—instead of "understanding." I have been rereading one of his long letters, in which he marshalled many arguments for his choice. He persisted in using it in his translation of the *Fragments,* and, as he had given me no inkling of a change of mind, I had no doubt that he would use it in the *Postscript.* But I was not put to this test, for I was relieved to see that in this manuscript he has invariably used "understanding." I mention the fact because I am sure he would have remarked upon this change had he lived to write the Preface.

I have read this work, first in German and then in Danish, I cannot say how many times; and now when I have reread it in Professor Swenson's translation, first in the manuscript and then in the printer's proof, I am profoundly impressed by the accuracy and lucidity of his rendering. And it has style. It is worthy of Kierkegaard, and surely it will last as an impressive memorial of Swenson. For this is not only a big book, it is a book difficult to understand, and without understanding it thoroughly it would not be possible to translate it adequately. I wonder if any great book in a foreign tongue has ever in the first instance been so adequately translated as this.

It is not by accident that, while I was engaged in translating the religious works, Professor Swenson assumed responsibility for the *Fragments* and the *Postscript;* nor was this division of labor due solely to the consideration that it needed a philosopher to deal with the works which

are incomparably the most important for philosophy as well as for theology; it was determined also by the fact that for Swenson personally the *Postscript* had a decided religious value. He told me that, when as a young man he was beginning his career as assistant professor, knowing all the views philosophers have entertained, but having nothing to support him except the faith his mother had taught him as a child, he happened to be attracted by the quaint name of a book, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments." He took it home, read it all that night and all the next day, with the profoundest emotion; and in this book he found support for his stalwart Christian life.

The late Professor Eduard Geismar of Copenhagen related to me an experience which was in every respect similar, except that his mental excitement was so great that the physician felt compelled to prohibit him from reading anything of Kierkegaard's for a year. When that year was over he devoted his life to enforcing the lessons he had learnt from S. K. The last labor in this behalf was the lecture tour in the United States which Professor Swenson and I engineered.

Probably none of the reviewers of this translation will be so profoundly moved. Yet this may not be ascribed to any fault in the translation, for Kierkegaard reported three years later that only sixty copies of this book had been sold and that it had nowhere been reviewed (X[6]B 114, p. 146). In Germany, however, it has had an incalculable influence upon theology, and a new philosophy, the so-called Existential Philosophy, has been prompted by it. Perhaps it will make its way slowly in England and America. It is in fact a very big book; and yet no great work on philosophy or theology, if we except the Dialogues of Plato, has been written with so much wit, with so much art; and many may find pleasure in reading it, even though they have no previous acquaintance with these austere disciplines.

It is another question whether they will understand it. Doubtless many will feel the need of a commentary or of an ample introduction. Would that Swenson had lived to write it! I shall not attempt to do here what he might have done. As I have said, this is already a big book, therefore I propose to make the introduction as short as possible. I regard it only as an orientation. A few quotations from S. K.'s Works and from his Papers suffice to determine the place of this book among his writings. An adequate discussion of the problems involved in this book would require

a separate volume. Such a discussion ought to be separate, for it is only fair that in this volume S. K. should be allowed to speak for himself.

As usual, I would express my obligations to Dr. Lange, the only surviving editor of the Danish edition of S. K.'s Collected Works, for permission to make use of many of the notes which I place in the Appendix and indicate in the text by small arabic numerals. The notes of the Danish edition have been gradually accumulated. In some respects they are inadequate, in others they seem to me redundant. Only occasionally have I furnished a translation of Latin and Greek words, and still more rarely have I indicated the source of the very numerous Biblical quotations and allusions. But if this proves to be what the age demands, it can be supplied in a subsequent edition. Professor Swenson has in many instances preferred to follow Kierkegaard's rather singular punctuation, which was criticized in his day and defended by him as an aid to reading aloud.

Princeton
March 10, 1941

WALTER LOWRIE

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

THIS, as I remarked in the Preface, is so big a book that between its covers no room is left for an adequate introduction. It might be said, on the other hand, that this book is so big and so important, and withal so complicated, that more than any other it requires an introduction. But this means that the introduction, if there is to be any, must be outside of these covers. The only competent introduction at present available is contained in the *Kierkegaard Studien* of Professor Emanuel Hirsch (1930-33), pp. 729-827.

Here I propose to provide only the most necessary hints for the preliminary orientation of the reader.

The title, as S. K. first conceived it (VI B 88), was as follows:

Logical Problems
by
Johannes Climacus
edited by
S. Kierkegaard.

Later he proposed (VI B 98):

Concluding [simple] Postscript
to the
Philosophical Fragments
by
Johannes Climacus

edited by
S. Kierkegaard.

In the title actually used, the word "unscientific" may be misleading, and it must be interpreted by the word "simple," which S. K. occasionally used even after the book was printed with its present title.

In the title, the word "concluding" has emphatic significance. It indicates S. K.'s intention of terminating here his literary work. He says in his Journal (VII A 4, Feb. 7, 1846), "My idea is to give up being an author (which I can only be altogether or not at all) and prepare myself to be a pastor." This was a serious resolution, which many times was reaffirmed in the Journal (cf. VII A 221, Jan. 20, 1847), and it was a natural course for him to take, seeing that as a Candidate in Theology he had

prepared himself for this career. But it was not exactly to a career he was looking forward: he proposed to retire to a country parsonage and remain there for the rest of his life. He had been compelled to become an author because his experience with Regina had made him a poet. The first three of his pseudonymous books were written for "her." But he was born a philosopher, and he felt a potent urge to say what he says in the *Fragments* and in the *Postscript.* His resolution to conclude with the *Postscript* proves how great an importance he attached to this work. In his Journal he gave thanks to God that he had been enabled to say adequately what he wanted to say.

However, this resolution was not carried out. The moment he was free from preoccupation with this great work, having sent the manuscript to the printer, he wrote the challenge to the *Corsair* which brought down upon him a deluge of ridicule which prompted him to stay at his post. If he were then to give up writing and retire to a country cure, it would be interpreted, he thought, as a cowardly retreat.

So it came about that the *Postscript,* instead of being his concluding work, proved to be, as two years later he viewed it in retrospect when writing *The Point of View* (pp. 13, 41 *f.*, 97 *f.*), the central point of his whole authorship. It was central, as he remarked at that time, even with respect to the total bulk of the works which preceded and followed it. In relation to the immense production of the year 1848, it was no longer central in that material sense, but it remained "the turning point." In the passages referred to above, S. K. says: "The *Concluding Postscript* is not an aesthetic work, but neither is it religious; hence, it is by a pseudonym, though I adjoin my name as editor, as I did not do in the case of any purely aesthetic work. The *Concluding Postscript,* as I have already said, constitutes the turning point in my whole work as an author. It presents the 'problem,' that of becoming a Christian. Having assumed responsibility for the whole pseudonymous aesthetic work as a description of *one* way a person may take to become a Christian (viz. *away* from the aesthetic so as to become a Christian), it undertakes to describe the other (viz. *away* from Speculation, etc. so as to become a Christian)." Thus the *Postscript,* so far from being the conclusion of S. K.'s work as an author, is the starting point for the serious religious books which followed it, and it deals dialectically with the problems which underlie the Edifying Discourses approximately contemporary with it. Inasmuch as I have been engaged in translating the serious religious works of 1848, which find their definition and dialectical support in the *Postscript,* I

have been very eager to see this work published in English, and am more than willing now to take a hand in producing it.

The second word in the strange title which S. K. bestowed upon this book is far too significant to be ignored. It is the word "unscientific." The Danish word is substantially the same as the German *wissenschaftlich* and is used with the same latitude. S. K. was inclined to satirize "the professor" in all the forms he assumed, he was against pedantry of all sorts. A glance at the Table of Contents is enough to reveal that in this book all accepted rules for the composition of a philosophic treatise are defied. It mingles together a little of everything, a little about history, a good deal about "speculation" and metaphysics, "something about Lessing," more than a little psychology, still more about religion and about Christianity in particular, the most subtle and abstract definitions alternating with poetical prose, and the whole of it spiced with the condiment of humor. I remember that in one of his letters to me, Professor Swenson remarked with some sense of dismay that he knew of no author who so swiftly and thoroughly altered his style. In English we have no other word to translate *uvidenskabelig* but "unscientific." The reference of this word is narrower, and yet it does not misrepresent the meaning of the title. For it was principally against the natural sciences S. K. inveighed—notwithstanding that in his youth, although he was nominally a student of theology, he proposed to devote his life to the study of the natural sciences. The year this book was written (1846) he made the following entry in his Journal (VII A 186, cf. 187-200, and for the year 1853, X^5 A 73):

"Almost everything that nowadays flourishes most conspicuously under the name of science (especially as natural science) is not really science but curiosity. *In the end all corruption will come about as a consequence of the natural sciences.*... But such a scientific method becomes especially dangerous and pernicious when it would encroach also upon the sphere of spirit. Let it deal with plants and animals and stars in that way; but to deal with the human spirit in that way is blasphemy, which only weakens ethical and religious passion. Even the act of eating is more reasonable than speculating with a microscope upon the functions of digestion.... A dreadful sophistry spreads microscopically and telescopically into tomes, and yet in the last resort produces nothing, qualitatively understood, though it does, to be sure, cheat men out of the simple, profound and passionate wonder which gives impetus to the ethical.... *The only thing certain is the ethical-religious.*"

Science, he says, by pretending to explain the "miracle" of qualitative change, only throws dust in our eyes. In so far as it succeeds in persuading men that it is just on the point of explaining everything, it suffocates faith, depriving us of the air we must breathe or die, defrauding us not only of the wonder which is the starting point of religion, but of "the possibility" which makes spiritual life possible. About the ultimate effects of science he makes prognostications which in our day we must recognize as veridical.

The choice of the pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, is interesting and important. It may be a matter of only curious interest that S. K. found this name applied to a Greek monk who was celebrated as the author of a book entitled "The Ladder of Heaven." S. K. adopted it as a denomination for himself when in 1842 he started to write a polemic against the followers of Descartes, entitled *Johannes Climacus; or, De omnibus dubitandum est* (IV B 1, pp. 103-82). This work was left unfinished—perhaps because he began to realize that the real adversary was Hegel, perhaps only because he was diverted by the urge to write two more books for Regina. But when, with the *Fragments,* he returned again to philosophy, Johannes Climacus appears again as his pseudonym. A glance at the earlier work, which was in large part autobiographical (see my *Kierkegaard,* pp. 29 *ff.*), will make it evident that this was S. K.'s most personal pseudonym. Whereas each of the other pseudonyms may be taken to represent one or another side of S. K.'s character, or a possibility which he discovered in himself, Johannes was neither more nor less than the young man Kierkegaard as he was in his twenty-fifth year, before his conversion in 1838, a young man thoroughly informed about Christianity, who had meditated profoundly upon its dialectical positions, was attracted to it like a moth to the candle, but, still critical, unresolved as yet to make the leap of faith. Hence, Climacus affirms emphatically that he is not a Christian. It is true he gives himself out to be thirty years of age (about the same age as S. K. when he wrote this book), but this merely signifies that he was far more developed intellectually than was S. K. at the time of his conversion. S. K. was a Christian before he wrote the *Postscript,* yet on looking back upon it he acknowledged that it was "a deliberation." By this I understand him to mean that until he had stated to himself in the sharpest form the paradoxical implications of the Christian faith, he could not be said to have accepted them. Only when he had surely appropriated these positions did he presume to call them his own; hence, in his Edifying Discourses,

even at this time, he essayed to give expression only (as he affirms) to religion in the sphere of immanence, which in this work he distinguishes as "religion A."

Another leap was required of him before he could reach "religion B," that is to say, Christianity in its distinctive form as a paradoxical religion. I do not say a *second* leap, for a leap had already been involved in the passage from the aesthetical to the ethical. And when the final leap had been made, S. K. was by no means at the end of his path; he was still struggling to "become a Christian," that is, to become existentially what he was. At this stage, when he personally was confronted by the obligation of a disciple to imitate Christ, and by his writings was confronting others with this serious challenge, his pseudonym was still a Climacus, but now a very different figure, called Anti-Climacus, who, instead of saying that he was not yet a Christian, proclaims himself a Christian in a superlative degree.

Johannes Climacus, as author of the *Fragments,* promised a sequel, which was to clothe in their historical costume the abstract problems presented in the earlier book. The *Postscript* obviously does much more than this. So much would be accomplished by the mere statement by Climacus that he was talking about Christianity. But why was the sequel so slow in coming? There is no answer to this query—unless one is content with the observation that in S. K.'s mind many and various thoughts were teeming and demanding utterance. A psychological study, *The Concept of Dread,* was published only four days later than the *Fragments,* and along with that a rollicking book of humor entitled *Prefaces;* the *Four Edifying Discourses* followed, then *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions,* which were intended to "accompany" the *Stages on Life's Way,* which appeared on April 30, 1845, as a repetition, in a certain sense, of *Either-Or,* and thus a reversion to the earlier category, the aesthetic.

The most positive aid to orientation in this work is the observation that the theme of the whole is expressed in the problem of Johannes Climacus, "How am *I* to become a Christian?"

When the problem is stated in this way, the response of theology must be altered at every point, for hitherto it has been formulated in answer to the objective question, "What is Christianity?"

And when the problem is stated in this subjective way, it is natural and necessary that this book should deal at great length, as it does in the earlier part, with the question, "What is truth?" That is where Lessing

comes in. Also it will seem natural, if not necessary, that Climacus should reply: "Subjectivity is the truth."

The Christian therefore has to renounce the comfort of calm assurance bolstered upon objective proofs, and must be content with a fighting certainty. He constantly lies over a depth of seventy thousand fathoms.

What renders faith perpetually uneasy (i.e. what insures that it shall always remain faith and not become knowledge) is the paradox and the possibility of the offense. In its extremest expression, the paradox is the God-Man, the fact that a man's relation to his eternal blessedness is dependent upon something historical, something moreover which, by its very nature, cannot become historical. But this is the apex. Below that, every thought of God is paradoxical to an "exister." Thus the unknowable God was a paradox for Socrates. S. K.'s thought is akin to the *coincidentia oppositorum* and the *docta ignorantia* of Nicholas of Cues.

The reader will not fail to observe that, in S. K.'s language, "to exist" does not mean simply "to be." The difference becomes clear when the etymological meaning is stressed. *Ex-sistere* means to stand out from. Heidegger in his Existential Philosophy strives to render the essential thought by *in-der-Welt-sein,* and by *Da-sein,* thus indicating the *thereness,* the concretion of the *ego* in relation to its environment and its task. In our tongue we might express S. K.'s meaning well enough in some instances by the word "life," as when he says that Christianity is not essentially a doctrine but an existential communication. We are familiar with Coleridge's word to the same effect, "not a doctrine but a life." Unfortunately it is not possible in an English translation to limit the use of the word "existence" exclusively to this sense, as a rendering of the Danish *Existenz;* it has to be used also in the more generic sense of coming into being, as a translation of the Danish *Tilværelse* or *bliven til,* since our language has no equivalent for the German *Dasein.*

But in addition to this concise positive orientation, a negative orientation may be needed, especially the warning which Professor Hirsch utters against treading the well-worn paths of German misinterpretation. The *Postscript* does present an either-or; but the alternative is *not*: the ethical and religion of immediacy/*or* Christianity in its most paradoxical form. From the very first S. K.'s either/or was: either the aesthetical/or the ethical and the religious. The only difference now is that he has learned to discriminate between "religion A" and "religion B." But with this he has no notion of discarding the former. It goes without saying that the religion of immanence and of immediacy which he continued to

expound in his Edifying Discourses meant for him true religion. He often asserted that immediacy is the element of religion, without which it cannot live. Therefore he posited "a new immediacy after reflection." Even of the aesthetic he says that when one passes over to the ethical sphere this is "not abolished but dethroned." But of "religion A" he never would have said that it was dethroned when one had reached "religion B." Nor would he have said this of the ethical. The most extravagant of Léon Chestov's misinterpretations of Kierkegaard is the affirmation that he triumphantly repudiated the ethical. The ethical always implied for S. K. a God-relationship. It is significant that in his delimitation of the "spheres" or stages, the ethical culminated in repentance, just as the aesthetic culminated in despair, and both of these positions are divided only by a line from the religious—only a line, but a line which one can cross only by a leap. The either/or of the *Postscript* is defined by Hirsch substantially in these terms: *either* aesthetic immediacy, whether it be eudaemonistic search for pleasure, or despair, or religious or metaphysical self-explanation/*or* the ethical along with the religion of immanence and immediacy and (as its culmination) Christianity apprehended as paradox. All of these latter terms belong emphatically on the same side of the alternative. This means that S. K.'s ideal was truly humane. He conceived that only through repentance (the sense of guilt) and through religious faith (including the paradoxical faith in the forgiveness of sin) does man become truly a man.

The reader will observe with how much care the "existence spheres" are defined in this work, which carries out more accurately the classification begun in the *Stages.* Here for the first time we find a clear determination of the position of irony as the *confinium* of the aesthetical, and of humor as the *confinium* of the ethical. This is, at least, interesting, for never before had these problems been dealt with, or even envisaged. However, the reader may wonder whether it was worth while devoting so much space in this book to the delimitation of the spheres. But evidently this was a question of considerable importance not only to Climacus but to Kierkegaard, who in *The Book on Adler* found frequent use for these categories. If to the reader all this seems of little importance, it is all the more important that he should be warned not to dismiss the subject hastily and so fall into a misunderstanding which is only too naturally suggested by the title of the *Stages.* For the word "stage" seems to imply that with each advance the preceding stage is definitely left behind. But even in the *Stages,* Climacus spoke more commonly of

the "spheres" of existence, and it is evident that the spheres overlap and penetrate one another.

S. K. seized the opportunity offered by this "concluding" book to explain through the mouth of Johannes Climacus the purport of all his previous pseudonymous works. To us this interpretation is very valuable, but it does not go far enough, because S. K. was not yet ready to concede that his method of "indirect communication" was condemned by the fact that an explanation was needed. Hence the thing had to be done over again two years later in *The Point of View*. S. K., who had so much to say against reviews and reviewers, felt naturally some embarrassment in "reviewing" his own works, and in one of his papers he offers his pseudonyms an apology for reviewing works which were cast in the form of "double reflection" and so rendered inaccessible to the objective scrutiny of a reviewer.

But this long passage about the pseudonymous works is far from being an intrusion in this book. It was appropriate that when he was pointing out "the other way of becoming a Christian" (i.e. by abandoning Speculation), he should recall the first way, which he had indicated in the earlier works (i.e. away from the aesthetical); for this new way could not be supposed to supersede the first, both were necessary, and by this passage S. K. intimates that his whole effort from the beginning had been the same, namely, to point out the way to become a Christian.

In this passage S. K. virtually, though in an indirect fashion, assumed responsibility for all the pseudonymous works, since every one knew that they were his. Hirsch calls this a "retraction"; but it was a retraction only in the sense that *The Point of View* was a retraction when it asserted that from the first he was not an aesthetical writer.

The direct and explicit declaration that he was the author of all of the pseudonymous works, that is, the "First and Last Declaration" appended to this book, was an afterthought. It was not sent to the printer till after the rest of the manuscript had been delivered, and it was sent with instructions to print it in smaller type and without numeration of the pages. It was to be regarded, he said, as a "dust-cover."

Rather than prolong the Introduction, I have put in the appended notes a few quotations which show that S. K., polemical as he was, was at the same time dialectical enough to appreciate highly the qualities and talents of the men in this book whom he singles out for attack: Hegel, Martensen and Grundtvig. Essentially his polemic here was directed, not against these men (Martensen, for example, was not men-

tioned by name), but against Speculation. He was always courageous enough to shoot at the most shining marks, and his polemic was the more effective for the fact that it was sharply directed against the most distinguished representatives of the positions which he denounced. It may need to be remarked that this work possesses perennial importance because essentially it contends not merely against a system of thought which has had its day (the Hegelian philosophy), but against a way of thinking which is still prevalent and still finds in Hegel its most brilliant exponent.

This book is full of humorous gibes against J. L. Heiberg, who was recognized as *arbiter elegantiarum* in the Danish literary circles of that time, and with whom S. K. always stood on the best of terms. Heiberg, although he professed to be a Hegelian, did not seriously represent any position which S. K. felt called upon to attack. Although at the very moment when the *Postscript* was published, S. K. found himself in conflict with Goldschmidt, the editor of the *Corsair,* it may be said that there was no one in Copenhagen who more highly appreciated this young man's talents or had so sincere a liking for him. His last polemic was directed against Mynster, the deceased Primate of Denmark, and one of the greatest contemporary figures in that land—who also was the man whom S. K. had admired above all others. It was a case of disappointed love.

WALTER LOWRIE

CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRAGMENTS

A Mimic-Pathetic-Dialectic Composition
An Existential Contribution

By

JOHANNES CLIMACUS

Responsible for Publication:

S. KIERKEGAARD

Copenhagen
1846
[Feb. 27]

Ἀλλὰ δή γ', ὦ Σώκρατες, τί ὀίει ταῦτ' εἶναι ξυνάπαντα; κνίσματα τοί ἐστι καὶ περιτμήματα τῶν λόγων, ὅπερ ἄρτι ἔλεγον, κατὰ βραχὺ διηρημένα.

HIPPIAS MAJOR §304 A.

But really, Socrates, what do you think this all amounts to? It is really scrapings and parings of systematic thought, as I said a while ago, divided into bits.

PREFACE

SELDOM perhaps has a literary enterprise been more favored by fortune, or had a reception more in accordance with the author's wishes, than was the case with my *Philosophical Fragments.*[1] Hesitant and reserved as it is my custom to be in connection with every form of self-appraisal, I dare nevertheless affirm one thing, and that with confidence, about the fate of the little book: it has created no sensation, absolutely none. Undisturbed, and in compliance with his own motto: "Better well hung than ill wed,"[2] the well-hung author has been left hanging. No one has asked him, not even in jest, for whom or for what purpose he hung. Better so, better well hung than by an unfortunate marriage to be brought into systematic relationship with all the world.

In view of the character of the book, I had indeed hoped for some such reception. But in view of the seething ferment of the times, the incessant forebodings of prophets, seers, and philosophers, I feared lest through some misunderstanding this hope might be doomed to disappointment. Even the most insignificant of travellers runs a risk of misunderstanding if he happens to arrive at a town when all the inhabitants are in a state of tense and varied expectancy: some with cannons planted, fuses lighted, fireworks and transparencies at hand; some with the town hall festively decorated, reception committee on its feet, speakers ready; some with note-books open, pens dripping with ink, minds yearning for systematic instruction; all and sundry awaiting the arrival of the promised hero *incognito.* Under such circumstances a mistake is always possible, and literary misunderstandings of this nature belong to the order of the day.

Thank heaven, therefore, that nothing of the kind occurred. The book was permitted to enter the world unnoticed, without fuss or fury, without shedding of ink or blood. It was neither reviewed nor mentioned anywhere. No learned outcry was raised to mislead the expectant multitude; no shouts of warning from our literary sentinels served to put the reading public on its guard; everything happened with due decency and decorum. As the enterprise itself was free from every tincture of magic, so fate preserved it from false alarms.[3] The author is thus *qua* author in the happy situation of owing nothing to

anybody—I refer to critics, reviewers, middlemen, appraisers, and the like, these tailors of the literary world, who make the man and help the author cut a figure. They place the reader at the proper standpoint, and it is by their art and aid that a book may eventually amount to something. But then it is with these benefactors as it is with tailors generally, according to Baggesen's words:[4] "Their art makes the man but their bills slay him." One comes to owe them everything; and one cannot even discharge the debt by writing a new book, for the new book, if it has any significance, will again owe this to the critical assistance of these benefactors.

Encouraged in this manner by fortune's favor, I now propose to carry on with my project. Without let or hindrance from the outside, with no overhasty concern for what the times demand, following solely my own inner impulse, I shall proceed to knead the thoughts, so to speak, until in my opinion the dough is a good one. Aristotle remarks somewhere[2] that it was the custom in his day to prescribe the ridiculous rule for the narrative that its movement should be rapid. He goes on to say: "Surely it is fitting here to cite the answer once given to a man who was kneading dough and asked if he should make the dough hard or soft: 'Is it not then possible to make it good?' " The one thing I am afraid of is a sensation, particularly if it registers approval. The age is liberal, broad-minded, and philosophical; the sacred claims of personal liberty have everywhere a host of appreciated and applauded spokesmen. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the case is not always apprehended in a sufficiently dialectical manner; for otherwise the strenuous exertions of the elect would scarcely be rewarded with noisy acclaim, huzzahs at midnight, torchlight processions, and other similar encroachments upon the liberty of the person.

It would seem to be a reasonable presumption that everyone should in lawful things be permitted to do as he likes. An infringement of liberty occurs only when one person attempts to bind another to perform some definite action. An expression of disapproval is hence always permissible, since it does not seek to impose any obligation upon the other. If the crowd brings a man a *pereat,* it does not interfere with his personal freedom. No response on his part is necessary, no obligation has been imposed. He is free to lounge indolently in his apartment, to smoke his cigar, to bury himself in his thoughts, to jest with his sweetheart, to take his ease in dressing-gown and slippers, to turn over for another hour of sleep. He may even absent himself altogether, since his personal

presence is by no means necessary. Not so, however, if he happens to be waited upon by a torchlight procession of his admirers. If the hero of such a demonstration is absent, he must instantly be summoned; if he has just lit a fragrant cigar, he must toss it aside; if he has retired for the night, he must be roused from his slumbers; and there is scarcely time for a hurried dive into coat and trousers before he must out bareheaded under the open sky to make a speech.

What holds true for persons of prominence in connection with popular demonstration, holds true also for us lesser folk in our lesser circumstances. A literary attack, for example, constitutes no infringement upon the personal freedom of an author. It must be regarded as a matter of course that the privilege of expressing an opinion should be open to everyone. As for the object of such an attack, he is still free to go on with his work, to fill up his pipe, to leave the attack unread, and so forth. But an expression of approval is by no means so innocuous. The critical judgment which excludes a writer from the realm of literature does not limit his sphere of action; but the criticism which assigns him a definite place within, may well be cause for apprehension. A passer-by who laughs at you does not place you under obligation; rather he becomes your debtor, in so far as he owes to you the opportunity to enjoy a laugh. Here each remains free to pursue his own way, unhampered by binding and intrusive friendships. A passer-by who stares at you defiantly, as much as to intimate that you are not worthy of a bow or greeting, does not oblige you to do anything; he rather relieves you of the necessity of tipping your hat. An admirer on the other hand, is not so easily disposed of. His tender assiduities soon become so many burdens laid upon the object of his admiration, and before the latter has an inkling of what is taking place, he finds himself groaning under heavy taxes and assessments, though he began by being the most independent of men. If an author borrows an idea from some other author without naming his source, and proceeds perhaps to make a perverted use of the borrowed idea, this is by no means an intrusion. But if he names his author, perhaps even with admiration, as the source of the perverted idea, he creates a most embarrassing situation.

To speak dialectically, it is not the negative which constitutes an encroachment, but the positive. How strange! Just as it was reserved for the liberty-loving states of the American Union to invent the most cruel of punishments, that of enforced silence,[5] so it was reserved for our liberal and broad-minded age to invent the most illiberal of all vexations: torch-

light processions by night, popular demonstrations thrice a day, nine hurrahs for the great, and similar lesser vexations for us lesser folk. The social principle is precisely the illiberal principle.

The present offering is again a *piece, proprio Marte, proprio stipendio, propriis auspiciis.*[6] The author is an independent proprietor in so far as he holds in fee simple the fragment that he owns; but otherwise he is as far from having a retinue of bond-servants as he is from being a serf in his own person. He hopes that fortune will again smile upon his enterprise, and above all that the tragi-comic predicament may be averted from him and his book, that some deeply earnest seer or jesting wag takes it upon himself to persuade the public that there is something in it, and thereupon runs away and leaves the author in the lurch, after the fashion of "the peasant boy in pawn."

J. C.

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INTRODUCTION

YOU will perhaps remember, dear reader, that near the end of the *Philosophical Fragments* there appeared a certain remark which might look like the promise of a sequel. Viewed as a promise, indeed, the remark in question ("if I ever write a sequel") was in the highest degree tentative, and at the farthest possible remove from a solemn engagement. I have therefore never felt myself bound by this promise, though it was from the beginning my intention to fulfill it, and the necessary materials were already at hand when the promise was made. In so far the promise might well have been launched with great solemnity, *in optima forma.* But it would have been an inconsistency to publish a piece of such a character that it was incapable of creating a sensation, and wished for none, and then at the end of it to introduce a solemn promise, which, if anything, is calculated to arouse a sensation, and would doubtless also in this case have caused a tremendous flurry. You must have had occasion to notice how these things come about. An author publishes a big book; it has scarcely been out a week before he falls into conversation with a reader. The reader asks politely, sympathetically, and in a very glow of longing, if he does not soon intend to write another book. The author is enchanted: to think of having a reader who so quickly works his way through a big book, and in spite of the labor and the toil preserves his zest undimmed! Alas for the poor deluded author! In the further course of the conversation, the benevolently interested reader, the same who so longingly awaits the new book, admits that he has not read the published book, and that he will probably never find the time to do so. But he had heard some talk in a social gathering about a new book by the same author, and he has become greatly interested in arriving at certainty on the point. Or an author publishes a book, and fondly imagines that he will have a month's respite until the critics have had time to read it. But what happens? Three days after publication there appears in the press a breathless shriek, something in the way of a literary notice; at the close of the article there is a promise that the writer will furnish a critical review later. This outcry creates a tremendous sensation, though the book itself is gradually forgotten, and the critical review never makes its appearance. Two years later, the book being mentioned casually in a conversational group, a well-informed per-

son recalls it to the memory of the forgetful by identifying it as the book that so-and-so reviewed. This is the way in which a promise satisfies the demand of the times. First it creates a tremendous sensation, and two years later the promiser even enjoys the honor of having fulfilled it. For a promise is interesting; but if the promiser fulfills his promise he only injures himself, for a fulfillment is not interesting.

As for my own "promise," its vague and tentative form was by no means accidental. In the strict sense of the word it was not a promise at all, since the fulfillment was given in the piece itself. When a task is capable of being divided into an easier and a harder part, the proper procedure for a promising author is to begin with the easier part, and then to promise the harder part as a sequel. Such a promise is serious, and well worthy of acceptance. More frivolous is the procedure of an author who completes the harder part first, and then promises the easier part as a sequel. And this is especially the case if the sequel is such that any attentive reader of the first part, provided he has the necessary equipment of culture, can write the second part for himself, should he think it worth his while.

So in the case of the *Philosophical Fragments.* The sequel was to be devoted to the task of investing the problem in historical costume. The problem itself, if indeed there was anything difficult in connection with the whole matter, was the difficult part; the historical costume is easy enough. With no desire to offend, it is nevertheless my opinion that not every divinity student would have been able to formulate the problem with a dialectical precision equalling that given it in the *Fragments.* It is also my opinion that not every divinity student, after having read the piece, would be able to lay it aside and proceed to formulate the problem with a dialectical clarity equal to that achieved in the *Fragments.* But as for the historical costume, I am convinced that every divinity student (and I am not sure that this conviction could flatter anyone) would be able to furnish it—provided he can reproduce the fearless dialectical positions and movements involved.

Such being the nature of the promise, it seems quite suitable that its fulfillment should be relegated to a *Postscript.* The author can scarcely be charged with having indulged in the feminine practice of saying the most important thing (if there is anything important in connection with the whole matter) as an after-thought, in a note at the end. Essentially, there is no sequel. In another sense, the sequel might become endlessly voluminous, in proportion to the learning and erudition of

whoever might undertake to invest the problem in its historical costume. All honor to learning and scholarship, all praise to the man who can control the material detail, organizing it with the authority of genuine insight, with the reliability that comes from acquaintance with the original sources. But the life of the problem is nevertheless in the dialectical issue. If the presentation of the problem fails in dialectical clarity, while exceptional learning and great acumen are expended upon the details, it becomes only increasingly difficult for the dialectically interested inquirer to find his way about. In connection with this problem there have been produced undeniably, many excellent works of thorough scholarship, revealing both critical acumen and powers of organization, on the part of men for whom the present author feels a deep respect, and whose guidance he could wish that he might have been able to follow in his student years with greater talent than he had at his disposal. But there came a time when he believed himself to have discovered, with mingled feelings of admiration for the distinguished authorities and of dejection over his own isolated doubting situation, that in spite of the meritorious labors of the scholars, the problem was not being advanced but retarded.

If a naked dialectical analysis reveals that no approximation to faith is possible, that an attempt to construct a quantitative approach to faith is a misunderstanding, and that any appearance of success in this endeavor is an illusion; if it is seen to be a temptation for the believer to concern himself with such considerations, a temptation to be resisted with all his strength, lest he succeed (by giving way to a temptation, and hence by the most signal failure) in transforming faith into something else, into a certainty of an entirely different order, replacing its passionate conviction by those probabilities and guarantees which he rejected in the beginning when he made the leap of faith, the qualitative transition from non-belief to belief—if this be true, then everyone who so understands the problem, in so far as he is not wholly unfamiliar with scientific scholarship or bereft of willingness to learn, must feel the difficulty of his position, when his admiration for the scholars teaches him to think humbly of his own insignificance in comparison with their distinguished learning and acumen and well-merited fame, so that he returns to them repeatedly, seeking the fault in himself, until he is finally compelled to acknowledge dejectedly that he is in the right. The spirit of dialectical fearlessness is not so easily acquired; and the sense of isolation which remains despite the conviction of right, the sadness of the parting from

admired and trustworthy authorities, is the line of demarcation which marks the threshold of its acquirement.

The relation between the dialectician and the considerations usually presented by way of an introduction, is analogous to the relation between the dialectician and the eloquence of the orator. The orator demands to be heard, and asks to be allowed to develop his ideas in a connected manner; and since he hopes to learn, the dialectician gladly consents. But the orator has rare gifts, and a great understanding of the human passions; he knows how to make effective use of the imagination for purposes of delineation; and he commands the resources of fear and terror for use in the critical moment of decision. He speaks, and carries the listener with him. The hearer loses himself in engrossed attention, his admiration for the distinguished speaker filling his soul with an almost feminine devotion; he feels his heart beat, his soul is stirred. Now the orator brings to bear all his resources of earnestness and pathos; he bids every objection keep silence, and brings the case before the throne of the Almighty. He asks if there is anyone who dares deny in sincerity before God what only the most ignorant and erring wretch could bring himself to deny. And then, in gentler mood, he adds an admonition not to yield to doubt, explaining that it is not the temptation, but the yielding to it which is so terrible. He comforts the anxious soul, and rescues it from fear as a mother reassures her child with tender caresses. But the poor dialectician goes home with a heavy heart. He sees indeed that the problem was not even presented, much less solved; but he has not yet acquired the strength to withstand the force of eloquence. With the unhappy love of admiration he understands that there must be a tremendous justification also in the force of eloquence.

When the dialectician has finally emancipated himself from the domination of the orator, the systematic philosopher confronts him. He says with speculative emphasis: "Not until we have reached the end of our exposition will everything become clear." Here it will therefore be necessary to wait long and patiently before venturing to raise a dialectical doubt. True, the dialectician is amazed to hear the same philosopher admit that the System[1] is not yet completed. Alas! everything will be made clear at the end, but the end is not yet there. However, the dialectician has not gained the necessary dialectical fearlessness, or this admission would soon teach him to smile in irony at such a proposal, where the prestidigitator has made so sure of a loophole. For it is ridiculous to treat everything as if the System were complete, and then to say at the end,

that the conclusion is lacking. If the conclusion is lacking at the end, it is also lacking in the beginning, and this should therefore have been said in the beginning. A house may be spoken of as finished even if it lacks a minor detail, a bell-pull or the like; but in a scientific structure the absence of the conclusion has retroactive power to make the beginning doubtful and hypothetical, which is to say: unsystematic. So at least from the standpoint of dialectical fearlessness. But our dialectician has not yet acquired it. Hence he refrains in youthful modesty from drawing any conclusion respecting the absence of a conclusion—and begins the study, hoping that the labor will bear fruit. He plunges into the reading, and is quite overwhelmed with astonishment; admiration holds him captive, and he yields himself to the superior mind. He reads and reads and understands in part; but above all he sets his hope upon the clarifying light which the conclusion will throw upon the whole. And he finishes the book, but has not found the problem presented. And yet the young dialectician has with all the enthusiasm of youth put his trust in the famous man; like a maiden with but a single wish, to be loved by the beloved, so he has but one desire—to become a thinker. And, alas! the famous man has it in his power to decide his fate; for if he does not understand him, the youth is rejected, and his one desire must suffer shipwreck. Hence he does not yet dare to confide in anyone else, so as to initiate him into his misfortune, his disgrace, the fact that he cannot understand the famous man. So he begins again from the beginning. He translates all the more important passages into his mother-tongue, to be sure that he understands them and has not overlooked anything, and thereby overlooked something about the problem; for it does not seem possible to him that there should be absolutely nothing about that. He learns much of it by heart; he makes an outline of the argument, which he takes with him everywhere so as to ponder it in odd moments; he tears up his notes and writes new ones—what will a man not do to realize his heart's single desire! He comes to the end of the book a second time, but finds himself no nearer the problem. So he buys a new copy of the same book, in order not to be disturbed by the discouraging memories of past failures; he moves to a distant place, so as to begin with fresh vigor—and then? Well, he perseveres in this manner until at last he acquires the true dialectical fearlessness. And then? Then he learns to give unto Caesar his due, and to the famous philosopher his admiration; but he also learns to hold fast to his problem, in spite of all notabilities.

The scholarly introduction draws the attention away from the problem by its erudition, and makes it seem as if the problem were posed at the moment when the scholarly inquiry reaches its maximum. That is to say, it seems as if the learned and critical striving toward its own ideal of perfection, were identical with the movement toward the problem. The rhetorical address serves to distract by intimidating the dialectician. The systematic tendency promises everything and keeps nothing. In none of these three ways does the problem come to light, least of all in the systematic. The System presupposes faith as something given—and this in a system that is supposed to be without presuppositions! It presupposes further that faith has an interest in understanding itself otherwise than through the preservation of its passion, which is a presupposition (for a system supposed to be without presuppositions), and a presupposition insulting to faith, proving definitely that faith was never given to the System. The presupposition of the System that faith is given, resolves itself into a delusion in which the System has deceived itself into thinking that it knew what faith was.

The problem posed and formulated in the piece, but without pretense of solving it, was as follows: *Is an historical point of departure possible for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure have any other than a mere historical interest; is it possible to base an eternal happiness upon historical knowledge?*[2] In the book itself the following passage is found:[3] "It is well known that Christianity is the only historical phenomenon which in spite of the historical, nay, precisely by means of it, has offered itself to the individual as a point of departure for his eternal consciousness, has assumed to interest him in another than the merely historical sense, has proposed to base his eternal happiness on his relationship to something historical." Thus the historical costume is Christianity. The problem is thus relevant to Christianity. Less problematically, in the form of a dissertation, it might be viewed as involving the apologetic presuppositions for faith, the approximations leading toward faith, the quantitative introduction to the decision of faith. That which accordingly would have to be treated would be a multitude of considerations, which are, or were, once dealt with by theologians in an introductory discipline, in the introduction to dogmatics, and in apologetics.

But in order to avoid confusion, it is at once necessary to recall that our treatment of the problem does not raise the question of the truth of Christianity. It merely deals with the question of the individual's rela-

tionship to Christianity. It has nothing whatever to do with the systematic zeal of the personally indifferent individual to arrange the truths of Christianity in paragraphs; it deals with the concern of the infinitely interested individual for his own relationship to such a doctrine. To put it as simply as possible, using myself by way of illustration: I, Johannes Climacus, born in this city and now thirty years old, a common ordinary human being like most people, assume that there awaits me a highest good, an eternal happiness, in the same sense that such a good awaits a servant-girl or a professor. I have heard that Christianity proposes itself as a condition for the acquirement of this good, and now I ask how I may establish a proper relationship to this doctrine. "What extraordinary presumption," I seem to hear a thinker say, "what egotistical vanity to dare lay so much stress upon one's own petty self in this theocentric age, in the speculatively significant nineteenth century, which is entirely immersed in the great problems of universal history." I shudder at the reproof; and if I had not already hardened myself against a number of fearful things, I would no doubt slink quietly away, like a dog with his tail between his legs. But my conscience is quite clear in this matter; it is not I who have become so presumptuous of my own accord, but it is Christianity itself which compels me to ask the question in this manner. It puts quite an extraordinary emphasis upon my own petty self, and upon every other self however petty, in that it proposes to endow each self with an eternal happiness, provided a proper relationship is established.

Without having understood Christianity, since I merely present the problem, I have still understood enough to apprehend that it proposes to bestow an eternal happiness upon the individual man, thus presuming an infinite interest in his eternal happiness as *conditio sine qua non;* an interest by virtue of which the individual hates father and mother, and thus doubtless also snaps his fingers at speculative systems and outlines of universal history. Although I am only an outsider, I have at least understood so much, that the only unpardonable offense against the majesty of Christianity is for the individual to take his relationship to it for granted, treating it as a matter of course. However unassuming it may seem to permit oneself this kind of a relationship to Christianity, Christianity judges it as insolence. I must therefore respectfully decline the assistance of all the theocentric helpers and helpers' helpers, in so far as they propose to help me into Christianity on such a basis. Then I

rather prefer to remain where I am, with my infinite interest, with the problem, with the possibility.

It is not entirely impossible that one who is infinitely interested in his eternal happiness may sometime come into possession of it. But it is surely quite impossible for one who has lost a sensibility for it (and this can scarcely be anything else than the infinite interest), ever to enjoy an eternal happiness. If the sense for it is once lost, it may perhaps be impossible to recover it. The foolish virgins had lost the infinite passion of expectation. And so their lamps were extinguished. Then came the cry: The bridegroom cometh. Thereupon they run to the market-place to buy new oil for themselves, hoping to begin all over again, letting bygones be bygones. And so it was, to be sure, everything was forgotten. The door was shut against them, and they were left outside; when they knocked for admittance, the bridegroom said: "I do not know you." This was no mere quip in which the bridegroom indulged, but the sober truth; for they had made themselves strangers, in the spiritual sense of the word, through having lost the infinite passion.

The objective problem consists of an inquiry into the truth of Christianity. The subjective problem concerns the relationship of the individual to Christianity. To put it quite simply: How may I, Johannes Climacus, participate in the happiness promised by Christianity? The problem concerns myself alone; partly because, if it is properly posed, it will concern everyone else in the same manner; and partly because all the others already have faith as something given, as a triviality of little value, or as a triviality which amounts to something only when tricked out with a few proofs. So that the posing of the problem cannot be regarded as presumption on my part, but only as a special kind of madness.

In order to make my problem clear I shall first present the objective problem, and show how this is dealt with. In this manner the historical will receive its just due. Then I shall proceed to present the subjective problem. This is at bottom more than the promised sequel, which proposed to invest the problem in its historical costume; since the historical costume is given merely by citing the one word: Christianity. The first part of what follows is then the promised sequel; the second part is a new attempt of the same general tenor as the *Fragments,* a new approach to the problem of that piece.

BOOK ONE

THE OBJECTIVE PROBLEM CONCERNING THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS CONCERNING THE OBJECTIVE PROBLEM

FROM an objective standpoint Christianity is a *res in facto posita,* whose truth it is proposed to investigate in a purely objective manner, for the accommodating subject is much too objective not to leave himself out; or perhaps he even unhesitatingly counts himself in, as one who possesses faith as a matter of course. The truth in this objective sense may mean, first, the historical truth; second, the philosophical truth. Viewed as historical, the truth of Christianity must be determined through a critical examination of the various sources, and so forth; in short, in the same manner that historical truth generally is determined. When the question of the philosophical truth is raised, the object is to determine the relationship of the doctrine thus historically given and verified, to the eternal truth.

The inquiring, speculating, and knowing subject thus raises a question of truth. But he does not raise the question of a subjective truth, the truth of appropriation and assimilation. The inquiring subject is indeed interested; but he is not infinitely and personally and passionately interested on behalf of his own eternal happiness for his relationship to this truth. Far be it from the objective subject to display such presumption, such vanity of spirit.

The inquiring subject must be in one or the other of two situations. *Either* he is in faith convinced of the truth of Christianity, and in faith assured of his own relationship to it; in which case he cannot be infinitely interested in all the rest, since faith itself is the infinite interest in Christianity, and since every other interest may readily come to constitute a temptation. *Or* the inquirer is, on the other hand, not in an attitude of faith, but objectively in an attitude of contemplation, and hence not infinitely interested in the determination of the question.

So much here at the outset, by way of calling attention to a consideration to be developed in Part II, namely, that the problem cannot in this manner decisively arise; which means that it does not arise at all, since decisiveness is of the essence of the problem. Let the inquiring scholar labor with incessant zeal, even to the extent of shortening his life in the enthusiastic service of science; let the speculative philosopher be sparing neither of time nor of diligence; they are none the less not interested

infinitely, personally and passionately, nor could they wish to be. On the contrary, they will seek to cultivate an attitude of objectivity and disinterestedness. And as for the relationship of the subject to the truth when he comes to know it, the assumption is that if only the truth is brought to light, its appropriation is a relatively unimportant matter, something which follows as a matter of course. And in any case, what happens to the individual is in the last analysis a matter of indifference. Herein lies the lofty equanimity of the scholar, and the comic thoughtlessness of his parrot-like echo.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL POINT OF VIEW

WHEN Christianity is viewed from the standpoint of its historical documentation, it becomes necessary to secure an entirely trustworthy account of what the Christian doctrine really is. If the inquirer were infinitely interested in behalf of his relationship to the doctrine he would at once despair; for nothing is more readily evident than that the greatest attainable certainty with respect to anything historical is merely an *approximation.* And an approximation, when viewed as a basis for an eternal happiness, is wholly inadequate, since the incommensurability makes a result impossible. But the interest of the inquiring subject being merely historical (whether he also has an infinite interest in Christianity in his capacity as believer, in which case the whole enterprise might readily come to involve him in several contradictions; or whether he stands aloof, yet without any passionate negative decision *qua* unbeliever), he begins upon the tremendous task of research, adding new contributions of his own, and continuing thus until his seventieth year. Just two weeks before his death he looks forward to the publication of a new work, which it is hoped will throw light upon one entire side of the inquiry. Such an objective temper is an epigram, unless its antithesis be an epigram over it, over the restless concern of the infinitely interested subject, who surely needs to have such a question answered, related as it is to his eternal happiness. And in any case he will not upon any consideration dare to relinquish his interest until the last moment.

When one raises the historical question of the truth of Christianity, or of what is and is not Christian truth, the Scriptures at once present themselves as documents of decisive significance. The historical inquiry therefore first concentrates upon the Bible.

§ 1. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Here it is necessary for the scholar to secure the maximum of dependability; for me, on the contrary, it is of importance not to make a display of learning, or to betray the fact that I have none. In the interest of my problem it is more important to have it understood and remembered

that even with the most stupendous learning and persistence in research, and even if all the brains of all the critics were concentrated in one, it would still be impossible to obtain anything more than an approximation; and that an approximation is essentially incommensurable with an infinite personal interest in an eternal happiness.*

When the Scriptures are viewed as a court of last resort for determining what is and is not Christian doctrine, it becomes necessary to make sure of the Scriptures historically and critically.†

In this connection there are a number of topics that come up for consideration: the canonicity of the individual books, their authenticity, their integrity, the trustworthiness of their authors; and a dogmatic guaranty is posited: Inspiration.‡ When one thinks of the labors which the English have devoted to digging the tunnel under the Thames,[1] the tremendous expenditure of energy involved, and then how a little accident may for a long time obstruct the entire enterprise, one will be able to form a fitting conception of this critical undertaking as a whole. How much time, what great industry, what splendid talents, what distinguished scholarship have been requisitioned from generation to generation in order to bring this miracle to pass. And yet a little dialectical

* In seizing upon this contradiction, the *Philosophical Fragments* posed or presented the problem in the following manner: Christianity is something historical, in relation to which the best knowledge attainable is merely an approximation, the most masterly historical elucidation is only the most masterly "as good as," an almost; and yet it proposes *qua* historical, and precisely by means of the historical, to have decisive significance for a man's eternal happiness. It goes without saying that the little merit of the piece consisted merely in posing the problem, and in disentangling it from all prating and speculative attempts at explanation, which serve indeed to explain that their authors have no notion of what it is all about.

† Even so it is impossible to exclude dialectics. A single generation, or perhaps two, might succeed in maintaining itself undisturbed in the presumption that a barrier had been found which is the end of the world and of dialectics: that is no use. Thus it was for a long time believed that one could keep dialectics away from faith, by saying that its conviction rested upon the basis of authority. If the believer was asked about his faith, i.e. if he was dialectically challenged, he would declare with a certain easy air of confidence that he neither could nor needed to give any account of it, since his trust reposed in others, in the authority of the saints, and so forth. This is an illusion. For the dialectician has merely to shift his point of attack, so as to ask him, i.e. challenge him dialectically to explain, what authority is, and why he regards just these as authorities. He is then not questioned about the faith he has on the basis of his confidence in these authorities, but about the faith he has in these authorities.

‡ The incommensurability between inspiration and critical inquiries is analogous to the incommensurability between an eternal happiness and critical considerations; for inspiration is solely an object of faith. Or is it because the books are inspired that the critical zeal is so great? In that case, the believer who believes that the books are inspired does not know the identity of the books he believes to be inspired. Or does inspiration follow as a consequence of the critical inquiry, so that when criticism has done its work it has also demonstrated that the books are inspired? In that case, one will never be in a position to accept their inspiration, since the critical labors yield in their maximum only an approximation.

doubt touching the presuppositions may suddenly arise, sufficient for a long time to unsettle the whole, closing the subterranean way to Christianity which one has attempted to construct objectively and scientifically, instead of letting the problem remain subjective, as it is.

One sometimes hears uneducated or half educated people, or conceited geniuses, speak with contempt of the labor of criticism devoted to ancient writings; one hears them foolishly deride the learned scholar's careful scrutiny of the most insignificant detail, which is precisely the glory of the scholar, namely, that he considers nothing insignificant that bears upon his science. No, philological scholarship is absolutely within its rights, and the present author yields to none in profound respect for that which science consecrates. But the scholarly critical theology makes no such clear and definite impression upon the mind; its entire procedure suffers from a certain conscious or unconscious ambiguity. It constantly seems as if this labor of criticism were suddenly about to yield a result for faith, issue in something relevant to faith. Here lies the difficulty. When a philologist prepares an edition of one of Cicero's writings, for example, and performs his task with great acumen, the scholarly apparatus held in beautiful subservience to the control of the spirit; when his ingenuity and his familiarity with the period, gained through formidable industry, combine with his instinct for discovery to overcome obstacles, preparing a clear way for the meaning through the obscure maze of the readings, and so forth—then it is quite safe to yield oneself in whole-hearted admiration. For when he has finished, nothing follows except the wholly admirable result that an ancient writing has now through his skill and competence received its most accurate possible form. But by no means that I should now base my eternal happiness on this work; for in relation to my eternal happiness, his astonishing acumen seems, I must admit, inadequate. Aye, I confess that my admiration for him would be not glad but despondent, if I thought he had any such thing in mind. But this is precisely how the learned theologian goes to work; when he has completed his task (and until then he keeps us in suspense, but holds this prospect before us) he draws the conclusion: *ergo,* now you can base your eternal happiness on these writings.

Anyone who posits inspiration, as a believer does, must consistently consider every critical deliberation, whether for or against, as a misdirection, a temptation for the spirit. And anyone who plunges into these critical inquiries without being a believer, cannot possibly intend to have

inspiration emerge as a result. Who then really has any interest in the whole inquiry?

But the contradiction remains unnoticed because the mode of approach is purely objective; and then indeed the contradiction is no longer there. The inquirer forgets what he has up his sleeve, except in so far as he occasionally stimulates and encourages himself lyrically by referring to it; or indulges in lyrical polemics with the aid of eloquence. But let an individual approach this enterprise, let him propose in infinite personal passion to attach his eternal happiness to the result: he will readily perceive that there is no result, and that none is to be expected; and the contradiction will bring him to despair. Luther's rejection of the Epistle of James[2] will alone suffice. In relation to an eternal happiness, and an infinite passionate interest in its behalf (in which latter alone the former can exist), an iota is of importance, of infinite importance; or rather, despair over the contradiction involved will teach him that there is no possibility of getting through along this road.

The years pass, but the situation remains unchanged. One generation after another departs from the scene, new difficulties arise and are overcome, and new difficulties again arise. Each generation inherits from its predecessor the illusion that the method is quite impeccable, but the learned scholars have not yet succeeded . . . and so forth. All of them seem to find themselves becoming more and more objective. The infinite personal passionate interest of the subject (which is, in the first instance, the potentiality of faith, and in the next, faith itself, as the form for an eternal happiness, and thereupon an eternal happiness itself) vanishes more and more, because the decision is postponed, and postponed as following directly upon the result of the learned inquiry. That is to say, the problem does not arise; we have become so objective as no longer to have an eternal happiness. For an eternal happiness is rooted in the infinite personal passionate interest, which the individual renounces in order to become objective, defrauded of his interest by the predominating objectivity. With the assistance of the clergy, who occasionally display learning, the laity get an inkling of how the land lies. The "community of believers" becomes at last a mere courtesy title; for the laity become objective merely by looking at the clergy, and expect a tremendously significant result, and so on. Now a hostile critic rushes forward to attack Christianity. He is precisely as well oriented as the scholarly critics and the dilettante laity. He attacks a book of the Bible, or a suite of

books. Instantly the learned rescue corps rushes in to defend; and so it goes on indefinitely.

Wessel said that he always seeks to avoid a crowd, and so it is doubtless imprudent for the author of a little piece to intervene in this dispute, with a respectful request for a hearing on behalf of a few dialectical considerations: he will be as welcome as a dog in a game of bowls. Nor is there much of anything that a stark naked dialectician can do in such a learned dispute, where in spite of all learning and talent *pro* and *contra,* it is, in the last analysis, dialectically uncertain what the dispute is about. If it is purely a philological controversy, let us honor learning and talent with the admiration they deserve; but in that case the dispute is no concern of faith. If the disputants have something up their sleeves, let us have it brought out, so that we can think it through with dialectical deliberation. Whoever defends the Bible in the interest of faith must have made it clear to himself whether, if he succeeds beyond expectation, there could from all his labor ensue anything at all with respect to faith, lest he should come to stick fast in the parenthesis of his labor, and forget, over the difficulties of scholarship, the decisive dialectical *claudatur.* Whoever attacks the Bible must also have sought a clear understanding of whether, if the attack succeeds beyond all measure, anything else would follow than the philological result, or at most a victory *ex concessis,* where it must be noted that everything may be lost in another manner, provided, namely, the mutual underlying agreement is a phantom.

In order therefore that the dialectical issue be accorded the significance it deserves, and that we may think the thoughts through without disturbing irrelevancies, let us first assume the one and then the other.

I assume, accordingly, that the critics have succeeded in proving about the Bible everything that any learned theologian in his happiest moment has ever wished to prove about the Bible. These books and no others belong to the canon; they are authentic; they are integral; their authors are trustworthy—one may well say, that it is as if every letter were inspired. More than this it is impossible to say, for inspiration is an object of faith and subject to a qualitative dialectic; it is incapable of being reached by a quantitative approximation. Furthermore, there is not a trace of contradiction in the sacred writings. For let us be careful in formulating our hypothesis; if so much as a single hint in this direction is admitted the parenthesis again begins, and the critical philological occupation-complex will again lead us astray on bypaths. In general, all that is needed to make the question simple and easy is the exercise of a

certain dietetic circumspection, the renunciation of every learned interpolation or subordinate consideration, which in a trice might degenerate into a century-long parenthesis. Perhaps this is after all not so easy, and just as our human life runs into danger everywhere, so a dialectical exposition runs everywhere into the danger of slipping into a parenthesis. The same principle holds in smaller things as in greater; and in general, what makes it so tiresome to listen as third party to an argumentative dispute, is the fact that usually by the second round the dispute has already run into a parenthesis, and now moves in this perverse direction more and more passionately away from the point at issue. This failing may be utilized as a sort of fencing feint, for the purpose of testing out an opponent, to determine whether he is a real master of the dialectical parade, or a mere parenthesis-hound who leaps into a gallop whenever the parenthetical suggests itself. How often has it not happened that an entire human life has from early youth moved only in parentheses! But I break off these moralizing reflections, looking toward the promotion of the common welfare, by which I have sought to atone somewhat for my lack of historico-critical competence.

Well then, everything being assumed in order with respect to the Scriptures—what follows? Has anyone who previously did not have faith been brought a single step nearer to its acquisition? No, not a single step. Faith does not result simply from a scientific inquiry; it does not come directly at all. On the contrary, in this objectivity one tends to lose that infinite personal interestedness in passion which is the condition of faith, the *ubique et nusquam* in which faith can come into being. Has anyone who previously had faith gained anything with respect to its strength and power? No, not in the least. Rather is it the case that in this voluminous knowledge, this certainty that lurks at the door of faith and threatens to devour it, he is in so dangerous a situation that he will need to put forth much effort in great fear and trembling, lest he fall a victim to the temptation to confuse knowledge with faith. While faith has hitherto had a profitable schoolmaster in the existing uncertainty, it would have in the new certainty its most dangerous enemy. For if passion is eliminated, faith no longer exists, and certainty and passion do not go together. Whoever believes that there is a God and an over-ruling providence finds it easier to preserve his faith, easier to acquire something that definitely is faith and not an illusion, in an imperfect world where passion is kept alive, than in an absolutely perfect world. In such

a world faith is in fact unthinkable. Hence also the teaching that faith is abolished in eternity.

How fortunate then that this wishful hypothesis, this beautiful dream of critical theology, is an impossibility, because even the most perfect realization would still remain an approximation. And again how fortunate for the critics that the fault is by no means in them! If all the angels in heaven were to put their heads together, they could still bring to pass only an approximation, because an approximation is the only certainty attainable for historical knowledge—but also an inadequate basis for an eternal happiness.

I assume now the opposite, that the opponents have succeeded in proving what they desire about the Scriptures, with a certainty transcending the most ardent wish of the most passionate hostility—what then? Have the opponents thereby abolished Christianity? By no means. Has the believer been harmed? By no means, not in the least. Has the opponent made good a right to be relieved of responsibility for not being a believer? By no means. Because these books are not written by these authors, are not authentic, are not in an integral condition, are not inspired (though this cannot be disproved, since it is an object of faith), it does not follow that these authors have not existed; and above all, it does not follow that Christ has not existed. In so far, the believer is equally free to assume it; equally free, let us note this well, for if he had assumed it by virtue of any proof, he would have been on the verge of giving up his faith. If matters ever come to this pass, the believer will have some share of guilt, in so far as he has himself invited this procedure, and begun to play into the hands of unbelief by proposing to demonstrate.

Here is the crux of the matter, and I come back to the case of the learned theology. For whose sake is it that the proof is sought? Faith does not need it; aye, it must even regard the proof as its enemy. But when faith begins to feel embarrassed and ashamed, like a young woman for whom her love is no longer sufficient, but who secretly feels ashamed of her lover and must therefore have it established that there is something remarkable about him—when faith thus begins to lose its passion, when faith begins to cease to be faith, then a proof becomes necessary so as to command respect from the side of unbelief. And as for the rhetorical stupidities that have been perpetrated by clergymen in connection with this matter, through a confusion of the categories—alas, let us not speak of them. The vanity of faith (a modern substitute: How can they believe who receive honor one of another, John 5:44) naturally will not

and cannot bear the martyrdom of faith; and the note of genuine faith is today perhaps the rarest note struck in the pulpit oratory of Europe. Speculative philosophy has understood everything, everything, everything. But the clergyman, nevertheless, holds himself a little in check; he admits that he has not yet understood everything, he admits that he is still striving. Poor man, what a confusion of the categories! "If there is anyone who has understood everything," he says, "then I confess (alas, he feels ashamed, and does not perceive that he ought to use irony against the others) that I have not understood it all, and that I cannot prove everything; we humbler folk (alas, he feels his humility in a very wrong place) must be content with faith." Poor, misunderstood, highest passion "faith," to have to be content with such a champion! Poor chap of a clergyman, that you do not know what you are talking about! Poor unlearned Peter Ericksen,[8] on the other hand, who cannot quite make out about science, but who has faith; for he really has it, the faith which transformed fishermen into apostles, the faith which removes mountains —when one has it!

When the question is treated in an objective manner it becomes impossible for the subject to face the decision with passion, least of all with an infinitely interested passion. It is a self-contradiction and therefore comical, to be infinitely interested in that which in its maximum still always remains an approximation. If in spite of this, passion is nevertheless imported, we get fanaticism. For an infinitely interested passion every iota will be of infinite value.* The fault is not in the infinitely interested passion, but in the fact that its object has become an approximation-object.

The objective mode of approach to the problem persists from generation to generation precisely because the individuals, the contemplative individuals, become more and more objective, less and less possessed by an infinite passionate interest. Supposing that we continue in this manner to prove and seek the proof of the truth of Christianity, the remarkable phenomenon would finally emerge, that just when the proof for its truth had become completely realized, it would have ceased to exist as a present fact. It would then have become so completely an historical phenomenon as to be something entirely past, whose truth, i.e. whose

* Herewith the objective standpoint is reduced to absurdity, and the subjective standpoint simultaneously posited. For if one were to ask why then the least iota is of infinite importance, the answer can only be: because the subject is infinitely interested. But this discloses the subject's infinite interest as the decisive factor.

historical truth, had finally been brought to a satisfactory determination. In this way perhaps the anxious prophecy of Luke 18:8, might be fulfilled: Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

The more objective the contemplative inquirer, the less he bases an eternal happiness, i.e. his eternal happiness, upon his relationship to the inquiry; since there can be no question of an eternal happiness except for the passionately and infinitely interested subject. Objectively, the contemplative inquirer, whether learned scholar or dilettante member of the laity, understands himself in the following farewell words, as he faces the final end: When I was a young man, such and such books were in doubt; now their genuineness has been demonstrated, but then again a doubt has recently been raised about certain books which have never before been under suspicion. But there will doubtless soon arise a scholar who will . . . and so forth.

The accommodating and objective subject holds himself aloof, displaying an applauded heroism. He is completely at your service, and ready to accept the truth as soon as it is brought to light. But the goal toward which he strives is far distant, undeniably so, since an approximation can continue indefinitely; and while the grass grows under his feet the inquirer dies, his mind at rest, for he was objective. It is not without reason that you have been praised, O wonderful objectivity, for you can do all things; not even the firmest believer has ever been so certain of his eternal happiness, and above all of not losing it, as the objective subject! Unless this objective and accommodating temper should perhaps be in the wrong place, so that it is possibly unchristian; in that case, it would naturally be a little dubious to have arrived at the truth of Christianity in this manner. Christianity is spirit, spirit is inwardness, inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essentially passion, and in its maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest in one's eternal happiness.

As soon as subjectivity is eliminated, and passion eliminated from subjectivity, and the infinite interest eliminated from passion, there is in general no decision at all, either in this problem or in any other. All decisiveness, all essential decisiveness, is rooted in subjectivity. A contemplative spirit, and this is what the objective subject is, feels nowhere any infinite need of a decision, and sees no decision anywhere. This is the *falsum* that is inherent in all objectivity; and this is the significance of mediation as the mode of transition in the continuous process, where nothing is fixed and where nothing is infinitely decided; because the

movement turns back upon itself and again turns back, so that the movement becomes chimerical, and the philosopher is wise only after the event.* There are indeed, in the objective sense, results everywhere, a

* The scepticism that is inherent in the Hegelian philosophy, in spite of its much advertised positivity, may be understood in the light of this consideration. According to Hegel,[4] truth is the continuing world-process. Each generation, each stage of this process, is valid; and yet it is only a moment of the truth. Unless we here allow ourselves to introduce a dash of charlatanry, which helps out by assuming that the generation in which Professor Hegel lived, or the generation which after him plays the rôle of *Imprimatur*,[5] is the last generation, we are all in a state of sceptical uncertainty. The passionate question of truth does not even arise, since philosophy has begun by tricking the individuals into becoming objective. The positive Hegelian truth is as illusory as happiness was in paganism. The individual could not know whether he was happy until all was at an end,[6] and so here: only the next following generation can know what the truth was in the preceding generation. The great secret of the System—but this had better be kept among ourselves, like the secret the Hegelians are supposed to share privately—is pretty much the same as the sophism of Protagoras,[7] that everything is relative; except that here, everything is relative in the continuing world-process. But this cannot help any living individual; and if he happens to know an anecdote in Plutarch's *Moralia*[8] about a certain Lacedaemonian by name of Eudamidas, he will doubtless be reminded of it. When Eudamidas saw the aged Xenocrates and his disciples in the Academy, engaged in seeking for the truth, he asked: "Who is this old man?" And when he was told that Xenocrates was a wise man, one of those occupied in the search for virtue, he cried: "But when does he then propose to use it?"

It is presumably the witchery of this ever continuing process which has inspired the misunderstanding that one must be a devil of a fellow in philosophy in order to emancipate himself from Hegel. But this is by no means the case. All that is needed is sound common sense, a fund of humor, and a little Greek ataraxy. Outside the *Logic*, and partly also within the same, because of a certain ambiguous light which Hegel has not cared to exclude, Hegel and Hegelianism constitute an essay in the comical. Blessed Hegel has presumably by this time found his master in Socrates; and the latter has doubtless found something to laugh at, if Hegel otherwise remains the same. There Socrates will have found a man worth conversing with, and especially well worth asking the typically Socratic question: whether he knows anything or not. It will be remembered that Socrates proposed to ask this question of the shades in Hades.[9] Socrates must have suffered a very great change in his nature if he permitted himself to be impressed in the slightest degree by the recitation of a series of paragraphs, and the promise that everything will become clear at the end.

Perhaps I may in this note find a suitable place for something I have to complain about. In the recently published biography of Poul Møller,[10] there is found only a single passage which conveys any notion of his attitude towards Hegel during the last years of his life. The respected editor has doubtless been determined to this reserve by a loyal and affectionate regard for the deceased, an anxious concern for what certain people might say, and what a speculative and almost Hegelian public might judge. And yet, it is possible that the editor, precisely when he thought to act in a spirit of affectionate regard for the deceased, has instead injured his memory. More remarkable than many an aphorism included in the printed collection, and quite as noteworthy as many a youthful trait that the careful and sensitive biographer has preserved for us in a beautiful and worthy setting, is the fact that Poul Møller, while everything here at home bore the Hegelian stamp, judged quite differently; that at first he spoke of Hegel almost with indignation, until at last the sound good humor that was his nature taught him to smile, especially at the Hegelian school; or, to recall Poul Møller still more clearly to mind, right heartily to laugh. For who that has been enamored of Poul Møller can have forgotten his humor; who that has known him can have forgotten his laughter, which did one good even when it was not entirely clear what it was he laughed at; for his distraction of mind was sometimes very confusing.

superfluity of results. But there is no decisive result anywhere. This is quite as it should be, since decisiveness inheres in subjectivity alone, essentially in its passion, and maximally in the personal passion which is infinitely interested in an eternal happiness.

§ 2. THE CHURCH

The protection against the intrusion of dialectics which the Catholic Church deems itself to have in the visible presence of the Pope, we shall here leave out from consideration.* But it has come about also within Protestantism, that after having given up the Bible as the certain recourse for determining Christian doctrine, resort has been had to the Church. Though attacks are still being levelled against the Bible, and though learned theologians are engaged in defending it linguistically and critically, this entire procedure is to a certain extent antiquated. And above all, precisely because of the increasing objectivity, the decisive conclusions with respect to faith are no longer there in the background. The letter-fanaticism of a bygone age, which nevertheless had passion, has vanished. That it had passion was its merit. In another sense it was comical; and just as the age of chivalry really comes to a close with Don Quixote (for the comic interpretation is always the concluding one), so a poet might still bring to consciousness that the age of the letter-theology is past, by immortalizing comically such an unhappy slave of the letter in his tragi-comic romanticism. For wherever there is passion there is also romance; and anyone who has flexibility of mind and a sensitiveness for passion, and has not merely learned by rote to know what poetry is, will be able to see in such a figure a beautiful *Schwärmerei.* It is as when a loving maiden embroiders the artfully wrought setting of the gospel in which she reads the happiness of her love, or counts the letters

* The infinite reflection in which alone the concern of the subject for his eternal happiness can realize itself, has in general one distinguishing mark: the omnipresence of the dialectical. Let it be a word, a proposition, a book, a man, a fellowship, or whatever you please: as soon as it is proposed to make it serve as limit, in such a way that the limit is not itself again dialectical, we have superstition and narrowness of spirit. There always lurks some such concern in a man, at the same time indolent and anxious, a wish to lay hold of something so really fixed that it can exclude all dialectics; but this desire is an expression of cowardice, and is deceitfulness toward the divine. Even the most certain of all things, a revelation, *eo ipso* becomes dialectical whenever I attempt to appropriate it; even the most fixed of things, an infinite negative resolve, the infinite form for God's presence in the individual, at once becomes dialectical. As soon as I take the dialectical away, I become superstitious, and attempt to cheat God of each moment's strenuous reacquisition of that which has once been acquired. But it is far more comfortable to be objective, and superstitious, and boastful about it, proclaiming thoughtlessness as wisdom.

in the note she has received from her lover. But if the poet has a feeling for the romantic, he will also see the comic.

Such a figure would undoubtedly be laughed at, but it is another question with what right; for the fact that the entire age has become passionless constitutes no justification for its laughter. The ludicrousness of the zealot consisted in the fact that his infinite passion had attached itself to a mistaken object (an approximation-object); the good in him was that he had passion.

This change in tactics, the letting go of the Bible and laying hold of the Church, is even a Danish idea. However, I cannot bring myself either to rejoice personally on the score of a fellow-countryman over this "matchless discovery"[1] (so the idea is officially called in the camp of the ingenious discoverer and his admirers), or to consider it desirable for the authorities to proclaim a *Te Deum* of all the people in devout thanksgiving for the matchless discovery. It is better, and for me, at least, indescribably easy, to let Grundtvig keep what belongs to him: the matchless discovery. It was indeed hinted at one time, especially when a similar little movement began in Germany with Delbrück[2] and others, that it was really Lessing to whom Grundtvig owed the idea, without however owing him its matchlessness; so that Grundtvig's merit would consist in having transformed a little Socratic doubt[3] presented problematically with fine dialectical skill, with genial acumen and rare sceptical expertness, into an eternal, matchless, historic, absolute, trumpet-tongued and sun-clear truth. But even supposing there were a relationship from the side of Pastor Grundtvig—which I do not by any means assume, since the matchless discovery bears the unmistakable stamp of Grundtvigian originality—it would still be unjust to call it a loan from Lessing, since there is not in the entire Grundtvigian exposition of the idea the least feature reminiscent of Lessing, or anything which that great master of the understanding could without a matchless resignation claim as his property. Had it been intimated that the clever and dialectical Magister Lindberg, the talented chief advocate and defender of the matchless discovery, possibly owed something to Lessing, the suggestion would have been more plausible. In any case the discovery owes much to Lindberg's talent, in so far as it was by his efforts that the discovery took on form, was constrained to assume a dialectical structure, became less afflicted with hiatus,[4] less matchless—and more accessible to common sense.

Grundtvig had rightly perceived that the Bible could not hold out against the encroaching doubt; but he had not perceived that the reason was that both attack and defense were involved in an approximation-process which in its everlastingly continued striving is dialectically incommensurable with an infinite decision, such as that on which an eternal happiness is based. Since he had no dialectical consciousness of this principle, it could only have been by a stroke of pure chance that he would really escape the presuppositions within which the Bible theory has its great merit, its venerable scientific significance. But a stroke of chance is unthinkable in connection with the dialectical. In so far it was more probable that in formulating the Church theory he would come to remain within the same presuppositions. The application of abusive epithets to the Bible, by which at one time he actually offended the older generation of Lutherans, abusive epithets and autocratic decrees instead of thoughts, can naturally satisfy only admiring worshippers, but will of course give immense satisfaction to them. Everyone else readily perceives that when thought is absent from the noisy discourse, it is thoughtlessness that runs riot in the licentious expressions.

Just as in the preceding paragraph it was the Bible which was to decide objectively what is Christianity and what is not, so now it is the Church that is to serve as the certain objective recourse. More specifically, it is the living word in the Church, the confession of faith, and the word in connection with the sacraments.

First it is clear that the problem is dealt with objectively. The obliging, immediate, wholly unreflective subject is naïvely convinced that if only the objective truth stands fast, the subject will be ready and willing to attach himself to it. Here we see at once the youthfulness (of which the aged Grundtvig is so proud) which has no suspicion of the subtle little Socratic secret: that the point is precisely the relationship of the subject. If truth is spirit, it is an inward transformation, a realization of inwardness; it is not an immediate and extremely free-and-easy relationship between an immediate consciousness and a sum of propositions, even if this relationship, to make confusion worse confounded, is called by the name which stands for the most decisive expression for subjectivity: faith. The unreflected personality is always directed outward, toward something over against it, in endeavor toward the objective. The Socratic secret, which must be preserved in Christianity unless the latter is to be an infinite backward step, and which in Christianity receives an intensification, by means of a more profound inwardness which makes it

infinite, is that the movement of the spirit is inward, that the truth is the subject's transformation in himself. The prophetic genius who envisages so matchless a future for Greece,[5] is not expertly familiar with the Greek spirit. The study of Greek scepticism is much to be recommended. There one may learn thoroughly what it will always require time and exercise and discipline to understand (a narrow way for freedom of speech!), that the certainty of sense perception, to say nothing of historical certainty, is uncertainty, is only an approximation; and that the positive and immediate relationship to it is the negative.

The first dialectical difficulty with the Bible is that it is an historical document; so that as soon as we make it our standard for the determination of Christian truth, there begins an introductory approximation-process, and the subject is involved in a parenthesis whose conclusion is everlastingly prospective. The New Testament is a document out of the past, and is thus historical in the stricter sense. Just this is what serves to beguile the inquirer, tending to prevent him from making the problem subjective, and encouraging him to treat it objectively, in consequence of which it fails altogether to arise. The *Philosophical Fragments* directed itself to this difficulty in Chapters IV and V, and dealt with it by abolishing the difference between the contemporary disciple and the disciple of the last generation, assumed to be separated by the interval of 1800 years. This is of importance lest the problem, the contradiction that God has existed in human form, be confused with the history of the problem, i.e. with the *summa summarum* of 1800 years of opinion, and so forth.

In this experimental manner, the *Fragments* set the problem forth in relief. The difficulty with the New Testament as a document belonging to the past appears now to be obviated in the case of the Church, which of course exists in the present.

On this point Grundtvig's theory has merit. Especially has it been developed by Lindberg with competent juristic precision, that the Church eliminates all the proving and demonstrating that was necessary in connection with the Bible because it was something past, while the Church exists as a present reality. To demand that it prove its existence, says Lindberg quite correctly, is nonsense, like asking a living man to prove that he exists.* In this matter Lindberg is wholly in the right; and

* The reason for this, formulated dialectically-metaphysically, is that existence itself is superior to any demonstration for existence, and hence it is in the given case stupid to ask for proof. Conversely, the inference from essence to existence is a leap.