Søren Kierkegaard's Use of Paradox
A Comparative Study

by

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This thesis is the result of my own research and was entirely written by myself during my period of residency as a Doctoral candidate.
The thesis, first of all, seeks to demonstrate Kierkegaard's use of paradox. It is affirmed that Kierkegaard's paradox is basically a paradox of ontology: the historical God-Man, the man who appears absolutely like all others, but who demonstrates Himself as being absolutely unlike all others both by word and by deed. The offense taken at this objective kind of paradox is both intellectual and moral in nature.

Secondly, similarities of Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox are noted as they appear in the thought of Tertullian and Luther, upon whom Kierkegaard relies. While both Tertullian and Luther hold similar views in terms of the ontological paradox and basic theological approach, a greater difference is noted in terms of the moral aspect of the paradox. Kierkegaard appears to be closer to Tertullian than to Luther in this respect.

Thirdly, Kierkegaard's use of paradox is compared with the paradox found in much of twentieth-century theology (Barth and Bultmann). Paradox in much of contemporary theology has come to mean a paradox of appearance of phenomenon. That is to say, there was nothing unique in the life of the historical Jesus which would separate him from other prophets and religious leaders of his time in terms of the ontological aspect here described.

Fourthly, it is argued that such an understanding on the part of contemporary theology, is a breach not only with Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox (as Vernard Eller has pointed out), but with the understandings of Tertullian and Luther.

Lastly, such a breach, it would seem, raises a dilemma for contemporary theology: either the Christologies of Tertullian, Luther, and Kierkegaard (which take Scripture largely at its face value) have been shown to be ill conceived due to the findings of historical criticism; or historical criticism is, at some point, inadequate and in need of qualification.

It is affirmed that Kierkegaard's ontological paradox retains its validity for two reasons: (a) reason can be "no viable criterion" regarding the paradox, and (b) critical judgment can make no claim (either positively or negatively) regarding the "practical certainty" of an historical occurrence, since historical evidence is lacking. Thus the believer is free to believe in the ontological paradox because he is so told. This is the point of Kierkegaard's often-quoted statement from Philosophical Fragments: "If the contemporary generation had left nothing
behind them but these words: 'We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died,' it would be more than enough." Faith is the only organ which may "apprehend" such an ontological paradox as having happened in history as an objective historical occurrence.
Summary

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"What...the age needs in the deepest sense can be said fully and completely with one single word: it needs...eternity."

Søren Kierkegaard, 1847.
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Wives usually receive the greatest credit in this kind of endeavor. This instance is no exception. During the past few years, both Astri and I have been busy at our various tasks. But there has been a difference. The following thesis has not really been work. I have enjoyed every minute of it. Astri, however, has been burdened with the more mundane responsibility of making our living. She has done the real work. In light of this, and so many things, she deserves and receives the dedication of this thesis.

W. R. B.
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## Conclusions On Kierkegaard's Use Of Paradox

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Paradox is one of the most used and confused concepts to be found in twentieth-century theology. Seldom is the term defined. Ronald Hepburn in his book Christianity And Paradox does not attempt a definition in any concise manner. Likewise many theologians such as Niebuhr, Brunner, Barth, and Bonhoeffer use "paradox" as well as paradoxical language, yet without stating precisely what is meant by such a word, or by such usage.

Martin Heinecken, writing in The Encyclopedia of The Lutheran Church, provides us with a useful structure of definitions. After mention of its derivation from the original Greek paradoxon, meaning contrary to received opinion or incredible, Heinecken goes on to isolate three primary uses of the term which are especially prevalent today.

The first is "counter to appearance". Here something appears different to the senses than what is in reality the case. He gives the example of how a straight stick, when partially submerged in water, appears to be bent due to the refraction of the light. In such an example, there are two seemingly contradictory facts which upon closer examination may be resolved. Yet while the issue is resolved, as long as the stick remains in water only "counter to appearance"
is it a straight stick, and hence remains paradoxical in this sense.

It should be noted that this definition is basically the definition used by Dialectical Theology. Emil Brunner, for example, even uses the stick and water analogy. He writes:

Like a rod in water, God's Word is broken in the element of the world; just as the Christ could only reveal the glory of God through the form of a servant, so all speech concerning God, if it is in the sense of this revelation, is necessarily 'paradoxical'. It is only by means of the contradiction between two ideas--God and man, grace and responsibility, holiness and love--that we can comprehend the contradictory truth that the eternal God enters time, or that the sinful man is declared just. Dialectical Theology is the mode of thinking which defends this paradoxical character, belonging to faith-knowledge, from the non-paradoxical speculation of reason, and vindicates it as against the other.¹

Likewise Karl Barth demonstrates a similar understanding of paradox as he rejects the term as a means of describing the Word of God. In passing, it should be pointed out that this kind of theological paradox which runs contrary to appearance is not to be resolved by ordinary scientific investigation. Barth writes:

A paradox...is not only made by means of a δέξιον a 'phenomenon', but is to be regarded, if it is to be understood at all, τὰ ἐπὶ τῆν δέξιον i.e. contrary to what the phenomenon as such appears to express. Just because the Word of God alone fulfills the concept of paradox with complete strictness, whereas in all other thinkable 'paradoxes' the opposition between communication and form is such that it can be dissolved from some superior point of vantage,

it is to be recommended that in theology more sparing use should henceforth be made of this concept now that it has done its part, not without causing all manner of confusions.\footnote{Karl Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics}, Vol. I Part 1, trans. G.T. Thompson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1936), p. 189.}

The second definition that Heinecken gives is "contrary to general opinion". This definition is in keeping with the root meaning of the word, but has relatively less significance for our purposes. Here the disjunction is between what people generally hold to be true, and what is in fact true. He uses the example of the belief of the few in Columbus' day in the sphericity of the earth, as opposed to the common opinion. These two kinds of paradox--those of appearance and opinion--are resolvable, Heinecken observes, with an increase of knowledge.

The third form of paradox Heinecken isolates is that "involving a logical contradiction which is not resolvable." Before dealing with this, however, he is careful to distinguish between that which is simply a contradiction and a true paradox. A contradiction is of such a nature that if one proposition of the contradiction is true, the other must be false, and \textit{vice versa}. They cannot both be true nor both false and remain only a contradiction. Consistent thinking depends on this "law of contradiction". Contradictory evidence, he observes, is not acceptable in the search for truth and is the incentive to further investigation.

Yet if logical paradoxes cannot be overcome with the evidence at hand, then man is unable to resolve the
contradiction. In that case, Heinecken continues, he affirms the paradoxical or that which is apparently a contradiction. He is faced with a phenomenon which he cannot adequately describe or understand. The example he gives of this kind of paradox is that of light which must be treated as demonstrating itself both in the form of waves and of particles. "A system of thought," he continues, "must be free of contradiction, but life itself is full of contradictions."¹

Heinecken does not deal in this definition with examples of paradoxes which are resolvable, and rather prefers to deal with "true" paradoxes which are "not resolvable". Ronald Hepburn, however, writing in A Dictionary of Christian Theology, does list some paradoxes of this resolvable kind which are worth mentioning. One is Zeno's argument against the possibility of motion. He states the problem briefly:

...to transverse a distance, half the distance must first be crossed, then half of the remaining distance, and so on, ad infinitum. But it is impossible to transverse an infinite number of lengths in a finite time. Therefore motion is impossible.²

Another paradox of this kind is the "Barber" paradox. It is "lighthearted", and reminiscent of a children's puzzle:

Suppose there is a village barber who shaves all those villagers (and only those) who do not shave themselves. Does he shave himself or not? If he does shave himself, he belongs to the class of non-self-shavers and thus is one of those whom the barber shaves: i.e. if he does shave himself,

¹Heinecken, p. 1843
he does not; if he does not, he does.¹

Hepburn resolves both of these paradoxes by pointing out the confusion inherent in them. In the case of Zeno, it has not been proved that motion is impossible, since we know that it is possible. Rather the confusion lies in space and time as continua—finite distance and infinite divisibility. Likewise with the Barber, the conclusion must be drawn that there is no such person, so described. The philosopher's task, as he sees it, is to show how a paradox arises and how it may be resolved.

Of the various forms of paradox described above—those of appearance, opinion, and logic—it is Heinecken's description of what he calls a "true" paradox which comes the closest to Kierkegaard's usage of the term. Yet in order to avoid confusion with the many other kinds of logical paradoxes (such as the kind Hepburn mentions), we may refer to this "true" paradox as one which demonstrates a contradiction in ontology. Light demonstrates itself to be both waves and particles. If this contradiction truly occurs at the same time and under the same conditions, the resulting situation may be described as an ontological paradox.

Let us, therefore, attempt to define Kierkegaard's "Paradox". However we will have to keep in mind the difficulty of such an undertaking, for the definition itself becomes paradoxical. And the temptation is always present for reason to correct the paradox and thus render the paradox

¹Ibid., p.252.
unparadoxical as a matter of course. To use an analogy, reason abhors a paradox, as nature abhors a vacuum. Thus it would be best to cling to the literal meaning here described even though it may sound strange and awkward. Unfortunately Kierkegaard not only uses paradox in a highly specialized sense, but neglects to state a definition adequate for our purposes. Thus one is forced to glean his meaning from various sources. His paradox may be defined as follows: "Paradox is the term used to describe an ontological contradiction in which the absolutely unlike ('eternal divine essence') comes into being in the absolutely like ('existence') as an objective historical occurrence and there reveals itself by virtue of the absurd."

This paradox, it will be argued in this thesis, is different from what Dialectical Theology traditionally understands Kierkegaard's paradox to be. The paradox of Dialectical Theology is basically one of appearance; Kierkegaard's paradox is basically one of ontology. Yet unlike the example of light which is theoretically explainable through further knowledge, Kierkegaard's "Absolute Paradox", since it involves the Absolute in time, is not theoretically explainable to further knowledge. It may only be believed, since as Kierkegaard observes, it is impossible to be knowing about a "qualitative" fact; one may only be believing.

Such a difference of interpretation is easily made, especially in Kierkegaard's more abstract writings (i.e. Philosophical Fragments, and Concluding Unscientific Postscript). Yet even here there is the basis for the
ontological paradox expressed above. Kierkegaard later clarifies his abstractions in Training In Christianity. Let us look at this matter of interpretation with reference to Kierkegaard's writings.

An often-quoted passage from the pen of Søren Kierkegaard has served as a theological axiom in recent years. It reads as follows:

If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: 'We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died,' it would be more than enough.  

D.M. Baillie in his book, God Was In Christ, suggests that this passage has influenced the theology of Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth, in that both scholars appear more or less agreed that the "revelation" to be found in the historical Jesus was a virtually hidden affair. Bultmann was even of the opinion "...that our Lord never regarded Himself as the Messiah at all..." Similarly, Baillie maintains, Karl Barth sees little value in a "Jesus of history" movement. Barth understands that, in so far as one is able to uncover the historical Jesus, "...there is nothing remarkable to be found in His life and character and teaching." The life

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3 Ibid., p. 36.
that Jesus led on earth did not reveal God but only concealed Him. The Christian Faith, therefore, is based, for Barth, upon what ensued during the Resurrection and the forty days which followed up to the Ascension. While Barth does maintain that there were during Jesus' life occasional anticipations of the Resurrection glory in the miracles and the Transfiguration, these as well, however, were dependent upon faith completely: "It is only the eye of faith that can find any revelation of God in the human life and passion of Jesus..."\(^1\)

Again the paradox here involved is contrary to appearance, or phenomenon.

This way of thinking (i.e. that which tends to separate what Bultmann calls *historie*, the actual scientific fact, from *Geschichte*, the reality of that happening for us presently) is not held without difficulties. D.M. Baillie comments directly on the passage above from the *Fragments* and indirectly on this understanding of history:

Would it really be enough and more than enough? There is the whole question in a nutshell. And one is disposed to reply: If no more than this was necessary, why was even that necessary? What would it avail us to be able to say so much, if we could say no more? If no revelation of the nature of God were to be found in the incarnate life, what could be the gain of believing that God therein became man? If the 'divine incognito' remains in this extreme form, what saving virtue is there in the dogma of the incarnation? If there is no revelation, no 'unveiling', of God in the human personality and career of Jesus, but only a 'veiling'; if God in Christ is as much as ever a *deus absconditus*, not a *deus revelatus*, what are we the better of the coming of God in Christ? Where is the light that saves us, the knowledge that sets us free?\(^2\)

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\(^1\)ibid.  
\(^2\)ibid., p. 49.
Professor Baillie raises a significant criticism here, not only of Kierkegaard's passage but of Dialectical Theology. The point he makes is straightforward: If Jesus Christ's life in the world was completely an 'incognito', what real basis is there for the Christian Faith? Indeed could the faith have any content? Certainly that for a contemporary generation to say, "We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community and finally died",¹ is not "more than enough"; nor for that matter can it, by any stretch of the imagination, be considered adequate by Professor Baillie. There must be more substance to the Faith than this.

However before we answer this criticism let us look more closely at what Kierkegaard himself has to say. In this section of Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard is writing concerning the problem of the "disciple at second hand" (i.e. everyone removed from the original disciples). He argues that there is really no such thing as the "disciple at second hand". Everyone is on the same plane when it comes to faith. "The testimony of the contemporary provides an occasion for the successor, just as the immediate contemporaneity provides an occasion for the contemporary."² This is a significant point. By way of analogy, the contemporary

¹Kierkegaard, Fragments, p. 130.
²Ibid., p. 131. Italics mine.
generation (i.e., the authors of the New Testament) provides an occasion for us, just as "the God" (as Kierkegaard calls Him here) provided the occasion for the first disciples. Thus Kierkegaard does not distinguish between what we might term the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith". The "occasion" for faith remains the same for the contemporary as it does for succeeding generations.

Jesus' "incognito" was not the strict incognito that is so often attributed to Kierkegaard's understanding. He makes this clear at several points in the Fragments. For example, he states:

But the God did not assume the form of a servant to make a mockery of men; hence it cannot be his intention to pass through the world in such a manner that no single human being becomes aware of his presence. He will therefore doubtless give some sort of sign, though every understanding resting upon an accommodation is essentially without value for one who does not receive the condition /i.e. for faith/; for which reason he yields to the necessity only unwillingly. Such a sign when given is capable of repelling the learner as of drawing him nearer. He humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant, but he did not come to spend his life as a servant in some private employment, attending to his tasks without in any manner making himself known, either to his master or to his fellow servants—such a measure of wrath we dare not ascribe to the God.\(^1\)

Likewise he writes a few pages later:

Here at the outset let us take care to make it clear that the question of an historical point of departure arises even for a contemporary disciple; for if we are not careful here, we shall meet with an insuperable difficulty later...when we come to deal with the case of the disciple whom we call the disciple at second

\(^1\)ibid., p. 69.
hand. The contemporary disciple gets an historical point of departure for his eternal consciousness as well as any later disciple; for he is contemporary with precisely that historical phenomenon which refuses to be reduced to a moment of merely occasional significance, but proposes to interest him in another sense than the merely historical presenting itself to him as a condition for his eternal happiness. If this is not so, then (deducing the consequences conversely) the Teacher is not the God but only a Socrates, and if he does not conduct himself like a Socrates, he is not even a Socrates.1

The facts which distinguish Jesus from his contemporaries are his behavior,2 his teaching,3 and his mysterious deeds.4 Here in the abstract Kierkegaard does not tell us what the content of these "signs" involve, nor does he give us concrete examples as he does in Training In Christianity. But it is obvious that Kierkegaard's understanding of the "historical Jesus" is at a far remove from Barth's understanding that would find only God's "concealment" in the human existence of Jesus.5 Kierkegaard's implication is that Jesus ranks historically as a greater personality than Socrates.

The Paradox for Kierkegaard, does not lie in the identity of Historie and Geschichte.6 Rather the paradoxical is to be found in the historical person of "the God". Thus the

1ibid., p. 72. 2ibid., p. 70. 
3ibid., p. 71. 4ibid., p. 86.

See: Chapter Four, "Paradox In Dialectical Theology."
6Kierkegaard does not make this distinction, although he does distinguish between "secular" (i.e. objective) and "sacred" history.
Paradox always remains the same either for the contemporary generation or for us.

To return to Professor Baillie's criticism, in *Philosophical Fragments* Kierkegaard argues for an incognito to be at work. But this should not be construed, as it often is, that therefore there was nothing extraordinary to be seen and heard had one been a contemporary oneself. The historical Paradox to which the quotation bears witness is this: that "...God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant..."

Had one been a contemporary, for Kierkegaard, the hard core would be on the one hand the ordinary person before one's eyes, and on the other how this person acts, teaches, and performs. Or as Kierkegaard writes in a later and more concrete way in *Training In Christianity*, "...directly there was nothing to be seen but a lowly man, who, by signs and wonders and by affirming that He was God, continually posited the possibility of offense."¹ Or again, as he states at another place in the same work:

'History', says faith, 'has nothing whatever to do with Christ. As applying to Him, we have only sacred history (qualitatively different from history in general), which recounts the story of His life under the conditions of His humiliation, and reports moreover that He himself said that He was God. He is the paradox, which history can never digest or convert into a common syllogism.²

²Ibid., p. 33.
Kierkegaard's paradox is primarily an ontological paradox. It is made up by an ordinary man, and by the contradictory fact that the man demonstrates himself through his actions to be anything but ordinary. The paradox of appearance pertains to Jesus (if it pertains at all) only in terms of his personal bodily appearance, and not in any other way.

Baillie's criticism of Kierkegaard's statement quoted above may be in order: It is too brief, too imprecise, etc. It leads to misinterpretation. But, properly understood, it is faithful to the point he was attempting to make; namely, that on the universal plane of world history this statement, in a theoretical, algebraic sense, may serve as the point of departure for a successor to paradoxical religiousness. The statement attempts to defend the paradoxical polemically against the immediacy of the Danish state church. That is to say, Baillie's questions may be best left to the interpreters of Kierkegaard mentioned above than to Kierkegaard himself. Kierkegaard is here suggesting that an ontological paradox as an objective historical occurrence may only be "apprehended" through the eyes of faith due to the extreme paradoxical nature of such an occurrence.

Even though it may not appear so at first glance, much of the difference between the paradox of Dialectical Theology

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1 One is not seeking here to maintain S.K.'s understanding against the conclusions of modern historical criticism. Rather the point is here being made that Kierkegaard's understanding is significantly different. The problem of sustaining such a paradox is reserved for the conclusion of this thesis.
and Kierkegaard's paradox may be understood as the difference between what Kierkegaard terms "Religiousness A" and "Religiousness B". In the Concluding Unscientific Postscript Kierkegaard seeks to clarify the meaning of the Fragments, and finds it useful to distinguish between these two terms.

Religiousness A, Kierkegaard affirms, "...is the dialectic of inward transformation; it is the relation to an eternal happiness which is not conditioned by anything but is the dialectic of inward appropriation of the relationship, and so is conditioned only by the inwardness of the appropriation and its dialectic." The prime example of this kind of religiousness is the Monastic Movement during the Middle Ages. During such a movement, men strove to become closer to God through personal piety. Such is the dialectic in the first instance of "becoming" in one's relationship with God. It is not conditioned by an external specific, but rather is a heartfelt expression of a sense of God, or of the Spiritual, or of an expectation of eternal blessedness. It is the religion of most men, be they Christian or pagan. Yet it remains man's highest reach, the most exalted attainment of his humanity.

Religiousness A, according to Kierkegaard, must be present in the individual before there can be any realization of Religiousness B.

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Religiousness B, however, is the paradoxical religiousness. It "...has the dialectical in the second instance, and does on the contrary posit conditions, of such a sort that they are not merely deeper dialectical apprehensions of inwardness, but are a definite something which defines more closely the eternal happiness...not defining more closely the individual apprehension of it, but defining more closely the eternal happiness itself, though not as a task for thought, but paradoxically as a repellent to produce new pathos."¹ Religiousness B indicates the specifically Christian religiousness. This is only possible where the historical message of Jesus Christ is known and believed. It is the doctrine of the Incarnation that separates Christianity from the other religions of the world. Christianity is an historical religion in the peculiar sense that it maintains that the Eternal has become temporal, not in mere theory alone, but in existence. This is the category of the Paradoxical, or the dialectic in the second instance.

Of course, it is a contradiction in terms for the Eternal to become temporal. This is what Kierkegaard means by the "absurd". However the "absurd" should not be confused with mere nonsense. "Every man", for Kierkegaard, "the wisest and the simplest, can qualitatively...distinguish just as essentially between what he understands and what he does not understand...", and he can discover that there is something which is, in spite of the fact that it

¹Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 494.
runs against his understanding and way of thinking."¹ It is the grasp of the "absurd" held by faith which qualifies one as a believing Christian and nothing else.

In the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard puts forward three theses concerning the category of the paradoxical. Let us take each one in turn. It must be remembered, as we look at these theses, that Kierkegaard is not seeking to explain the problem of the paradoxical but merely to state it.

1. The dialectical contradiction which is the breach: to expect eternal happiness in time through a relationship to something else in time.²

While Religiousness A sees the individual during the course of time as coming into a relationship with the eternal and thinking about it in the sense of immediacy, Religiousness B in time (i.e. in existence) comes into a relation with the eternal in time (i.e. in history). This relationship conflicts with all thinking whether one thinks in terms of the individual, or in terms of the Deity;³ for either to be, at the same time, the other is an absurdity.

¹ibid., p. 495.
²ibid., p. 505.
³ibid.

This problem is Lessing's "ditch". It is interesting to note that Lessing did not reject S.K.'s paradox of the man who did miracles, rose from the dead, etc. on historical grounds. Rather he did reject basing one's eternal happiness on these historical facts. This was a transition into another kind of fact entirely.

Of course, the Christian believer has no problem with this chasm, having already made the "leap". Kierkegaard seems to be suggesting that the size of such a chasm is basically a function of the will. See: Postscript, p. 86ff.
In Religiousness A, the eternal is ubique et nusquam, yet concealed by the actuality of existence. Immanence lies at the base of existence and sustains it. The eternal is concealed in life and, as concealed, is present. Religiousness B places the contradiction absolutely between human existence and the eternal at a definite point in time. Existence, in this instance, "...is abandoned by the concealed immanence of the eternal".\(^1\) The breach with immanence is understood to be that the eternal is at a definite place in time. Therefore one's relationship with the Eternal is qualified by the fact that the eternal may be found only in time (i.e. historically). The paradoxical religiousness, therefore breaks with immanence, and runs against it. "There is no longer any immanent fundamental kinship between the temporal and the eternal, because the eternal itself has entered time and would constitute there the kinship."\(^2\)

In Religiousness A, Kierkegaard claims that there is no historical starting point. The historical, as in the case of the Danish church, is given only lip-service. It is in time that the individual comes to "recollect" that he is eternal. This happens all within the realm of immanence. "It is another thing," Kierkegaard writes, "when the historical is outside and remains outside, and the individual who is not eternal now becomes such, and so does not recollect what he is but becomes what he is not, becomes, be it observed, something which possesses the dialectic that as soon as it is, it must have been, for

\(^1\)ibid., p. 506. \(^2\)ibid., pp. 507-508.
this is the dialectic of the eternal.\textsuperscript{1} This is Religious¬ness B. Here the proposition which cannot be thought is that one should become eternal although one never was eternal.

Existence plays a key role for Kierkegaard. In A, existence is a moment within one's eternal consciousness. As such it is a lowly thing, preventing one from becoming what one actually is, that being infinitely higher. In B, it is only by means of existence in extreme lowliness (the paradoxical being accentuated), and subject to death, that one does become eternal. Consequently existence becomes necessary in the scheme of salvation. Redemption, one may go on to say, cannot be separated from the created order.

2. The dialectical contradiction that an eternal happiness is based upon something historical.\textsuperscript{2}

As mentioned above, Religiousness A does not base one's eternal happiness upon one's existence, but rather lets the relation to the eternal transform existence. \quotes{From the individual's relation to the eternal, there results the how of his existence, not the converse, and thereby infinitely more comes out of it than was put into it.}\textsuperscript{3} The relationship, therefore, is the starting point and not one's existence and the historical paradox of Christ. What Kierkegaard seems to be saying is that it is Christ who defines the relationship and not the relationship which defines Christ.

\textsuperscript{1}ibid., p. 508. \textsuperscript{2}ibid. \textsuperscript{3}ibid., p. 509.
In Religiousness B, the dialectical contradiction lies essentially in the second place, for historical knowledge, even at its maximum, remains only an approximation. The contradiction is to base one's eternal happiness upon such an approximation. This may only be done when one ceases to have an eternal determinant (i.e. an understanding of immanence).

That all historical knowledge is only an approximation, Kierkegaard writes, is not a criticism of the historical method of his day. But it illuminates the problem at hand of bringing the utmost passion of subjectivity into contact with something historical. It must be remembered, however, that this history does not speak of any "unwarranted passion", but of the most profound passion of all. Nonetheless it is a contradiction to base eternal happiness upon something which is at best an approximation. One only overcomes such a contradiction when one is given the "condition" (i.e. of faith) from the Deity. Then it is that one becomes a new creature.

Characteristically enough, Kierkegaard compares the situation to human love:

If a woman who is in love were to receive at second hand the assurance that the man she loved (who was dead and from whose mouth she had never heard the assurance) had affirmed that he loved her——let the witness be the most reliable of men, let the case be so plain that a captious and credulous lawyer would say it is certain——the lover will at once detect the precariousness of this report; it is hardly a compliment to the woman to suppose that she would not, for objectivity is no crown of honor for a lover."1

1 ibid., p. 511.
Certainly, he adds, she would eventually give up this passion and console herself with the eternal.

But Kierkegaard points out, concern for eternal blessedness cannot be given up. One finds oneself in the contradiction of either facing the reality that there is nothing eternal to console oneself, or to base one's eternal happiness upon something historical, which again remains only an approximation.

Within the realm of Religiousness A, Kierkegaard places the comment: "...let the six thousand years of history be true or not true, to the exister, as concerning the question of his blessedness, it makes no difference, for in the last resort, he reposes in the consciousness of eternity."¹ Likewise, Kierkegaard warns, to change the historical speculatively into an eternal history in which the Incarnation comes to mean an on-going event or what-have-you, is only a play on words and an evasion of the problem.²

Again, the problem is that I should place my life in jeopardy by basing my eternal happiness upon a relationship to the historical. Yet it is only in this manner that one may believe:

...and when, with truth confronting the individual as a paradox, gripped in the anguish of pain and sin, facing the tremendous risk of the objective insecurity, the individual believes. But without risk no faith, not even the Socratic form of faith, much less the form of which we here speak.³

¹Ibid., p. 512. ²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 188.
Should one thus come to believe, Kierkegaard states, it would be foolish to think that such faith could be understood since it conflicts with all thinking. The contradiction remains a contradiction. Should it cease to remain contradictory, then one has ceased to base one's happiness upon the historical, and by doing so has opted for Religiousness A or some other "stage" in life.

3. The dialectical contradiction that the historical fact here in question is not a simple historical fact, but is constituted by that which only against its nature can become historical, hence by virtue of the absurd.¹

The basic assertion of the Christian Faith, according to Kierkegaard, has been throughout the centuries that the Deity, the Eternal One, has come into being in time at a specific point and as an individual man. Such an affirmation, Kierkegaard states, has led speculative philosophy to accept a "pleasant illusion"; namely, that as an historical fact, it is a simple one, and moreover, can be understood eternally. Kierkegaard sees this as missing the mark entirely, as (A) if the contradiction is to base one's eternal happiness upon an historical fact, then this contradiction is not resolved by explaining away the contradiction of the fact itself, when one is nevertheless to hold fast that it (i.e. the fact) is itself historical; and (B) any eternal explanation becomes "ludicrous" as the eternal can only be explained from the point of view of the eternal

¹ibid., p. 512.
(i.e. by being eternal). Kierkegaard maintains that speculative thought, at this point, leaves out the one contradiction and explains the second away.

Religiousness A declares that "a man in accordance with his possibility is eternal and becomes conscious of this in time." Against this Religiousness B proclaims that the eternal against its nature became temporal, was born, grew up, and died. This, as well, is a "breach with all thinking".

As a project for thought, Religiousness B is not difficult to understand. The difficulty arises in that we are not here dealing abstractly. The difficulty, the Paradox, is that it is real. "In the fantasy-medium of possibility God can perfectly well for the imagination be fused with a man," Kierkegaard observes, "but that this should occur in reality with an individual man, this precisely is the paradox."

The significance of this comparison in relationship to Dialectical Theology lies in the fact that if Dialectical Theology understands by "paradox" a paradox of appearance instead of Kierkegaard's ontological paradox, for that very reason, it is to move from Religiousness B to Religiousness A or to some other approach. Religiousness B is based upon what Kierkegaard terms an "objective uncertainty". That is to say, the paradox recorded in the New Testament is uncertain both in view of the complex nature of this historical fact per se, and also because of the approximate nature of historical evidence. A paradox of appearance, however, used in its strictest sense, would exclude—or at

\[1\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 513.} \quad 2\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 515.}\]
least be indifferent to--the ontological paradox as an historical occurrence, since all phenomena are, by definition, ruled out. If all phenomena are ruled out at the outset, so is paradox in Kierkegaard's sense, and one is again under the rubric of Religiousness A and "immediacy". For since the historical aspect has been negated, it can only be through some form of immediacy that the paradox of appearance becomes paradoxical. Kierkegaard's paradox, on the contrary, is paradoxical in an objective historical sense, independent of any sort of immediate revelation whether it be in the individual or in the Church.

What is basically at issue in Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox is an alternative approach to theology, one quite distinct in style and direction from other theological methods. In this thesis we will examine more closely what Kierkegaard means by "Paradox", and the implications inherent in the term. While Kierkegaard relies upon many famous figures for his understanding of paradox, two which he mentions will be dealt with in the following chapters as being especially significant for Kierkegaard's understanding. The first is Tertullian who, besides being memorable for his paradox (quia inepturn), is mentioned at length and with admiration in Kierkegaard's journals. A second figure is that of Martin Luther. Luther, likewise, is fond of paradox and appears throughout Kierkegaard's writings, both public and private. After exploring these positions and noting their

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1 Kierkegaard, Fragments, pp. 66-67.
proximity to Kierkegaard on the subject of paradox, a comparison will be made with the understanding of paradox as it is found in Dialectical Theology. Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann will be singled out as being representative of this theological school. And lastly, the dilemma that Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox raises for contemporary theology will be discussed in the Conclusion.

Paradox is a term which has been under attack both from theology and philosophy in recent years. Critics claim that the usage of paradox is anything from "confusing" to "irrational". While, in the wrong hands, such may indeed be the case, others like Bernard Williams find in paradox the formulation of something "essential to Christian belief."1 I share this latter opinion. The reader is thus advised of this prejudice so that he may judge accordingly.

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Søren Kierkegaard's Use Of Paradox:
A Comparative Study

Chapter One: Kierkegaard's "Paradox"
Søren Kierkegaard once wrote concerning his pseudonymous works that, "...their importance...absolutely does not consist in making any new proposal, any unheard-of discovery, or in forming a new party, or wanting to go further, but precisely on the contrary, consists in wanting to have no importance, in wanting...to read solo the old text, well known, handed down from the fathers--to read it through yet once more, if possible in a more heart felt way."¹ This statement which appeared at what was to be the end of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works, here appears at the beginning of this chapter and of this thesis. It is with the question of continuity--especially in a Christological sense--that this study is concerned. Let us keep Kierkegaard's declaration in mind as a point of reference throughout the following essays.

This essay is divided into two sections. The first section concerns itself with Kierkegaard's "Paradox", and with the historical problems associated with it. As Training In Christianity describes the paradox in a more concrete fashion than do his other works, it will receive special emphasis as a primary source. The second section will trace the "Implications Of The Paradox For Speculative Philosophy". Here we will compare Kierkegaard's approach to the approach used by German Idealism--especially Hegel. The fundamental differences in methodology, as used by Kierkegaard in

contrast to the dogmaticians of his day, will be outlined.

It may be noted that the majority of Kierkegaard's works cited in this chapter were written by pseudonymous authors. The use of pseudonyms, such as Johannes Climacus in the case of *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Postscript*, and Anti-Climacus in the case of *Training In Christianity*, create various problems of interpretation. An examination of these difficulties is dealt with in Appendix A: "Understanding Kierkegaard's Authorship". A stance is there adopted in regard to these works which will be followed throughout the discussion below.

**The Paradox**

Before dealing with Kierkegaard's paradox *per se*, comment is called for in regard to the historical question so often associated with it. It was Lessing whom Kierkegaard cites as giving rise to the historical question, and which now occupies so much of the attention of modern theology. Lessing objected to basing one's subjective "metaphysical" and "moral" convictions upon the "accidental" truths determined by objective historical inquiry. Or as he states:

That the Christ, against whose resurrection I can raise no important historical objection, therefore declared himself to be the Son of God; that his disciples therefore believed him to be such; this I gladly believe from my heart. For these truths, as truths of one and the same class, follow quite naturally on one another. But to jump with that historical truth to quite a different class of truths, and to demand of one that I should form all my metaphysical and moral ideas accordingly; to expect me to alter all my fundamental ideas of the nature of
the Godhead because I cannot set any credible testimony against the resurrection of Christ: if that is not a \( \text{μετάβασις ἐξ ἀλλο γένεσις} \), then I do not know what Aristotle meant by this phrase.\(^1\)

Yet it has been Christianity's persistent assertion that the Eternal has entered time, that He was born in the form of a servant, revealed Himself as the Truth, died, and lives and rules eternally. Moreover it has been precisely because of the historical, Christianity would contend, that there has been any revelation at all.

Thus the paradox arises, for Kierkegaard, from the claim that a superhistorical Being (God) has revealed Himself within history as an individual man. The paradox does not arise from the fact that God in his very nature is paradoxical, but rather from the fact that God (essence) has entered into history (existence) taking upon Himself the limitations of time and space as an individual person. This, for Kierkegaard, should not be confused with pagan mythology. For we are not talking here about God entering time as a "possibility" (an eternal divine becoming), as an illusion that is turned into an "actuality", but rather God entering time as the apparently "well known", yet the "absolutely strange" which turns actuality into a deception. As Johannes Climacus states, "In the fantasy medium of possibility God can perfectly well for the imagination be fused with a man, but that this should occur in reality with

an individual man, this precisely is the paradox."¹

The problem which arises at this point is that if we should at least be attentive to Christianity's claim, how are we to apprehend such a fact? What is there to demonstrate the truth of such an ontological paradox, and therefore, its historicity? Furthermore, even given its historicity as paradox, how may the implications of such a fact be personally appropriated?

Vernard Eller summarizes this problem in an understandable, concise manner as follows:

If God's self-revelation appeared in terms that were totally amenable to historical categories—that is, to historical reflection, to historical evidence capable of being handled and adjudged by the scientific criteria of self-evident fact or absurdity—then clearly it could not be the self of a superhistorical God which is revealed. History and historical observance simply do not comprise a big enough medium for the immediate and transparent revelation of superhistorical reality. And yet if God is going to reveal himself to us historical creatures he will have to do it through the medium of history, because that is where we live. The best God can do, then—although this course is dictated by our limitations and not his—is to create within history a disturbance which calls attention to the fact that something queer is going on. However, because the evidence itself can be nothing other than the historical—which is all that we are capable of perceiving—the matter is most paradoxical. The option necessarily is open for us either to interpret the event as the superhistorical's effort to communicate himself or to interpret it simply as a freak occurrence, a delusion, a fake, or a misreport of something purely historical. If the event is indeed an act of God no amount of reflection over the evidence will prove the case, because historical evidence simply cannot be put together into a combination that spells superhistory. The two

¹Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 515n.
alternatives of the paradox equally and eternally are open, and there is no conceivable way to tip the balance either way.

In a word, we are back to what Lessing termed, "the ugly, broad ditch." This is, of course, the problem that Johannes Climacus deals with in the Fragments and the Postscript. Kierkegaard argues, using this pseudonym, that whereas the results of objective historical research would only serve to underscore the essential paradoxical nature of faith, the objective chasm may be bridged. What Reason finds to be absurd, Faith finds sublime, but only, it should be noted, because the condition for Faith in this sense, has been given by God.
difference between subjectivity and objectivity, according to Bller, "...lies not in the intrinsic nature of their truth claims, but in the method of their proof or certainty."¹

Thus, to this way of understanding, if what we are dealing with is essentially a paradox (i.e. in Kierkegaard's sense), there is little point in pushing the investigation further on objective grounds (as an essential paradox is one which cannot be resolved), nor should one's subjective response to the paradox be postponed (as it concerns one's personal salvation).² This is another way of saying that once the paradox is understood to be essentially such, to a degree, faith is already present. If faith was not already present, the investigator would be convinced that the paradox, while presenting certain problems, is not essentially a paradox; and therefore will soon be resolved, if not immediately, by next week at the latest. The fact that during the past "1800 years" the issue has not been resolved, is pushed aside by the investigator's faith in "the present age", and its abilities.

When and if the investigator becomes a believer, he finds little interest in further objective research, because the subjective certainty, of which Kierkegaard writes, is certain to the degree that reflection is certain of a self-evident fact. Kierkegaard would argue, indeed, that

¹Bller, p. 62. ²Ibid., p. 63.
subjective certainty is the greater, as it involves much more than merely the intellectual assent of objectivity, subjectivity resting on a personal assumption. Just as the scientist is subjectively certain of his assumptions, so in the same manner, the believer is subjectively certain of his. As Eller states—or perhaps overstates it:

When the Christian believer affirms that \textit{Jesus is the Christ}, he intends a same order of fact as when the scientist affirms that the earth is round. In short, God was uniquely in Christ, whether anyone ever became aware of the fact or not, whether anyone likes the idea or not—just as the earth is round, whether anyone ever discovered this or whether it is the preferred shape.\footnote{ibid., p. 64. This statement is rather confusing, as Eller's emphasis is on the manner of the subjective assumption, and not on the nature of the objective fact itself.}

It is this objective revelatory fact, therefore, which Kierkegaard seeks to defend on two fronts: (1) against those who would try to prove that such a fact is true—thus introducing an inappropriate organ of apprehension (i.e. knowledge instead of faith); and (2) against those who would try to prove that such a fact is false—which is equally ridiculous to the believer since the fact is certain.\footnote{See: e.g., Kierkegaard, \textit{Postscript}, p. 29ff.} Let us discuss each of these arguments beginning with the second argument.

Kierkegaard comments in regard to those who wish to prove falsity:

\begin{quote}
I assume now...that the opponents have succeeded in proving what they desire about the Scriptures...What then? Have the opponents thereby abolished Christianity? By no means. Has the believer been harmed? By no means,
\end{quote}
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 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 himself invited this procedure, and began to play into the hands of unbelief by proposing to demonstrate (i.e. that the revelatory fact existed).

In other words, Kierkegaard points out in this passage an apparent non sequitur, namely, that just because something has been proven in regards to the biblical material--its unreliability in various respects--it does not follow (a) that the authors of the material in question did not exist, and (b) that Christ did not exist. We are back to the famous phrase from the Fragments quoted previously: "We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died". Even this brief statement Kierkegaard would find to be "more than enough" as a point of departure for paradoxical religiousness. Therefore the believer is free to assume that his faith has

1ibid., p. 31.

2Just what would constitute "proof" is an interesting problem in itself. It will be discussed more fully in relationship to Bultmann in the Conclusion.

3Kierkegaard, Fragments, p. 130.
historical basis. Seeking to prove such a basis would only serve to call into question the nature of his faith.

However Kierkegaard is often criticized at this point because it sounds as if he is simply postulating the fact of revelation and its historicity, due to his personal, arbitrary, but albeit paradoxical beliefs. Thus the Gospel instead of flowing from the self-attestation of Jesus has been made into but one facet of an existential philosophy.¹ Hermann Diem comments on this point:

What now are the implications of the fact that man the disciple believes all this [i.e. that the claims of Jesus were justified, etc.? In the first place, on the basis of his experience existentially he believes in the significance of the event in which the God-man is revealed, and only in the second place, and in consequence of the first consideration does he believe in its historical factuality, and even then he believes it in its aspect of 'double potency,' i.e. he accepts it as a historical fact which is also an eternal fact. Hence it is faith which through the existential fulfilment of the believer transforms a specific historical fact into a revelatory fact, and this change comes about through insight into the meaningfulness of that historical fact.²

Similarly Richard Campbell comments on this passage from the Postscript (p. 31) which we have singled out above. He writes:

Now as a matter of logic, Kierkegaard is right in this. Even if there be no evidence whatever


that a certain Elizer Gehoups lived in Windsor Castle from the year 1900 until 1932, I can still say with great passion and conviction that he did, if I want to. But why would I want to? The only answer would be that to me saying this has some great significance. But then, the assertion about Elizer Gehoups does not really say anything about a person who lived in Windsor Castle; it says something about me. And the 'creative personal decision' not only brings belief in the meaning and truth of the fact; it brings belief in the factuality of the fact itself.1

Two comments should be made at this point in regards to Kierkegaard's argument. First of all, it is often overlooked that Kierkegaard's discussion falls under the rubric "even if". That is to say, within the context of his discussion the possibility of the opponents having proved what they sought to prove regarding Scripture is dealt with as a hypothetical case.

Generally speaking, it is a difficult thing to prove anything either positive or negative in regards to history. This becomes all the more difficult when the historical object in question is the paradox that Kierkegaard describes. If one's criterion for judging what has occurred in the past is that of "probability", the paradox might well ask, "Comedies and romances and lies must needs be probable, but why should I be probable?"2 The miracle involved in Kierkegaard's paradox shuns this kind of test. Thus the most reliable form of historical evidence would be some form of

1 Campbell, p. 53.
2 Kierkegaard, Fragments, p. 65.
documentation, which is, of course, what the New Testament represents. It is difficult, therefore, to conceive of the kind of evidence that would make Kierkegaard's hypothetical argument a proven case, even though biblical unreliability is suspected.

Secondly, that there is "a fact in question", albeit a paradoxical fact, remains in spite of Campbell's remarks about there being "no evidence whatever". The reason for this is that, as Kierkegaard points out, even if the opponents' case is proved, it does not follow that the authors of the documents in question did not exist. Hence we are still faced with a certain body of evidence (i.e. the consequences of their writing). This evidence is "more than enough".

This precludes what Diem refers to as "transformation" and "change" in regards to the "specific historical fact". It, likewise, precludes the "creative personal decision" which Campbell rightly sees as affecting "the factuality of the fact itself."

Such a position is confirmed by what Kierkegaard states at various places. In his work On Authority And Revelation, he writes:

Christianity exists before any Christian exists, it must in order that one may become a Christian, it contains the determinant by which one may test whether one has become a Christian, it maintains its objective subsistence between the subjective and the objective. Though Christianity comes into the heart of never so many believers, every believer is conscious that it has not arisen in his heart, is conscious of the objective determinant of Christianity is not a reminiscence ...No, even if no one had perceived that God had revealed himself in a human form in Christ, he
nevertheless has revealed himself...  

Likewise Kierkegaard affirms that the soteriological element is present objectively. An entry from his *Journal* dated September 18, 1838 reads:

The objective reality of Christ's atonement, independent of its subjective appropriation, is most clearly shown in the history of the ten lepers—They were all of them healed, though only of the tenth, who thankfully returned to give honour to God, is it said: Thy faith made thee whole. What was it that cured the others?

The answer to this question would suggest that it was Christ's work which healed them and not their faith, as faith is only pronounced after the fact.

Yet this does not mean that Kierkegaard did not consider the possibility that in Christ's entire life on earth his divinity was a completely hidden affair. Such would be a more absolute paradox than the one traditionally presented by Christianity. Yet he rejected such a notion, however, not because it was a more radical paradox, but because it failed to communicate what was supposed to have been communicated:

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Of course to speak of a revelation without there being someone to whom the revelation is revealed is a highly specialized statement to say the least.


Hence when a mystification, a dialectical reduplication, is used in the service of a serious purpose, it will be so used as merely to obviate a misunderstanding, whereas all the while the true explanation is at hand and ready to be found by him who honestly seeks it. To take the highest example: the whole life of Christ on earth would have been mere play if He had been incognito to such a degree that he went through life totally unnoticed—and yet in a true sense He was incognito.¹

Closely related to the objective nature of Christianity is the fact of its "unthinkable" quality. Later in his Journals, we find an entry from 1849. In it Kierkegaard takes exception to the criticism that Johannes Climacus is purely subjective. The curious thing about what has been said above, Kierkegaard argues, is that it has the quality about it that if it is (how), it had to be (what):² "...that there is a 'how' which has this quality, that if it is truly given, then the 'what' is also given; and that what is the 'how' of 'faith'."³

This, according to Kierkegaard, again shows the objective aspect of subjectivity. It would seem to suggest that while it is not unthinkable that a man should claim divinity (for many a mad man has done the same), what is unthinkable is that such a thing should not only be believed, but should be proclaimed as the only means of man's salvation—an apparent absurdity. The shock involved


²This Johannes Climacus works out at a later point in the Postscript, as S.K. states. See: Postscript, p. 513ff.

in such a thing is not merely an aesthetic offense, but an ethical one. Christ was crucified not because he was mad, but because he had blasphemed.

On the other front, Kierkegaard would defend the paradoxical against those who would seek to prove the truth of historical revelation. Alternatively, they would seek to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the superhistorical being. This is especially the subject of Kierkegaard's often neglected work, Training In Christianity. Whereas the task of proving the falsity of the revelatory fact has been traditionally the task of the biblical critic, this other front has been the work of the speculative dogmatician.

Two contemporaries of Kierkegaard who would qualify under this latter category were Bishop Jakob Peter Mynster, then Primate of the Danish Lutheran Church, and Professor Hans Larsen Martensen, who was to succeed Mynster after his death. Kierkegaard had these two especially in mind during the writing of Training In Christianity.

The first part of the work is entitled, "'Come Hither, All Ye That Labour And Are Heavy Laden, I Will Give You

1Kierkegaard, On Authority And Revelation, p. 25. Kierkegaard takes the claim of Jesus' divinity from such passages as John 10.30 (See also: 8.58, 14.8ff). In a sermon Luther translated John 10.29-30 with the following words: "I know how to prevent any creature from tearing these out of my hands, for I am God Himself." (Luther's Works, Vol. 23, American Edition, p. 78). Kierkegaard evidently relied heavily on this series of Luther's sermons. See: Appendix B: "Luther's Influence On Training In Christianity".

2Søren Kierkegaard, Training In Christianity, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. XXV. Mynster was of the opinion that one half of the book was written against Martensen, the other half against himself. See Appendix B.
Rest', For Revival and Increase of Inwardness". The author is Anti-Climacus. The title calls to mind the statue of Christ by Thorwaldsen which is placed above the altar in the Cathedral Church of Copenhagen; there Christ stands, the noble, heroic type. Lowrie writes regarding this:

Almost every Sunday S.K. sat in the Cathedral, listening to Mynster's sermons--and thinking his own thoughts, which he jotted down regularly in the Journal. And several times he stood in front of this statue to deliver one of his 'edifying discourses'. In one of the two Christian Discourses which were actually delivered in the cathedral on the occasion of a Friday Communion, he alluded, apparently, to this figure, perhaps even pointing to it, when he said: 'But thou knowest, my hearer, who the Inviter is, and thou hast followed the invitation to attach thyself more closely to Him. Behold He spreadeth out His arms and says, "Come hither, come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden", behold, He invites thee to His bosom!' We do not know exactly when this discourse was delivered, but it was published on March 6th, 1848, and presumably it was on April 18th of the same year that he made three entries in the Journal, registering his purpose to write 'seven discourses' upon the theme which is inscribed in bold letters upon the base of the statue: Come Unto Me. We see this resolution carried into effect in Part Three of Training In Christianity. Inasmuch as the 18th of April was Tuesday in Holy Week, S.K. presumably was in the cathedral and drew inspiration, if not from the sermon, at least from the statue. Moreover, since these are the entries immediately preceding the record of the profound religious experience of Wednesday, the inspiration he drew from the statue was presumably not unconnected with what may be called his third conversion.1

This statue, and the events surrounding it, have great significance for understanding this work. Thus Lowrie is quoted at length. The above section will serve as necessary

1 *ibid.*, pp. xii-xiii.
background in understanding the paradox per se.

Kierkegaard begins the first part of his work with the invitation to "Come hither!". "Three interpretations" may be found under this heading, each of which expresses how wonderful this invitation is:

Oh! Wonderful, wonderful! That the one who has help to give is the one who says, Come hither! What love is this!

Kierkegaard compares the inviter to a physician who speaks these words. Kierkegaard writes concerning him:

The Helper is the help. Oh, wonderful! He who invites all and would help all has a way of treating the sick just as if it were intended for each several one, as if each patient he deals with were the only one. Commonly a physician must divide himself among his many patients, who, however many they are, are very far from being all. He prescribes the medicine, tells what is to be done, how it is to be used—and then departs...to another patient...Hence in this case the helper and the help are not one and the same thing...But when the Helper is the help, He must remain with the patient all the day long, or the patient with Him. Oh, wonderful! That it is the very Helper who invites all!

The Helper invites all to come who are in need of help, and all are in need of help, especially the sinner. Likewise he seeks those who "labour and are heavy laden". He does not wait for them to come, but summons them. And if there happens to be someone who is perhaps so wretched that he is unable to come—"a sigh is enough, to sigh for Him is to come hither."

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1ibid., p. 10. 2ibid., pp. 14-15. 3ibid., p. 22.
The foregoing Kierkegaard writes in a style appropriate not only for Thorwaldsen's statue, but appropriate for the speculative dogmatics he opposes. Thus there is nothing either troublesome or offensive in the above, even if it may sound odd to the modern reader. Likewise there are no theological objections to be made at this point. The problem for dogmatics comes in "The Obstacle" that he now places in the reader's way:

'Come hither unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.'
Halt now! But what is there to impose a halt? That which in a single instance infinitely alters everything—so that, in reality, instead of getting a sight, as one might expect, of an interminable throng of such as labour and are heavy laden following the invitation, you behold in fact a sight which is exactly the opposite: an interminable throng of men who turn backward in flight and shudder, until in the scramble to get away they trample one another under foot; so that if from the result one were to infer what had been said, one must conclude that the words were, 'Procul, O procul este profani', rather than, 'Come hither'. (The halt is imposed, finally) by something infinitely more important and infinitely more decisive: by the Inviter. Not as though He were not the man to do what He says, or not God to keep the promise He has made—no, in a sense very different from that.1

The "difference" which Kierkegaard insists upon is that the inviter in question is a definite historical person who existed 1800 years before; and it was He who spoke these words of invitation. About Him, Kierkegaard argues, nothing may be known from history (i.e. world-history, or secular history, as opposed to sacred history); He may only be believed. He declines to be known in a human way from the

1ibid., p. 25.
consequences of his life, because he would only be the "sign of offence", and the "object of faith". The fact that He existed at all (He being God) is infinitely more decisive, for Kierkegaard, than all the consequences of his life in the course of history.\(^1\)

Kierkegaard then proceeds to discuss six points in regards to this issue. Let us take each point briefly in turn, summarizing them, and commenting where appropriate. This comprises his main arguments against those who would seek to prove the truth of Christianity.

(a) "Who spoke these words of invitation?"\(^2\) Kierkegaard answers this question by stating that it was the Inviter who spoke these words: Jesus Christ. Which Jesus Christ? The Christ of glory? No, Kierkegaard affirms, "From the seat of His glory he has not spoken one word."\(^3\) While Jesus Christ is always the same, both yesterday and today, it is the humiliated Christ which spoke these words. The Christian \textit{believes} that Christ is now in glory; and this fact, being outside of time, can only be believed. Thus, for Kierkegaard, one can only become a Christian by coming to Christ in the state of humiliation, for this is the only way in which he existed. That Christ shall come again, the Christian expects. But it can be expected and believed in only because he has first existed here on earth. Furthermore, Kierkegaard adds, to pass these words of invitation off as if it were the Christ of glory who spoke them, would be to make them untrue, just as untrue as if

\(^{1}\text{ibid.}, \ p. \ 26. \ ^{2}\text{ibid.} \ ^{3}\text{ibid.}\)
the words were ascribed to someone who never said them.

(b) "Can one learn from history anything about Christ?" Kierkegaard means by "history", secular history. Thus he affirms in answer to this question, that nothing can be known from history about Christ, for He is the paradox, who is the object of faith, and exists only for faith. Secular history makes Christ into something other than He truly is, he suggests, by pretending to know about Christ. Yet nothing can be known about Christ; He can only be believed.

(c) "Can one prove from history that Christ was God?" Kierkegaard finds it ridiculous to want to prove that an individual man was God:

But to 'prove' is to demonstrate something to be the rational reality it is. Can one demonstrate that to be a rational reality which is at variance with reason? Surely not unless one would contradict oneself. One can 'prove' only that it is at variance with reason. The proofs which Scripture presents for Christ's divinity--His Miracles, His Resurrection from the dead, His Ascension into heaven--are therefore only for faith, that is, they are not 'proofs', they have no intention of proving that all this agrees perfectly with reason; on the contrary they would prove that it conflicts with reason and therefore is an object of faith.

Thus, returning to the historical proofs, Kierkegaard insists that one cannot prove from 1800 years of history (i.e. the consequences of a man's life, as great as they may be), that an individual man was God. One might be able to prove that he was a great man, perhaps the greatest man that ever lived--but God, no; this conclusion could not be drawn.

\[1\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 28.} \quad 2\text{ibid.} \quad 3\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 29.}\]
For to begin with the presupposition that Jesus was a man could never lead to a \textit{μεταβάσεις ἐις ζηλο γένος}, to the inference of a new quality—that he was God. Finite, quantitative data cannot be so arranged as to produce an infinite, qualitative conclusion. Conversely, to begin with the presupposition that Jesus was God (the assumption of faith), the 1800 years of history have nothing to do with the problem. The consequences of a life are a human phenomenon of a quantitative nature. To identify God with such a process would be blasphemous. Kierkegaard reminds us, however, that the historian must begin with one or other of these presuppositions: either Jesus was a man, or He was God. "If one begins in the latter way," Kierkegaard states, "everything is as it should be."\(^1\)

(d) "Are the consequences of Christ's life more important than his life?"\(^2\) Kierkegaard answers this with a firm "No". Millions and millions of men have lived. An individual life only becomes noteworthy in terms of the noteworthy traits that an individual life exhibits. Among these traits are what he accomplished, or the consequences of his life. The fact that God lived, however, is a different matter. For even if there were no consequences which stemmed from such an event, the fact that He lived is of infinitely greater significance than all the consequences. The fact that God lived is "in-and-for-itself noteworthy".

(e) "A comparison between Christ and a man who in his

\(^1\mathrm{ibid.}, \ p. \ 30. \quad \ ^2\mathrm{ibid.}, \ p. \ 34."
lifetime suffered the same opposition from his age that Christ suffered.\(^1\) Kierkegaard has Socrates in his mind especially at this point.\(^2\) Here was a man misunderstood by his age, then derided, ridiculed, persecuted and finally put to death for the good of society. But the consequences of his life soon make it apparent who he was. Finally he is acclaimed as a noble man, his humiliation being forgotten. The same, however, does not hold true for Christ. Here again, no amount of historical consequences can prove who He was, "He" being God. It reduces Christ to a mere man, Kierkegaard contends, to think that this would be the case.

(f) "The misfortune of Christendom."\(^3\) In this final section, Kierkegaard sums up his complaint against Christendom. He argues that for many, many years, Christ has neither been what he was when he lived on earth, nor what he will be upon his return. Rather people have in an "illicit" sort of way become knowing about Christ, while the only possible way is to be believing. Gradually the essential issues of Christianity have become lost. He states:

By degrees, as this came to be accounted wisdom, all pith and vigour was distilled out of Christianity; the tension of the paradox was relaxed, one became a Christian without noticing it, and without in the least noticing the possibility of offence. One took possession of Christ's doctrine, turned it about and pared it down, while He of course remained surety for its truth, He whose life had such stupendous results in history. All became as simple as thrusting a foot into the stocking. And quite naturally, because in that way Christianity became paganism.\(^4\)

\(^1\)ibid., p. 35. \(^2\)ibid., p. 35n. 
\(^3\)ibid., p. 37. \(^4\)ibid., p. 38.
Without really being aware of it, Kierkegaard argues, Christianity has ceased to exist. Thus if this situation is to be remedied, one must undertake, "to introduce Christianity into Christendom."¹

Kierkegaard goes about this task by introducing Christianity as "contemporaneousness" with Christ.² That is to say, he seeks to reintroduce the paradox into Christendom. Kierkegaard would have us remember who the Inviter is, the paradoxical Christ, Christ in his humility that spoke these words of invitation.

The 1800 years of Christian history must be swept aside. However, Hermann Diem points out that we must be careful to understand what Kierkegaard means by this. He is not arguing for a return to an earlier point in the development of the Church as an ideal (e.g. primitive Christianity). The issue here is not the return to a time free of the complications of history, but rather the return to "the presuppositions underlying the situation of contemporaneity with Christ, in which these historical differences—lose their relevance for faith."³

Kierkegaard is not seeking to set aside the Church authorities, or the institution. Rather he wishes to prevent Christianity being presented on the claim of the "proof of centuries", in such a way that knowledge replaces faith, and members are free "to inherit" Christ without reference to the scandalous nature of the Inviter.⁴

¹ibid., p. 39. ²See Appendix B. ³Diem, p. 107. ⁴ibid.
Thus Christ is presented contemporarily, that is, as one being contemporaneous with him:

...it is necessary above all to get rid of the whole delusion of after-history, so that he who in the year 1846 becomes a Christian becomes that by being contemporaneous with the coming of Christianity into the world, in the same sense as those who were contemporaneous before the eighteen hundred years. To this unshakable qualitative difference between the historical element in Christianity (the paradox that the eternal came into existence once in time) and the history of Christianity, the history of its followers, etc. The fact that God came into existence in human form under the Emperor Augustus: that is the historical element in Christianity, the historical in a paradoxical composition. It is with this paradox that everyone, in whatever country he may be living, must become contemporary, if he is to become a believing Christian. With the history of Christianity he has in this respect nothing whatever to do.¹

The essential "fact" of Christianity, for Kierkegaard, has no history, apart from its coming into existence at a specific point in time. This is the offense and, therefore, the point of departure for Christian faith. Thus the believer can be a contemporary with this fact whether it happened yesterday, or whether it occurred 1300 years in the past. The paradox is a "polar star", Kierkegaard writes, which "stands immovable and unchanged". The distance from this fact, because it is a "qualitative" fact, cannot be measured on the "quantitative scale of time and space"; and because it is a qualitative fact, it is the paradox.²

Thus in Part II of Training In Christianity entitled,

¹Kierkegaard, On Authority And Revelation, pp. 58-59.
²Ibid., pp. 60-61.
"'Blessed Is He Whosoever Is Not Offended In Me.' A Biblical Exposition and Christian Definition of Concepts", Kierkegaard, through the character of Anti-Climacus, presents Christ as the contemporary, the object of faith. Here is Christ as he appears in the biblical accounts. He looks like other men, speaks like them, follows their habits and customs, and yet is the Son of God. Such a picture of Christ, the God-Man, Eduard Geismar states, is "in full conformity with the orthodox Athanasian creed." For Kierkegaard, God is Spirit; and because God is Spirit, he is related paradoxically to existence; "...he can in turn come so near to reality that he is right in the midst of it, in the midst of the streets of Jerusalem." If God were to appear directly, man would find him to be ridiculous, his majesty being infinitely higher. Thus Christ appears as the paradox, "before our very noses." Precisely because Christ is the ontological paradox, he presents the possibility of offense. From such an offense, man turns either to offense, or to belief. The situation, Kierkegaard affirms, is inseparable from the God-Man. He is not the illusory unity of God and mankind.

1Kierkegaard, Journals, (417) pp. 111-112.


4S.K. notes that the opposite of belief is not doubt, but offense. "Doubt" would suggest that the problem is understood in a theoretical, rather than existential sense; and as such would be a misunderstanding of the problem.
but rather is the unity of God and an individual man. Christianity is to be distinguished from pagan mythology because of this particularity. "There is neither in heaven, nor in earth, nor in the depths, nor in the aberrations of the most fantastic thinking, the possibility of a (humanly speaking) more insane combination", Kierkegaard writes. Such an absurd combination is revealed only in the situation of "contemporaneousness".¹

This offense of the God-Man has two forms. The first concerns itself with loftiness, that is, with the fact, "...that an individual man says of himself that he is God, or speaks in such a way as to betray this thought". The second has to do with lowliness, that is, with the fact, "...that He who is God is this lowly man, suffering like a lowly man".²

The two forms differ in terms of their point of departure. In the first, the point of departure is man, and offense arises not because of an individual man's lowliness, but because he wants it to be understood that he is God. In the second, the point of departure is God, and the offense arises—given the possibility of such a thing occurring—that God should appear as a lowly and helpless man.³

¹Kierkegaard, Training, p. 84.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.

Kierkegaard lists, as well, a third aspect of offense which has to do with "a human individual who comes into collision with the established order" (p. 86). It is here omitted as it does not have to do with Christ as the God-Man per se.
Let us consider both forms in turn. First of the biblical examples that Kierkegaard uses for the paradox of loftiness is Matt. 11.6 (parallel: Lk. 7.23). In this account, John the Baptist sends from prison to know if Jesus was the Christ, or if he should wait for another. Jesus replied: "Go and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Commenting on this, Kierkegaard explains that Jesus did not answer the question of John's messengers directly. Instead of answering that he was the Expected One, Jesus referred John to his works. The reason for this, Kierkegaard suggests, is that John was absent from the scene. A direct communication to an absent person would not require faith on the part of the hearer. To someone who was present, Jesus could very well reply directly. Yet such a direct reply would require faith as well, because one would only witness a man of lowly appearance speaking such words. In effect, the direct communication would have become an indirect communication.

Likewise if it was directly obvious that Jesus was the Christ, as Christendom (not to mention Thorwaldsen's statue) apparently assumes, why would Jesus reply in such a strange way? It would have been much simpler to say in effect:

1 Ibid., quoted in, p. 96.
2 Ibid., pp. 96-97.
"Just look at me, you can see that I am God." Of course in the situation of contemporaneousness, Kierkegaard observes, such a reply would be ridiculous. Thus he uses the situation of contemporaneousness as a tool separating possibility from reality. The sentimental notion of direct apparentness in regards to Christ breaks down when Christ is understood to be a contemporary, and the scandal inherent in this becomes obvious.1

Furthermore with the exception of the "proof from prophecy" (this being weakened by John's question), Christ's reply does away with the "proofs" of the truth of Christianity. For even with the data which Jesus gives in his answer, it does not therefore follow that he is God. This conclusion is not directly ascertainable:

That is, He makes it evident that in relation to him there can be no question of any proofs, that a man does not come to him by the help of proofs, that there is no direct transition to this thing of becoming a Christian, that at most the proofs might serve to make a man attentive, so that once he has become attentive he may arrive at the point of deciding whether he will believe or be offended. For the proofs remain equivocal: they are the pro et contra of the reasoning intellect, and therefore can be used contra et pro. It is only by a choice that the heart is revealed (and it was for this cause Christ came into the world, that the thoughts of all hearts might be revealed), by the choice whether to believe or be offended.2

The second text taken as an example of the aspect of loftiness is found in John 6.61.3 Here Christ speaks of

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1See Kierkegaard, Journals, (985) p. 340; (988) p. 343; and (1002) p. 348.
2Kierkegaard, Training, p. 98.
3See: Appendix B.
himself as the "living bread", saying that whoever eats of this bread shall live. Kierkegaard notes that the Jews were troubled at this and asked, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" To which Jesus replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you...Even many of his disciples when they heard this said, This is a hard speech, who can bear him (sic)?" Then Jesus, Kierkegaard continues, "who knew in Himself that His disciples murmured over this, said 'Doth this offend you?'" And from the following verse (verse 66) it appears that from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with Him.\(^1\)

Thus it is that an individual man, a man who looks like all the others, speaks in such a way about himself. No wonder then, Kierkegaard goes on, that many, many even of his disciples were offended. He qualifies himself in such a divine manner that it is only he who eats his body and drinks his blood shall be saved at the last day. This suggests the most decisive manner of qualifying himself as God. When he speaks of himself as the bread which comes down from heaven, the suggestion is the same. And finally when he suggests that the Son of Man will ascend up where he was before, "he directly represents himself as something entirely different from what it is to be a man, makes himself out to be divine--he, an individual man!"\(^2\)

\(^1\)Kierkegaard, Training, pp. 100-101.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 102.
Again in contemporaneousness, as opposed to the possible world of imagination, the offense is all too apparent in what Jesus has to say. The only way that this may be avoided is to believe. However, in order to believe, it is necessary to have passed through the possibility of offense.

Kierkegaard adds a "Supplement" at this point.¹ He notes that these are not the only passages where the paradox as loftiness is mentioned in the New Testament. It is "...present every instant when He (the God-Man), this individual man, spoke or acted in a way suggesting the qualification God."² Kierkegaard lists several passages as examples of this ontological contradiction. He points out, though, that it is not necessary to list all such passages since it might "...give the impression that the possibility of offense was present only at this or that moment, whereas in fact it is present every instant." He writes:

Thus in Matt. 9:4 (the story of the paralytic), when Jesus says to the Pharisees, 'Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts', these evil thoughts were the offense. To forgive sinners is in the most decisive sense a qualification suggestive of God. But (to repeat it once again) when a man has only a fantastic picture of Christ, he perhaps finds nothing strange in His forgiving sins, and fails to notice the possibility of the offence. On the other hand, in reality, in truth, in the situation of contemporaneousness--an individual man like others--that he should assume to forgive sins! There is but one way to avoid the offence, viz. by believing; but he who believes has passed through the offence.--Matt. 12:24, where the Pharisees, after Christ had healed a man possessed, who was blind and dumb, exclaim, 'This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils'--when in

¹ibid., p. 102ff. ²ibid., p. 103.
this connexion it is said that 'Jesus knew their thoughts', it was these thoughts again that were the offence. Matt. 26:64,65, where Christ says, 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of heaven'—and the high priests cried out, 'He blasphemeth God, now ye have heard His blasphemy', here again it is the offence we hear. See also John 8:43,52f.; the whole story about the man born blind; and John 10:20,30ff.1

Whereas the above aspect of paradox deals with loftiness, the following, second aspect of paradox has to do with lowliness. In this case, one is not offended by Jesus' claim of divinity, but rather by the fact that he shows himself to be a poor, suffering, and unimportant man. Here it is important to note Kierkegaard's order in raising this aspect of the paradox. Had Jesus' claim of divinity not arisen, the paradox, in this sense, would not have arisen:

In the foregoing section the man was about to be offended, who was brought to a halt by the possibility of offence, said, 'An individual man like us wants to be God.' Here the man who is brought to a halt by the possibility of offence says, 'Supposing for an instant that thou art God, what folly and madness it is that thou art this lowly, poor, impotent man!'2

The first biblical passage Kierkegaard uses as an example of this is Matt. 13:55 (parallel: Mk. 6:3). Here Jesus' own people asked themselves: 'Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, and his

1 Ibid.

It is this aspect of paradox which is so often ignored and swept aside by contemporary theology. Kierkegaard deals with it at length, however, especially in Training In Christianity. See e.g.: pp. 33,42,67,84,99,125, and 134.

2 Ibid., p. 105.
sisters, are they not all with us? Whence hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. 1

Here Kierkegaard argues that their offense is centered in the fact that God should be born the son of a carpenter, and that these are his brothers and sisters. Again anyone who thinks of the God-Man as the unity of God and mankind could easily overlook the offense. But when one is a contemporary with Christ this is impossible. The question arises: "Whence hath this man all these things?"

A second passage is taken from Matt. 26.31,33 (parallel: Mk. 14.27,29). Here the issue at hand is not Christ's loftiness, since in these passages the disciples believe him to be the Christ, but rather with his lowliness, for he here foretells what is to befall him, "...He, the highly exalted, the Only Begotten of the Father, should suffer in this way, should be delivered helpless into the power of his enemies." 2 It is this same kind of offense, Kierkegaard suggests, which is at the heart of Peter's denial, and the falling away of Jesus' disciples upon his arrest.

Like the first aspect of paradox (loftiness), this second aspect suggests, as well, that offense belongs essentially to the experience of faith. All were offended in Christ, either as Jesus' neighbours were at his claims of divinity, or as the disciples were at his suffering. Offense, Kierkegaard affirms, brings all human understanding

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1 ibid. Kierkegaard also mentions John 7.27f. in this context. See Appendix B.

2 ibid., p. 106.
to a halt. Reason stumbles so as either to be offended, or to believe.  

He supplements this second discussion by stating that an additional example of the offense of lowliness may be found in the history of the passion. Likewise there is an offense associated with lowliness, in terms of personal piety. Christians, as well, must be prepared to suffer in this world, just as their Lord once suffered. Kierkegaard presents Christ in this respect not only as the gift, but as the model.  

He lists Matt. 13.21, 16.23; Mk. 4.17; and John 16.23 in support of this understanding. This is in keeping with Kierkegaard's own understanding of Training In Christianity, as expressed in the "Editor's Preface": "The requirement must be heard; and I understand what is said as addressed solely to me—that I might learn not only to take refuge in 'grace', but to take refuge in such a way as to make use of 'grace'."  

Here Kierkegaard finds himself inferior to Anti-Climacus. 

By way of summary, in whatever form offense may occur, be it in terms of loftiness, or in terms of lowliness, offense finds its cause in the paradox. The paradox, 

1 Ibid., pp. 107-108.
2 Luther also emphasizes these two modes.
3 Kierkegaard, Training, p. 5.

Kierkegaard continues his discussion at some length (p. 122ff.) under the heading "Thoughts Which Determine The Meaning Of 'The Offence' Strictly So Called". While the discussion is worthwhile, most of the themes here discussed have been introduced previously in this chapter, and therefore are omitted at this point.
strictly speaking, is Jesus Christ the God-Man, the only God-Man. He is the Eternal (essence or spirit) who has entered into time (existence) at a specific point in time, not in a theoretical (possible) sense, as in the union of God with mankind, but in the existential (real) sense, as in the union of God with a specific individual at a specific moment in time (i.e. under the reign of Caesar Augustus). It is there he reveals himself by his claims, miracles, and actions, and thus indicates an ontological contradiction.

The paradox, understood in this manner—-and without reference to faith—is absurd, as it runs contrary to reason. However there is a double entendre in regard to the paradox, as Alastair McKinnon points out. One cannot and does not believe something which is logically absurd. However faith—the condition for faith being given by God—finds this paradox not to be absurd. Kierkegaard's pseudonymous, non-Christian authorship, therefore, speaks of Christianity in a paradoxical fashion, while paradox is absent from his acknowledged works.

This is evident especially at two points in Kierkegaard's later comments about his authorship. A Journal entry from 1850 reads:

A true sentence of Hugo de St. Victor
"In things which are above reason faith is not really supported by reason, because reason cannot grasp what faith believes; but there is also a something here as a result of which

1Kierkegaard, Fragments, p. 79.
Both faith and reason deal with the paradox in their own way: faith by believing the paradox; reason by rational explanation. Yet the paradox remains paradoxical and an issue of discussion because neither faith nor reason attain certain knowledge. For example, faith believes that Jesus is the Christ He says He is, but finds the proof of such a claim both impossible and inappropriate; reason reasons that such a claim itself is impossible, yet—while the paradoxical nature of such a claim may be explained by various means—is unable to prove such explanations as evidence is lacking. See the Conclusion.
reason is determined, or which determines reason to honour faith which it cannot perfectly understand.' That is what I explained (e.g. in the Final Postscript); not every absurdity is 'the absurd' or the paradox. The effect of reason is in fact to know the paradox negatively—but not more.1

Secondly Kierkegaard's unpublished reply to Theophilus Nicolas treats the issue in greater detail:

The Absurd is a category, it is the negative category for God or for the relationship to God. When the believer believes, the Absurd is not the Absurd--faith transforms it; but in every weak moment, to him it is again more or less the Absurd. The passion of faith is the only thing capable of mastering the Absurd. If this were not so, faith would not be faith in the strictest sense but would be a kind of knowledge. The Absurd provides a negative demarcation of the sphere of faith, making it a sphere in itself. It must necessarily seem to a third party that the believer relates himself by virtue of the Absurd; for after all, the third party lacks the passion of faith.2

Thus the paradox, or the Absurd, may be said to operate on two levels for Kierkegaard. On the one level, to those outside of faith, it is an ontological contradiction which runs contrary to reason (contra rationem). However on the other, to those who possess faith, it is no longer a contradiction, and is above reason (supra rationem). The believer believes that God is able to jump over a ditch of his own making; the God-Man demonstrates that all things are possible for God.


Implications Of The Paradox For Speculative Philosophy

Kierkegaard observes that while speculative philosophy has been so busy doing everything, doubting everything, and what-have-you, the speculative philosopher, on the other hand, has become too objective to speak about himself. The philosopher does not say that he doubts, etc., but that it is **speculative philosophy** that does so. Thus the affirmation is made about speculative philosophy, with no reference to the speculative philosopher. He does not commit himself in any greater degree than this. But, Kierkegaard asks, is it not possible to agree to be "human beings?" Socrates once commented that if flute-playing is posited, so must the flute player. Does it not stand to reason, Kierkegaard continues, that if speculative philosophy is posited, so must the speculative philosopher, or several speculative philosophers?¹

It is Kierkegaard's opinion that the thinker who in all his thinking forgets that he is an "existing individual" will never explain the enduring questions. Rather he merely attempts to become "a book or an objective something", instead of what he is in reality—a human being. This, for Kierkegaard, is an impossibility. While this does not deny the validity of objective thought, it does, at least, qualify it:

¹Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, p. 50.
If a man occupied himself, all his life through, solely with logic, he would nevertheless not become logic; he must therefore himself exist in different categories. Now if he finds that this is not worth thinking about, the choice must be his responsibility. But it will scarcely be pleasant for him to learn, that existence mocks everyone who is engaged in becoming purely objective.  

This is initially Kierkegaard's complaint against modern philosophy. Such philosophy is not so much mistaken, as it is comical. The comedy is brought about by having forgotten, "in a sort of world-historical absent-mindedness, what it means to be a human being."  

And, he quickly adds, it is not a human being "in general" one is here discussing. This would be to slip again into the abstract via an "ingenious contrivance", and thus nullify the criticism.

Such a comical situation is deserving of a comical response. He writes:

Let no one misunderstand me, I happen to be a poor existing spirit like all other men; but if there is any lawful and honest manner in which I could be helped into becoming something extraordinary, like the pure I-am-I for example, I always stand ready gratefully to accept the gift and the benefaction. But if it can only be done in the manner indicated, by saying *eins zwei drei kokolorum*, or by tying a string around the little finger, and then when the moon is full, hiding it in some secret place --in that case I prefer to remain what I am, a poor existing human being.

All objective systems, Kierkegaard observes, dissipate the concept of existence. Existence must be revoked in the eternal before any system can "round itself out". There

1 *ibid.*, p. 86.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 169.
can be no existing "remainder" in the system, not even Herr Professor who has written the system, if the system is to be final in itself.¹

The Idea of systematic philosophy Kierkegaard sees as being the identity of subject and object, and the unity of thought and being. Existence poses a problem for such a synthesis as it separates these entities. This is not to suggest that existence is "thoughtless", but it does bring about this separation. Objectively, thought is to be understood as pure thought, which corresponds to its object, or thought itself. This objective thought, Kierkegaard argues, has no relation to the existing thinker. How such an existing subject can slip into objectivity, or pure abstract subjectivity--which again does not signify an existing human being--is a different question. In any case, he continues, the existing subject tends to "evaporate" into objectivity. But nothing of this sort can happen. At the most, the human being can become aware through the imagination of a participation in abstract consciousness, and of the pure relationship between thought and being. This is a tautology, for Kierkegaard, since this being which is ascribed to the thinker does not mean that he is such, but only that he is engaged in thinking. The existing subject, contrarily, is engaged in existing, as is every human being, given the structure of reality.²

Kierkegaard finds, for example, that Fichte's "I-am-I"

¹ibid., p. 111. ²ibid., p. 112.
is a "mathematical point which does not exist". Furthermore, it "...is not an identity of the infinite and the finite, since neither the one nor the other is real; it is a fantastic rendezvous in the clouds, an unfruitful embrace, and the relationship of the individual self to this mirage is never indicated."¹

For Kierkegaard, all essential knowledge is related to existence. To state it somewhat differently, it is only such knowledge which has an essential relationship to existence that is essential knowledge. All knowledge which does not relate itself inwardly to existence is, essentially viewed, accidental knowledge. The degree and scope of such accidental knowledge is indifferent. He continues:

That essential knowledge is essentially related to existence does not mean the above-mentioned identity which abstract thought postulates between thought and being; nor does it signify, objectively, that knowledge corresponds to something existent as its object (i.e. an idol)² but it means that knowledge has a relationship to the knower, who is essentially an existing individual, and that for this reason all essential knowledge is essentially related to existence. Only ethical and ethico-religious knowledge has an essential relationship to the existence of the knower.²

Essentially viewed, Christianity is not an historical phenomenon.³ That is to say, Christianity is something other than an historical process (i.e. the consequences of a man's life, etc.) about which one may become knowing in

¹ *ibid.*, p. 176. ² *ibid.*, p. 177.

³ This should not be construed as meaning that Christianity has no historical point of departure, or "paradox". This issue has been discussed in the previous section, with reference to On Authority And Revelation, p. 58ff. See below Kierkegaard's discussion in regards to "Subjectivity".
an objective manner. Rather Christianity is subjectively a relationship. Kierkegaard uses the analogy of a husband and wife:

...their marriage expresses itself clearly in terms of external fact, and constitutes a phenomenon in existence, just as Christianity has stamped its impress upon life on the larger stage of the world's history. But their wedded love is no historical phenomenon. The phenomenal is here in itself the insignificant, and it receives significance for husband and wife only through their love; but otherwise considered, i.e. objectively, the phenomenal is a deception. And so also is Christianity.¹

When the question of truth is raised in an objective sense, the knower deals objectively with the truth. Reflection is not focussed upon the nature of the relationship to the truth, but rather upon the question of objective truth itself. Only in so far as the objective is true is the subject considered to be in the truth. When the question of truth is raised in a subjective sense, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the relationship itself. Only is the individual in the truth in so far as the relationship is in the truth, even if it should be that the truth to which the individual is related is not true.²

According to Kierkegaard, the existing individual who wants to pursue the objective approach enters upon an "approximation-process" which would bring God to light

¹Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 52.
²ibid., p. 178.
objectively. This Kierkegaard considers to be impossible, as God is a subject, and therefore only exists for subjectivity. In fact, the existing individual who chooses the objective way of approach at once is aware of the difficulty involved in having to use time, perhaps a very long time, in having to discover God objectively. This is all the more painful, he observes, because every moment is wasted when the individual does not have God.¹

Here Kierkegaard states the problem with which the two approaches deal by means of another analogy which is often cited:

If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, the house of the true God, with the true conception of God in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one who lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol: where is there most truth? The one prays in truth to God though he worships an idol; the other prays falsely to the true God, and hence worships in fact an idol.²

Here we have one man who investigates objectively the problem of eternity; the other embraces uncertainty with "the passion of the infinite". Where, then, is the greater truth to be found, Kierkegaard asks; and who has the greater certainty? "The one has entered upon a never-ending approximation, for the certainty of immortality lies precisely in the subjectivity of the individual; the other is immortal, and fights for his immortality by struggling with

¹ibid. ²ibid., p. 179-180.
the uncertainty."¹  

Kierkegaard concludes that objectively there is no "infinite decisiveness". The objective approach seeks to annul the difference between good and evil, and the question of contradiction, and therefore also "the infinite difference between the true and the false." Only subjectivity, for Kierkegaard, manifests decisiveness. Objectivity is an error. The decisive factor is the passion for the infinite, which is its content, and not some objective kind of content.² Thus the truth is subjectivity. He defines truth in the following way: "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual."³ The individual has merely an "objective uncertainty" which constitutes such "passionate inwardness". Truth chooses such an uncertainty with infinite passion. He provides an example:

I contemplate the order of nature in the hope of finding God, and I see omnipotence and wisdom; but I also see much else that disturbs my mind and excites anxiety. The sum of all this is an objective uncertainty. But it is for this very reason that the inwardness becomes as intense as it is, for it embraces this objective uncertainty with the entire passion of the infinite.⁴

As compared with this, the objective approach provides as

¹Ibid., p. 180. ²Ibid., p. 181. ³Ibid., p. 182. ⁴Ibid.

Kierkegaard has been criticized at this point for opening the door to Nazism. However, a closer examination reveals quite the contrary to be the case. Nazism (like Communism) presents truth as objectivity, hence its appeal to the masses.
given its truth (e.g. the "I-am-I"), and for this reason is a matter of indifference.

Such an above definition of truth Kierkegaard views as being equivalent to an understanding of faith. Thus faith necessitates risk. It is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty:

If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy fathoms of water, still preserving my faith.¹

In the Christian context such an "objective uncertainty" is the paradox. And because such a truth is objectively paradoxical it demonstrates in turn that subjectivity is the truth. The objective situation, for Kierkegaard, serves as a repellant and thus creates the tension and the measure of subjective inwardness.

Such a paradox arises when the "eternal essential truth" is put in juxtaposition to "existence". The eternal essential truth is not in itself paradoxical, but becomes such when it enters into existence—when it "comes into being in time".²

Thus the individual is faced with the "objective uncertainty" which cannot be grasped intellectually, nor transcended through speculation. Nor for that matter, may one return to the eternal through some kind of speculative

¹Ibid. ²Ibid., p. 187.
"recollection". This way is also blocked, for Kierkegaard, because of Original Sin. The individual, therefore, must come to the truth through existence: "...if the individual does not existentially and in existence lay hold of the truth, he will never lay hold of it."\(^1\) The only way out of such a dilemma is through faith. The best speculation can do is to understand the impossibility of transcending such a situation. Any speculative attempt which insists upon being speculative shows by so doing that it has not understood the problem. The individual may avoid the issue and take refuge in speculation. But he cannot at first accept the situation and then reject it by means of speculation, as it is structured to prevent speculation—speculation being an entirely separate mode of thought.

Of course speculative philosophy maintains, Kierkegaard observes, that there is no paradox when it is viewed from the perspective of eternity, the divine, etc. He counters this by saying simply that he is in no position to determine whether or not the speculative philosopher is correct, since he is after all, "...only a poor existing human being, not competent to contemplate the eternal either eternally or divinely or theocentrically, but compelled to content...\(\text{himself}\) with existing."\(^2\)

Christianity has proclaimed itself to be the "eternal essential truth" which has "come into being in time." It had declared itself to be the paradox. It is the individual's responsibility to relate himself in faith to this

\(^1\text{ibid.} \quad ^2\text{ibid., p. 190.}\)
truth which is an offense to the Jews and a folly to the Greeks—an absurdity to human understanding. This negates the objective approach and demands of the individual subjectivity if he is to find the truth. He writes in this respect:

Suppose Christianity never intended to be understood; suppose that, in order to express this, and to prevent anyone from misguidedly entering upon the objective way, it has declared itself to be the paradox. Suppose it wished to have significance only for existing individuals, and essentially for existing individuals in inwardness, in the inwardness of faith; which cannot be expressed more definitely than in the proposition that Christianity is the absurd, held fast in the passion of the infinite. Suppose it refuses to be understood, and that the maximum of understanding which could come in question is to understand that it cannot be understood. Suppose it therefore accentuates existence so decisively that the individual becomes the sinner, Christianity the paradox, existence the period of decision. Suppose that speculation were a temptation, the most dubious of all. Suppose that the speculative philosopher is, not indeed the prodigal son, for so the anxious divinity would characterize only the offended individual whom he nevertheless continues to love, but is the naughty child who refuses to remain where existing individuals belong, namely, in the existential training school where one becomes mature only through inwardness in existing, but instead demands a place in the divine council chamber, constantly shouting that viewed eternally, divinely, theocentrically, there is no paradox.¹

The paradox is absolute in this respect, that it denies objective knowledge with respect to itself, and instead affirms that the only understanding possible is that it cannot be understood. Thus speculative philosophy cannot "get hold of it at all." Rather it denies the understanding

¹ibid., pp. 191-192.
in the "interests of inwardness in existing." Kierkegaard affirms that objectively there is no truth for the existing human being, but only "approximations". Subjectively there is truth in inwardness, as "the decisiveness of the truth is rooted in the subjectivity of the individual."\(^1\)

Kierkegaard observes that while the modern allegorizing tendency views all of Christianity as a myth, speculative philosophy presents a different sort of problem. In declaring its opposition to the mythical allegorizing approach, speculative philosophy does not "stand still" with the believer's paradox by seeking to explore faith more fully. Rather speculative philosophy, when addressed by the absolute paradox in such a way that it is absurd to the human mind, does not respond by indicating that the paradox is nonsense. It offers, instead, an explanation of the paradox which contains a correction, thus suggesting that the paradox is in error. Kierkegaard writes with a certain degree of sarcasm: "And when Christianity itself declares that it is a paradox, the speculative explanation is not an explanation but a correction, a polite and indirect correction to be sure, as befits a superior intelligence over against a more limited understanding."\(^2\)

To explain the paradox, for Kierkegaard, would be to reduce the term to a rhetorical expression. To suggest that the paradox does have a certain validity, but then does not have validity, would mean that there is no paradox.

\(^1\)ibid., p. 195.  \(^2\)ibid., p. 197.
Such an abrogation is a delusion. Rather to explain something in most cases means to make something clear in its significance. And to demonstrate that the object in question is not something else. For the speculative philosopher to explain the paradox, Kierkegaard suggests, would be to understand more and more profoundly what the paradox is, and that it is the paradox.¹ He comments in this respect:

If the speculative philosopher explains the paradox so as to remove it, and now in his knowledge knows that it is removed, that the paradox is not the essential relationship that the eternal essential truth bears to an existing individual in the extremity of his existence, but only an accidental relative-relationship to those of limited intelligence; in that case there is established an essential difference between the speculative philosopher and the plain man, which confounds existence from the foundation. God is affronted by getting a group of hangers-on, an intermediary staff of clever brains; and humanity is affronted because the relationship to God is not identical for all men.²

To sum up, speculative philosophy is objective, and, for Kierkegaard, there is no objective truth for "existing individuals", but only "approximations". The existing individual is unable to become purely objective, simply because of the fact that he exists. Christianity, on the other hand, is subjective. That is to say, it holds fast to an "objective uncertainty", or "paradox", in the inwardness of faith, and there makes its decision regarding eternal truth. Objectively there is no truth. For Christianity to have an objective knowledge of the truth, Kierkegaard states, is to be in untruth. "To know a confession of faith by rote is paganism, because Christianity

¹ Ibid. ² Ibid., pp. 203-204.
is inwardness.\textsuperscript{1}

For Kierkegaard no existential system may be formulated. This is not to say that no such system exists, nor does he wish to imply this. "Reality itself is a system--for God", he states. It cannot however become a system for the existing individual. "System and finality correspond to one another, but existence is precisely the opposite of finality."\textsuperscript{2}

\section*{Summation}

This chapter has sought to do two things: (1) to examine in greater detail Kierkegaard's use of "Paradox" and the historical problems associated with it, and (2) to demonstrate the implications of Kierkegaard's position for that of speculative philosophy.

Since we have here outlined Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox, we are now in a position to inquire further into the concept. It has been noted above that two figures of special importance in this regard are those of Tertullian and Luther. Among others, Kierkegaard refers to these theologians as giving rise to his understanding of paradox.\textsuperscript{3} We will thus turn to the first of these major figures in an attempt to discover the theological context from which Kierkegaard takes his understanding. Certain points of comparison will be noted between Kierkegaard and Tertullian as it would seem appropriate. It is of special

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 201.
\end{footnotes}
interest to know in what sense the term "paradox" may be applied to Tertullian, if Kierkegaard's assertion of continuity with "the fathers" is to be supported.
Chapter Two: Tertullian--

"It Is Credible Because It Is Absurd"
In the previous chapter we have outlined Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox and the implications inherent in the term. Let us now turn to a Church Father who has been often cited as a source of paradoxical thought and one upon whom Kierkegaard relies.

As Tertullian is discussed, three major points of comparison have been chosen which are of significance in noting Kierkegaard's reliance upon him, and in assessing Kierkegaard's claim of theological continuity. The first section deals with "Revelation and Speculation". The second concerns itself with Tertullian's view of "The Person Of Christ". The third discusses "Paradox In Tertullian" as it relates to the controversy with Marcion. We will then be in a position to assess Tertullian's famous paradox, "It is credible because it is absurd", in light of modern research. In all these sections, comparisons will be made with Kierkegaard as it would seem appropriate. And lastly, some concluding comments will be made on the relationship of Tertullian to Kierkegaard in the "Summation".

Revelation and Speculation

One of the most memorable statements of Tertullian, apart from the one quoted above, has to do with the relationship between Christianity and philosophy. It may be found in his Prescriptions Against the Heretics: "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens, the Church with the Academy,
the Christian with the heretic?"\(^1\)

For the most part, Tertullian's dislike of philosophy is apparent. According to Tertullian, philosophy is the "parent of heresy", while the philosophers are the "patriarchs of heresy".\(^2\) It is Tertullian's view that Valentinus was out of the school of Plato; Marcion from the Stoics, the death of the soul from the Epicureans, the equality of matter with God from the teaching of Zeno, and the denial of the resurrection of the body may be traced to all philosophers in general. Philosophers and heretics are of the same ilk because of the similarity of their arguments. And both, for Tertullian, are the "arch-enemy".\(^3\)

Tertullian's complaint with philosophy is that, like Esau, it has sold its "birth-right" for something of little importance. This however is not done out of mere indifference or ignorance, but because of the inherent evil and convoluted nature of man. This is what Tertullian argues in his *Apology*:

While they \(\overline{\text{the philosophers}}\) are striving to imitate our doctrine, being both greedy as men with a lust, as we have said, of fame and eloquence only, anything they took offense at in the holy scriptures, such as is their own fancy, neither sufficiently believing their divine character, which would prevent them from garbling them...For even when the truth was in simple form, all the more did that cavilling spirit of man, disdaining belief, begin to falter, and thus they confounded in uncertainty even that which they had found certain.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Pres. Her., VII.


\(^3\)Ibid. 

\(^4\)Apol., XLVII.
Tertullian finds the gospel revealed. Yet man, out of his own sinfulness, rejects that which has been made evident. This is likewise the case as he refutes the hiddenness of Valentinian metaphysics as compared to the truth revealed in Jesus Christ. Such behavior is offensive to Tertullian; "...to remove oneself from a familiar authority to an unknown one, to wrench oneself from what is manifest to what is hidden, is to offend faith on the very threshold."¹

For Tertullian, the philosopher and the heretic do not know what it is to believe. Both take pride in their understanding to the exclusion of obedience. Neither can tolerate silence on the part of God. They believe that they know in advance what is the appropriate behavior for God. Thus they stumble over the fact of God's becoming man.

Spiritualism of the gnostic variety denies the incarnation. It is both unworthy and unnecessary for God. Yet the point of Christian belief is that the "God of the philosophers", the unchangeable, distant, and transcendent deity may be known in the weak and humiliated figure of Christ. This is an insult to the majesty of such a Being. Yet it is only in such a way that God reaches us. His dignity is different from that of human honor.² His dignity lies in the fact of man's redemption, not in God's personal revelation.³

¹A. V., III.
³Roberts, p. 178.
Tertullian did not treat Christianity as if it was merely another philosophy of life, as for example, Justin Martyr is sometimes alleged to have done. Christianity was a manifestation of God, not merely human philosophy. Tertullian sees in the human soul a certain inherent knowledge of God. This knowledge is natural and untutored. Yet it is Christ who qualifies this knowledge and brings it to life, yet not as an achievement of the human intellect, but as a gift received by faith.\footnote{ibid., pp. 36-37.}

This inherent knowledge of God is especially evident in Tertullian's work on The Testimony of The Soul. As opposed to heathen culture, Christianity proclaims that there is but one God, "to whom the name of God alone belongs, from whom all things come, and who is Lord of the whole universe."\footnote{Test. Soul, 2.} This was offensive, of course, to the pagan mind. But Tertullian is quick to point out:

\begin{quote}
B\textbf{e\,a\,r\,t\,h} thy testimony \textit{\underline{\text{Soul}}}, if thou knowest this to be the truth; for openly and with a perfect liberty, such as we do not possess, we hear thee both in private and public exclaim, 'Which may God grant,' and, 'If God so will.' By expressions such as these thou declarest that there is one who is distinctly God, and thou confessest that all power belongs to Him to whose will as Sovereign thou dost look.\footnote{ibid.}
\end{quote}

However real knowledge of God comes from God himself. His Treatise on The Soul speaks to this, "From God you may learn about that which you hold of God; but from none else will you get this knowledge, if you get it not from God. For who is to reveal that which God has hidden?",\footnote{Treat. Soul, 1.} asks
Tertullian. Certainly it is not the philosopher and man's wisdom. It would be better not to know something which God has not revealed, than to come to know something simply because man has been bold enough to assume it.¹ Knowledge of this latter variety would be falsely so called.

However R. A. Norris declares that while Tertullian is hostile to what speculation assumes, this should not be construed as an attack on what we would call "natural theology".² As noted above, Tertullian accepts the fact that man may hold a true, if incomplete knowledge of God apart from what has been revealed to him through the prophets and Christ.³

Tertullian complains that philosophy is guilty of introducing confusion and distortion into the matter at hand. It is only the Christian faith which rectifies this situation through the revelation entrusted to it. Even though philosophers may by chance hit upon the truth, and

¹Ibid.
One finds an apparent Trinitarian formula, incidently, bound up in this matter of the knowledge of God. Earlier in the same work this is apparent: "For by whom has truth ever been discovered without God? By whom has God ever been found without Christ? By whom has Christ ever been explored without the Holy Spirit? By whom has the Holy Spirit ever been attained without the mysterious gift of faith? (ibid.)" Tertullian has been recognized by some (e.g. Harnack) as a major influence in the later formulation of the doctrine of Christ and the Trinity.


³Tertullian's treatise Against Marcion is also helpful at this point: "Our knowledge of God comes to us from the prophets and from Christ, not from the philosophers or from Epicurus. We believe that God has sojourned even on earth, and that for the purpose of man's salvation he has taken upon him the lowliness of human form..." (II. 16.)
even though their speculations may be built on the presupposition of a natural belief in God, their expositions only lead to uncertainties and controversy.\(^1\)

Thus it is the task of the Christian to set things aright:

Whatever noxious vapours, accordingly, exhaled from philosophy, obscure the clear and wholesome atmosphere of truth, it will be for the Christians to clear away, both by shattering to pieces the arguments which are drawn from the principles of things—I mean those of the philosophers—and by opposing to them the maxims of heavenly wisdom—that is, such as are revealed by the Lord; in order that both the pitfalls wherewith philosophy captivates the heathen may be removed, and the means employed by heresy to shake the faith of Christians may be repressed.\(^2\)

Over against the chaos of philosophy stands the revealed "Rule of Faith". While it may not answer all the speculative questions of philosophy, it does nonetheless answer the most important of them, questions which concern God, the world, and the soul, and their relationship. These answers are what Tertullian seeks to explain in his theological writings. The revelation of the faith as it is found in the Scriptures, and tradition, is held up in opposition to the "diversity"\(^3\) of heretic and philosopher alike.\(^4\)

The human mind, however, is unable to grasp the full

\(^{1}\)Norris, p. 107. \(^{2}\)Treat. Soul, III.

\(^{3}\)Treat. Soul, II: "...if you take the philosophers you would find in them more diversity than argument, since even in their argument their diversity is discoverable."

\(^{4}\)Norris, p. 107.
reality of God. This is because of God's greatness. In the last resort, He is unlike anything in the generate world, and therefore can only be fully known to Himself. In the Apology Tertullian makes this point, "...that which is immeasurable is known only to itself...", he writes. "Thus it is that the power of his greatness represents him as both known and unknown to men." 1 The offensiveness of Christianity lies in the fact that it bears witness to Him of whom men can no longer remain ignorant. 2

Tertullian's position is based on the premise that Christianity is a revealed phenomenon. To understand the nature of God, it is not enough to have a common-sensical, or philosophically speculative belief in the Divine, even though that belief may be shared by all of mankind. For the Christian, God is not a passive Being who waits to be found out, rather He is actively at work making Himself known in the world, and especially so in Christ in whom He is both known and worshipped. Thus Tertullian ridicules those who make up a god or religion for themselves, and act, therefore, in opposition to "the divine dispensation". True faith is that which responds obediently to what God has revealed, acknowledging and honoring Him by believing in what He has revealed of His will. 3

Or to use Tertullian's own words in this regard:

After Jesus Christ we have no need of speculation, after the Gospel no need of research.

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1Apol., XVII. 2ibid. 3Norris, p. 102.
When we come to believe, we have no desire to believe anything else; for we begin by believing that there is nothing else which we have to believe.¹

According to Tertullian, Christ laid down a "definite system of truth" which is to be believed "without qualification". We must seek to believe this truth when it is found. This search cannot proceed forever, because the truth is "single" and "definite". We must seek until we find, and when we find, we must believe. When this is accomplished, one need only hold on to what is believed, there being no greater truth than this,² that is, the "Rule of Faith" as held fast by the Church.

In his *Prescriptions Against The Heretics*, Tertullian states what it is exactly that is meant by the "Rule":

The Rule of Faith...is of course that by which we believe that there is but one God, who is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced everything from nothing through his Word, sent forth before all things; that this Word is called his Son, and in the Name of God was seen in diverse ways by the patriarchs, was ever heard in the prophets and finally was brought down by the Spirit and Power of God the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, was born of her and lived as Jesus Christ; who thereafter proclaimed a new law and a new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles, was crucified, on the third day rose again, was caught up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father; that he sent in his place the power of the Holy Spirit to guide believers; that he will come with glory to take the saints up into the fruition of the life eternal and the heavenly promises and to judge the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both good and evil with the restoration of their flesh.³

In Tertullian's understanding, to be a Christian means to be obedient to this Rule, the doctrine and reality made known by God. Tertullian's legal background surfaces most clearly in relationship to this Rule, Faith has its law; and man's well-being may be found in obedience to that law. The Rule is necessary; and more than this, it is sufficient. Nothing should be believed against it, nor should it be augmented by additional human attempts. Further digging and speculation are pointless. The truth is known in Christ. This brings further search to an end. Tertullian's task is to keep and defend the Rule, not to change it, or find variations for it.¹

This revelation of God is, of course, no mere idea. Rather God Himself is revealed as the Creator and Sovereign who directs the course of the world. He it is that has overthrown the demons through Christ and who now calls all men to believe. In contrast to this, the wisdom of the philosophers has a hollow ring. For the truth of God is only made known to the Christians. They know all that man should know of the Being of God. It is through His Son, His teaching and word, that the will, nature, and law of God is known.²

Thus it is not surprising that Tertullian deals in short order with heretics who not only speculate, but deny the entirety of the Rule of Faith. In opposition to the

¹Norris, pp. 103-104.
²Von Campenhauzen, p. 6.
Church's universal Rule, the heretic could not trace his teaching back to the Apostles, to Christ, and therefore, to God; nor, for that matter, could he appeal to the common mind of the churches for his position. A heretic was one who forsook what was prior to him, choosing instead something which did not exist in times past.¹

Discussion and argument with heretics is also given little toleration. The only reason for meeting with a heretic was that of correction, not discussion, for the heretic, "...is to be censured for the very reason that forbids discussion with him." "Besides," Tertullian goes on, "arguments about Scripture achieve nothing but a stomach-ache or a headache."² Discussion with heretics is later discouraged for similar reasons: "What will you accomplish, most learned of biblical scholars, if the other side denies what you affirmed and affirms what you denied? True, you will lose nothing in the dispute but your voice; and you will get nothing from their blasphemy but bile."³

But to turn again to the relationship of "Jerusalem" to "Athens" in Tertullian's thought, perhaps there may appear at this point, to be little in common. Likewise the question of Tertullian's rationality may seem doubtful. One critic comments: "He [i.e. Tertullian] thinks of faith as asceticism of the intellect; it is making yourself believe something which reason rejects, or an intellectual

¹Norris, p. 103. ²Pres. Her., 16. ³Ibid., 17.
form of renunciation.¹

However neither Tertullian himself nor a significant amount or recent criticism tends to bear this out. Much of Tertullian's work is tightly knit, well reasoned, and highly philosophical.² And none of it bears the label of "nonsense", including his famous work, On The Incarnation Of Christ. In fact Tertullian often uses philosophical allusions to explain his thought.

In his Apology, he writes of how the totality of the universe has been constructed by God's Word, Reason, and Power. He then turns to contemporary philosophy in his appeal:

Among your philosophers also it is a settled belief that Logos, which means word and reason, is the fashioner of the universe. For Zeno lays it down that this maker, who fashioned everything in order, is the same that is called also fate and god and the mind of Jupiter and the inevitableness of all things. These Cleanthes coalesces in the Spirit, which he maintains pervades the universe.³

The difference, however, between speculative philosophy and Tertullian's position is soon apparent in what follows:

And we also ascribe Spirit as its true essence to word and reason and likewise to power, by which we have proclaimed that God has constructed everything, in which are present both word when declaring and reason when arranging and power when accomplishing. We have learnt that this Spirit came forth from God and by this forth-coming is begotten and has therefore been called Son of God, and God from unity of nature. For spirit is also God. Also, when a ray is projected from

²See, e.g., his treatise Against Hermogenes.
³Apol., XXI.
the sun, it is a part of the whole...This ray, therefore of God, was always foretold in the past, coming down into a certain Virgin and being formed into flesh in her womb, is born man mixed with God /nascitur homo deo mixtus/. The flesh having been informed with breath is nourished, grows up, speaks, teaches, works, and is Christ. 1

Philosophical constructs are not necessarily false by themselves. However they are in need of the amplification that Revelation and Tertullian supply. Thus Tertullian is free to use philosophy, as long as it does not contradict his understanding of Christianity.

Similarly in his Treatise On The Soul (16), he argues that the rational element in the soul is its natural condition, made thus by its Author who is Himself a rational Being. The irrational element has been introduced by the serpent in the Garden.

Robert Roberts takes this point to its logical conclusion by saying, "It is God whose truth is revealed in the Rule of Faith, and it is God who has created rational human nature. Hence it is that reason and revelation are harmonious and not contradictory." 2 Reason is the one that has gone astray through Sin. It is therefore through revelation that reason is set right. Here reason finds its fulfillment through what has been revealed in Jesus Christ. Whatever contradicts this truth is of little value. Thus philosophy has occupied itself with a needless search. While it may not be entirely corrupt, it is

1 ibid. 2 Roberts, p. 66.
certainly ignorant of the fuller revelation which has come.¹

Thus Tertullian, while rejecting certain aspects of philosophy, makes use of much philosophical thought in arguing his theological positions. His terminology uses words such as "reason" and "essence"; he refers to the substance, accidents, and status of a thing. He uses philosophical principles, methods, and presuppositions in his work.² He borrows especially from Stoic philosophy, and considers much of Stoicism's conclusions to be apparent, arguing for the physical nature of reality. The resurrection of the flesh, it would seem, comes from Stoic tailors.³

A key point in Tertullian's relationship to philosophy is made by Hans Von Campenhausen. He points out that, in Tertullian, faith and philosophy represent analogous forms of knowledge, differing rather in terms of their content, which is appropriated in different ways.

Faith clings to what God has revealed, while the philosopher lives under the illusion that he is able to solve by himself even the problems which lie beyond the human horizon. What Tertullian demands is not really a sacrificium intellectus but an appropriate limitation of the intellectual hubris of man according to the criterion of God's Word.⁴

In his treatise On Penitence, Tertullian states that

¹ibid. ²Von Campenhausen, p. 18.
⁴Von Campenhausen, p. 19.
reason is a specific property of God, determining all things in accordance with it, "...moreover, there is nothing which He does not wish to be investigated and understood by reason."\(^1\) However he goes on to add that man's obligation is to be obedient in the face of God's majesty: "It is presumptuous, I think, to debate about the goodness of a divine decree, for we ought to obey it, not because it is good, but rather because God had decreed it."\(^2\)

The point is that, for Tertullian, the crucial issue is not a distinction between thought and belief, reason and revelation, or philosophy and revelation. The believer, just because he is such, does not think less logically, or reasonably than the philosopher. The difference, rather, is one of Sin, in this case intellectual pride, which causes the philosopher and the theologian to reach their conclusions by different means.

While both Tertullian and Kierkegaard accept much from contemporary philosophy, they reject the speculative approach in favor of historical revelation. Of a certain amount of difference between the two is Tertullian's insistence upon the "Rule of Faith". This would seem to make Christianity into a series of objective propositions. Yet Tertullian does not view the Rule as a final knowledge of God. Rather it reflects the fact that even in revelation, God is both known and unknown to man. As with Kierkegaard, it is man's responsibility to accept what has been revealed to man, and to rest content in that

\(^1\)Penz, 1. \(^2\)Ibid., 4.
knowledge. The Rule appears to be less a final objective system, than a practical tool, or a credal statement, setting the boundaries of belief. Kierkegaard would insist, however, that such a Rule must be held fast in the subjectivity which Tertullian demonstrates for the Rule to have any personal validity.

Let us now turn to the knowledge of God as it is revealed in the Person of Christ.

The Person Of Christ

Ernest Evans tells us that from time to time in the theological debate since the fourth century, the Person of Christ had been dealt with as if he were an appendage of God, an understanding reminiscent of Arianism. However Tertullian and his contemporaries had a significantly different understanding. To their way of thinking, God was never known apart from His Word. This Word, or Son of God, has from the beginning served in a mediating capacity, and afterwards as incarnate in Jesus Christ. Therefore every valid approach to God has been, and continues to be, mediated through this Word.¹

It has been noted above how Tertullian borrows from contemporary philosophy as he seeks to communicate the gospel to those outside the Church. The pagan concept of the Word and Tertullian's concept are not that different. The difference comes in what is predicated: "The Spirit of

God, and the Word of God, and the Reason of God—Word of Reason, and Reason and Spirit of Word—Jesus Christ our Lord, namely, who is both the one and the other...1 It is through Jesus Christ that God is known in His fullest sense to the world.

Tertullian compares the relationship of God to his Word by various means. It has been mentioned above that one analogy may be found in the sun and its ray. Completing the passage of the Apology already quoted:

...when a ray is projected from the sun, it is a part of the whole; but the sun will be in the ray, because the ray belongs to the sun and is not separated from it by nature but stretches out from it. Spirit comes from the Spirit and God from God as light is kindled from light...2

In his Treatise Against Praxeas, Tertullian finds two similar examples, as he argues against Praxeas' notion that it was the Father who became incarnate and was therefore crucified:

...I say that God and his Word, the Father and his Son, are two: for the root and the shoot are two things, but conjoined; and the spring and the river are two manifestations, but undivided; and the sun and its beam are two aspects, but they cohere. Everything that proceeds from something must of necessity be another beside that from which it proceeds, but it is not for that reason separated (from it).3

While there are drawbacks to this kind of explanation, nonetheless Tertullian struggles to accomplish two important tasks. He wants to insure the true and complete deity of

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1Pra., 1. 2Apol., XXI. 3A. P., 8.
Jesus, and at the same time delineate the distinctness of the Logos from its origin in God without creating two Gods. Such an attempt, on the part of Tertullian, to hold two contradictory positions simultaneously, Kierkegaard was later to term a paradox.

Tertullian goes on to make a more biblically oriented argument against the incarnation of God the Father. This argument has to do with the Old Testament axiom, so often repeated in the New, that no man shall see God and live.\(^1\)

This, of course, runs contrary to the Praxeian view.

Tertullian argues that the statement of John, "That which we have seen, which we have heard, have seen with our own eyes, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life",\(^2\) was none other than it states, the Word of God, heard, seen, and handled because He was made flesh. Before the incarnation, the word only was in the presence of God the Father, "not the Father in the presence of himself."\(^3\)

It was this same eternal Word through which God had, in ancient times, related himself to the world. For it always was the Son who conversed, and was seen by men, from Adam through the patriarchs and prophets. Yet this Word could only be seen in dreams and visions, mirror and enigma, for He was not yet incarnate. Thus the Son was learning in these ancient times how, as God, to communicate

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\(^1\)Exod. 33.20; John 1.18; I Tim. 6.16.
\(^2\)John 1.1.
\(^3\)A. E., 15.
with men, since this was the Word who was later to reveal the Father in a human life by becoming flesh. This as well laid a foundation of faith for the believer. Having access to the knowledge that the Son had previously made Himself known to the world, he may more easily believe that the Son of God has come into the world, "For, as things were written, so also were they done..." ¹

Thus keeping in mind Tertullian's emphasis on the pre-existence of Christ, as He works in various enigmatic ways in ancient times, one is able to understand his fondness for the argument from prophecy in developing a Christian apologetic. There is nothing really disruptive in this view of revelation. The same Word that had previously inquired into Sodom, asked questions of Adam and Cain, made requests of Moses, who acted in human ways in times past, more recently became fully human at the incarnation. All this was foretold by the prophets that Christ should come in the flesh, through the process of human birth.

Tertullian's Answer to The Jews especially develops this line of thought. That Christ, the Lord's anointed, was to come, both the Jews and the Christians of Tertullian's time were in full agreement. The problem arose over the Christian assertion that the ancient prophecies had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. This fell offensively on Jewish ears. Therefore Tertullian sets out to examine the Scriptures in light of the Christian claim.

¹ibid., 16.
The Christ who was to come was to be distinguished, according to Tertullian, by a twofold operation: **preaching** and **power**. To support his preaching role, Tertullian cites Isaiah:

Cry out in vigour, and spare not; lift up, as with a trumpet, thy voice, and announce to my commonalty their crimes, and to the house of Jacob their sins. Me from day to day they seek, and to learn my ways they covet, as a people which hath done righteousness, and hath not forsaken the judgment of God.

The fact of Christ's power comes, as well, from Isaiah:

Behold, our God will deal retributive judgment; Himself will come and save us: then shall the infirm be healed, the eyes of the blind shall see, and the ears of the deaf shall hear, and the mutes' tongues shall be loosed, and the lame shall leap as a hart.

Tertullian suggests that the Jews do not deny the work Christ did, but reject Him, "because He did them on the Sabbaths."

Furthermore Tertullian sees in Christ's Person two characters, as well as a duality of advents forenoted in the Scriptures. The one is the character of humility

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1 Tertullian makes this same distinction of *preaching* and *power* in his work, *Against Marcion* (III. 17), where he writes: "Christ is announced by Isaiah as one who preaches: for he says, 'Who is there among you who feareth God, and will hear the voice of his Son?' [Isa. 50.10] and as a healer, for he says, 'He himself hath taken away our weaknesses and borne (our) wearinesses.' [Isa. 53.4,5]"

2 Isa. 58.1-2. Tertullian evidently used the Septuagint which often shows different references than modern texts. The references listed here are from the R.S.V. The wording is that of *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*.

3 Isa. 35.4-6.

4 John 5.17-18; 10.31-33. *Ans. Jews*, IX.
corresponding to the first advent, when He was led:

'as a sheep for a victim; and, as a lamb voiceless before the shearer, so He opened not his mouth, not even in His aspect comely: For 'we have announced,' says the prophet, 'concerning Him, He is as a little child, as a root in a thirsty land; and there was not in Him attractiveness or glory. And we saw Him, and He had not attractiveness or grace; but His mien was unhonoured, deficient in comparison of the sons of men,' a man set in the plague, and knowing how to bear infirmity: to wit, as having been set by the Father 'for a stone of offence,' and 'made a little lower' by Him 'than angels,' He pronounces Himself 'a worm, and not a man an ignominy of man, and the refuse of the people.'

This evidences the ignobility of the first advent, while sublimity is the mark of the second. Here Christ is no longer "a stone of offence nor a rock of scandal," but "the highest corner-stone". It is this precious rock that "shall crush and crumble the image of secular kingdoms." This second advent concerns itself with the same Christ of whom Daniel has spoken:

'And, behold, as it were a Son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven, came unto the Ancient of days, and was present in His sight; and they who were standing by led Him unto Him, and there was given Him royal powers; and all the nations of the earth,

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1Isa. 53.7.  2Isa. 53.2.
3Ps. 38.17.  4Isa. 53.3.
5Isa. 8.14; Ps. 118.22; Rom. 9.32; I Pet. 2.4.
6Ps. 8.5; Heb. 2.5-9.  7Ps. 22.6.  Ans. Jews, XIV.
8Isa. 28.16.
according to their race, and all glory, shall not be taken away, and His kingdom one which shall not be corrupted.' Then, assuredly, is He to have an honourable mien, and a grace not 'deficient more than the sons of men;' for He will then be 'blooming in beauty in comparison with the sons of men.'

Yet this Christ shall be recognizable to those who viewed Him at His first advent. At that time, they will "learn to know Him whom they pierced, and shall beat their breasts tribe by tribe". In His first advent they did not know Him in part due to His human state.

Tertullian is careful to make clear that while Christ's first advent is in utter humility, He is nonetheless Christ who has come, lest we "may perhaps think some carpenter-king is signified". He goes on to remind us of the famous passage from Isaiah, that:"For a child is born to us, and to us is given a son." The only reason that this passage has any significance, Tertullian points out, is that it is God's Son who is born. But unlike the earthly kings with the ensign of power on their shoulders, diadem on their heads, and sceptre in their hands, "the novel 'King of ages,' Jesus Christ, alone reared 'on His shoulder' His own novel glory, and power, and sublimity,—the cross, to wit; that, according to the former prophecy, the Lord thenceforth 'might reign from the tree.'"

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1 Dan. 7.13-14.  2 Ans. Jews, XIV.
3 Zech. 12.10,12; Rev. 1.7.  4 Ans. Jews, X.
5 Isa. 9.6.  6 Ans. Jews, X.
However Tertullian's most specific work on the Person of Christ is his treatise Against Praxeas. It deals with the essential problem of Christ's Person—the relating of the divine and human elements in Him.

Like the other works which deal with Christ's Person, Tertullian sees God as acting in the world through His Word, or His Son. In Christ, this Sonship has become incarnate. This is necessary because, "No one shall see God and live." Therefore God relates Himself to the world through His Word.

The problem, however, of man's recognition is not a simple one, lest the value of God's action be reduced to naught, both by negating the reality of the incarnation, as well as the subjective aspects of salvation. The flesh of Christ, therefore, was exactly like our own. His body testified to its earthly origin in the same manner as any human body does; its flesh obscures His Sonship. The impression invariably made upon contemporaries was that He was just a man.

Yet as a man, He acts in many ways dissimilar to other men. Concerning Himself, He says to Nicodemus, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that everyone who believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life..." He says at length, "I am come in my Father's name and ye have not received me." Tertullian goes on,

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1Exod. 33.20. 2Roberts, p. 174.
3John 3.16. 4John 5.43.
to those who asked Him what they must do he replied, "To believe in him whom God hath sent", again meaning Himself. He further considers Himself to be the bread which the Father provided from heaven, coming down from heaven not to do His own will but His Father's, that will being that those who see the Son might believe and obtain life and resurrection. Furthermore Tertullian states, no one can come to the Son except those whom the Father draws, those being everyone who had heard and learned from the Father.²

Tertullian takes Christ's proclamation of Himself as being self-evident. People marvel at Christ's doctrine and acts. He had revealed Himself as God's "deputy" by ministering the Father's acts and words—the Father remaining invisible to mortal men. Those who wish to see the Father, as though He were visible, are informed that He becomes visible in the Son, in consequence of His powerful acts, not in consequence of the actual manifestation of His Person.³

Therefore the Father abides in the Son through "works of power and words of doctrine". He is seen through those things which He abides, and in whom He abides, "and from this very fact it is apparent that each Person [i.e. the Father and the Son] is himself and none other". It is not

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¹John 6.29.
²A. F., 21. Both Luther and Kierkegaard share this understanding.
³Ibid., 24.
the point of Jesus' teaching to believe that He is the Father, but rather, "That I am in the Father and the Father in me, or if not, believe for the very works' sake."¹ The Father is seen in the Son through the works, not visibly, but believed "with the mind".²

Thus Tertullian sees God's Word in the flesh. This is not a transformation into flesh, but rather being clothed in the flesh. Since God is eternal, He is also "immutable" and "untransformable". To change form is a destruction of what first was, Tertullian reasons, again demonstrating the influence of philosophy, "for everything that is transformed into something else ceases to be what it was and begins to be what it was not."³

Here Tertullian makes his most memorable contribution to Christology in light of later developments. Concerning the relation of the divine and the human in Christ, he "solves" the problem by maintaining that in the one person of Christ, the two substances of God and man are found, each being complete with all its properties, yet "not confused". Christ is not a tertium quid, therefore being neither God nor man—rather He is both God and man.

Since his thoughts are especially concise on this subject, they are quoted as follows:

¹John 14.11. ²A. P., 24.
³Ibid., 27. This is the same position that he holds in opposing Marcion on The Incarnation of Christ, 3. See below.
...certainly (we find him set forth) as in every respect Son of God and Son of Man, since (we find him) as both God and Man, without doubt according to each substance as it is distinct in what itself is, because neither is the Word anything else but God nor the flesh anything else but man...we observe a double quality, not confused but combined, Jesus in one Person God and Man...And to such a degree there remains unimpaired the proper being of each substance, that in him the Spirit carried out its own acts, that is powers and works and signs, while the flesh accomplished its own passions, hungering in company of the devil, thirsting in the company of the Samaritan woman, weeping for Lazarus, sore troubled to death--and at length it also died. But if there had been some third thing, a confusion of both, like electrum, there would not be in evidence such distinct proofs of both substances, but the Spirit would have performed the functions of the flesh and the flesh the functions of the Spirit, by interchange, or else neither those of the flesh nor those of the Spirit but those of some third form, by confusion: yes, either the Word would have died or the flesh would not have died, if the Word had been converted into flesh for either the flesh would have been immortal or the Word mortal. But because both substances acted each in its own quality, therefore they accrued both their own activities and their own destinies. The problem of the early Church was not that of explaining how it was possible for the incarnation to have happened, but rather to affirm that it actually did take place, preserving the two characteristics, the divine and the human in one Person. Each nature retained its own peculiar identity (i.e. the flesh remained flesh, while the Word demonstrated its presence through preaching and power), and exercised its own function apart from the

1The mixture of gold and silver.

2A.P., 27. Italics mine. Note the similar wording to the Chalcedonian definition.
other.1

Tertullian held this view in opposition to the docetic doctrine of Christ's Person which was particularly prominent in his day. Thus Tertullian emphasized the flesh of Christ and the real humanity of Jesus. But he also held to Christ's divinity, working out more clearly the nature of the incarnation, and the relation of the human and divine natures in Christ. This, according to Robert Roberts, was "not only a great advance upon the work of his predecessors, but also a remarkable prefiguring of the conclusions attained at the Council of Chalcedon."2

Tertullian, however, does not write of the double nature of Christ's Person in terms of His incarnation alone; his resurrection, as well, maintains this dual reality. Thus the flesh is to be resurrected at the last day.3 If this were not the case, he argues, certainly Paul

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1 Roberts, pp. 245-246.
2 Ibid., p. 245.
3 Tertullian has some notions in this regard which sound odd to the modern ear. Perhaps the most notable is this: "It is well-known not only that the bones last /after death/, but also that the teeth continue entire; they are seeds of the body that will sprout at the resurrection /Res. Flesh, 427/." See also I Cor. 15.35ff.
would not have been "ridiculed" at Athens. For the resurrection of the soul was "a frequent tenet of their philosophy."\(^1\) Thus Tertullian describes Jesus Christ in His resurrected state:

'Jesus' still 'sits there at the right hand of the Father,' a man although God 'the last Adam' although the primal Word, 'flesh and blood,' although purer than ours, yet the same both in substance and the form with which He ascended, 'in the same form also to descend' as the angels declare, assuredly 'to be recognized by those that wounded Him.'\(^2\)

It is because Christ is entrusted with both flesh and Spirit, that He is able to be called "a mediator between God and men."\(^3\) He received flesh from us which was taken to heaven as a pledge that one day our flesh may be restored there: "Be ye easy in mind, flesh and blood, ye have seized both heaven and the kingdom of God in Christ."\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Res. Flesh, 39.  \(^2\)Ibid., 51.  \(^3\)I Tim. 2.5.  
\(^4\)Res. Flesh, 51.  

Tertullian may have had more in mind than Atonement when dealing with the two aspects of Christ's character in His resurrected state. Perhaps he was seeking to avoid a confusion in the faith, the emergence of a docetic notion of Christ's Person in the resurrection, which saw the earthly Christ left behind on the cross, thereafter only a heavenly, glorious Christ relating Himself to the world. The result of this would be in essence two Christs: the one, humiliated and earthly, a matter for history; the other, glorified and heavenly, with whom we now have to deal. Both Leo the Great and Luther fight against this tendency which would introduce docetism "by the back door". (See: R. V. Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, pp. 241ff., and Luther's Table Talk, (1544) No. 5659.)

Tertullian, however, does not develop in his theology the subtle Pauline idea of a "spiritual body" (I Cor. 15.44), even though much of his argument is based upon Pauline motifs. This may be due to the fact that a subtlety of this kind would not fit his polemics against Marcion; it would only weaken Tertullian's position.
Thus we have described a context out of which paradoxical formulations, in regards to Christ's Person, naturally follow. There is a *prima facie* contradiction found in the gospels: a man who is absolutely like all other men according to the flesh, but who demonstrates himself as being absolutely unlike all other men according to the spirit. For an ordinary man to proclaim himself wholly dissimilar through his preaching, and to show himself wholly dissimilar through his power (or miracles), is an ontological contradiction. Kierkegaard was to form his paradox, in part, on the kind of contradiction here described, and on Tertullian's paradoxical arguments against Marcion.

**Paradox In Tertullian**

Before dealing with what has traditionally been understood to be Tertullian's paradox, some comment is in order regarding the underlying controversy with Marcion which set the stage for Tertullian's most paradoxical formulations. Paradox in Tertullian is not merely limited to his famous passage taken from his treatise *On the Incarnation of Christ*, but rather is related to a broader theological setting.

Marcion's doctrine affirmed, apparently, that there was a greater God than the Creator, who had done greater things. Both the Creator God and His work were evil. It was Christ, therefore, who had brought this new revelation of the Good God, being sent by Him. Of course since the Creation was evil, Christ could not have been a real human
being, but rather only appeared as such, likewise only appeared to suffer and die. He came so that He might save souls, the flesh being both incapable and unworthy of salvation.\(^1\)

In writing against Marcion, Tertullian often found God's foolishness superior to Marcion's wisdom. Tertullian mocks Marcion's contempt for the common and little things to be found in creation:

Since you put to scorn those tiny animals which the great Artificer has designedly made great in competence and ability, so teaching us that greatness approves itself in littleness, even as, the apostle says, strength does in weakness: \(^2\) imitate, if you can, the bee's house-building, the ant's stabelings, the spider's network, the silkworm's spinning: tolerate, if you can, even those creatures in your bed and in your bed-cover, the poison of the cantharsis, the midge's sting, the mosquito's trumpet and spear. How great must the greater things be, when by things so little you are so gratified or distressed that not even in those little things can you despise their Creator. \(^3\)

Certainly, Tertullian goes on, if Marcion's logic were consistent, man should be despised as well, yet his God has affection for man, taking the trouble himself to come down from his "third heaven" into these "beggarly elements", and thus even being crucified in the "Creator's prison-house". \(^4\)

Tertullian is quick to point out that Marcion's logic is not consistent in other respects either; for while

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\(^2\) Cf. II Cor. 12.19.

\(^3\) A. M., I, 14.

\(^4\) Ibid.
despising the creation, Marcion "begs and borrows" things from God's creation to use them in his ceremonies. Marcion washes his followers with water, he anoints them with oil, and weans them with milk and honey. And more than this, Tertullian questions Marcion's sincerity, for he "hankers" after the things he rejects. Marcion despises the sky; yet he builds his house in full view of the sky. He despises the earth; yet he eats its food. Marcion despises the sea; yet he stops short of its contents, considering these things to be a "holier kind of food." For Tertullian, Marcion is a hypocrite, otherwise he would starve himself to death as a substitute for martyrdom. Tertullian concludes by saying to Marcion, "you despise as worthless those very things on which your life and death depend."¹

In contrast to this, Tertullian does not despise the creation and the contradictions inherent in it. He affirms its diversity of things "visible and invisible" as made by the Creator. In fact, it is the very mark of His operation that things are in diversity, "of corporal and incorporeal, of animate and inanimate, of vocal and silent, of mobile and static, of reproductive and sterile, of dry and wet, of hot and cold." Likewise man reflects this diversity both in body and disposition; some of man's members are strong, others weak; sometimes man's temperament is glad, sometimes anxious, etc.²

Tertullian continues to argue that if this is the case

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., I, 16.
Diversity is tolerated in God, if not in philosophers.
that this universe is balanced between opposing attributes, "it at once follows that things visible stand in need of things invisible, and that these must be ascribed to the very same Author as their opposites, while they indicate that even the Creator differs (from Himself), commanding what he has forbidden and forbidding what he has commanded, smiting and healing."\(^1\)

Yet Marcion is not content with this view of God and reality. He would have God the Creator of visible things alone, and consistent in terms of this sphere alone. But Tertullian adds, "we have good cause to believe that he has made both life and death, both evil things and peace".\(^2\) And "precisely", we may add, because the Christian believes that the invisible God has lived on earth in the lowliness of human form, for the purpose of man's salvation.\(^3\)

Marcion's offense at the incarnation, however, goes beyond the fact that God took upon Himself the flesh of creation. He is also offended that being found in the flesh, according to Christianity's proclamation, He associated Himself with humility and weakness. Tertullian points out the references for this assertion: \(^4\) "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor"; \(^5\) "Blessed are the indigent, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; \(^6\) "He hath sent me to

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\(^1\)ibid. \(^2\)ibid. \(^3\)ibid., II, 16. \(^4\)ibid., IV, 14.
\(^5\)Isa. 61.1; Luke 4.18.
\(^6\)Luke 6.20; Matt. 5.3,6,4.
heal the broken hearted”;¹ "Blessed are they that are hungry, for they shall be filled”;² "To comfort those that mourn”;¹ "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall laugh”;² "To give to them that mourn the glory of Sion, and instead of ashes the joyfulness of anointing, and the garment of glory for the spirit of heaviness”.¹

Christ, it may be said, not only associated Himself with humility and weakness, but was humble and weak as opposed to proud and powerful.³ This is bound up in the offensive message of the cross. And for the Jews it was more than this, for "cursed is everyone who shall hang on a tree."⁴ Jesus, to their understanding, was under God's curse. This Tertullian refutes as being truly the case since Christ was not guilty on his own part, but rather vicariously because of man's sin. He was crucified to fulfill the prediction of the prophets. Christ was the "stumbling-stone" of Isaiah.⁵

Thus when St. Paul writes in I Corinthians, addressing the Church with "grace" and "peace",⁶ such words belong only to the Christian community; "For grace only comes after offence, and peace after war."⁷ Marcion's god was

¹Isa. 61.1; Luke 4.18. ²Luke 6.20; Matt. 5.3, 6, 4.
³In fact, Tertullian states in a different context (Pat., VII), "...the Lord Himself is found amid no riches. He always justifies the poor, fore-condemns the rich." The Lord shrank from being made a king, turning from all "pride" and "garb", as well as dignity of power, even though he had the greatest right to use such things, being the Son of God (Idol., XVIII).
⁴Deut. 21.23; Gal. 3.13. ⁵Isa. 28.16. Ans. Jews, X.
⁶I Cor. 1.3. ⁷A. H., V, 5. Italics mine.

Significantly Tertullian—as has
incapable of this kind of offence and warfare because he could not be known, and because he could not be angry. There can be no grace for one who has not been offended, and no peace for one who has not rebelled. This is why St. Paul says that the cross is foolishness to those who are to perish, but to those who are being saved it is the power and wisdom of God. And Paul goes on to quote Isaiah, "For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart.'" This associates the Creator with the judgment of the cross in opposition to the "good" god of Marcion who is offended at the mere thought of judgment. God has made foolish the wisdom of the world.

The significance of the Pauline argument, however, does not reside in the repudiation of wisdom or cleverness itself. Rather the basis of the argument finds its key at another point. Tertullian makes this clear as he argues against Marcion's idea that Christ was not really born, and therefore did not really suffer:

But what is that foolish thing of God which is wiser than men, if not the cross and the death of Christ? What is that weak thing of God which is stronger than men, if not God's birth, and his human flesh? But if Christ was neither born of a virgin nor composed of flesh, and consequently has not truly suffered to the end either the cross or death (as Marcion would argue),

already been demonstrated in Kierkegaard—does not view the faith as being inherently irrational; it is only foolishness to those outside the faith.

1I Cor. 1.18. 2Isa. 29.14. 3I Cor. 1.20.
there was nothing in that either foolish or weak; and in that case God has not chosen the weak things of the world to confound the strong, nor things dishonourable and little and contemptible, things which are not, that is, which do not exist, to confound the things which are, that is, which do truly exist [as Paul writes]. For nothing ordained by God is really small and ignoble and contemptible, but (only) that (ordained) by man.

The point is that man, in his hubris, considers certain things "dishonourable", and "little", and "contemptible". God never told man this; man has figured this out for himself. On the contrary, man is told that all God has made is "very good". Yet man considers himself with his abundant intellect above certain things in creation. He considers himself above his fellow human beings, especially so if he who considers is wise, or powerful, or wealthy, or righteous, or even religious. Thus in the cross, man's sinful snobishness is overturned. God sends His Son in the common form of a carpenter-turned-preacher to suffer and to die. He offends man's wisdom being neither powerful, nor wealthy, nor righteous, nor religious.

Marcion's God, Tertullian affirms, knows nothing of the fact that the Creator has chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may confound the world's wisdom. It knows nothing of this "confutation of opposites by opposites" (contraria contrariis redarguere), being "wise" itself. Being thus wise, it glories in itself, Marcion's idol, and not in the Lord.

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1 A. M., V, 5. Italics mine.
2 Gen. 1.31.
3 A. M., V, 5.
For Tertullian, as well as for St. Paul, God has chosen what man considers to be the foolish things, and ordains them for salvation. This is the wisdom of God which has been hidden under figures, allegories, and engimas later to be revealed in Christ, the light of the gentiles.\(^1\) God has accomplished all this, the same God who through the words of Isaiah promised that he would make known the dark and secret treasures.\(^2\) In Christ the hidden things have been revealed, albeit in earthen vessels.\(^3\)

The above discussion describes what Kierkegaard referred to in the previous chapter as "lowliness". It is precisely at this "moral" issue that Marcion is offended. However there is another sense in which Marcion is also offended. It is in his treatise On The Incarnation of Christ that Tertullian deals not only with a moral question in regards to Christ, but more basically with an intellectual question.\(^4\) Marcion is offended not only because it is "unseemly" that God's Word should become incarnate, but because it is "impossible". It is this latter argument, which Kierkegaard referred to as "loftiness", which is at the heart of Tertullian's paradox.

\(^1\)Isa. 42.6.  \(^2\)Isa. 45.3.  \(^3\)A. M., V, 6.

Let us return to Tertullian's argument. Putting himself in Marcion's role, Tertullian despises the Nativity as Marcion would do. He continues:

You shudder of course, at the child passed out along with his afterbirth, and of course bedaubed with it. You think it shameful that he is straightened out with bandages, that he is licked into shape with applications of oil, that he is beguiled by coddling. This natural object of reverence you, Marcion, bespittle; yet how were you born? You hate man during his birth: how can you love any man?¹

While Marcion may not be able to love any man, Christ and His gospel can:

Christ, there is no doubt of it, did care for the sort of man who was curdled in uncleannesses in the womb, who was brought forth through organs immodest, who took nourishment through organs of ridicule. For his sake he came down, for his sake he preached the gospel, for his sake he cast himself down in all humility even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.² Evidently he loved him: for he redeemed him at great price.³

Tertullian points out that God has redeemed man in his nativity and flesh. Certainly Marcion is in no position to find shameful and beneath his dignity what God has redeemed. For had he not loved man in this condition, he would not have acted on his behalf. Yet He did act, restoring every deficiency, making it whole again, not being ashamed to be born into it.⁴

¹Incar., 4. This is reminiscent of Kierkegaard's arguments against speculative philosophy. The speculative philosopher is caught up in a system as Marcion is caught up in his. Kierkegaard reminds the philosopher of his existence, while Tertullian reminds Marcion of his birth.

²Phil. 2.8. ³I Cor. 6.20. Incar., 4. ⁴Ibid.
Indeed if God had chosen to come into the world in the body of some kind of domestic or wild animal in order to preach the kingdom of heaven, Marcion would find this action on the part of God foolish as well. Anyone who believed in such a thing would be a fool, this again being beneath God's dignity. Here Tertullian reminds us of St. Paul:

But look about you, Marcion, if indeed you have not deleted the passage: God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may put to shame the things that are wise. What are the foolish things? The conversion of men to the worship of the true God, the rejection of error, instruction in righteousness, in chastity, in mercy, in patience, and in all manner of innocence? No, these are not foolish things. Inquire then to what things he did refer: if you presume you have discovered them, can any of them be so foolish as belief in God who was born, born moreover of a virgin, born with a body of flesh, God who has wallowed through those reproaches of nature? Let someone say these are not foolish things: suppose it to be other things which God has chosen for opposition to the wisdom of the world—and yet, the professors of this world's wisdom find it easier to believe that Jupiter became a bull or a swan than Marcion finds it to believe that Christ veritably became man.

Yet, Tertullian goes on, there are other things which are "foolish". For not only was God born, but He died; not only did He carry a body, but a cross as well. Marcion would be wiser if he were to refuse to believe these things. Yet Marcion cannot become wise, except by becoming a fool in the world's eyes and believe what God has done.

Tertullian argues that Marcion has made St. Paul into

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1I Cor. 1.27. 2Incar., 4.
a fraud, by insisting on the phantasmic idea of Christ's flesh. For Paul would certainly be fraudulent if, such being the case, he continued to insist that Christ was crucified, buried, and was raised up again. Indeed the faith as a whole would be fraudulent as well, the whole of the Christian hope being a phantasmic idea. God's assassins would be innocent, had Christ suffered nothing.

Thus Tertullian's argument reaches its climax as he implores Marcion to...

Spare the one and only hope of the whole world: why tear down the indispensable dishonour of the faith. Whatever is beneath God's dignity is for my advantage. I am saved if I am not ashamed of my Lord. Whosoever is ashamed of me, he says, of him will I also be ashamed. I find no other grounds for shame, such as may prove that in contempt of dishonour I am nobly shameless and advantageously a fool. The Son of God was crucified: I am not ashamed—because it is shameful. The Son of God died: it is immediately credible --because it is silly /credibile est, quia inentum est/. He was buried, and rose again: it is certain because it is impossible /certum est, quia impossible/. Yet acts such as these cannot be true unless He Himself was true, that is, made of flesh and blood, "...scaffolded of bones, threaded through with sinews, intertwined with veins, competent to be born and to die, human unquestionably, as born of a human mother".

Tertullian continues to develop, in the remainder of

1Cf. I Cor. 2.2; 15.4; 15.17-19.
2Incar., 5.
4Incar., 5. 5Ibid.
this section, the kind of Christology previously discussed, which sees in Christ the two "substances" of man and God, "on the one hand born, on the other not born: on the one hand fleshly, on the other spiritual: on the one hand dying, on the other living."\(^1\) However the two sets of attributes, while found in the one Person, are distinct from one another, its explanation being found in the verity of each nature, both flesh and blood are in the fullest sense what they claim to be:

\[\text{...the powers of the Spirit of God proved him God,}\]
\[\text{the sufferings proved there was the flesh of man.}\]
\[\text{If the powers postulate the Spirit, no less do the sufferings postulate the flesh. If the flesh along with the sufferings was fictitious, it follows that the Spirit also along with the powers was a fraud.} \(^2\)]

Much of Tertullian's discredit as a rational thinker centers around the passage quoted above, where writing of the faith he states, "...it is credible because it is silly...it is certain because it is impossible."\(^3\) Recent scholarship, likewise, singles this phrase out as being worthy of special comment.

George Phillips sees Tertullian's thought, as embodied in this quotation, to be a \textit{nova lex} instituted by Christ, faith being the only requirement. As Christians we are asked to believe certain things which "stagger the

\[^1\text{ibid.}\] \[^2\text{ibid.}\]

\[^3\text{This is often misquoted as being, "I believe because it is absurd" (\textit{credo quaia absurdum}). However Tertullian never used precisely these words...even though he might have (See Timothy Barnes, \textit{Tertullian}, p. 223.). "Silly" is often interpreted in this context as "absurd".}\]
reason", for example, that Jesus died and rose from the dead. But this, he argues for Tertullian, only provides a greater opportunity for faith. The more incredible the proclamation may seem, the more credit belongs to one's faith! He states that Tertullian (as noted above), "...thinks of faith as asceticism of the intellect; it is making yourself believe something which the reason rejects, or an intellectual form of renunciation."\(^1\) The reason, according to Phillip's interpretation, is forced to hold to this essentially irrational position, "simply because God commands"; to question would be an act of impiety. This understanding of Tertullian suggests that authority is the sole basis of faith, not truth. Thus the faith remains essentially irrational.\(^2\)

But other scholars find more method in Tertullian's madness than Phillips is willing to concede. More recently, Bernard Williams writes of the paradoxical aspect of Tertullian's thought (but not directly so, as he forewarns us),\(^3\) and of its interest in the study of religious language. After recounting Tertullian's argument in De Carne Christi, he centers on the phrase in question and writes:

People who express themselves in paradoxes are in a strong position; and the more outrageous the paradox, in general the stronger the position. For an objector who insists on pointing out the absurdity of what has been said is uneasily conscious of making a fool of himself, for all he is doing is pointing out that the paradox is

\(^1\)Phillips, p. 237. \(^2\)ibid. \(^3\)Williams, p. 187.
paradoxical, and this was perfectly obvious already: he is like a man who has missed the point of a joke or an ironical remark or an imaginative comparison, and insists on taking it literally. But ironical remarks and imaginative comparisons can have their point, and so can paradoxes; so it will not do, either, for the objector to dismiss the paradox in the hope that its equivalent absurdity makes it unworthy for discussion; for this is again to suggest that the person who uttered the paradox had overlooked its absurdity, but on the contrary he knew that it was absurd, and that was one reason why he uttered it.1

Williams goes on to speculate about the "point" of this paradox. He argues that Tertullian's expressions about the faith being "credible because silly", and "certain because impossible" should be taken seriously, and not as a mere rhetorical device refuting a particular doctrine. Rather Williams sees in it "a striking formulation of something...essential to Christian belief."2

After a more general discussion of religious language, he again returns to Tertullian's paradox. Williams quotes Wittgenstein as he approaches the conclusion of his article: "How the world is, is completely indifferent for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world."3 This, Williams argues, like the gods of Epicurus, "far remote and cut off from our affairs", is not the God of the Christian believer, who toils in the world of men. The problem arises for the Christian in talking about this God who captures both realms, the world and divinity, in his Person.

1ibid., p. 190. 2ibid., p. 192. 3ibid., quoted in, p. 202.
Here Williams finds Tertullian's paradox to be relevant, both because it is a paradox, and because it is about the incarnation. The incarnation is the point of intersection between religious and non-religious language, since it speaks not only of someone being crucified, but that the person in question was God's Son. This, Williams contends, has to be stated if there is to be a Christian faith; this Tertullian saw, and likewise that it is a paradox. According to Williams:

The paradox comes about because, although we must have some statement which says something about both God and the world, when we have it we find that we have something that we cannot properly say...For there is no language for God's eternity and perfection beyond the statement of it: it can be said that God is eternal and perfect, not how he is, for God's eternity and perfection must be beyond the reach of our understanding. So when we come to a statement that is about both God and temporal events, it must be unsatisfactory; for if it were not, we should have adequately described the relation of the temporal events to God in terms appropriate only to the temporal events: and this would mean either that we had described only the temporal events, and left God out, or had described God as a temporal being, which he is not.

Williams goes on to observe that the difficulty which Tertullian expresses stems not from God's eternality in itself, but from the conjunction of this with its perfection as a personal being. Some hold that numbers, for example, are eternal objects, and mathematical statements about things in the world can be adequately made. Leaving the question of application aside, the nature of the numbers themselves may be expressed in the language of pure numbers, as stated in the text.

\textsuperscript{1}ibid., p. 203.
mathematics. But it does not follow, he continues, that the nature of God can be expressed in human language. He states:

The question of the applicability of mathematics to the world does not affect the question of the expression of the nature of the numbers by pure mathematics; but the question of the relation of God to the world does affect the question of the expression of the nature of God in religious language. The actual effect is that God is said to be a perfect personal being; because, for instance, prayers are addressed to him, and because he has a Son who was born into the world. The statement of these relations will be itself unsatisfactory, and will involve others that are so: because the concepts required—of fatherhood, for instance, and of love, and of power—are acquired in a human context; the language of these things is a language that grows and is used for the relations of humans to humans. To say that, while this is so, religious language requires merely an extrapolation from the human context, is not to solve the problem but to pose it again. For the extrapolation required is an extrapolation to infinity, and in even trying to give a sense to this we encounter the incomprehensibility. This incomprehensibility Tertullian has brought out in his paradox. 1

Williams is apparently making the same point in regards to religious language that Kierkegaard made in regard to speculative philosophy; religious language can no more be rid of the historical, than can the speculative philosopher. It is impossible to speak about God using anything other than human terms.

Theology, it seems, has set about an impossible task in speaking of God-in-the-world. "If it is impossible, what is to be done?", Williams asks. He answers by saying

1 ibid., p. 204.
that we may respond in faith; the incomprehensibility he has discussed being necessary to faith, by providing a place for faith. He suggests that this is the core of Tertullian's paradox, "...not just that it was absurd and he believed it, but that he believed it because it was absurd."\(^1\) Of course, he argues, this implies a certain definition of faith, that being inherently mysterious and necessarily so. This definition is apparently opposed to reason, for Williams, as he states: "If, then, the Christian faith is true, it must be partly incomprehensible; but if it is partly incomprehensible, it is difficult to see what it is for it to be true."\(^2\)

Williams sees that the faith of Tertullian necessitates a certain incomprehensibility if one admits to talking about God-in-the-world at all. It is significant that Williams disqualifies himself as a theologian, for his understanding of faith remains that of man's endeavor, or asŽent, in the face of the paradox. For Kierkegaard, reason can only know the paradox in a negative sense, while faith—the condition given by God—"transforms" the paradox and it is no longer paradoxical.

Writing in response to Williams' article, and those of similar persuasion, is Vianney Decarie. He points out that the passage "credibile quia ineptum" which divides

\(^1\)ibid., p. 205.
George Phillips apparently overlooks this point in his article on Tertullian.

\(^2\)ibid., p. 211.
interpreters, is seen either as a rationally modified formula expressed in other terms, or as an anti-rationalistic absolute.¹

Décarie complains that this phrase is often taken outside of its context in de Carne Christi. He reviews Tertullian's argument as he reminds Marcion of St. Paul's remark that, "the folly of the world (is) the wisdom of God",² the incarnation and the crucifixion both being indignations to Marcion's understanding. This argument is supported by Christ's generally neglected warning not to be ashamed of Him, lest He be ashamed in return.³ Décarie finds that quoted outside of their context, the words "credible because silly" lack meaning in the sense Tertullian intended.⁴

What Tertullian had in mind was not simply rhetoric and antithesis. Rather Tertullian's point was that which is the substance of confusion, of shame, of folly to the wisdom of the world, it is this which the Christian accepts because it is the wisdom of God. He is not ashamed because here he finds salvation:

The crucifixion? Tertullian does not have shame, because it is shameful to the eyes of the world. The death of the Son of God? It is an object absolutely unworthy of faith, because it is stupid to the eyes of the world. The burial and the resurrection? It is certain, because it is impossible to the eyes of the world; 'The foolishness of God is his wisdom--confounding

²1 Cor. 1.27-28. ³Mark 8.38; Luke 9.26; Matt. 16.32.
⁴Décarie, p. 27.
the wise.'

His conclusion makes three points: (1) the classical formula, "I believe because it is absurd" (or more accurately, "it is credible, because silly") does not represent the thought of Tertullian because it neglects the context of its argument, its scriptural references, and makes a particular case (i.e. the crucifixion) the door to belief; (2) the faith of Tertullian in the incarnation and the crucifixion depends on the Word of God, God's revelation in the Scriptures, not upon its absurdity or non-absurdity; and (3) the anti-rationalism of The Incarnation of Christ is that of St. Paul in the First Letter to The Corinthians, and all that accept its teaching. Décarie boils down the thought of Tertullian to these words: "Whatever is beneath God's dignity is for my advantage. I am saved if I am not ashamed of my Lord."2

Finally, and most recently, Timothy Barnes speaks briefly to the issue at hand. Unlike many scholars, Barnes does not view the passage as proof of Tertullian's irrationality, or subjective, unreasoning emotion. "If that was his true attitude," he asks, "why did he ever descend to apparently rational argument?"3 Rather Barnes reminds us,

1ibid., p. 30. "La crucifixion? Tertullien n'en a pas honte, parce que c'est honteux aux yeux du monde; la mort du Fils de Dieu? C'est un objet absolument digne de foi, parce que c'est sot aux yeux du monde; la sépulture et la résurrection? C'est certain, parce c'est impossible aux yeux du monde. 'Stulta dei elegit deus, ut confundat sapientia.'"

2ibid., p. 31.

Tertullian's paradox is only apparent: "He is contrasting the assumptions of Christianity with those of pagan society. That is his argument against Marcion, who rejects parts of the Gospels because he considers them deficient by conventional standards."¹

Like Décarie, Barnes alludes to Tertullian's assertion that if the Christian denies Christ in the world, he will be denied Christ in heaven. Marcion presents a threat similar to persecution, however not physical, but moral. Jesus' death is neither shameful nor incredible, as Marcion would have it. Rather the crucifixion and death are honorable and credible precisely because Marcion argues the opposite. Barnes concludes that Tertullian has shifted the argument from Marcion's exclusively intellectual treatment to an emotional argument as well, thus making the intellectual argument irrelevant. Tertullian countered Marcion's abridgement of the Gospel, through emotional means, having good oratorical precedents.²

**Summation**

It may be helpful at this juncture to summarize this chapter by noting the points of similarity between Tertullian and Kierkegaard.

¹ Neither theologian should be described as an irrational thinker. Reason, for Tertullian, has a neutral quality about it. He is as capable of using reason in his arguments, as are the philosophers and heretics whom he

² ibid., p. 294. ² ibid.
argues against. In fact, he suggests that it is their position which is irrational and not his. The difference between philosophy and revelation is more a matter of sin than logic. In this he is very close to Kierkegaard, and as we shall soon observe, to Luther as well.

2. Both use a non-speculative approach to theological issues. Philosophy, for Tertullian, is of value within certain limits. While he often uses philosophy in his arguments and apologetics, he rejects speculation in favor of historical revelation. After Jesus Christ, Tertullian finds that there is no need of speculation, and thus treats speculation with contempt. Christ instead laid down a "definite system of truth"—contained in the Rule of Faith—which is sufficient for salvation. Man should rest content with this; further knowledge is unnecessary.

While we have already noted a certain dissimilarity between Tertullian and Kierkegaard over the "Rule of Faith", Kierkegaard insisting that Christianity is not an objective doctrine, another point of difference should be noted as well. There is the tendency in Tertullian to pursue objective speculation in spite of his protestations to the contrary. This is especially in evidence as Tertullian seeks to explain his "logos" Christology. While Tertullian bases much of his theology upon the seriousness with which the created order should be taken, Kierkegaard is more existential in this respect. Kierkegaard refuses to speculate on how God can be both human and divine in Jesus Christ. One wonders whether Tertullian grasped the
full implication of his paradoxical formulations. Kierkegaard defines these implications, apparently, with greater clarity.

3. Both theologians understand Christ in a similar manner. Tertullian and Kierkegaard see Christ as being one person with two characteristics, as in the Chalcedonian definition. Christ is truly human, being flesh; and He is truly divine, demonstrating his divinity by preaching and power. These two are combined without confusion. The Scriptures present this contradiction with striking clarity when it is understood in a prima facie sense. Such an understanding is, for Kierkegaard, the paradox.

4. Both Tertullian and Kierkegaard understand the Christological paradox in a double dimension. First, there is a "moral" dimension to Tertullian's paradox (Kierkegaard labels this "lowness"). It has been argued that Tertullian's refutation of Marcion is the same as St. Paul's refutation of the philosophers at Athens. Namely, it is man's pride which often stands in the way of man's acceptance of God's activity in the world. Man is offended that God could only save man through Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Man especially considers the birth and the death of Christ to be "weak" and "foolish". Yet Tertullian, like St. Paul, argues that it is precisely the "weak" and the "foolish" things which are in reality the "strength" and the "wisdom" of God. God considers nothing to be weak and foolish, only man does so out of his inherent hubris. God, if He is to save man, can only do so if man is humble and not arrogant, since
it is Sin which marks the divorce between man and God.

Secondly, there is an "intellectual" dimension to Tertullian's paradox (Kierkegaard labels this "loftiness"). Bernard Williams points out that Tertullian finds Christianity "certain because it is absurd". Putting the moral issue aside, it is "impossible" for God to be man, to grow up and to die. Yet this is what Christianity proclaims; and, as such, is absurd and paradoxical. Language which speaks of an eternal God and the temporal world simultaneously, will necessarily break down, or break into paradoxical forms, because if it did not, "...we should have adequately described the relation of the temporal events to God in terms appropriate only to the temporal events; and this would mean either that we had described only the temporal events, and left God out, or described God as a temporal being, which he is not."¹

Christianity seeks to proclaim that Christ was both truly God, and truly man. This is impossible, yet it is necessary if the Christian witness and the place of faith is to be maintained. If the eternal is really to reveal itself in time, it must, to a certain extent, be incomprehensible (absurd) if it is to be a revelation; and because it is incomprehensible, it is believable as God's action. Paradoxical language, therefore, symbolizes this incomprehensibility.

Décarie is correct in pointing out that Tertullian's

¹Williams, p. 203.
paradox cannot be separated from the rest of his argument. However Décarie overlooks the fact that within the context of the argument, Marcion raises two objections: not only is it "unseemly" that Christ be born, grow up and die, it is "impossible". That is to say, there is besides the moral issue (i.e. that of being "ashamed") an intellectual one. Not only does such a paradox remain incomprehensible "to the eyes of the world", but it remains incomprehensible to the believer as well. In fact, it is this very incomprehensibility which is the height of Tertullian's argument, and which Williams correctly perceives as being "essential to Christian belief."

Yet one should be careful to add at this point, that while Kierkegaard uses both "moral" and "intellectual" aspects, it is the intellectual aspect which is the overriding feature of the paradox. This is in keeping with Tertullian's understanding. Had no ontological contradiction occurred, there could be no moral issue. The moral aspect, as Tertullian points out, is largely a function of man's hubris.

Timothy Barnes goes on to add that there is an "oratorical and emotional" dimension to Tertullian's paradox. However he seems to be somewhat confused in that he does not distinguish between the moral and intellectual aspects involved. He even suggests that the point of the paradox has shifted from being essentially intellectual to being emotional.¹ This exclusiveness does not seem to

¹Barnes, p. 224.
be borne out in light of the arguments already noted. Nevertheless there is a sense in which Tertullian's paradox can be interpreted also as emotional and oratorical: the faith is certain, because it is impossible for people like Marcion. It may well be that, given Tertullian's terse wit, all three meanings were intended in this passage.

Thus we may say that in regard to Kierkegaard's claim that his theological approach made no "new proposal" but rather was "handed down from the fathers" holds true, at least as far as this Church Father is concerned. There is no great difference between the two over the issue of what Kierkegaard terms the "Paradox". With a few minor exceptions, Kierkegaard demonstrates a remarkable similarity to Tertullian's Christological position.

Let us now turn to another theologian who is of significance in influencing Kierkegaard. Martin Luther's theology was also noted by Kierkegaard as providing the basis for his understanding of paradox. In the following, we will again be concerned with the question of continuity in so far as Kierkegaard's paradoxical understandings are similar to Luther's.
ABBREVIATIONS

Against Hermogenes - A. H.
Against Marcion - A. M.
Against Praxeas - A. P.
Against Valentinus - A. V.
An Answer To The Jews - Ans. Jews
The Apology - Apol.
Concerning The Resurrection Of The Flesh - Res. Flesh
Of Penance - Pen.
Of Patience - Pat.
On Idolatry - Idol.
On Prayer - Pra.
Prescriptions Against The Heretics - Pres. Her.
The Testimony Of The Soul - Test. Soul
Treatise On The Incarnation Of Christ - Incar.
Treatise On The Soul - Treat. Soul
Chapter Three: Luther--

"Christ By Contrast And Antithesis"
One does not begin a book on Martin Luther, much less a chapter, without calling to mind a now familiar fact, namely, that with the renaissance of Reformation studies in the twentieth-century, this subject has attained immense proportions. Indeed one author has concluded that more has been written about Martin Luther than about any man in history with the exception of Jesus Christ.¹

Yet not everything that appears in print, even fresh print, is faithful to Luther's theological position. More accurately, not everything written in recent years reflects the passion of what Luther called theology. For Luther there was a quality in the true theologian which stemmed from the deepest existential experiences: life, death, and damnation; as opposed to the more cerebral mode: observation, reflection, and speculation.² Such knowledge cannot be imparted from books as much as from life itself.

Thus the rationale for this chapter is in keeping with our general theme. We are here seeking to understand Luther's position in regards to the paradoxical nature of the Christian revelation. In the previous chapters we


have noted especially two aspects of the Christological paradox: the moral aspect ("lowliness"), and the intellectual aspect ("loftiness"). Both of these emphases find points of similarity in Luther's theology, as we shall see. Since Kierkegaard affirms dependence upon Luther, this chapter (like the chapter on Tertullian) will draw attention to these similarities, keeping Kierkegaard's claim of historical continuity in mind.

The following, therefore, is divided into five sections. The first three sections correspond to the basic theological issues dealt with in previous chapters. We will discuss them here under the following headings: "Luther's Knowledge of God", "The Theology of The Cross", and "Reason and The Holy Spirit". With this completed, we will continue on to note how the basic tenets of Luther's theology are applied in the last two sections: "The Gospel: A Living Word", and as a case in point "The Hidden God and The Church". While several major points of comparison with Kierkegaard will be reserved for the "Summation", other comparisons will be made throughout the chapter as it would appear appropriate.

In this chapter, we are not seeking to develop Luther's entire doctrine of Christ,¹ as this is too broad for our purposes. Rather let us begin by underlining the fact that Luther found no complaint with the traditional Christological and Trinitarian formulations of the Church.

¹A significant recent work on this subject is: Ian D. K. Siggins, Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970).
Both Luther and his followers regarded these traditional creeds as being beyond dispute. Indeed they valued them highly as proof of their unity with the ancient Church.\(^1\) Nor, for that matter, did Rome accuse Luther of heresy in regards to these issues. Luther was convinced that in this area, at least, he held traditional doctrine.\(^2\)

Yet this does not mean that Luther's understanding of Christ was the same as it was for its opponents. Artists of the time often depicted Christ, "seated on a rainbow with a sword and twig proceeding out of his mouth...",\(^3\) a description based on Isaiah 11. However Luther's conception was not so glorious. Luther's Christ was always the Christ of the cross, "born in the squalor of a cow stall and dying as a malefactor under the desertion and the derision of men, crying unto God and receiving for answer only the trembling of the earth and the blinding of the sun, even by God forsaken, and in that hour taking to himself and annihilating our iniquity, trampling down the hosts of hell and disclosing within the wrath of the All Terrible the love that will not let us go."\(^4\) This despised Christ was the driving force in all of Luther's theology.

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However let us commence with the question of how God was known to Luther. While this may appear to have little to do with the Christological question at hand, it should be kept in mind that for Luther God only makes Himself known in His fullest sense in Christ. Such knowledge is imparted through historical revelation, not through philosophical speculation. Again we may observe certain similarities in Luther's approach to that of Tertullian and Kierkegaard.

**Luther's Knowledge of God**

Luther distinguished the knowledge of God by two categories in his commentary on Galatians: general and particular. General knowledge represents the kind of knowledge which all men possess. As St. Paul states in Romans 1:20, God's invisible nature has been clearly perceived by all men through the created order. Thus every man is aware that God exists, that He is the Creator God, and that He will one day judge mankind. Adam's fall has not destroyed such knowledge, but only weakened it.

Particular knowledge of God, however, can only be known through Jesus Christ. It has been explained by the difference in knowing someone "by sight", and knowing them "personally". In knowing someone "by sight", we may have a certain knowledge of that person; however it is not until the person acts or speaks to us "personally" that we really come to know him. This personal action may or

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may not correspond with the image that we have held of the person in the past. Indeed because of the person's action we may have to confess: "It has been a revelation to me!"¹

While the image we may have of God prior to Christ may not be necessarily false, since it has been implanted by God, sometimes false impressions of God do creep in. Thus one's worship may be nothing but mere idolatry.² But even if such false impressions do not exist, natural knowledge is still lacking, for Luther, because such knowledge does not save man. Man is in need of the knowledge that God is merciful and pardoning. This knowledge is only granted to man through the particular revelation of Jesus Christ.³ With this in mind, Philip Watson concludes that from a certain perspective, "the whole essence of Luther's reforming work lies in his rediscovery of the incarnation."⁴

Opposed to Luther's incarnational approach was the approach used by Scholastic Theology. As Luther states in The Heidelberg Disputation (thesis 19): "He is not worthy calling a theologian who seeks to interpret 'the invisible things of God' on the basis of the things which have been created."⁵ While God's presence in the world was

¹Watson, p. 279. ²Ibid.
⁴Watson, p. 281.
everywhere both hidden and revealed, Luther objected to the method which sought by rational inference to proceed from the existence of the world to demonstrate the existence of God.¹

This thesis rejected the entire Scholastic scheme of thinking which sought not only to give a detailed understanding of the nature of the physical world, but also of the relationship between God and man. Luther considered this approach to be "sophistry" and its exponents "sophists". Scholasticism raised questions which Luther thought to be unnecessary, and gave answers which were unwanted. More importantly, it was an elaborate edifice built upon an idolatrous foundation: the god of the philosopher and infidel, and certainly not the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the last analysis, Luther thought that Scholasticism was attempting to change Christianity into something that it was not; Christology was giving way to anthropology.²

For Luther there was no other God except Christ.³ Christ's divinity was assuredly true. In Christ the whole of God was revealed; God did not hold Himself back from man.

Thus Luther considered the approach of Scholasticism

¹Watson, p. 281.


with its inferential method, trying to find God through "reason" and "speculation", to be wrong in principle. This attempt to "comprehend God in his majesty" Luther described as the "theology of glory". He opposed this knowledge of God with his own "theology of the cross". Luther's approach, it should be noted, corresponds to Kierkegaard's method which rejected "speculation" in favor of "paradoxical religiousness".

Above all, Luther was a Biblical theologian. Luther was essentially neither a philosopher nor a technical scholar. Much of his work was written with a specific situation in mind. Luther sought to exegete Biblical texts rather than to construct a system.1

The "theology of the cross", therefore, begins with St. Paul's paradox as found in 1 Corinthians 1.17ff.:

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.
For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (R.S.V.)

The cross is here regarded as a scandal and foolishness by those outside the faith; the power and wisdom of God is hidden to the world. Thus God is not the God of immediacy, nakedness, and majesty as the "theology of glory" would have it. God is not known in this context through the visible to the invisible, a metaphysical creation whose

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attributes are omnipresent and omnipotent, the highest good, or as Gerhard Ebeling recounts, "the highest object of eros." Ebeling continues:

The invisibility of the glorious God, which belongs to the purely spiritual sphere, is therefore, not to be confused with the concealment of God shamefully crucified, who came forth in visible form, into the flesh, into history and into suffering. For the invisibility of the Deus gloriosus as perceived by reason is a glorification of the world. To know him in this way is a pretension and deceiving wisdom, and the affirmation of man's endeavor to realize himself in his works in a way analogous to the divine principle of creation.¹

The Deus crucifixus and absconditus does not establish a harmony between God and the world, as if they were to be found on the same plane. Rather the crucified God suggests that the God of the cross is a God of contradiction.²

Thus the "invisible" and "hinder parts" of God are set over against those visible parts. These invisible parts refer to God's humanity, His weakness and foolishness, as He is found on the cross. God has done this, to Luther's way of thinking, because men have made wrong use of their intellectual abilities, seeking to know God through the creation. Thus God determined to be known through His sufferings. This is what St. Paul states in I Cor. 1.21, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through

²Ibid., p. 228.
the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." It is no longer sufficient for man to know God through His glory and majesty; rather man should know God through humility and suffering. In this way God destroys the wisdom of the wise and brings to submission the understanding of the prudent.¹

Luther draws an example from John 14 to support this preference:

...When Philip asks in the spirit of the theology of glory, 'Show me the Father,' Christ immediately pulled him up sharp. He took him with his high-flying ideas of seeking somewhere else and led Philip right back to himself saying, 'Philip, whosoever sees me sees my Father as well.' Therefore in Christ crucified is the true theology and the knowledge of God.²

This knowledge of God is not just another doctrine which supplements a general knowledge of God. Rather it is the beginning of all true personal knowledge of man's relationship to God. The opposite of speculation, it points to a God who has come to us in history. He imparts Himself to us through His Word and thereby is revealed.

Thus Luther begins with Christ's humanity and moves to His divinity. Man cannot climb up to a knowledge of God on his own. All true knowledge of God is taught in the incarnation and ends at the cross. Like Tertullian, Luther thought it godless arrogance to seek God in some


²Ibid. It should be noted, however, that God is not so absconditus in the flesh as to exclude Christ saying this to Philip.
other way than the way in which He Himself wished to be found. Or as Luther states in the exegesis of Hebrews 1:2:

Now the Apostle's procedure must be carefully noted. First he declares the humanity of Christ and then proceeds to his divinity. As a consequence he establishes that principle by which true knowledge of God may be found. For the humanity of Christ is that holy ladder set for us. It is on the rungs of this ladder we rise to a knowledge of God. Cf. Gen. 28:12. See also John 14:6: 'No man cometh to the Father but by me.' And again 'I am the door' (John 10:7). Therefore, whoever wishes to rise to a true love of God and knowledge of God let him put away all the human and metaphysical rules on how to attain to the knowledge of God, and as his first task let him seek to understand the humanity of Christ. After all, when God himself humbled himself to make himself known to us, it is the most impious rashness for man, by the exercise of his own wisdom, to plan for himself some other way of salvation.1

Luther affirms that all proper knowledge of God is dependent upon God's own self-disclosure. This revelation is an active, positive, and continuous self-communication. It is God's nature to speak and to make Himself known. Should He not reveal Himself, mankind would remain in ignorance. Revelation depends on God's gracious act in Christ.2

Yet even in revelation, the theologia crucis reminds us that God is hidden. He remains shrouded under His contrary. The revelation is one of contradiction and paradox, so that the appropriate response may be created in the individual. This response is faith.3

1Ibid., pp. 31-32.
3Ebeling, p. 238.
Luther makes this clear as he writes concerning Romans 3.11:

No one understands, because the wisdom of God is hidden, unknown to the world. For 'The Word became flesh' (John 1.14), and Wisdom was made incarnate and thus hidden and unapproachable except by understanding, just as Christ cannot be known except by revelation. Therefore those who are wise only in regard to visible things and in the realm of visible things (such as all men are outside of faith who do not know God and the life to come), do not understand, are not wise, that is, they are not intelligent or truly wise but stupid and blind; and although they may seem to be wise in their own eyes, yet they have become fools. For they are wise only with a wisdom which can be found by human means but not in hidden things. 

As stated above, for Luther there is no other God than Christ. However this should not be understood as some kind of Monarchianism or Christocentrism. Christ is the essence of the Father, revealed in the world. Luther, in making such a statement, is speaking soteriologically. While God may be known to a limited extent through reason or the Law, now a new relationship has literally been born. God seeks to be known in a new way, not only as Creator and Law-giver. From now on, God wishes to be known through faith in Christ.

Luther expresses this shift in emphasis as a shift from "left" to "right-handed" knowledge of God. Left-handed knowledge has been partial, inadequate, and ultimately of no use. It has been knowledge with God's

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2Siggins, pp. 79-80.
back turned. But now God's face has been revealed. This is right-handed knowledge, the knowledge of God as grace and truth. God's very self, His Person has been made known, apart from this there is no God. Jesus Christ is truly God's revelation as He is for us.

The Theology of The Cross

Closely related to Luther's understanding of the knowledge of God was his "tower experience". This experience, which reportedly occurred at the Black Cloister at Wittenberg, was of the greatest theological significance. Some scholars have tried to date this event precisely, but apparently without success. Others think that the event has been highly exaggerated. However the content of Luther's experience is more assured, in spite of the actual details surrounding such an occasion.

According to Roland Bainton, the revelation took place while Luther was reviewing Romans 1.17 in relationship to his lectures on the Psalms. Here Luther discovered the evangelical Reformation insight into Christ's Person and Work. The twenty-second psalm was particularly difficult for Luther. While the reference to Christ was unmistakable, as it referred to the verse spoken by Christ on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Luther struggled with its meaning. Evidently Christ

1 Ibid., p. 80.
3 We must keep in mind Luther's method, and the method of his time, of dealing with the Old Testament as a Christian book prefiguring the incarnation of the Word.
experienced the utter desolation (Anfechtungen) that Luther had experienced. Christ was rejected by men and by God; yet how much worse this must have been for Him than for us. In a word, the sufferings of this Christ were equivalent to those of the "Man of Sorrows" depicted by Albrecht Dürer.¹

This image ran contrary to Luther's understanding of Christ, who appeared mighty, Holy, and aloof from the sins of the world. The solution of this contradiction could only be found in the fact that Christ took upon Himself the sins of mankind. Bainton writes: "He who was without sin for our sakes became sin and so identified himself with us as to participate in our alienation."² Christ was truly God and man, and thus the Mediator between God and man. This was a new image of Christ. No longer was He sitting upon the rainbow as the righteous judge. He remained a judge, but now in a different sense:

He must judge, as Truth judges error and light darkness; but in judging he suffers with those whom he must condemn and feels with them subject to condemnation. The judge upon the rainbow has become the derelict upon the cross.³

God had acted in a new way towards mankind. No longer was Christ to be understood as a later and more perfect Moses. The "All Terrible" God had become the "All Merciful". Christ had become, in the words of the Romans passage, "the righteousness of God revealed from faith for

¹Bainton, p. 47. ²Ibid. ³Ibid.
faith". The price man deserved to pay had been paid for man through this atoning death. Law had been supplanted by Gospel.

This overturned the medieval Catholic understanding of the terms and conditions of salvation. No longer were works the key to enter the Kingdom, but rather faith in the derelict Christ. Thus God's judgment became a hammer which broke down man's reliance upon himself and his good works, and instead drove him to surrender in faith to the forgiveness and grace revealed in Christ and his cross. Luther's heart had been changed. The God of judgment, whom he hated, became the God of love. This activity could only be explained by the working of the Holy Spirit, a now living reality in Luther's life. Luther states:

...I soon came to the conclusion that if we, as righteous men, ought to live from faith and if the righteousness of God should contribute to the salvation of all who believe, then salvation won't be our merit but God's mercy. My spirit was thereby cheered. For it's by the righteousness of God that we're justified and saved through Christ. These words (which had terrified me) now became more pleasing to me. The Holy Spirit unveiled the Scriptures for me in this tower.¹

However Luther's tower experience should not be confused, as is sometimes the case, with either a mystical experience, or with something more bizarre.² Regardless of

¹Luther, Table Talk, p. 193.

²e.g., Erik Erikson writes in Young Man Luther, p. 205: "Those who object to these possibly impure circumstances of Martin's spiritual revelation forget St. Paul's epileptic attack, a physical paroxysm often accompanied by a loss of sphincter control, and deny the total involvement of body and soul which makes an emotional and spiritual experience
the many speculations about Luther's experience, it should be kept in mind that the experience was primarily cognitive. Luther was not caught up into an "imagined" world by an "elicited act". Rather Luther's experience was centered in the concreteness of the cross and the real world.

It was this *theologia crucis* which was to Luther's mind the correct scriptural theology upon which the Church of Christ is based. Only as the Church proclaimed this theology, could it be said to be preaching the gospel. The difference between these two theologies was irreconcilable, just as false theology was from true theology.¹

Therefore to the Jews, Turks, Papists, Zwingli and the Enthusiasts (Schwärmere) as well, who taught that the manhood of Christ should be abandoned in favor of His divinity, Luther asserted that it was exactly the lowliness of Christ that was the power of God. If reason is offended at Christ's claims when He appears poor, weak, and despised --an ordinary man, faith clings to Christ in spite of appearances. In fact the weak and beggarly things that man despises provide a necessary habitation for faith. Or as Luther states:

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For what is good for us is hidden, and that so deeply that it is hidden under its opposite. Thus our life is hidden under death, love for salvation under damnation, our kinship under exile, heaven under hell, wisdom under foolishness, righteousness under sin, power under weakness. And universally our every assertion of anything good is hidden under the denial of it, so that faith may have its place in God, who is a negative essence and goodness and wisdom and righteousness who cannot be possessed or touched except by the negation of all our affirmatives. 1

Thus the theologian of the cross is one who speaks of God as crucified and hidden. As Luther writes in the Heidelberg Disputation (thesis 20): "...he is worth calling a theologian who understands the visible and hinder parts of God to mean the passion and the cross." 2 This theologian recognizes God in the midst of sufferings, whether they be in Christ or in himself:

This is the real strength, to trust in God when to all our senses and reason He appears to be angry; and to have greater confidence in Him than we feel. Here He is hidden, as the bride says in the Song of Songs: 'Behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows'; that is, He stands hidden among the sufferings, which would separate us from Him like a wall, yea, like a wall of stone, and yet He looks upon me and does not leave me, for He is standing and is ready graciously to help, and through the window of dim faith He permits Himself to be seen. 3

1Luther, Romans, pp. 382-383.


To a certain extent the "natural man" would admit that God is hidden in creation. But Luther points out that in Christ, God is more deeply hidden. For the natural man more readily connects divinity with power and justice than he does with the humility and suffering of the cross. Christ's divinity is at no time apparent to sight, but only to faith, and even then it remains a mystery.¹

While Luther's emphasis on God's hiddenness in Christ and upon the power of His humanity may be seen as neglecting His divinity, Luther never departed from the assertion that Christ was both God and man in one Person. The incarnation, while bringing the revelation, is necessarily a "veil" of the revelation. God is absconditus in the humanity. Thus there is a sense in which it can be said that God was crucified and died, and that the man Christ created the world. This communication of the attributes was known by the doctrine of communicatio idiomatum. Whatever was to be said of Christ's humanity must also be said of his divinity and vice versa. Luther reflected the thought of Colossians 2:9: "...in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily." The finite was shown as being capable of bearing the infinite (finitum capax infiniti). This, however, should not be understood as a metaphysical explanation of how Christ could be both God and man, as much as it is an affirmation that Christ was both God and man.²

¹Watson, p. 103. ²Watson, p. 126.
regard. Luther states:

True theology is practical, and its foundation is Christ, whose death is appropriated to us through faith. However, today all those who do not agree with us and do not share our thinking make theology speculative because they cannot free themselves from the notion that those who do good (will be rewarded).

Again Luther's dislike of speculation and metaphysics shows through. Somehow Greek thought could not do justice to the reality at hand. Luther's Christology reflects the Christ found in the New Testament. His concern was for description as opposed to resolution.

Luther's main concern in affirming the traditional Chalcedonian formulation of Christ's Person suggests not only a wish to be true to the proclamation of the gospels, but to the soteriological emphasis inherent in them. Christ must be both God and man if He is to fulfill his "proper" Work of being Mediator and Saviour. Both are necessary if He is to effect man's salvation, and therefore be truly God for us. Christ could not redeem what he did not share.

"The center about which all the petals clustered," writes Roland Bainton, "was the affirmation of the forgiveness of sins through the utterly unmerited grace of God made possible by the Cross of Christ, which reconciled wrath with mercy, routed the hosts of hell, triumphed over sin and death, and by the resurrection manifested that

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1Luther, Table Talk, p. 22.
power which enables man to die to sin and rise to newness of life.¹ This, Bainton goes on to observe, was the theology of St. Paul, "heightened, intensified, and clarified." Luther was never to go beyond these major tenets.²

But if this represents the Saviour's "proper" Work, there is necessarily an "alien" Work involved in man's salvation. That is to say, in order to save man, certain things inherent in man need to be destroyed. Chief among these is the notion, on the part of man, that he is able to save himself through his own ability and intellect. Here the cross makes short work of the natural man's idea of righteousness. Christ's righteousness is different from man's which is really a kind of disguised self-love.³ For as Luther observed, the greater one's religious practice, the less one was concerned with God, and the more one was concerned with one's own self: my sins, my confession, my penance, my salvation. In Luther's words: "When I was a monk I depended on...willing and exertion, but the longer (I worked at it) the farther away I got."⁻

It is in the cross of Christ that man finds himself coram deo a sinner, unrighteous in everything he does. And it is here, as well, that the full grace of God is revealed. This is not revealed to sight, but to faith, that God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ. In the cross, God's righteousness opposes all

human ego-centricity, exposing it as sin, no matter how respectable it may appear, even through religious practice. Man's righteousness and apparent goodness is thus torn down and is shown to be in truth, nothing but self-centeredness. Yet even in the act of judging man, God's forgiveness is active, though without man's help. In the words of Philip Watson:

There is nothing here that we can do to give God the glory due to His name, except acknowledge the glory that is revealed; and this we do only as we accept in faith both the judgment and the mercy and are reconciled to God. The only way to let God be truly God for us is to let Him have His way with us in Christ, to let Him, as Luther puts it, 'do His work'.

In order to "let God be God", to believe rightly, we must make no gods for ourselves, nor make gods of ourselves. On the contrary, we are suitable material for God who has no difficulty creating something out of nothing, as He has been doing this from the beginning of time. Such a theology of the cross is not dependent upon human wishes, but upon the Will of God. According to Luther, "Our theology is certain, for it places us outside ourselves."2

Luther's early writings expound these themes with freshness and vigor. Several passages from his works are especially worthy of our attention. But we should not forget that God's "proper" Work is never undertaken without God's "alien" Work being present as well. Likewise Christ's Person is meaningless, for Luther, without His

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1 Watson, pp. 61-62.
2 Quoted in Ebeling, p. 260.
Work being present, and vice versa.

As early as April 8, 1516, Luther wrote in a letter to Georg Spenlein: "Learn Christ, dear Brother, learn Christ crucified; learn to sing unto Him and, despairing of self, to say, 'Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, I, however, am Thy sin. Thou hast taken unto Thyself what was mine, and hast given me what is thine.'"

Here Luther develops the Pauline concept of the "righteousness of God" which became a theme of major importance in his lectures on Romans of the following year. Let us look at the way in which Luther exeges Romans 1.17, the verse so often associated with his "tower experience". But verse 17 cannot be dealt with apart from verse 16, since verse 17 completes the thought begun in the previous verse. They read as follows in the Revised Standard Version:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (vs. 16). For in it (i.e. the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live' (vs. 17).

Now for Luther, the gospel is nothing else than, "the Word concerning the Son of God, who became flesh, suffered, and was glorified." This Word has the power of salvation for those who believe, as it was given "through God and from God." Thus, for Luther, the person who possesses the gospel is powerful and wise "before" and "from" God, even

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1Quoted in Works of Martin Luther, Vol. 1, p. 175.
2Luther, Romans, p. 143.
though he may be considered "foolish and weak" in men's eyes.\footnote{ibid., p. 8.} Luther sees that the gospel itself, as it is preached, has a paradoxical quality about it in the sense of 1 Corinthians 1.23-24: "But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called...the power of God and the wisdom of God." He specifically associates this verse from Corinthians with the meaning of the gospel as it is found in Romans 1.16.\footnote{ibid.}

To Luther's understanding, the gospel is more available to the weak and to the powerless. Likewise it is especially available to those who share the humility of the weak and powerless because such people are more responsive to the manner in which God works in the world. Or as Luther writes:

Riches, weapons, gold, silver, kingdoms, and other things of this kind are the power of men, by which they manage to do what they do and without which they cannot do anything. But all this, as I said, must completely come to nought, at least as far as the desire of it is concerned. Otherwise the power of God will not be in us. For the rich and the powerful do not receive the Gospel. Therefore they do not receive the power of God, for it is written: 'To the poor the Gospel is preached' (Luke 7.22)\footnote{ibid., p. 150.}

Thus many people are "ashamed" of the Gospel, and they even contradict it, Luther goes on. The reason for this is that many simply enjoy what this world offers to such an extent that this conflicts with the Spirit of God. They fight against it, and do not want to hear of it. Darkness
is preferable to light. Therefore when the Gospel is rejected, it is a manifestation of man's power, or the power of the world, or the flesh. Instead man's actions should correspond to the actions taken by God on behalf of man for man's salvation. Just as God let go of all His possessions in order to meet man on a common plane, man must do likewise:

Thus all power and wisdom and righteousness must be hidden and buried and not apparent, altogether according to the image and likeness of Christ, who emptied Himself so that He might completely hide His power, wisdom, and goodness. In the same way he who is powerful, wise, and attractive must have these things as if he did not have them.

This leads to verse 17. Here Luther argues that various kinds of man's righteousness are revealed, that is, how man, through his own works, tries to be righteous before others. But there is only one righteousness of God, and that is found in the Gospel exclusively. Man is justified before God by grace alone (sola gratia), through faith alone (sola fidei). Luther states:

For the righteousness of God is the cause of salvation. And here again, by the righteousness of God we must not understand the righteousness by which He is righteous in Himself but the righteousness by which we are made righteous by God. This happens through faith in the Gospel.

1 At first glance, this passage may appear to represent a wholly phenomenal paradox. It must be remembered, however, that this passage has nothing to do with Jesus' preaching, signs, and miracles. Rather the reference here deals with the "image" and "likeness" of Christ as He appears on the cross (I Cor. 1.17ff.; Phil. 2.5ff.), where the activity of God is in its most hidden form.

2 Luther, Romans, p. 151.

3 Ibid.
That is to say, we are made righteous, for Luther, not in seeking conformity to a righteous God, but rather through God's death on the cross. Justification is achieved through faith in the Gospel of the crucified Christ, who became sin for us. While such faith may appear foolish to the world, it is really God's wisdom and salvation. For Luther, soteriology rests necessarily upon a paradoxical foundation. It is only God's "alien" work that allows room for faith, and therefore implements His "proper" work.

Here we have in Luther the "moral" aspect of paradox ("lowliness") that has been described in previous chapters. This represents, in a broadly enlarged sense, the paradox described by Tertullian in his treatise Against Marcion (V.5.): "For nothing ordained by God is really small and ignoble and contemptible, but (only) that (ordained) by man." Tertullian as well dislikes the presumptuousness by which man recognizes the good, and condemns what appears to be evil. However while Tertullian leaves it at this, Luther maps its greater implications, developing the moral aspect into his understanding of soteriology along the lines of St. Paul's thought.

This is an interesting point of comparison between the two men. While both are aware of the moral paradox, Tertullian and Luther represent proponents of two widely different soteriological schemes: Tertullian, the penitential system which led to gross abuses during the middle ages; and Luther, who sought to destroy this approach
through the preaching of justification by grace through faith in this moral paradox.

Luther elaborates this paradox further as he again speaks of the Jews and all who reject the crucified Christ in discussing Romans 3:7:

For there is an unending controversy...between God and proud men, especially the Jews, for God in His mercy desires the Jews and all men for the very reason that they are liars, unrighteous, foolish, weak, sinful men to be made truthful, righteous, wise, strong, innocent men through His truthfulness, righteousness, wisdom, strength, and innocence, and thus to be freed from sin, in order that His truthfulness, righteousness, wisdom, strength, and innocence may be glorified and commended in them and by them. Then those haughty people, being men who consider themselves truthful, righteous, wise, strong, and innocent, by their own powers and of themselves, refuse to speak against God and thus with all their might judge Him and make Him the liar, the unrighteous, foolish, and weak sinner. For they want to establish their own truthfulness, righteousness, wisdom, virtue, and innocence, and they refuse to be looked upon as liars, unrighteous, foolish, weak sinners. Therefore either God or they must be the liars, the unrighteous, and the weak, etc.  

God would gladly take upon Himself the sins of mankind, but this cannot happen unless the individual considers himself to be a sinner in need of forgiveness. Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many.

Luther continues by recounting the story of Persius about a doctor who wishes to heal his patient. But an odd thing happens to the doctor. The patient refuses to admit that he is sick. And, in fact, he calls the doctor a fool, and a man sicker than himself for seeking to cure a man so healthy. Thus the doctor cannot do his work, for he

could only do so if the man were to admit his illness.  

It is the same way, Luther affirms, with many ungodly and arrogant men. They suffer from the illusion that although they are sick before God, they are healthy to themselves. Thus they do not only reject God who comes into the world to heal them, but they even regard Him as a fool, sicker than themselves for presuming to treat such men of apparent good health as if they were sick.

But Luther reminds us, even though man has rejected God's activity through his sin, by resisting Him, speaking against Him, judging and condemning Him, all this has been done in vain, for God's words remain. Thus even if man considers himself to love nothing but "love, virtue and truth", he is saying in effect:

'Surely He is not wise, is He, when He thinks that we are foolish? Rather, He (that is God of His Word) is not truthful, righteous, and strong when He contends that we are liars, unrighteous men, and weaklings, whereas we really cling to truthfulness, righteousness, and strength! Actually He himself is such a person, because He does not know, as we do, where alone these good things are.'

This is the same presumptuousness recorded in the Scripture, Luther observes. Here the men of the time said of Christ, "We know that this man is a sinner," and "This man is not from God." It is as if men actually knew what

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1 ibid., pp. 202-203. Kierkegaard was also fond of this story as has been noted previously.

2 ibid., p. 203. 3 ibid.

4 John 4.29. 5 John 9.16.
the "good" was, as in the words of the Psalm, "Many there are who say, '0 that we might see some good!'"1 Thus the only thing that can be "good" for man is that which he presupposes to be "good"; anything running against this presupposition must be evil, even if that were to be God incarnate.

Thus Luther concludes, "God in His words cannot be wise, righteous, truthful, strong, or good, unless we believe Him and submit to Him by confessing that we are foolish, unrighteous, liars, weak, and evil."2 It is humility and faith that are especially needed. God must accomplish His "alien" work, so that His "proper" work can commence. Man cannot be filled with God's righteousness unless man is emptied of his own righteousness, which is really not righteousness at all. Thus a man filled with his own truth and wisdom, cannot be filled with God's truth and wisdom, for God can only fill a heart that is empty and destitute. Thus we should say to God:

O how willingly we are empty that Thou mayest dwell in us! How gladly weak that Thy power may dwell in me; gladly a sinner that Thou mayest be justified in me; gladly foolish that Thou mayest be my wisdom; gladly unrighteous that Thou mayest be my righteousness! 3

Thus Luther takes the paradoxical dimension of the cross into a long-forgotten direction. In the cross of Christ, man is confronted by a moral paradox. All man's possessions (i.e. righteousness, intellect, strength, etc.)

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1Ps. 4.6. 2Luther, Romans, p. 204. 3Ibid.
are of no value in God's sight. One is finally justified, for Luther, not in seeking to attain perfection through holy living; but one is justified through God's grace and righteousness, that is, through faith in the crucified Christ. This is the distinction between Law and Gospel. As Luther puts it: "The Law says: 'Do this,' but it is never done. Grace says: 'Believe in him,' and everything is already done."¹

The historical event of the cross suggests, for Luther, that Christ's work is "already done", that the forces of darkness have ended their reign, whether or not we may care to believe in it. Christ died for many and not for all because not everyone is willing to pay the price of accepting this gift. In his exposition of the Magnificat (1521), Luther underlines, in striking terms, the objective nature of Christ's Work:

He [i.e. God] lets the godly become powerless and to be brought low, until everyone supposes that their end is near, whereas in these very things He is present to them with all His power, yet so hidden and in secret that even those who suffer the oppression do not feel it but only believe. There is the fullness of God's power and outstretched arm. For where man's strength ends, God's strength begins, provided faith is present and waits on Him. And when the oppression comes to an end, it becomes manifest what great strength was hidden underneath the weakness. Even so, Christ was powerless on the cross; and yet there He performed His mightiest work and conquered sin, death, world, hell, devil and all evil.²

God's justification through the cross is also God's

¹Luther, Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XVI, p. 278.
judgment. For not only is the truth of God's activity more accessible to the humble than to the haughty, but such is the case because God has, in the words of Mary: "...put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away."¹ God's judgment has already begun.

Thus while the godly and the humbled may appear to be forsaken by God, in reality they are strong. However for the rest of mankind another kind of judgment is in store:

God lets the other half of mankind become great and mighty to exalt themselves. He withdraws his power from them and lets them puff themselves up in their own power alone. For where man's strength begins God's strength ends. When their bubble is fullblown, and everyone supposes them to have won and overcome, and they themselves feel smug in their achievement, then God pricks the bubble, and it is all over. The poor dupes do not know that even while they are puffing themselves up and growing strong they are forsaken by God, and God's arm is not with them. Therefore their prosperity has its day, disappears like a bubble, and is as if it had never been.²

This corresponds to what Luther has to say concerning the "wrath of God" of Romans 1.18. Here the apostle directs his attack against the strong and the powerful. If they can be humbled, how much more easily will their followers be humbled. But more than this is involved. For they have also been opposed to the Gospel, the Word of Christ, and His cross, and have enlisted others in their cause. Thus

¹Luke 1.52-53.
²Luther, Magnificat, pp. 340-341.
guilt and sin are laid upon these men as if they alone were guilty. God's wrath rests upon them.¹

The paradox of the cross runs contrary to all man's attempts to build himself up, whether that be by righteousness or by intellect. Luther concludes: "To no one does the preaching of the cross appear so foolish as to philosophers and men of power because it is completely contrary to them and their sensitivities."²

But if God opposes the proud, He gives grace to the humble.³ This, for Luther, is the source of man's love and praise of God. God can only be loved if He makes Himself known to man in "the most lovable and intimate fashion." This God reveals to us through His works, which are felt and experienced within ourselves:

But where there is this experience, namely, that He is God who looks into the depths and helps only the poor, despised, afflicted, miserable, forsaken, and those who are nothing, there a hearty love for Him is born. The heart overflows with gladness and goes leaping and dancing for the great pleasure it has found in God. There the Holy Spirit is present and has taught us in a moment such exceeding great knowledge and gladness through this experience.⁴

Before closing this discussion on Luther's "theology of the cross", some comment is in order regarding the place of "good works" in this theology. As has been noted above, the moral paradox of the cross tended to negate man's work in relationship to salvation. A brief comment of Luther's

¹Luther, Romans, p. 154. ²Ibid.
³1 Pet. 5.5. ⁴Luther, Magnificat, p. 300.
may be helpful in this respect:

He /i.e. God/ does not first accept our works, and then save us. The Word of God is prior to all else; faith follows it; then love succeeds faith, and gives rise to every good work.¹

Luther has been charged by Catholic writers with divorcing faith from works. For this very reason Luther attempted to clarify for others his understanding of ethics in the performance of Christian living. He gave both works and faith their proper place by maintaining that Christ must be the center of the Christian's life. True faith was directed only to Him; and true works sprang only from Him.²

Of course Luther maintained that man was justified before God "by faith alone" (sola fide) and not by works of Law. Sometimes, however, this phrase has become an article of faith itself, or a party slogan, and has led to much misunderstanding.³ Thus it is significant to note that the wording in the above quotation runs, "The Word of God is prior to all else; faith follows it..."

With Luther, salvation was wholly dependent upon God's grace, not upon man's faith, lest faith itself become a work. What he wished to repudiate by his insistence upon "faith alone" was the "works of righteousness" which led to so many of the great abuses of his time. "Faith alone" can never be separated from God's grace and mercy. Salvation resides in Christ's work alone, not man's.


²Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther's World of Thought (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), p. 90.

Gordon Rupp has an interesting way of explaining what was involved in Luther's discovery of faith as opposed to works. According to Rupp, man's fundamental need is to be "right with God." It is out of this relationship, which is bounded on the one side by God's grace and on the other by man's faith, that Christian obedience springs. He uses this example:

When two people are in love and sure of each other, they do not think in terms of quantity, that is, they do not reckon up the size of the gifts to one another, or how expensive they are, nor do the things they do together and the places they visit, depend on quantitative measure, the best seats in the best theatres, the more costly flowers, etc. It is when the relationship is unsure, when two young people are uncertain of one another, that they begin to think quantitatively, and the one may seek to please the other by bigger and better gifts.1

In the same way, Rupp concludes, Luther's discovery did away with this quantitative approach to man's relationship with God. Good works, no matter how great they may be, are finally no substitute for a right relationship.2 Luther discovered that what was required of man by God was his heart, no more, no less.

Luther was suspicious of works done by a man whose heart was not in his actions. The Heidelberg Disputation (1518) speaks to this question: "The works of man, though they always look splendid and have the appearance of being very good, are yet in all probability mortal sins."3

1Rupp, p. 231.
2ibid.
He refers to Christ's reference to the Pharisees: "Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto white-washed sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful to men but in fact are full of bones of the dead and every uncleanness."\(^1\) While their works seem to be good, both to themselves and to others, Luther comments, God does not judge by outward appearances: "He looks on the heart of man and to his very inmost being." And without grace and faith it is not possible to have a clean heart. This is what Peter refers to in Acts 15.9, where he refers to God purifying the hearts of the Gentiles through faith.\(^2\)

What Luther means by "faith" here is not faith of the abstract variety, but rather faith in the crucified Christ. Such faith is not to be understood in the medieval sense as "assent", but in the biblical sense, as faith in Christ, a work of grace. It is only the cross that has the power to instill faith of this latter kind. Prior to the cross, man devises his own wisdom and righteousness. But these are man's works and not God's. Rather it is in the cross that God brings a person to nought and changes his heart—the moral paradox.

However this does not mean, for Luther, that a man will automatically busy himself with doing good works:

The truth of the matter is that whoever has been brought to nought by sufferings does not thereby do good works. On the contrary he simply knows that God is working in him and

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\(^1\) Matt. 23.27.

effecting everything. Therefore whether he is doing good works or whether he is not doing good works is all the same to him: he neither boasts if he does a good work nor is ashamed when God is not working anything in him. Thus he knows that it is enough if he suffers and is broken through the cross, nay rather is utterly brought to nought. But this is exactly what Christ says in John 3.7: 'Ye must be born again.'

He argues this point here to affirm the nature of faith as opposed to works in one's relationship with God. In principle, one need not feel guilty about not doing good works because it is God's grace alone, through faith that justifies. But in practice, the good man wants to do, and does do good works, even if his salvation does not depend upon them: "The Word of God is prior to all else; faith follows it; then love succeeds faith, and gives rise to every good work." he does so because his heart is in what he is doing; good works are no longer work. James' comment, "faith without works is dead", holds true in this practical context.

In his Treatise On Good Works (1520), Luther finds an analogy for this dynamic of faith proceeding works:

Therefore, when some say that good works are forbidden when we preach faith alone, it is as if I said to a sick man: 'If you had health, you would have the use of all your limbs; but without health, the works of all your limbs are nothing'; and he wanted to infer that I had forbidden the works of all his limbs; whereas, on the contrary, I meant that he must first have health, which will work all the works of all the members. So faith must be in all works the master-workman and captain, or they are nothing at all.

\[^1\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 293.}\] \[^2\text{Jas. 2.17.}\] \[^3\text{Luther, Works of Martin Luther, Vol. I, p. 199.}\]
The healthy man does healthy works; the unhealthy man can do nothing in so far as God is concerned. Luther is anxious to maintain the location of man's salvation, not within himself, but within God. He does this at the cost of anything that man would call his own: righteousness, wisdom, and even his will to believe.

Thus the good man is free to love others because he has experienced such love and mercy in himself. Luther distinguishes between faith and works for the believer. Faith is to be directed towards God; good works towards one's neighbor. These two directions are not to be confused.

Of course there arises the question of the lawyer who one day asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Luther answers this by pointing out that Christ sets aside all considerations of person. Christ does not say that "you shall love the rich, the powerful, the learned, the wise, the upright, the righteous, the handsome, the pleasant, etc." But without qualification Christ says, "your neighbor":

By this very fact he is declaring that in the sight of men we are indeed all different in personal status and rank, but that in the sight of God, we are one lump of equal reputation. For to observe a distinction of persons annihilates this commandment completely, as do those who loathe the unlearned, the poor, the weak, the lowly, the foolish, the sinners, the troublesome. For they take into consideration, not the

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1 Bornkamm, p. 91. 2 Luke 10.29.
people themselves but their masks and appearances; and so they are deceived. 1

Here again the "theology of the cross", or what we have termed the "moral" aspect of the paradox shows through. They are deceived, just as they once were deceived by the appearance of Christ who embodied all these negative aspects of "lowness" on the cross. The reasoning is that if God so identifies Himself with the dregs of human society and there manifests His greatest love towards us, should we not return this love to Him by loving our neighbor? Or as St. Matthew's gospel has it: "... as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." 2 Thus the cross, while denying good works on the part of man as a means of attaining salvation, nonetheless encourages good works out of thankfulness for what Christ has done. 3

Of course Luther's "theology of the cross" would be nonsense if it was not really God who died on the cross. 4 This leads us to another aspect of the paradox besides the "moral" one. It is an ontological contradiction that the


2 Matt. 25.40.

3 There is a sense, for Luther, in which good works done by the good man make for a better man. The 44th of his Ninety-Five Theses reads in part: "... by works of love, love grows and a man becomes a better man..." Kierkegaard was to publish a book entitled Works of Love in 1847.

man Jesus is God. This "intellectual" aspect of the paradox, or what Kierkegaard later termed "loftiness", is also inherent in Luther's theology. Indeed the ontological aspect is essential, for Luther, if Christ's Work is to be sustained.

**Reason and The Holy Spirit**

It is apparent that Luther had a certain understanding of reason which was constantly reflected in his theology. Luther at one point calls reason "the devil's whore", and even had a name for her, "Hulda". Presumably Luther's cause for doing this was due to his conviction that reason would render her services to anyone who employed her. This is another way of saying that reason was merely man's instrument, to be done with as he pleased. Yet reason was not inherently corrupt, and thus was capable of reform.

The use of reason, for Luther, was determined by man's will. Reason was suspect insofar as it was in the grips of an unregenerate will. Luther gave no assent to the view that reason could somehow be an object independent from, and above, man's general condition as sinner.

Therefore in order for reason to be of value in recognizing God's revelation, it must be a humble and repentant reason. Or as Luther states regarding Romans 3.11:

> No one seeks for God. This statement pertains both

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to those who manifestly do not seek God as well as those who think they are seeking Him, because they do not seek Him in the way in which He wishes to be sought and discovered, namely, through faith, in humility and not through their own wisdom and presumption.¹

It has been observed that from one perspective all idolatry can be attributed to reason, since it is by reason that men devise and defend their own conceptions of God. Thus in decrying reason, Luther is not decrying reason per se, since it is the best of God's gifts to man, and indeed the gift by which man may be called, and is, a man.² Rather what Luther condemns is how men commonly use their reason to seek after God by their own methods, and not look for Him where He may be found, in the flesh, and on the cross.

According to B. A. Gerrish, if reason stumbles at the doctrine of the incarnation, it does not do so because it refuses to believe in God, but because it has certain preconceptions about who God is, and what God should do. In the final analysis, reason arrogantly sets itself up as judge of what is, and what is not God's Word. This amounts to creating a god after its own fancy. Reason falls short on two points for Gerrish: "...first, although it believes that God can aid, it does not believe that God will do so for it; second, though it knows that God is, it does not know who or what God is."³

¹Luther, Romans, p. 223. ²Watson, p. 86.
Reason in its pristine, unregenerate state is, for Luther, nothing but a disguised form of arrogance. Therefore God seeks to humble man through various means, sometimes through His hiddenness, sometimes through humiliating rites (such as circumcision), yet always through the cross—that is to say, the humanity of Christ. Thus Luther comments in his Lectures on Romans:

...'the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field' (Matt. 13:44). The field is dirty in contrast to the treasure; while the one is trodden under foot, the other is picked up. And yet the field hides the treasure. So also 'our life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. 3:3), that is, in the negation of all things which can be felt, held, and comprehended by our reason. So also our wisdom and righteousness are not at all apparent to us but hidden with Christ in God. But what does appear is that which is contrary to these things, namely, sin and foolishness, as the apostle says: 'If anyone among you thinks that he is wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise' (I Cor. 3:18), that is, let him become wise and rich in God, not in himself; let all his own wisdom disappear and nothing but foolishness remain.

However it should be noted that becoming intellectually humbled by the cross does not mean becoming irrational; Luther was only foolish in Christ, so to speak. Indeed Luther had a high opinion of regenerate reason. If reason was put to evil uses by the ungodly, in the hands of believers, enlightened by the gospel, it was an excellent instrument. Faith and reason were no longer antagonistic; instead reason promoted faith. It became the greatest aid

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1Ibid., p. 19. 2Luther, Romans, p. 383.
3Luther, Table Talk, p. 183.
in solving all earthly problems, including the task of understanding the truth of revelation in overcoming its own sinfulness.\(^1\) Luther, quoting Augustine at the Diet of Worms,\(^2\) enlisted reason in the support of his cause:

> Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by plain reason...I cannot and will not recant, for it is neither safe nor honest to violate one's conscience. I can do no other. Here I take my stand, God being my helper. Amen.\(^3\)

Bainton points out, however, that reason as he used it in this sense was really the reason of "logical deduction from known premises". When Luther railed against reason, Bainton goes on, it was under the rubric of "common sense", or, "the way in which man ordinarily behaves, feels, and thinks." Yet by either definition, God's actions are incomprehensible. For Bainton, the Christian problem is "far deeper than logic."\(^4\)

Indeed even enlightened reason cannot ultimately understand the "paradoxes" of the faith, Luther concludes. He makes this observation at the table in the spring of 1540:

> Who can understand anything about these things by means of reason? To be sure enlightened reason can to some extent understand the Ten Commandments and the religion of the Jews; but articles of faith, like the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ— these don't tally with reason. Let's say that the king of France and a stone are the same thing, or

\(^1\)Lohse, p. 353.


\(^4\)Bainton, p. 172-173.
this knife and I are identical—these statements don't tally with reason. It's the same with the statement God is man. We have to puzzle this out. I can reflect on it but can't understand it. Paul understood a good part of it, though he didn't comprehend all of it by any means. Yet he said with authority, 'In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2.3). For in Christ all things, every creature, the whole Godhead are known. Here are united the greatest fortitude and the greatest weakness, life and death, righteousness and sin, the grace and the wrath of God. Ah, this is high doctrine, but few care very much about it.¹

Many scholars disagree as to what extent Luther's paradoxes are really paradoxical. Some argue that Luther is essentially irrational and contradictory, others that his paradoxes are only apparently contradictory but not essentially so, and still others that there is no real contradiction to "enlightened reason".² However Luther, in the above passage, apparently negates even enlightened reason as a means of finally understanding the mysteries of the faith.

This is borne out by Luther's distaste of all attempts to try to make the absurd seem less so. This way of "attenuation", runs against Luther's basic understanding of the meaning of Christianity.³ It would seek to remove God's "No" and his "alien" work, and leave only God's "Yes" and "proper" work. These rationalisms, to Luther's

¹Luther, Table Talk, p. 378.
³Gerrish, p. 80.
mind, would ultimately replace faith with knowledge, and humility with pride. Thus it is necessary that faith should remain only "dim faith", if man is not to do away with the power of Christ altogether.

Perhaps it would help to keep in mind the doctrine of "double truth" attributed to Robert of Holcot, a disciple of Occam: "A proposition may be false in theology and true in philosophy, and vice versa." Bernhard Lohse reminds us of this in his own way:

...one has to take into account that theology is a different sphere from philosophy. In theology certain premises have to be made which are not valid in philosophy. E.g. the incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ is something which philosophy cannot understand and if it is faithful to its own presuppositions must refuse. But for any theological thinking the incarnation is, of course, of primary importance.

Luther, as a student of Occam, shares this conviction. This becomes most clear in a work which comes late in Luther's career: "The Disputation Concerning The Passage: 'The Word Was Made Flesh' (John 1,14)" (1539). In the first theses of this disputation, Luther makes it apparent that he is concerned not only with what we have termed the "moral" aspect of paradox, but with the "intellectual", or ontological, aspect as well. Such a paradox denies being known by human reason and must be, therefore, apprehended by faith. This corresponds to Kierkegaard's view. Luther writes:

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1 ibid., p. 52. 2 Lohse, p. 357.
1. Although the saying, 'Every truth is in agreement with every other truth,' is to be up-held, nevertheless, what is true in one field of learning is not always true in other fields of learning.

2. In theology it is true that the Word was made flesh; in philosophy the statement is simply impossible and absurd.

3. The declaration, 'God is man,' is not less but even more contradictory than if you would say, 'Man is an ass.'

4. The Sorbonne, the mother of errors, has very incorrectly defined that truth is the same in philosophy and theology.

5. And has impiously condemned those who have argued to the contrary.

6. For by making this abominable statement, it was taught that articles of faith are subject to the judgment of human reason.

While Luther is not willing to admit that the matter at hand runs contrary to logic, he finds human logic incapable of dealing with the problem. The matter is not on the same plane with logic: "21. So it is not indeed something contrary to, but is outside, within, above, below, before, and beyond all logical truth." Thus the statement, "The Word was made flesh" (paradox) may only be understood by faith, only then will we "know" what this means. This is the difference between philosophy and theology for Luther: "Philosophy deals with matters that are understood by human reason. Theology deals with matters of belief, that is, matters which are apprehended by faith."

It was this issue, as well, which was a major factor

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2 ibid., p. 241. 3 ibid., p. 242. 4 ibid., p. 262.
in separating the Lutheran and the Reformed positions on the Sacrament. Luther felt that if the words, "this is my body", spoken by Christ at the Last Supper, could be understood as meaning, "this represents my body", then reason would sit in judgment on God's Word, and there would be nothing to prevent denying also that, "the Word became flesh" (Jn. 1. 14), since basically the same issue was at stake.¹

Thus Luther argues in the tract, "That These Words Of Christ 'This Is My Body,' etc., Still Stand Firm Against The Fanatics" (1527), that Zwingli and like minds cannot "prove" that Christ's words mean representation regarding the Sacrament. Nor, for that matter, can they "prove" representation regarding Christ's words concerning Himself. These words, likewise, demonstrate the ontological contradiction:

There is no proof of representation, either, in all the other passages which they quote. For example, where Christ says, 'I am the true vine' (John 15.1), he speaks of the true spiritual vine, which he also was, not which represents him. How should it read: 'I represent the true vine,' or, 'I am represented by the true vine'? Who then is the true vine, apart from any representation? Again, 'I am the shepherd' (John 10.11), 'I am the door' (John 10.7). 'I am the resurrection and the life' (John 11.25), and all the others. All these sayings are expressed and understood in terms of being, not of representing. They will never convincingly show a representation there; it is sheer imagination and self-conceit on their part.²

Such an ontological contradiction, it should be noted,

was not limited to Christ's speech. Luther states at a later point in the same discussion the contradiction regarding Christ's actions:

To be sure, when he walked on earth, he availed to the extent that whomever he touched with his flesh, he helped. Through his body, with his physical voice, he called Lazarus from the grave (John 11:43). He touched the leper and made him clean (Matt. 8:3). He walked upon the sea, and stretched forth his hand to the sinking Peter and drew him to the land (Matt. 14:31), and all his acts were miracles and good deeds.\(^1\)

In a different context, but with the same issues in mind, Luther states in a succinct manner the nature and direction of his argument:

Hence, to sum it all up, what those people keep saying—that because it is not in accord with reason it is not true—we shall simply turn about and say the opposite: God's Word is true, therefore your notions must be false. Is it necessarily unreasonable, just because it seems unreasonable to you and you think that the Word must be wrong and your ideas valid?\(^2\)

To sustain this kind of interpretation in his theology, Luther states, as he does in various places, that, "In Scripture we should let the words retain their natural force, just as they read, and give no other interpretation unless a clear article of faith compels otherwise."\(^3\) When Scripture is read in this manner, we are faced not only with moral, but ontological paradoxes.

\(^{1}\)ibid., p. 133.


The significance of this point should not be overlooked. For it is in this issue that twentieth-century theology so often errs, by taking Luther's "theology of the cross", or what we have termed the "moral" aspect of the paradox, as being primarily a paradox of appearance or phenomenon. Luther at no point in his writings denies any teaching or action attributed to Christ as having happened. Indeed it is through Christ's teachings and miracles that Christ is recognized. Had Christ not said, "whoever sees me sees my Father as well", Philip would still be seeking God through speculation or some other means. Luther views the Scriptures as not only proclaiming Christ, but also as recording the history of His life, and therefore as recording the ontological contradiction inherent in that life as demonstrated by words and actions.

As we have seen above, the question of God's hiddenness was a major theme in Luther's work on Romans (1517) where he especially opposed the "theology of glory". However while Luther maintained God's hiddenness in the flesh of Christ, such hiddenness never included Christ's activity. It is, for Luther, a sign of heresy to "divide Christ" by accepting on the one hand that He "was born, suffered, died, etc.", while denying that which pertains to Christ. Rather Luther maintains that, "Christ and the things which pertain to Him are one and the same thing."

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3Luther, Romans, p. 238.
The ontological paradox is not denied in Romans.

Of Luther's many writings now translated into English, this paradox may be seen most clearly in Luther's exegesis of John. We may use John 6.35 as an example. Here Christ says, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." Of this passage, Luther states:

Well, that makes no sense at all. Very likely the Jews first gaped and stared, envisioning all their grainaries filled with corn and barley, all their cellars with wine and beer, and their purses with money. But now, when Christ continues: 'I am the bread of life,' they think: 'Oh, my, what a fool He is! Surely He is possessed! Just hear Him prate such foolishness as He points us to Himself and claims the ability to provide sufficient nourishment, food and drink, to sustain life forever. Who ever heard such a thing?' And now they ask: 'How about it, dear brother? You would have us believe that you can hold dominion over the whole world, since you claim that you can feed all mankind. Oh, surely this is an abominable lie!' They think. I suppose that the Lord was wearing some drab garment at the time and did not have as much as a morsel of bread to eat, since He was a poor man. He Himself speaks of His poverty in Matt. 8.20: 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' But in spite of this He can answer: 'I am the bread,' declaring that He would teach, satisfy, feed, and preserve the entire world, prevent its death by starvation, and give it life. Though He Himself does not have a crust of bread to eat, He offers to become a physician and helper to others. To the Jews and their thought He could not have given a reply that would have shocked them more. This is as though I, a poor preacher and beggar, were to address the emperor: 'By way of helping you defeat the Turks and the Tartars I shall donate as much money as this church can hold,' and he were to rely on my promise. Where would I get the money if I owned no more than this coat and did not have a single heller in my purse? How do you suppose I would fare? Would the emperor not laugh at me? Would he not say: 'Take that good man into custody. He is a fool. Somehow he lost his mind.'

1 Martin Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 23, Sermons On
Here we have the kind of ontological paradox that Kierkegaard deals with at length.\(^1\) On the one hand is the lowly man who is obviously not bread, and on the other his declaration: "I am the bread of life." When Christ says this, "no one is able to grasp His meaning, and all regard Him as a fool."\(^2\)

Luther exegetes John 6.41,42 in a similar fashion. Here Jesus is in a controversy with the Jews: "The Jews murmured at Him, because He said: I am the bread which came down from Heaven. They said: Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say: I have come down from heaven?"

Luther observes that the Jews must have found such a message "ridiculous, offensive, and foolish". It was a contradiction to maintain that He had come down from heaven when His family lived right there in Capernaum. He continues:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{They } & \text{ hear Christ proclaim and say that He is the bread from heaven, and they immediately think of Mary and Joseph's house and say: 'Mary is His mother; Joseph is His father, etc. Why, do we not know His family, His house, His street, the stones, and the wood? How can we harmonize this? How can He come from heaven? His house is not in heaven, for His house and His parents are here on earth in Capernaum. Therefore this is a mistake; in fact, it is unparalleled folly.' They regard it as a lie. Our Sacramentarians } & \text{ these dunces, do the same thing. They declare Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, that He is enthroned in heaven at the Father's right hand, and that for this reason He cannot be present in the Lord's Supper. To be sure, we are well aware that bread and wine are on the altar; for we certainly see and recognize bread and wine. But at the same time we say} \\
\end{align*}\]


\(^1\) See Appendix B. \(^2\) Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 23, p. 45.
that Christ, who is seated at the right hand of His Father, is also present in the Lord's Supper. But how does this make sense? Yes, if our God were to present us with sensible doctrines--doctrines which our reason could comprehend--none of us would be saved; we would all be lost. For reason is not worth a thing for the purpose of salvation...

While this may sound wholly irrational, such is not the case, given Luther's perspective. For it must be remembered who it is that speaks in such a manner:

This has been recorded for our warning, so that he who would deal with the doctrines of the Christian faith might not pry, speculate, and ask how it may agree with reason, but, instead, merely determine whether Christ said it. If Christ did say it, then he should cling to it, whether it harmonizes with reason or not, and no matter how it may sound. For I will admit that Christ is wiser than my reason is or I am. Give honor to Him who is speaking here, and let Him be wiser than you.

Luther goes on to observe that similar occasions often occur in secular affairs when a householder or a prince commands those beneath him to do things which are not understood from this lower perspective. Still the person under command is obliged to follow his master's order, and, in so doing, makes the reason captive.

To sum up then, Luther maintains throughout his writings an ontological paradox, not merely a paradox of appearance. The paradoxes of "the Word became flesh", "This is my body", and Christ's words quoted above bear this out. While the lowliness of Christ's appearance does

1 ibid., p. 80. 2 ibid. 3 ibid., pp. 80-81.
play a part, such hiddenness is never so pervasive as to include Christ's own words and actions. Luther states:

Thus the Lord declared above: 'He who believes in Me has eternal life' and: 'I am the bread of life.' These words greatly offended the Jews. It annoyed them to think that this Man should have the power to save, to bestow eternal life, and also to deliver us from death, sin, and all evil. After all, He did not give that appearance. He was a poor man, the son of a poor carpenter and of a poor mother, devoid of all power. Therefore it sounded unreasonable to hear Him say: 'He who believes in Me will have eternal life.' But I have told you that whoever would remain a Christian and be saved must not follow his eyes or judge by appearances, confer with reason, or employ his other senses in this matter; he must hear solely what is preached to him and must turn his ears to the lips of this Man. Whoever fails to do this, but surrenders and forsakes God's Word, is lost.

Or again:

To be sure, it is annoying to hear Christ say: 'I am the bread of life,' while He appears to be only a poor, despised, and weak man, a man who walked the earth like any other human being. Dear Lord Christ, Thy appearance is deceiving. The Jews must surely have asked and said: 'What do you make of Yourself? What do you pretend to be? Don't you know what it means to give eternal life or to preserve temporal life and to expel death? Who can do this but the one, eternal God? And you claim to be the One who can dispense a food which gives eternal life to him who eats it. You speak as though You Yourself were God and Lord over sin, death, and life. No saint can speak these words. Whoever ascribes such power to himself must be more than a creature.'

These claims of Jesus sound irritating and offensive. Therefore we must close our eyes, blind our reason, and believe the divine Word of Christ: 'I am the bread of life.' It is for us to say: 'I will believe what He says.'

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2 *ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

This same kind of ontological paradox was shared by the understanding of the Lutheran Church. For example, it
It should also be noted that while Luther saw faith as being the foremost instrument of theology, there is a sense in which faith retained a cognitive dimension. It is through faith that one "understands" and "knows" Christianity. Gerrish underlines this thought by recalling Luther's comments on Galatians 5.5. There a comparison is made between faith and hope in respect to "subject, function, object, order, and diversity of working." Luther also affirms that faith is "in the understanding"; its object is "truth"; it is an "instructor and judge", etc.1 Thus Luther develops the cognitive dimension of faith apart from reason, whether "enlightened" or otherwise.

However coming to see faith in this light is a difficult task, undoubtedly the most difficult task if left to man's own devices. Fortunately, for Luther, man is the

is stated in the Solid Declaration: "...Christ performed all his miracles and manifested his divine majesty according to his good pleasure, when and how he wanted to. He did so not only after his resurrection and ascension but also in the state of his humiliation—for example, at the wedding of Cana in Galilee /Jn. 2.1-11/, again when he was twelve years old, among the teachers /Lk. 2.41-52/, again in the garden when with one word he struck his enemies to the ground /Jn. 18.6/, and again in death, when he died not just like another man but in such a way that by and in his death he conquered sin, death, the devil, hell, and eternal damnation."

The Formula of Concord expressly condemned as "False Doctrine Concerning the Person of Christ", "That in spite of Christ's express assertion, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me /Matt. 28.18/,' and St. Paul's statement, 'In him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily /Col. 2.9/, Christ, according to the human nature, is wholly incapable of omnipotence and other properties of the divine nature."


1Gerrish, p. 82.
benefactor of God's grace working through the Holy Spirit.

Luther affirms that ultimately faith is not left up to man's resources alone. Certainly man "cooperates" in his salvation, but in the last analysis, only because he has been taken hold of by God.¹ He writes concerning this issue as he explains the third article of the Apostle's Creed (1520):

...Apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit, no one can come to God, nor receive any of the blessings effected through Christ, His life, cross, and death, and whatever else is ascribed to Him. Through Him /i.e. the Holy Spirit/, the Father and the Son move me and all others that are His. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son rouse, call, and draw us; and, through and in Christ give us life and holiness, and make us spiritually minded. Thus the Holy Spirit brings us to the Father, for He it is by whom the Father, through Christ and in Christ, does all things, and gives life to all.²

And again (1521):

And Christ, in John 10 (9,3), declares that he is the door by which one must enter, and whoever enters by him, to him the gatekeeper (the Holy Spirit) opens in order that he might find pasture and blessedness.³

Thus faith is finally "revelation" in the personal dimension. Indeed he states at one point that, "...Christ cannot be known except by revelation."⁴ It is a gift from

²Luther, Reformation Writings of Martin Luther, Vol. I, p. 87.
³Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 35, p. 123.
⁴Luther, Romans, p. 223.
God, not essentially an act of will. If one is to know Christ, books, teachers, and reason are finally unable to help, Luther implies. The Father Himself, through the Holy Spirit, must "reveal" and "present" Christ to us. Luther finds John 6.44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him"; John 6.65, "No one can receive me or know me, unless it is given to him by the Father"; and John 6.45, "Everyone who has heard me through the Father comes to me", as partial biblical support for this understanding.¹

All that Luther has to say about Christ whether it be in terms of His cross ("moral" paradox), or in terms of His being ("intellectual" or ontological paradox), would have little more than historical interest if it were not for the fact that the Word of this event remains alive. Let us look briefly at how Luther applies his paradoxes. Two examples of this application are outlined below.

The Gospel: A Living Word

It was Luther's understanding that the gospel was a living Word which continues to capture the hearts of men. Luther writes:

...the word 'Gospel' signifies nothing else than a sermon or report concerning the grace and mercy of God merited and acquired through the Lord Jesus Christ with His death. Actually, the Gospel is not what one finds in books and what is written in letters or the alphabet; it is rather an oral

The gospel, for Luther, is meant to be heard. The reason for this is not merely because the gospel lies beyond all understanding, but because it has that quality of providing more than man could possibly expect or desire: "For what Christ has said about heaven and the life to come is grasped only by hearing, be it ever so deep, but also exceeds all capability of desiring, be it ever so extensive." The gospel, after all, is "good news", such utter good news that man upon hearing its proclamation cannot, as it were, "believe his ears." It must be heard again and again.

While Luther defines what he means by the "gospel" in various places, his definition remains essentially the same. He affirms the fact that while there are many gospels, witness the four gospels, as well as the epistles found in the New Testament, there is only one Gospel. It concerns itself with the Word of the incarnate Son of God, who was born of the seed of David, was humbled, and then glorified through the Holy Spirit. But more than this: "It is a word of salvation, a word of grace, a word of


2 Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 29, p. 145.

3 See e.g.: Explanation To The Ninety-Five Theses, No. 62; Lectures On Romans (1517), 1.3-4 (scholia); A Brief Instruction On What To Look For And Expect In The Gospels (1521); and Sermons On The First Epistles Of St. Peter (1523), Preface.
comfort, a word of joy, a voice of the bridegroom and the bride, a good word, a word of peace." It is given to us without any merit on our part as a free gift.

The gospel is the same word as preached by Christ. Christ says in John 11.25, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me shall live eternally"; in John 14.6, "I am the way, the truth and the life"; in Matthew 4.4, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Therefore the soul, for Luther, can do without anything except the Word of God. When it has the Word, it has need of nothing else. "In short, it possesses food, joy, peace, light, ability, righteousness, truth, wisdom, freedom, and sufficient to overflowing of everything good."

Such a word of Jesus, contained in the gospel, is so presented, for Luther, that you hear God speak to you. It shows that your life and labor are nothing in God's sight, and are only worthy of perishing. Thus despairing of yourself, and recognizing your guilt, you are set face to face with Jesus Christ, in order that, "you may come out of yourself and flee from yourself and escape your corruption." It is Christ who says to the sinner through His Word, "you should surrender yourself to Him with firm


2 Luther, Reformation Writings of Martin Luther, Vol. I, p. 358.
faith, and trust Him gladly." Then, Luther concludes, that for your faith's sake, all sins are forgiven and wickedness overcome. "You yourself will be righteous, upright, serene, and devout. You will fulfill all commands, and be free from all things," as St. Paul states (Rom. 1.17; 10.4).

However it must be kept in mind that while the gospel and the Word are the proclamation of Christ and the Church, Luther never divorced this proclamation from history. For Luther, the gospels are nothing other than a record of the words and works of Christ. While none of the gospels record all the events connected with Christ, some have more, others less:

Gospel is and should be nothing else than a discourse or story about Christ, just as happens among men when one writes a book about a king or a prince, telling what he did, said, and suffered in his day. Such a story can be told in various ways; one spins it out, and the other is brief. Thus the gospel is and should be nothing else than a chronicle, a story, a narrative about Christ, telling who he is, what he did, said, and suffered—a subject which one describes briefly, another more fully, one this way, another that way.

But the difference between gospel writers is only of limited significance. What is of the greatest significance is the one Fact to which all writers address themselves—the coming of Christ: "For at its briefest, the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that he is the Son of God and

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become man for us, that he died and was raised, that he has been established as a Lord over all things.\textsuperscript{1}

The reason that Luther does not make a distinction between the Word and history is because Luther does make a distinction between the Word proclaimed and the Word incarnate. They are \textit{substantially} different. Thus Luther cannot distinguish between the Word and history, not because he lacks subtlety, but because the Word, in its incarnate sense, is historical. The Word proclaimed can only flow from the incarnate Word, and not vice versa. This is not simply a matter of belief, but because it is the incarnate Word that proclaims the Word about Himself, through His words and deeds. These words and deeds, as described in the previous section, bring what we have termed the ontological paradox to light. In this way Christ brings the gospel to the world.

This is Luther's point in a "table talk" of August, 1540:

\begin{quote}
Somebody asked, 'Doctor, is the Word that Christ spoke when he was on earth the same in effect as the Word preached by a minister?'
The doctor (Martin Luther) replied, 'Yes because he said, 'He who hears you hears me' (Luke 10.16).'

The inquirer asked, 'Doctor, isn't there a difference between the Word that became flesh
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 118.

It should be noted how closely this corresponds to Søren Kierkegaard's statement which is so often quoted: "If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: 'We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died,' it would be more than enough." (\textit{Fragments}, p. 130).
(John 1.14) and the Word that is proclaimed by Christ or by a minister?

'By all means!' he replied. 'The former is the incarnate Word, who was true God from the beginning, and the latter is the Word that's proclaimed. The former Word is the substance of God; the latter Word is in its effect the power of God, but isn't God in substance, for it has a man's nature, whether it's spoken by Christ or by a minister.'

Luther's doctrine of the Word is too complex to deal with here in any extensive manner, except to say that the Word, for Luther, is the vehicle through which God brings His will to bear on the world, whether that be materially, through such things as nature and history, or spiritually, through such a thing as a contrite heart. Gordon Rupp calls it a "master word", and, therefore, too great to be limited by any single definition.

By the Word, then, Luther sometimes refers to Scripture, sometimes to Christian preaching, sometimes to the Sacrament, sometimes to things already mentioned, and sometimes to Jesus Christ Himself. Yet none of these items, taken by itself, totally exhausts its meaning. Ultimately, according to Jaroslav Pelikan, there is only one "Word of God", although it is manifested in different forms. However we should be careful to keep in mind the distinction which Luther draws above.

In this section, we have been concentrating on the gospel, the word of Christ. Heinrich Bornkamm writes

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1Luther, Table Talk, pp. 394-395.
2Rupp, p. 320.
reflecting Luther's thought,\(^1\) and sees in the unpretentious spoken word a metaphor of the wonderful might of Christ:

A word is the weakest thing in the world, a mere breath of air—yet it is the mightiest. Words can affect the whole human race, decide the fate of nations, introduce new eras. Similarly unprepossessing, insignificant, and seemingly defeated, Jesus stands among the rulers of the world, and yet, what power has issued from Him, visibly and invisibly!\(^2\)

One reason that Luther attaches such power to this word of Christ is that the word (like Christ Himself) has a two-fold, or paradoxical, quality to it, a "proper" and an "alien" work; it "builds up", but it does not do so without first "tearing down". Thus, Luther states at Worms, "it was inevitable that Christ would be a rock of offence."\(^3\)

The gospel, Luther notes, is for St. Paul a word of the Cross,\(^4\) a foolish preaching for the heathen and an offense for the Jews.\(^5\) In fact, when the gospel is correctly proclaimed, it continues to be such in any generation: "we have to remind ourselves," Luther warns, "that for us also the gospel by its very nature is and continues to be nothing else than the word of the cross, a message of foolishness and offense."\(^6\) It is this offensive "word of

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\(^1\)See Luther's tract: "The Sacrament of The Body and Blood of Christ—Against The Fanatics" (1526), Luther's Works, Vol. 35.

\(^2\)Bornkamm, p. 72.

\(^3\)Luther, Reformation Writings of Martin Luther, Vol. II, pp. 165-166.

\(^4\)I Cor. 1.18.  \(^5\)I Cor. 1.23.

\(^6\)Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 36, p. 237.
the cross", or what we have termed the "moral" aspect of the paradox, which is especially a part of Luther's preaching.

It is offensive because it breaks down all man's pretensions of intellect, wealth, and righteousness--anything related to pride. Of course, not everything that offends is a word of the cross, but this offends because it makes the first to be last, and the last first, in man's relationship to God. Luther states in his Lectures On Galatians (1519), "To me it is certain that the Word of God cannot be rightly treated without incurring hatred and danger of death, and that if it gives offense--especially to the rulers and the aristocrats of the people--this is one sign that it has been treated rightly." Again he states:

It is a very precious sign of true faith and doctrine on our part that Satan, through his lackeys, attacks us so bitterly and in so many different ways. If our doctrine were of the world then the world would praise it, as the world has praised the doctrines of the pope. Since it is not of the world, however, but has been given us by God, the world hates us (John 15.19; 17.14).

Men would rather hear flattering words--words which underline their own wisdom, righteousness, word and work. It is as the Psalm states: "Speak to us smooth things. Prophesy not to us what is right." This is why, Luther

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1Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 27, p. 386.
2Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 36, p. 237.
3Ps. 30.10.
points out, men shudder at the word of the cross, "by which their own thought should have been put to death and torn to pieces by teeth, as it were..." They wish to hear things which cater only to them, and to their thought:

For the pleasant and outward appearance of truth and righteousness is the reason why this is an open sepulcher, an incurable and hopeless poison. For all people love truth and righteousness, but it is despised when it appears ugly, as it always really appears. This is evident in the case of Christ, for whom 'there is no form or comeliness' (Isa. 53.2). And thus it is with every truth which goes contrary to our thought.

Everything that is from God is necessarily condemned by man, Luther affirms. This was most obvious in the case of Christ, who was condemned as stones by the builders.

Thus the cross of Christ, Luther notes, has two kinds of enemies. The first kind are the violent type who want to negate the effects of the cross by force. They seek vengeance for anyone who offends. They do not rest until this is accomplished, and they have been vindicated. The second type is the cunning variety. They are those who desert the cross by fleeing. They always try "to please, to wheedle, to flatter everyone and to offend no one." St. Paul refers to this kind in Galatians 6.12 where he states: "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ."

1Luther, Romans, p. 230. 2ibid. 3ibid., p. 290.

Kierkegaard makes a similar distinction between "active" and "passive" offense. Compare: Fragments, p. 61ff.
However it should be pointed out that not everyone is offended by the preaching of the cross. Luther, at one point, refers to his "fan mail": "But the letters of many God-fearing people have borne witness that my teaching has brought comfort, profit, and improvements to simple, sorrowful, and captive consciences, and they have heartily thanked me, though I am unworthy, and have praised God that they lived long enough to hear such a word... wild animals were offended at Him /Christ/7, but the sheep heard His voice."\(^1\) That is to say, those who are poor in spirit, humble, weak, despised and rejected are not offended in this fact that Christ shared these lowly qualities. If they are offended at Christ, it is not for this reason. Thus Christ is hidden from the wise, the strong, and the self-righteous, and is revealed to babes.

This is why Luther's own preaching had, at times, such a loving and tender quality about it. He was, in the words of one critic, unlike Tertullian, for Luther was both a "lion" and a "lamb".\(^2\) He had the sensitivities of one who felt real affection for men, even the lowest of the low. His lion-like qualities were reserved for those whom he considered to be enemies of the cross of Christ.

"Preach one thing," Luther affirmed in 1515, "the

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wisdom of the cross.¹ And so Luther did. His preaching itself reflected this paradoxical quality, or as he states, "When I preach a sermon, I take an antithesis."² Thus he never preached without proclaiming simultaneously both God's "Yes", and God's "No"; "Yes" to God's redemption of man in the gospel, "No" to all man's presumptions in the cross.³ God's "proper" work, and "alien" work were kept together as he applied Christology. He did this in spite of the fact that it was "a pain to everybody", for while it was "a stumbling block to the Jews", and "to the Gentiles folly or stupidity", to believers it was "salvation and consolation."⁴

It is interesting to note how Luther's preaching clung to these theological convictions over the years. His preaching reflected not only the paradox of God's "lowliness" on the cross, but also "reflected the "loftiness" represented by Christ's words and work. Luther's last sermon preached at Eisleben on February 15, 1546, is interesting in that it combines both these aspects of paradox in a unity of form. He states:

The Lord here /Matt. 11.25-30/] praises and extols his heavenly Father for having hidden these things from the wise and understanding. That is, he did not make his gospel known to the wise and understanding, but to infants and children who cannot speak and preach and are not knowing and wise. Thus he indicates that he is opposed to the wise and understanding and dearly loves those who are not wise and understanding but are rather like young children.⁵

²Ibid., quoted in, p. xx.
³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 113. ⁵Ibid., p. 383.
Luther continues:

The wise and the understanding in the world so contrive things that God cannot be favorable and good to them. For they are always exerting themselves; they do things in the Christian church the way they want to themselves. Everything that God does they must improve, so that there is no poorer, more insignificant and despised disciple on earth than God; he must be everybody's pupil, everybody wants to be his teacher and preceptor.¹

Here the gospel is "hidden" from the "wise and understanding", but rather is revealed to those who are "rather like young children". This is the dynamic and the power of the cross, the paradox of God's hidden "lowliness"--the "moral" aspect. Yet the "wise and understanding" seek to "improve" what God has done. This suggests the "intellectual" aspect in which men seek to provide a correction—in much the same way, to cite an appropriate example, as "this is my body" is corrected to read, "this represents my body".

The paradoxical nature of Luther's theology, however, was not limited to his understanding of the Gospel, or even of the Sacrament. It is found throughout all of his thought. Let us look briefly at how Luther expands this concept in other directions, using his understanding of the Church as a special case.

The Hidden God and The Church

Luther, as has been pointed out, knew God as a hidden God. His presence was most hidden on the cross. But,

¹ Ibid., p. 384.
Luther reasoned, if God's activity can be revealed to be at work even in the depths of human degradation, then certainly God is at work in areas where He is the object of equal disregard. For Luther, "...God is excluded from no place and is confined to none. He is everywhere and He is nowhere."¹ This led to what has been termed Luther's doctrine of "ubiquity". Luther found God to be active both in nature and history.²

This does not mean, however, that it was possible by rational inference, or mystical experience, to proceed from the existence of the natural world to the existence of God, as we have noted previously. While Luther had little use for natural theology, Philip Watson comments, he had a magnificent theology of the natural. This understanding of the world, therefore, was of value to faith, and only to faith. Through it the Christian could see God at work through his "masks", "veils", and "mirrors". For all of God's works reflected His "divine will and presence."³

¹Luther, Table Talk, p. 32.
²However there is a significant difference between finding God in nature and history, and finding Him in the sacraments: "Although he is present in all creatures, and I might find him in stone, in fire, in water, or even in a rope, for he is certainly there, yet he does not wish that I seek him there apart from the Word, and cast myself into the fire or the water, or hang myself on the rope. He is present everywhere, but he does not wish that you grope for him everywhere. Grope rather where the Word is, and there you will lay hold of him in the right way. Otherwise you are tempting God and committing idolatry." (Luther's Works, Vol. 36, p. 342).
³Watson, p. 281.
Such an understanding of nature was similar to his understanding of history. History was the arena in which God worked His will in all its varied dimensions. Furthermore, for Luther, God works through us concealing Himself as He performs "all in all", as the Christian well knows. Thus God is active on the historical plane. His Word accomplishes His Will. The Christian should not be afraid when at times this activity appears chaotic. As Luther states in a polemic context:

To wish to stop these tumults, therefore, is nothing else but to wish to suppress and prohibit the Word of God. For the Word of God comes, whenever it comes, to change and renew the world. Even the heathen writers testify that changes of things cannot take place without commotion and tumult, nor indeed without bloodshed. But it is the mark of a Christian to expect and endure these things with presence of mind as Christ says: 'When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet' (Matt. 24,6).

For myself, if I did not see these tumults I should say that the Word of God was not in the world; but now, when I do see them, I heartily rejoice and have no fear, because I am quite certain that the kingdom of the pope, with all its followers, is going to collapse; for it is against this particular that the Word of God, now at large in the world, is directed.

However let us focus our attention on but one aspect of history alluded to in the above passage, namely, Luther's understanding of the Church. In the Schmalkald Articles (1537), Luther defined the Church quite simply: "Thank God,

\footnote{1}{Bornkamm, p. 60.}

a child of seven years old knows what the Church is, namely the Holy Believers and the lambs who hear the shepherd's voice.\(^1\)

It is this aspect of "faith alone" which marks the nature of the true Church. Thus the Church is not ultimately to be recognized by outward uniformity of constitution or ceremony. Rather the Church is, in Pauline terminology, the body of Christ.\(^2\) Members of the body are true believers wherever they may be found. There is, after all, only one faith in spite of local differences. Thus the true Church is invisible, or hidden, for it is impossible to look into men's hearts.\(^3\)

Luther states this viewpoint most clearly in a work entitled, The Papacy At Rome, An Answer To The Celebrated Romanist At Leipzig (1520). Here he speaks of the Church as an assembly of all those who believe in Christ, as it states in the Creed: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Communion of saints..." Or as Luther puts it, "This community consists of all those who live in true faith, hope and love; so that the essence, life and nature of the Church is not a bodily assembly, but an assembly of hearts in one faith...Thus," Luther goes on, "though they be a thousand miles apart in body, yet they are called an assembly in spirit because each one preaches, believes, hopes, loves, and lives like the other."\(^4\)

\(^1\)Quoted in Rupp, p. 319.  \(^2\)Eph. 1.23.  \(^3\)Kramm, p. 68.  
\(^4\)Luther, Works Of Martin Luther, Vol. I, p. 349.
This corresponds to Luther's understanding of God's kingdom, a kingdom not of this world. The Church is separated from all temporal communities since it is not external in nature. He quotes Luke 17.20-21 in support of this, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo, here, or lo, there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you."¹ Those who would make Church into a temporal kingdom are, in reality, Jews, Luther observes, because they look for an external kingdom to be established at a definite place, namely, Jerusalem. Thus they would, "sacrifice the faith, which alone makes the kingdom of Christ a thing spiritual and of the heart."²

Luther also recognized the fact that the cross would take its toll when it was realized that this cross meant loving those who were not very lovable. Luther opposed the "philosophical" idea that there was a proper "object" or "material" of love, that is, an object which was righteous, saintly, pious, good, etc. Such people were for Luther:

...the kind who disdain having the uneducated, the useless, the hot-tempered, the foolish, the troublesome, and the surly as companions in life but look for people who are cultured, pleasant, kindly, quiet, and saintly. That is, they want to live, not on earth but in Paradise, not among sinners but among angels, not in the world but in heaven. In their case one has to fear that they are receiving their reward and have their kingdom in this life. For they are unwilling, with the bride, to be a lily among thorns (Song of Sol. 2.2) or, with Jerusalem, to be situated in the midst of the heathen or, with Christ, to rule in the midst of enemies (Ps. 110.2). In fact they make the cross of Christ of no effect

¹ibid., pp. 349-350. ²ibid., p. 352.
(I Cor. 1.17) in themselves, and the love they have is inactive, is snoring, and is carried on their shoulders. 1

These people who try to become good by fleeing sinners and other cast-offs, Luther concluded, become the worst of all. Yet they are the last ones to recognize this fact, since it is for the sake of "love" that they are fleeing from salvation itself. "For the Church was always best," says Luther, "when it was living among the worst people." 2

Therefore the true Church is a small, hidden community, made one by personal faith. Luther often described the Church as a remnant in this respect, especially in his earlier years of lecturing. He saw that the Word of God always ran contrary to the natural desires of men. It abased pride, crushed arrogance, and left all human pretentions in "dust and ashes". Few there will be who will listen to such a thing. The true Church will be rejected and despised by men, and hidden in the midst of the world, for the true nature of divine things always appears in this way. Luther recalls as he writes:

What happened in Christ's own time when all the apostles fell away (Matt. 26.31,56) and he himself was despised and condemned by the whole people, and scarcely more than a Nicodemus, a Joseph, and the thief on the cross were saved? Were these then called the People of God? They were the remnant of the People, but they were not so called, and what was so called was not the people of God. Who knows but that the state of the Church of God throughout the whole course of the world from the beginning has always been

1Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 27, p. 391-392.
2ibid., p. 392.
such that some have been called the People and the saints of God who were not so, while others, a remnant in their midst, really were the People or the saints, but were never called so... Christ has preserved his Church, but not so as to have it called the Church.1

However, as Roland Bainton points out, while the true Church was for Luther, "the Church of the redeemed, known only to God, manifest here and there on earth, small, persecuted and often hidden, at any rate scattered and united only in the bond of the spirit", Luther was prepared neither to think this hidden Church could be actualized, nor to leave the institutional Church "disembodied".2 Even this hidden Church had its external marks.

Some of the "marks" referred to by Luther were strictly of a descriptive variety. Thus while the Church appears, "pure, holy, and the dove of God" to heavenly eyes, the eyes of the world only see a Church which is like Christ himself, "hacked to pieces, marked with scratches, despised, crucified, mocked (Isa. 53.2,3)."3 In essence, just as he appeared on the cross, again, in the "moral" aspect of paradox.

Other marks of the Church are perhaps best described as actions or functions. They are distinctly visible and audible. Luther first considered these actions to be Word and Sacrament. This meant that the Church was a

1Luther, The Bondage of The Will, pp. 86-87.
3Luther, Table Talk, p. 262.
place where the Word was preached (viva vox evangelii), and the sacraments administered.¹ These were on-going, or living actions, and as such, were constitutive of Faith and therefore of the Church.²

Luther later broadened this list to include various forms of ministry and worship. In two works, Of Councils and Churches (1539), and Wider Hans Worst (1540), he lists these functions. They are as follows: (1) the preaching of the Word; (2) the Sacrament of Baptism; (3) the Sacrament of the Altar; (4) the keys of Christian discipline and forgiveness; (5) a called and ordained Christian ministry; (6) public thanksgiving and worship of God; and (7) suffering, the possession of the Holy Cross.³

Thus we find in Luther's concept of the Church the two aspects of the Christological paradox which we have traced through this chapter. On the one hand the Church is hidden to the eyes of the world. In the words of Gordon Rupp, "Faith is not deceived by Cinderella-like rags, the form of a servant, but knows the Church to be the Bride."⁴ Yet on the other hand, the Church demonstrates not only lowliness, but the contradiction that in spite of such lowliness here may be found the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments, which correspond to Christ's Word and Work.

¹Kramm, p. 69.
³Rupp, p. 322.
⁴Ibid.
**Summation**

Luther's theological method may be summarized as follows: (These points of comparison correspond largely to the items listed in the "Summation" of the previous chapter.)

1. **Luther's approach to theology, like that of Kierkegaard and Tertullian, should not be construed as being irrational.** While Luther has a high regard for reason, in the last analysis it is of little value as a means of dealing with issues of revelation. Luther takes revelation seriously as having occurred in history. Since revelation has occurred, as God's Word tells us, reason itself has little merit as a judge of what has taken place. Such a revelatory occurrence, while not contradicting reason, nevertheless is beyond reason's ability to comprehend. Humility and obedience, for Luther, reflect the proper stance for man to take in the face of revelation.

2. **Luther, like Kierkegaard and Tertullian, uses a non-speculative approach to theological issues.** For the most part, Luther takes Scripture at its face value. His theology begins with the historical Jesus as He appears on the pages of the New Testament. Speculation is ruled out as a means of attaining a knowledge of God. Such speculation, as demonstrated by Scholastic Theology, is unnecessary and erroneous since God has revealed Himself fully in Christ. Jesus Christ is God as He truly is for us.

3. **Luther's Understanding of the Person of Christ is in keeping with traditional Christological doctrine.**
Luther found no complaint with the traditional formulations of Christ's Person, as taught by the Church. The Chalcedonian Definition, which held Christ to be true God and true Man in one person, was retained by Luther. There is no significant difference between Luther, and those studied previously, on this point.

4. Like Kierkegaard and Tertullian, there is a double aspect to Luther's Christological paradox. The "moral" aspect of the paradox, or what Kierkegaard terms "lowliness", is found in Luther's "theology of the cross". Unlike Kierkegaard and Tertullian, Luther develops the full implications of this "moral" issue into a thorough-going soteriology which encompasses much of his theological activity. Yet there would be no "moral" aspect if it were not for its ontological basis.

What we have referred to as the "intellectual" aspect of the paradox, or what Kierkegaard terms "loftiness", is also found in Luther. This ontological paradox is made known historically through the contradiction of the ordinary man, Jesus, who demonstrates himself as being anything but ordinary through his words and deeds. While his physical appearance is that of a mere man, who looks like all the others, Jesus proclaims himself to be more than human, and demonstrates this claim by healing the sick, raising the dead, calming the sea, etc. Thus Luther is able to affirm that, "God is man and man is God."¹

5. Luther applies his paradoxical understanding of

Christ in various directions. Preaching, for Luther, like the gospels themselves, "present" Christ to its hearers. Likewise it presents the paradoxes of Christ's Person and Work. Such a proclamation is met with either "offense" or "faith". These paradoxical understandings are also demonstrated in Luther's concept of the Sacrament, nature, and history. His doctrine of the Church was chosen as a special example of this kind of application. Paradoxical formulations are a pervasive influence in all of Luther's theology.

Thus we may conclude that Kierkegaard's claim of historical continuity may be sustained not only in regard to Tertullian, but in regard to Luther as well. There is no great difference between Luther and Kierkegaard over what Kierkegaard terms the paradox. However, as there were some minor exceptions noted to this conclusion in the previous chapter, so also may some exceptions be noted between Kierkegaard and Luther.

Luther, as observed above, is hesitant to state that the ontological paradox runs contrary to reason. Yet there is an ontological "contradiction" involved, hence the inadequacy of reason. Kierkegaard states that faith "transforms" the paradox. Luther makes a similar statement by affirming that faith "apprehends" and "understands" Christ. Faith is not "offended" at the paradox. Faith has a cognitive dimension for Luther, yet one which is not wholly such. Kierkegaard, likewise, affirms that faith is not "thoughtless". Their respective positions, in this regard, are almost indistinguishable.
Since faith attached itself to an objective uncertainty or paradox, objective speculation was excluded for Kierkegaard as a matter of certain knowledge. Hence Christianity was essentially a right relationship to God, as opposed to right doctrine. This, however, should not be understood as excluding Dogmatics, but rather as affirming the Dogmatic enterprise yet always under the qualification of faith and its passion.
Perhaps a greater difference between the two concerns "lowness", or the moral aspect of the paradox. While Kierkegaard agrees that man is able to do "nothing" in terms of his salvation like Luther, Kierkegaard does not emphasize this understanding as growing out of the moral paradox which negates "good works" as a means of satisfying God. Like Tertullian, Kierkegaard recognizes the question of "lowness" in regard to Christ's Person. Yet also like Tertullian, he does not trace the implications of this aspect to the extent which Luther does in his soteriology.

In spite of these differences, however, Kierkegaard's theological writings may be viewed as an attempt to restate Luther's theology for the benefit of nineteenth-century Denmark. This is especially the case in Kierkegaard's later works: The Works Of Love, The Sickness Unto Death, Philosophical Fragments, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, and above all, Training In Christianity. Basic issues which appear "en passant" in Luther are succinctly concentrated in Kierkegaard. This is in full agreement with Appendix B, and more importantly with Kierkegaard's own comment that he sought, "to prevent any one in Christendom from taking Luther and the significance of Luther's life in vain." ¹ Such an intention, however, appears to break down at two points: (1) Kierkegaard's pseudonyms prove to be confusing, and (2) Kierkegaard himself is a very different person as compared to Luther.

Kierkegaard tends to be a highly philosophical and introspective thinker, while Luther tends to be more theological and expansive. Kierkegaard's main obstacle in this undertaking seems to have been his own personality. Still Kierkegaard has performed an invaluable service in this regard.
Conclusions On Kierkegaard's Use Of Paradox

Before proceeding to compare Kierkegaard's paradox with the term as understood by two significant representatives of Dialectical Theology (Barth and Bultmann), let us briefly list several major aspects of Kierkegaard's Christological approach which may aid such a comparison. While the following points especially pertain to Kierkegaard, they pertain also to those of similar persuasion such as Tertullian and Luther.

1. Kierkegaard accepts the Jesus described in the New Testament as being the "approximate" historical Jesus. Scripture is taken by Kierkegaard largely at its face value, and even in its literal sense. He does not distinguish between what has been termed in the twentieth-century, "the Jesus of history" and "the Christ of faith". The New Testament is the historical record of Jesus' life as compiled by those who believed in Him. This is not to suggest that the New Testament can, or should, be used as a biographical record. Rather the significance of these documents lies in the fact that God is said to have revealed Himself historically. This is in and of itself noteworthy.

2. Read in this manner, the New Testament presents the record of an ontological paradox. On the one hand, Jesus is merely a man who appears identical to all other men who have ever lived. There is nothing in terms of His physical appearance that would separate Him in any "qualitative" sense from anyone else. On the other hand, this
man proclaims Himself as the Christ and equates His person with the eternal God. Furthermore He performs miracles, and acts in such a manner as to support this claim. This suggests an ontological paradox for a man (finite, mortal, limited in power, etc.) to be, under the same conditions, God (infinite, immortal, omnipotent, etc.).

3. The offense taken at this kind of paradox lies in the fact that there is something objective on which to base one's faith. It is morally offensive, and even blasphemous for a man—who is obviously not God—to speak of Himself as God. Likewise it is intellectually offensive for each of two separately defined beings to be, under the same conditions, the other.

4. Since Christianity finds as its point of departure what is an objective uncertainty (ontological paradox), essentially viewed, Christianity is a relationship. The paradox has made objective speculation impossible in respect to God. Thus, for Kierkegaard, the individual may only respond to this situation in faith, or subjectivity. Faith in this sense should not be understood merely as belief (assent), since the condition for faith is given by God.
Chapter Four: Paradox in Dialectical Theology

(Barth and Bultmann)
In the previous chapters we have traced the background for Kierkegaard's use of paradox as it appears in the writings of Tertullian and Luther. We will now turn to the use of paradox as it is reflected in Dialectical Theology, most notably in the writings of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. While others in contemporary theology also refer to paradoxes,¹ by and large the most central and pervasive influence in this century stems from Barth and Bultmann.

In this chapter, therefore, we will begin by examining what Karl Barth means by this term as it appears in his Romans. Secondly, since Rudolf Bultmann attributes much of his theology to his interpretation of Barth, we will examine Bultmann's understanding of paradox in relationship to Barth. And lastly, since Barth sought to separate himself from the position of Bultmann (especially in his Church Dogmatics), we will glance at Barth's later development in relationship to paradox, noting what change there is in this regard. Again, as in previous chapters, comparison will be made with Kierkegaard's understanding as it would seem appropriate.

This chapter will seek to demonstrate the fact that Barth's and Bultmann's understanding of paradox is very close. However while their positions may be close, it will

¹e.g., D. M. Baillie mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis.
be proposed that they are significantly different from Kierkegaard's and like positions studied previously. Whether Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox may be sustained in the present is especially the concern of the Conclusion of this thesis.

**Paradox In Barth's Romans**

The most radical approach to the question of the contemporary significance of the doctrine of "justification by faith" was made by Karl Barth in his second edition of *The Epistle To The Romans* (1922). Barth argued in this work, as opposed to nineteenth-century liberalism, that faith should not be confused with belief, religious feeling, or man's experience. Barth saw faith as being the realisation of the abysmal gulf which separates man from God. An often quoted statement from the introduction to his second volume reads:

...if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth.'

This "gulf" between man and God had great significance for Barth. Consequently it is faith which is closely allied to the ambiguous and questionable nature of life. Faith emerges when this basic contrast between man and God is realized. Such faith was for dialectical theologians

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of greater significance than belief or assent to certain propositions. Rather they asserted that such faith implied an acceptance of radical intellectual doubt.¹

Such an understanding, Van Harvey suggests, contributes to the appeal of Dialectical Theology. Thus the believer is liberated from any concern that Biblical Criticism could threaten faith. "The morality of knowledge," he writes, "is not the antithesis of faith but its expression."²

Yet, Harvey goes on, such a position is not held without inherent theological problems. He questions why faith should be distinguished from all belief, to what extent the Christian faith should be termed historical if historical inquiry is irrelevant to its truth or falsity, and in what sense theology's claim may be that of a unique act of God in Jesus Christ.³

A key term in dealing with these theological issues is that of "paradox". Barth uses the term extensively in his work on Romans. T. F. Torrance underlines the fact of Kierkegaard's influence on Barth at this time, and of Barth's use of such Kierkegaardian concepts as that of "paradox".⁴ The question which arises, however, is whether Barth's reliance upon "paradox" reflects anything more than an agreement in vocabulary.

²Ibid., p. 138. ³Ibid.
In the preface to the second edition of *Romans*, Barth argues (in apparent disagreement with Kierkegaard) that the present theological position, and therefore the relationship between God and the world, is not a simple one. According to Barth, "...he who is concerned with the truth must boldly acknowledge that he cannot be simple." Barth affirms that human life is necessarily complex, and that therefore "short-lived pseudo-simplifications" are inadequate. Thus truth cannot be expressed directly. It can only be expressed paradoxically and received by "faith alone". Therefore Barth rules out any understanding of Jesus Christ which would seek to combine God and man in one person as some kind of "anthroposophical chaos", whether it be a "relative-absolute", or an "absolute-relative". Furthermore he declares that it is precisely this kind of "chaos" that Paul views with such "evident horror" in all his letters.

Barth describes what happens in Jesus Christ by referring to two planes which intersect. The one plane is that of this fallen world in need of redemption, with all its limitations of time and space--"our world". This known plane is, therefore, intersected by an unknown plane, a world of "primal creation" and "final redemption"--"the world of the Father". However, while this new world seeks recognition, this intersecting line is not self-evident. The only place where anything may be directly observed is

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1Barth, *Romans*, p. 5.  
2*ibid.*, p. 11.
in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, "the historical Jesus". It is in the name of Jesus that the "unknown world cuts the known world".\(^1\)

Barth points out, in keeping with his "system", that this does not mean that "time, and things, and men" are in themselves of greater value than "other times, and other things, and other men", for this is a "hidden line". He writes, "In so far as our world is touched in Jesus by the other world, it ceases to be capable of direct observation as history, time, or thing." Thus Jesus only becomes paradoxical, for Barth, through the "resurrection":

> In this declaration and appointment—which are beyond historical definition—lies the true significance of Jesus. Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah, is the End of History; and He can be comprehended only as Paradox (Kierkegaard)...\(^2\)

Prior to the resurrection, there is nothing that would distinguish Jesus from the rest of mankind:

> The assumption that Jesus is the Christ...is, in the strictest sense of the word, an assumption, void of any content that can be comprehended by us. The appointment of Jesus to be the Christ takes place in the Spirit and must be apprehended in the Spirit. It is self-sufficient, unlimited, and in itself true.\(^3\)

The resurrection is, for Barth, the revelation. This is what discloses Jesus as the Christ, exclusive of his works and teachings. In the resurrection, Jesus is recognized as the "paradox". And even the resurrection itself demonstrates the kind of paradoxical meaning that is in

\(^1\)ibid., p. 29. \(^2\)ibid. \(^3\)ibid., p. 36.
keeping with his basic ontology:

The Resurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 30, inasmuch as it there 'came to pass', we discovered and recognized. But inasmuch as the occurrence was conditioned by the Resurrection, in so far, that is, as it was not the 'coming to pass', or the discovery, or the recognition, which conditioned its necessity and appearance and revelation, the Resurrection is not an event in history at all. Jesus is declared to be the Son of God wherever He reveals Himself and is recognized as the Messiah, before the first Easter Day and, most assuredly, after it. This declaration of the Son of man to be the Son of God is the significance of Jesus, and, apart from this, Jesus has no more significance or insignificance than may be attached to any man or thing or period of history in itself. -- Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no longer. what He was, He is. But what He is underlies what He was. There is here no merging fusion of God and man, no exaltation of humanity to divinity, no overflowing of God into human nature. What touches us—and yet does not touch us—in Jesus the Christ, is the Kingdom of God who is both Creator and Redeemer. The Kingdom of God has become actual, is nigh at hand. And this Jesus Christ is—our 'Lord'...

The "absolute paradox" for Barth is the "gulf" which separates man and God. He maintains (in opposition to Luther) that "Finitum non capax infiniti", the finite cannot bear the infinite. This must be maintained, he argues, lest some "illusion" replace the only salvation, which is the "Mercy of God".

Barth holds up this paradox of appearance or phenomenon against a Christianity that has become a "direct communication". Such a Christianity Barth sees as being "a tiny superficial thing" which is capable of neither wounding,
nor of healing in any great measure. Instead Barth promotes
the theme of faith in Jesus as the radical "Nevertheless". This is "the most hazardous of all hazards," Barth main-
tains, yet it is the "road" on which he directs men.¹

Above all, such an endeavor requires faith. Christ
can only be indirectly apprehended or communicated. Christ
has been appointed Son of God "according to the Spirit".
This denies direct immediacy. If Christ is to be God, he
must be unknown, "for to be known directly is the charac-
teristic mark of an idol (Kierkegaard)." For Barth:

The Gospel does not expound or recommend itself.
It does not negotiate or plead, threaten, or make
promises. It withdraws itself always where it is
not listened to for its own sake.²

Thus the Gospel is for those who are "mature enough to
accept a contradiction and to rest in it...". It likewise
becomes a "scandal" and a matter only for "faith".³ This
qualitative distinction between "God and man" and "God and
the world" is maintained throughout Barth's Romans:

The stone of stumbling, the rock of offence,
which is, however, at the same time the precious
corner-stone laid in Sion, is--Jesus Christ. In
Him God reveals Himself inexorably as the hidden
God who can be apprehended only indirectly. In
Him He conceals Himself utterly, in order that
He may manifest Himself to faith only.⁴

Barth understands Kierkegaard's "absolute paradox"
in a phenomenal sense which separates "God and man", and

³ibid., p. 39.  ⁴ibid., p. 369.
“God and the world”. This, however, is a basic breach with Lutheran thought in so far as Barth develops his paradox along Christological lines. Kierkegaard’s paradox (as has been demonstrated in a previous chapter) is absolute in an ontological sense which negates speculation’s attempt to apprehend God. This difference between phenomenal and ontological paradox is the basic difference which separates Dialectical Theology from Kierkegaard and similar theologies studied in previous chapters.

There is an apparent non sequitur in Barth’s thought which excludes the kind of ontological paradox described above. It does not follow that while God does not reveal Himself directly in the person of Jesus Christ that there is consequently nothing that would separate Jesus Christ, on historical (historisch) grounds, from his contemporaries. Barth comments in this regard:

The vision of the New Day remains an indirect vision; in Jesus revelation is a paradox, however objective and universal it may be. That the promises of the faithfulness of God have been fulfilled in Jesus the Christ is not, and never will be, a self-evident truth, since in Him it appears in its final hiddenness and its most profound secrecy. The truth, in fact, can never be self-evident, because it is a matter neither of historical nor of psychological experience, and because it is neither a cosmic happening within the natural order, nor even the most supreme event of our imaginings. Therefore it is not accessible to our perception; it can neither be dug out of what is unconsciously within us, nor apprehended by devout contemplation, nor made known by the manipulation of occult psychic powers. These exercises, indeed render it the more inaccessible. It can neither be taught nor handed down by tradition, nor is it a subject of research. Were it capable of such treatment, it would not be universally significant, it would not be the righteousness
of God for the whole world, salvation for all men.1

The positions which have been described in previous chapters maintain that God's revelation has been experienced through historical and natural realities (i.e. through Christ's words and deeds). Yet it does not therefore follow that there is a direct continuity between man and God. Rather the paradox that has been previously described only becomes a paradox through Christ's teaching and work, and through the fact that it is only a man (yet to faith God "incognito") who accomplishes these things. Again to quote Kierkegaard:

No, there was 'nothing about Him for the eye, no glamour that we should look upon Him, no outward appearance that we should desire Him' (Isa. 53.2 [Kierkegaard's version]); directly there was nothing to be seen but a lowly man, who, by signs and wonders and by affirming that He was God, continually posited the possibility of offence.2

This should not be construed as a confusion of God and man, Creator and creature. On the contrary, God remains God, and man remains man. Kierkegaard's paradox (like Luther's) is not a tertium quid, nor a rejection of trinitarian doctrine and a return to Praxeas. Rather it is in keeping with the words recorded in Hebrews: "It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by

1Ibid., pp. 97-98.

signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will."

Certainly Barth's "system" uses as its dialectical basis Kierkegaard's structure of the "infinite qualitative difference". But this, for Kierkegaard, did not exclude the understanding of paradox that we have attributed to him. Rather it was the structure itself which allowed his paradox to work, or more accurately, it was the structure which came into being through the paradox. If there was not an "infinite qualitative difference" between man and God, one would be back to the world-view of paganism, where God could be directly apprehended. As it is, according to Kierkegaard, God may be indirectly apprehended in Jesus Christ, the God-Man, through his words and deeds. This is the miracle. Yet even this falls under the rubric of faith. For without faith Christ would appear as another religious rabble-rouser, magician, and messianic pretender.

It is interesting to note how Barth takes the "infinite qualitative difference" to mean something else than what Kierkegaard intended. In The Sickness Unto Death, Kierkegaard writes:

> God and man are two qualities between which there is an infinite qualitative difference. Every doctrine which overlooks this difference is, humanly speaking, crazy...2

1Heb. 2.3a-4.

Barth takes this "difference" as applying primarily to ontology. Understood in this manner, God is "wholly other" than man. There is no possibility of natural theology. Thus in Jesus Christ, the God-Man we are presented with a paradox of phenomenon: "In so far as our world is touched in Jesus by the other world, it ceases to be capable of direct observation as history, time, or thing."  

However at a point previous in the discussion, Kierkegaard makes it clear that this "difference" between God and man is less a matter of ontology than it is a matter of soteriology. He states:

Sin is the only thing universally predicated of man which cannot in any way, either via negationis or via eminentia, be affirmed of God. It may be affirmed of God that He is not finite as man is, and so, via negationis, that He is infinite; but to affirm of God that He is a sinner is blasphemy. As a sinner man is separated from God by a yawning qualitative abyss. And obviously God is separated from man by the same yawning qualitative abyss when He forgives sins. In case it were possible by a converse kind of accommodation to transfer the divine attributes to a human being, in one respect man will never in all eternity come to resemble God, namely, in forgiving sins.

Since the "abyss" between God and man is not exclusively ontological, the God-Man remains an ontological paradox instead of a phenomenal one. Thus Barth apparently overlooks the paradox which Kierkegaard describes:

That there is an infinite difference of quality between God and man is the possibility of offense which cannot be taken away. Out of love God becomes man; He says, 'Look what it is to be a man'; but He adds, 'O take heed, for at the same time I am God--

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1 Barth, Romans, p. 29.
blessed is he who is not offended in me.'... Or conversely, 'I and the Father are one, and yet I am this particular lowly man, poor, forsaken, delivered into the hands of men—blessed is he who shall not be offended in me. I, this lowly man, am He who maketh the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the lame to walk, the leper to be cleansed, the dead to rise up—blessed is he who shall not be offended in me.'

That Barth overlooks Kierkegaard's meaning may be understood, when viewed in the light of a discussion which Kierkegaard makes previously. Christianity begins with the doctrine of sin, Kierkegaard affirms. Such a category implies the "individual" and opposes "Speculation". To talk about sin is to talk about the fact that "I and thou" are sinners. On the other hand:

Speculatively one has to look away from the individual. So it is only frivolously one can talk speculatively about sin. The dialectic of sin is directly contrary to that of Speculation.

Barth's approach, however, is basically scientific and objective. Or as he states at a later occasion: "Theology's whole illumination can be only its human reflection, or mirroring (in the precise sense of 'speculation')..." When Kierkegaard is studied from Barth's point of view, the above oversight is easily made as the modes of thought do not correspond. The problem of sin, and hence Kierkegaard's paradox, can only be approached existentially and

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1 Ibid., pp. 258-259. Italics mine.
2 Ibid., p. 251.
historically, and not speculatively.

Barth's position in pressing the "infinite qualitative difference" into the realm of Christology, moreover, raises a serious problem. There is a dualistic, gnostic tendency to be found in Romans. If Jesus himself did not bring God's revelation through his teaching and works, later testified to be the Holy Spirit, what is it then that is revealed? Barth fills this void, as we have noted, by calling attention to the resurrection as the revelation. Here one finds what Bonhoeffer has termed "the positivism of revelation". It is the revelation itself which gives significance to history. Thus Barth removes Christianity from the realm of historical relativism and, therefore, historical criticism. But one questions whether Barth has removed Christianity as well. The real world seems to be, one is tempted to say, gobbled-up by God's spiritual revelation:

If we thrust the Resurrection into history, if we set the pre-supposition which is in Jesus within the sequence of events, if we weave the paradox of faith into human spiritual experience, we introduce, as it were, a spectre which devours every living thing. The world would then disappear before God, creation before redemption, experience before apprehension, content before form, and the law would be made of none effect before the Lawgiver, which is, however, visible to faith alone.  

Barth is aware of the gnostic nature of such a statement, as well as of the criticism such a statement arouses. He answers this criticism by employing a series of

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1Barth, Romans, p. 115.
negatives which leave the reader wondering if he has really answered the accusation, or merely clouded it:

How could we protect such a notion and the criticism which proceeds from it from the dualism of Gnosticism? We could in no way protect it, if the radicalism which here appears be not the extreme radicalism. A negation which remains side by side with the position it negates must itself be negated, and is therefore no truly radical negation. Resurrection ceases to be resurrection, if it be some abnormal side event side by side with other events. What, in that case, did rise again? A presupposition which does not apply to every living thing and which is not universally valid, is no absolute final presupposition. The paradox which still retains a relationship with normal spiritual experience, however peculiar or abnormal or even 'ecstatic' it may be, is no real paradox. That Other from which we have come and which is contrasted with all concrete, known, temporal, human existence can be in no manner wholly distinct. This complete Otherness is adequately protected only when it is quite strictly the Origin and Fulfilment of human existence, its final affirmation.¹

Barth seems to be saying that to the believer the revelation is known to be true because it negates every negation. But is this a proper argument? Does Barth's position really separate him from the cries of "gnosticism", or only set forth a more radical application of the same theme?

Likewise Barth's position does not necessarily change in what follows. Barth comments on Paul's use of the Abraham narrative (Rom. 4.17b-25). In his discussion, as in other places, he quotes Luther.² This, however, is odd as Luther's commentary on the same passage runs contrary to the very point that Barth is seeking to make.

¹ibid. ²ibid., p. 144.
Barth writes in reference to verse 21:

'And being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.'

Was he—'assured' by some religious experience, by intuition, by the consciousness of a divine mission? Perhaps there were these things also; for why should the non-historical assurance not be accompanied by historical assurance? It is more probable, however, that there were no such accompaniments. It is more probable that Abraham was filled with deprivation and brokenness and uncertainty. And yet not even filled with these things, for the assurance of deprivation and hunger and thirst would still be no more than an historical assurance. The riches of grace (Eph. i.) lie, like poverty in spirit (Matt. v.), beyond historical possession and deprivation. The fulness of Abraham's assurance, however, has no other ground than that he was the recipient of the divine promise. This is beyond history and is indescribable. It is comprehensible only as life from the dead (iv. 13).

Instead Luther writes:

He was fully convinced, through faith, that God was able to do what he had promised, because His truthfulness sees to it that He does not promise what He cannot perform. But man, because he is a liar, often promises what he cannot fulfill. But His power sees to it that He cannot be changed and cannot lie.

This can hardly be construed as a ringing endorsement of Barth's position as far as Luther is concerned; rather, it is just the opposite.

Barth continues in verse 22:

'Wherefore it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.'

'Wherefore'?—Because Abraham's faith is faith.

1 Ibid.


before God (iv. 17b); because faith is not one element in his character, but forms the absolute limitation which marks his behaviour and dissolves it, the absolute Miracle, the pure beginning, and the Primal Creation. Because his faith is not comprehended in an historical happening, but is the negation of all occurrence and non-occurrence, it is defined by God as righteousness; and in God, and by God only, Abraham participates in the negation of all negation and in the death of all death. And so his faith, being unimpeded by historical occurrence, shines forth as light from light uncreated.¹

This again opposes Luther's position. Luther sees Abraham as justified by faith because he believed that God would do in history what He had promised.² If such a promise is unfulfilled, Abraham's faith is in vain, and God becomes a liar. Yet God kept his promise to Abraham, Luther tells us. Such an occurrence is opposite of what Barth describes as being, "the negation of all occurrence and non-occurrence", not to mention, "light from light uncreated".³

This brief comparison with Luther underlines the tendency in Barth's Romans which seeks to re-create the world as if the created order, with its time, material, and space, was somehow inferior so as not to be capable of "bearing the infinite". Furthermore, and in accordance with Luther's suggestion, the fact that certain events

¹Barth, Romans, pp. 144-145.
²Luther, Romans, pp. 41-42.
³Kierkegaard apparently shares the same conviction as Luther. Kierkegaard writes under the pseudonym Johannes De Silentio regarding Abraham: "He accepted the fulfilment of the promise, he accepted it by faith, and it came to pass according to the promise and according to his faith..." (Fear And Trembling, p. 33).
never happen for Barth would call into question the nature of Barth's faith, in spite of his protestations to the contrary, since doubt is here implied in regards to what God is able to perform. Barth's reason finds it "more probable" that Abraham's promise was not fulfilled in any historical sense.

One has the feeling in reading Romans that, for Barth, the physical world is beneath him and is, therefore, of secondary importance. As such, this is to place a foreign element into Christianity. Barth writes:

Faith is the possibility of daring to know what God knows, and of ceasing, therefore, to know what He no longer knows. Such knowledge, since it opposes the questionableness of all human capacity, lies outside our competence. It is this recognition that constitutes the hazard of faith. Faith is the possibility which belongs to men in God, in God Himself, and only in God, when all human possibilities have been exhausted. Faith means motionlessness, silence, worship—it means not-knowing. Faith renders inevitable a qualitative distinction between God and man; it renders necessary and unavoidable a perception of the contradiction between Him and the world of time and things and men; and it finds in death the only parable of the Kingdom of God.1

Faith means many things for Barth, "knowledge", "possibility", "motionlessness", "silence", "worship", etc. But one wonders when it is that faith means faith in the historical God-Man, Jesus Christ. By understanding the "infinite qualitative difference" in the way he does, Barth is reminiscent of Marcion who found it "unseemly" that God should associate Himself with the created world. Thus the paradox of Jesus Christ is given after the fact,

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1 Barth, Romans, p. 202.
not with the fact. God only becomes corporate in the resurrection, which is to say, He does not become corporate in the Christian sense--He does not become flesh (John 1. 14). Barth continues:

The visible significance of His (i.e. Jesus') life cannot be understood apart from the disclosure and revelation of the invisible glorification of the Father. This is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The judgement to which Jesus surrenders Himself is righteousness; the death He suffers is life; the 'No' which He proclaims is 'Yes'; and the contradiction between God and man which is disclosed in Him is reconciliation. In the invisible totality of the new man Jesus, that is, in the concrete, corporal person of the risen Jesus, the direction in which His visible human life had moved is reversed. When this reversal is revealed and is perceived, the frontier of all visible human history, including the visible human history of Jesus of Nazareth, is clearly marked. This reversal or transformation is not a 'historical event' which is placed side by side with other events. Rather it is the 'non-historical' happening, by which all other events are bounded, and to which events before and on and after Easter Day point.\(^1\)

This "'non-historical' happening" Barth understands in terms of Overbeck's notion of Urgeschichte. This term suggests that it is the Church which has the task of speaking God's Word into an historical void. One cannot pass from man to God, from history to God's Word. Rather it is the revelation of God which breaks into history and meets man there. Here God speaks in particular ways, but in such a way that His revelation is not tied to historical events, lest like the rest of history it too should die and perish. T. F. Torrance describes it as follows:

Revelation is rather that which breaks into

\(^1\)ibid., p. 203.
history and becomes historical without being resigned to the history of this passing world; and therefore it becomes historical in a way that breaks through the history of the fallen world, not because it is less real but because it is more real. That is the new kind of history that takes place in Christ, Urgeschichte, the original history of Revelation, history which is not merely historical event, but history invaded by the creative and redeeming Word of God, history which we can only grasp and understand by listening to the Word of God, by participating in its happening, and which we cannot understand by abstracting it from the speaking and revealing God who meets us in it. Rather is it from the point of view of Urgeschichte that we are to understand all history for then we can see beyond all history for then we can see beyond its uncertainties and relativities and contingencies and ambiguities to its true meaning and foundation in the God of history.1

Such an understanding seems to place speculation in the realm of history. We are faced with a device which would seek to overcome the created order with all the world's "uncertainties", "relativities", "contingencies", and "ambiguities", in order to get at what is really "true", that being beyond this creation. While such a technique uses Christian rhetoric, there is very little other than rhetoric that would separate it from a kind of gnosticism applied to the historical realm. The Word does not really become incarnate. Rather it is the "Revelation" which "declares" and "appoints" Jesus as such.

It must be kept in mind that we are only dealing here with Barth's Romans. Barth later became aware of some of the problems inherent in this approach, and sought to alter

1Torrance, p. 110.
his position (final section). Part of the reason for this change was Bultmann's approval of Romans.

**Bultmann's Paradox**

Bultmann received Barth's Romans in a friendly manner, a fact which Barth found to be, "the strangest episode in the history of the book". The chief reason for Bultmann's agreement with Barth was because of Bultmann's acceptance of Barth's "system" taken from Kierkegaard. Schubert M. Ogden quotes the statement from the second edition which concerns Barth's "system", and goes on to state that:

> I know of no better way to characterize Bultmann's own 'system' than by saying of it the principle thing that the 'early' Barth says of his. For in Bultmann's case also, what constitutes the inner integrity of all that he really intends to say in his affirmation of the 'infinite qualitative difference' between time and eternity in its several negative and positive implications. Indeed, we may lay it down as a rule that one ought never to suppose he has correctly understood anything that Bultmann says, as regards the method or the content of his theology, until he is able to see it as permitted or required by this basic dialectic.

However at second glance, it is not necessarily odd that Bultmann should be in agreement with Barth on Romans. For as Ogden points out, both theologians identify themselves in the strictest sense with this basic ontological dialectic. The difference that does emerge between the two is that of their respective points of departure. Barth begins from the point of view of God in Himself;

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Bultmann begins from the point of view of man in himself. This makes their two positions very much alike in some respects, and very dissimilar in others. In either case, though, this basic ontological dialectic is maintained.

Bultmann states, in opposition to certain critics (e.g. Jaspers), that Christianity is not a philosophy of existence, as much as it is a "kerygma". It is a proclamation in which God addresses man through Jesus Christ. This is Bultmann's paradox. While on the one hand Bultmann calls for a transition of New Testament teaching into statements which concern themselves with human existence, on the other, he insists upon the decisive act of God in Christ. The Christian faith, for Bultmann, is not dissolved into a mere philosophy of existence, or so it is argued. Thus John Macquarrie observes that Bultmann puts a limit upon demythologizing.\(^1\)

This "act of God", this "eschatological event", like Barth's, is not a direct act, but a paradoxical one. All that one would see in a natural and historical context would be the birth and death of the man Jesus. That God has acted in history in such a way, may only be recognized by faith existentially. Again, like Barth, faith is expressed in terms of a "nevertheless".\(^2\)


Bultmann writes in respect to this indirectness:

The thought and the action of God as an unworldly and transcendent action can be protected from misunderstanding only if it is not thought of as an action which happens between the worldly actions or events, but as happening within them. The close connections between natural and historical events remains intact as it presents itself to the observer. The action of God is hidden from every eye except the eye of faith. Only the so-called, secular (worldly) events are visible to every man and capable of proof. It is within them that God's hidden action is taking place.¹

Thus the fact that God cannot be identified with any visible action excludes what Bultmann understands to be "myth". God does not submit to being seen and observed. If one is to believe in God, this is to be accomplished only in spite of appearance. Bultmann compares his task to that of St. Paul and Luther, except they argue for "justification by faith" in the field of soteriology. However Bultmann applies the doctrine of "justification by faith" to the sphere of "knowledge and thought". He writes:

Our radical attempt to demythologize the New Testament is in fact a perfect parallel to St. Paul's and Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law. Or rather, it carries this doctrine to its logical conclusion in the field of epistemology. Like the doctrine of justification it destroys every false security and every false demand for it on part of man, whether he seeks it in good works or in his ascertainable knowledge. The man who wishes to believe in God as his God must realize that he has nothing in his hand on which to base his faith. He is suspended in mid-air, and cannot demand proof of the Word which addresses him. For the ground and object of faith are

identical. Security can be found only by abandoning all security, by being ready, as Luther puts it, to plunge into the inner darkness.¹

This rejection of all self-made security is "offensive" to many, Bultmann observes. But it is only those who surrender this security to God that find "authentic existence".²

A central criticism has been made at this point in regards to the "formlessness" of Bultmann's revelation. One critic comments on Bultmann, "Since he is committed to the view that God acts only in Jesus Christ and in the proclamation about him but insists that no historical knowledge of that event is relevant to faith, it is difficult to know what he means by an 'act of God,' or what possible relevance the life of Jesus has for one's self-understanding."³ Such a criticism finds Bultmann's theology to be "contentless" in any historical (historisch) sense. There is no happening which "informs the pattern of faith." Jesus only seems to denote man's transition from "unfaith to faith". The content of the faith itself


²Schmithals, p. 256. ³Harvey, p. 143.
may be discovered in a "philosophical analysis of human existence." \(^1\)

However such is not fully the case, as has been noted. Bultmann is willing to discuss the "act of God" within "secular events" which are available to the historian. Bultmann is sure that Jesus existed historically, that he taught and died. But he finds no evidence regarding Jesus' personality, inner development, and little about the content of his life. Bultmann expresses this by saying that we have the \textit{Dass}, not the \textit{Was} of Jesus. However this \textit{Dass}, for Bultmann, does include a certain amount of knowledge in which Jesus' person and teaching are preserved. Like Schweitzer, Bultmann sees Jesus as an apocalypticist, proclaiming the world's end. However Bultmann places greater emphasis on decision in regards to Jesus' person. A decision for or against Jesus is a decision for or against the kingdom of God. The \textit{Dass} is not only that Jesus existed, but that he taught and called men to decision through the Word. This teaching was nothing new in way of content. The decisive element was that he spoke. Through his Word God's Will called men to decide. Yet all this was given without claim as to his person. There were no signs to validate his preaching. Historically (\textit{historisch}) he was only a mistaken apocalyptic preacher proclaiming the imminent end of the world. But contrary to all outward appearances he brought the Word of God. He placed men

\(^1\textit{Ibid.}, \text{ pp. 143-144}.\)
through the paradox of phenomena of having to make an eschatological choice.¹

This decision did not cease with the death of Jesus, but is present, as well, in current existential encounter through preaching. Since the action of God is not conceived in terms of any superhistorical or supernatural occurrence, to speak of the act of God means at the same time to speak of one's own existence. Human life is only lived out in the world of time and space. Thus man's encounter with God must be here and now in the specific event of preaching. Bultmann writes:

It is the paradox of the Christian message that the eschatological event, according to Paul and John is not to be understood as a dramatic cosmic catastrophe but as happening within history, beginning with the appearance of Jesus Christ and in continuity with this occurring again and again in history, but not as the kind of historical development which can be confirmed by any historian. It becomes an event repeatedly in preaching and faith. Jesus Christ is the eschatological event not as an established fact of past time but as repeatedly present, as addressing you and me here and now in preaching.²

The believer is one who has chosen freedom from himself by the grace of God. He becomes a "new self", and finds a "new life" grounded on "responsible acting". This allows the believer to be assuredly for his neighbour, since this is only possible for the man who is free from himself. He is free to live for the future. He continues:


It is the paradox of Christian being that the believer is taken out of the world and exists, so to speak, as unworldly and that at the same time he remains within the world, within his historicity. To be historical means to live free from the future. The believer too lives from the future; first because his faith and his freedom can never be possession; as belonging to the eschatological event they can never become facts of past time but are reality only over and over again as event; secondly because the believer remains within history. In principle, the future always offers to man the gift of freedom; Christian faith is the power to grasp this gift. The freedom of man from himself is always realised in the freedom of historical decisions.\(^1\)

For Bultmann, it is preaching itself which marks the life of Jesus as being a saving act of God. Without preaching, God would not be found in this historical event. Revelation only occurs, the saving event only happens, in proclamation. Christ "...meets us in the word of preaching and nowhere else."\(^2\)

Thus Bultmann finds little point in inquiring behind the primitive Christian preaching. Faith does not grow from certain saving facts, but from the saving event of preaching. Historical investigation can ponder what it will, but it cannot investigate salvation "for me".\(^3\)

As Gustav Wingren observes, for Bultmann, the question of whether anything actually happened in the past in Christ may be "completely eliminated". Not only does such

\(^{1}\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 152.}\)

\(^{2}\text{Rudolf Bultmann, in Kerygma And Myth, Vol. I. p. 41.}\)

\(^{3}\text{Schmithals, pp. 176-177.}\)
an investigation find it impossible to secure adequate answers to this question, but such a question "destroys faith". It would seek to flee from the decision in which Christ's Word places one now in the present. To even ask such a question means by itself that one has chosen "unreality". It is to seek objective security in factual possessions, instead of grasping new life offered to one in the Word addressed now through preaching.¹

Like Barth, Bultmann sees nothing in the historical Jesus which would call to the attention of a contemporary the possibility of a superhistorical faith. Jesus does not call attention to himself, but merely proclaims the end of the world and is ultimately mistaken. One only comes to believe that Jesus is God's saving act because it is proclaimed as such through the Word of preaching. Kierkegaard's dialectic of the "infinite qualitative difference" may be taken as applying to Christology as well. The paradox for Bultmann and Barth is "absolute" in the sense that God never infringes upon the world in such a way as to cause a disturbance, as, it is argued, this would make God directly apprehendable. Like Barth, Bultmann can say that God remains God, and man remains man, in the strictest sense.

While it is certainly paradoxical to speak of any divine significance, any "act of God", or "eschatological event", as happening in the created order, given this basic

dialectic, this paradox per se is not Kierkegaard's paradox. As we have previously observed, Kierkegaard's paradox arises from history (Historie) itself; it is not merely applied to history through preaching. To recall a passage which underlines this point:

Here at the outset let us take care to make it clear that the question of an historical point of departure arises even for a contemporary disciple; for if we are not careful here, we shall meet with an insuperable difficulty later...when we come to deal with the case of the disciple whom we call the disciple at second hand. The contemporary disciple gets an historical point of departure for his eternal consciousness as well as any later disciple; for he is contemporary with precisely that historical phenomenon which refuses to be reduced to a moment of occasional significance, but proposes to interest him in another sense than the merely historical, presenting itself to him as a condition for his eternal happiness. If this was not so, then (deducing the consequences conversely) the Teacher is not the God but only a Socrates, and if he does not conduct himself like a Socrates, he is not even a Socrates.¹

Kierkegaard's paradox is an ontological paradox which begins with history (Historie). Such an "historical phenomenon" presents itself to man "as a condition for his eternal happiness." Therefore preaching itself, in so far as it retains this paradox, is historical. Any other alternative presents one with "an insuperable difficulty".

There is really no objection to the fact that Barth and Bultmann use the paradox that they do. The only objection here noted is the tendency to pass off their paradox as being Kierkegaard's paradox. Any such effort cannot succeed simply because of the abundant evidence to the

contrary.

Let us now turn to the question of whether the more mature Barth is an advance upon his earlier position in regards to the Christological issue.

Later Barth: The Paradox Resolved

Gustaf Wingren observes that Barth's "system", which makes an ontological distinction between God and man, has "left its stamp" on the whole of Barth's writings. The difference between Barth's earlier and later theological works, therefore, "appears insignificant". ¹

For the most part, Wingren's observation seems to be correct. However one does find in later Barth a certain mellowing of his position over against the position expressed in Romans. There tends to be a relaxation of the hostility between the two realms separated by this "gulf", even if it does not represent the construction of a "new building", as Wingren rightly observes. ²

Furthermore there is a difference in Barth's later position regarding paradox. While in the Dogmatics Barth refrains from using paradox to the extent it was used in Romans, this is not to say that he does not occasionally refer to Jesus' existence as a "paradox", or that there is now no Christological paradox of the phenomenal kind as used in his earlier work. Rather it is to suggest that from what he terms the "altitude of revelation", his mature position finds the Christological paradox resolved,

¹Wingren, p. 23. ²Ibid., p. 28.
given an "illumined" reason.

We have noted at the very beginning of this thesis that for Barth, "A paradox...is not only made by means of a δόξα a 'phenomenon,' but is to be regarded, if it is to be understood at all, Παράδοξον δόξαν i.e. contrary to what the phenomenon as such appears to express."¹ Paradox, for Barth, means that which runs contrary to "appearance". In this respect, his position is very similar to Bultmann's. Thus Barth is able to say, for example:

The form as such, the means, does not take the place of God. It is not the form that reveals, speaks, comforts, works, helps, but God in the form. The result therefore of God assuming a form is not a medium or a third thing between God and man, nor a reality different from God, which as such would be the subject of revelation.²

This revelation, for Barth, takes place not in "man's sphere", as a theogony or cosmogony may be said to have done. Nor for that matter does it take place in the "historical", if one is to understand by that, historical phenomena. Barth contends that revelation as history of the phenomenal variety is, "obviously and utterly inappropriate to the object of its testimony."³

Revelation in this sense suggests a certain understanding of faith. Faith, to Barth's way of thinking, is best grasped as "gnosis": "...rightly understood the act

²ibid., p. 369. ³ibid., p. 373.
of faith is also an act of knowledge. Faith means knowledge."¹ Faith is concerned with an "illumination of the reason". Revelation occurs when God in His own freedom makes Himself known to man and there is "actual experience" that God speaks, and one cannot fail to see and hear Him. Knowledge is transmitted to man by "this incomprehensible Teacher". Thus Christian faith and knowledge occurs when the "divine reason" or the "divine Logos", "...sets up His law in the region of man's understanding, to which law, reason must accommodate itself." When this comes to pass, man comes to "knowledge". Then it is that, "God sets up His law in man's thought, in his seeing and hearing and feeling, the revelation of the truth is also reached about man and his reason, the revelation of man is reached, who cannot bring about of himself what is brought about simply by God Himself."² Barth continues:

Can God be known? Yes, God can be known, since it is actually true and real that He is knowable through Himself. When that happens, man becomes free, he becomes empowered, he becomes capable--a mystery to himself--of knowing God. Knowledge of God is a knowledge completely effected and determined from the side of its object, from the side of God.³

Possessing this revelation, or rather being possessed by this revelation, the disciples could witness to Jesus as the Christ. They could then use these revelatory sayings about Jesus, "...repeating them as coming from His mouth."

²Ibid., p. 24. ³Ibid.
This, however, was not an illegitimate practice, since it was God's revelation, and not merely their own enthusiasm which motivated this action.

Thus the Bible is understood by Barth, as the "witness" to revelation.\(^1\) The Gospels "witness" to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as He was revealed to the disciples in the Resurrection and the forty days following. Barth writes:

During this period they came to see that He had always been present among them in His deity, though hitherto this deity had been veiled. They now recalled these preliminary manifestations of glory which they had already witnessed during His earthly life, but with unseeing eyes, and which now, in the light of what took place in those days, acquired for them particular import which they had always had in themselves, though hidden from them. Now they actually beheld His glory. During these forty days the presence of God in the presence of the man Jesus was no longer a paradox.\(^2\)

When the New Testament, therefore, speaks of Jesus as the Word of God it is speaking of "His resurrection from the dead", and only secondarily of any historical records of the event itself. The paradox of phenomena is strictly adhered to in terms of Jesus' historical existence:

The witness concerns the self-attestation of the Son of God who is identical with this man, not an existing acquaintance with His being and work as such. All such acquaintance with Jesus the Son

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\(^1\)Karl Barth, C.D., I/1, p. 375ff.

of God is repudiated. His form as a man is regarded and described rather as the concealing of His true being, and therefore this true being as the Son of God is a hidden being.¹

This later position in the Church Dogmatics does not seem to vary from this earlier position in so far as the phenomenal paradox is concerned. In volume I/2 especially, Barth deals with the Christological issue and with the difference between Reformed and Lutheran understanding. Much of what he states here shares the same conviction as expressed in Romans.

Barth affirms that "the Word became flesh" means "primarily and by itself", that the Word became a "participant" in human nature and existence. Human "essence and existence" became His in this respect, that is to say, in the concrete reality of one man, Jesus of Nazareth. This, he states, is not to be confused with adoptionism, so that man ceased to be what he was before. Nor for that matter, did God cease to be what He was before—yet He became what He was not, "a man, this man".²

However Barth understands by the word "became" in this context something other than its literal meaning. In a manner reminiscent of Zwingli, Barth proposes a "paraphrase", and thus understands the passage to mean "the Word assumed flesh". This, he argues, avoids the misunderstanding that God could somehow cease to be

¹Barth, C.D., IV/1, p. 163.

"entirely Himself and equal to Himself". "God cannot cease to be God."  

Furthermore he makes the significant point (to which we will return below) that while the incarnation is "inconceivable", it is not "absurd", nor must it be understood as an "absurdity". He continues:

The inconceivable fact in it /i.e. the incarnation/ is that without ceasing to be God the Word of God is among us in such a way that He takes over human being, which is His creature, into His own being and to that extent makes it His own being. As His own predicate along with His original predicate of divinity, He takes over human being into unity with Himself. And it is by the paraphrase 'the Word assumed flesh' that the second misunderstanding is also guarded against, that in the incarnation, by means of union of divine and human being and nature, a third is supposed to arise. Jesus Christ as the Mediator between God and man is not a third, midway between the two. In that case God has at once ceased to be God and likewise He is not a man like us. But Jesus is the Mediator, the God-Man, in such a way that he is God and Man. This 'and' is the inconceivable act of the 'becoming' in the incarnation.  

Barth goes on to recall the difference in this respect between the Lutheran and the Reformed positions. The Lutherans took a "well-nigh independent interest in the unio naturarum", while the Reformed Church, on the other hand, stressed the "relation of the union of natures to the hypostatic union." Pushed to the extreme, he notes, the former position might lead to the Eutychian error of identification of the two natures, the latter to the

1 *ibid.*, p. 160. Marcion also made this assertion. See: Tertullian's *Incar.* 3.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 160-161.
Nestorian error with its separation. This was in fact the mutual objection of both parties.¹

Barth maintains, however, that such differences should not be construed as differences in "faith", but rather as differences between "two schools of tradition". Each position, he argues, finds their starting-point in the unity of Jesus Christ, "the unity of the divine Word with the human being assumed by Him, the unity of the two natures." He finds biblical antecedents to this discussion in the "Synoptic and Pauline-Johannine witness to Christ", the Synoptic being closer to the Lutheran position, the Pauline-Johannine being closer to the Reformed.²

Barth sums up Luther's position on Christ along the following lines:

The miracle of the incarnation, of the unio hypostatica, is seen from this angle when we realise that the Word of God descended from the freedom, majesty and glory of His divinity, that without becoming unlike Himself He assumed His likeness to us, and that now He is to be sought and found of us here, namely, in His human being. There is no other form or manifestation in heaven or on earth save the one child in the stable, the one man on the cross. This is the Word to whom we must harken, render faith and obedience, cling ever so closely. Every question concerning the Word which is directed away from Jesus of Nazareth, the human being of Christ, is necessarily and wholly directed away from Himself, the Word, and therefore from God Himself, because the Word, and therefore God Himself, does not exist for us apart from the human being of Christ.³

In light of the above description—a description which would appear to be an accurate outline of Luther's

¹ibid., pp. 161-162. ²ibid., p. 162. ³ibid., pp. 165-166.
position—Barth raises several questions which are of value in relationship to Luther and also to the Christological paradox. He writes:

The problems raised by this idea may be plainly reduced to the following questions. Does it take such account of the freedom, majesty and glory of the Word of God that they are in no way merged and submerged in His becoming flesh? And if such account is taken of it, then does the same hold true also of the flesh which He has become? And if the concept 'Word' and the concept 'flesh' are both taken seriously but are considered as mutually conditioning one another, is the statement of John 1.14 an understandable statement at all? On the assumption of such mutual conditioning does it not mean that either the vere Deus or the vere homo is taken less than seriously, is in fact weakened down and altered in meaning?  

The key word here in Barth's understanding of the Lutheran position is that of "idea". In the foregoing chapters where the Christological paradox has been discussed, it has been defined and described not as an "idea", but as an "historical occurrence". Unless this point is made and understood, subsequent discussion is at cross purposes.

The difference between Luther's understanding outlined above, and the Reformed understanding as outlined by Barth, is largely one of existential versus speculative modes of thought. This was what Kierkegaard discussed in the Postscript, and which we have reviewed in a previous chapter in reference to the "absolute paradox". On a theoretical-speculative level, it is "inconceivable"

\[\text{\textit{ibid.}}, \text{pp. 166-167.}\]
that God could become man. However on an historical-existential level, not only is such an event "inconceivable", it is "absurd". Absurdity denotes existence; it is "absurd" that the scrawny Jew, who I can touch and handle, and who stands before me, is, at the same time, God, and demonstrates himself to be such by word and deed.

This is not to suggest that Christianity itself is "absurd", or that the "eternal divine essence" is inherently illogical. Rather it becomes absurd when it comes into existence. The experience of the paradox is a function of one's "transition to belief".¹ For the believer the paradox is no longer paradoxical, nor absurd. According to Kierkegaard: "the object of faith is the absurd, the paradox, which is the inevitable cause of scandal, but only for whoever sees the object from the outside, i.e. for him who has no faith...For the believer, for the man of faith, the object is neither absurd nor paradoxical..."²

This is to suggest, as well, a difference in how Scripture is understood by the respective positions. Barth writes:

The New Testament, like the Old Testament, is the witness to the revelation of the hidden God. The conclusive revelation, the revelation expected by the whole of the Old Testament, at the very point at which one might well have seen the contradiction and annihilation of it, in the rejection


and crucifixion of the Son of God by His chosen people. Here, too, essentially, the New Testament asserts nothing that differs from the Old Testament. On the contrary, we shall have to show that it is the New Testament that the hiddenness of God in the Old Testament is first disclosed in all its completeness.¹

The New Testament (as we have observed previously) is, for Barth, the "witness to the revelation", in the sense that God has illumined men's reason through the revelation, not in some crude historical sense. Barth continues:

With regard to expectation in the New Testament the change that has taken place as compared with the Old Testament consists in the fact, and only in the fact, that the coming of Christ of whom the New Testament witness speaks is not the object of recollection as He that has come. This cannot be said of the Messiah expected in the Old Testament, although Old Testament expectation refers only to Him that came according to the New Testament witness. As distinguished from Old Testament expectation, New Testament expectation knows concretely and explicitly who it is that is expected. It is simply recollection turned at an angle of 180 degrees, the recollection of the Word come in the flesh, whose glory the New Testament witnesses have seen.²

On the contrary, Luther, as we may recall, understood the New Testament to represent history, "...just as happens among men when one writes a book about a king or a prince, telling what he did, said, and suffered in his day."³ Understood as history, the New Testament allows one to become, to use Kierkegaard's term, "contemporaneous

with Christ". Christ does not come to us existentially in the present as a superior kind of divine Friend. Rather we become existentially contemporaneous with Him through the reading of the New Testament as history. This presents an ontological paradox to us as an objective historical occurrence.

Thus the questions that Barth addresses to Luther are, strictly speaking, inappropriate and misplaced. What is involved, to Luther's understanding, is not his "idea", but God's occurrence. Nor for that matter, could the Lutheran position admit to a difference between the Synoptic and Pauline-Johannine understanding of Christ. John's gospel, as well as Paul's epistles, concern themselves with history as do the Synoptics. From Luther's perspective, the issue at stake is not one of "tradition", as much as it is one of "faith". John 1.14 is intelligible only as ontological paradox, and must be faced as such. Not to face the paradox, is not to face the God-Man. One can only enter Christianity through the "door"; only then will one "go in and out and find pasture."¹

At a later point in the Dogmatics (IV/1), Barth again speaks directly to incarnational issues. Yet even in this later description, Barth does not alter his basic dialectic. The word assumes flesh, but does not become flesh as in the sense of John 1.14. Barth writes:

God gives Himself, but He does not give Himself away. He does not give up being God in becoming a creature, in becoming man. He does not cease

¹John 10.9.
to be God. He does not come into conflict with Himself. He does not sin when in unity with the man Jesus. He mingles with sinners and takes their place. And when He dies in His unity with this man, death does not gain any power over Him. 1

For Barth God "becomes" man, only in the sense of "God and man", of God "in unity with" man. He maintains this construction since:

If it were otherwise, if in it He set Himself in contradiction with Himself, how could He reconcile the world with Himself? Of what value would His deity be to us if--instead of crossing in that deity the very real gulf between Himself and us--He left that deity behind Him in His coming to us, if it came to be outside of Him as He became ours? What would be the value to us of it if He lost Himself? 2

Thus Barth states that, "We begin with the insight that God is 'not a God of confusion but of peace' (I Cor. 14.33)." 3 Therefore Barth finds "no paradox...not even the possibility of it." God is the "Father of lights with whom there is no variableness nor interplay of light and darkness (Jas. 1.17)." 4

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1 Barth, C.D., IV/1, p. 185.  
2 ibid.  
3 Tertullian, Luther, and Kierkegaard "begin" from the opposite direction with the historical Jesus Christ.  
4 Barth, C.D., IV/1, p. 186.  
This, again, is not to say that there is no paradox in Jesus' existence. For as has been observed, Barth speaks of Jesus' existence as a "paradox", and that in a phenomenal sense (C.D., III/2, p. 449). Rather, it is to say that in light of Barth's understanding of revelation, the paradox has ceased to be paradoxical to the extent that it is "no longer a paradox."

Perhaps it would be helpful to recall Brunner's analogy of the stick in the water. A straight stick appears broken when partially submerged in water, just as God's Word appears broken when found in the world. God, for Brunner, could only reveal Himself in the world.
Barth continues in a style of argument almost reminiscent of Luther:

What He is and does He is and does in full unity with Himself. It is in full unity with Himself that He is also—and especially and above all—in Christ, that He becomes a creature, man, flesh, that He enters into our being in contradiction, that He takes upon Himself its consequences. If we think that this is impossible it is because our concept of God is too narrow, too arbitrary, too human—far too human. Who God is and what it is to be divine is something we have to learn where God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ as the God who does this, it is not for us to be wiser than He and to say that it is in contradiction with the divine essence. We have to be ready to be taught by Him that we have been too small and perverted in our thinking about Him within the framework of a false idea of God. It is not for us to speak of a contradiction and rift in the being of God, but to learn to correct our notion of the being of God, to reinstate them in the light of the fact that He does this.

It is this latter passage which is especially interesting in contrast to Barth's other comments from IV/1 quoted above. On the one hand, Barth seeks to affirm that in the "form of a servant" The Word And The World, pp. 6-7). Yet we know that the paradox of the stick in the water is resolvable. From a higher perspective, it may be determined that the stick is indeed straight; and that its broken appearance is due to the refraction of the light. But the question which arises when this paradox is applied to Christology is how in the world may it be determined that there is no contradiction in God's Word? This was Kierkegaard's complaint against Speculative Philosophy. For Kierkegaard maintained that in the world it cannot be determined, but rather can only be determined by being eternal. Yet Barth argues that given God's revelation, an "illumined" reason knows there to be no contradiction in God's Word, and hence no paradox. The phenomenal paradox is resolved by Barth. For Kierkegaard the paradox is ontological and, therefore, cannot be resolved even in the face of an "illumined" reason. This difference becomes especially apparent in what follows.

ibid.
God "does not cease to be God" when He is found "in unity with" Jesus. For if that were to happen, He would have lost Himself and there could be no reconciliation. But on the other hand, Barth finds that in order for there to be a reconciliation, God, "in full unity with Himself", must at some point enter into the contradiction of our being, "creature, man, flesh", and therefore all its "consequences". But how can this be? How can God, who is without contradiction, enter into contradiction and still remain non-contradictory? Something must give. And for Barth, finally, it is man's reason itself which must go.

Barth's style of argument is "almost" reminiscent of Luther's but not quite. Luther, like Kierkegaard, would never admit to there being a contradiction in God's being. Rather the contradiction is found in the fact that the "eternal divine essence" has come into being in "existence", hence the paradox. The paradox is not within God Himself, but within the fact that He has come into being. The contradiction lies historically in the God-Man, the ontological and "absolute" paradox.

Barth, however, in trying to hold together his "system" can only do so at the cost of reason itself. Barth figures that what appears to be a "contradiction within the divine essence" must really be a "false idea of God". But is such a "contradiction" really "within the divine essence" itself, or within Barth's "system" itself?

It is usually Tertullian, Luther and Kierkegaard who
are accused of being irrational. However they are at least rational enough to recognize a paradox when they see one. An ontological paradox in order to be an ontological paradox presupposes the reason that the paradox contradicts. Given Barth's approach, there is no paradox, no contradiction, and hence no reason. While Luther and Kierkegaard find such a paradox to be no paradox to faith, the paradox always remains paradoxical to reason. Barth, on the other hand, finds no paradox in terms of an "illumined" reason. Where does Barth acquire such an "illumination"? No doubt Barth would answer that it is "revealed". To argue with Barth is a losing battle. For not only are we playing on his court, but we are playing by his rules.

We are again back to the question of gnosticism that was raised in the previous section on Romans. Barth seems to act the role of re-Creator. Faith is re-created as knowledge, the God-Man as God and Man, Biblical history as Biblical witness, ontological paradox as phenomenal paradox, "the Word became flesh" as "the Word assumed flesh", and reason as illumination.

A chief characteristic of Marcion was his contempt for the created order. He found it "unseemly" that God should be found within this "prison-house" which he called our world. Barth comes very close to Marcion when he states that history is an "obviously and utterly inappropriate" setting for revelation. And if it is "inappropriate" for God to reveal Himself in history, it is also "inappropriate" for God to reveal Himself in the
creation. Thus Barth re-creates the world to his liking; everything is re-fashioned in the image of his "system"--a "system" which, as has been observed, cannot be traced back to Kierkegaard.

**Summation**

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that both Barth and Bultmann share an understanding of paradox which is a paradox of phenomenon. On the other hand, it has been argued above that Tertullian, Luther, and Kierkegaard share an understanding of paradox which is basically one of ontology.

Barth's later position, while being close to his earlier position in terms of its basic dialectic, does reflect a different position regarding the Christological paradox. Given a revelation which "illumines" the reason, the paradox is no longer paradoxical to reason. This differs from Kierkegaard's understanding which finds the paradox "absurd" to reason, yet inoffensive to faith.

For Barth, the contradiction in God's reconciliation of man lies not in God's being itself, but in man's reason itself. For Kierkegaard, the contradiction in God's reconciliation of man lies not in God's being itself, but in the historical paradox itself--the God-Man. Precisely because the God-Man is an ontological paradox and not merely a phenomenal one, objective knowledge of God is ruled out for Kierkegaard. Instead man is placed in the position of having to believe in this objective uncertainty.

Barth's misunderstanding of Kierkegaard's paradox
seems to stem from a "speculative" reading of *Sickness Unto Death*. Read in this manner, the "infinite qualitative difference" between God and man is basically a difference in ontology. For Kierkegaard, however, this difference is more a matter of soteriology than ontology.

Barth and Bultmann, it should be noted, are not alone in their rendering of Kierkegaard's paradox as being phenomenal. Such an understanding has had a tremendous influence on the theology of this century. It is an understanding shared not only by, what has been termed, the "left-wing" of Dogmatics and Biblical Criticism, but by so-called "moderate" voices speaking for the Church herself.

It may be recalled that we began this thesis by noting three primary definitions of paradox used by Martin J. Heinecken: counter to appearance (phenomenon), counter to general opinion, and counter to logic (reason). It is interesting to note how Heinecken himself understands Kierkegaard's "absolute" paradox in light of the above definitions. For Heinecken, it is the paradox of phenomenon which is the controlling idea that informs the other definitions. He maintains that such a paradox fits all three definitions of the term. First, it is "counter to appearance" because God is "effectively hidden" in the man Jesus. He did not reveal Himself directly to his contemporaries "either by his looks or his deeds."

Secondly, it is "counter to the general opinion" since the "natural man" cannot discern the Godhead in the man Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit may enable man to do this.
And thirdly, it is an "offense to the reason of man". Man "can only understand that he cannot understand it." Yet he observes that it is not primarily offensive to the intellect in this sense, but "to his pride of virtue and of power, which makes his absolute dependence upon God's grace a skandalon." Heinecken continues:

The 'knowledge' of God conveyed in and through Jesus, the Christ, is, therefore 'knowledge' of the most intimate personal relationship in the biblical sense rather than a mere intellectual apprehension of an historic fact or of a truth of the reason. It is the self-impartation of God himself and this is not accomplished except through the transformation in his existence of the one so apprehended (John 2.5). The alternatives when confronted by the claim which Jesus, the Christ, puts upon man are not belief or doubt, but 'faith' or 'offense', and neither 'faith' nor 'offense' are possible except where the absoluteness of the paradox in the sense described is recognized.¹

Thus Heinecken understands by Kierkegaard's "absolute paradox" not an ontological paradox, which so affronts reason as to render objective speculation impossible because the paradox is irresolvable. Rather he understands by "absolute paradox" a paradox of appearance which excludes "historic fact" in favor of the "self-impartation of God himself" existentially in "the one so apprehended". Like Barth, he affirms "absolute dependence upon God's grace"

apart from any physical or historical manifestation, any form that would betray a synthesis with God's content.\footnote{Cf., Barth, \textit{C. D.}, I/1, p. 200.}
Conclusions On Dialectical Theology's Use Of Paradox

In the previous chapter, paradox has been studied in relationship to two representative figures of Dialectical Theology (Barth and Bultmann). The following major points of comparison may be drawn between this Christological approach and the approach used by Kierkegaard.

1. Both Barth and Bultmann (in agreement with much of historical criticism) do not accept the Jesus described in the New Testament as being the "approximate" historical Jesus. As opposed to Kierkegaard's understanding, their approach is indifferent to any historical phenomenon as being in and of itself noteworthy as a point of departure for Christian faith. That is to say, there is nothing about the historical (historisch) Jesus' teachings and actions that could be construed as being an unveiling of God's hiddenness in themselves. Barth, for example, only proceeds from God's Word to history, and not from history to God's Word. If God is revealed through the teachings and actions of Jesus, it is not the form as such that reveals God, but God in the form. For Kierkegaard, revelation and the form cannot be separated.

2. The New Testament, therefore, presents a paradox of appearance or phenomenon. On the one hand, Jesus is merely a man who appears identical to all other men who have ever lived. There is nothing that would distinguish him in what Kierkegaard would term a "qualitative" sense from anyone else. This applies not only to his physical appearance, but to his words and deeds. On the other hand,
this man is revealed to be God's act in history. The New Testament, therefore, is seen as the "witness" (Barth) or "proclamation" (Bultmann) of this revelation.

3. The offense taken at this kind of paradox lies in the fact that there is nothing objective on which to base one's faith. Heineckcn finds this offensive to man's pride because, it is argued, man has nothing to content himself with in terms of objective historical possession. It is also intellectually offensive for God to act in history counter to all appearance. Barth maintains that man has nothing on which to base his faith except the "mercy of God", which, of course, cannot be apprehended from history as phenomenon.

4. Since the contradiction between God and man is spoken of in terms of a paradox of phenomenon and not ontology, objective knowledge of God is not excluded for reasons of the paradox. Barth affirms that God is knowable to a reason illumined by God's revelation. The Christological paradox in the phenomenal sense is resolved in the face of such knowledge. Kierkegaard, however, saw the paradox as being an ontological contradiction, and hence "absolute" in the sense that it contradicted any objective attempt at the knowledge of God apart from the paradox. Such an ontological paradox could only be appropriated by faith--the condition for faith given by God. Bultmann also excludes objective knowledge of God, not because of the paradox of phenomenon, but because of his presuppositions (see below).

These two different understandings of paradox (as
represented by Tertullian, Luther, and Kierkegaard on the one hand, Barth and Bultmann on the other) raise certain problems for contemporary theology. It is to this question that we will now turn.
Chapter Five: Conclusion--

The Dilemma of Contemporary Theology
The title of this final chapter reflects the name of a book by Per Lønning. Lønning observes that there is a conflict to be found in contemporary theology when two positions express "different and seemingly incompatible claims". How can both "revelation" and the "modern world" be taken seriously? Or as Lønning phrases it, "...is a coexistence possible without some kind of amputation that would render either Christianity of culture invalid?"\(^1\)

In terms of this thesis, the question which emerges is whether the ontological paradox which has been attributed to Kierkegaard, Tertullian, and Luther can be sustained in the present, given the rise of historical criticism? If it can, what is to become of such criticism? And if it cannot, what is to become of the Christologies of Kierkegaard, Tertullian, and Luther?\(^2\)


\(^2\)&nbsp;As observed previously, Kierkegaard's ontological paradox comes about through the acceptance of the Jesus depicted in the New Testament as being the "approximate" historical Jesus. Kierkegaard takes the gospels largely at their face value and even in their literal sense.

No paradox is paradoxical except when understood at its face value. Brunner's analogy of the stick in the water, for example, is paradoxical only when understood in terms of appearance. Upon further examination, such a phenomenal paradox may be resolved with an increase in knowledge. In much the same way, Barth resolves his understanding of the Christological paradox in his *Church Dogmatics* when such knowledge is given in the form of revelation.

Kierkegaard's paradox, however, is an ontological paradox. That is to say, the believer believes that the paradox is a "true" paradox at its face value, and thus
However before attempting to struggle with this issue any further, let us first review the fact that we are indeed dealing with an ontological paradox, and not a phenomenal one. Paradox, as has been observed in the previous chapter, is often understood by twentieth-century theology to be a paradox of phenomenon, i.e. that which runs contrary to appearance. This understanding, it has been argued, is a breach with Kierkegaard and his predecessors. For further support of this argument, a glance at a recent work which comments on this issue may be of value.

**Eller's Observation**

Vernard Eller, writing in *Kierkegaard and Radical Discipleship: A New Perspective*, speaks to the question at hand. Eller affirms that for Kierkegaard, Jesus Christ is "The" Paradox, the Absurd, and thus the object of faith. Such a paradox, for Eller, is ontological in nature. He writes: "The claim he both presents and represents is that this plain, ordinary, individual man (who thus obviously is not God) is in fact God."¹ This claim, he continues, is

not to be ignored. For if the claim is true, to choose Christ is to choose life, and to reject him is to chose damnation. Likewise indifference is a sign of "defiance and rebellion". Therefore, "one must choose."¹

This choice, as Eller sees it, cannot be calculated on a rational basis, either scientifically, historically, or philosophically. Investigation and reflection are incapable of deciding the matter. But Eller affirms, "this is not the same as saying that investigation and reflection are of no use whatever". Rather he understands Kierkegaard's position as maintaining a role for reason and research. Their "role" is that of determining whether the claim is truly a paradox or not, and in determining what evidence is available both "pro" and "con". He continues:

Thus regarding the claim 'Napoleon was a man', research can say, 'This claim is not a paradox but an evident fact. All the evidence is "pro"; there was such a man and there is nothing to indicate that he was anything other than a man.' Conversely, regarding the claim 'Plymouth Rock is God,' research can say, 'This claim is not a paradox but an absurdity; all the evidence is "con"; the rock is a rock and there is nothing to suggest that it might also be God.' Finally, regarding the claim, 'Jesus Christ is God,' research can say, 'This claim, indeed is a true paradox; there is strong and convincing evidence both pro and con; Jesus is either what the claim says he is or else he is a fraud--either God-Man or mad man, but which, no amount of study or thought will accomplish a whit to decide.'²

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 359.

There is a certain amount of difficulty in this approach in that (1) "pro" evidence runs contrary to
Paradox, for Eller, is the "precondition of faith". It makes faith both possible and necessary. Kierkegaard maintains the paradox by proposing the term "God-Man". This term affirms Jesus' divine humanity (or human deity), "without positing a human nature and a divine nature in such a way that one tends to gain predominance over the other." Thus, Eller observes, for Kierkegaard the factors of Christ's "recognizability" as over against his "incognito" are in operation concurrently and in tension with one another. Furthermore, he makes the following statement, whose content is in keeping with the basic nature of this thesis:

S.K. has not been well understood on this point, and in an effort to go him one better, thinkers of the modern 'kerygma theology' school have picked up the truth of S.K.'s insistence upon Christ's incognito and made it mean that the 'deity' of the historical Jesus must be absolutely invisible and indiscernible. The paradox, then, comes about in this wise: The life, career, and person of the earthly, historical Jesus constitutes the 'con'; nothing is to be seen here except what would indicate that Jesus is simply and solely a man. Later, after the historical Jesus has left the scene, the 'pro' comes along in the form of the early Church's contention that this man was indeed God. But this was not S.K.'s position: in fact, he said: 'The whole life of Christ on earth would have been mere play if he had been incognito to such a degree that he went through life totally unnoticed—and yet in a true sense he was incognito.'

reason and therefore is difficult to accept "scientifically"; and (2) even if there is established "pro"
evidence on historical grounds, it does not follow that such evidence leads to the logical conclusion: God. That is to say, once confronted with both "pro" and "con" evidence, we are still faced with Lessing's "ditch". (Eller understands by "pro" evidence any claim of divinity, in the first instance; and in the second, any miracle that would "witness" to such a claim. See: p. 363.).

1ibid., p. 360. 2ibid., p. 362. This and other points of evidence which support Eller's claim have been noted in previous chapters.
Eller goes on to state that much of the misunderstanding of paradox stems from what Kierkegaard meant by "incognito". Eller maintains that for the "kerygma-school", any "proofs", "signs", or "claims" of Jesus deity would be a violation of His "incognito". Therefore such evidence of "supernaturalness", or anything that could be seen as betraying Jesus' divinity are seen by such people as Bultmann, as belonging to the Church's early affirmation of faith (kerygma), and are not to be understood as a literal event concerning the historical Jesus.¹

But Eller points out that such claims were, for Kierkegaard, no such violation, since it must be remembered who it is that acts in such a manner. For Jesus to say, as an example, "I am God", is no violation of incognito, Eller reminds us, since it is only a mere man who says such a thing, and therefore is obviously not what he claims to be. The speech contains all "pro" evidence, but the speaker is all "con", and thus the speech is paradoxical in the extreme—not in the sense of being contrary to all phenomena, but in the sense of affirming contradictory ontologies. Eller states:

Clearly, 'incognito' meant something different to S.K. than it does to Bultmann and others of the kerygma-school. For S.K., it did not mean that the historical Jesus must be denied any and every indicator that would suggest his deity but only that every such indicator be accompanied with a counter-indication which would have the effect of balancing the account and leaving the verdict wide open—yet all the more urgent because of the evidence that is building up. In short, the kerygma-school sees the

¹ibid., p. 363.
historical Jesus as nothing but incognito; S.K. saw him as incognito so dialectically welded to immediate recognizableness as to form a most irritating and inescapable paradox.

Eller sees Kierkegaard's position as avoiding some of the "most glaring weaknesses" of the "kerygma-school". For, he reasons, if there is nothing to be found in the historical Jesus that would betray the ontological kind of paradox described above, then there is no real reason why the claims of the early Church should attach themselves to Jesus of Nazareth and not to someone else, or even to no one at all. Paradox, used in the sense that is used by the "kerygma-school", arises from the claim of the Church and not from the historical person, and thus might just as well attach itself to a figure of the imagination as to a real historical person.

Finally, Eller concludes by raising several other questions which often go unanswered. He writes:

Thus, the kerygma-school does not possess a true Kierkegaardian paradox composed of pro-and-con evidence building up to an existential tension that compels one either to take offense or to make the venture of faith. It holds, rather, a mass of 'con' evidence topped by a 'pro' claim which brings with it absolutely no substantiation except the subjective power of 'God's Word.' But why this particular claim, coming as it were out of thin air, should be treated as the Absurd rather than merely an absurdity, no one is able to say. And what there is about a claim so lacking in solidity, in historical actuality and 'presence', that should attract a man's attention, compel him to face up to it, and force him to decide one way or the other--again, no one is able to say. And yet--and yet Kierkegaard is the one who customarily gets accused.
of irrationality, subjectivism, and making faith into a wild and unmotivated leap in the dark.¹

This thesis would confirm Eller's observation regarding the difference between Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox—a paradox which represented an ontological contradiction; and that understanding of paradox held by a great segment of contemporary theology—a paradox which represents a phenomenal contradiction.² Indeed one may go further than Eller and maintain that in so far as Kierkegaard developed his ontological paradox on the Christologies of Tertullian and Luther, this breach is reflected, as well, between these earlier positions, and the paradox of contemporary theology.

It must be remembered that Tertullian and Luther read the Scriptures as statements of history. Read in this manner, the New Testament found no distinction between the "historical Jesus" and the "biblical Christ". Rather, they were one in the same: the paradox, the God-Man, or as Luther called Him simply, "Christ". He was the objective historical revelation. This Jesus proclaims Himself in various ways as being divine. He heals the sick, raises

¹Ibid., p. 366.

²John Heywood Thomas in his book, Subjectivity And Paradox (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), is also of the opinion that Kierkegaard's paradox is historical in nature (pp. 116 & 124). While it appears, at first, that he understands by Kierkegaard's paradox, an ontological paradox (p. 114), it soon becomes obvious that his understanding is one which runs "contrary to all appearance" (p. 128). Thus there is an ontological distinction to be made between God and man in Jesus Christ (p. 123), and therefore is no real difference between Kierkegaard and Barth (pp. 122-133) to his understanding.
the dead, commands nature, fulfills prophecy, and announces God's Kingdom with Himself as King. And he does all this as an historical individual man born of the seed of David. We are left wondering, "What sort of man is this...?"  

It is interesting to note as well, that Kierkegaard read the Bible in the same manner as his predecessors. And he did so after the historical question had arisen. The paradox that Kierkegaard demonstrates throughout his work is the paradox of the God-Man. It is always Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Jesus, who "...directly represents himself as something entirely different from what it is to be a man, makes himself out to be divine—he, an individual man!" The paradox is that while Jesus appears to be only a mere man who "looks like all the others", yet he says such strange things about himself, and does such miraculous deeds, that he, in effect, acts in such a way as to announce that he is God. Always "incognito" is expressed by Kierkegaard in terms of Christ's flesh, not in terms of his words or deeds. Kierkegaard's paradox is an absolute one because it contains the absolute consideration: Eternity which has come into being in time. It is, therefore, in keeping with

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1Matt. 8.27.  

2Kierkegaard, as we have noted, attributed much to Lessing's writings. The Postscript was written especially against the backdrop of historical relativism. Likewise David Friedrich Strauss' famous work, Das Leben Jesu (1835), was in print years before Kierkegaard first travelled to Berlin, and for over a decade before the Postscript (1846) was published.  

traditional Chalcedonian Christology, and in some ways, an improvement upon it.

Luther, however, like Kierkegaard, is often viewed by contemporary theology as presenting a Christological paradox which runs contrary to all phenomena. Thus Ian D. K. Siggins describes the following as "the extreme paradox of the faith":

We must, on pain of our soul's damnation, believe in the lordship of Christ. Yet when we hear that all things are given to His hand, does not the very opposite seem to be the truth? Before God, Christ is indeed lord of all; yet there seems to be nothing humbler in heaven and earth. In relation to the kingdom of the world, Christ's kingdom is hidden, secret, spiritual, subject to the cross. It has no might, no wealth, no population statistics. It does not regard the riches and power and position, nor yet the wisdom, piety, and virtue of the world, but is open to the weak, poor, blind, and sinful only. Not only does the world refuse to recognize it, but the most eminent, wisest, holiest, and most zealous men persecute it as a destruction and subversion of sound government, both spiritual and temporal.1

Or to cite another example:

Luther's faith is a daring faith: it looks to Christ. His open eyes for reality with all its profundities and tensions had made it apparent to him that God is not visible, not demonstrable, not calculable, but that belief in Him calls for a venture, a leap into the dark...According to Luther, only one thing sustains us in this leap from life's safe shore into the abyss; over this abyss God has erected the sign of the Cross. Even the Cross is no proof that we shall spring into the arms of God. Even on the Cross we behold nothing of God's victory...the certainty of faith

is not based on human experiences and on visible tokens of God's rule in the world. These may be deceptive. But this certainty rests on faith's knowledge of another aspect of God's reality in the world: His hidden presence in Jesus Christ. To be sure, this runs counter to all outward appearance and to all reason. Reason cannot grasp the mystery: 'Who, clothed in garb of flesh and blood, Dost take a manger for Thy throne, While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.'

Again in contemporary theology, the Christological paradox becomes a paradox which "runs counter to all outward appearance". And only does it run counter "to all reason" in so far as it "runs counter to all outward appearance". This, however, was not Luther's understanding, as has been discussed in a previous chapter. For if such was the case, why would Luther waste so much effort in defending ontological paradoxes?

Rather we have observed that Luther's understanding of Scripture was that it represented an historical document. Furthermore Luther maintained at various places a position regarding Scripture that is sometimes (falsely) taken to be "literalism". Luther states, "...its plainest meanings are to be preserved; and, unless the context manifestly compels one to do otherwise, the words are not to be understood apart from their proper literal sense, lest occasion

1 Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther's World of Thought, trans. Martin H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), pp. 87-88.

2 See: A Brief Instruction On What To Look For And Expect In The Gospels (1521).
be given to our adversaries to evade Scripture as a whole."¹

Luther was not offended by the simplicity of the language and of the stories that he found in the Bible. In spite of simplicity, he found the Scripture to contain the "wisdom of God". He urged those who study the Bible to:

...let your own thoughts and feelings go, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and holiest of holy things, as the richest of mines, which can never be worked out, so that you may find the wisdom of God that lays before you in such foolish and simple guise, in order that He may quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling-clothes and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds. Simple and little are the swaddling-clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, that lies in them.²

Yet while Luther has a high estimate of Scripture, and even considers it to be God's Word, he does not let this conviction prevent him from criticizing it when it departs from what he considers to be the gospel and Christ. For this reason, he considers James' letter to be a "right strawy epistle". Likewise he is, at one point, willing to hold up Christ against Scripture should Scripture contradict Christ. "That which treats of Christ" is Luther's standard for judging the Bible. The Bible records the historical event of Jesus Christ; it is the "swaddling-clothes" in which Christ is laid. His critical viewpoint arises from what we have termed the moral and ontological


paradoxes which Scripture itself bears.¹

To a certain degree, it is understandable how Barth could misinterpret Kierkegaard on the meaning of paradox. In *The Sickness Unto Death*, the paradox is treated briefly; and in *Philosophical Fragments*, the paradox is outlined without the accompanying detail which would avoid any misinterpretation. But it is difficult for one to understand how the same kind of phenomenal paradox has achieved such wide acceptance as being truly representative of Luther's Christology, when at every turn Luther holds up the plain meaning of Scripture against all speculative attempts to replace its simplicity with sophistication. This must be one of the most remarkable misunderstandings in the history of Christian scholarship. Scripture, again when taken at its face value, presents Christ as an ontological paradox, not as a phenomenal paradox.

For Luther, God was hidden in the flesh of Christ. God's activity was recognizable neither to the naked eye in terms of Christ's appearance nor in his Cross. But such hiddenness never included, to Luther's understanding, Christ's teaching and works as often reported to be the case by contemporary theology. When Scripture was read in

¹For examples of Luther's use of Scripture, see:
the sense that Luther encouraged, Christ preached the gospel, healed the sick, raised the dead, etc. In a word, Luther's understanding of Christ was the understanding taken over by Kierkegaard in his "incognito". It was never the "leap into the dark" which Bornkamm describes. Luther writes:

This means that He, ate, drank, slept, awakened, was tired, sad, and happy. He wept and laughed, hungered, thirsted, froze, and perspired. He chatted, worked, and prayed. In brief, He required the same things for life's sustenance and preservation that any other human being does. He labored and suffered as anyone else does. He experienced both fortune and misfortune. The only difference between Him and all others was that He was sinless. Since He is also very God, He was free of sin. And yet He was the man through whom the whole world was created and made.¹

Contemporary theology has no problem thus far. But Luther goes on to add the following:

There is the Creator. He is in the world. He lives among men. But He is well hidden. The world did not know Him and paid no attention to Him, especially not until His thirtieth year, when He began to preach, heal the sick, and raise the dead.²

Or again:

But because Christ's actual appearance did not coincide with the image of Him which their thoughts conjured up—He was plain and unassuming, and enjoyed no great reputation—the rulers of the people of Israel and the common mob would not acknowledge Him as the Messiah, much less accept Him. And this despite the fact that St. John had preceded Him as His herald and had testified to Him, and that He


²Ibid., p. 74. Italics mine.
Himself appeared publically shortly thereafter, preaching with power and performing miracles.  

Luther maintains that on the one hand, Christ appeared to be like any other man. There was nothing in terms of his physical appearance which would set Him apart from the millions upon millions of men that have lived. Yet this same man—ordinary to all appearance—demonstrated Himself to be something beyond man by what He accomplished.

Luther describes this ontological paradox as follows:

...Christ not only demonstrated His humanity with His actions, by dwelling among the people so that they could see Him, hear Him, speak with Him, and live near Him until His thirty-fourth year, by suffering cold, hunger, and thirst in this feeble and wretched human form and nature, but that He also displayed His glory and power in proof of His divinity. Of this He gave proof with His teaching, His preaching, His signs and wonders, convincing anyone of His Godhead who was not blinded and hardened by the devil, as the high priests and scribes were. By word and deed He proved that He was God by nature: He healed the sick and raised the dead; in short, He wrought more and greater miracles than any prophet before Him, in fact, than any other human being ever was able to do.  

Luther's position, of course, was nothing new. Tertullian, it has been affirmed, held to this same kind of ontological paradox, as did Luther, many centuries before. It may be helpful, as well, to quote a passage from Tertullian's Apology (XXI), where he writes similar to Luther:

It followed therefore that he whom they [I.e. the Jews] had assumed to be merely man because of his

\[\text{ibid., p. 77. Italics mine.} \]  
\[\text{ibid., p. 614.}\]
humanity, they regarded as a magician from his power, when by a word he cast out demons from men, restored light to the blind, cleansed lepers, braced up the paralytic again, and even by a word restored the dead to life, ruled the elements themselves, quelling storms and walking upon seas, showing that he was the word of God (that is the Logos), that original, first-born word, attended by power and reason and supported by spirit, the selfsame who was both making and had made everything in a word. At his teaching, however, by which the teachers and leading men among the Jews were refuted, they were so angered, especially because a vast crowd was turning aside to him, that in the end they persecuted him, and by violence of their partisanship obtained from Pontius Pilate... Jesus' surrender for crucifixion...

Tertullian goes on to add these solemn words:

Let no one charge us with dishonour, let no one believe any other thing than this \textit{\small i.e. the above, etc.}\footnote{\textit{Tertullian, Apologeticus, trans. Alex. Souter (Cambridge: The University Press, 1917), pp. 71-73.}}\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 75.}, because it is not permitted for anyone to tell lies about his own religion. For from the moment that a man says anything that is worshipped by him other than what he worships, he denies what he worships, and transfers both worship and honour to another, and by transferring he now no longer worships that which he denied.

To sum up, then, it would seem unlikely that the paradox of contemporary theology—the paradox which runs contrary to all phenomena in terms of Jesus' divinity—can find support for its position in the writings of Kierkegaard, or for that matter, in the writings of Luther and Tertullian. Reading the Scripture as history, they held to an understanding of Christ which was basically a paradox of ontology. Kierkegaard's paradox borrows from the paradoxes described by these earlier theologians. There appears to be nothing
of importance which would separate Kierkegaard's position, in this regard, from these preceding positions studied in this thesis, except for the fact that Kierkegaard refers to Christ as the "Paradox", whereas these others did not. Vernard Eller has drawn attention to a significant breach in the continuity of Christology.

An Either/Or

Perhaps it is fitting that in dealing with Kierkegaard, we should finally pose a dilemma around one of Kierkegaard's favorite themes: either/or. While the question of sustaining Kierkegaard's paradox is not, strictly speaking, at the center of discussion in this thesis, it is a question which naturally arises, and which requires some comment. It would be anticlimactic, if not irresponsible, to escort the paradox all this way, only to abandon it outside the pale of the current discussion. The problem which arises is this: either the Christological positions of Tertullian, Luther, and Kierkegaard (positions which take Scripture at its face value and even in its literal sense) are no longer adequate, given the conclusions of historical criticism -- in which case, they should be honestly and finally laid to rest; or historical criticism is, at some point, inadequate -- in which case there is need for the further qualification of such research due to the nature of the paradox.

Contemporary theology, it would seem, has sought to grasp the best of two worlds. On the one hand, it has maintained that the ontological paradox is no longer
necessary, given its exegetical conclusions. On the other, it has looked for support in this endeavor especially to Luther and Kierkegaard by understanding the paradox to be found in their works to represent a paradox of phenomenon rather than ontology.

Let us, therefore, move on to discuss this dilemma using Rudolf Bultmann's theology as a primary case. In the following, the arguments in favor of sustaining the paradox will especially be considered. The reason for such a biased approach is twofold: (1) given the manifold conclusions of historical criticism, a response is called for if one is to cling seriously to the traditional Christological positions described above; and (2) there appears to be certain implications of Kierkegaard's paradoxical approach which have been largely overlooked in the current debate.

That Bultmann understands paradox in a different manner from Kierkegaard stems from the fact that both men have differing presuppositions regarding the nature of the world, and the events that are possible within it. Kierkegaard writes in a journal entry in 1848:

To God all things are possible, that thought is now, in the deepest sense, my watch-word, has acquired a significance in my eyes which I had never imagined it could have. That I must never, at any moment, presume to say that there is no way out for God because I cannot see any. For it is despair and

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1 This has been, in general, the finding of historical criticism since David Friedrich Strauss' famous work, Das Leben Jesu (1835), and has not reversed itself in recent years.

2 This practice would appear invalid in view of the discussion thus far.
presumption to confuse one's pittance of imagination with the possibility over which God disposes. 1

Kierkegaard's presupposition is the presupposition of faith. He sees God at work both in nature and history. Miracles do happen for Kierkegaard. In fact, "God can only show himself to man in miracles..." 2

On the contrary, Bultmann holds to a presupposition which excludes Kierkegaard's understanding. Bultmann's theology is entirely consistent and predictable in this respect that whatever has happened historically must be understood "within" the process of history. He writes in Jesus And The Word (1934):

Obviously the [biblical] criticisms which many deliver, favorable or unfavorable, are given from a standpoint beyond history. As against this I here especially aimed to avoid everything beyond history and to find a position for myself within history. Therefore evaluations which depend on the distinction between the historical and the super-historical find no place here. 3

Again Bultmann holds to the "infinite qualitative difference" in relationship to Jesus as being God's revelation. This same understanding is expressed in a clearer fashion in a work decades later. In his essay, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" (1957), he


2Ibid., (498) p. 134.

writes concerning the historical method:

The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect. This does not mean that the process of history is determined by the causal law and that there is no free decisions of men whose actions determine the cause of historical happenings. But even a free decision does not happen without a cause, without a motive, and the task of the historian is to come to know the motives of actions. All decisions and all deeds have their causes and consequences; and the historical method presupposes that it is possible in principle to exhibit these and their connections and thus to understand the whole historical process as a closed unity.¹

As in his earlier statement, this latter statement, as well, seeks to understand history without reference to anything beyond itself. Bultmann's methodology begins with the assumption that it is theoretically possible to explain the entire historical process as a "closed unity".

This presupposition, however, is not held to exclusively. Bultmann as well claims "faith". In faith, Bultmann denies this "chain of cause and effect as it presents itself to the natural observer."² In faith, he is able to place supernatural events within the realm of causal history. Yet this is done not as mythology does through an observable phenomenon, Bultmann argues, but rather in a hidden way. He writes:


In faith I realize that the scientific world-view does not comprehend the whole reality of the world and of human life, but faith does not offer another general world-view which corrects science in its statements on its own level. Rather faith acknowledges that the world-view given by science is a necessary means for doing our work within the world. Indeed, I need to see the worldly events as linked by cause and effect not only as a scientific observer, but also in my daily living. In doing so there remains no room for God's working. This is the paradox of faith, that faith 'nevertheless' understands as God's action here and now an event which is completely intelligible in the natural connection of events.\(^1\)

This position represents a significant (and sometimes overlooked) difference between Bultmann on the one hand, and the positions of Tertullian, Luther, and Kierkegaard on the other. While they, like Bultmann, claim faith, their faith includes the fact of historical (historisch) happening.\(^2\) Bultmann, given this presupposition, considers the claim of any such observable event to be "mythology". However Kierkegaard maintains his position against mythology. For Kierkegaard, "Actuality, i.e. the fact that this or that actually occurred, is the subject of faith..."\(^3\) It is this understanding which calls normal "scientific" presuppositions into question as far as Kierkegaard is concerned. For Kierkegaard is convinced that the paradox

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\(^1\) *ibid.*, p. 65.


of the God-Man, including the related implications of word and deed, happened in "actuality", not just in the "illusory" world of mythology.

Bultmann's approach, therefore, raises an interesting problem. Since his world-view cannot be disturbed by "supernatural, transcendent powers", there can be no "miracle" in any "super-" sense of the word. This would be something whose cause existed apart from history. He states:

While, for example, the Old Testament narrative speaks of an interference by God in history, historical science cannot demonstrate such an act of God, but merely perceives that there are those who believe in it. To be sure, as historical science, it may not assert that such a faith is an illusion and that God has not acted in history. But in itself as science cannot perceive such an act and reckon on the basis of it; it can only leave every man free to determine whether he wants to see an act of God in a historical event that it itself understands in terms of that event's immanent historical causes.1

Thus if God is to reveal Himself to the world, to Kierkegaard's way of thinking, He can do it only through "miracle" (ontological paradox). But if God only reveals Himself through "miracle", to Bultmann's way of thinking, science cannot "perceive" such an event as occurring, but would rather "understand" it in terms of the event's "immanent historical causes". Thus we are back to our definition of paradox (i.e. the term used to describe an ontological contradiction in which the absolutely unlike \(\text{eternal divine essence}\) comes into being in the absolutely like \(\text{existence}\) as an objective historical

1Bultmann, Existence And Faith, p. 345.
occurrence and there reveals itself by virtue of the absurd). This "paradox" historical science finds to be absurd and seeks to explain it through historical causation. In fact, according to science, there is no paradoxical occurrence at all.

This raises questions, from the perspective of the ontological paradox, as to the value of "the scientific method" as a means of determining whether or not any revelatory event occurred in history. Bultmann may be placed in the tradition of Francis Bacon who said once long ago, "God does nothing in nature save by second-causes". Yet if this conviction is held to at the start as a presupposition, it would rule out beforehand the possibility of an ontological paradox as an historical occurrence, there being no tool adequate for the task. In the case of Jesus Christ, at least, the objective, scientific historian has ceased to be objective, by holding to a position which is as much a matter of faith as the believer's. The "scientific" argument runs, a non posse ad non esse—if something is impossible it never happened. This, however, is a questionable stance for any historian to adopt.

Bacon, though, was also of the opinion that a proper scientific approach to any realm of experience studied the facts under investigation with an open, and unprejudiced

mind, and, therefore, allowed the facts to make their own impression upon him.\(^1\) It would seem that a prime requirement of any researcher would be an openness to the facts as they are. Yet as Bultmann points out, no exegesis is without presuppositions; the exegete is not a "\textit{tabula rasa}".\(^2\) In distinction from natural science, he affirms, historical science deals with facts which cannot be neutrally observed, "...but rather open themselves in their meaning only to one who approaches them alive with questions, then they are always only understandable now in that they actually speak in the present situation."\(^3\) Historical investigation is never closed because the questions asked of history arise in the present situation as an on-going process.

This would suggest that a study of the God-Man cannot be objective in the scientific sense. It certainly cannot claim to have reached any positive conclusions on the basis of science, since it is impossible to be knowing about the God-Man, one may only be believing. Likewise the very questions that science asks of history in so far as they are shaped by scientific presuppositions, determine the shape of the answers. Kierkegaard once observed, in this respect, that one begins a study of the Bible from one of


\(^3\) ibid., p. 348.
two presuppositions, either Jesus was the God-Man, or he was not. That is to say, what is involved in this question is as much a subjective problem as an objective one, the subjective issue being the emphasis of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript.

However, if science cannot speak in a positive sense regarding revelation, it being a consideration "into another kind" and therefore the object of faith, it is at least theoretically possible that it may negate the historical basis of the Christian revelation, since revelation in order to be revealed must be tied to history: Jesus is the God-Man. Yet, strictly speaking, such a negation lacks "certainty" because history is a relative dimension and not an absolute one. Historical research can lead only to probable results. Under certain conditions (e.g. the recovery of historical evidence through archaeology), the results of historical research may become so extremely probable as to constitute "practical certainty". Yet this must be distinguished from "absolute", or "philosophic certainty". The question which arises is in what sense "practical certainty" may be spoken of in relationship to Bultmann's historical method, if at all. Let us look further at Bultmann's approach.

1 Kierkegaard, Training In Christianity, p. 30.
In recent years much emphasis has been placed on the fact that Bultmann was influenced by Martin Kähler.¹ Kähler's famous book, The So-Called Historical Jesus And The Historic, Biblical Christ, argued two main points:

(1) that the search for the historical Jesus was ill conceived, and (2) that the historic (geschichtlich) Christ is the Christ of New Testament preaching. Kähler defended the suggestion that it was impossible to somehow get behind the historic, Biblical Christ to the historical Jesus. According to Kähler, "...we have no sources for a biography of Jesus of Nazareth which measure up to the standards of contemporary historical science."² Thus he emphasized the preached Christ as the "real" Christ.³

The similarities between Kähler's position and that of Bultmann's later development of form criticism are numerous. According to Carl Braaten, they agree that no historical biography of Jesus may be composed from the gospels. Likewise there is no scientific basis for the "Marcan prejudice", namely, that the historical outline of Mark may be taken to be the most reliable chronology. The difference between the fourth gospel and that of the synoptics is basically one of degree, not one of kind. Thus all four gospels largely reflect the early evangelical preaching which founded the Church. As such they

²ibid., p. 48. ³ibid., p. 66.
present the witness of the early Church to Jesus as the Christ. It is impossible and irrelevant to get behind the kerygma to a purely historical Jesus. The tradition of Jesus the Crucified Messiah is inseparable from the believing community. The recollections regarding Jesus were shaped in the community. The tradition should be understood in terms of its original intention, that is, kerygmatically. Thus the event of the resurrection becomes the basic hermeneutic factor for New Testament interpretation.¹

However, it should be noted in passing, that while there are some basic similarities between Kähler and Bultmann, there are also some basic differences. The chief difference between the two lies in how they distinguish between Historie and Geschichte. For Bultmann, as we have seen, there is nothing in the historical (historisch) events themselves which would set Jesus of Nazareth apart from his contemporaries in any super-historical sense. Rather the significance of Jesus arises out of the fact that he is proclaimed as the "eschatological event" through the Christian kerygma (Geschichte).

Yet Kähler never makes such a hard distinction as this. On the contrary, the biblical picture of Christ is "real", for Kähler, because it has arisen in history (Historie). Christ is the Messiah of Christian preaching.

¹Ibid., pp. 34-35.
because he was the historical Messiah, and considered himself to be such.\(^1\) Kähler writes in this regard:

The biblical picture of Christ, so lifelike and unique beyond imagination, is not a poetic idealization originating in the human mind. The reality of Christ himself has left its ineffaceable impress upon this picture. Were this not so, all the scholars would long ago have ceased to rack their brains over the sphinx-like enigma of this person. Because it is so, thousands have been able to live with him as if he were their most intimate and influential friend.\(^2\)

For Kähler, this historic \((\text{geschichtlich})\) picture of Christ can only have arisen because the image itself was an historical \((\text{historisch})\) reality. The two meanings of history cannot be clearly separated. Rather, "...Christ himself is the originator of the biblical picture of Christ..."\(^3\)

Paul Althaus, in his companion volume entitled, The So-Called Kerygma And The Historical Jesus, makes some related contributions to this discussion. He is of the opinion that while it was necessary that Kähler (writing when he did in opposition to the "lives" of Jesus) should emphasize the fact that the gospels were not primarily historical sources, but were rather testimonies of faith, today the emphasis should be placed elsewhere. Althaus is concerned that the gospels be viewed also as historical \((\text{historisch})\) narratives and sources. Thus the question as to the historical basis of the kerygma is theologically legitimate and not one to be ignored.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)ibid., p. 69. \(^2\)ibid., p. 79. \(^3\)ibid., p. 87. Italics his.  
Althaus makes a like observation to the one made above regarding the difference between Kähler's and Bultmann's respective understandings of history. He states:

Here, i.e. in the writings of Bultmann and Gogarten/Kähler's proposition, that we cannot theologically and dogmatically go behind the kerygma, is affirmed. But in contrast to Kähler, the retrospective question as to the historical ground of the kerygma is also vetoed. Here we have to do with an outlook indifferent to, or rather hostile to, history.¹

Thus in opposition to Bultmann and Gogarten, Althaus argues that:

The problem is this; preaching has a double content in inseparable unity; it is a report of things that have happened, happened in our human history at a determinate place in time. And secondly it is the indicative and imperative, a witness of the significance of the event for salvation and judgment.²

Of course if such "double content" is really "inseparable", it would be foolish to again renew the quest for the historical Jesus. But to return to the question that has been asked above (regardless of the issue of Bultmann's faithfulness to Kähler's position), in what sense does Bultmann's method of form criticism speak to the question of "practical certainty" in negating the historical (historisch) nature of the Scriptures, and likewise Althaus' thesis concerning "inseparable unity"?

Bultmann sharpened the historical-critical method into the form-critical method of biblical analysis. The latter postulates the fact of an amorphous oral tradition

¹ibid., p. 27.  ²ibid., p. 29.
"behind" the earliest written forms. These forms tended to crystallize in a manner characteristic of all folk-tradition. Furthermore, it holds that these early forms (i.e. narratives, apothegms, miracle stories, and proverbial sayings) were selected by the Church not out of historical concern but because of the developing Christology, and because the early community, as a missionary and cultic society, was at odds with the greater society as a whole.¹

Given these various tools, the apparent results of such a critical approach were pervasive and even spectacular. Gerhard Ebeling writes in this respect:

...the crumbling fortifications of the orthodox doctrine of Scripture were unable to withstand the onslaught of the historical-critical method. While the Church taught the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures through God, historical enquiry was showing the Bible to be the results of a long and complicated development which could be charted by the various disciplines of tradition-history, form criticism, literary criticism, and by an examination of the history of the canon and the texts. Its various sources and historical strata were isolated. Many of the details about the history of the documents, as for example their authorship, have been shown to be no more than pious inventions. Much which was before considered historical is now recognized as legendary. Parallels from other religions have shown that the portrayal of divine acts of revelation is mythological in character. The biblical view of the universe of time and space emerges as very different from our own.²

Thus applying Bultmann's, as well as other related critical methods, led to the conclusion that not only were

¹Cushman, p. 170.
these documents unreliable from the point of view of historical chronology, but the constituent parts of the documents themselves—the forms themselves—were largely the legendary or mythical product of the Church's faith. And if on the grounds of "scientific historical knowledge", which is Bultmann's accredited means of historical "knowing", one cannot identify the subject involved in the Church's messianic claim, neither can the claim be verified, one can hardly be asked to put one's faith in an historical event of absolute significance, if one cannot even identify the event. If such, indeed, be the case, in the words of one critic:

    Jesus, where art thou? And the answer is, gone beyond recall, that is, so far as the most refined use of our adopted scientific method can say.2

Yet there remain certain fundamental problems in Bultmann's, and similar approaches, to which this above passage hints. The chief problem with such critical methods is simply the fact that while these approaches may reach any number of critical "conclusions"—undeniably both critics and "conclusions" abound—it does not, therefore, follow that such-and-such a conclusion has any relationship whatsoever to do with what actually occurred. The fact that a hundred volumes, or a hundred thousand volumes, have been written which reach similar conclusions,

2Cushman, p. 172. Italics his.
does not mean that, for example, the biblical Christ is not the "real" (historisch-geschichtlich) Christ of Kähler and Althaus, nor, for that matter, does it mean that He is!

In so far as one understands the theological method of Luther and Kierkegaard, there are two arguments which seem to present themselves in the defense of the ontological kind of paradox here at issue. Thus if such a paradox is to be sustained, a defense may be formulated along the following lines: Historical criticism implies by definition rational judgment. Therefore (1) in so far as such criticism demonstrates rational judgment, it is not capable in principle of dealing with an ontological paradox as an historical occurrence, since such an occurrence runs contrary to reason. And (2) in so far as such criticism demonstrates rational judgment, it is not capable in principle of reaching "practical certainty" (or proof), since a judgment is an opinion (perhaps an "expert" opinion, but an opinion nonetheless), and an opinion, while constituting more than an impression, is less than positive knowledge. To recall a phrase used by Luther, one cannot

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1 This is basically the thrust of Luther's polemics. He argues from the standpoint of faith: "...what those people keep saying—that because it is not in accord with reason it is not true—we shall simply turn about and say the opposite: God's Word is true, therefore your notions must be false." (Luther's Works, Vol. 36, p. 343).

Kierkegaard makes a similar statement at one point: "...but since the Paradox has made the Reason absurd, the regard of the Reason is no reliable criterion." (Fragments, p. 65).

2 This is Luther's argument against Zwingli, upon whom he considers the burden of proof to rest. See: Luther's Works, Vol. 37, p. 30ff.

It may be argued that such critical research concludes
begin with a water jug and end with a wine jar; the conclusion must reflect the means by which the conclusion was obtained. Practical certainty can only rely on historical evidence, not on historical judgment. The greatest certainty that judgment is able to reach is consensus; but, again, consensus is not proof.

This latter point is often neglected by biblical criticism. For example, Ebeling (quoted above) writes as if the critical conclusions he cites are a practical certainty. He does this in spite of the fact that Bultmann apparently never makes so bold a claim. In fact, Bultmann maintains that historical science cannot speak to the question of revelation in history. Rather, "...it can only leave every man free to determine whether he wants to see an act of God in a historical event that it itself understands in terms of that event's immanent historical causes." This is quite a different matter.

With these comments in mind, let us look at how Bultmann deals with the question of "historical revelation", both in terms of "miracle", and in terms of "messianic consciousness" (Christology). Bultmann begins his study of Jesus by holding to strict historical analogy. That is

with a number of extremely probable findings. But, again, this has nothing to do with the ontological paradox. Kierkegaard writes, "The offended consciousness holds aloof from the Paradox and keeps to the probable, since the Paradox is the most improbable of things. Again it is not the Reason that made this discovery; it merely snatches the words from the mouth of the Paradox, strange as this may seem; for the Paradox itself says: Comedies and romances and lies needs be probable, but why should I be probable?" (Fragments, p. 85).

1 Bultmann, Existence And Faith, p. 345.
to say, what happens in the present is analogous to what happened in the past, and vice versa. Thus Bultmann treats the Bible as he would any historical document. Nor can there be any exceptions, for Bultmann, if the Bible is to be understood historically. Thus Bultmann does not look beyond history for any explanation of Jesus' actions or deeds. In his work, *Jesus And The Word*, he writes:

Accordingly this book lacks all the phraseology which speaks of Jesus as a great man, genius, or hero; he appears neither as inspired nor as inspiring, his sayings are not called profound, nor his faith mighty, nor his nature child-like. There is also no consideration of the eternal values of his message, of his discovery of the infinite depths of the human soul, or the like. Attention is entirely limited to what he purposed, and hence to what his purpose as a part of history makes a present demand on us.

Bultmann is of the opinion that, "...we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist." Of course the problem initially with this approach is that while Bultmann treats the Bible as if it was any other historical document, the Bible itself does not make assertions exclusively about the historical plane. Rather, in the words of St. Mark, for example, his work is, "...the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 345-346.  
3 *ibid.*  
4 Mark 1:1.
In other words, it raises the question of revelation in an historical context, and to raise the question of revelation is to raise the question of miracle (ontological paradox).

In his essay on "The Question of Wonder", Bultmann deals with this issue. He is convinced that it is "almost impossible" for us today to believe in miracle because we understand the natural process to be governed by law. Miracle is not a viable possibility, for Bultmann, not because such an event would contradict all experience, but because we presume, as axiomatic, law as a part of our understanding of nature, an assumption from which we may not free ourselves at will.

Thus "the idea of conformity to law" underlies our basic ideas and actions which are related to the world. Such a conception is not merely an "idea", "interpretation", "judgment", "conclusion", or "world-view", but rather, he argues, is "given in our existence in the world". We always act in the world in implicit acceptance of, and in conformity to, natural law. "Up" is up, and "down" is down, so to speak, a fact which is true for all men regardless of geographical or historical setting. Even the astronauts, one may add, are dependent upon the consistency of natural law for their very lives. Assertions which

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2 ibid., pp. 247-248.
cannot conform to such an understanding, Bultmann affirms
to be "fantasies".\(^1\) Also more recent developments tend to
make the conclusion that many things which were once regard-
ded as supernatural are now understood as conforming to
law. Thus, "...the impossibility of accepting miraculous
events as real becomes increasingly clear." It follows
that the "idea of miracle...must be abandoned." He con-
tinues:

Hence the Christian faith is apparently not
concerned with miracles; rather it has cause to
exclude the idea of miracle. No argument to the
contrary can be based on the fact that in the
Bible events are certainly recorded which must
be called miracles. That fact merely makes
necessary the use of critical methods which show
that the biblical writers in accordance with the
presuppositions of their thinking, had not fully
appréhended the idea of miracle and its impli-
cations. The authority of Scripture is not
abandoned when the idea of miracle is relin-
quished. The real meaning of Scripture can be
rightly seen only after the idea of wonder as
God's action has been made clear.\(^2\)

Bultmann states that while wonders are "recorded" in
the New Testament which have the character of miracles,
especially in association with Jesus, they are acts which
only have importance for "those immediately concerned".
Even if they were verified historically, they do not
"directly" concern us; as such they are not Christ's work,
if we understand Christ's work to be that of "redemption".

Lastly Bultmann concludes with a reference to Kierke-
gaard:

\(^1\)ibid., p. 248. \(^2\)ibid., p. 249.
Anyone who chooses to affirm that God's revelation is the historical personality of Jesus lays himself open to Kierkegaard's taunt that he is smarter than God himself, who sent his son in the hiddenness of the flesh. To apply the conception of revelation to the historically demonstrable personality of Jesus is as senseless as to apply the conception of creation and wonder to the world seen as nature. 1

Several comments may be presented in response to Bultmann's opinions from the point of view of the ontological paradox. Let us take each one in turn. The question of the actual "use of critical methods", however, will be reserved until Jesus' "messianic consciousness" is discussed below.

First of all, Bultmann is correct in assuming that all men rely on natural consistency, or "law" as he calls it, in daily life. However such consistency does not necessarily exclude the kind of ontological paradox which Kierkegaard describes, as much as it makes such a paradox perceptible. If the natural world were itself as absurd as Alice's "wonderland", the paradox could not be perceived as being absurd. It would, rather, be taken to be yet another aspect consistent with such surroundings. Every revelatory aspect and implication would be reduced to naught. However since all men are subject to an understanding of natural consistency as a presupposition, "given in our existence in the world", God's revelation becomes apparent and astonishing: in the words which St. Mark records, "We never saw anything like this!"; 2 or in the words recorded

1ibid., p. 261. 2Mark 2.12a.
by St. Luke, "We have seen strange things today."¹

Secondly, while Bultmann feels that the biblical writers describe what may be termed "miracles", they did not fully apprehend the meaning of the "idea" of miracle and its implications. Bultmann's criticism, in keeping with his presupposition, views miracle as an "idea". However, Kierkegaard's paradox has, in this thesis, been defined as an "objective historical occurrence". Thus Bultmann (much like Barth in the previous chapter) is unable to speak to the question of ontological paradox, because he is unwilling to admit to its historicity.

Thirdly, while Bultmann argues that even if miracles, such as healings, could be more or less verified historically, they do not concern us in so far as they are not Christ's work of redemption. Yet while it may be true that such events do not concern us, strictly speaking, as redemptive works (Soteriology), they do, however, concern us in so far as they testify to Christ's Person (Christology).

While Christology and Soteriology cannot be separated, there can be no Soteriology without a prior Christology. If Melanchthon's phrase, "To know Christ is to know His benefits", is true, it is only because Christ does the work of Christ, for the same reason that a "sound tree bears good fruit."² It is interesting to note that when the Christological question was asked of Jesus by John's

¹Luke 5.26b. ²Matt. 7.17.
disciples, Jesus directed them to his works: "...the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."¹

Lastly, Bultmann's final reference to Kierkegaard underlies his basic misunderstanding of Kierkegaard's paradox. We have already dealt with this at some length. For Kierkegaard, "hiddenness of the flesh" meant exactly that, and had nothing to do with Christ's teaching or miracles. In fact it was his teaching and miracles together with this "hiddenness" which constituted the paradox historically. Eller comments that Bultmann's motive is credible in denying that miracles are supernatural "proofs" of Jesus' divinity. Such "proofs" would destroy the paradoxical precondition of faith. However he states:

S.K. would have agreed with Bultmann's principle but not with his application of it, for S.K. denied that miracles actually can play the role that Bultmann fears they do. Indeed, S.K. insisted that miracles are meet for his purpose, that their very nature reflects the ambiguity, the pairing of 'pro' and 'con', which truly heightens the paradox rather than destroying it. He pointed out miracle is understood as a miracle only by one who through an act of faith already has accepted the miracle-worker for what he claims to be. Otherwise, the so-called miracle is simply an inexplicable event which just as easily and just as logically can be explained as a fraud or delusion. For S.K., Jesus' miracles are very much to the point; they are ambiguous witnesses that attract attention and then, quite the opposite of providing proof, force one to make a decision regarding the paradoxical miracle-worker.²

¹Matt. 1.5-6.
²Eller, p. 363.
Thus Bultmann, in keeping with his basic presuppositions and critical methods, seeks to understand those events recorded in the New Testament which must be called miracles wholly within their historical context. This, again, is not to say that such events never occurred. Rather it leaves the reader free to determine whether or not he cares to believe in such events as miracles, given the fact that they can be explained in the manner which Bultmann does.

However a more basic question in terms of Christian faith than the question of miracle, is whether or not the historical Jesus actually considered himself to be the Christ, the Son of God, and proclaimed himself to be such. As Eller points out above, the question of miracle only has significance in light of Jesus' super-historical claims. Apart from such claims, any miracle is simply an "inexplicable event", devoid of any revelatory significance.

Let us, therefore, glance at how Bultmann deals with the question of Jesus' "messianic consciousness", and the Christological paradox which such a consciousness implies. Bultmann argues that the Church, after Christ's death and resurrection, "superimposed" her own faith in Jesus' messiahship upon his person. He writes:

The message of Jesus is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself. For New Testament theology consists in the unfolding of those ideas by means of which Christian faith makes sure of its own object, basis, and consequences. But Christian faith did not exist until there was a Christian kerygma; i.e., a kerygma proclaiming Jesus Christ—especially Jesus Christ the Crucified and Risen One—to be God's eschatological act of
salvation. He was first proclaimed in the kerygma of the earliest Church, not in the message of the historical Jesus, even though that Church frequently introduced into its account of Jesus' message, motifs of its own proclamation. Thus, theologically thinking—the theology of the New Testament—begins with the kerygma of the earliest Church and not before.  

The problem which arises at this point is what historical evidence Bultmann can supply which would support this understanding. For this opinion, as Bultmann admits, runs contrary to the Evangelist's point of view. However, it also runs contrary to St. Paul's view as well. On the whole, St. Paul presupposes the historicity of Jesus' message. As he states, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." In other places, however, St. Paul becomes more explicit. Perhaps most explicit is his comment in I Timothy 6.13 where he speaks of the "good confession" which Christ made before Pontius Pilate, a confession likewise echoed by the Church (6.12). The Christological nature of such a confession is apparent.

However, in answer to the question of historical evidence, again Bultmann provides none. Rather, he merely lets the assertion stand on its own as a premise. In

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3 I Cor. 3.11.
4 E.g. Eph. 2.17ff. and I Tim. 3.16, 6.3.
5 Matt. 27.11; Mk. 15.2; Lk. 23.3; and Jn. 18.37.
other words, the assertion finds as its basis the probability that such and such must have been the case. In so doing, he is in keeping with the methods of historical **criticism**. As Timothy Barnes writes in another context, "...rational speculation provides the foundation of his A.e the historian's/7 craft." Yet it must be noted that Bultmann's method presupposes that a "messianic consciousness" (Christology) is impossible to begin with, as has been discussed. Thus Bultmann can reach no other conclusion **in spite of** evidence to the contrary.

And there is evidence of this kind. It is interesting and significant to note how Bultmann seeks to defend his premise in the face of such opposing evidence. Let us look at the way in which Bultmann deals with "Peter's Confession". Bultmann finds this to be "no counter evidence". On the contrary, he argues that "...it is an Easter-story projected backward into Jesus' life-time, just like the story of the Transfiguration (Mk. 9.2-8)." But how does Bultmann know this? He does not know it (since knowledge is dependent upon evidence); rather he makes the judgment that such must have been the case, again given his presupposition.

In his work on *The History of The Synoptic Tradition*, Bultmann deals with this passage in some detail. Here

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he considers the passage to be "legend", and Jesus' question a "literary device". Let us consider how Bultmann deals with this passage, noting the judgmental element in his method (italics):

...the narrative is fragmentary, since it must have originally contained an account of the attitude Jesus himself took to the confession he had stimulated. The instruction to keep silent and the prophecy of the Passion, together with the rejection of Peter in vv. 31-33 are formulations by Mark, and parts of what follows need not, in my view, be considered as the original continuation of the Confession. I think that the original conclusion has been retained in Matt. 16.17-19. Mark has dispensed with it, and has on top of that introduced a polemic against the Jewish-Christian point of view represented by Peter from the sphere of the Hellenistic Christianity of the Pauline circle (6.32f). At the least Matt. 16.17-19 goes back to an old Aramaic tradition...The words can hardly have been formulated in any other place than in the Palestinian Church, where Peter was looked up to as the founder and leader of the Church and the blessing of Peter was put into the mouth of the Risen Lord. For it is doubtless the risen Lord who speaks in Matt. 16.17-19 is the original conclusion to the story of the Confession, that but expresses the view that Peter's experience of Easter was the time when the early Church's messianic faith was born; indeed we should have to reckon the whole narrative as an Easter story, which had been (perhaps for the first time in Mark) carried back into the ministry of Jesus. Just as Jer. 20-22f. is a parallel to Matt. 16.19, so the whole story of the Confession has a clear parallel in the Easter story in Jn. 21.15-19.\(^1\)

This kind of rational approach is typical of Bultmann's exegesis. He deals in the same way with Jesus' messianic title, "Son of Man". Bultmann speculates, for

example, that when Jesus forgives the sins of the paralytic as the Son of Man, it must be a "wrong translation", or really refers to the word "I". Bultmann argues that it is the Palestinian Church which deals with the tradition in such a manner as to increase its own "authority".  

Yet nothing has been proved. That Peter's Confession is "an Easter-story projected backward into Jesus' lifetime", that Peter's Confession never occurred, that the phrase "Son of Man" is a wrong translation, and most important, that Jesus never considered Himself to be the Christ (ontological paradox), and never elicited this response in his contemporaries, are all the product of Bultmann's critical method. Such a method is a method precisely because further historical evidence is lacking.

Again, Bultmann does not claim any such proof on the basis of such a method. Rather he only claims to demonstrate such an event "in terms of that event's immanent historical causes." That is to say, he seeks to explain such an event as occurring entirely "within" history; and thus no reference to any super-historical explanation is required.

However from the point of view of Kierkegaard's paradox, such an explanation is tantamount to saying merely that the ontological paradox is paradoxical. That

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1 Mk. 2.1-12.
is to say, it is absurd, and thus seeks a rational explanation. But we knew this when we started. In fact, it was admitted that the paradox not only contradicts reason, but in the words of Kierkegaard and like minds is "absurd".

Whether it be in terms of miracle, or in terms of Jesus' messianic claims, Bultmann looks to "critical methods" which would explain such events in a fashion more acceptable to his presupposition. Such a method, we should note as well, is analogous to the method of Erasmus which Luther once argued against. Erasmus used figurative explanations or "tropes" to deal with difficult passages which contradicted his understanding of free choice.¹ In a similar way, Bultmann seeks to explain difficult passages which contradict his understanding of a "closed continuum...of cause and effect". The issues are different; but the dynamics are the same. Erasmus and Bultmann place human reason above God's omnipotence; Luther and Kierkegaard affirm the contrary. Humility before God, for the latter, includes man's reason; to quote Luther, "...there is no avoiding the absurdity."² Man's reason finds Jesus Christ to be impossible and contradictory. In light of this, one must either seek to explain the paradox involved through rational means (e.g. "The proclaimer became the proclaimed."), thus making human reason the final arbiter of what God is able to do; or one must believe (e.g. "Let

¹See Appendix B.
²Luther, The Bondage Of The Will, p. 173.
God be God!). For if God is God, He is beyond human reason's ability to comprehend.

To return to the question which was posed previously, Bultmann does not achieve "practical certainty" in negating the ontological paradox which Kierkegaard describes, nor does he claim to. In fact, Bultmann admits, at one point, that the question of Jesus' "messianic consciousness" remains open.¹ Bultmann presents no new historical evidence, only new critical tools. And criticism, it has been argued, cannot attain "practical certainty". Let us keep this issue in mind as a few comments are made on his famous essay on demythologizing.

Much of what Bultmann deals with in this essay has been implicit in our discussion thus far. Bultmann argues that (in opposition to Kähler) the historical Jesus was turned into myth by primitive Christianity. The preached Christ was, for the most part, the Christ of faith, having little historical (historisch) foundation. He was presented under the influence of a Gnostic redeemer-myth which maintained that he was not a mere human being, but a God-Man, a pre-existent being, who redeemed man from his sinful condition. Not only did he die, but he rose from the grave, and returned to his heavenly realm, enabling his followers to return to this realm of light as well.²

¹Bultmann, Existence And Faith, p. 343.
This kind of message Bultmann finds to be "irrational and utterly meaningless". Indeed he proposes a two-fold task which would rightly present the Christian message to modern man. Not only must the gospel be "demythologized", that is, the primitive mythical elements of Christian preaching be removed, but its message must be reinterpreted in a manner more acceptable to modern scientific thinking.

In much of what Bultmann has to say, there is no basic disagreement with Kierkegaard's paradox. There are admittedly mythical elements (as defined by Bultmann), in the New Testament which, if held to in all seriousness as real historical (historisch) occurrences, would demand a sacrificium intellectus. In fact, it may be argued that Kierkegaard himself presents us with a "demythologized" account of the New Testament message in his *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), and later, and more extensively, in his *Training In Christianity* (1850). Here many of the elements which modern "scientific" man considers to be "mythical" are either excluded or reinterpreted in a secular fashion (e.g. the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and the Ascension). Nor are the mythical elements, as myth, necessary for Christian belief. What is necessary, according to Kierkegaard, is the ontological paradox; and

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1 *ibid.* Indeed it is "irrational and utterly meaningless"...so described.

2 Shaw, p. 261.
this is precisely the disagreement—if one may call it that—between Kierkegaard and Bultmann. For Bultmann to claim Kierkegaard as an intellectual forebear, it is necessary that he redefine Kierkegaard's concept of paradox as has been shown. Such is necessary as Bultmann's definition of "myth" is so broad as to include what Kierkegaard means by paradox.¹

It has been pointed out that Bultmann's real reason for his proposal to demythologize the Church's message lies not only in a desire to make this message more palatable to modern man, but also in an underlying fact. Bultmann's concept of mythology includes, as well, "all objectifying statements about the acts of God." According to George Ladd:

Demythologizing is a demand of faith itself. For faith needs to be emancipated from its association with a world view expressed in objective terms, whether it be a mythical or a scientific one. It is a fundamental failure of mythological thinking that it has tried to project God and His acts into the sphere of objective reality. The invisibility of God excludes every myth which tries to make Him and His acts visible. God withdraws Himself from the objective view: He can only be believed upon in defiance of all outward appearance. Security can be found only by abandoning all security. This framework of nature and history is profane, it is only in the light of the Word of proclamation that nature and history become for the believer, contrary to appearance, the field of divine activity.²

In opposition to this paradox of phenomenon, Kierkegaard argues that there is an actual objective historical

¹See: Eller, pp. 362-363.

basis for the faith. While God does not appear to man "face to face", he does appear in the flesh. He manifests Himself to man through his words and deeds. Such an historical occurrence serves as the point of departure for Christian faith.

This Bultmann claims to be myth, "...the use of imagery to express the other worldly in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side." Such acts and deeds, Bultmann argues in another context, are nothing new:

...they come from old mythologies, from ancient hopes and dreams. The new element was simply the fact that all these assertions were made about this specific historical man, Jesus of Nazareth. But the conceptions were not necessarily altered by this ascription to a specific person. Rather, this historical figure, because of the strong impression he made on people, became the occasion for believing the old wishes and fantastic dreams to be reality.

From the point of view of the paradox, however, this criticism itself finds little basis in reality. What the reason finds to be offensive cannot have happened. Thus some "critical method" must be employed to help the paradox out of its sorry condition. We are left with Kierkegaard's biting, and none too complimentary, words from the pen of Johannes Climacus: "When Reason takes pity on the Paradox, and wishes to help it to an explanation, the Paradox does not indeed acquiesce, but nevertheless finds it quite

1Bultmann, Kerygma And Myth, I, p. 10n.
2Bultmann, Faith And Understanding, p. 264.
natural that the Reason should do this; for why do we have our philosophers, if not to make supernatural things trivial and commonplace?"¹

¹Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, p. 72.
Summation

In this thesis we have sought, first of all, to demonstrate Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox. It has been affirmed that Kierkegaard's paradox is basically a paradox of ontology: the historical God-Man, the man who appears absolutely like all the others, but who demonstrates Himself as being absolutely unlike all the others both by word and by deed.

Secondly, we have noted the genesis of Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox as it appears in both Tertullian and Luther. While both hold similar views in terms of the ontological paradox and basic theological approach, a greater difference was noted in terms of the moral aspect of the paradox. Kierkegaard appears to be closer to Tertullian than to Luther in this respect.

Thirdly, we have observed the history of Kierkegaard's paradox in the twentieth-century. Paradox in contemporary theology has come to mean a paradox of appearance or phenomenon. That is to say, there was nothing unique in the life of the historical Jesus which would separate him from other prophets and religious leaders in the ontological sense here described.

Fourthly, it has been argued that such an understanding, on the part of contemporary theology, is a breach not only regarding Kierkegaard's understanding of paradox (as Eller has pointed out), but regarding the understandings upon which Kierkegaard relied: Tertullian and Luther.
Lastly, such a breach, it would seem, raises a dilemma for contemporary theology: either the Christologies of Tertullian, Luther, and Kierkegaard have been proven to be ill conceived due to the findings of historical criticism; or historical criticism itself is, at some point, inadequate and in need of qualification.

For the sake of discussion, certain questions have been raised concerning Bultmann's "critical methods", from the viewpoint of Luther and Kierkegaard especially. It should be noted, however, that while Bultmann has been used as a case in point, the issue is much greater than simply the findings of one theologian. In asking such questions, it is realized that "critical methods" themselves are being criticized. In this regard, it may be helpful to take note of the following comments, written by a representative of one's own denomination:

There are those, of course, who have no patience with this exacting task of critical interpretation and prefer to deal with the Bible as though it has no relationships to its times, a timeless book untouched by human hand. Their motives are not always questionable or vicious; they are frequently reacting against what they regard as a relativizing of the biblical message. They fear that once the critical process is under way it will be impossible to point to a sure message from God. But it is important to recognize that the historical character of the Bible makes the critical process not only permissible but necessary. The gospel is not present in the Bible like precious metal in unprocessed ore, gold amid dross...1

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1 This is an interesting comment in light of the passage of Luther quoted above: "...think of the Scriptures...as the richest of mines, which can never be worked out..." (Works of Martin Luther, Vol. VI, pp. 367-368).
Biblical interpretation requires therefore not only literal and historical principles but a theological principle as well. God's message to us in Christ varies with our relationship to Him. He whose relationship to God in Christ is evasion or rebellion will hear God's address to him as a demand for responsibility. When he heeds this message and comes to know himself as God's creature, he can listen comprehendingly to the offer of life in Christ. At its deepest level, biblical interpretation demands not only sound critical judgment but an existential relation to God who speaks in Scripture. For only the Holy Spirit can give understanding of the realities of God's redemptive purpose, which is the content and unifying principle of Scripture.  

Warren Quanbeck has here in mind the kind of literalism which persistently haunts certain branches of American Lutheranism and the Church in general. The reader should be aware, however, that literalism is not the issue raised above. Likewise one would seek to dissociate oneself from a doctrine of "verbal inspiration", or similar device, that would view the Bible as, "a timeless book untouched by human hand." One is not seeking here to perform the kind of "amputation" which Per Lönning fears would leave culture "invalid".

Rather the issue here being raised is a problem which stems from the relationship of Revelation to Reason. Kierkegaard's paradox, it has been affirmed, has an objective, historical (historisch) basis. However such an occurrence, because it involves historically the Absolute consideration, poses certain problems. How may

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such an occurrence be perceived as having taken place in history at all? Reason automatically finds such a paradox (as the kind recorded in the New Testament) absurd, and, therefore, seeks to explain it in rational terms: *a non posse ad non esse.*

As opposed to this, Kierkegaard maintains that the paradox may only be "apprehended" by faith not only historically but immediately—that is, had one been contemporaneous with it, faith would be necessary to avoid the conclusion that Jesus was a messianic pretender and a magician. Reason argues that it "perceives" (Bultmann) no historical paradox; faith argues that reason cannot "apprehend" (Kierkegaard) what is plainly before it. Thus faith considers itself to be higher than reason—reason being a "blockhead and a dunce", at least in this respect.

Thus historical criticism can neither prove nor disprove the historical nature of revelation. Yet there is an element of risk involved in such an historical commitment.¹ The evidence of historical research (as opposed to the judgment of historical criticism) may someday demonstrate the extreme improbability of the paradox on historical grounds, through archeological or some other tangible means. Such research faith welcomes, since it believes that it will be ultimately vindicated. Reason also welcomes such research out of the same

¹Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, p. 103.
conviction.

In the meantime, it would seem that the believer is free to believe in the biblical Christ as the "real" (historisch-geschichtlich) Christ, simply because he is so told. This is the point of Luther's "literal" interpretation. It is also the point of the words used by Kierkegaard in the *Fragments*: "If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: 'We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died,' it would be more than enough." The New Testament itself adds precious little to this statement which is of value as far as faith is concerned. Faith is the only organ which may "apprehend" such an ontological paradox as having happened in history as an objective historical occurrence.

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Evaluation

Kierkegaard's paradox has little value as a rational philosophic category. If Luther's distinction between philosophy and theology is maintained, it would appear that the chief value of such an understanding would be on the side of theology. It is Luther's opinion that paradoxes are only of value for the "elect". Likewise Kierkegaard states that the paradox exists for "Faith alone". In the field of theology, the paradox has great, and, indeed, Absolute significance. As was observed, it is the point of departure for Christian faith.

The paradox, as a Christological construct, would appear to be an improvement upon the Chalcedonian Definition. While this definition does point to two natures in one person, it may lead to certain misinterpretations either of an Eutychian or Nestorian variety. Such a formulation, by its very positing of two natures, poses the problem of "balance", in which one nature or the other is overly stressed, a problem easily documented in the history of Christian thought. Thus Eller comments on the Kierkegaardian paradox:

S.K., on the other hand, made no use of this creedal solution—but not because he was intent on deserting orthodoxy. He chose to be unorthodox in the interest of achieving a purer orthodoxy. He consistently referred to Christ under the term

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1Luther, The Bondage Of The Will, p. 61.
2Kierkegaard, Fragments, p. 120.
That is to say, reason is not capable of acknowledging an ontological paradox in history, even when there exists a certain amount of objective documentation affirming such a paradox. Hence the paradox may be said to exist for "Faith alone" since other organs of apprehension are incapable of embracing the paradox.
'the God-Man,' and he never allowed the slightest grounds for breaking that hyphen apart to examine the two halves independently. The God-Man is not some of God and some of Man; he is not two natures in union; there is no suggestion that either in his being or in his actions there is that which can be identified as stemming from his deity as over against that which stems from his humanity. Precisely the significance of Christ's humanity is that it is God who has assumed it; and precisely the significance of Christ's deity is that it is revealed in human form. The two 'natures' cannot get out of balance, because the concept has been so developed that it is impossible to describe either without affirming the other. 1

The term "God-Man", however, was not Kierkegaard's invention. It may be found in the writings of the ancient Church. 2 Indeed this is in full agreement with Kierkegaard's insistence (quoted at the beginning) that the importance of his writing, "...absolutely does not consist in making any new proposal, any unheard-of discovery, or in the forming of a new party, or wanting to go further, but, precisely on the contrary, consists in wanting to have no importance, in wanting...to read solo the original text of the individual, human existence-relationship, the old text, well known, handed down from the fathers--to read it through yet once more, if possible in a more heartfelt way." 3

1Eller, p. 355.
2C. Moell, writing in the New Catholic Encyclopedia (Vol. XIV, p. 4), attributes the term to Pseudo-Dionysius (ca. 500).
3Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 554.
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Appendix A:

Understanding Kierkegaard's Authorship

Much of the misunderstanding surrounding Kierkegaard's authorship stems from his critics, especially those in Germany, and continues to flourish to the present day. Most evidence points to one Christoph Schrempf as the initiator of this confusion. Schrempf was a Lutheran pastor in Germany who gave Kierkegaard the credit for the extreme theological liberalism which resulted in Schrempf's exclusion from the ministry of the Lutheran Church. Embittered, he spent his life translating Kierkegaard, and combating Christianity. Schrempf's translation—significantly the only complete edition of Kierkegaard's works in German from 1906 to 1950—was accompanied by a Nachwort which pictured Kierkegaard as a fool and a non-Christian. He represented Kierkegaard as an extreme fideist and irrationalist, an interpretation which is still held in some circles.

This interpretation (which has been dubbed by Alastair McKinnon as "the phantom Kierkegaard") understood Kierkegaard's concept of reason to be an exclusively logical

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capacity, and likewise understood the concept of paradox only in terms of logical contradiction. This understanding neglected the peculiar orientation of Kierkegaard's work, and failed to grasp that the believer's experience of paradox was but an aspect in his transition to belief. The poetic nature of Kierkegaard's writing was dismissed and read instead as a series of direct prose conclusions. The result was a Kierkegaard who held that Christianity itself was a logical contradiction, which must be accepted as such if it was to be believed.¹

Such a misunderstanding is apparent in the problem that Hermann Diem outlines regarding Kierkegaard's pseudonymity:

During his lifetime Kierkegaard could to some extent protect himself from the enthusiasm of the lecturers both by his own personal attitude and the whole apparatus of pseudonymity which intensified the obliqueness of his literary method. But with his death this obliqueness ceases. One is no longer confronted by the spectacle of his own personal life as a challenge and a shock. The mystery of the pseudonyms is pierced. It is no longer necessary to pay heed to Kierkegaard's own requirement that his writings should not be cited under his own name but under that of the pseudonyms in order to guard the obliqueness of his communication as an essential part of his whole work, for it can concern nobody if this is not done, and, moreover, the lecturers regard the failure to do it as a scholarly proceeding. On the contrary, the position now is that the pseudonyms can be utilised in order to probe the personality of the author underlying them, and the main interest is centered in that personality.

Thus the modern critic need no longer subject himself to the ultimate intention of Kierkegaard's

¹ibid.
work and its method and purpose. And thus we are in a position to analyse the work into its component parts and so exploit it as we will.

However this misunderstanding is not overturned by what Diem adds as a remedy, since it too fails to grasp the entire dramatic quality of the pseudonyms:

Instead of engaging in a dialectical approach to his work in its passionate concentration and wholeness—an approach which requires the involvement of the critic's personal existence—existence will rather be made the object of academic exposition, and philosophers and theologians will take from Kierkegaard's work the cornerstones for the construction of a system of 'existential thought.' And they will completely overlook the small distinction, so momentous in consequences, namely the fact that Kierkegaard speaks not of 'existential thought' but of the 'existing thinker.'

Many of Kierkegaard's critics fail to take note of the fact that the pseudonyms, "...are poetically created creatures, held together poetically so that what they say is in character with their poetic individuality." That is to say, in order to grasp the significance of the pseudonyms, one must know that the "authors", like dramatic characters, all have their part to play. Some represent views contrary to those of Kierkegaard himself, others are close to him or on the way to becoming him, and still others represent his ideal. One of them (Anti-Climacus), it has been suggested, "...is even more Kierkegaardian

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2ibid., p. 205.

than Kierkegaard himself. ¹

Thus Kierkegaard warns his readers against confusing himself with his creations (a fact, incidentally, which has little to do with whether Kierkegaard is alive or dead):

As everyone with a grain of common sense will immediately realise, a ridiculous confusion would ensue if the statements of these poetic personalities were made into mine. However, I have once for all, as a precautionary measure, earnestly begged people to observe that if they wish to cite something by one of the pseudonyms the quotation should not be made into my words (Final Postscript). ²

Quoting Kierkegaard's pseudonyms indiscriminately, as if they were Kierkegaard himself, would only lead to the conclusion that the author had a split personality. This Kierkegaard warns against. Likewise disreputable would be the practice (more evident in our age) of alluding to Kierkegaard's dramatic techniques while quoting the pseudonyms at will as representing his position: "And everyone who makes use of the fact that there is also a poetic side to me in order to quote those writings in a confusing way is, in my opinion, more or less of a chicaneur or literary practical joker." ³ This would be analogous to passing off the position of Lear, Hamlet, or John Falstaff—or all three together—as representing Shakespeare's true position.

One may wonder why Kierkegaard went to all the trouble of using pseudonyms, as opposed to direct discourse. The answer to this question is bound up in a journal entry

²Kierkegaard, Journals, (1238) p. 454.
³Ibid.
from 1848: "A man who could not seduce men cannot save them either."  
In other words, inherently involved in what Kierkegaard wished to communicate to his reader was a certain change in the state of the reader which could only be appropriated through a process which Kierkegaard had already undergone. This communication, therefore, could not be communicated directly without the reader undertaking the same appropriation process.

Walter Lowrie states the problem in this manner:

Whereas the objective thinker can perfectly well communicate directly the results of his own reflection, 'the subjective existing thinker' discovers an impediment to the communication in the further reflection that the truth he arrives at 'interests' his existence (is part and parcel of it) and as such cannot simply be handed over to another, but to be appropriated, to be one's own, it must be acquired through the same process of reflection by which it was originally reached. Hence the communication must be indirect, artfully devised to prompt the other to think out the thing for himself, while the subjectivity of the communicator remains concealed.

Thus Kierkegaard refuses to make things simple for his readers by merely presenting them with a "result". This would be like memorizing the answer to a mathematical problem without working it out for oneself. He obliges his reader to approach the goal along the same difficult

\[1\] *ibid.*, (835) p. 271.

[2] This is one reason why Kierkegaard's *Postscript* is "unscientific".

path which he has already trod.¹

A related reason for the need of indirect communication lies in the fact that to Kierkegaard's mind his reader is in the grips of an illusion. If the reader were purely receptive to what he would communicate, "...like the empty vessel which is to be filled," direct communication would be appropriate; but where an illusion enters in and something must be done away with, then direct communication is out of place.²

The illusion that Kierkegaard would dispel is that while his audience would claim to be a Christian audience (for to be born a Dane was to be born a Christian), it was living for the most part in aesthetic rather than religious categories. The problem was to enable his reader to become a Christian, when the reader naturally thought that he already was a Christian—hence the illusion.

His writing, then, is one of religious (and even evangelical) concern, that of dispelling an illusion, and calling attention to what Kierkegaard considered to be the truth. As such, this is a decidedly delicate task. For if anything would cause the subject to set his will against such a process, all is lost. This, however, is just what the direct approach achieves:

...And it implies moreover the presumption of requiring a man to make to another person, or in his presence, an admission which he can make most

¹Lowrie, p. vii.
profitably to himself privately. This is what is achieved by the indirect method, which, loving and serving the truth, arranges everything dialectically for the prospective captive, and then shyly withdraws (for love is always shy), so as not to witness an admission which he makes to himself alone before God—that he has lived hitherto in an illusion.1

Thus Kierkegaard began to impart the religious truth *maleutically*, in much the same manner as Socrates sought to impart philosophic truth. Kierkegaard's approach was to "seduce" his reader in order to "save" him. Thus instead of beginning directly with the matter that Kierkegaard wished to communicate, he began by accepting the readers illusion as if it were "good money". Instead of beginning, "I am a Christian; you are not a Christian"; or, "It is Christianity I am proclaiming; and you are living in purely aesthetic categories"; he began as follows: "Let us talk about aesthetics."2 It was no accident that his first pseudonymous work (Either/Or) dealt with "wine, women, and song"; and for this reason, had a large following at the start.

Kierkegaard's writing, which began with the seductive aesthetic stage, soon led the reader to the *ethical* stage, and finally to the *religious*. His intent was, again, to begin aesthetically in order to introduce the religious theme to someone who lives in aesthetic categories.3 Or to phrase it somewhat differently, he sought "...to beguile a person into the truth."4

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1ibid., pp. 25-26.  
2ibid., p. 41.  
3ibid.  
4ibid., p. 148.
Of course such a "movement" was not meant for the masses, but for what Kierkegaard termed "the individual". This he believed to be "the decisive Christian category". His authorship placed the individual in the position of compelling the reader to say "I", and to discard, what he considered to be, the high-minded, and disinterested universalisms of Hegel. Such an emphasis on the unique importance of the individual is, of course, the mode of the artistic, as opposed to the scientific. Science was not interested in the individual as Kierkegaard conceived the category. Rather science was interested in the particular individual, only in so far as he was a specimen of the species or of the social. Kierkegaard developed theology not as a science, but as an art—a distinction, it may be added, of less clarity in the twentieth-century than in the nineteenth.

Kierkegaard's seduction had as its goal that of approaching, or of attaining what he called "simplicity":

In a Christian sense simplicity is not the point of departure from which one goes on to become interesting, witty, profound, poet, philosopher, etc. No, the very contrary. Here one begins (with the interesting, etc.) and becomes simpler and simpler, attaining simplicity. This, in 'Christendom', is the Christian movement: one does not reflect oneself into Christianity; but one reflects oneself out of something else and becomes, more and more simply, a Christian.  

However since this movement is towards "simplicity", the communication of calling attention to the religious

1ibid., p. 135.  2ibid., p. 148.
must end, sooner or later, with direct communication. What began maieutically with the aesthetic, pseudonymous works was to become more and more a direct communication with the emergence of Kierkegaard's own name, first as publisher (as in the *Fragments* and the *Postscript*), and later as editor (as in *The Sickness Unto Death* and *Training in Christianity*). The religious intention, however, was inherent from the very beginning;\(^1\) and likewise Kierkegaard had aesthetic interests later in life.

The maieutic, though, was not seen by Kierkegaard as being an end in itself. As opposed to the Socratic understanding, which found the truth to reside within the individual, Christianity possessed a revelation which must be proclaimed. Thus the "witness"\(^2\) was the final form for Kierkegaard,\(^3\) and undoubtedly a driving force in his "attack upon Christendom".

Let us now turn to two areas of pseudonymous authorship alluded to above: the works ascribed to Johannes Climacus, and those ascribed to Anti-Climacus. We will deal with each one respectively.

The fact of the dramatic nature of Kierkegaard's writing has already been discussed. Kierkegaard loved the

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\(^1\) *Ibid.*

\(^2\) Kierkegaard comments on Luther in this respect: "... Luther broke with 'the whole set of apish tricks which passed under the name of Christian discipleship.' But he did not do away with the idea of discipleship, on the contrary it consisted for him 'in witnessing to the truth and in many dangers which he voluntarily took upon himself, without making a merit out of it.'" (Quoted in Diem, pp. 146-147).

\(^3\) Lowrie, p. 447.
theater, and spent much time in attendance. His pseudonymous work, therefore, created his own theatrical production, each actor exhibiting the fullest of characterization.

There is, however, one sense in which the pseudonyms are not the usual actors. A recent critic affirms that Kierkegaard's actors exemplify types and thus do not demonstrate the impulsiveness inherent in the average character. Rather, "they must express precisely the characters which they typify."\(^1\) Thus the seducer is an exceptional seducer, the aesthete an unqualified aesthete; and each role is played to its fullest.

It is very difficult, therefore, to assign to any one pseudonym the role of the "real Kierkegaard". This holds true for Kierkegaard's most famous writings, and is especially the case if we keep in mind his assertion that, "...in the pseudonymous works there is not a single word which is mine, I have no opinion about these works except as a third person, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader, not the remotest private relation to them, since such a thing is impossible in the case of a doubly reflected communication."\(^2\)

Likewise he warns that if one quotes a particular saying from these works, the respective pseudonymous author should be cited in conjunction.\(^3\) Thus it is not

\(^1\)Arbaugh, p. 41. \(^2\)Kierkegaard, Postscript, p. 551. \(^3\)Ibid., p. 552.
uncommon to find Kierkegaard quoting from his pseudonyms by saying, for example, "as Johannes Climacus truly observes...", or "as Anti-Climacus truly remarks...", etc.¹

In this regard, we are warned by one critic that in the case of each pseudonymous work, its "author" should be fixed firmly in mind. And only when this is accomplished, can one begin "carefully to weigh the problem of the manner in which this fictional character expresses the meaning or purpose of Søren Kierkegaard himself."²

Similarly Walter Lowrie suggests that, with the exception of Anti-Climacus, the pseudonymous writings each reflect a stage that Kierkegaard had passed through. For this reason, the pseudonyms should not be made to represent Kierkegaard's deliberate position. Lowrie writes:

The reader is following the flight of a bird and can determine its successive positions only after they have been passed and left long behind. We can understand that each position he relinquished was more decisively transcended the moment he had poetized it and put it in writing.³

Lowrie later points to the voluminous journal entries to show how many of these thoughts end up at the pen of one or another of his pseudonyms.⁴

One would suspect this to be more the case with Johannes Climacus than even with some of Kierkegaard's earlier stages. For while P. L. Møller may have been the

¹Kierkegaard, Journals, (962) p. 331.
²Arbaugh, p. 43. ³Lowrie, p. 277. ⁴ibid., p. 288.
model for "the seducer", and P. V. Jacobsen may have served as the model for Judge William,¹ both colleagues of Kierkegaard, Johannes Climacus represents a somewhat more specialized type.

The word "Climacus" is Latinized Greek for ladder. The character represents "John the Climber", who climbs towards the Christian truth through various speculative means.² He is an aesthete and not a Christian. There is evidence to suggest that Johannes Climacus represents more the young Kierkegaard, one who is given to heroic decisions, and who defies both his father and God.³ The Existentialist school of philosophy in the twentieth-century is one largely influenced by this kind of characterization.

Johannes Climacus, however, is also the author of two of Kierkegaard's most important works: Philosophical Fragments, and its Concluding Unscientific Postscript. Neither of the works is totally aesthetic nor totally religious. The Fragments is concerned with how the Eternal is related to the temporal in the objective Christ. Kierkegaard here presents Christianity in such a seductive, doubly-reflective, and philosophic manner, as to bring it to the attention of the systematic philosopher. Johannes Climacus proposes that his work is an "advance upon Socrates", yet makes no claim as to its truth for the individual, that being a subjective problem. The work is done in a kindly and

¹Ibid., p. 96. ²Arbaugh, p. 146. ³See: Lowrie, p. 29ff., and 109ff.
complimentary, if ironic, fashion. His "moral" concludes: "But to make an advance upon Socrates and yet say essentially the same things as he, only not nearly so well—that at least is not Socratic."¹

The Postscript begins where the Fragments leave off. It deals with how the Eternal's relationship to the temporal may be appropriated by the believer, and how the believer may base his eternal happiness upon an historical event. It was intended, at one point, as the final work in the series, as the word "Concluding" would indicate. However Kierkegaard later changed his mind.² The problem set by the Postscript (and, for that matter by the bulk of Kierkegaard's writing), is "how to become a Christian."³ Whereas the purely aesthetic pseudonymous works dealt with becoming a Christian by moving away from the aesthetical, the Fragments and the Postscript deal with it by moving away from "the System" (i.e. Hegel's), and from "speculation", by "fighting for this cause and vigorously slashing through to find the way back."⁴ For Kierkegaard, such a task was a passionate affair which grew impatient with Hegel who claimed to deal with the basic questions in an objective manner. He insisted upon "subjectivity", but Lowrie points out, "by that he meant, not a disposition

²Kierkegaard, Journals, (1294) p. 491.
³Kierkegaard, Point Of View, p. 13.
⁴Ibid., p. 97.
to ignore facts, but a vital concern about them—especially about the facts which most properly concern man."¹

However the year 1848 marked a "metamorphosis" in Kierkegaard's life. It was during Easter week of this year that he experienced a last conversion, one marked by the forgiveness of sins and the encouragement to speak directly—in much the same manner as Christ once said to the paralytic: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, arise and walk."² Thus Kierkegaard comments in a journal entry from that year:
"From now on begins, more strictly and more decisively than ever before, the presentation of Christianity—and so I can no longer write on any aesthetic subject, and it is self-evident that I shall neither find the time nor be in the mood to do so."³

This personal awakening was accompanied by a new pseudonym, Anti-Climacus. Whereas Johannes Climacus was a non-Christian (having heard of Christianity but not understood it), who represented a position lower than Kierkegaard's "simple" Christianity, Anti-Climacus was a Christian "in an extraordinary degree."⁴ He writes concerning him:

But the very fact that he is a pseudonym indicates (as the name Anti-Climacus itself indicates) that he is rather to be regarded as a signal of arrest. All the earlier pseudonyms are lower than the 'edifying author'; the new pseudonym represents a higher pseudonymity. It is to be understood, however, that

the 'arrest' is accomplished by pointing out a higher ideal, with consequence of forcing me back within the bounds of my limitations, condemning me because my life does not correspond to so lofty a claim, so that of necessity the communication is a poetic one.¹

It is Anti-Climacus who is the author of two of Kierkegaard's last works, *The Sickness Unto Death* and *Training In Christianity*. In *Sickness*, Kierkegaard treats seriously the Christian doctrine of sin. It was considered by Kierkegaard to be the greatest of his religious works. Lowrie concludes that it shows how deeply Kierkegaard was influenced by Luther during this period, noting Luther's dread at the sin of doubting the forgiveness of sins.² Lowrie suggests that *The Sickness Unto Death* may be viewed as a somewhat revised edition of *The Concept Of Dread* which Kierkegaard had published some years earlier.³

But if *Sickness* is a re-edition of Kierkegaard's *Dread*, so a maturer edition of the *Fragments* and the *Postscript* may be found in the last pseudonymous work, *Training In Christianity*, according to Lowrie. This work as well seeks to define the fundamental Christian categories, yet it does so in a more intense and polemical way; "the incognito of humour has been laid aside," Lowrie writes, "and it is evidently written by a believer, a convinced believer to whom this book was his education, not in Christian faith but in Christian practice."⁴

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¹Kierkegaard, *Point Of View*, p. 146n.
²Lowrie, p. 409. ³Ibid., p. 430.
⁴Ibid.
If these last works differ from Kierkegaard's own position, they differ not in kind, but in degree. Lowrie comments at another point that the pseudonym in this regard was an afterthought, and that Kierkegaard had intended to publish the works under his own name. He continues: "Here therefore every word can be regarded as his own, and now for the first time, with complete frank-heartedness, without resort to the device of 'indirect communication,' as in the earlier pseudonymous works...he essays to tell directly and as plainly as possible what Christianity is and all that it is, even if no man can live up to the obligations which it imposes."\(^1\)

While, for reasons already noted, this endorsement may be somewhat too unqualified, the fact remains that these last works by Anti-Climacus are hardly distinguishable from Kierkegaard's own mature position. Yet there remains no hard-and-fast rule to separate what is truly Kierkegaard's from what is truly his pseudonyms', even though the two positions are extremely close.

For our purposes, however, we will accept what Kierkegaard terms "the problem" as being the problem that he sees Christianity as presenting. In the objective sense the problem is the paradox; in the subjective sense the problem is the "how" of becoming a Christian. If "the problem" is not taken to be Kierkegaard's own, his entire pseudonymous authorship breaks down into nonsense, its purpose being

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negated. Furthermore, we would do well to recall Arbaugh's advice of placing firmly in mind each pseudonymous "author", in order to weigh the extent to which the fictional character represents the meaning and purpose of Kierkegaard himself.
Appendix B:

Luther's Influence On Training In Christianity

As we have noted in a previous chapter, Kierkegaard's avowed task was "to introduce Christianity into Christendom." However this thought suggests another, namely, "Does Kierkegaard seek to introduce Luther into Lutheranism?"

While we have uncovered some evidence to suggest that Luther stands closely in the background of Kierkegaard's writing, documenting such a proposal is always a difficult undertaking. If Kierkegaard does rely heavily on Luther, he seems to use Luther in a rather haphazard fashion. As Johannes Slob suggests:

"Kierkegaard's knowledge of Luther was of a strongly accidental character. This is not unusual for Kierkegaard, somewhere in his Journals he complains of it himself. It is very difficult for him to concern himself objectively with another author: he invariably views him from his own positions and, accordingly, he sometimes fastens upon quite accidental and unrelated things. He had a tendency--of which he was well aware--to evaluate others on the basis of highly arbitrary associations which might be aroused by some peculiar phrase or the like."

Slob concludes in this regard that,

"as far as Luther was concerned, Kierkegaard's study of him was rather one-sided. Luther's great theological, philosophical, and polemical works apparently did not matter much to him. Even though

he had read these works, his writings give no evidence that he was deeply concerned about them.  

Most scholars, like Sløk, contend that Luther's influence was especially limited to his sermons, which Kierkegaard read extensively for edification. Hermann Diem comments that Kierkegaard was deeply concerned with Luther, "but confined his reading almost entirely to Luther's sermons." Likewise Heywood Thomas writes that Luther, "...probably influenced Kierkegaard more by the movement or Church of which he was the father than by his actual works."

Part of the reluctance to give Luther a greater role in Kierkegaard's writing must arise from the fact that Kierkegaard himself was, more often than not, highly critical of Luther in his Journals. Thus while Kierkegaard refers to Luther at one point as being a kind of theological "Copernicus," he later considers Luther to be, "the absolute opposite of an 'Apostle'."

Perhaps Kierkegaard's most central, biting, and memorable criticism is this one from 1850:

**Luther's Transformations**

Those who lived at the same time as Luther,

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1 *ibid.*, p. 86. 2 *ibid.*


6 *ibid.*, (1406) p. 547.
particularly those who were near to him, received a powerful impression of him as the hero of faith, first of all melancholy beyond measure and then terribly tried in the most frightful tribulation, a pious, God-fearing man and as such essentially a stranger in the world.

But in the meanwhile the impression which Luther made soon changed; he was really understood as a political hero, and the catchword under which he is remembered: Hear me, thou Pope, etc.

The impression was changed once the Pope was crushed, and Luther was understood as a jolly man of the world, a boon companion; and the catchword under which he is remembered both by layman and clergy became: Wer nicht liebt Weiber, Wein, Gesang, etc. Speaking in quite a popular way one might say that nowadays the interpretation is: The Meaning of the Reformation is that Luther installed girls, wine, and cards in their rightful place in the Christian Church as an essential part thereof, a real perfection as opposed to the imperfection: poverty, prayer, and fasting.

And so the best way to celebrate his memory would be in this way. Chorus of clergy and lay folk: Here's to Martin Luther's health, hurra! Shame on those who will not drink to Martin Luther's health, hurra, hurra, hurra, hurra, and once again hurra!...

Here Kierkegaard especially writes against the later Luther, the one whom he considers to be seduced by history. Kierkegaard would no doubt have been happier if Luther had remained less of a reformer, and more of a corrective, which is how Kierkegaard considered himself. 2

Hermann Diem suggests a significant point, however, in that while Kierkegaard's private writings often speak of Luther in a critical manner, his published writings always speak of him with the greatest respect. 3 This insight,

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1 ibid., (1119) p. 402.
2 Diem, p. 158.
3 ibid., p. 159.
though, is complicated by the fact that Kierkegaard expected his journals to be published, and even revised them with this thought in mind.¹ This raises the whole question of the public intent of his private writings.

At any rate, for reasons which have been noted previously, as well as for reasons about to be noted, there is evidence to suggest that Luther played a significant role in the formulation of Kierkegaard's published works, especially Training In Christianity. As Kierkegaard writes at one point:

Luther is, next to the New Testament, the truest form of the Christian consciousness. What does Luther express? Luther expresses a pause in which takes place an act of reflection and recollection. In him humanity or Christianity pauses to recollect that between the God-man and us other men, in fact between the Apostles and the rest of us, there lies a qualitative distinction, and, therefore, that grace must be our one recourse. The Christians and the Church fathers did not understand this matter thus, but went straight ahead in their imitation of Christ. Luther reacted against this. What I blame is that he did not make more effectively known the nature of his reaction, that he referred to it at most en passant...²

What Kierkegaard seems to accomplish in terms of his writing, is to take certain aspects of Luther's thought which appear "en passant", and express them anew in greater detail and lucidity. In so doing, these thoughts take on Kierkegaard's style, a style marked by its personalized, terse, and philosophic manner. Thus Kierkegaard writes

²Kierkegaard, quoted in Diem, p. 163.
in his *Journal* (1850):

> What makes the difference in life is not what is said, but how it is said. As for the 'what', the same thing has already been said perhaps many times before— and so the old saying is true: there is nothing new under the sun, the old saying which is always new... 

If Kierkegaard uses something old, such as some of Luther's categories, and related them in a new way, this practice may have been present as early as the *Postscript*, if not before. We have already made allusion (in the chapter on Kierkegaard) to Luther's influence on the *Postscript*, but perhaps a more significant relationship exists in the *Fragments*. Johannes Climacus writes at one point, "When the Reason says that it cannot get the Paradox into its head, it was not the Reason that made the discovery but the Paradox, which is so paradoxical as to declare the Reason a blockhead and a dunce..." Later Climacus identifies this passage with Luther.1

Commenting on this reference to Luther, Niels Thulstrup writes that, "Before 1846 Luther is mentioned in only a few places in Kierkegaard's *Journals*, and by the time he wrote *Philosophical Fragments* he did not have basic first-hand knowledge of Luther's own works."2 Thulstrup does not find any similarities between the above passage and any passage to be found in the works by Luther which Kierkegaard

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3 *ibid.*, p. 67. 4 *ibid.*, p. 226.
had in his library. However we have something strikingly similar in The Bondage Of The Will:

Absurdity, then, is one of the principle reasons for not taking the words of Moses and Paul literally. But what article of faith does this absurdity sin against? Or who is offended by it? Human reason is offended, who although she is blind, deaf, stupid, impious, and sacrilegious with regard to all the works and words of God, is brought in at this point as a judge of the words and works of God.

This suggests that Kierkegaard may have not only glanced at Luther's work by this time, but may have shared basic categories with this source in Bondage. All the meaningful concepts: "Absurd", "Reason", "Offense", and "Paradox", are to be found here. Should this, indeed, be the case, the significance of this allusion should not be overlooked, even if The Bondage Of The Will is not to be numbered among Kierkegaard's possessions.

During these years (beginning especially in 1846), Kierkegaard was influenced by Luther to the extent that he spent some time meditating on, and writing about Lutheran themes. Ernest Koenker comments concerning this influence:

The vigour and profusion of Kierkegaard's criticism of Luther can easily obscure both the depth and extent of his appreciation of the Reformer. Kierkegaard had Luther's valid insights, and though the criticism overshadows the guarded expressions of indebtedness, such positive expressions are at the same time both implicit and explicit. By considering the explicit statements

\[1\text{ibid.}\]

it should also become clear how extensively his succinct Luther-approval places Kierkegaard's vast literary output into Luther's debt.¹

However, it is one thing to suggest that Kierkegaard was "influenced" by Luther, or that his writing was placed in "Luther's debt", and quite another thing to assert that Kierkegaard consciously identified himself with Luther's position to the extent that he sought to "introduce Luther into Lutheranism". This would require greater documentation than has been produced at this point. However, it is Training In Christianity which supplies us with a certain body of evidence to support this latter view.

Unlike Kierkegaard's other pseudonymous works, Training In Christianity contains peculiarities which distinguish it as having a specific hidden agenda. Kierkegaard writes concerning this work:

In so far as the Church establishment understands itself, it will in the same degree understand also the last book, Training In Christianity, as an attempt to provide an Idealistic support for the establishment. In the first instance I did not wish to speak out directly, as I do here (what, as a matter of fact, the Preface expresses directly by expressing how I understood the book) in order, in the interest of truth not to spare myself in the face of a situation which, probable or improbable, was always a possibility; in order not to evade the difficulties and dangers which might arise if the establishment were to undertake to convert my communication into opposition—which would have prompted serious misgivings about the state

of the establishment's health. Thank God, this did not occur, however. Yet it is quite possible that some well-informed office-bearer—to whom the fact that I have no official position was in itself reproach enough—might have perpetrated the ludicrous folly of rushing forward to defend and shield the establishment against what at this moment is surely a possible defence of the establishment, so long as it understands itself.¹

Kierkegaard footnotes this in the following way:

¹That the book (except for the Editor's Preface, which stands by itself) is a defence of the established order cannot be affirmed directly, since the form of communication is doubly reflected; it might equally well be the very reverse, or be understood as such. 'Directly' I say only, therefore, that an established order which understands itself must understand the book thus [i.e. as doubly reflected]; all doubly reflected communication makes contrary interpretation equally possible, and the judge will be made manifest by his judgement.²

Thus Kierkegaard implies that a negative judgment upon Training In Christianity would be a negative judgment upon what is really a support for the establishment. That is to say, if the establishment were to condemn the work, the establishment would be, in an oblique sort of way, condemning itself; contrarily, to affirm the work, would be to affirm itself. Thus, "the judge will be made manifest by his judgment."

This would explain Kierkegaard's concern to hear Bishop Mynster's opinion of the work. Mynster, of course, as the symbol of the establishment, was the appropriate


person to decide whether *Training In Christianity* represented an attack or a defense. It was from him that Kierkegaard sought the concession that established Christianity did not represent the Christianity of the sort described in the New Testament.  

Kierkegaard and Mynster were accustomed to present each other with their books. Thus like the previous works (*Works Of Love* and *The Sickness Unto Death*), Kierkegaard gave Bishop Mynster a copy of *Training In Christianity*. According to Mynster's son-in-law, Pastor Pauli, the Bishop's initial reaction was not favorable. Pauli told Kierkegaard that Mynster had commented: "This book has greatly embittered me, it is a profane game played with sacred things." Thus Kierkegaard, upon hearing the news, went to the Bishop himself (Oct. 22, 1850):

The following morning I went to see him. Familiar as I am with his disarming dignity I began immediately as follows: 'Today I have come on a particular matter. Pastor Pauli told me yesterday that you intended to reprimand me for my last book as soon as you saw me. I beg you to regard it as a renewed expression of the deference I have always shown you as soon as I was informed of this I instantly made my appearance'... He replied, 'No, I have no right to reprimand. I have told you before that I have no objection to each bird singing its own song.' Thereupon he added: 'People can perfectly well say what they want about me.' But that addition made me suspect a little sarcasm and I sought instantly to save the situation. I replied that this was not my intention, I begged him to tell me whether I had in any way distressed him by publishing such a

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1Lowrie, p. 522.

Kierkegaard, as has been noted above, considered Luther to have, "next to the New Testament, the truest form of Christian consciousness" (Diem, p. 163.).
book. Then he answered 'Yes, I really believe that it will not do any good.' With this reply I was content; it was kindly and personal.  

A later visit with Mynster (May 2, 1851) also concerns itself with *Training In Christianity*:

Then we talked together about the ministers and the ministry, all of which I do not note down because it has nothing to do with my 'matter'. Then the conversation turned to other events...I then repeated that although it was possible he might have something to say against my book it was nevertheless a defence of the established order...  

Walter Lowrie indicates that Kierkegaard's initial contentment at Mynster's reply was due to the fact that it did not compel a full attack upon established Christianity, which would have been the case if his book had been openly condemned by authority. Kierkegaard noted that no ecclesiastical authority had condemned the book, nor was it challenged by the religious press. However at a later time, Kierkegaard reproached Mynster because he had neither spoken for it nor against it. Lowrie reports Kierkegaard's feeling that Mynster, "...ought either to have recognized it as a true exposition of Christianity, or to have denounced it strongly as a gross offense against the Church."  

One might suspect from Kierkegaard's comment about *Training* being a defense of the established order that the work, therefore, has something to do with Luther. This is

2*ibid.*, (1216) p. 439.  
3Lowrie, p. 515.
underlined by the fact that just prior to Kierkegaard's statement (quoted above) about the hidden purpose of the book, is a rather odd comment about Luther's relationship to his writing:

...What I have desired to prevent is, the one who has limited himself to the easier and lower should thereupon 'go farther' /i.e. a reference to Hegel and speculative philosophy/ and abolish the higher, go farther and represent the higher as a fantastic and ludicrous exaggeration, the lower as wisdom and true seriousness—to prevent any one in 'Christianity' from taking Luther and the significance of Luther's life in vain. This I have desired to be instrumental, if possible, in preventing.1

Of a similar nature is a thought from a journal entry (1849) which may serve as a clue to the tactic at work in Training In Christianity:

It might serve a really useful purpose to learn one of Luther's sermons word for word by heart— and then deliver it without letting the fact be noticed —and then say: that is, word for word, one of Luther's sermons. And for the sake of precaution one might have two confidants, sworn to secrecy, who could testify that such was one's original intention —so that it should not all end in an accusation of plagiarism.2

The thought, therefore, which comes to mind is this: "Does Training In Christianity represent some aspect of Luther's works in an updated but albeit disguised fashion?"

It is common knowledge that Kierkegaard's pseudonymous work In Vino Veritas used as its model Plato's Symposium;3

1Kierkegaard, The Point Of View, etc., p. 161.
2Kierkegaard, Journals, (914) pp. 308-309.
3Lowrie, p. 3.
is it possible that Training In Christianity used a model as well?

There is evidence to suggest two significant areas of Lutheran influence on Training In Christianity. Of primary importance appears to be that of a series of sermons which Luther preached in Wittenberg from November 1530 to March 1532, on John, chapter 6 through chapter 8. Also of importance appears to be Luther's major work already cited, The Bondage Of The Will. Let us examine both of these sources, beginning with Luther's sermons on John.

It may be recalled that Training In Christianity is divided into three parts. Part I uses as its motto a verse taken from Matthew 11.28: "Come Hither, All Ye That Labour And Are Heavy Laden, I Will Give You Rest." The words "Come Unto Me" were the words inscribed on the base of Thorwaldsen's statue of Jesus, which figured so significantly in Kierkegaard's third conversion in 1848. Luther also uses this verse in a memorable passage concerning the distinction between Law and Gospel. Luther writes:

He who masters the art of exact distinction between the Law and the Gospel should be called a real theologian. These two must be kept apart. The function of the Law is to frighten men and drive them to despair, especially the coarse and secure sinners, until they realize their inability to meet the demands of the Law or to obtain grace. They will never obtain mercy, but must despair. Dr. Staupitz told me once: 'I lied to God more than a thousand times, promising that I would become pious. I never kept the promise. Therefore I shall no longer form that resolve; for I see very well that I am unable to keep my promise, and I never again want to tell a lie.' I myself had the same experience. In the papacy I was zealously given to piety. But how long did it last? Only until I read Mass. After an hour I was worse than before. In the end one becomes
weary and feels impelled to say: 'I will lay 
pity, Moses, and the Law aside and cling to 
another Person, who says (Matt. 11.28): "Come to 
Me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will 
give you rest"' Cherish these words: 'Come to 
Me.'

It is an interesting coincidence that Luther used the 
verse Kierkegaard uses in Part I of Training, the same words 
which occur in conjunction with Thorwaldsen's statue and 
Kierkegaard's last conversion. Adding weight to this coin-
cidence is "The Moral" with which Kierkegaard completes 
Part I. It deals with the very issue of Law and Gospel that 
Luther mentions above: "...for the terrible language of the 
Law is so terrifying because it seems as if it were left to 
man to hold fast to Christ by his own power, whereas in the 
language of love it is Christ that holds him fast."

Or again, Kierkegaard continues:

'But if the Christian life is something so 
terrible and frightful, how in the world can a 
person get the idea of accepting it?' Quite 
simply, and, if you want that too, quite in a 
Lutheran way: only the consciousness of sin can 
force one into this dreadful situation--the 
power on the other side being grace.

Here we find stated in somewhat different language, 
the Law-Gospel issue. Kierkegaard, as has been observed, 
showed an interest not simply in "what" is being said, but 
in "how" an old truth may be stated in a new way.

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1Martin Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 23, Sermons On 
The Gospel Of St. John, Chapters 6-8 (Saint Louis: Con-

2Kierkegaard, Training, p. 25.

3Kierkegaard, Journals, (1059) p. 376.
Yet there is a great difference to be found between the context of the "Come Unto Me" of Thorwaldsen's statue, and the corresponding context found in the writings of Luther and Kierkegaard. Thorwaldsen treats Christ as if He were directly recognizable as the Son of God; Christ's invitation is sentimental and appealing. Thus the element of "offense", which plays so great a part in Luther's sermons, is lacking in this artistic representation.

However Part II of Training in Christianity deals with the nature of this "offense" in relationship to Christ. In this section, Kierkegaard presents Christ to his readers in much the same way as Luther does to those who hear his sermons. The similarity of description is striking. Thus it is not surprising to find Kierkegaard using examples which find their parallel in Luther's sermons. Thus Kierkegaard uses John 6.61ff. in which Christ speaks of Himself as the living bread come down from heaven. Kierkegaard writes about the nature of the offense, that the individual man, Jesus, should talk so about Himself:

Thus an individual man, to all appearance like the others, talks in such a way about himself! What wonder, indeed, that people are offended, and that they separated themselves from him and went each to his own affairs, deeply offended, and many of the disciples with them.1

Luther writes throughout his sermons along the same lines:

He would have been glad to convert them and to remove the offense from their hearts. But it was

1Kierkegaard, Training, p. 101.
all in vain. They could not be persuaded... They went their way.

One can well imagine how grieved the Lord must have been to see His own disciples, His daily companions, desert Him. Very likely they took a large number of people with them.\(^1\)

It is in this series of sermons on John, especially, that Luther presents Christ in terms of what Kierkegaard referred to as "contemporaneity". That is to say, Christ is presented as if one were contemporaneous with Him—as if you were there. Presented in this manner, the offense of the gospel becomes all too apparent, whether that offense be described as "loftiness" or "lowliness".

Several examples of Luther's technique have already been cited in the discussion of "Reason and The Holy Spirit" in a previous chapter. One cannot begin to list all the examples of this style of presentation which Luther uses in his sermons, as it encompasses the entire volume. Some further comments by Luther on John 6.61 will have to suffice:

61. But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, said to them: Do you take offense at this?

When this good Man Christ noticed that they were offended and displeased, it touched and hurt Him. Even though they may not have betrayed their mood by their facial expression, by drooping head or wry mouth, He detected this as He looked into their hearts and knew their thoughts; for He was God. He discerned their thoughts as soon as He directed them from the physical food and drink to the spiritual and expounded this obscure text so clearly, saying that he who believed in Him would not hunger and thirst in eternity. Thus this was

\(^1\)Luther, John, p. 186.
put to them carefully and simply enough. But it does no good; they take offense at His words...¹

Part III of *Training In Christianity*, likewise, finds parallels in this series of Luther's sermons. The motto of Part III is taken from John 12.32: "And I, If I Be Lifted Up From The Earth, Will Draw All Unto Myself." Kierkegaard builds seven final discourses around this theme. Luther also relies on this passage extensively in his preaching on John, where it recurs throughout these sermons.²

Luther writes regarding it:

In his book, *The City of God*, St. Augustine makes a great ado over the fact that Christ was born among the Jews and not among the Gentiles. After Paul and Peter had preached the Gospel in Rome and had converted people, the Romans complained that they were idolaters. But St. Augustine replies that this was not the fault of the Gospel. Therefore let them scream as they will; they have been told. When they had the Word, they would not believe. Let them believe after Christ has been crucified and lifted up, and when the stones are piled on top of one another. The Romans, too, refused to believe during the lifetime of the apostles; but later, when Rome lay in ruins, destroyed by the Goths and the Vandals, they had to believe. God had preached, but they had ignored it. Thus emperor, king, and pope will not believe today either until they are laid low. And it matters not that war, rebellion, and destruction will come. 'Why do you not believe in Me? Since you do not, you will be destroyed.' Pope and emperor, give ear, or perish. It makes no difference if we also perish in the general destruction. Thus Christ, too, was lifted up and crucified. Thus pious preachers are banished, innocent blood is shed, and Christians are burned at the stake.


²See e.g.: *ibid.*, pp. 161, 374-375, 381ff., and 396.
All this falls under the term 'to be lifted up.' When this has happened, they will find out.¹

One questions if such a passage as this had added significance for Kierkegaard's "attack upon Christendom". Kierkegaard had certainly given such men as Bishop Mynster "the Word". The fact that no clear response was given in return to the "matter" that Training In Christianity presented, may have led Kierkegaard to even more direct confrontation in his pamphleteering campaign.

As mentioned above, there are also certain similarities which should be noted between Training In Christianity and The Bondage Of The Will. Significantly Luther uses the word "paradoxes" in this work, and goes on to add that "they are paradoxes of no small moment."² Luther always preached Christ "by contrast and antithesis" (Christum per contentionem et antithesin).³ When Christ is preached in such a way that it conflicts with reason, the significance of such a conflict rests not merely in the realm of reason per se, but in the fact that underlying reason is man's natural free will and choice which the paradoxical (either morally or intellectually) offends. Christ proposes a salvation outside of man's natural inclination to build up and to save himself. Thus the natural man is doubly bound: by reason, but more basically by will. Wherever God's grace is properly proclaimed, Luther finds that the natural

¹ibid., pp. 387-388. ²Luther, Bondage, p. 63. ³ibid., p. 287.
man is not only indifferent to it, but battles against it.  

However it is Part III of Training In Christianity, again, which especially speaks to the problem of free choice. Of the seven discourses in this series, the first one is by Kierkegaard himself, which Anti-Climacus uses with "his consent". It was delivered in the Church of Our Lady on Friday, September 1, 1848. Anti-Climacus takes credit for writing the last discourse, "...in order to round off the whole with a conclusion answerable to the beginning...". He does this he says, "...in the same tone of mildness, and with that I have deviated in a measure from my role (of austere admonition)."²

The title which Anti-Climacus takes from Kierkegaard, finds its parallel in The Bondage Of The Will. At two points Luther writes of the Son of Man being lifted up from the earth,³ especially in reference to the story of Nicodemus (a story later used by Kierkegaard). A few pages further on finds this comment by Luther:

> Now take the saying of Christ in John 6 (44):  
> 'No one comes to me unless my Father draws him.'
> What does this leave to free choice? For he says that everyone needs to hear and learn from the Father himself, and that all must be taught by God. He plainly teaches here, not only that the works and efforts of free choice are fruitless, but that even the message of the gospel itself (which is what this passage is about) is heard in vain unless the Father himself speaks, teaches and draws inwardly. 'No one can come,' he says, 'no one'; and thus that power by which man is able to make

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¹ Ibid., p. 250. Compare Training, p. 25.
² Kierkegaard, Training, p. 151.
³ Luther, Bondage, p. 281.
some endeavor toward Christ, or in other words, towards the things that pertain to salvation, is asserted to be no power at all...\(^1\)

While Kierkegaard takes a verse which is not found in Bondage,\(^2\) it nonetheless suggests the passage expressed above. Kierkegaard speaks to the issue of choice as follows:

He would draw man unto Himself, and in order to draw him truly to Himself, He would draw him only as a free being, and so through choice. Therefore will He who humbled Himself, He the humiliated one, from on high draw man to Himself. Yet whether in lowliness or in exaltation, He is one and the same; and this choice would not be the right one if anyone were to mean by it that he should choose between Christ in His lowliness and Christ in His exaltation, for Christ is not divided, He is one and the same. The choice is not between lowliness and exaltation; no, the choice is Christ...\(^3\)

The question which arises at this point is whether Kierkegaard is presenting Luther's position in regards to choice correctly as the manner in which it appears in The Bondage Of The Will. The above passage, at first glance, seems to argue for a position contrary to Luther's. This, however, is not the case either in terms of Luther himself, or in terms of Kierkegaard's understanding of Luther's position on the will. Early in the year 1850,\(^4\) we find the following discussion in Kierkegaard's journal on the question of the will. As it is of special significance,

\(^1\)ibid., pp. 285-286. Italics mine.  
\(^2\)John 12:32.  
\(^3\)Kierkegaard, Training, p. 160. Italics mine.  
\(^4\)Training In Christianity was not published until September 27th of that year. Lowrie seems to think that the work was completed for the most part as early as 1848, due to a comment once made by Kierkegaard (Training, p. xxv). However like Kierkegaard's other works, revision
giving Kierkegaard's understanding of the issue, it is quoted at length:

What a curious, yet profound turn of phrase which makes it possible to say: in this case there is no question of a choice—they in relationship to God— I choose this and this. To continue: Christianity says to a man: you shall choose the one essential thing but in such a way that there is no question of a choice—if you drivel on any longer then you do not in fact choose the one essential thing; like the Kingdom of God it must be chosen first. So there is consequently something in regard to which there may not be, and in thought cannot be a choice, and nevertheless it is a choice. Consequently, the very fact that in this case there is no choice expresses the tremendous passion or intensity with which it must be chosen. Could there be a clearer expression of the fact that this liberty of choice is only a qualified form of freedom?... However astonishing it may seem, one is therefore obliged to say that only 'fear and trembling', only constraint, can help a man to freedom. Because 'fear and trembling' and compulsion can master him in such a way that there is no longer a question of a choice—and then one chooses the right thing. At the hour of death most people choose the right thing...Freedom really only exists because the same instant it (freedom of choice) exists it rushes with infinite speed to bind itself unconditionally by choosing resignation, the choice of which it is true that there is no question of a choice.

The inconceivable marvel of the omnipotence of love is that God can really grant so much to many that almost like a lover he can say to himself: 'will you have me or not', and so wait one second for the answer. But alas, man is not so purely spirit. It seems to him that since the choice is left to him he can take time and first of all think the matter over seriously. What a miserable anti-climax. 'Seriousness' simply means to choose God at once and 'first'. In that way man is left juggling with a phantom: freedom of choice—with the question whether he does or does not possess it etc. And it even becomes scientific. He does not notice that he has thus suffered the loss of his freedom. For a time perhaps

seemed to be a never-ending practice. Various journal entries indicate that he was wrestling with certain issues which appear in the later parts of the work after 1848. The first part of Training Kierkegaard once considered to be a separate work (Training, p. 84). He may have added considerable material to Part I after 1848.
he delights in the thought of freedom until it changes again, and he becomes doubtful whether he is free or not. Then he loses his freedom of choice. He confuses everything by his faulty tactics (militarily speaking). By directing his mind towards 'freedom of choice' instead of choosing he loses both freedom and freedom of choice. Nor can he ever recover it by the use of thought alone. If he is to recover his freedom it can only be through an intensified 'fear and trembling' brought forth by the thought of having lost it.

The most tremendous thing which has been granted to man is: the choice, freedom. And if you desire to save it and preserve it there is only one way: in the same second unconditionally and in complete resignation to give it back to God, and yourself with it. If the sight of what is granted to you tempts you, and if you give way to the temptation and look with egoistic desire upon the freedom of choice, then you lose your freedom. And your punishment is: to go on in a kind of confusion priding yourself on having--freedom of choice, but woe upon you, that is your judgment: you have freedom of choice, you say, and you still have not chosen God. Then you will grow ill, freedom of choice will become your idée fixe, till at last you will be like the rich man who imagines that he is poor, and will die of want--and your fault is only that you do not grieve deeply enough or you would find it again.¹

Thus here we have an extremely precise statement on the will. It allows for a degree of freedom, but only in a highly qualified sense, and only under the jurisdiction of God's impelling activity.

Closely related to this discussion is what Kierkegaard considers to be an "admirer" as opposed to a "follower". While an admirer holds himself personally aloof, either consciously or unconsciously, from the claims of the thing he admires, the follower strives to be what he admires.²

²Kierkegaard, Training, p. 234.
Kierkegaard cites two examples of the admirers handed down by tradition: Judas and Nicodemus. It is not necessary to review here Kierkegaard's discussion concerning these two individuals, except to note that both are examples used by Luther in The Bondage Of The Will in relationship to free choice. Judas is mentioned in regards to necessity, while Nicodemus is especially singled out as an example of free choice. Thus here again Kierkegaard identifies himself with Luther's work and position as it pertains to free choice and its relationship to salvation: free choice finds itself bound in terms of choosing salvation, just as an admirer is bound in terms of choosing to become a follower.

A final, and perhaps very significant point of comparison between Training In Christianity and The Bondage Of The Will may be found in the work which accompanies Training under Kierkegaard's own name. It is entitled, "An Edifying Discourse". The text for this little discourse is found in Luke 7.37ff., "The Woman That Was A Sinner." This work is especially important as it comes at the very end of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings. Thus it bears the quality of being the first words uttered to his reader directly.

In this discourse, Kierkegaard lists three items which we may learn from this woman: (1) "...to become, like her, indifferent to everything else, in absolute sorrow for our

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1 Ibid., pp. 239ff.
2 Luther, Bondage, pp. 185, 192ff.
3 Ibid., p. 280f.
sins, yet is such a way that one thing is important to us, and absolutely important: to find forgiveness";¹ (2) "...that in relation to finding forgiveness she herself could do nothing at all";² and (3) "...that we have a comfort which she had not"³ (i.e. the assurance that Christ actually did die for our sins).

Of these three, the second item is especially pertinent to our discussion. Here Kierkegaard argues that the woman could do "nothing at all" in relationship to her salvation. She was in no way worthy for the forgiveness bestowed upon her. The only thing she does is to shed tears. But, Kierkegaard points out, this is not really to do anything; had she thought it was, she might have even been able to hold back her tears.⁴

No, "...she did nothing at all", he writes, "she practiced the high, rare, exceedingly difficult, genuine womanly art of doing nothing at all, or of understanding that with respect to finding forgiveness she herself was able to do nothing." To those who think that such a lack of activity is easy, Kierkegaard declares, that "precisely the easiness is the difficulty." "Verily he that subdueth himself is greater than he that taketh a city."⁵

The fact that one can do nothing in the remotest way to obtain the forgiveness of sins places the forgiven individual in a new debt to this "infinite grace". "Before

¹Kierkegaard, Training, p. 262. ²Ibid., p. 266. ³Ibid., p. 269. ⁴Ibid., p. 267. ⁵Ibid., pp. 268-269.
"God", man has no power to do anything, nor could he have any power; for even the least thing, in relation to God, man has no power to accomplish, except by God's help. ¹

The significance of Kierkegaard's "nothing" lies in the fact that the same argument is found in Bondage. This argument is also in keeping with Kierkegaard's understanding of free choice as quoted above. Again Luther is quoted at length:

After all this she [I.e. Diatribe] lists a large number of similes, with which she only succeeds as usual in drawing the undiscerning reader's attention to irrelevant matters while completely ignoring the real issue. For instance, God indeed preserves the ship, but the sailor brings it into port; hence the sailor does not do "nothing." This simile implies a division of labor, attributing to God the work of preserving, and to the sailor that of navigating; and if it, proves anything, it proves that the whole work of preserving is God's, and the whole work of navigating is the sailor's. Yet it is a beautifully apt simile! It is the same with the farmer who reaps the harvest, when God has given it. Again there are different works for God and man—unless she makes the farmer also the Creator who gives the harvest. But suppose for the moment that the same works are given to God and man, what do these similes achieve? But are we now disputing about cooperation, and not rather about the power and operation that belong to free choice in itself? Where, then, is our orator running off to, who was going to speak about a palm, but talks of nothing but a gourd? 'It started as a wine jar, why does it end as a water jug?' We too know that Paul cooperates with God in teaching the Corinthians (I Cor. 3:9), inasmuch as he preaches outwardly while God teaches inwardly, each doing a different work. He also cooperates with God when he speaks by the spirit of God (I Cor. 12:3), and both do the same work. For what we assert and contend for is this, that when God operates without regard to the grace of the Spirit, he works all in all, even in the ungodly, inasmuch as he alone moves, actuates, and carries along by the motion of his omnipotence.

¹ibid., p. 269.
all things, even as he alone has created them, and this motion the creatures can neither avoid nor alter, but they necessarily follow and obey it, each according to his capacity as given by God; and thus all things, even including the ungodly, cooperate with God. Then, when he acts by the Spirit of grace in those whom he has justified, that is, in his Kingdom, he actuates and moves them in a similar way, and they, inasmuch as they are his new creation, follow and cooperate, or rather, as Paul says, they are led (Rom. 8.14). But that is not our subject here.

We are not discussing what we can do through God's working, but what we can do of ourselves; that is to say, whether, created as we are out of nothing, we do or attempt to do anything under the general motion of omnipotence to prepare ourselves for the new creation of the Spirit. Here an answer should be given, instead of changing the subject. For the answer we give is this: (1) Before man is created and is a man, he neither does nor attempts to do anything toward becoming a creature, and after he is created he neither does nor attempts to do anything toward remaining a creature, but both of these things are done by the sole will of the omnipotent power and goodness of God, who creates and preserves us without our help; but he does not work in us without us, because it is for this he has created and preserved us, that he might work in us and we might cooperate with him, whether outside his Kingdom through his general omnipotence, or inside his Kingdom by the special virtue of his Spirit. (2) In just the same way (our answer continues), before man is changed into a new creature of the Kingdom of the Spirit, he does nothing and attempts nothing to prepare himself for this renewal and this Kingdom, but the Spirit alone does both of these things in our recreated state, as also James says: 'Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of his power, that we might be a beginning of his creature' (James 1.18)—speaking of the renewed creature. But recreated and preserves us, that he might work in us and we might cooperate with him. Thus it is through us he preaches, shows mercy to the poor, comforts the afflicted. But what is attributed to free choice in all this? Or rather, rather, what is there left for it but nothing? And really nothing! 1

Thus Kierkegaard alludes to categories and issues

1Luther, Bondage, pp. 241-243. Italics mine.
inherent in The Bondage Of The Will. The thought that man is able to do nothing to merit his salvation, calls to mind a very noteworthy and memorable discussion in Luther's work. This allusion, however, is done quite subtly, as Kierkegaard does not wish to be accused of "plagiarism".

There remains, as well, a note of freedom in all this—not an omnipotent freedom, but a freedom constituted by God. This is not to be confused with "free choice", since it is in no way "free"; quite the contrary, it is very much dependent. In this regard, Kierkegaard makes the following comment in regards to his writing:

...it delights me childishly that I have served in this way, whereas in relation to God I offer this whole activity of mine with no more diffidence than a child when it gives as a present to the parents an object which the parents had presented to the child. Oh, but the parents surely are not so cruel that, instead of looking kindly upon the child and entering into its notion that this is a present, they take the gift away from the child and say, This is our property. So it is also with God: He is not so cruel when one as a gift brings to Him ...His own.\(^1\)

And so it is also with Christ. Man may decide for or against God's grace. He has an element of freedom in this regard, but only because God has granted it to man in seeking his "cooperation". Should man decide in favor of Christ, he is only returning the love already shown to him.

Such a decision, however, is one that must be made first. To call attention to the decision qua decision is to remove the pathos from the problem, and, therefore, to

\(^1\)Kierkegaard, The Point Of View, etc., p. 90.
make decision practically impossible. The lover's question which Kierkegaard poses, "will you have me or not", must be answered immediately. If one were to deal with such a question by reflecting upon it, and saying to oneself, "Now, I will have to decide either 'Yes' or 'No'": would say very little for the condition of the heart. However to respond to the same question immediately, perhaps with only the beginning of a smile, would be already to decide. For Kierkegaard, it is the heart which must be revealed.

Kierkegaard's understanding, like Luther's in The Bondage Of The Will, is that objections to Christianity do not spring from doubt. Kierkegaard considers this to be a complete misunderstanding. Rather it is from "insubordination" that these kinds of objections arise—the dislike of obedience, and rebellion against all authority. The controversy over the truth of Christianity is misplaced on the intellectual level alone, for Kierkegaard, and should rather be fought on the moral level with reference to rebellion.¹

Properly understood, this is likewise the problem inherent in the paradox. For the paradox, Kierkegaard argues, is only paradoxical when it is understood in terms of reality. When one talks only in terms of possibility, one remains essentially unchanged, the old, dealing with imagination. However when the issue becomes reality, Kierkegaard writes, then,"...I am the one changed and the

¹Kierkegaard, Journals, (630) p. 193.
question now is whether I can preserve myself.\textsuperscript{1} The "self" he deals with here is not so much the physical self, as what we would call the ego, or what Luther would call the will. To put this again in different words, "When it is a matter of understanding the same thing in reality I am relieved of any effort of the imagination; it is near enough to me, all too near; it has as it were, swallowed me up and the question now is, whether I can survive."\textsuperscript{2}

Kierkegaard's writings, from the very outset, proceeded to bring to the reader's attention this very question of survival. The issue of Christianity's truth is something Kierkegaard does not seriously question. The problem here is that of "offense", not "doubt". Kierkegaard has brought the problem to light. The matter now rests with his reader and God; it is a private matter, from which Kierkegaard discreetly withdraws.

Lastly there remains one loose end worthy of comment. Regarding Kierkegaard's Journals, how is one to understand Kierkegaard's ambivalent attitude toward Luther? Not being wholly opposed to speculation, one may hazard a guess. Hermann Diem, as noted, pointed out that Kierkegaard's private writings are one thing, his public ones another. Yet it should be added that Luther's influence is often hidden in the public works (as in Training), whereas the private works represent a more direct statement.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., (1002) p. 348. \textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
Kierkegaard, well aware of his historical significance, may have intended a certain ambivalence toward Luther in his *Journals* so as not to leave his writings as a direct communication to history. If Kierkegaard's private attitudes toward Luther appeared to remain contradictory, one would again be forced back upon Kierkegaard's works *per se*, and "the judge will be made manifest by his judgement." That is to say, perhaps he intended this ambiguity as a rather Kierkegaardian means of revealing men's hearts.