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Kierkegaard and the Nature of Truth

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SØREN KIERKEGAARD will always have something to say to a national church. Truth, he urged, is something which an individual discovers for himself. It does not belong in the abstract to 'the crowd'. Christian truth has to do with individual commitment and discipleship; not with mere attendance at the state church, with being baptised and reciting the creed, or with accepting the conventional standpoints of 'religion'. An individual who hides himself as part of the faceless anonymous crowd of religious men may thereby shelve his responsibility, cling to his impenitence, and keep truth at arm's length. St. Paul, Kierkegaard insisted, asserts that of the runners who compete 'only one receives the prize' (1 Cor. 9:24). This is not meant in a comparative sense as if to exclude others, but means that every man can win the prize although only as the one, as an individual. Christ was rejected by the crowd, who crucified him; but he relates himself, as the truth, to the individual.

Kierkegaard writes with bitter irony, 'Christianity has been *abolished* by *expansion*—by these millions of name-Christians. . . . The human race . . . wanted to chatter itself out of being a Christian and sneak out of it by help of this shoal of name-Christians'. Hence men fabricate concepts like the notion of a 'Christian' state, which are 'shrewdly calculated to make God so confused in His head by all these millions that He cannot discover that He has been hoaxed, that there is not one single Christian'.¹ Commenting on the central purpose behind all of his voluminous writings he explains: 'The whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem of "becoming a Christian", with direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom, or against the illusion that in such a land as ours all are Christians'.²

Yet Kierkegaard is not simply a pious Christian protesting against a merely nominal Christianity. His writings say much that is important about the nature of truth. Truth does not belong primarily to the

realm of theory, speculation and ideas. Truth must be lived out, and not merely thought out. There is all the difference in the world between thinking true thoughts about the Christian faith, and living out Christ's truth in daily life. It is one thing to talk about forgiveness, another thing to be forgiven. It is one thing to talk about salvation, another thing to be saved. But this has profound implications for our view of truth. In Kierkegaard's words, 'Truth becomes untruth in this or that person's mouth'.³ 'It would help very little if one persuaded millions of men to accept the truth, if precisely by the method of their acceptance they were transferred into error.'⁴ 'Truth is subjectivity.'⁵

This kind of approach to questions about the nature of truth gives rise to some major problems and unusual situations both in theology and in philosophy. Firstly, many radical theologians not only welcome Kierkegaard's biting satire against religious and theological orthodoxy and against the institutional church, but also see an escape from the embarrassing bondage to supposedly objective or absolute criteria of truth, in exchange for the less demanding notion of what is true 'for me'. A thing is true if it rings a bell *for me*. If it does not strike a response within me, it is false. I therefore become my own authority in matters of truth, and subjectivity in Kierkegaard's profound sense of the term becomes simply subjectivism in the more popular sense of the word. We cannot aspire, it is urged, to declare 'the truth', but only to pass on a particular viewpoint which is one among others. Theology becomes exclusively confession. I say how it is with me. But is this really what is demanded by Kierkegaard's own approach to truth? Or is it a distortion of his approach at the hands of radical theologians?

Secondly, if truth concerns not so much thought but life, this underlines the importance of an incarnational approach to theology. Jesus Christ is the truth not only because he taught true ideas, but because he embodies the word of truth and becomes its enfleshment. In this sense (although certainly not in all senses) the church must also be an extension of the incarnation. Yet as soon as we move into this more Catholic and perhaps Anglican ethos, we meet with other related concepts which stand in tension with Kierkegaard's thought. The notion of tradition, for example, becomes dangerous in Kierkegaard's view; and language about the body of Christ as used of the church threatens to entice the individual away from responsible personal decision into the anonymity of the abstract structure. Kierkegaard has a highly Protestant emphasis on individuality and inwardness, and is far from convinced about the supposedly exclusive blessing to be mediated through priests or sacraments.

Thirdly, in philosophy Kierkegaard stands as the first great existentialist thinker, and the first to challenge, from this viewpoint, the idealist philosophy of Hegel. In seminal form we can find in Kierkegaard's thought themes which reappear either in the militantly atheistic

existentialism of Nietzsche, Sartre, and Camus, in the quasi-atheistic quasi-agnostic existentialism of Heidegger, in the writings of the Roman Catholic existentialist Marcel, or in the undogmatic and vague religiousness of Jaspers. Kierkegaard himself, however, dreaded the possibility that men might one day regard him as the founder of a school, let alone as a professional philosopher. Alas, he wrote, 'I know who will inherit from me; that figure which is so enormously distasteful to me . . . , the professor'⁸ He chose for his own epitaph simply 'That Individual'. But in spite of all this, Kierkegaard is treated seriously in departments of philosophy in our own universities today, not least because he has raised questions which are of permanent importance in relation to the nature of truth. What consequences follow when we view truth not in terms of thought, or ideas, or correspondence between propositions, but in terms of life, experience, and involvement?

1. *Truth and Life*

WHEN we look at the course of Kierkegaard's life, it is clear that, as Kaufmann puts it, 'he tried to *live* his thoughts'.⁷ It is illuminating to see how this happened, not least because there are some who dismiss his writings as only the product of a sick and neurotic mind.⁸ Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen in 1813. Almost everything in his short life of forty-two years contributed to a close acquaintance with sorrow and anguish. Wit played an important part in his life, but wit did not mean happiness. The titles of three of his books reflect the traumatic experiences which he underwent, namely *Fear and Trembling*, *The Concept of Dread*, and *The Sickness unto Death*. Kierkegaard confesses in his journals that he never knew the joy of being a child. As a child he was 'already an old man'.⁹

Kierkegaard's childhood and youth was dominated by his attempt to please his father. His father was a severe disciplinarian, devoutly religious, but also obsessed with a sense of guilt derived in the first place from an act long in the past of deliberately cursing God. Even when his business affairs prospered, Mikael the father interpreted this as a proof that his great sin had exceeded even the bounds of punishment. Meanwhile, he urged his son on, believing, as Søren put it, 'that Canaan itself lay on the other side of a theological degree' at university.¹⁰ Mikael's sense of guilt and anxiety deepened when his wife and no less than four of his six sons died. Søren later wrote of 'the dread with which my father filled my soul, his own frightful melancholy, and all the things in this connexion which I do not even note down'.¹¹ Moreover he was never very close to Peter, his sole surviving brother. Peter (eventually to become a bishop) was too smug for his liking.

After the family's tragedies, we must imagine Søren Kierkegaard feeling, as he puts it, that his life was all of sixes and sevens, dutifully promising his stern and saddened father that he would try to make a success of his career as a theological student, in spite of longings on his own part for a different kind of life.²² But then in 1835, when Søren was twenty-two, there came an event which shattered his world like an earthquake. His father who had sermonised him with 'Be sure that you love Jesus' found himself about to have a child by his housekeeper, and Søren's idol came crashing to the ground.

For a brief period Kierkegaard plunged into a career of moral decline. He even went to the length of experimenting with certain vices in order to discover, first-hand, whether he had been missing anything in his hitherto restricted life. But his wild abandonment failed to bring him peace and liberty. It only heaped upon his head more and more desperate pangs of guilt. Eventually he came to believe that his father's curse had fallen upon himself. If he had been unhappy before, his present wretchedness completely eclipsed all former suffering. He discovered, and drank deeply from the despair and desolation, the sense of guilt and solitude, which have come to feature as themes among certain existentialist writers.

On the one hand Kierkegaard passed through depths of suffering and despair. But on the other hand, he began to discover his own identity. He began to discover what it meant to live as *himself*; not merely to live as his father's son, but to accept the responsibility for his own choices and their consequences. Like many of the existentialists of our day, Kierkegaard came to regard such experiences as positive moments of *truth*. But it is also important to note that unlike the secular existentialists, he came to regard them as moments of truth *before God*. Jean-Paul Sartre may associate them with the disclosure of an individual's freedom and future. Martin Heidegger may see in them an inkling of the human finitude which points in turn to Being. But for Kierkegaard himself, this painful experience of self-discovery meant primarily a disclosure of sin, and a call to repentance. It concerns the individual as he stands before God. It would be too much perhaps to describe this crisis as an experience of conversion, for Kierkegaard's whole life is virtually a dialogue between faith and doubt. But it constitutes a critical moment in his search for truth, and he can never dissociate truth from God in Christ.

Two other crises were also to affect Kierkegaard's life in a similar way. In the first place he fell deeply in love with Regine Olsen, and found himself lifted to peaks of elation. But as soon as they became engaged, he was filled with dread and despair at a sense of his own utter unworthiness. So compelling was this despair, that after an agonising period of indecision he brought their relationship to an end. For Regine's sake he pretended to her that he had merely played with her affections, but this self-inflicted torture left him doubly heart-

broken. It is scarcely surprising that writers have suggested various psychological explanations of his conduct, including the basic fact that he found all relationships with women difficult.¹³ But the two most important factors for the student of his thought are, first, that it relates to Kierkegaard's retreat from the idea that one individual human being can take responsibility for another; and, secondly, that the Christian may be called on to encounter truth through suffering. He saw himself as a latter-day Abraham, called upon to sacrifice Isaac, treading the path of obedience of slaying the son of promise.¹⁴

The third crisis was brought about when in a moment of rashness Kierkegaard threw down a challenge to an unscrupulous popular newspaper, *The Corsair*, to try to pillory him in its columns. The success of *The Corsair's* campaign went beyond his expectations, and he found himself the laughing-stock of Denmark. But once again he interpreted his suffering, called down by his own act, as part of a divine vocation to live out the truth of the cross. He compared the arm-chair ease with which many philosophers, and especially Hegel, claimed to 'think the thoughts of God' with his own attempt to encounter God's truth in terms of an actual living experience. Increasingly he withdrew into a private world, except for the world of his own writings, and ruthlessly lashed out against the complacent optimism and shallow orthodoxy of his times. He attacked the Danish Church, refusing in his last days to receive Communion from a Lutheran pastor.

Although in 1855 he died exhausted and disappointed, Kierkegaard had tried to *live* the truth, as he saw it. Truth, he believed, was not something to be handed on and received on a plate, but something to be striven for, sought for, and passionately engaged with. Christian truth cannot be easily acquired, least of all by learning off other people's 'right' answers. He writes: 'Everyone who has a result merely as such does not possess it; for he has not *the way*.'¹⁵ If Christ is the truth, he is also the way. Kierkegaard's many and voluminous writings bear witness to a life of striving, a life of pilgrimage, a life which, as Kierkegaard himself saw it, marked the way but not the end of truth.

2. *Truth and the Individual*

KIERKEGAARD'S relationships with his father and with Regine underlined his burning concern for the individual. Second-hand authorities, second-hand doctrines, and second-hand ideals had all taken on the character of deceptive counterfeits. He had discovered genuineness and authenticity only when he had lived as himself. Certainly he had never found them when he had lived merely as his father's son, or merely as a student of theological dogmatics, or merely as a slave of social convention.

But the broken engagement suggested more than this to Kierkegaard.

The event had outraged everyone, because it had failed to accord with all the expected social conventions. From the point of view of the outside world, Kierkegaard agreed, no justification for such conduct could apparently exist. Yet he himself saw it as a courageous act of obedient faith, taken in accordance with no recognised standards of conduct, but in accordance with his own inner conviction. In *Fear and Trembling* he expounds the concepts which lay behind all this, by citing the example of Abraham.¹⁶ God had made it plain to Abraham that all His promises were to be fulfilled through Isaac. His only son, the son of his old age, whom God had given him as by a life-giving miracle, represented to him the fulfilment of all his joys, and held out to him the fulfilment of all his hopes. Yet God demanded of him a terrible thing. He demanded that on Mount Moriah he should slay the son of promise.

This act of obedient faith took the form of a self-contradiction. To slay Isaac would be to surrender all hope of the promises. By all external standards such an act would appear an insane folly, a treacherous blasphemy. But the man of faith cannot heed such notions. In his paradox he stands alone, and in his solitude he makes his choice. It is the choice of faith, the paradox which no-one else will ever understand, and which even he himself might come to doubt. The decision over-rides even recognised differences between right and wrong, for it passes by the Divine injunction to do no murder. The man of faith must subordinate all outward considerations, even ethics, to his own inner decision to obey.

It takes little imagination to see how Kierkegaard applied all this to himself and to Regine Olsen. He had been called upon by God to play the heroic role of Abraham. Regine represented, on an earthly level, the fulfilment of all that might have been his. By sacrificing her he had aroused the indignant censure of the world, but by his decision of faith he had entered further into the realm of the Divine. Yet Kierkegaard's case was much more than a mere replica of Abraham's. For when the last moment of his test came, no ram was provided for substitution, and despite serious afterthoughts, the sacrifice of his happiness was made.

This is no ordinary kind of individualism. It allows unexpected applications, and it involves peculiar insights as well as peculiar difficulties. Kierkegaard's individualism is intensely theological. It has superficial affinities with humanitarian concerns for the individual, but it completely transcends a humanitarian orientation. He asserts: 'The most ruinous evasion of all is to be hidden in the crowd in an attempt to escape God's supervision . . . in an attempt to get away from hearing God's voice as an individual.'¹⁷ This, he insists, is what Adam tried to do when he hid among the trees. He declares: 'Each one shall render account to God as an individual. The King shall render account as an individual; and the most wretched beggar, as an

individual. No one may pride himself at being more than an individual, and no one despondently think that he is not an individual, perhaps because here in earth's busyness he had not as much as a name, but was named after a number.¹⁸

Words such as these preserve a fundamental insight, which has been lost in certain ages; although as the prophet that he is, Kierkegaard states only that part of the truth which his own age neglects. But other facets of his individualism raise acute difficulties.

A serious problem arises over ethics. In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard devotes a special section to the question: is there such a thing as a teleological suspension of the ethical? Ought we, he asks, to honour Abraham as the father of faith, or to convict him as guilty of attempted murder? Kierkegaard finds his answer in the concept of paradox. On this basis he maintains 'the story of Abraham contains therefore a teleological suspension of the ethical. As the individual he becomes higher than the universal. This is the paradox which does not permit of mediation'.¹⁹

The ethical dimension of the problem underlines the dilemma with which Kierkegaard confronts us over the nature of truth. It is connected with the dilemma which meets us today in the so-called new morality, many advocates of which see themselves as Kierkegaard's heirs. On the one hand, to see the source of moral truth, as Kant did, in universal law may seem to make truth a matter of generalising rules; of doctrinaire prescription prior to the actual circumstances of life. A 'general truth' states that lying is wrong; but what if the telling of one lie could save twenty Jews from a Nazi gaschamber? Might it not be said that in this case the particular supersedes the universal? Ethical truth, it may be said, concerns the individual who is confronted by a concrete decision, rather than man in general. Instead of putting forward the general truth that everyone is everyone's neighbour, Jesus tells of the neighbourly action of a given Samaritan towards a Jew, and leaves his hearers to work out its truth for them as individuals.²⁰

However, Kierkegaard's insistence that the ethical can be suspended or transcended can also open the door to relativism. H. A. Williams explores how the personal courage of individual decision may, in his view rightly, break through the bounds of traditional morality in such a way as to make prostitution virtually an act of faith.²¹ Prostitution carried out as a daring venture, he suggests, can be a nobler act than that of standing by a piece of conventional morality which has been accepted only through motives of fear. This is part of the existentialist's attempt to break through the barriers of what is artificial and inauthentic because it is not truth 'for me'. Since truth comes through the individual's own individuality H. A. Williams looks for guidance, in his essay, not to the Bible, but to the writings of Sigmund Freud. However, in the last analysis even the writings of Freud may not be authentic for the individual. We cannot, he argues, find moral

truth by 'merely receiving reports, maps, and photographs' from other people or from religious authorities. 'It is only by actually *making* the journey that we can perceive the nature of the country.'²³

J. A. T. Robinson's book *Honest to God* is representative of a more moderate but nevertheless in some ways still radical approach to morality within Anglican theology, when he also criticises the idea of receiving ideas of right and wrong 'at second-hand' from God.²⁴ 'What the supernaturalist ethic does,' he argues, 'is to subordinate the actual individual relationship to some universal external to it.'²⁴ Thus in a particular given situation, he urges, 'it makes much greater demands to ask, and to answer, the question "Do you love her"? . . . and then to help him to accept *for himself* the decision that if he doesn't . . . then his action is immoral'.²⁵

A difficulty, however, arises because, like those who make claims for higher wages, everyone is tempted to regard himself as a special case. On the one hand we do indeed want to say that Jesus Christ was concerned with people and their situations, rather than with an abstract legalism. We want to say, with Kierkegaard, that the individual encounters moral truth when he sees it for himself. But on the other hand there is another dimension in Kierkegaard's thought which Karl Barth so clearly saw, but which is usually missed by his supposed heirs in radical theology or secular existentialism. Kierkegaard nowhere entertains the idea that anyone but *God* can revise God's commandments. Abraham showed obedient faith in his readiness to sacrifice Isaac, only because *God*, and God alone, had called him to go beyond the bounds of normal morality. Rightly or wrongly, Kierkegaard viewed his own conduct in the same way, as a response to the call of God. In terms of Kierkegaard's vocabulary of the ethical and the religious 'sphere' or 'stage', only the *religious* stage can take us beyond the ethical.

Admittedly a man can make a mistake about whether he has genuinely received a call from God. This is partly why, for Kierkegaard, faith involves venture and risk. But even allowing for the problems which still attach to Kierkegaard's position, this is a very different kind of venture from that described by H. A. Williams when a secular man has to decide about his attitude towards prostitution. The only thing that both attitudes have in common is their purely formal similarity as acts of decision for which no one else can take responsibility and which are isolated from objective or external criteria of judgment. In both cases the truth is entirely a matter of individual conviction or 'inwardness', rather than the content of a body of propositions. But in Kierkegaard's case, the individual stands, or thinks he stands, in a personal relation to God. The question with which this point now leaves us is whether Kierkegaard's emphasis on the religious dimension goes any way towards softening the problem of relativism and providing an adequate account of truth.

3. *Truth and Subjectivity*

SUBJECTIVITY, for Kierkegaard, means the passionate involvement of the 'I' or the subject in such a way that he is *transformed by* the truth. To understand or to accept truth is thereby to be transformed by it. If a man claims to know truth, and yet his life remains untouched by that knowledge, his claim is no more than an illusion. This view of truth is especially demanded, in Kierkegaard's view, in the context of the truth of the Gospel.

Subjectivity does not mean simply, as one writer puts it, 'grubbing about in the depths of one's particular psyche'.²⁶ It means 'an inner transformation . . . , an infinite passionate interest'.²⁷ The term describes how an individual acts when he accepts his individuality, and ventures forth in the commitment of an ethical decision. It means 'being sharpened into an I' rather than being 'dulled into a third person';²⁸ and Kierkegaard defines this as 'staking his life, which one avoids doing if he is a third person'.²⁹ This is why, if subjectivity is truth, as Kierkegaard claims, truth can never be a matter of the objective content of propositions. *'The objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said. . . . Objectively the interest is focussed merely on the thought-content, subjectively on the inwardness. At its maximum this inward 'how' is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite is truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity becomes the truth.'*³⁰

All this relates in Kierkegaard's thought to three possible 'existence-spheres', or existential stages: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.³¹ A man who lives only in the aesthetic sphere samples what life has to offer as if he were an uncommitted bystander. He may seek his pleasures, like the philosopher, on the intellectual plane; or he may seek them elsewhere. But he avoids the involvements of first-hand ethical decision. Decision and commitment translate him into the ethical sphere, where discovery of individual decision means also the discovery of genuine selfhood. His existential situation, however, confronts him with a further choice. Ethical demands expose his weakness and insufficiency and thereby summon him to live his life before God. He can choose the way of faith, which, for Kierkegaard, is the way of suffering. To make these decisions, and to enter fully into them, is to accept what Kierkegaard calls 'the task of becoming subjective'.

In 'Christian' Denmark, Kierkegaard maintained, a man might supposedly become a Christian simply by assenting to the 'right' doctrines. But genuine faith, he insists, has nothing to do with the sort of intellectual argument which leaves the believer as a mere spectator of certain views. What has the theoretical knowledge of widely-held doctrines to do with practical and personal commitment? A Christian is not an observer or an assenter, but a participant. When

a man commits himself to a practical decision, it leaves an indelible mark on him. He no longer remains the same man as he was before. But in Denmark a man became a Christian merely by being born a Dane.

Why had everything gone wrong? Kierkegaard partly blames Augustine: 'Augustine has done incalculable harm. The whole of Christian doctrine through the centuries really rests on him—and he has confused the concept of faith.'³³ Augustine, he argued, had resuscitated the Platonic-Aristotelian definition of faith as 'a concept which belongs to the sphere of the intellect'. Nevertheless 'from the Christian point of view faith belongs to the existential: God did not appear in the character of a professor who has some doctrines which must first be believed and then understood'.³³

This is the aspect of Kierkegaard's thought which has received most attention through the work of Rudolf Bultmann and the Bultmann school. The Christian Gospel, Bultmann insists, is not information about acts of God so much as an existential message addressed to man as a *thou*. God must not be 'objectified' into a mere object of thought; and man must not be objectified into a mere receiver of information. God, as active subject, *addresses* man who is also subject. The emphasis is not upon the 'what' of conceptual content, or objective truth, but on the 'that' of event and address (*Anrede*) or subjective truth. The *truth* of the Gospel is bound up with man's response to it.³⁴ This is why soteriology comes before Christology for Bultmann. Because it is recognised that the truth is a transforming reality which actively engages man's subjectivity, this leads both to positive insights and also to some dubious claims. Both aspects appear in a pointed way in the new hermeneutic. Ernst Fuchs, Bultmann's former pupil, gives expression to the two sides. On the one hand he asserts, '*The truth has us ourselves as its object*'. 'The texts must translate us before we can translate them.'³⁵ On the other hand he declares, 'We should accept as *true* only that which we acknowledge as valid for our own person.'³⁶

Kierkegaard, however, is not exclusively concerned with Christian truth when he makes this basic point. He calls in question the value of the whole philosophical tradition which has to do with a theoretical and exclusively rationalist approach to truth. He would certainly have sympathised with William Temple's description of Descartes' inauguration of his method of purely rational enquiry after truth as 'the most disastrous moment in the history of Europe'.³⁷

In this respect Kierkegaard overlaps with Pascal. Both of these thinkers accepted, within limits, the value of rational enquiry in the Cartesian sense of the term. But both regarded it as the method and instrument of mathematics and the sciences; and not as a means of establishing relationships with people or with God. Descartes, admittedly, had taken the individual consciousness as his starting-

point. But it was a consciousness which had been isolated artificially, and disengaged from its participation in concrete affairs. Western philosophy, existentialists have often maintained, has never fully recovered from entering the Cartesian cul-de-sac. Too many of its philosophers have addressed man as intellect alone, as if his mind were somehow disengaged from his emotional involvements and practical commitments.

Kierkegaard makes one of his most memorable denunciations when he sees this attitude reflected in the use of philosophical arguments for the existence of God. He declared, 'To prove the existence of one who is present is the most shameless affront, since it is an attempt to make him ridiculous. . . . One proves God's existence by worship . . . not by proofs'.³⁹ Even to talk about God in the third person brings its dangers. 'They are busy about getting a truer and truer conception of God, but seem to forget the very first step, that one should fear God.'⁴⁰ Thus in the end he returns again to the question of the truth of Christ. The Christianity of Christ he urges is necessarily repugnant to the 'natural' or unbelieving man. Most men are willing to *talk about* Christian doctrine, but they are not so willing to commit themselves in practical obedience. Orthodox 'Christendom' has sided with the talkers. By assenting to its creeds and formulae, they can play 'a knavish trick, calling Christianity what is the exact opposite of Christianity, and then thanking God for Christianity and for the great and inestimable privilege of being a Christian'.⁴¹

Can we do other than applaud Kierkegaard's emphasis as prophetic? In the New Testament, as he is quick to point out, 'the apostle speaks of the *obedience of faith*'.⁴² He could also have cited a score of passages about the opposition of the unbeliever to the stumbling-block of the cross. The trouble is that with the passion of the prophet and with the zeal of the pioneer, Kierkegaard goes on to overstate his case. He entitled his first major work *Either/Or* and this could be coined to pinpoint the cause of the difficulty. Faith, admittedly, means *more* than mental assent. It involves decision, commitment, and participation. But why must we define faith *either* in terms of intellectual belief *or* in terms of practical response? Why not both? Far from accepting the rational content of faith, Kierkegaard insists that faith is 'believing against the understanding'.⁴³ Faith is paradox; it is constantly called in question by doubt, because it must constantly be renewed by personal decision. All these elements are expounded in the theology of Bultmann. Faith, no more than truth, can never be as it were, 'at man's disposal'. It is not a 'thing' to be possessed and mastered as it were at man's disposal. Its very moment-by-moment character challenges the self-sufficiency of man's rationality, calling for repeated acts of decision and repeated acts of obedience.

4. *Truth, Finitude, and Dialectic*

THIS approach to truth and subjectivity, which was taken up by Bultmann, has also, as Karl Barth saw, close connexions with Kierkegaard's emphasis on human finitude. God is in heaven, and man is on earth; so how can man claim to grasp divine truth? All that he can discover is that which he can meet in his own life; and this is not to be measured by the size of the crowd, but by the capacity of the individual. Whatever the individual can see of the truth engages with his subjectivity. Hence man, or, better, a particular man, can never leap over the confines of his own creatureliness and finitude. He can never come to see truth as a system, as a whole. He may think about *concepts* of 'the whole truth', but this is a different matter. He can in practice only see certain aspects of the truth; insights which come to him in particular concrete situations. The relationship between them may then have to be expressed in a dialectic of tension and agreement, if 'yes' and 'no', of coming at them from different viewpoints and holding them together then side by side if need be in tension.

This was at odds, Kierkegaard believed, with Hegel's view of truth as a system, and much of Kierkegaard's writing is an attack on Hegel's philosophy. Hegel was forty-three years Kierkegaard's senior, and died before the latter was half way through his university course. His rationalistic philosophy dominated the nineteenth century, although Hegel's thought was no ordinary type of rationalism. For he rooted his approach in a particular concept of history. This enabled him to avoid some of the blunders and dilemmas which attached to the earlier forms of rationalism. He accepted the inevitable relativity of all human thought to the historical circumstances which conditioned it. But he also held that each historical event derived both its significance and its reality from its place within the *total* historical process. Thus, whilst the individual thoughts of a particular man remained relative to his situation, the whole historical process, viewed in its entirety, remained absolute, or unconditioned. In Hegel's view, history-as-a-whole represented the Absolute itself in process of self-manifestation. Individual phases of development, he agreed, often seemed to contradict each other. But each apparent contradiction merely gave rise to a new creative synthesis. And the very fact of this coherent cycle towards creative synthesis demonstrated the ultimate rationality of the whole process. Thus Hegel defined history as a progressive revelation to the Whole of its own nature, a revelation which takes the form of experience in finite minds. All reality ultimately hangs together in a rational coherent whole.

Kierkegaard ironically dubbed the whole enterprise 'the System'. The uncritical adulation with which the world of his day seemed to flock after Hegel inflamed his criticisms of this philosophy. It seemed to him, firstly, that Hegel's system subordinated individual personality

to some abstract, impersonal, speculative principle. Hegel had taught that only totality genuinely possessed reality. To Kierkegaard, the only ultimate reality was the beating heart of a living man, with all the deeply personal fears, dreads, and longings that belonged to it. To Hegel, an individual or partial fact constituted an abstraction which was less than real. To Kierkegaard, the philosophical or rational 'Absolute' constituted an airy theory which had little relation to personal life.

A second feature of Hegel's thought struck Kierkegaard as being even more grotesque. Was it not self-contradictory for one and the same man to talk glibly about Ultimate Reality as a whole, and yet admit that an individual's own standpoint is fundamentally conditioned by his own historical situation? Kierkegaard saw a speculative philosopher building grandiose conclusions on the foundation of a concept of which by very definition he himself must be ignorant. For to view the Absolute, a man would have to stand completely outside the historical process which constituted it. 'Is he,' he demands, 'a human being, or is he speculative philosophy in the abstract?'"⁴³ Kierkegaard diagnoses the philosopher's malady: 'In a sort of world-historical absent-mindedness' he has forgotten what it means to be a human being. Not indeed, what it means to be a human being in general—for this is the sort of thing that one might even induce a speculative philosopher to agree to; but 'what it means that you and I and he are human beings, each one for himself'.⁴⁴

The situation may be tragic, but it also matches Kierkegaard's definition of the comic. It depicts incongruity *par excellence* 'in willing to be what one is not'. Hence the systematist 'becomes a comic figure, since existence has the remarkable trait of compelling an existing individual to exist'.⁴⁵ Everywhere he is caught out. 'Systematisers are like a man who builds an enormous castle and lives in a shack close by; they do not live in their own enormous systematic buildings.'⁴⁶ The philosopher talks a lot about perfection, but he has a patch on his elbow. He thinks less about individuals than about lofty ideas; but he himself is eager enough to collect his own pay-packet.

The satire continues as Kierkegaard now pictures himself as a humble and respectful, but baffled, enquirer. He explains his difficulty with mock pathos. 'I shall be as willing as the next man to fall down in worship before the System, if only I could manage to set eyes on it. . . . Once or twice I have been on the verge of bending the knee. But at the last moment, when . . . I made a trusting appeal to one of the initiated who stood by: "Tell me now sincerely, is it entirely finished; for if so I will kneel down before it, even at the risk of ruining a pair of trousers (for on account of the heavy traffic to and fro, the road has become quite muddy)"—I always received the same answer: "No, it is not yet quite finished." And so there was another postponement—of the

System, and of my homage. . . . If the system is not finished, there is no system.'⁴⁷

But why does the systematist fail to see that? Kierkegaard cannot credit him with honest blindness, and so pretends to credit him with a commercial motive: 'If on the title-page . . . I call my production a persistent striving for the truth, alas! who will buy it or admire me? But if I call it the System, the Absolute System, everyone will surely buy the System.'⁴⁸ The trouble is, adds Kierkegaard, that what the systematist sells is not the system.

The heart of the matter, as Kierkegaard sees it, is expressed in the phrase 'I am not in a position to . . .'. He declares: 'If speculative philosophy wishes . . . to say . . . that there is no paradox when the matter is viewed eternally, divinely, theocentrically—then I admit that I am not in a position to determine whether the speculative philosopher is right. For I am only a poor existing human being, not competent to contemplate the eternal either eternally or divinely or theocentrically, but compelled to content myself with existing.'⁴⁹

Kierkegaard's statement sums up the rudiments of existentialism. The systematist himself tries to grasp too much, whilst his system actually embraces too little. He sets his sights ambitiously for an all-inclusive world-view; but his horizons are limited to the viewpoint given by his own existential situation. Although his method allows him an illusion of partial success, the reason for this is not far to find; the system belongs only to the realm of thought. Certainly it may look convincing *on paper*; but it fails to apply to life and existence. Kierkegaard seeks to expose the situation by asserting two parallel theses: 'A logical system is possible. . . . An existential system is impossible.'⁵⁰ The systematist who follows Hegel blithely assumes the unity of thought and being. But the assumption is false, because 'existence' prohibits the equation of life itself with the concepts which we use to describe it.

This view of the nature of truth, as man comes to see it, has profound implications for our use of language in communication. Truth, Kierkegaard believed, can be communicated effectively only by the method of *dialectic*. In its earliest use 'dialectic' meant simply dialogue, and might refer, for example, to the method of question and answer used by Socrates in his philosophical dialogues. More specifically it may convey the idea of stating a thesis and counter-thesis which are left in unresolved tension, in order that the hearer himself may come to 'see' an insight which cannot be so effectively expressed as a neat and tidy package. Socrates never handed men 'the truth' on a plate, but asked *questions* in such a way that a man came to see the truth *for himself*.

Kierkegaard believed that 'what Christianity needs is another Socrates . . . with some cunning dialectical simplicity'.⁵¹ 'Socrates . . . was a gad-fly who provoked . . . the individual's passion, not allowing him to admire . . . but demanding his self of him.'⁵² And this des-

cribes the difference between system and dialectic. The system discourages participation, by inviting the passive applause of a passing spectator. It demands little or nothing from the individual himself.⁵³ But dialectic invites decision and response. It confronts the reader not with someone else's *fait accompli*, but with a cluster of viewpoints from which he must choose. When the viewpoints constitute half-truths or exaggerations, or when two are presented together in the form of a paradox, the individual can try to make sense of it only on his own.

Kierkegaard used pseudonyms to sharpen the edge of his own dialectic. He explains his method in a small but important book which was to be published only after his death. *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* had the sub-title, 'A Report to History'. Reviewing the difference between various groups of his writings, he comments: 'The ambiguity is a conscious one.'⁵⁴ It does not reflect changes of conviction in the author, for 'the duplicity dates from the very start'.⁵⁵ Pseudonyms allow him to attack his own work; for if the truth is to be conveyed at all, he argues, then deception has to play some part. But 'One must not let oneself be deceived by the word "deception"'. . . . To recall old Socrates, one can deceive a person into the truth. Indeed it is only . . . by deceiving him that it is possible to bring into the truth one who is in an illusion'.⁵⁶ He adds: 'Whoever rejects this opinion betrays the fact that he is not over-well versed in dialectic. . . . Direct communication presupposes that the receiver's ability to receive is undisturbed. But here . . . an illusion stands in the way. . . . One must first of all use the caustic fluid.'⁵⁷ Precisely the same point is made in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* under the heading, 'Truth is Subjectivity' when Kierkegaard observes, 'It would help very little if one persuaded millions of men to accept the truth, if precisely by the method of their acceptance, they were transferred into error'. 'Truth becomes untruth in this or that person's mouth.'⁵⁸

As an approach to the problem of language and communication, Kierkegaard's methods are of the utmost value and importance. The purpose of many of the parables of Jesus is, as C. H. Dodd puts it, to 'tease the mind into active thought'.⁵⁹ Ernst Fuchs similarly emphasises the contrast between the open-ended call and address of the parable and the mere passing on of information in flat discursive propositions. He comments, 'Jesus draws the hearer over to his side by means of the artistic medium, so that the hearer may think together with Jesus. Is this not the way of true love? Love does not just blurt out. Instead, it provides in advance the sphere in which meeting takes place'.⁶⁰

5. Truth and Christian Faith

AFTER examining the writings of Kierkegaard himself we may perhaps

feel surprise and misgiving about the ways in which some of his supposed successors have tried to appropriate and to develop his thought. We have already expressed reservations about the way in which his approach has been utilised in connexion with the new morality and radical theology. In Kierkegaard's view, we noted, the universal can be superseded by the particular in the sphere of ethics only when what is at issue is not egocentric humanism but the call of God. We must now explore this point further.

In the existentialist philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Jaspers the problem of scepticism and relativism becomes acute. The slogan of one of Nietzsche's characters that God is dead is intended to signal man's release from any objective or external frame of reference which may serve as a criterion of truth. Truth relates only to man's subjectivity; he can know only what is true *for him*. In terms of objective criteria Nietzsche asserts, 'Nothing is true, everything is permitted'.⁶¹ Karl Jaspers is admittedly less nihilistic than Nietzsche, but Kierkegaard and Nietzsche constitute the two main philosophical influences on his thought.⁶² Like Kierkegaard, Jaspers believes that conformity with conventional values or with merely external criteria of truth may conceal the authentic truth which an individual encounters in his own subjectivity. One way, if not the major way, in which an individual discovers truth is described in Jaspers' notion of 'limit-situations'. These occur when a man faces a crisis which brings him to the very limit of his customary resources, compelling him to transcend ordinary every-day values in a new self-awareness. In such situations, fear, anxiety or suffering may serve to jolt him out of an inauthentic reliance on other people's values, and force him to discover what is true *for him*. Truth therefore, for Jaspers, cannot be regarded as an 'absolute', but is always relative to the individual and his situation.

This means that although he can accept the truth of 'religion' in a realistic or pluralistic sense, Jaspers cannot accept the exclusive truth-claims of Christianity. This is expressed not only in his major work *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, but also in his debate with Bultmann about myth in the New Testament. When Bultmann hints that 'Jesus was mistaken', Jaspers applauds his 'rare honesty'. But when Bultmann expresses his faith in the uniqueness of the cross as God's act in Christ, Jaspers retorts: 'Who can be sure in such a matter? Here everyone confronts the mystery of the other, whom he never sees wholly. One can only voice the aspect that was disclosed to one, and not in judgment, but only as a question.'⁶³

This kind of scepticism, however, cannot be found in Kierkegaard. Karl Barth recalls that what attracted him most in his reading of Kierkegaard in 1919 'was the criticism, so unrelenting in its incisiveness, with which he attacked . . . all the speculation that blurred the infinite qualitative difference between God and man, all the aesthetic playing

down of *the absolute claims of the Gospel* . . . in short all the attempts to make the scriptural message innocuous'.⁶⁴ Thus the second edition of Barth's famous commentary on Romans stands as 'the very telling document of my participation in what has been called "the Kierkegaard Renaissance"'. Barth concludes: 'I believe that throughout my theological life I have remained faithful to Kierkegaard's reveille . . . and that I am still faithful to it today. Going back to Hegel . . . has been out of the question ever since.'⁶⁵ Hence, where Jaspers, following Nietzsche, finds Kierkegaard an impetus leading towards an entirely relativist view of truth, Barth finds him an inspiration for safeguarding 'the absolute claims of the Gospel'.

Which is the more legitimate understanding of Kierkegaard? If sheer weight of numbers were to decide, then the direction followed by Jaspers has been travelled by many writers including especially Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre boldly asserts the meaninglessness of everything except the existing individual. The individual must not surrender his subjectivity and personhood to the claims of the crowd, or to some supposedly objective truth. To lose that subjectivity in favour of accepting external creeds, authorities, values, or conventions, is to suffer a death 'like that of the wasp which sinks into the jam and drowns in it, . . . as ink is absorbed by the blotter'.⁶⁶ Sartre admits that it might be otherwise if God were a reality, but 'the idea of God is contradictory'.⁶⁷

All that is being said, however, is that Kierkegaard's thought leads to extreme relativism and scepticism when its lynch-pin, namely the truth of the Gospel, is taken away from it. Without the truth of Christ, it dissolves into something even worse than an undue relativism; it becomes a self-contradiction. For if Jaspers and Sartre are correct, their whole philosophies represent only what is true *for them*. But if one man in a limit-situation like that of the prodigal son discovers the truth of the Gospel, whilst another man seems to discover that God is dead, who is to decide between them? Certainly neither Jaspers nor Sartre are in any position, on his own showing, to assess these rival claims. However, it would be otherwise with Kierkegaard. Certainly he criticised 'the crowd'. But whilst he tended to avoid seeing the Christian scriptures as a set of historical documents, he nevertheless saw them as some kind of anchor, or at least paradigm, for himself. He criticised the Danish Church of his day for 'letting go of the Bible and laying hold of the Church'.⁶⁸ Kierkegaard, in Barth's words, stood by the absolute truth of the Gospel.

What Kierkegaard's writings do perhaps demonstrate is that his view of truth cannot stand on its own feet as a self-contained theory of knowledge in philosophy. Everything depends on what, from one point of view we may call the reality of God, but which from another point of view must be called the phenomenon of Christian faith. But it must be questioned whether an account of truth which is valid only

within the framework of faith really constitutes, after all, an adequate theory of the nature of truth.

Martin Heidegger also began from an existential perspective, but in his middle and later writings attempted to provide some kind of account of truth. Like Kierkegaard, he rejected the notion that truth depended on correspondences between different propositions, or correspondences between human ideas about reality and reality itself. For the 'reality' against which we test our *ideas* of reality still remains the 'reality' which is depicted by our own ideas. Man must begin with *Dasein* (being-there), with his own horizons and his own world, which is 'his' because he sees it only from his own standpoint. In *Being and Time* Heidegger accepts this starting-point, and views the world not in terms of some speculative abstract content, but in terms of the 'directedness' of man's attitudes towards that which is given in his own world. The fundamental datum is that of man's historicity, or the way in which he is conditioned as a finite being by his place within history.

In his later writings Heidegger develops the idea of truth as the unveiling of Being. But man, he urges, has 'fallen' out of Being. He regards the dualism of Plato as a major disaster in the history of the Western philosophical tradition. According to Plato, 'Being as *idea* was exalted to the suprasensory realm', and a dualism was created.⁶⁹ Christian ideas of truth depend on this dualism. He comments: 'Nietzsche was right in saying that Christianity was Platonism for the people.'⁷⁰ There now occurs, according to Heidegger, an artificial split between subject and object, between things and ideas, between concepts and reality, which betrays the fact that man has 'fallen out of Being'.⁷¹ Man himself has become the measure of all things, and 'truth' is measured by most Western philosophies in terms of a contrived correspondence between propositions (which already express man's thought), and things, or states of affairs (which themselves belong only to the world-as-he-sees-it). We might compare Wittgenstein's analogy of the man who buys several copies of the morning newspaper in order to check on the truth of the first copy. Man, Heidegger insists, treads only 'the paths that he himself has laid out. . . . He turns round and round in his own circle'.⁷²

Heidegger sets out the implications of this for the nature of truth in his essay on the subject, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*.⁷³ Man must step back from his day-to-day man-centred concerns, and try to recapture a sense of wonder at Being. Truth is then communicated not as a property of ideas or statements, but as an *event*; it is an event in language, or a 'language-event' (*Sprachereignis*) in which Being 'comes to light' or 'shines forth'.⁷⁴ Language which communicates truth is 'not a tool at man's disposal', but, according to Heidegger, it constitutes 'the house of Being'.⁷⁵ Man speaks the truth when he speaks as the mouthpiece or 'shepherd' of Being.

Is this an adequate theory of truth? If he is asked how man can

become the mouthpiece of Being, Heidegger can answer, firstly, that man finds certain inklings of reality sometimes in creative art, especially in creative poetry; but secondly that he must 'know *how to wait*, even for a whole lifetime'.⁷⁶ Above all, Heidegger recommends an attitude of passivity, or yieldedness (*Gelassenheit*) in which man 'listens' to Being. However, as Hans Jonas points out, *thinking* 'is precisely an effort *not* to be at the mercy of fate'.⁷⁷ To surrender one's own initiative in exchange for a mere 'listening' to Being is precisely *not* to escape from one's own conditionedness by history and language. We must conclude that Heidegger's attempt to arrive at an account of truth of this basis cannot be described as successful. Furthermore, although he begins in *Being and Time* with a Kierkegaardian emphasis on concrete finite existence, and although he never loses his sense of man's 'fall', nevertheless his philosophy moves increasingly away from Kierkegaard, for Kierkegaard's view of truth is certainly not that of an event proceeding from 'Being'.

It seems, then, that no philosophical thinker has succeeded in developing Kierkegaard's starting-points into an adequate theory of knowledge or account of truth. Why, then, is there so much in Kierkegaard that seems compelling? Kierkegaard himself, as Karl Barth suggests, should be seen firmly in the context of his own times. He was essentially a Christian prophet or reformer recalling Christians of his own day to values and insights that were dangerously neglected. He reminded them that truth is lived out, and not just thought out. He summoned the individual to encounter truth for himself, and not merely to express a nominal acceptance of external values. He pointed out that truth comes not as mere information, but as a transforming power which addresses man's subjectivity. He saw that the communication of the Gospel was a dialectical process, and not a matter of handing someone a package on a plate.

Nevertheless, Kierkegaard regarded his task as that of providing a balance: 'We have to draw up a balance in all truth—and this is my task as I understand it.'⁷⁸ This point is made with particular clarity by Hermann Diem in his exposition of Kierkegaard. He writes, 'Kierkegaard did not succumb to the "unfortunate mistake" of wishing to make of the corrective a norm'.⁷⁹ Kierkegaard, after all, is saying what truth is *for him* as a Christian believer. This is not to deny that there are serious problems in Kierkegaard's approach, but only to make the point, that on his own showing, his account of truth is not intended to be a systematic or comprehensive one.

That Kierkegaard's emphasis is admittedly one-sided can be seen from the terrible and prolonged agonies of doubt to which his *Journals* bear witness. Kierkegaard, as we have seen, believed that faith must be a repeated act of venture on the part of the individual, unsupported by all external support and external criteria of judgment. Hence faith was inseparable from anguish and doubt. The extent to which this

was so for him can be seen from journal-entries taken almost at random. At one moment he can exult 'This is how one knows that one has become a Christian', and can speak of his confidence in 'the objective reality of Christ's atonement'.⁸⁰ But six months later in the very same year (1838) he writes: 'My doubt is terrible. Nothing can withstand it. It is a cursed hunger.'⁸¹ On April 19th, 1848, he rejoices after a period of despair: 'My whole being is changed. My reserve and self-isolation is broken.'⁸² But this cannot last. Five days later on 24th he confesses: 'No, no! My self-isolation cannot be broken, at least not now.' For all his insistence about the validity of divine vocation, he questions: 'Is it possible to have . . . a purely immediate certainty of one's relation to God?' and answers: 'An immediate certainty about my relation to Christ I cannot acquire.'⁸³

What is lacking in Kierkegaard's view of the nature of truth is an adequate awareness of the importance of three factors: the Christian community (or just simply the community); rationality or logical coherence; and the relation between truth and contingent historical events. With regard to history, Kierkegaard thoroughly endorses Lessing's dictum that the eternal truths of reason cannot be said to depend on the contingent events, or accidents, of history. He even goes further, commenting: 'There can in all eternity be no direct transition from the historical to the eternal, whether the historical is contemporary or not.'⁸⁴ All this means that Kierkegaard is like a man who fights with one hand tied behind his back. The jibe is sometimes made against the Bultmann school that it is almost suggested that the less probable a historical event or narrative is in the New Testament the more valuable it becomes, since it calls forth faith as pure venture. If such a jibe is in any way justified, it is because Bultmann draws this kind of perspective from Kierkegaard's writings. Perhaps also similar points can be made about Bultmann's individualism, and in spite of controversy about the matter writers such as Pannenberg have criticised Bultmann for underestimating the place and importance of rationality in Christian faith.

This is not to deny the value of Kierkegaard's positive insights into the nature of truth. The Bible does not merely present abstract generalising neatly-packaged 'truths', as if it were a systematic theology. It is written for life out of life. Jesus does not say 'everyone is our neighbour', but tells a story about a particular Samaritan. Truth comes to the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) when he finds himself destitute and abandoned in a limit-situation. The confident defiant youth who left his father's house undergoes a moment of truth which is a transforming experience of self-discovery. The man who buried the talent in the ground (Matt. 25:14-30) is the man who refused to venture in faith, and from whom therefore his master took away all opportunities for further responsibility. The Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) rely on others to pay the bill; somehow they will be safe with

the crowd and things will come out all right. But they are faced with their own individual moment of truth. Job's comforters look for neat inauthentic 'answers'; Job himself travels the path of suffering and finds himself actively engaged with the question of truth.

Anglican theology has always tried to pay adequate attention to the historical foundation of Christian truth in the events of the Bible, to the role of the community in witnessing to truth through creeds and worship, and to the part played by rational enquiry in testing and elucidating truth through theology. It must be admitted that in certain eras it has perhaps been less successful in emphasising the relation between truth and the life and subjectivity of the individual. In this respect Kierkegaard stands in the Protestant tradition (which is still part of the Anglican tradition) and his warnings about the dangers of nominal orthodoxy in state churches must be heeded. He writes with his usual irony: 'That we are all Christians is something so generally known and assumed that it needs no proof. . . . Christianity has been abolished by expansion.' But that is only on paper. In reality God 'has been hoaxed. . . . There is not a single Christian'.⁶⁶ For truth relates to life, and not just to thought. Kierkegaard may have underplayed the importance of the rational element in the *assessment* of truth; but he was right to call attention to the existential element in the *communication* and *appropriation* of truth. Truth is multiform, and what truth *is* depends partly on the forms of life (in Wittgenstein's sense) to which it relates. These forms of life include rationality, community and history; but they also include daily life, the individual, his subjectivity, and perhaps even, in some contexts, his faith.

¹ *Attack on 'Christendom'* (Eng. Oxford, 1946), p. 127.

² *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* (Eng. Oxford, 1939, r.p. New York, 1962), pp. 5-6.

³ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* (Eng. Princeton, 1941), p. 181.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-224.

⁶ *The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard* (Eng. ed. by A. Dru, Oxford, 1938), p. 471.

⁷ W. Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York, 1956), p. 83 (my italics).

⁸ Cf. the rejoinders by W. Lowrie in *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* (Princeton, 1965) and also in S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread* (Eng. Princeton, 1946); D. G. M. Patrick, *Pascal and Kierkegaard* (London, 1947); and E. J. Carnell, *The Burden of Soren Kierkegaard* (Exeter, 1965).

⁹ *The Journals*, pp. 860 and 921.

¹⁰ *Johannes Climacus* (Eng. London, 1958), p. 21.

¹¹ *The Journals*, p. 841.

¹² Cf. *Johannes Climacus*, p. 21.

¹³ Cf. L. Dupré, *Kierkegaard as Theologian* (London, 1964), pp. 13ff.; and E. J. Carnell, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-25.

¹⁴ *Fear and Trembling* (with *The Sickness unto Death*, Eng. New York, 1954), pp. 27-64.

¹⁵ *The Concept of Irony* (Eng. London, 1966), p. 340.

¹⁶ *Fear and Trembling*, *loc. cit.*

- ¹⁷ *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* (Fontana ed.), p. 163.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ *Fear and Trembling*, p. 77; cf. pp. 64-76.
- ²⁰ Cf. Luke 10:29-37.
- ²¹ H. A. Williams, 'Theology and Self-Awareness' in A. R. Vidler (ed.) *Soundings* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 68-101, especially 81ff.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 73 (my italics).
- ²³ J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London, 1963), p. 106.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- ²⁶ J. Brown, *Subject and Object in Modern Theology* (London, 1955), p. 46; cf. pp. 34-82.
- ²⁷ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 51.
- ²⁸ *The Journals*, p. 533.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 181 (his italics and capitals).
- ³¹ *Stages on Life's Way* (Eng. Princeton, 1945) *passim*; Cf. further, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* (two vols., Eng. Princeton, 1944); *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, pp. 22-43; and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 261ff. 'Stages' and 'spheres' are used by different translators to express the same term in Danish.
- ³² *The Last Years: Journals 1853-1855* (Eng. ed. by R. Gregor Smith, London, 1965), p. 99.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ Cf. R. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* (Eng. London, 1969) especially pp. 286-312; the essays in *Kerygma and Myth*; and also A. Malet, 'What is Objectivity?' in *The Thought of Rudolf Bultmann* (New York, 1971), pp. 5-21.
- ³⁵ E. Fuchs, 'The New Testament and the Hermeneutical Problem' in J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb (eds.) *New Frontiers in Theology*, 2: *The New Hermeneutic* (New York, 1964), p. 143 (his italics); and in E. Dinkler (ed.) *Zeit und Geschichte* (Tübingen, 1964), p. 365.
- ³⁶ E. Fuchs, 'The New Testament and the Hermeneutical Problem' *loc. cit.*, p. 117.
- ³⁷ W. Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (London, 1940), p. 57. Cf. M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Anchor ed. New York, 1961), and *Nietzsche* (two vols., Neske, Pfullingen, 1961), pp. 148-189.
- ³⁸ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 485.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 484.
- ⁴⁰ *Attack on 'Christendom'*, p. 150.
- ⁴¹ *The Last Years*, p. 336. This aspect of faith is stressed by Rudolf Bultmann.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 336.
- ⁴³ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 109.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *The Journals*, p. 156.
- ⁴⁷ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 97-98.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 99 and 107. These form two section-headings in the discussion.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 232.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.
- ⁵³ T. Haecker, *Soren Kierkegaard* (Eng. Oxford, 1937), comments, 'Once Hegel knows a thing or an object, it is really finished with, it exists no more. . . . It vanishes from the dialectical process' (p. 35).
- ⁵⁴ *Point of View for my Work as an Author*, p. 10.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- ⁵⁸ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 221 and 181.
- ⁵⁹ C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London, 1935), p. 16.
- ⁶⁰ E. Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (London, 1964), p. 129.
- ⁶¹ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Eng. Penguin ed. London, 1961), p. 285.
- ⁶² K. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation* (Eng. London, 1967), pp. 346ff.

- ⁶³ K. Jaspers, 'Myth and Religion' in H. W. Bartsch (ed.) *Kerygma and Myth* vol. 2 (Eng. London, 1962), pp. 178-179.
- ⁶⁴ K. Barth, *Fragments Grave and Gay* (Eng. London, 1971), p. 98 (my italics).
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Eng. London, 1957), pp. 609-610.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 36.
- ⁶⁹ M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Anchor edn. New York, 1961), pp. 89-90.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- ⁷³ M. Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (Frankfurt⁴, 1961) especially pp. 6-13 (also r.p. in *Wegmarken*, 1967).
- ⁷⁴ M. Heidegger, 'Das Wesen der Sprache' in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen, 1960), pp. 162-177; cf. also pp. 30ff., and also *Existence and Being* (London⁵, 1968), pp. 299-300. On the concept of 'language-event' (*Sprachereignis*), see A. C. Thiselton, 'The Parables as Language-Event. Some Comments on Fuchs's Hermeneutics in the Light of Linguistic Philosophy' in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970), pp. 437-468, and 'The New Hermeneutic' in I. H. Marshall (ed.) *New Testament Interpretation* (forthcoming).
- ⁷⁵ M. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 267; cf. *Existence and Being*, pp. 299-300.
- ⁷⁶ M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 172.
- ⁷⁷ H. Jonas, in *The Review of Metaphysics* 18 (1964), p. 216; cf. 207-233.
- ⁷⁸ *The Last Years: Journals 1853-1855*, p. 331.
- ⁷⁹ H. Diem, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence* (Eng. Edinburgh, 1959), p. 157.
- ⁸⁰ *The Journals*, pp. 59-63.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 235.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.
- ⁸⁴ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 89; cf. 88.
- ⁸⁵ *Attack on 'Christendom'*, pp. 107 and 127.