5-1-1966

The Concept of Free Will in the Lutheran Confessions and in Selected Writings of Soren Kierkegaard

David Klumpp

THE CONCEPT OF "FREE" WILL IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS AND IN SELECTED WRITINGS OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

---

by

David J. Klumpp

May 1966

Approved by: Paul M. Bretscher
Adviser

Gilbert A. Thiele
Reader

SHORT TITLE

"FREE WILL" IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS AND IN SØREN KIERKEGAARD

Klumpp, STM, 1966

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Human freedom or the lack of it is a subject of great interest. Socially and politically the quest for freedom has highlighted our news for years. Freedom marches may gain some measure of social equality for oppressed minorities, independence granted to subject nations may mark the advent of political freedom, but still the search for freedom will go on. New moralities may be promulgated, new liberties expressed in fashions, nevertheless man's hunger for freedom will not be satisfied. We live in an age of collectivism, of big business and big labor. In this time the "solitary individual" is seeking identity and meaning for life. For this reason and to this end man thirsts for freedom.

Ultimately freedom is a spiritual concept. Our Lord said, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."[1] Saint Paul underscores the freedom that comes to the follower of Christ in the words, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death."[2] This freedom is of a different nature from the freedom so ardently sought after today, but ultimately

---

[1] John 8:31b, 32. R.S.V.

[2] Romans 8:1,2. R.S.V.

all true and lasting freedom is grounded in this freedom.

Such an assertion needs authentication. This is the purpose of this paper. This study will focus on the concept of "free will" as it is formulated in the Lutheran Confessions and expressed by Søren Kierkegaard in selected writings.

We make this comparison in the light of recent developments in Protestant theology. This new movement has been called "Neo-Orthodoxy" or "crisis" theology and has received much of its impetus from the writings of Karl Barth. Many acknowledge that Kierkegaard is ultimately the spiritual "father" of this theology. Kierkegaard is also cited as the source of existentialism. Smith asserts: "There can be no doubt that the ultimate source of existentialism, especially in its religious and theological aspect, is Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) . . . ."[3]

Since Kierkegaard was a Danish Lutheran one might logically expect to find affinities between his thought and that of our Lutheran Confessions. But since the Lutheran Confessions were available long before Kierkegaard why has he had such an impact on modern theological thought? Is Kierkegaard's theology different or is it expressed differently? These questions pose the reason for this study.

The Scope of this Study

This paper will attempt to survey and examine the concept of free will in the Lutheran Confessions and in selected Kierkegaard writings.

---

[3]John E. Smith and Others, A Handbook of Christian Theology (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), pp. 120, 121.

Ancillary categories such as original sin will likewise have to be explored so that free will is seen in its true perspective. Faith will receive brief treatment to show the subordinate position of the concept of free will in both the Lutheran Confessions and in Kierkegaard.

Wherever equitable similar categories will be used to examine the position of the Lutheran Confessions and of Søren Kierkegaard. Since this cannot be done completely, the first category considered in examining each position will be the point of view.

A limiting factor in this study are the resources available to this writer. The following works will serve as basic resources for this paper: The Book of Concord edited by Theodore G. Tappert will be the basis for the study in the Confessions. Schlink's Theology of the Lutheran Confessions will also be used in the Confessional segment of this paper. In examining Kierkegaard's works, The Concept of Dread and The Sickness unto Death are cited most frequently. In interpreting Kierkegaard's position Thomte's Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion and Heinecken's The Moment Before God play the most prominent role although other works are cited. For purposes of general overview and perspective Pelikan's From Luther to Kierkegaard and Martin's The Wings of Faith have been used.

The Method of this Study

Our approach to the concept of free will in the Confessions and selected Kierkegaard writings will be first to examine the positions. A brief attempt will be made to understand the position taken in the

light of the historical context. Hence introductory background material will be cited to establish the circumstances pertinent to the position taken by either the Lutheran Confessions or Kierkegaard.

Following the examination of each position an attempt will be made at comparison. Similarities and differences will be noted. The significance of the similarities as well as the differences will be the subject of the final chapters of this study.

I know of no other study in this area, but this does not mean that such studies do not exist. If parallel studies are available at the Seminary library, they should be read as a control on this paper.

The Objectives of this Study

The primary objective of this paper will be the comparison of the Lutheran Confessional position on human freedom with the position of Søren Kierkegaard. In the light of the comparison similarities and differences may be brought out for evaluation. The deeper appreciation of the Lutheran Confessional position with regard to free will as well as Kierkegaard's position should result from this study.

There ought to be some by-products of this study. Perhaps a better grasp of the direction of modern Protestant theology might be one. Hopefully, there will be some implications for systematic theology as a result of this survey. Perhaps there may be even a suggestion for improving the Seminary curriculum in systematic theology.

Finally, we will discover the answer to the question mentioned previously: Is Kierkegaard's theology different or does he express it

differently? From the answer we receive we might be moved to examine current Lutheran theological formulations. We might even be challenged to utilize a different methodology for expressing theological convictions.

A Personal Reason for this Study

I must here acknowledge my debt to Søren Kierkegaard who brought theology back to life for me. The arid deserts of Aristotelian categories in which our systematic theology was framed had nearly convinced me that theology was merely a matter of comprehending and applying certain formulae. It was and is Kierkegaard's gift to me that he led me to see Christianity in terms of existence. In his own dynamic way he demonstrated to me that theology included the "how" of life as well as the "what" of life. Thus this pilgrimage into the Lutheran Confessions and Kierkegaard was for me both necessary and rewarding.

CHAPTER II

FREE WILL IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

Man, the Creature

> So it is not irreligious, idle, or superfluous, but in the highest degree wholesome and necessary, for a Christian to know whether or not his will has anything to do in matters pertaining to salvation. Indeed, let me tell you, this is the hinge on which our discussion turns, the crucial issue between us; our aim is, simply, to investigate what ability 'free-will' has, in what respect it is the subject of Divine action and how it stands related to the grace of God. If we know nothing of these things, we shall know nothing whatsoever of Christianity, and shall be in worse case than any people on earth.[1]

So wrote Luther to Erasmus, and these words seem a fitting introduction to our examination of the concept of free will in the Confessions of our church. Furthermore, Luther's statement underlines the crucial importance of this area of thought for theology. In order to appraise the Confessional position fairly, we turn first to the point of view under the theme: "Man, the Creature."

As we look at our Confessional anthropology we note that man is understood on the basis of Scripture. The perspective is Divine rather than human. Thus Dr. Pelikan writes:

> The fundamental category in the Biblical doctrine of man is the category "creature." Whatever else Christian theology may have to say about the nature and destiny of man, it says in the limits described by that category. Its picture of man as a sinner, therefore, must portray him as a fallen creature. It must not make him a creature of Satan because

---

[1]Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, translated by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Westward, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1957), p. 78.

> of his sin. Nor dare theology forget that it is precisely man's creaturely derivation from God that makes his sin so calamitous.
>
> Seeking as they do to declare the orthodox Christian faith on the basis of the Sacred Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions articulate their doctrine of man within this fundamental Biblical category.[2]

The understanding of man as a creature is not an attempt to debase man but an effort to ground human dignity in God, the creator. Man's true dignity is not to be found in any achievement or goodness on man's part, but in the basic truth that God created him and still preserves him even after the fall. To confess "I believe that God has created me" means that I am God's creature even in the state of my sin. Schlink writes:

> At the same time it becomes clear that we believe in God not only as the creator of man in general, but of the concrete individual person. No function of man is expected. Indeed, the long list of things in which man is the creature of God--the list which Luther compiled and to which we could add--is expressly left unfinished when it is stated "that none of us has his life of himself, or anything that has here been mentioned or can be mentioned, nor can he by himself preserve any of them, however small and unimportant" (L.C. 11,16). Did God, then create sinful man? No. But man even in sin and in spite of sin is altogether God's creature.[3]

Regardless of our spiritual capabilities or religious attainments or the lack of them, our relationship to God is one of creature to

---

[2]Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Doctrine of Creation in Lutheran Confessional Theology," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVI, No. 8, (August 1955), 569-579.

[3]Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), pp. 39-40. Hereafter Schlink's work will be referred to as Schlink, Theology.

Creator. This fact is never lost sight of in the Confession's view of man. Often this is more implicit than explicit, for aside from Luther's explanations to the first article of the Apostles' Creed in both Catechisms no separate article is devoted to it.

The Flacian controversies did serve to point up the necessity of making a distinction between man's creatureliness and his corruption. Hence the Formula of Concord reaffirms in no uncertain terms man's creature-creator relationship to God.

> even after the Fall God is man's creator who creates body and soul for him. Therefore the corrupted man cannot be identified unqualifiedly with sin itself, for in that case God would be the creator of sin... . . It is of course true that this creature and handiwork of God has been miserably corrupted by sin, for the dough out of which God forms and makes man has been corrupted and perverted in Adam and is transmitted to us in this condition. At this point all Christian hearts may well ponder God's inexpressible kindness in that he does not immediately cast this corrupted, perverted and sinful dough into hell-fire, but out of it he makes and fashions our present human nature, which is so miserably corrupted by sin, in order that through his beloved Son he might cleanse it from sin, sanctify it, and save it (F.C. I, 38,39).[4]

The love of God is abundantly evident in the Creator-creature relationship. This love which has created and sustains human life is undeserved and unmerited. In explaining the first Article of the Apostles' Creed Luther stressed God's goodness and mercy in providing for our human needs. Schlink observes: "In this connection it is

---

[4] The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer, and Arthur C. Piepkorn (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), pp. 514, 515. Hereafter The Book of Concord will be referred to as BC.

striking that with all this emphasis on the unmerited character of this love the term 'grace' is not used." He also notes that the Lutheran Confessions nowhere speak of a "grace of creation" that would correspond to the "grace of forgiveness."[5]

At the outset we must recognize the Confession's emphasis on "Man, the Creature," the recipient of God's goodness in both creation and preservation. We must recognize also the distinction between man's creatureliness which is God's workmanship and man's corruption which is Satan's workmanship. In fact, the Creator-creature relationship shapes the line of responsibility between man and God. Luther pointed out our response in this relationship very simply in the words: "For all of this I am bound to thank, praise, serve and obey him."[6]

In the Large Catechism Luther asserts that we haven't responded to God's goodness and mercy as we ought.

> Therefore, this article would humble and terrify us all if we believed it. For we sin daily with eyes and ears, hands, body and soul, money and property, and with all that we have. This is especially true of those who even fight against the Word of God. Yet Christians have this advantage, that they acknowledge themselves in duty bound to serve and obey him for all these things (L.C. II, 2,22).[7]

To the cause for our failure to respond we now turn.

---

[5]Schlink, Theology, p. 40.

[6]BC, p. 345.

[7]Ibid., p. 413.

Man, the Fallen Creature

It is no accident that in the Formula of Concord the article on Free Will follows the article on Original Sin. The will of man has been conditioned by the Fall. Man is not only a creature, he is now a fallen creature. His will is now diseased, unable to establish a healthy relationship with God.

> Our churches also teach that since the fall of Adam all men who are propagated according to nature are born in sin. That is to say, they are without fear of God, are without trust in God and are concupiscent. And this disease or vice of origin is truly sin, which even now damns and brings eternal death on those who are not born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit (A.C. II, 1,2).[8]

Both the Fall and the "Imago Dei" are considered in the Confessions under the subject of "Original Sin." And although we might wish these subjects had received separate treatment, they are given their proper relationship to man, who in the Confessions is always viewed as a whole. Man is one, and yet conflict rages within man. Man is a creature of God and yet man is a sinner estranged from God.

> Man in this time is therefore, on the one hand, a creature and, on the other, a sinner; a creature in his whole nature of body and soul, and "thoroughly and entirely poisoned and corrupted" in the sight of God as by "a spiritual leprosy" (S.D. I, 6). Every day his reason is given to him by his Creator, and yet it is corrupt through and through; given to him by God, and yet unable to decide in favor of the good. Daily God gives man life, and yet as a sinner he is dead. Thus man as a creature receives divine love, while as a sinner he is under the wrath of God.[9]

---

[8] Ibid., p. 29.

[9] Schlink, Theology, p. 44, 45.

Here we catch a glimpse of the dialectical tension involved in being a "fallen creature" of God. The fall involves us as human beings in the loss of the Imago Dei and yet we remain God's creatures. The Confessions make no attempt to psychologize or explain the fall. It is simply termed "Adam's disobedience." The result is a loss of God's image and involvement in "Original Sin."

To "Fall" one has to fall from something to something. That from which man has "fallen" is termed in our Confessions, "the image of God." Man has lost the image of God. This image is now defaced. The Confessions equate this image with the original concreated righteousness of paradise which included truth, holiness, and righteousness. The loss of the "image of God" is also termed "original sin."

> Furthermore, that original sin is the complete lack or absence of the original concreated righteousness, or of the image of God according to which man was originally created in truth, holiness, and righteousness, together with a disability and ineptitude as far as the things of God are concerned (F.C. I, 10).[10]

In view of the Confessions original righteousness or the image of God involved "a balanced physical constitution" together with a "balanced spiritual constitution" that included "knowledge of God, fear of God, trust in God, or at least the inclination and power to do these things."[11] The Confessions cite Genesis 1:27 as the biblical base for this position and interpret the "image of God" to mean the

---

[10] BC, p. 510.

[11] Schlink, Theology, p. 47.

gifts of the knowledge of God, fear of God and trust in God. It is only in regeneration by the Holy Spirit that fallen man is "changed into His likeness" which is interpreted as a restoration of the true knowledge of God. The Confessions accept the traditional position regarding man's state of integrity prior to the fall. Schlink observes:

> The concept 'original sin' clearly presupposes and includes the fact of the fall and of man's original state, but this presupposition is not further explained, and statements about the pristine state and the manner of the fall are scanty.[12]

This preliminary exploration of the Confessional concepts of the Fall and the Imago Dei will suffice to introduce us to a consideration of the concept of original sin.

Original Sin

The Confessional doctrine of original sin could claim connection with historic Christian doctrine as expressed by Tertullian and Augustine.[13] In the Apology Melanchthon reviews Augustine's definition of "concupiscence" before summing up with this statement:

> In our definition of original sin, therefore, we have correctly expressed both elements: lack of ability to trust, fear or love God; and concupiscence, which pursues carnal ends contrary to the word of God (that is, not only the desires of the body but also carnal wisdom and righteousness in which it trusts while it despises God) (Ap. II, 26).[14]

---

[12] Ibid., p. 41.

[13] Willard Dow Allbeck, Studies in the Lutheran Confessions (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), p. 62. Hereafter Allbeck's work will be referred to as Allbeck, Studies.

[14] BC, p. 103.

Schlink has collated the Confessional references to the doctrine of original sin in masterly fashion, and for the sake of convenience and brevity we will follow his collation.

> Man as a sinner is 'without fear of God, . . . without trust in God, and . . . concupiscent' (A.C. II, 1). This lack of the fear of God and of trust in God is by no means merely a deficiency, but it is the reality of the creature's active rebellion against the Creator, "hating his judgment and fleeing it, being angry at him, despairing of his grace, trusting in temporal things, etc."--'fleeing God as a tyrant, hating and grumbling against his will; again, not daring to entrust ourselves to God's goodness, but rather always putting more reliance on money, property, and friends' (Ap. II, 8).[15]

In the Augsburg Confession the German version reads "evil desire and inclination" for "concupiscence" which means "the perversity which loves the evil rather than the good."[16] Schlink, quoting the Confessions, expands on this explanation of concupiscence in the following fashion:

> The reality of the enmity against God is again, not merely a sinful deed, but it is sinful craving, lust and desire. "When we use the term 'concupiscence," we do not mean only its acts or fruits, but the continual inclination or nature" (Ap. II, 3). Concupiscence is a corruption of the physical constitution and also 'an evil lust and inclination, according to which we, in spite of the best and highest faculities (sic) and the light of reason, nevertheless are carnally inclined and minded against God' (Ap. II, 25).[17]

Concupiscence is a loaded term, packing the freight of man's enmity and hostility toward God. In a sense, it is the loaded gun from which actual sin is fired.

---

[15]Schlink, Theology, p. 40.

[16]Allbeck, Studies, p. 63.

[17]Schlink, Theology, p. 40.

> Men are sinners, such as "are full of evil lusts and inclinations from their mothers' wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God" (A.C. II, 1). Sin is not merely the reality of individual deeds, but of all thoughts, words and deeds of man, both of the evil as well as of the so-called good ones.
>
> Thus 'man sins truly even when he performs noble, beautiful, and precious deeds, such as the world values highly' (Ap. 14, 33). Sin is not merely the deed of individual people, but it is a reality for all men. "Here no one is godly" (S.A. III, iii, 3).[18]

From this and countless references of similar nature we can conclude that sin is the condition in which we exist from the moment of our birth. By nature man is unable to truly fear and trust God. Sin is the inescapable prison of every man born of woman. Sin is real because original sin is real and only the virgin-born Son of God is excluded from the verdict that all men are conceived and born in sin.[19]

Sin not only affects us individually, but it pervades our corporate lives. "The community of all men, of all their deeds, and of all their inclination is, ever since Adam's fall, the community in sin."[20]

The Confessions heap up analogous phrases seeking to express the nature of original sin.

---

[18] Ibid., p. 41.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 43.

> Accordingly, original sin is a "deep . . . corruption of nature" (S.A. III,i,3), 'the rapidly spreading hereditary plague' (Ap. II,8), the "abominable and dreadful inherited disease which has corrupted our entire nature" (S.D. 8,21), by no means only a partial corruption, but a "deep, wicked, abominable, bottomless, inscrutable, and inexpressible corruption of his entire nature in all its powers, especially of the highest and foremost powers of the soul in mind, heart, and will" (S.D. I,11).[21]

In view of this, it is impossible to view sin only as an act. Original sin is not something we do, but a blight on our very existence:

> it inheres in the nature, substance, and essence of man in such a way that even if no evil thought would ever arise in the heart of corrupted man, no idle word were spoken, or no wicked act or deed took place, nevertheless man's nature is corrupted through original sin (Ep. 1,21), and "his nature and person" are as with "a spiritual leprosy . . . thoroughly and entirely poisoned and corrupted" (S.D. I,6). Nothing in man is excepted from this corruption, neither in his body nor in his soul, neither in his deeds nor in his thoughts or inclinations. "The fruits of this sin are all the subsequent evil deeds which are forbidden in the Ten Commandments" (S.A. III,i,2).[22]

The natural man will object to this understanding of man by pointing out that he has no choice but to sin if this view of man is true. And if he has no choice, how then can God hold him responsible? Werner Elert discusses this very point in the first chapter of The Structure of Lutheranism under the term Urerlebnis.

---

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., pp. 43, 44.

> In this situation it is natural to look first at man. One tries to explain this dread (of God) to oneself psychologically. But under the eyes of God man comes to an altogether different conclusion. For he is totally in the grip of a power outside and therefore opposed to him. And indeed in a twofold sense. For one thing, God demands of him an accounting. God holds him responsible. The fact that God holds him responsible shows him conclusively that he actually had an obligation to be something, to do something, or to leave something undone. But now the terrible discovery. God holds him responsible for something he can never accomplish. The reason is that for the fulfillment of the great "Thou shalt" which hangs over his whole life he lacks the first and important thing--free will. His will is in bondage. Only when man can no longer be in doubt as to the mysterious power that binds him unconditionally and therefore keeps him from doing what he should does this knowledge become terrible in full measure. It is God Himself. This is the second sense in which God has power over him. God makes demands of man and, in spite of this, brings about the very opposite in him. As if in mockery, however, He holds him responsible for nonfulfillment. Man should do what is good, but he must do what is evil. We know why Luther is filled with dread. Now we know the connection between death and God. Furthermore, we know that this death is something different from the outer end. It is the end of the "moral person."[23]

To this point we now turn in the Confessions, namely that although fallen man cannot but sin, he is still responsible before God and his sin incurs guilt.

> Even though fallen man cannot but sin, this sin is guilt, nevertheless; "is truly sin"--sin which condemns "to the eternal wrath of God" (A.C. II,2). Even though sin is inherited sin, 'what a grevious mortal guilt original sin is in the sight of God!' (Ap. II,45). Original sin is original guilt, "culpa originis" (A.C. XXIV,25). Not for one moment is concupiscence ever an "adiaphoron," 'neither good nor bad' (Ap. II,41f.), but it is poena et peccatum,

---

[23]Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, translated by Walter A. Hansen, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 21.

> at once penalty and guilt (Ap. II,47), it is the punishment inflicted on Adam's children for Adam's deed, and yet it never ceases to be the sin and guilt of Adam's children. Guilt and not being able to do otherwise, guilt and ignorance, responsibility and nature are not mutually exclusive in the doctrine of sin. In numerous statements any rationalizing of these dreadful paradoxes is expressly declined (cf., e.g., Ap. II,1,38,42).[24]

In the Confessions the full seriousness of sin and our accountability for sin stares us starkly in the face. Sin and Adam's fall are no trifling matter. In fact, it exceeds all human reasoning what a horrible wrath of God has been handed on to us by this disobedience.

The results of original sin are many and manifold in their implications. Of special interest to this study is man's ignorance of God and the tyranny of Satan to which man, the fallen creature, is now subjected. Schlink in his summary focuses his emphasis on the "Wrath of God" as he considers the results of original sin. He gives man's natural ignorance of God separate treatment.

> Thus we all stand under the angry God who 'wants to punish sin in so dreadful a manner with both temporal and eternal penalties' (Ap. IV,129). There (Gen. 3) human nature is subjected not only to death and other physical ills, but also to the rule of the devil (Ap. II,46), who keeps all men under his tyrannical rule, smites them with blindness, and seduces to vice. Through Adam's disobedience, i.e., through God's wrath because of Adam's disobedience, all men are "subject to death and the devil" (S.A. III,i,1). Thus all of us are "'by nature the children of wrath,' of death, and of damnation" (S.D. 1,6). Over against the wrath of God man with all his works is "like a little feather tossed aside by a hurricane' (Ap. IV,47).[25]

---

[24]Schlink, Theology, p. 44.

[25]Ibid.

It is essential for us now to consider a man's ignorance of God as a result of original sin. Knowledge and will fit together, and the Confessions recognize this by pointing out the impossibility of natural man accomplishing God's will when he does not know God. And the Confessions deny that natural man has the ability to know God. God is hidden both from man's creatureliness and his corruption. In this fallen world neither God's love nor wrath can be recognized by fallen man. In fact, the ignoratio Dei is termed the essence of original sin.

> Among the "more serious faults of human nature" are mentioned "ignoring God, despising Him . . ." ('this is our true and supreme misery that we are all born in such a way that we do not know, see, or notice God and the works of God, but despise God. . . .' (Ap. II,8). Original sin "involves such faults as ignorance of God, contempt of God, lack of the fear of God and of trust in him, inability to love him" (Ap. II,14). To define sin correctly we must include the loss of 'the knowledge of God' (Ap. II,23). Before we heard God's Word 'we were entirely of the devil, knowing nothing either of God's love or of God's wrath; for, as long as the human heart is at rest, it 'does not feel God's wrath or judgment' (Ap. IV,9).[26]

Thus man by his own powers is incapable of obtaining any knowledge of God, either from nature or from God's self-revelation in His Word. "Original sin spells ignorance of God in the most comprehensive sense."[27]

Is there then a contradiction when the Confessions speak of "Man's reason or natural intellect" as they frequently do? For example, man

---

[26] Ibid., p. 48, 49.

[27] Ibid., p. 49.

has a "dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God" (S.D. II,9).[28]

This question receives no direct answer in the Confessions. Apparently it was not regarded as sufficiently significant to require harmonization with the doctrine of the total ignorance of God. Schlink demonstrates how the Confessions understand the "dim spark" to function in relation to God's law.

The decalogue requires not only external works which reason can accomplish but first and foremost fear and love toward God. However, true fear and love of God are "far beyond the reach of reason." Natural man fails to recognize that the real demands of the Ten Commandments can not be fulfilled. Rather he attempts his self-justification by external observance of the law. "For all human reason and wisdom cannot but hold that we must become righteous by the law and that a person externally observing the law is holy and righteous (Ap. IV,159)."[29]

Since the natural knowledge of the law does not even achieve a realization of God's wrath much less His love, it serves to intensify man's estrangement from God. In fact, when man takes this "dim spark" or general knowledge of God seriously and attempts to put it into practice

> by calling God by name and devising a ritual for him, he only falls more deeply into sin with his natural obedience to the law and does not come to God but to idols. It is true on the one hand that "there has never been a

---

[28] Ibid., p. 51.

[29] Ibid., p. 50.

> people so wicked that it did not establish and maintain some sort of worship," but it is true without exception, on the other hand, that "everyone has set up a god of his own, to which he looked for blessings, help and comfort" (L.C. I,17).[30]

Hence the natural man knows there is a God but does not know who that God is or what He is like. Man grasps something of what is demanded of him (in the Law), but does not understand who demands it, and so fails to recognize God's wrath. Thus natural man knows neither God nor his own predicament; he fails to acknowledge the innate uncleanness of human nature. God's Word alone is able to reveal to us who God is and who we truly are.

> And "this cannot be adjudged except from the Word of God" (Ap. II,13; cf. 34). "This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature that reason cannot understand it. It must be believed because of the revelation in the Scriptures" (S.A. III,i,3; cf. also Ep. 1,9; S.D. I,8). Original sin is "ultimately the worst damage . . . , that we shall not only endure God's eternal wrath and death but that we do not even realize what we are suffering" (S.D. I,62).[31]

Even our creatureliness remains hidden from our natural knowledge. Man's utter helplessness apart from God's saving self-revelation is brought home with raw power. Here is a case where "ignorance is not bliss" but the very opposite.

The Flacian controveries made it necessary for the Formula of Concord to make a clear distinction between man's creatureliness and

---

[30] Ibid., p. 51.

[31] Ibid., p. 52.

his corruption. We cannot discuss this controversy in detail here but the Formula's conclusions should be noted.

> The Solid Declaration makes three affirmative points: that mankind's inherited spiritual malady is truly sin; that nature comes from God but sin from the devil; that the corruption of human nature is complete and total. These points are followed by a summary of the declarations of the Apology with reference to the results, extent, terribleness, penalty and cure of original sin.[32]

The Epitome also points out the necessity of a distinction between human nature and sin, the reasons for this distinction, and reaffirms the total corruption of human nature which results from original sin.

> We believe, teach, and confess that there is a distinction between man's nature and original sin, but only in the beginning when God created man pure and holy and without sin, but also as we now have our nature after the Fall. Even after the fall our nature is and remains a creature of God. The distinction between our nature and original sin is as great as the difference between God's work and the devil's work.[33]

There are several other implications in the Confessional doctrine of original sin; for instance, the relationship of original sin to sexuality: "Ever since man sinned, natural desire and the lust that inflames it come together; therefore marriage is more necessary now than in a state of purity."[34] Kierkegaard also mentions this subject, but unfortunately we cannot delve further into it. It might make a good subject of study by itself and shed some meaningful light on a subject that is repeatedly discussed but often misunderstood in our sex-obsessed

---

[32] Allbeck, Studies, p. 257.

[33] BC, p. 466.

[34] Ibid., p. 241.

culture.

Of necessity there will be much overlapping between the subject we have just covered, namely original sin, and the subject to which we now turn, namely free will. For all practical purposes the Confessions treat both as two sides of the same coin.

Free Will

The background against which the concept of free will unfolds in the Confessions is the Pelagian heresy which though condemned still lingered in the medieval church. Basically the stance taken by Pelagianism failed to take seriously original sin and is the antithesis of all that has been previously said concerning natural man's condition and predicament before God. When free will is considered in the Confessions it is considered only in relationship to natural man after the Fall. As Allbeck notes, "There may be a study of human nature as created, or as born, or as reborn."[35] The Confessions focus on man as he is "born."

At the outset it should be noted that the approach of the Confessions is Scripturally based. Its inquiry is about free will in unregenerate man, born according to nature, dominated by original sin. No attempt to solve the philosophical problem of free will is made. Religious implications of the doctrine are the chief concern of the Confessions and its definition of free will is a theological one.

---

[35]Allbeck, Studies, p. 107.

There is little concern expressed about reconciling the tension of man's creatureliness and his corruption. Philosophical determinism which has so preoccupied western thought was not a concern of the Confessions. The philosophical approach to human freedom impinges upon the existentialist movement in Berdyaev whose concept of personal freedom differs radically from orthodox Christian doctrine.[36]

In the Formula the further explication of free will is grounded not only in Scripture but also in the previous confessional statements made in the Augsburg Confession and the Apology. Allbeck notes that the framers of the Formula used Melanchthon's methods to propogate not his, but Luther's views. The theological position of the Formula is thoroughly Lutheran.[37]

The Synergistic controversy is the occasion for the further consideration of this subject in the Formula. Luther insisted on the monergism of God's grace. His view was that "man does nothing in conversion, but the divine agency operates in him through the means of grace."[38] Nevertheless, Luther did recognize that man could resist this offered grace. But

---

[36]Klumpp, David J. "Concept of Personal Freedom in Berdyaev" (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1959), pp. 11, 19.

[37]Allbeck, Studies, p. 252.

[38]Ibid., p. 259.

> In the course of the years Melanchthon wrote on these topics in such a way as to make less sharply clear the monergism of God's grace. He used broader and somewhat more ambiguous terms. Instead of viewing conversion only from God's side, he tried to see it from man's side also.[39]

Some of Melanchthon's students became synergists and this made necessary the clarification the Formula presents. Basically it seeks to answer this question: What spiritual ability does unregenerate human nature have?

Perhaps the best background or introduction is offered by the Confessions themselves in the following paragraph.

> But it is of these that the Scripture everywhere warns us of these that the prophets constantly complain, namely, carnal security, contempt of God, hate of God, and similar faults that we are born with. The scholastics mingled Christian doctrine with philosophical views about the perfection of nature and attributed more than was proper to free will and to "elicited acts." They taught that men are justified before God by philosophical or civic righteousness, which we agree is subject to reason and somewhat in our power. But thereby they failed to see the inner uncleanness of human nature. This cannot be adjudged except from the Word of God, which the scholastics do not often employ in their discussions (Ap. II,11,12,13).[40]

With this brief background we may now begin our consideration of the concept of free will. The Augsburg Confession succinctly pictures our Confessional position in Article eighteen.

> It is also taught among us that man possesses some measure of freedom of the will which enables him to live an outwardly honorable life and to make choices among the things that reason comprehends. But without the grace, help, and activity of the Holy Spirit man is not capable of making

---

[39] Ibid.

[40] BC, p. 102.

> himself acceptable to God, of fearing God and believing in God with his whole heart, or of expelling inborn evil lusts from his heart. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who is given through the Word of God, for Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:14, "Natural man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God," (A.C. XVIII,1,2,3).[41]

The first thing to strike us in this article is the clear distinction made between the "outwardly honorable life" and true righteousness before God. The Apology adds to our understanding of this distinction.

> Therefore we may profitably distinguish between civil righteousness and spiritual righteousness, attributing the former to the free will and the latter to the operation of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate. This safeguards outward discipline, because all men ought to know that God requires this civil righteousness and that, to some extent, we can achieve it. At the same time it shows the difference between human righteousness and spiritual righteousness, between philosophical teaching and the teaching of the Holy Spirit; and it points out the need for the Holy Spirit (Ap. XVIII,9).[42]

From this we observe that our terminology is defined, "civil righteousness" being in part at least a product of free will, and "spiritual righteousness" which is the result of the Holy Spirit's operation in man. The interesting thing to note is the ambiguity here in defining the limits of man's ability to attain civil righteousness, for the words "to some extent we can achieve it" leave the question of 'to what extent' unresolved. By the very nature of this question, however, we become involved in the complexities of human relativity.

---

[41] Ibid., p. 39.

[42] Ibid., p. 226.

The Confessions are aware of this as they point out:

> We are not denying freedom to the human will. The human will has freedom to choose among the works and things which reason by itself can grasp. To some extent it can achieve civil righteousness or the righteousness of works. It can talk about God and express its worship of him in outward works. It can obey rulers and parents. Externally, it can choose to keep the hands from murder, adultery, or theft. Since human nature still has reason and judgment about the things that the senses can grasp, it also retains a choice in these things, as well as the liberty and ability to achieve civil righteousness. This righteousness which the carnal nature--that is, the reason--can achieve on its own without the Holy Spirit, Scripture calls the righteousness of the flesh. But so great is the power of concupiscence that men obey their evil impulses more often than their sound judgment, while the devil, who as Paul says (Eph. 2:2) is at work in the ungodly, never stops inciting this feeble nature to various offenses. For these reasons even civil righteousness is rare among men. . . . (Ap. XVIII,4,5).[43]

The pivotal place of reason in the functioning of civil righteousness is apparent in the foregoing statement. Since man's ability to reason varies from one to another a relativity will be observable in natural man's achievement of civil righteousness. However, one dare not predicate man's attainment of civil righteousness solely on the basis of reason, because a foreign element is introduced here, namely, the devil and temptation.

The limitation put upon reason is also extremely significant, for it is limited to only "those things which the senses can grasp." Hence, that which transcends sense perception is out of bonds to reason.

---

[43] Ibid., p. 225.

The limitation put upon reason is also extremely significant, for it is limited to only "those things which the senses can grasp. Hence, that which transcends sense perception is out of bonds to reason.

A connection between reason, judgment and choice is also mentioned. Natural man retains a choice in the "things that the senses can grasp," and has the liberty and ability to achieve civil righteousness to this extent.

The lament that few attain even to the "righteousness of works" is valid for the Confessions maintain that God requires such righteousness of man.

> We for our part maintain that God requires the righteousness of reason. Because of God's command, honorable works commanded in the Decalogue should be performed, according to Gal. 3:24, "The law is a custodian," and 1 Tim. 1:9, "the law is laid down for the lawless." For God wants this civil discipline to restrain the unspiritual, and to preserve it he has given laws, learning, teaching, governments, and penalties. To some extent, reason can produce this righteousness by its own strength, though it is often overwhelmed by its natural weakness and by the devil, who drives it to open crimes. We freely give this righteousness of reason its due credit; for our corrupt nature has no greater good than this. . . . God even honors it with material rewards. Nevertheless, it ought not be praised at the expense of Christ (Ap. IV, 22f).[44]

Here the constructive function of civil righteousness is acknowledged, but the last sentence alludes to the possibility of this righteousness of reason getting in the way of true spiritual

---

[44] Ibid., p. 110.

righteousness. This is our next point.

> Although we concede to free will the liberty and ability to do the outward works of the law, we do not ascribe to it the spiritual capacity for true fear of God, true faith in God, true knowledge and trust that God considers, hears and forgives us (Ap. XVIII, 7).[45]

Thus we can conclude that in view of the Confessions "true fear of God, true faith in God, true knowledge of God" are not products of human reason. First, because God stands beyond the grasp of the senses. Second, because human reason has fallen into an alien captivity, namely that of the devil. This stand is forcibly driven home in the Formula.

> Although man's reason or natural intellect still has a dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God, as well as of the teaching of the law (Rom. 1:19-21,28,32) nevertheless, it is so ignorant, blind and perverse that when even the most gifted and the most educated people on earth read or hear the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot by their own powers perceive this, comprehend it, understand it, or believe and accept it as the truth. On the contrary, the more zealously and diligently they want to comprehend these spiritual things with their reason, the less they understand or believe, and until the Holy Spirit enlightens and teaches them they consider it all mere foolishness and fables (F.C. II, 9).[46]

The preceding paragraph echoes Luther's eloquent explanation to the third article of the Apostles' Creed. Here too, the limits of human reason and strength are sharply drawn.

In this statement from the Formula the assertion is made that reason can actually hinder man's understanding and faith in the

---

[45] Ibid., p. 225, 226.

[46] Ibid., p. 521, 522.

Gospel of the Son of God. The foundation for this assertion is the catalog of Scripture passages marshalled to show the inability of human reason to comprehend Divine grace. The key passage in this list is (1 Cor. 2:14) "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly for him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." The conclusion the Formula draws is:

> Thus Scripture denies to the intellect, heart, and will of the natural man every capacity, aptitude, skill and ability to think anything good or right in spiritual matters, to understand them, to begin them, to will them, to undertake them, to do them, to accomplish or cooperate in them as of himself. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor.3:5).[47]

Hence the verdict of the Formula concurs and supports the position affirmed in the Augsburg Confession and Apology. In the realm of the spirit, man's "free will" is impotent, and if anything his reason is a hindrance.

> Accordingly, we believe that after the Fall and prior to his conversion not a spark of spiritual powers has remained or exists in man by which he could make himself ready for the grace of God or to accept the proferred grace, nor that he has any capacity for grace by and for himself or can apply himself to it or prepare himself for it, or help, do, effect, or cooperate his conversion by his own powers, either altogether or half-way or in the tiniest or smallest degree, "of himself as coming from himself," but is a slave of sin (John 8:34), the captive of the devil who drives him (Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim.

---

[47] Ibid., p. 522.

> 2:26). Hence according to its perverse disposition and nature the natural free will is mighty and active only in the direction of that which is displeasing and contrary to God (F.C. II, 7).[48]

Allbeck notes that the threefold designation "intellect, heart, and will" reflects the "ancient psychological distinction of the intellectual, the volitional, and the affective phases of the mind."[49] The Confessions thus reflect the traditional psychological understanding of man.

All that has been stated here could have been stated under the concept of original sin. This underscores again the point already made, that in the Confessions original sin is the conditioning factor in understanding the free will.

However, the Formula, too, recognizes the constructive contribution of civil righteousness produced in part by free will. It allows that God rewards civil righteousness with temporal blessings. The Formula also notes that since such outwardly noble acts do not flow from faith, they are sinful. Faith alone is recognized as "the mother and source of the truly good and God-pleasing works that God will reward both in this and in the next world."[50]

---

[48] Ibid., p. 521.

[49] Allbeck, Studies, p. 261.

[50] BC, p. 552.

Faith is the indispensable prerequisite before we can do anything that pleases God. If we can not please God, then spiritual righteousness is impossible for us, and if so we are in bondage to an alien evil power. "For before we became members of the Christian church we belonged entirely to the devil and were completely ignorant of God and Christ."[51] The urgent question now becomes: How can I prepare myself for faith? Quoting Luther the Formula notes that our "free will has no power of its own to prepare itself and to strive for righteousness." There is no cooperation on the part of man's will in conversion. Rather,

> Outside of Christ death and sin are our masters and the devil is our god and lord, and there is no power or ability, no cleverness or reason, with which we can prepare ourselves for righteousness and seek after it. On the contrary, we must remain the dupes and captives of sin and the property of the devil to do and to think what pleases them and what is contrary to God and His commandments (F.C. II,43).[52]

Natural man can do nothing to prepare himself for salvation. However, the Confessions do allow that natural man can expose himself to the means through which God works faith. This point is made by Bonhoeffer in The Cost of Discipleship and he no doubt had this reference in mind.

> The person who is not yet converted to God and regenerated can hear and read this Word externally because, as stated above, even after the Fall man still has

---

[51] Ibid., p. 528.

[52] Ibid., p. 529.

> something of a free will in these external matters, so that he can go to church, listen to the sermon, or not listen to it (F.C. II,53).[53]

Faith and the Means of Grace

How does one come to faith? God kindles faith through the operation of His Holy Spirit who works through the means of grace in the hearts, wills, and minds of men.

> Through this means (namely, the preaching and hearing of his Word) God is active, breaks our hearts, and draws man, so that through the preaching of the law man learns to know his sins and the wrath of God and experiences genuine terror, contrition, and sorrow in his heart, and through the preaching of and meditation upon the holy Gospel or the gracious forgiveness of sin in Christ there is kindled in him a spark of faith which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel. And in this way the Holy Spirit who works all this, is introduced into the heart (F.C. II,54).[54]

So God draws natural man in such a way that his darkened reason becomes enlightened and his resisting will becomes an obedient will. The Holy Spirit initiates the work of renewal and regeneration in us through the Word and the holy Sacraments. And although natural man is unable to cooperate in his conversion, regenerate man can and must cooperate with the power of the Holy Spirit in his sanctification, even though this be in great weakness.[55] Hence there is

---

[53] Ibid., p. 531.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., pp. 533, 534.

a great difference between natural man and regenerate man.

> There is therefore a great difference between baptized people and unbaptized people because, according to the teaching of St. Paul, "all who have been baptized have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27), are thus truly born again, and now have a liberated will--that is, as Christ says, they have again been made free. As a result, they not only hear the Word of God but also are able to assent to it and accept it, even though it be in great weakness (F.C. II,67).[56]

Conversion does not spell the end to the struggle for freedom. Rather freedom in a spiritual sense begins only with faith. This casts us full force into the fray as the following words show.

> But since in this life we have received only the first fruits of the Spirit, and regeneration is not as yet perfect but has only begun in us, the conflict and warfare of the flesh against the Spirit continues also in the elect and truly reborn. Again, there is not only a great difference between Christians, one being weak and the other strong in the Spirit, but even the individual Christian in his own life discovers that at one moment he is joyful in the Spirit and at another moment fearful and terrified, at one time ardent in love, strong in faith and in hope, and at another time cold and weak (F.C. II,68).[57]

How aptly this describes the Christian life can only be recognized by a believer engaged in this same struggle.

This section of our study can be concluded with words from Luther's masterful treatise on the subject of man's not so free will.

> If we do not want to drop this term altogether (namely free will)--which would really be the safest and most Christian thing to do--we may still in good faith teach people to use it to credit man with 'free-will'

---

[56] Ibid., p. 534.

[57] Ibid.

> in this respect, not of what is above him, but of what is below him. That is to say, man should realize that in regard to his money and possessions he has a right to use them, to do or to leave undone, according to his own 'free-will'--though that very 'free-will' is overruled by the free-will of God alone, according to His own pleasure. However, with regard to God, and in all that bears on salvation or damnation, he has no 'free-will', but is a captive, prisoner and bondslave, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan.[58]

Conclusions

The first consideration noted in this chapter was the pervasive understanding of man as creature and God as Creator in the Confessions. The Christian study of man must operate within this framework and the Confessions certainly do. In fact, so pervasive is this understanding that Confessional statements on original sin and free will often presuppose the creatureliness of man. This perhaps explains why there is in the Confessions no separate treatment given to the Fall or to the Image of God.

In our examination of original sin we discovered the important distinction between man's nature as creature, and thus the handiwork of God, and man's corrupted nature, the work of Satan. The totality of man's impotence in spiritual matters could hardly have been more emphatically stated. The disastrous effect of original sin is not limited to man's body while his soul escapes unscathed. Rather man is treated as a whole, and his whole nature is involved

---

[58]Luther, The Bondage of the Will, p. 107.

in the corruption and poisoning that results from original sin.[59] This understanding of man effectively blocks the classic dualistic view of man prevalent in western idealism.

In our study of free will a distinction between civil righteousness and spiritual righteousness became evident. The intimate connection of reason to civil righteousness was apparent in that such human goodness was even termed "the righteousness of reason." The limits of reason were likewise noted and the boundaries fixed at "the things which the senses can grasp."[60] This position undercuts any rationalistic or philosophical approach to God, just as the interpretation of original sin demolishes all moralistic approaches to God.

In this chapter we also discovered that the Confessional statements on original sin and free will are in reality two sides of the same stone. Natural man sees free will as the top side, but when he seriously considers it, stoops, and picks up the stone, he discovers on the underside, amid the slugs and slime, the inescapable reality of original sin. Even this discovery can not be made without the Holy Spirit's activity in natural man. Once this realization is accepted, it disallows any presumed powers of free will in the spiritual realm. There is therefore in the Confessional exposition of these two concepts an essential oneness.

---

[59] Supra, p. 10.

[60] Supra, p. 25.

Another pertinent observation is the form of the Confessional presentation of this position. In a sense the framers of our Confessions were in the position of one who had just challenged another to a duel and thus had forfeited the choice of weapons. Although scholastic methodology and terminology is used in the Confessions, these do not obscure the evangelical thrust of the Confessions' message. The rhythm of sin and grace, law and gospel is certainly apparent. The pragmatic concern for man's eternal salvation is constantly kept in the forefront. Nevertheless, some of the strong new wine of the biblical view of man is poured into the old wine skins of traditional scholastic categories. This was no doubt done to show continuity with past tradition, but at times it seems to blunt the cutting edge of man's paradoxical nature as "saint and sinner" or creature and corrupted creature.

The exact relationship of reason and will was not made explicit in the Confessions. But implicit in the Confessional understanding of man is the view that reason is antecedent to will. This understanding of the relationship between reason and will lends itself to the abuse of rationalism, and history bears this out.

The Confessions approach both original sin and free will from God's point of view. The direction of movement is consistently from God to man. Psychology and philosophy, while implicit here and there in the Confessional statements, are not explicitly defined. It is also significant that the Confessions place the concepts of original sin and free will in the proper perspective

by treating them within the context of the whole plan of salvation.

The Confessions accept the traditional view of man's integrity prior to the Fall without speculation as to the difference in existence before the advent of sin. This is significant because we will note in chapter three that Kierkegaard does not accept the traditional understanding of man's innocence.

One apparent weakness in the Confessions' exposition is the attempt to make quantitive terms express a quality of existence. The term "dim spark" occurs in an attempt to show that the possibility of communication and communion with God exists. The distinction between external works and the work of the Holy Spirit which is viewed as internal is a vulnerable distinction and liable to misapplication. Bonhoeffer points this out in a later chapter.

The problem of the relationship between "civil righteousness" and "spiritual righteousness" is one which the Confessions struggle to enunciate clearly. It is obviously difficult to set forth this relationship systematically in a comprehensive fashion. Perhaps this needs to be acknowledged. On the other hand, perhaps the categories of "civil righteousness" and "spiritual righteousness" are not completely adequate. We will note that Kierkegaard uses different categories to make a distinction and yet show relationship in chapter three. Ultimately, the question seems to be: "Can Melanchthon's Aristotelian philosophy serve as an adequate vehicle for dynamic Lutheran theology?"

Finally, our Confessions do not attempt to expatiate on original sin and free will from the human point of view. When Melanchthon attempted to view conversion from the human perspective difficulty arose. Melanchthon's attempt and the consequent controversy may be a portent of things to come, for we turn now to Kierkegaard's concept of human freedom.

CHAPTER III

KIERKEGAARD'S CONCEPT OF FREE WILL

The Man, the Method, and the Motive

> The moment I take Christianity as a doctrine and so indulge my cleverness or profundity or my eloquence or my imaginative powers in depicting it: people are very pleased; I am looked upon as a serious Christian.
>
> The moment I begin to express existentially what I say, and consequently to bring Christianity into reality: it is just as though I had exploded existence--the scandal is there at once.[1]

This introduction of Kierkegaard, the man, will of necessity be brief. There is a plethora of introductory material available to the serious student. Instead of presenting an interpretation of Kierkegaard's early life it seems best to let him speak for himself from his Journals. In 1835 he penned these lines:

> Then it was that the great earthquake occurred, the terrible revolution which suddenly forced upon me a new and infallible law of interpretation of all the facts. Then I suspected that my father's great age was not a divine blessing but rather a curse; that the outstanding intellectual gifts of our family were only given to us in order that we should rend each other to pieces: then I felt the stillness of death grow around me when I saw my father, an unhappy man who was to outlive us all, a cross on the tomb of all his hopes. There must be a guilt upon the whole family, the punishment of God must be on it; it was to disappear, wiped out by the powerful hand of God, obliterated like an unsuccessful attempt, and only at times did I find a little alleviation in the

---

[1]Søren Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard, translated by Alexander Dru (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 174.

> thought that my father had been allotted the heavy task of calming us with the consolation of religion, of ministering to us so that a better world should be open to us even though we lost everything in this world, even though we were overtaken by the punishment which the Jews always called down upon their enemies: that all recollection of us should be utterly wiped out, that we should no longer be found.[2]

Two years later Kierkegaard would note in his Journal:

> Inwardly torn asunder as I was, without any expectation of leading a happy earthly life ("that I should prosper and live long in the land"), without hope of a happy and comfortable future--as it naturally springs from and lies in the historical continuity of family life--what wonder then that in desperate despair I grasped at nought but the intellectual side in man and clung fast to it, so that the thought of my own considerable powers of mind was my only consolation, ideas my one joy, and mankind indifferent to me.[3]

In the foregoing autobiographical sketches we are given an intimate and candid view of the heart and mind of Søren Kierkegaard. Perhaps a few external facts about his life will prove helpful. Copenhagen, Kierkegaard's home town, was a "provincial market town" during his life time (1813-1855). At the age of twenty-five Søren began receiving an allowance from his father and later that year when Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard died Søren received enough of an inheritance to sustain his work as an author until his death seventeen years later.

Kierkegaard never married although he was engaged. He broke this engagement in October 1841. This left a deep mark on him but this

---

[2] Ibid., p. 39.

[3] Ibid., p. 40.

experience also marks the beginning of his literary work. At forty-two Kierkegaard died, nearly penniless, but having been in his words, "a witness to the truth."

We turn now briefly to his "method" which sheds light on understanding his work. Kierkegaard's first works (1841-1845) embrace several aesthetic and ethical volumes published under pseudonymns. For the most part, these works follow the method of indirect communication, and some of these are of considerable significance in the Kierkegaard corpus.

Dru comments:

> The oustanding feature of this part of his work is the polemic against Hegel, a criticism of the whole corpus of post-Christian philosophy from Spinoza to Hegel; an attack on "philosophy" itself for its wordy metaphysics and its verbal scepticism and for its original sin of divorcing thought from existence or reality. It is also a criticism, on the moral and psychological level, of the humanism of that period. . . . That world, with its rationalist philosophies and its aesthetic humanism, was, in his view, already moribund, a mirage, but a potent illusion which prevented men from seeing the real problems of both faith and doubt.[4]

In the writings of this period Kierkegaard begins from various points of view, but he always moves in the same direction, either toward the "choice" in Either-Or or toward the "leap of faith" in Fear and Trembling. He is guided by his conception of the "individual" who encounters the "moment" in which "decision and action fuse thought and existence, the moment in which temporal and

---

[4]Ibid., pp. 19, 20.

eternal meet and man can fulfill his destiny."[5]

In his attempt to counter Hegelianism Kierkegaard emphasizes feeling of passion:

> Kierkegaard would, however, be misunderstood if it were not at once made clear that feeling is not sentiment or emotion isolated from the other faculties of mind. Feeling and passion are only the gateway to reality when purified by reason and will and integrated by that process with the other faculties. Feeling is in one sense the faculty which leads to the quality of intensity of our knowledge, as opposed to knowledge which is significant by virtue of its extensity. It is only when both are co-ordinated that "the individual" begins to exist and becomes a complete man. The error of rationalism is therefore twofold. It limits man to being "a rational animal," and because it excludes feeling, limits him to one form of communication which, by definition excludes reality. It is the world of a man who "has forgotten what it means to exist," who does not really live in the same categories as he thinks in. . . .[6]

From the foregoing it becomes clear that "the choice" and "the leap of faith" are not arbitrary acts of the will divorced from reason and feeling, but rather are actions of the whole man which give him the right to speak of existence. Dru observes:

> It might almost be said that Kierkegaard reverses the cogito. Instead of saying "I think, therefore I am," he says, "Only if I exist sensu eminenti can I begin to think" and that thought, moreover, requires a dual form of communication, both direct and indirect.[7]

Kierkegaard viewed "imagination" as the synthesis of feeling, reason, and will. It is the "reflection" which fuses the three

---

[5] Ibid., p. 20.

[6] Ibid., p. 21, 22.

[7] Ibid., p. 23.

faculties of "the individual." Choice which is the act by which the fusion of feeling, reason, and will takes place is never for Kierkegaard the choice of something external. It is always the choice of one's self, of a complete existence.

> Prior to that constitutive act man is always consciously or unconsciously in despair, for despair is the disintegration of personality in the course of which one or the other of the faculties assumes "supremacy": either reason, resulting in rationalism; or feeling, resulting in sentimentality; or will, resulting in voluntarism. It is really only after the "choice" that "the leap of faith" becomes possible, for only the complete man can really become a Christian.[8]

As far as Kierkegaard is concerned, "man only begins to exist in faith." Real Christianity is a new level of existence. The task is not to prove Christianity before the fact, but to demonstrate it after the fact. Thus the second part of Kierkegaard's work becomes a direct communication or witness to the Christian faith. Dru regards the "problem of communication" as the "distinctive characteristic" of Kierkegaard's work, work upon which he renders this verdict: "That, as far as I can see, is the core of Kierkegaard's word, neither rationalistic, nor irrationalistic, nor inhuman."[9]

Before leaving this section on method we must look at Heinemann's evaluation of two of Kierkegaard's works central to this study. The Concept of Dread (1844) is from Kierkegaard's early pseudonymous writings, while The Sickness Unto Death (1849) is from Kierkegaard's later works.

---

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., pp. 23, 24.

> Self-estrangement is to him primarily a process going on in one's own self, not an external, but an internal relation, based on one's own attitude to oneself. Kierkegaard therefore becomes the psychologist or rather the psychopathologist of self-estrangement. He heralds the Age of Anxiety by describing the state of alienation as anxiety. . . .
>
> In the Concept of Dread this sort of alienation finds a most profound and penetrating psychological analysis as "being dominated in a state of anxiety by an alien power which threatens our dissolution."
>
> He goes, however, one step further in his analysis of alienation as an internal happening within oneself in his The Sickness unto Death. Anxiety is now transformed into despair, and despair is "the sickness unto death." This is one of the most important of his publications; it implies a phenomenology of despair and of its forms and, at the same time, a sort of existentialist psychology of despair. It marks simultaneously an important state in the spiritual history of modern man, namely the point where modern doubt and scepticism turn inward, focus on one's own self and therefore lead to despair. Despair, says Kierkegaard, is the misproportion in the relation of the self to itself, or every disturbance in the process of becoming a Self, a sort of self-consumption, a specific illness of man as a spiritual being, arising from his attempt to separate himself from the power which created him, or from the fact that he neglects what is eternal in him and forgets his spiritual nature. Whoever has no God has no Self, and he who has no Self is in despair.[10]

Having examined briefly the man and his method, we now look at what is termed his "motive." This is meant to describe the theological-philosophical-cultural milieu in which Kierkegaard found himself and in which he tried to act as a corrective. For Søren Kierkegaard did consider himself to be a corrective.

> He who must apply a "corrective must study accurately and profoundly the weak side of the Establishment, and then vigorously and one-sidedly present the opposite. Precisely in this consists the corrective, and in this too the

---

[10] F. H. Heinemann, Existentialism and the Modern Predicament (New York: Harper Torchbooks; Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1953), pp. 36, 37.

> resignation of him who has to apply it. The corrective will in a sense be sacrificed to the established order.
>
> If this is true, a presumably clever pate can reprove the corrective for being one-sided. Ye gods! Nothing is easier for him who applies the corrective than to supply the other side; but then it ceases to be the corrective and becomes the established order.[11]

What did Kierkegaard feel constrained to correct? Martin gives a quick glimpse of three factors that influenced the course and emphasis of Kierkegaard's work.

> There is firstly the danger of the rationalistic approach to the understanding of Christianity, or the scientific attitude which requires the truth of Christianity to be demonstrated with the same logical conviction as the scientist is able to produce for his truths. Kierkegaard stands for the position that the Christian Gospel, by its very nature cannot be understood within rational and logical categories. Human reason is a divine gift to man. . . . But in relation to the Divine world of eternity, human reason comes up against a boundary beyond which it cannot operate successfully, because beyond that boundary it is attempting to deal with a truth which is incommensurable with the scientific truth of the material world.[12]

A second factor that influenced Kierkegaard is closely related to the rationalist approach. It is:

> the danger of the approach to the understanding of Christianity through Idealistic Philosophy, and especially through the conception of the Divine as immanent in all the processes of nature and in the spirit of man. Such philosophy implies an ultimate continuity between nature, man and God; otherwise the aim of the philosophical thinker to present a coherent system of Reality would be impossible.[13]

---

[11] Søren Kierkegaard, Attack Upon 'Christendom,' translated by Walter Lowrie (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1944), p. 90.

[12] H. V. Martin, The Wings of Faith (A consideration of the nature and meaning of Christian faith in the light of the work of Søren Kierkegaard) (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), p. 38.

[13] Ibid., pp. 38, 39.

In the face of both rationalism and a religious philosophy of immanence Kierkegaard insisted on the "infinite qualitative difference" between God and man, time and eternity. Sin had severed man's existence. Any real Gospel had to cope with and remedy the tragic predicament of man's dividedness.

The third danger which Kierkegaard sought to combat was the danger of a "facile acceptance of nominal Christianity without ever experiencing 'the qualitative encounter with the Divine.'" Thus Kierkegaard

> set himself to awaken inward unrest by proclaiming the New Testament standard of what it means to be a Christian. Mere birth into a Christian community, or membership in a Christian Church is of no avail. Blind assent to Christian dogma is not faith but superstition. Nor is saving faith just the natural awakening of the soul to the all-pervading presence of the immanent Divine. To be a Christian in the New Testament sense means that every individual as an individual shall relate himself personally to Christ in fear and trembling through the leap of passionate decision in the despair of his guilt before God.[14]

Martin points out that contrasted to the anthropocentric tendencies of Christian theology in his day, Kierkegaard's theology stands out sharply as theocentric.[15] These aforementioned factors all exerted influence upon Kierkegaard's life and work.

But Kierkegaard also viewed Lutheranism as a corrective.

> Lutheranism is a corrective--but a corrective made into the norm, the whole, is eo ipso confusing in the next generation (when that which it was meant to correct no

---

[14] Ibid., pp. 39, 40.

[15] Ibid., p. 40.

> longer exists). And as long as this continues things get worse with every generation, until in the end the corrective produces the exact opposite of what was originally intended.[16]

This view would explain the constant reference to Roman Catholic dogma in the presentation of Lutheran theology. However, when Kierkegaard applies this standard to Lutheran theology he lays himself open to like application. His verdict on Lutheran theology in his day was negative, "Taken by itself, as the whole of Christianity, the Luthern corrective produces the most subtle type of worldiness and paganism."[17] Let's see how his theology fares.

Kierkegaard's dialectical presentation of his thought leaves him vulnerable to various interpretations. In this chapter we will note how he has been misunderstood as well as understood. The fact that Kierkegaard is more concerned with describing true "religiosity" than with defining doctrine makes this task difficult. Thomte observes:

> In Kierkegaard the approach to religious faith is subjective. His focus is not doctrine but religiosity. His emphasis is on the act of faith rather than the object of faith. Religiosity and inwardness are not subject to objective scientific research, hence the scientific method cannot be the norm of Christianity.[18]

---

[16]Kierkegaard, The Journals, pp. 232, 233.

[17]Ibid., p. 233.

[18]Reidar Thomte, Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 87. Hereafter this work will be referred to as Thomte, Philosophy.

The Consciousness of Sin

This writer suspects that Kierkegaard would object to his attempt to treat sin as a concept, and insist that it be considered as an existential reality since all men are involved in it. Likewise, this same concern could be expressed toward selfhood, freedom, and faith. Kierkegaard points out the danger of assuming that in the act of comprehension we stand above the position we comprehend.[19] Aware of this danger, we begin with Kierkegaard's thinking on the "consciousness of sin."

The "consciousness of sin" is the distinguishing category in Kierkegaard's thinking. It is the dividing line between paganism and Christianity. Only a Christian can realize that his guilt is sin. If this were a philosophical enterprise, the logical concept to consider first would be Kierkegaard's understanding of "selfhood," but since ours is a theological inquiry we begin with the consciousness of sin. Kierkegaard would appreciate our beginning here, for he wrote:

> The concept by which Christianity distinguishes itself most decisively from paganism is the concept of sin, doctrine of sin; and therefore Christianity also assumes quite consistently that neither paganism nor the natural man knows what sin is; yea, it assumes that there must be a revelation from God to make manifest what sin is.[20]

---

[19] Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling and The Sickness unto Death, translated by Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Doubleday Anchor Books, 1941), p. 227. Hereafter referred to as Kierkegaard, Fear or Sickness.

[20] Ibid., p. 220.

To comprehend the consciousness of sin it is necessary to understand Kierkegaard's distinction between immanent religiosity and transcendent Christianity. To this we now turn.

The Distinction between Immanence and Transcedence

Kierkegaard makes a sharp distinction between what he terms Religion "A," which is an immanent religiosity that presupposes the immanence of truth in the human subjectivity, and Religion "B" which is "paradoxical Christianity." In Religion "A" moral and religious life can be integrated by means of inner effort within the personality. However, in Religion "B" or Christianity the presupposition is that human subjectivity is not truth, but untruth. In the realm of transcedent Christianity inner effort within the personality can only result in a consciousness of the absolute gulf between man and God. Hence Christianity affirms that the personality can only be brought to soundness by the revelation of God in history. Religion "A" has a plus at the foundation of human nature, whereas Religion "B" or Christianity has a minus.[21] "The paradoxical religiousness breaks with immanence and makes the fact of existing the absolute contradiction, not within immanence, but against immanence."[22]

Failure to recognize this distinction is the cause of much misinterpretation of Kierkegaard's writings. Kierkegaard's

---

[21]Thomte, Philosophy, p. 87.

[22]Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, translated by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 507.

Edifying Discourses written in his early period are directed toward the religiosity of immanence, not Christianity. Kierkegaard began with the realm of immanence because in his judgment this is where natural man is, for apart from God's revelation no one enters into the reality of paradoxical Christianity.

Nevertheless, even in Religion "A" or immanence man experiences resignation, suffering, and guilt. Even in immanent religiousness Kierkegaard does not get away from the thought of inherited sin. In religious healing God is the actor, though the healing is brought about by man's own effort.

> It is God Himself who best knows how to utilize a man's own anxieties for the purpose of extirpating all his self-confidence; and when he is about to sink down into his own nothingness, it is again God Himself who can best keep him from continuing to maintain a diver's under-water connection with his earthly self.[23]

Kierkegaard maintained that God does not reveal Himself in the objective world round about us; but He reveals Himself as the foundation for the subjective. Therefore with regard to immanent religiousness Kierkegaard makes the oft misquoted statement "truth is subjectivity."[24]

Kierkegaard's novel approach toward the religion of immanence has a purpose. He encourages man to follow this path betting that

---

[23]Søren Kierkegaard, Edifying Discourses, translated by David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1945), II, 132.

[24]Kierkegaard, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 169-224.

he will confront the deadend of the qualitative difference between God and man, a difference which is sin. Instead of cautioning people against the path of immanence, Kierkegaard waves them on so that they might come to the contradiction and realize the importance of a religiosity of immanence. In his aesthetic and ethical writings Kierkegaard points out that living in immediacy and living by the universal leaves one is despair. Thus he encourages:

> Choose despair, for despair itself is a choice; for one can doubt without choosing to, but one cannot despair without choosing. And when a man despairs he chooses again--and what is it he chooses? He chooses himself, not in his immediacy, not as this fortuitous individual, but he chooses himself in his eternal validity.[25]

In other words, until natural man realizes the fallacy of clinging to immanence he cannot come to faith in the Christian sense. Despair conditions man for the "leap of faith." Thomte summarizes it best when he writes:

> The deeper the individual whose religiosity is human enters into the God-relation, the more conscious he becomes of the fact that he is bound in the finite. His experience is paradoxical for the closer he gets to the Absolute the more he realizes how distant he is from it. Progress here is tantamount to retrogression. He is unequal to the task and the result is guilt-consiousness. This form of religiosity moves entirely within the realm of immanence; there is therefore in this no breach with nature.

On the other hand:

> The Christian religiosity or the paradoxical religiosity is altogether transcendental. It is based on the supposition that human nature is "the untruth," and that

---

[25] Søren Kierkegaard, Either/Or, translated by Walter Lowrie (New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., Anchor Books, 1944), II, 215.

> personality as such has become invalidated. There is thus a definite breach between the Eternal and the human nature. This religiosity is characterized by the fact that the Divine has appeared in time and in historic form of one single individual in the personality of Jesus.[26]

When an adherent of Religion "A" recognizes the breach between himself and the Eternal God, then

> the consciousness of guilt is heightened to sin-consciousness through the discovery that there has been an alteration of human nature itself so that the truth is no longer found within but outside the personality. Sin-consciousness is the only means of entrance to Christianity.[27]

Kierkegaard urges the natural man to choose himself, that is to choose despair with his whole being. Natural man can accomplish the act of resignation for faith is not required. In this act the natural man may find himself as an "individual" and thus be open to God's revelation. Kierkegaard's position here seems analogous to that of Elijah urging on the prophets of Ba'al.[28]

Kierkegaard desperately wants the natural man to realize who he really is, and what his relationship to God is. He does not imply that natural man has the power to believe as an act of his will. He clearly states, "faith is a miracle," and "faith begins where thinking

---

[26]Thomte, Philosophy, p. 213.

[27]Ibid., p. 214.

[28]I Kings 18.

leaves off." Furthermore, faith is not renunciation but affirmation. "By faith Abraham did not renounce his claim on Isaac, but by faith he got Isaac."[29] Kierkegaard held that in life every movement which brings about real change is a leap or act of freedom.[30]

We set out in this section to describe the consciousness of sin according to Kierkegaard. It must seem that we have taken a long detour into the distinction between Religion "A" and Religion "B," immanence and Christianity. This detour was necessary as noted by the distinction made by Thomte[31] on the previous page. The natural man clinging to his immanent religiosity can acquire a sense of guilt, but he can not know that he is a sinner. This is why Kierkegaard can assert that the "concept of sin" distinguishes Christianity most decisively from paganism.[32] Thus Kierkegaard affirms:

> The individual is unable to acquire Sin-Consciousness by himself, as he can guilt-consciousness; for in guilt-consciousness the identity of the subject within himself is preserved, and guilt-consciousness is an alteration of the subject within the subject himself; sin-consciousness, on the other hand, is an alteration of the very subject himself, which shows that outside of the individual that power must be which makes clear to him the fact that in coming into life he has become another than that he was, has become a sinner. This power is the Deity in time.[33]

---

[29]Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, pp. 77, 64, 59.

[30]Thomte, Philosophy, p. 58.

[31]Supra, p. 52, n. 27

[32]Supra, p. 48, n. 20.

[33]Kierkegaard, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 517.

The foregoing should suffice to demonstrate the sharp distinction which Kierkegaard makes between the religiosity of immanence and paradoxical Christianity.

Selfhood

In the Confessions we discovered a pervading influence that consistently viewed man as the creature and God as the Creator. Since the Fall man is a corrupted creature, unable to initiate communion with God, lost apart from God's grace and faith which God works in man to apprehend His grace. The perspective of the Confessions moves from God to man. Kierkegaard reverses the approach. His perspective is introspective. Because Kierkegaard deviates from the traditional approach, because he views man dialectically, and because some fail to keep his distinction between the religiosity of immanence and transcedent Christianity in mind he can be misunderstood.

S. U. Zuidema's verdict on Kierkegaard's understanding of man is an apt illustration.

> Human existence is, therefore, a free spontaneous inner act; it is man's free realization of himself. In and through such voluntary acts man is his own "father." His life lies in his own hands. In freedom he disposes of his own future and his own future being; in free self-actualization he is the free cause of his "becoming." The transition from a possible to a real act is the result of an act of choice. At the basis of the whole of human existence lies a choice made by the self.
>
> Human freedom, as the director of self-realization, has within its own typical existential pathos, its own existential passion. This passion is connected with "the

> fact" that man is simultaneously finite and infinite, temporal and eternal, real and ideal, relative and absolute. Man is a tension between finitude and infinity, between temporality and eternity, between the relative and the absolute, and as such he is simultaneously the unity and the opposition, the contact and the conflict, the synthesis and the struggle between these intrinsic polar opposites. Human existence consists of this tension; its task as finite existence is to realize itself as an infinite self, to extend its bounds beyond all limits, thereby transcending all finiture. This director of human existence gives human passion its impetus, making it into an infinite passion. It arouses an existential dialectical movement through which self-denial (denial of one's self as finite), is simultaneously self-election (choice of one's self as infinite), self-disclosure is concurrently self-affirmation, and existential spontaneity is self-transcedence, in which man climbs above himself. Man's passion may be described as his anxious concern to attain his own infinity, his absolute self, and his eternal salvation.[34]

This parody of Kierkegaard demonstrates that Kierkegaard's dialectical view of the self needs to be approached with care.

Unlike traditional understanding of man, Kierkegaard posits freedom as anterior to selfhood. Freedom is the catalyst wherein selfhood becomes possible. It is his contention that no one can know the meaning of his own existence except from the perspective of revelation. Hence his emphasis focuses on the individual and what it means to exist coram Deo.

Man is indeed, a synthesis of time and eternity. He stands at the junction of nature and spirit. He is a riddle to himself. He is bound and yet free. His existence is a paradox. Kierkegaard

---

[34]S. U. Zuidema, Kierkegaard, translated by David H. Freeman (Grand Rapids: The Baker Book House, 1960), pp. 15, 16.

contends that paradox is the category which expresses the relationship between man and God. If one leaves God out of the picture, then man can be understood in some other way. But to do so falsifies man's self-understanding. If one makes God immanent, and thus resolves the paradox, then God is misunderstood. If one misunderstands God, one eo ipso misunderstands man.[35]

The paradox of human existence is best summarized by this statement: Man is absolutely free and at the same time man is absolutely determined.[36] Man is part of nature and thus of its chain of determinacies--that is his involvement in time. Yet man stands outside of this stream in the transcendence of his freedom. With the mystery of his free will he can break the chain and control his destiny, as it would appear to him and as he would like it to be absolutely.[37]

> He is not unwittingly carried along in a determined process like a twig in a torrent, nor is he safely guided by instinct like the bird that builds its nest in the spring. He is called upon to guide his own destiny and yet he is unable to do so. It is out of this anxiety (or dread) which is the constant concomitant of his freedom that both creativity and rebellion are born.[38]

---

[35]Martin J. Heinecken, The Moment Before God (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), p. 153. Hereafter referred to as Heinecken, Moment.

[36]Ibid., p. 154.

[37]Ibid., p. 165.

[38]Ibid.

For Kierkegaard "dread before nothingness" is the constant concomitant of freedom in human existence and the psychological state out of which sin is born. If man were a beast or an angel, he would not be able to be in dread. But since man is a synthesis of eternity and time; since man stands at the juncture of nature and spirit he can be in dread, and the greater the dread, the greater the man.[39]

Kierkegaard does not operate with a simple body-soul dualism, assigning to the soul rational powers, viewing it as the essence of man and giving it an essential freedom opposed by the body as a restricting factor. If Kierkegaard had assumed this view, then man's predicament would be merely his involvement in finitude, his imprisonment in the body. To the extent then that man could free himself from the limitations of his body, to that extent he would be free. Absolute freedom comes when the soul leaves the body if one accepts this approach. But,

> This would be granting to the soul an essential autonomy and freedom, such as on Kierkegaard's view, only God possesses. Such a being would overcome the dread of its existence precisely to the degree that it recovered its autonomy and asserted its own freedom. In Kierkegaard's view, this is precisely what the human self cannot do.[40]

What then is the self? To understand this it is necessary to combine what Kierkegaard says about the nature of selfhood in The

---

[39] Ibid., p. 166.

[40] Ibid., p. 169.

Sickness unto Death with what he says about the dread as the psychological state preceding the leap into sin in The Concept of Dread.

> Man is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation [which accounts for it] that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but [consists in the fact] that the relation relates itself to its own self.[41]

Although at first this statement sounds as though someone scrambled the words in translation, it means that human beings are different from animals in that they can recognize their own selfhood. A horse for example can not contemplate the advantages of being a horse rather than a mule. As human beings we can stand outside ourselves and contemplate ourselves. This is possible because: "Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short a synthesis."[42] Hence the self is that which is capable of relating to itself, a center of contemplation and responsibility. In the human self this self is inseparable from the synthesis of the temporal and eternal.[43]

Kierkegaard regards the human self as a creature of God, a derived and dependent self. In fact, he asserts that a healthy relationship to

---

[41]Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, p. 146.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Heinecken, Moment, p. 171.

the self requires recognition of man's dependent relationship to God. Thus he affirms: "The self cannot of itself attain and remain in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation."[44] Hence the God-relationship must be right if the relationship of the self to itself is to be right. This appears to be Kierkegaard's equivalent of Saint Augustine's "Man's soul is restless until it rests in God." Failure to ground our life in God as the Power that posits it is despair whether recognized or not.[45]

The very fact that man can despair is indicative of his superiority over animals. The consciousness of despair is the first step toward effecting a cure. The cure is faith in the atonement.[46]

Consequently, Kierkegaard posits that the "self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become a self, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God."[47] To this he adds: "The self is in sound health and free from despair only when precisely by having been in despair, it is grounded transparently in God."[48]

---

[44]Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, p. 147.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Heinecken, Moment, p. 175.

[47]Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, p. 162.

[48]Ibid., p. 163.

For Kierkegaard the self has infinite significance because its measure is God. Consciousness of God is necessary before the self recognizes its infinitude. Hence:

> The more conception of God, the more self; the more self, the more conception of God. Only when the self as this definite individual is conscious of existing before God, only then is it the infinite self; and then this self sins before God.[49]

This introduces us to Kierkegaard's dialectical view of the self. A self that is in one sense completely free whereas it is completely determined. Human existence is a paradox.

Freedom

Dread is the inescapable concomitant of freedom. Dread is possible only for human beings who are syntheses of eternity and time. Only dependent selves are capable of dread. God is not in dread, for He is the ground of his own being. But we who are subject to both freedom and necessity are in dread.

> It is thus that dread is the psychological state preceding the "leap" into sin. The biblical story of the fall into sin is to be interpreted in this way. Adam's story is to be regarded as the common human story. It is not to be an explanation of how sin came into the world out of an original state of abstract freedom and original integrity. Sin always enters by a leap out of the psychological state of dread. Furthermore, sin always presupposes itself, so that you cannot put your finger on the state of innocence, either in the history of the individual or in the history of the

---

[49] Ibid., p. 211.

> race. It is always the man who is guilty already, who has already lost his innocence, who begins wondering about the origin of sin.[50]

Here again in Heinecken's sympathetic approach to Kierkegaard we see how inextricably sin, particularly original sin, and human freedom are bound together. We noted this to be the case in the Confessions understanding of free will. But Kierkegaard's understanding of the Fall definitely departs from traditional orthodoxy. In his view, Adam does not stand apart from the human race completely free and innocent, capable of choosing equally either good or evil. This would presuppose a knowledge of good and evil which Adam did not have until after the Fall as the biblical account pictures it. Prior to his choice Adam could have no knowledge of the meaning of either the tempter's spurious promise or God's threat. Hence Kierkegaard reinterprets the fall. To do so, Kierkegaard attempts to project himself into Adam's position prior to the fall.

This state he claims is analogous to the psychological state preceding any choice. This is the state of being aware of freedom, of the ability to act, to choose without having yet made the choice. This state is dread, anxiety, the object of which is precisely the unknown. It is the dread of "nothing," the awareness of the alarming possibility of being able. Of what he is able man has no knowledge. To suppose he has, is to presuppose what comes later, the distinction

---

[50]Heinecken, Moment, p. 175, 176.

between good and evil.[51] Thus Kierkegaard terms dread "sympathetic antipathy and antipathetic sympathy" by which he means that we are both attracted and repelled by the possibility. Heinecken sums up Kierkegaard's view when he writes:

> Thus out of the state of dread, which is the constant concomitant of freedom, sin is born. It is not given with existence. Man is not created a sinner, but he is created a self--a synthesis of freedom and necessity in dread of the possibilities his freedom opens before him. Thus he stands at the place of decision and, since he is a dependent being, his well-being really depends upon his surrender to the being upon whom he depends. If he properly surrendered in trust all would be well with him. But as a matter of fact he does not. Therefore every human being is aware of the sinister contradiction with himself: He is aware of his guilt in some measure or other, he is aware of his insecurity, he is aware of his limitations, and he tries frantically to overcome them. He is thus always trying to live out of himself and the world, out of his finitude, out of his self-sufficiency. He is asserting himself in pride and is mistrustful of the limitations that are placed upon him. Thus life circles about himself. This would be well enough, if he really were his own center. But since he is a self constituted by another, this notion about himself throws him horribly out of kilter. This is the state in which every man is found, having entered into it by an inexplicable leap out of the dizziness of his freedom.[52]

Thus if Heinecken's observation is valid, Kierkegaard views freedom as the medium through which man sins and through which he comes to a consciousness of his sin and is thus reclaimed by God.

---

[51]Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 40. Hereafter referred to as Kierkegaard, Dread.

[52]Heinecken, Moment, p. 179.

Martin observes that

> Kierkegaard was a passionate apostle of man's individual freedom. But he perceived that the relation of faith to freedom is a highly dialectical one. The act of Christian faith is a personal decision of the human will; but, at the same time, it is more. It is conditioned by the divine determination of the individual through the Holy Spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3). In this, the act of faith corresponds to the paradoxical nature of the object of faith, so that, from the human side, Christian faith is an act of human decision; while, from the Divine side, it is the free gift of God's grace.[53]

There can be little doubt about Kierkegaard's dialectical understanding of human freedom. Like sin, freedom is because it is. There can be no logical explanation for it. The opposite of freedom is not necessity, but ultimately guilt.

> When sin is posited in the particular individual by the qualitative leap, the distinction is then posited between good and evil. We have nowhere been chargeable with the foolishness of thinking that man must sin; on the contrary, we have everywhere protested against every sort of merely experimental knowledge, and have said, what we here again repeat, that sin presupposes itself, just as freedom does, and cannot be explained, any more than freedom can, by any antecedent. To let freedom commence as a liberum arbitrium (which nowhere is to be found, as Leibnitz says), which is quite as free to choose the good as the evil, is to make every explanation radically impossible. To talk about good and evil as objects of freedom is to finitize both freedom and the concepts of good and evil. Freedom is infinite and does not arise out of anything.[54]

This approach to freedom makes speculation about its origin out of bounds to reason, for reason certainly is not infinite. The

---

[53]Martin, The Wings of Faith, p. 93.

[54]Kierkegaard, Dread, p. 100.

"religious genius" may by turning inward discover guilt and freedom, not freedom to do this or that in the world, but "freedom to know of himself that he is freedom." However,

> In the degree that he discovers freedom, in that same degree does the dread of guilt in the condition of possibility impend over him. Guilt only does he fear, for that is the one and only thing that can deprive him of freedom. It is easily seen that freedom is not defiance by any means, or the selfish liberty understood in a finite sense. By such an assumption [that of liberum arbitrium] the effort has often been made to explain the origin of sin. That, however, is labor lost, for the assumption of such a presupposition presents a greater difficulty than that which it would explain. When freedom is so interpreted, its opposite is necessity, which shows that freedom has been construed under an intellectual category. No, the opposite of freedom is guilt, and it is the supreme glory of freedom that it has only with itself to do, that it projects guilt in its possibility and also posits it by itself, and if guilt is posited actually, freedom still posits it by itself. If one does not give heed to this, then one has confounded freedom with something entirely different, with <u>force</u>.[55]

Here we see the consistency of Kierkegaard. He has given the self a religious orientation and now he gives freedom this same religious orientation. Freedom is an existential category, not merely an intellectual one. As such it is not a logical concept, but a condition describing and defining existence. Kierkegaard's concept of freedom lies beyond the reach of logical analysis in the realm of the spirit. Hence he adds:

> When freedom then fears guilt, it is not that it fears to recognize itself as guilt, if it is guilty, but it fears to become guilty, and therefore, so soon as guilt is

---

[55] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 97.

> posited, freedom comes back again as repentance. But meanwhile freedom's relation to guilt is a possibility. . . . Only by itself can freedom learn to know whether it is freedom or guilt which is posited.[56]

Dread, already described as a concomitant of freedom, shows itself as a "dizziness" in the practical psychological functioning of freedom in the life of man.

> Thus, dread is the dizziness of freedom which occurs when the spirit would posit the synthesis, and freedom then gazes down into its own possibility, grasping at finiteness to sustain itself. In this dizziness freedom succumbs. Further than this psychology cannot go and will not. That very instant everything is changed, and when freedom rises again it sees that it is guilty. Between these two instants lies the leap, which no science has explained or can explain. He who becomes guilty in dread becomes as ambiguously guilty as it is possible to be. . . . Psychologically speaking, the fall into sin always occurs in impotence.[57]

This is not an attempt to explain the origin of human freedom, rather it is an attempt to describe its symptoms in our existence. It leads us back into the realm of the spirit. Kierkegaard observes at the conclusion of his study on dread that as soon as psychology has finished with dread it must deliver it over to dogmatics. For "he who with respect to guilt is educated by dread will therefore repose only in atonement."[58]

Kierkegaard's concept of human freedom is clarified by this comment from Thomte:

---

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., p. 55.

[58] Ibid., p. 145.

> Freedom does not consist in being equally able to choose good and evil. Good and evil are not regarded as determinants of freedom but as derivatives. First, "when sin is posited in the particular by the qualitative leap, the distinction is then posited between good and evil." Bohlin points out the difference between Kant's and Kierkegaard's conception of freedom. For Kant the result of the ethical striving of the will is a progression toward ethical perfection. For Kierkegaard the result of the same striving is a consciousness of guilt which makes it apparent that the salvation resulting in a new life must come through a spiritual power which is greater than man's.[59]

Human freedom for Kierkegaard is the context of our life in which God brings us to an awareness of our sin and impotence. And it is God who is the teacher.

> The Teacher is then God himself, who in acting as an occasion prompts the learner to recall that he is in Error, and that by reason of his own guilt. But this state, the being in Error by reason of one's own guilt, what shall we call it? Let us call it Sin.[60]

This brings us full circle, back to the consciousness of sin. We want to look at sin now not as an act of willful disobedience, but as a condition of our existence.

Sin--Fallen Freedom

The Confessions make a distinction between the creature and the creature's corruption due to sin. Kierkegaard's dialectical approach at times seems to equate finitude with sin, but this is not so. Rather

---

[59] Thomte, Philosophy, p. 167.

[60] Søren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, translated by David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), p. 10.

he maintains that everyone who exists is a sinner because man has abused his freedom. Man does not sin from necessity--this is a contradiction. He sins only in freedom. This is part of his definition. Given with existence are two possibilities:

> The one is the leap into sin, the grasping to finitude in the assertion of a false independence; the other is the surrender in faith. It is the failure to surrender in faith that constitutes man a sinner and makes him guilty. No one has said this more unequivocally than Kierkegaard.[61]

But such a position is paradoxical. It defies systematization. It proposes an existential situation which can only be recognized by one who has experienced what it means to be a sinner in the light of Christ. Thus Kierkegaard holds that it is only as man is confronted by the love of God in Christ that he recognizes the full dimension of his sin.

Even in the subsequent state of sin dread remains. The fall into sin is not just a past event, but a constantly recurring action in the life of each individual. Everyone is confronted by two possibilities of existence, either to receive his life from God in trust, or to assert himself in a false independence. This is the constant threat or "crisis" in which man stands before the abyss, the threat of meaninglessness and insecurity, from which a man is always tempted to escape into something that he can control and manipulate.[62]

---

[61] Heinecken, Moment, p. 183.

[62] Ibid., p. 184.

Heinecken summarizes the nature and function of dread in these words:

> Dread is the dizziness of freedom which is the constant concomitant of the freedom of the self which is a synthesis of freedom and necessity. Out of this psychological state sin is born by a leap. This dread is dread of the unknown, of the mere possibility of being able, out of which state a man grasps at finitude or overreaches himself in some way and finds that he is guilty, that he is in contradiction with himself and the author of his being. After having thus become a sinner a person is educated by dread more and more. That is to say, the possibilities of his freedom are explored imaginately. . . . The only escape from dread is in faith. . . .[63]

It will prove helpful to keep this summary definition in mind so that dread is not confused with despair. Dread is not itself sin, but despair is! Dread is the antecedent state to despair or sin. Dread has to do with ignorance, sin has to do with knowledge.

Just as the self was involved in dread so the self is also involved in despair or sin. For Kierkegaard the true self exists only in the consciousness of its dependent relationship to God. This he calls being "grounded transparently" in God or the Power who posits our life. The "transparency" is the awareness of God as the source of our existence, and the rejection of self-deception. "The self no longer mistrusts or misconstrues this Power, he rests in it as an inexhaustible wellspring of boundless and unconditional love."[64]

The self is confronted with choice, the "either or"--faith or sin.

---

[63] Ibid., p. 186.

[64] Ibid., p. 188, 189.

But the self is already in sin. And this is a bondage from which the self is impotent to achieve release. This is the inescapable lot of man. He cannot get around it nor can he get out of it. To get out of it he would have to get rid of himself. To attempt to evade it, falsifies his relationship to God upon which his relationship to himself depends. Paradoxically, man retains the freedom of his wilful self-assertion without being able through self-assertion to become his true self. To become this, he must surrender his autonomy and find his true freedom in God who loves and accepts him.[65] This dovetails with Kierkegaard's observation recorded in his Journals:

> 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 very same second unconditionally and in complete resignation to give it back to God, and yourself with it.[66]

Man can be in despair/sin without being conscious of it. There are various kinds of despair, such as despair of infinity, despair of finitude, despair of possibility, fatalism, and others. They all represent the logical possibilities that stem from the nature of man's self as a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of possibility and necessity.

Man's basic sin is his failure to recognize his dependence upon God and hence his refusal to live out of God. Instead substitutes

---

[65] Ibid., p. 189.

[66] Robert Bretall, A Kierkegaard Anthology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 428.

like self, world, flesh, and law replace God. This is the despair of weakness which can be summarized under the category of self-acceptance:

> This whole matter of the despair of weakness can be reduced to the question of self-acceptance. It is not just a matter of accepting what fortune gives or denies to you, because then a man would be falling in and out of despair with the changes of fortune. It is a matter of accepting oneself as a limited and finite self, just as one is, while never forgetting the possibilities of the infinite. In order to do this properly, however, one must see oneself as nothing before God and yet accepted of him.[67]

Kierkegaard expresses the connection between despair and sin in this way:

> Sin is this: before, . . . to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself. Thus sin is potentiated weakness or potentiated defiance: sin is the potentiation of despair.[68]

Since Kierkegaard views human existence as existence before God, sin has grave consequences. A clear conception of God underlines the harsh reality of human sin, for only as we know God's love in Christ can we really recognize sin's seriousness. Sin, therefore, is never merely the breaching of an impersonal law, but it is always before God. This emphasis is refreshingly like Luther.

The self is always before God, and apart from faith the self is in despair. Since the self is before God, the despair in which the self exists is also before God. This is the condition out of which sinful acts are born:

---

[67]Heinecken, Moment, p. 208.

[68]Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, p. 208.

> Nor is it only now and then one sins before God; for every sin is before God, or rather it is this which properly makes human guilt to be sin.
>
> Despair is potentiated in proportion to consciousness of self; but the self is potentiated when God is the measure. The more conception of God, the more self, the more self, the more conception of God. Only when the self as this definite individual is conscious of existing before God, only then is it the infinite self; and then this self sins before God.[69]

The Confessions view original sin as the ignorance of God. Kierkegaard too attempts to relate sin and ignorance, but in a different way. Heinecken sums up his argument in the words:

> The Socratic definition of sin is ignorance. The Socratic contention is that men do the wrong only because they are ignorant of the right, and that no one would deliberately do what he knows to be wrong. This raises the very interesting point as to how this ignorance first came to be? How a man's knowledge of the good first came to be obscured? If the first time he sinned a man was not distinctly conscious of what he was doing, there must have been a prior obfuscation of this intelligence. This is not accounted for. If, on the other hand, he was clearly conscious of what he was doing, either he would never have fallen into sin, or else sin must lie not in the intelligence but in the defiant will. This is what Christianity asserts. If the Socratic view is correct then, by definition, sin does not exist at all.[70]

Kierkegaard was a great admirer of Socrates, but here we see him parting company with his mentor because of his Christian convictions. Kierkegaard's view shows clearly his endeavor to place sin at the door of will rather than at the step of reason.

---

[69] Ibid., p. 211.

[70] Heinecken, Moment, p. 216.

Kierkegaard connects sin and the will. If the Confessions regarded reason anterior to will, Kierkegaard seems to reverse this order and make will antecedent to reason. Note the progression of his logic in this passage.

> Christianity begins also in another way, by declaring that there must be a revelation from God in order to instruct man as to what sin is, that sin does not consist in the fact that man has not understood what is right, but in the fact that he will not understand it, and in the fact that he will not do it.
>
> Socrates explains that he who does not do the right things has not understood it; but Christianity goes a little further back and says, it is because he will not understand it, and this in turn is because he does not will the right. And in the next place, describing what properly is defiance, it teaches that a man does wrong although he understands what is right, or forbears to do right although he understands what is right; in short, the Christian doctrine of sin is pure impertinence against man, accusation upon accusation. . . .
>
> But can anyone comprehend this Christian doctrine? By no means--this too is Christian, and so is an offence. It must be believed. Comprehension is conterminous with man's relation to the human, but faith is man's relation to the divine. How then does Christianity explain this incomprehensible? Quite consistently, in an equally incomprehensible way, by means of the fact that it is revealed.
>
> So then, Christianity understood, sin lies in the will, not in the intellect; and this corruption of the will goes well beyond the consciousness of the individual. This is the perfectly consistent declaration, for otherwise the question of how sin began must arise with respect to each individual.[71]

This leaves little doubt as to the freedom Kierkegaard assigns to the human will in matters of faith. Natural man is free to sin, free to defy God. His reason cannot even comprehend the nature and

---

[71]Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, p. 226.

significance of this defiance in relationship to God.

Since the self is a paradox, it follows logically that sin is also paradoxical. Sin is an absolute paradox which can neither be resolved nor explained. It can only be acknowledged, confessed and repented of. Revelation must teach us what sin is!

> No man by himself and of himself can explain what sin is, precisely because he is in sin. All his talk about sin is at bottom palliation for sin, an excuse, a sinful mitigation. Hence Christianity begins also in another way, by declaring that there must be a revelation from God in order to instruct man as to what sin is, that sin does not consist in the fact that man has not understood what is right, but in the fact that he will not understand it and in the fact that he will not do it.[72]

Kierkegaard makes no apology about this position being offensive to man's reason. He dwells on the "offense" of Christianity and places it in sharp focus:

> Here again we have the criterion of the offense. The possibility of the offense consists in the fact that there has to be a revelation from God to enlighten man as to what sin is and how deep it lies. The natural man, the pagan, thinks thus: "Oh well, I admit that I have not understood everything in heaven and earth. . . . I don't pretend to be a perfect man, far from it; but I know and I am willing to concede how far I am from perfection--ought I not then to know what sin is?" But Christianity makes an answer, "No, that is what you know least about, how far you are from perfection and what sin is." Behold, in this sense, in a Christian sense, sin doubtless is ignorance; it is ignorance of what sin is.
>
> The definition of sin . . . still needs to be completed: sin is, after having been informed by a revelation from God what

---

[72]Ibid., p. 225, 226.

> sin is, then before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself.[73]

Kierkegaard definitely agrees with traditional orthodoxy that sin is not just a negation. It's not just a lack, a weakness, ignorance, or finitude. It is a position. Sin is the orientation of man's existence. It is the inclination of his will. Since this is true, sin cannot be explained, but must be experienced.

> Christianity, we have insisted from the beginning, is not a philosophical or theological doctrine but an existential communication in which the paradox plays an essential role. Though Christianity is not a doctrine, nevertheless it involves dogmas, the revealed dogmas, which are to be affirmed. Strictly speaking, of course, it is not the dogma which is believed, it is the God to whom the dogma points who is believed and trusted. Nevertheless there is the revealed dogma, that which is affirmed on the basis of revelation.[74]

This is how Heinecken interprets Kierkegaard. His distinction between dogma and doctrine seems confusing, but its validity would depend upon his definition. Without a doubt, Kierkegaard does tie paradox, faith, and dogma together as the three determinants that stand in support of the Christian doctrine of sin and act as a bulwark against pagan wisdom.[75] There is no denying, either, the major role that is played by the concept "paradox" in Kierkegaard's thought. The paradox must be lived and experienced, because by its very nature it

---

[73] Ibid., p. 226, 227.

[74] Heinecken, Moment, p. 222.

[75] Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, p. 227.

transcends our understanding and cannot be reasoned through or intellectually recognized. No one dare claim to understand and resolve the mystery of his own sinfulness and the greatness of his own redemption.

The Atonement

The revelation of man's involvement in sin is the basis for the doctrine of the atonement. Kierkegaard points out that Christianity is at pains to establish sin so firmly that it is impossible for man to rid himself of it. Man stands guilty before God and only God himself can clear him of his guilt. As he strives to rid himself of sin by his own devices, man only compounds his predicament, working himself deeper into despair and sin. God alone can help him.[76]

> First Christianity goes ahead and establishes sin so securely as a position that the human understanding never can comprehend it; and then it is the same Christian doctrine which in turn undertakes to do away with this position so completely that the human understanding never can comprehend it. Speculation, which chatters itself away from the paradoxes, lops a little bit off at both ends, and so it goes easier; it does not make sin so entirely positive--and in spite of this it cannot get it through its head that sin should be entirely forgotten. But Christianity, which is the first discoverer of the paradoxes, is in this case also as paradoxical as possible; it works directly against itself when it establishes sin so securely as a position that it seems a perfect impossibility to do away with it again--and then it is precisely Christianity which, by the atonement, would do away with it so completely that it is as though drowned in the sea.[77]

---

[76] Heinecken, Moment, p. 222.

[77] Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, p. 231.

Kierkegaard could have come to this understanding from Luther's Small Catechism for certainly this emphasis is apparent in Luther's explanation of the Apostles' Creed. The cure of sin, the sickness unto death, comes through faith in the God who in Christ has reconciled the world to Himself and who is present and active in His church through His spirit. "The true image of God, true selfhood, true humanity, is attained when, in the proper relationship to this God, a man wills to be the dependent self, the sinful self, the redeemed self.[78]

The alternative to faith is offense. It is the refusal to accept the God who humbled himself to be the Savior of all in Jesus, the Christ. Even God Himself cannot eliminate the possibility of this offense. Love cannot be forced, it must be freely given.

> In paganism man made God a man (The Man - God); in Christianity God makes Himself man (The God - Man)--but in the infinite love of His compassionate grace He made nevertheless one stipulation, he can do no other. This is precisely the sorrow in Christ, "He can do no other"; He can humble Himself, take the form of a servant, suffer and die for man, invite all to come unto Him, sacrifice every hour of the day, and sacrifice His life--but the possibility of the offense He cannot take away. Oh, unique work of love! Oh, unfathomable sorrow of love! That God Himself cannot, as in another sense He does not will, cannot will it, but, even if He would, He could not make it impossible that this work of love might not turn out to be for a person exactly the opposite, to be the extremest misery! For the greatest possible human misery, greater

---

[78]Heinecken, Moment, p. 224.

> even than sin, is to be offended in Christ and remain offended. And Christ cannot, "Love" cannot render this impossible. Lo, for this reason He says, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." More he cannot do.[79]

We conclude with Thomte's summary statement on Kierkegaard's understanding of faith, for faith alone can apprehend the atonement:

> Kierkegaard maintains that faith in the Christian sense is neither continuous with rational belief nor to be identified with a spontaneous awareness of God. Christian faith is "the second immediacy" or "immediacy after reflection." By the term immediacy after reflection he means exactly what he formerly had called "repetition," namely the restoration of the personality to its pristine integrity. However, the immediate consciousness of God must be completely destroyed by the consciousness of sin before there can be any question of a second immediacy of God. Only when the individual has found himself guilty before God can he arrive at faith and the mystic union with God in Christ. The "reflection" is here the process by which the consciousness of sin completely destroys every possibility of finding God in the immediate experience of life.
>
> Faith is not regarded as a form of cognition. It is not an intellectual observation but an expression of the will. There is in Kierkegaard's concept of faith as well as in his concept of choice a pronounced tendency toward voluntarism.[80] At the same time Kierkegaard maintains that faith and the new immediacy with God is a divine gift. Faith is the transcendent point of departure.[81]

---

[79] Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, p. 257.

[80] The Lutheran Cyclopedia, p. 1113, defines "voluntarism" as "the opposite of intellectualism. In philosophy, the attempt to interpret ultimate reality in terms of will rather than intellect. In theology the basing of moral and logical distinctions on the will of God rather than on reason, i.e., whatever God wills to be so is on that basis right, true, and good." Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 1113.

[81] Thomte, Philosophy, p. 161.

It should be pointed out that when Kierkegaard makes faith an act of the will he is consistent, for sin in his thought is also an act of the will, and the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith.[82] The charge of voluntarism is frequently lodged against Kierkegaard and ultimately becomes a question of definition. And once the definition is established, then one must ask: Is voluntarism any more a distortion of reality than rationalism? Conceivably, the debate could be lengthy.

OBSERVATIONS

The time has now come to knot the thread, to use a favorite expression of Kierkegaard and attempt to make some observations on his thought in the areas just treated. For perspective, Thomte's estimate of Kierkegaard's contribution to theology might prove helpful:

> In the author's estimate it is Kierkegaard's contribution to have drawn a distinct line between all human religiosity of immanence and the Christian religiosity of transcedence. The human individual does not possess the Truth, God himself must reveal it to him. There is in Kierkegaard's philosophy an absolute dualism or discontinuity between God and human nature. This dualism is due to the fact that man is regarded as a created and derived self, but more essentially it is due to sin which is held to be a qualitative difference between God and man.[83]

---

[82] Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, p. 213.

[83] Thomte, p. 214.

History without question endorses Thomte's verdict on Kierdegaard's work. It is this particular emphasis which was treated under the sub-title "the consciousness of sin" which has led to some remarkable rethinking of twentieth century theology.

We began our foray into Kierkegaard with the idea expressed in the introduction that Kierdegaard viewed his work as a corrective to rationalism, idealism, and nominal orthodoxy. How does he measure up as a corrective? Thus Kierkegaard's own standard shall be the norm of measurement in these brief observations.

Kierkegaard's subjective approach makes analysis difficult. Since he treats both freedom and sin as existential categories, pinning down his meaning in a logical framework meets with only partial success. He himself made it quite clear that a logical system is possible but an existential system is not.[84]

The significance of Kierkegaard's insistence on the distinction between the religiosity of immanence and paradoxical Christianity cannot be overstated. That Kierkegaard should maintain that a consciousness of sin cannot be achieved by reason is a blow at the heart of rationalism. Any idealistic view of man is shattered by the "abyss" separating man and God. Unless one is content to remain in the realm of immanence, Kierkegaard's argument shatters all human pretence and presumption. To become a Christian requires

---

[84]Kierkegaard, The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 99-113.

God's act. To posit another way is nothing but delusion and unconscious despair.

Kierkegaard's concept of selfhood is subjective. It appears aptly framed, however, for who can deny that man is a synthesis. Like the Confessions Kierkegaard views man as a whole rejecting the Greek body-soul dualism. One's relationship to God as the basis for a healthy relationship to the self is a valid conclusion. One might question the wisdom of making one's consciousness of the God relationship a prerequisite for participating in the atonement. Further study on how this position relates to infant baptism and the objective validity of the means of grace seems called for.

Kierkegaard adopted this position in opposition to the nominal orthodoxy of the state church where one born a Dane was automatically a Lutheran. Apparently Kierkegaard viewed this with the same feeling Lutheran theology views the ex opere operatio principle of Roman Catholicism. But as the "corrective" he may well overreach himself in his understanding of selfhood.

Kierkegaard's concept of freedom begins with a realistic repudiation of the liberum arbitrium. Since this abstraction does not exist in reality and was devised simply so that freedom might be treated logically we are left with paradoxical freedom. Kierkegaard maintains that freedom's opposite is not necessity, but guilt which thrusts freedom into the realm of spirit. Good and evil for

Kierkegaard are not determinants of freedom, but derivatives. Freedom forms the matrix of selfhood and of good and evil. Hence anxiety or dread is a concomitant of freedom. To Kierkegaard freedom is that which enables man to sin, but also that which enables him to recognize his sin and his need for the atonement. This is the heart of Kierkegaard's thinking on freedom and its appeal is that it appears to square with our experience of life. If one follows his thinking carefully one will find that Kierkegaard is very consistent in the application of his concept of freedom's paradoxical nature.

Sin is the condition of everyman's existence because all have misused freedom. The basic nature of sin is its refusal to recognize God as the ground of being. What else is this, than a repetition in different terminology of the Confessional doctrine of the Creator--creature relationship? This was Adam's sin, and Adam's sin affirms Kierkegaard as a type of all men's sin. Heinecken's interpretation gives one some insight into the implications of Kierkegaard's understanding of the Fall.

> Moreover a state of innocence is not to be sought for as an actual state at the beginning of the human race. The so-called status integritatis, or state of integrity, is never an actual historical state, but is the designation of the purpose for which man was created: to take his life from God in trust, to come to rest in the power that posited him, and to become the clear channel through

> which that power may flow. This was the one possibility which was given a man with his existence. This possibility was, however, never realized.[85]

We have designated Kierkegaard's concept of sin as "fallen freedom." It is only just that we let him speak for himself concerning sin's origin.

> That account in Genesis is the only dialectically consistent account. Really its whole substance is concentrated in the clause: Sin came into the world by a sin. If this were not so, then sin would have come in as something accidental, which man would do well not to try to explain. The difficulty for the understanding is precisely the triumph of the explanation, its profound consistency in representing that sin presupposes itself, that it so came into the world that by the fact that it is, it is presupposed.[86]

Kierkegaard takes sin out of the realm of reason. Sin is despair at willing to be one's self or at not willing to be one's self, namely a fallen dependent creature of God. Sin is the potentiation of despair either in weakness or defiance. Sin is always against God and is measured by man's consciousness of himself which in turn is measured by his consciousness of God. Kierkegaard's insights here are dynamic and open up a great area for further study.

Thus one can see that Kierkegaard locates sin not in the mind, but ultimately in the will. Here he parts company with his mentor, Socrates. Sin, like the self is paradoxical. It cannot be

---

[85]Heinecken, Moment, p. 181.

[86]Kierkegaard, Dread, p. 29.

explained, it can only be confessed and repented of. Attempts to explain it always distort it because the interpreter is a sinner himself. It takes a revelation of God to make sin known. Natural man concerned only with a religiosity of immanence can comprehend guilt, but not sin. Sin is before God, and before one recognizes his guilt as sin he needs to recognize that he is a "self" before God.[87]

The only solution to sin is the atonement. But the atonement so defies reason that man's only possible response is either faith or offence. Even God in His love revealed in Christ recognizes and respects man's fallen freedom and will not coerce acceptance of His solution for the liberation of man's fallen freedom.

If one were to ask, what is the distilled essence of Kierkegaard's concept of human freedom, this writer would respond: Freedom is the catalyst in human nature through which God works both the awareness of sin and the forgiveness of sin. Freedom is that in man which makes him liable to sin and yet subject to the Atonement.

In the next chapter an attempt at comparison of the Confessions' view of free will and Kierkegaard's position on human freedom will be made.

---

[87] Supra, pp. 72 and 73.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON OF THE TWO POSITIONS

Sin with resultant enmity against God "is an inevitable result of the claim to autonomy, the claim implicit in the delusion that there is a "free will" (Liberum arbitrium). But "moral autonomy is destroyed as soon as there is a break with immanence which is subject to the divine commandment."[1]

In this chapter we reach our primary objective. Here we compare the Confessional position of Lutheranism on free will with Kierkegaard's position. We will note the general similarities and differences between the two positions.

Introduction

It will prove helpful to note some general similarities before we begin considering specific points. This will make it possible to see the positions in perspective and enable us to be fair in our comparison.

First, we should note that both the Confessions and Kierkegaard are attempting a corrective. The Confessions present their position in opposition to semi-Pelagianism and synergism, striving for a clear distinction between civil righteousness and righteousness

---

[1] Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, translated by Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), I, 31, 25.

before God.[2] Kierkegaard strives to be a corrective to the nominal orthodoxy of his day with its reduction of Christianity to a rationalistic system of immanence.[3] Both seek to correct the same basic deviation, the over-rating of reason and free will.

Secondly, both the Confessions and Kierkegaard view man as a creature.[4] In the Confessions the category "creature" is fundamental to any Christian understanding of man. Often this is taken for granted. But it may be also presupposed. In Kierkegaard there is "an absolute discontinuity between God and human nature." This is due to the fact that man is regarded as a created and derived self, but even more essentially it is due to sin which is held to be the "qualitative difference between God and man."[5] This too is the basic presupposition in Kierkegaard's approach to the understanding of human nature.

Thirdly, both the Confessions and Kierkegaard regard man as a whole.[6] Kierkegaard caustically inveighs against the Hegelian system that would consider man's thought or rationality apart from his existence. The wholeness of man is an important emphasis in

---

[2] Supra, p. 23.

[3] Supra, p. 53.

[4] Supra, pp. 6-9, 59.

[5] Reidar Thomte, Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 214.

[6] Supra, p. 9, p. 57.

our day.[7]

Finally we need to note the difference in the approach between the two positions. The Confessions view the subject of free will from a theological perspective. Philosophy and the problems posed by the question of free will from the philosophical perspective remain in the background.[8] On the other hand, Kierkegaard is very much aware of the philosophical implications of his position. A key consideration in his stance is his opposition to the current philosophical system of his day. In summary, we might say that the Confessions approach the subject of free will from God's point of view whereas Kierkegaard approaches it from man's perspective.

Original Sin and the Consciousness of Sin

Both the Confessions and Kierkegaard treat original sin and free will as two sides of the same coin. The Confessions approach the Fall as an historical act with continuing implications. Kierkegaard, however, understands the Fall psychologically and views it dynamically as a continuing reality in the life of each individual. Here is an obvious difference in the two positions under scrutiny.

In the Confessions the Fall is understood as the cause of man's

---

[7] Infra, p. 117.

[8] Supra, p. 23.

natural inclination to sin. No attempt is made to psychologize the Fall. The Fall is simply termed "Adam's disobedience." The result of the Fall is the loss of the "Imago Dei." The image of God is equated with the concreated righteousness of man in his pristine state. It included the gifts of knowledge of God, fear of God, and trust in God. The effect of Adam's sin is passed down to men by birth so that none except the Son of God can claim exclusion from original sin.[9]

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, regards Adam's Fall as symbolic of everyman's fall, although he does not regard Adam as a mythological figure. Kierkegaard assumes this position because he is unwilling to admit that man sins from necessity. Man sins only in freedom. Given with existence are two possibilities, sin or faith. Hence man either seeks to assert himself in a false independence or he accepts his life from God in trust.[10] The atmosphere surrounding man as he confronts this decision is one of dread or anxiety. Dread is the dizziness of freedom poised on the precipice of choice. The dread that confronted Adam before the Fall confronts man as he faces the choice of his dependent and sinful nature before the holy and infinite God. Thus Kierkegaard posits for each descendent of Adam the possibility that traditional

---

[9]Supra, pp. 10-11.

[10]Supra, p. 68.

theology attributed to Adam alone.

This does not mean that Kierkegaard ascribes to each individual a time of innocence. No one can know what innocence is until he has fallen! Hence Kierkegaard can reject the notion that both the first Adam and any subsequent "adam" could freely choose between good and evil. As far as Kierkegaard is concerned, there is no historical state that anyone can point to as a state of innocence.[11]

The Confessions mention man's corporate involvement in original sin.[12] Kierkegaard does not. His concern is with the individual. He is also concerned with keeping Adam a member of the human race and thus subject to the atonement made by the "last Adam," Jesus Christ. Here we find a significant variation in Kierkegaard's theology and warrants further study.

The Confessions distinctly define the nature and effect of original sin in both its positive and negative aspects. The loss incurred as a result of the Fall includes both the original relationship of harmony with and knowledge of God, and the inclination to sin. Thus original sin is more than the sum total of man's actual sins. Even if a man were not to commit sin, he would still be involved in original sin. Thus no one is godly. Sin is universal.[13] By analogy Kierkegaard points to man's

---

[11] Supra, p. 81.

[12] Supra, p. 14

[13] Ibid.

continuing in sin as man's worst sin. He accepts the traditional dogma that sin is not merely a negation but a position.[14] He views actual sins as the outward occasion for observing the momentum of original sin. For Kierkegaard sin is the decisive category of Christianity, for sin must be recognized before the atonement has any meaning. Man's creatureliness and especially man's sin account for the infinite qualitative gulf between man and God.[15]

Like Luther and the Confessions, Kierkegaard draws no distinct boundary between original sin and actual sin. Pinomaa observed of Luther: "There is very little difference between original sin and actual sin as far as Luther is concerned."[16] In fact, Kierkegaard's view of the Fall appears to eliminate any practical distinction between original and actual sin. It would seem that Kierkegaard would posit actual sin as the act that catapults man into solidarity with the race of sinful humanity for all do sin. On the other hand, the relationship between original sin and actual sin in the Confessions appears to be that of cause and effect. Actual sin is evidence of the fact of original sin.

Both the Confessions and Kierkegaard acknowledge original sin

---

[14] Supra, pp. 68-71.

[15] Supra, pp. 66, 67.

[16] Lennart Pinomaa, Faith Victorious, translated by Walter Kukkonen (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 64.

as guilt. Kierkegaard could hardly deny this in view of his understanding of the Fall and hence of original sin. He cites with approval the Smalcald Articles in The Concept of Dread: "This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of human nature that reason cannot understand it. It must be believed because of the revelation in the Scriptures."[17]

Even in the realm of the religion of immanence Kierkegaard does not operate without the concept of "original" sin.[18] However, in this realm man merely recognizes his guilt; he fails to see that his guilt is sin, namely guilt before God.

Both the Confessions and Kierkegaard emphasize the Godward dimension of sin. Sin is enmity against God evidenced by such attitudes and actions as ignoring and despising God. The result is that man stands under the wrath of an angry God.[19] For Kierkegaard man must pass from immanence to trancendence by means of the qualitative leap of faith before guilt consciousness becomes sin consciousness. The more seriously a man takes his relationship with God, the more conscious he becomes of the "abyss" created by his sin.[20] For both Kierkegaard and the Confessions sin is more

---

[17]Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 24.

[18]Supra, pp. 48-50.

[19]Supra, p. 17.

[20]Supra, pp. 48-53.

than a mere transgression of the law, it is an affront to God. Kierkegaard's distinction between the guilt consciousness of immanence and the sin consciousness of Christianity indicates that he would agree with Elert's verdict: "Reason understands that there are offenses against God's law, but it is indifferent to God's wrath."[21]

Ignorance of God is an aspect of original sin endorsed by both the Confessions and Kierkegaard but it is understood differently. The Confessions term this ignorance "the essence of original sin" and relate this ignorance to God.[22] Kierkegaard agrees that sin is ignorance, but he relates this ignorance to sin. Here he is consistent, for he locates sin not in the mind, but in the will.[23] Because of this ignorance both the Confessions and Kierkegaard agree that it takes a revelation of God to make sin known. Thus, although both positions result in the same conclusion, there is a significant difference in the method used to reach this conclusion.

A Common Distinction?

Kierkegaard approaches sin from the point of view of the human consciousness. Because he does so, he brings into focus the great

---

[21]Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, p. 32.

[22]Supra, p. 18.

[23]Supra, p. 72.

contrast between what he chooses to call guilt consciousness and sin consciousness. He uses this subjective approach to examine sin in the realm of immanent religiosity. The Confessions interpret sin from the biblical point of view although a subjective understanding of the experience of sin is not absent.

The question mark behind the heading of this section is there for good reason. It is suggested that the Confessional distinction between "civil righteousness" and "spiritual righteousness" is matched by Kierkegaard's distinction between Religion "A" or immanent religiosity and Religion "B" or paradoxical Christianity. In Religion "A" Kierkegaard would admit that reason is at the helm just as the Confessions acknowledge the place of reason in "civil righteousness." Just as the Confessions insist that reason is out of bounds in relation to "spiritual righteousness" so also Kierkegaard maintains that paradoxical Christianity is beyond the province of reason.[24] The parallels are obvious and it appears valid to equate the Confessional distinction between "civil righteousness" and "spiritual righteousness" to the distinction of Kierkegaard between the "religiosity of immanence" and the paradoxical religiosity of Christianity. The terminology is different, but the goal is the same. Which of these two distinctions, the Confessions' or Kierkegaard's, better accomplishes the mission will be discussed in the next chapter.

---

[24] Supra, p. 32, p. 58.

Hence it is within the structure of this common distinction that we consider and compare the nature and function of man's free will or freedom.

Comparison of "Free" Will or "Freedom"

The Confessions allow for the functioning of free will in the area of "civil righteousness." The "free" will is limited, however, by the things that reason can grasp. In fact, the Apology calls "civil righteousness" the righteousness of reason.[25] God demands this righteousness. It is necessary for law and order in society. Natural man retains choice in this realm, but often even here fails to achieve what theoretically could be achieved if he were always subject to reason and sound human judgment. Sin and temptation lead him astray against his better knowledge. Thus one dare never predicate a man's potential for "civil righteousness" merely on the basis of his intellectual capacity.[26]

Kierkegaard, too, maintains the possibility of choice within the realm of immanence. The choice, however, does not refer to this or that external something, but always to the choice of self. Natural man can choose (will) himself. Kierkegaard encourages this choice. He challenges natural man to follow his reason to the end,

---

[25] Supra, p. 26, n. 44.

[26] Supra, p. 26.

which for Kierkegaard is despair. Kierkegaard sees the value of seriously seeking God, for only he who seeks seriously will realize despairingly the "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and man.[27]

The Confessions understand the constructive contribution of "civil righteousness." But they also recognize the danger of "civil righteousness" becoming confused with the true righteousness of God.[28] Whereas Kierkegaard is certainly aware of the danger of a religion of immanence supplanting transcendent Christianity he nevertheless encourages man to pursue it. (This may reflect Kierkegaard's judgment on the nature of Christianity in his day, namely, that it had already surrendered to immanence.) He plays the part of the devil's advocate when he insists that immanence be followed to its dead end. Choose despair, he urges, for then you have at least the possibility of the eternal open to you. It seems Kierkegaard is saying: If you are going to be religious, get serious about it.[29] If this interpretation is accurate, then he and the Confessions agree on the importance of "civil righteousness." However, again the argumentation is different. Whereas the Confessions view "civil righteousness" as necessary for law and

---

[27] Supra, pp. 52, 53.

[28] Supra, pp. 28-30.

[29] Supra, p. 51.

order in the world, Kierkegaard sees the religiosity of immanence as a penultimate step toward despair and the possibility of true faith.

Both the Confessions and Kierkegaard agree that natural man cannot achieve righteousness before God by an act of his "free" will. Man's will is impotent in spiritual matters.[30] Kierkegaard categorically denies free will because it is not a category of existence, that is, no one has it! No one is equally free to choose either good or evil. The Confessions deny freedom to the will in spiritual matters because Scripture denies it. Kierkegaard's approach is more philosphical. Both sin and freedom are infinite categories without antecedents. To attempt to rationalize them is to reduce them to finitude. For him the opposite of freedom is not necessity, but the possibility of guilt.[31] His treatment of free will is given in psychological terms but with a spiritual or religious goal. While the Confessions and Kierkegaard agree again in their conclusion on man's spiritual impotence in his natural state, the process whereby this conclusion was reached in the Confessions and by Kierkegaard varies.

The Confessions acknowledge the function of reason in the achievement of "civil righteousness," but they also provide evidence

---

[30] Supra, p. 28.

[31] Supra, pp. 63-65.

that reason is forever invading the area of "faith-righteousness."

> On the contrary, the more zealously and diligently they want to comprehend these spiritual things with their reason, the less they understand or believe, and until the Holy Spirit enlightens and teaches them they consider it all mere foolishness and fables (F.C. II,9).[32]

Likewise, Kierkegaard limits reason's realm to immanence. Reason can not even comprehend sin. It must be revealed by God. Thus sin consciousness is the distinctive category of Christianity. Faith is God's miracle. It begins where "thinking leaves off." Kierkegaard locates both sin and faith in the will.[33] The Confessions indicate that the Holy Spirit enlightens and teaches man's reason. The Confessions view man's reason as antecedent to man's will. Kierkegaard reverses this view and considers will as antecedent to reason. For Kierkegaard reason's function in the context of freedom is to lead natural man to an awareness of reason's finitude in the face of God's infinitude.[34]

The result of man's "freedom" is dread which anticipates guilt. Elert's observation on dread in Luther is very similar to Kierkegaard's understanding of dread.[35] Despair is the condition of natural man at the end of his rational tether, and hence he becomes

---

[32] Supra, p. 28, n. 46.

[33] Supra, pp. 72-74.

[34] Supra, pp. 74, 75.

[35] Supra, p. 16.

open to the revelation that God's verdict on human guilt is that it is sin. Sin consciousness marks the end of the line for immanence. Rational and ethical attempts to master God end at the point where faith becomes a possibility. Kierkegaard's conception of freedom is the very opposite of Kant's. Kant views the result of ethical striving as progression toward ethical perfection. But Kierkegaard sees the result of such striving to be the consciousness of guilt which shows man that salvation must come from a power greater than he.[36]

Faith

For the Confessions, faith is the result of the Holy Spirit's invasion of our lives. He moves us to knowledge of, fear of, and trust in God. How? His tools are the means of grace, the Word, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit is the energizing power that liberates the captive human will and enlightens and empowers it for obedience.[37]

For Kierkegaard, faith is paradoxical, an act of the will and yet a gift of God. It is choosing to exist grounded "transparently" in our creator God. It is acknowledging our self as a self before God and Christ, with Christ being the measure of our self. Faith

---

[36] Supra, pp. 65, 66.

[37] Supra, p. 32.

focuses in the Paradox of Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Eternal in time. The Atonement calls man either to faith or to offence. For both the Confessions and for Kierkegaard, faith marks the beginning of new life or existence. Authentic existence is grounded in faith, for faith bridges the "abyss" and faith recognizes the eternal validity of the self.[38]

The Confessions acknowledge what might be called faith's ambivalence. It is a life characterized by repentance and forgiveness. It is also a life engaged in struggle, a warfare of the flesh against the Spirit.[39] Similarly, in Kierkegaard, faith involves man in tension and struggle. Repentance is a necessary consequence of faith and is viewed as a reaffirmation of the self as sinner before God, yet as a forgiven sinner in Christ.[40] Again, although the terminology and reasoning varies, there is a remarkable similarity in the dynamic view of the Christian life taken by both the Confessions and Kierkegaard.

Observations

This writer hesitates to title this section "observations" lest someone quip that this study is now reduced to making

---

[38] Supra, pp. 74-76.

[39] Supra, pp. 33, 34.

[40] Supra, p. 76.

observations about observations. However, for want of a better term and in view of the need to point up a few significant discoveries this section is necessary.

In general, it is reassuring to note the great similarity between the Confessions and Kierkegaard in the conclusions reached on the subject of free will. This is particularly significant since these conclusions were obtained by different methodologies. The Confessional approach is deductive whereas Kierkegaard's approach was inductive. In this writer's opinion the Confessional position based on the authority of Scripture is complemented by Kierkegaard's conclusions reached by introspection and induction. The fact that both the Confessions and Kierkegaard reach similar conclusions by variant methods is indicative of the validity of the position. Perhaps such agreement should not surprise us since both the Confessions and Kierkegaard were attempting to achieve the same goal.

However, there is a decisive difference between the Confessional understanding of the Fall and that of Kierkegaard. The implications of this difference are reflected in Kierkegaard's concept of human freedom. The crux of the matter appears to be Kierkegaard's unwillingness to admit that man sins from necessity. For Kierkegaard the biological category of birth does not transmit the spiritual determinant of sin. When Kierkegaard assents to the Confessional statement that "hereditary sin is so deep and dreadful a corruption of nature that it cannot be understood by

the reason of any man but must be recognized and believed by the revelation of Scripture,"[41] he appears to be either reinterpreting hereditary sin or accepting only the latter half of this Confessional affirmation. Thus, one is faced with this question: Does accepting the Confessional position on original sin compel one to believe that man sins of necessity because of the corruption of his nature? Kierkegaard would say no.

> We have nowhere been chargeable with the foolishness of thinking that man must sin; on the contrary, we have everywhere protested against every sort of merely experimental knowledge, and have said, what we here again repeat, that sin presupposes itself, just as freedom does and cannot be explained, any more than freedom can, by any antecedent.[42]

The significance of this difference between Kierkegaard and the Confessions will be considered in chapter five.

One final observation is on order before we move on to the next chapter. The Confessions attempt to distinguish between "civil righteousness" and "spiritual righteousness" without complete success.[43] There can be no doubt about the sincerity of the men who sought to make this distinction plain and unambiguous, for much of their argument hinged on the validity of this distinction. By analogy Kierkegaard also made a distinction between the

---

[41] Supra, p. 89.

[42] Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 100.

[43] Infra, p. 113.

the "religiosity of immanence" as opposed to the "religiosity of paradoxical Christianity." The Confessional categories are rational whereas Kierkegaard's are existential. Which can best carry the freight is the question to be examined also in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

FINAL EVALUATION

> The work of the theologian, then is to describe the workings of faith, and to do so in faith's own terms; for without a knowledge of justifying faith, in Dr. Pieper's word, the Bible remains "a book locked with seven seals."[1]

"Evaluation" is a difficult task. Objectivity is obviously called for, and yet some subjectivity is inevitable. Nevertheless this chapter is necessary to "knot the thread" and to point to areas for further study.

A Corrective?

Both the Confessions and Kierkegaard attempt a "corrective" when presenting their positions on "free" will. Both the Confessions and Kierkegaard sought to correct the over-rating of reason in man's coming into relationship with God. A corrective assumes that the right position does exist, but that deviation has occurred. The question we must ask in view of the above is: Do we need a corrective?

To answer this question we must ask others. Can we entirely escape rationalism, immanence, and nominal orthodoxy? Does our Synod's position in regard to "free" will faithfully reflect the Confessional

---

[1]Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard: A Study in the History of Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 12.

position? Do the current doctrinal formulations of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod make use of the insights of Kierkegaard in the area of "free" will? Can current Lutheran theological formulations continue to utilize Aristotelian philosophy as the vehicle for self-expression?

Understanding theology is more than a matter of the mind. Pinomaa says of Luther:

> To Luther theology was a matter of the heart and not of the intellect. From the beginning of his theological endeavor he valued experience very highly. He who has not experienced temptation and affliction, what does he know? Here we have one of the difficult problems of Luther's theology: he insists on an experiential basis of faith, yet takes a stand against natural human feelings. Faith's experience of reality does not stem from natural human feelings but contradicts them. The saving reality of Christ and faith in him are in contradiction to everything that natural man can experience on his own. They have to do with the reality of God, which is beyond human reason.[2]

In view of Luther's understanding of theology and the difficulties it presents to systematic theology it is not surprising that Lutheran Confessional theology turned to Melanchthon's methodology. Pelikan observes that Chemnitz repudiated some of "Melanchthon's theological vagaries," but the "philosophy and dialectic of Melanchthon retained its control of Lutheran theological formulation even after 1577." The fact that Melanchthonian philosophy prevailed even after Melanchthonian theology had gone down in defeat is one of the ironies in the history

---

[2]Lennart Pinomaa, Faith Victorious, translated by Walter Kukkonen (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 79.

of Lutheran theology. "Even the Lutheran Confessions kept Melanchthon's philosophical framework almost intact."[3] The men who composed the Formula, for example, were trained in "Aristotelian philosophy as developed by Melanchthon."[4] Finally Pelikan observes: "Thus Melanchthonianism was repudiated theologically, but by the work of Chemnitz was saved philosophically."[5] Even to this day, the Aristotelian philosophical influence is apparent in Lutheran theological formulation.[6]

If Aristotelian philosophy has served adequately as the framework and vehicle for Lutheran theology why call it into question now? But has it served adequately? Pelikan observed:

> One by one, Kant's Critique does away with the elaborate proofs for the existence of God which Lutheran Aristotelianism shared with medieval scholasticism. For this fact, scholasticism has never forgiven Kant, and neither has Rationalism. But Lutheran theology can be grateful to him for freeing it from the onerous responsibility of proving by means of reason that which is known by faith through the forgiveness of God in the Cross of Jesus Christ. Thus, by proving "that all attempts to establish a theology by the aid of speculation alone are fruitless, that the principles of reason as applied to nature do not conduct to any theological truths, and, consequently, that a rational theology can have no existence," Kant

---

[3]Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard, pp. 46, 47.

[4]Ibid., p. 47.

[5]Ibid., p. 48.

[6]Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), I, II, III, passim.

> made possible a reconstruction of the subject matter and method of theology that could have cleared the way for a recovery of Luther's understanding of the nature of faith.[7]

Unfortunately, as Pelikan also notes, Luthern theology did not do this. Thus, still today we are left with an Aristotelian methodolgy which is hardly adequate to express Lutheran theology. Can Kierkegaard act as a corrective on our methodology? Can he provide a philosophy less alien to our theology, one which will express the basic truths of the Christian faith without rationalistic distortion? Pelikan answers:

> But if the new philosophy was to do more than to give up one speculative system in favor of another, it had to be related to the basic structure of Lutheran theology and rooted in faith. The only philosophical framework in which Lutheran theology could be recast had to be a framework derived from that theology itself. It is this circumstance that gives meaning and relevance to the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard is the first Christian philosopher to develop a critical philosophy in the truest and most complete sense of the word. He is, therefore, the climax of the development we have traced in this study. In him Lutheranism produced a philosopher whose thought has brought on a revolution in both theology and philosophy. But the revolution has made possible a recovery of the deep evangelical insights of the theology of Martin Luther.[8]

Perhaps we could admit the need of a corrective to current Lutheran theological methodology. The existentialist framework would then become the vehicle for theological expression. But is this

---

[7]Pelikan, From Luther To Kierkegaard, pp. 92, 93.

[8]Ibid., pp. 113, 114.

possible? Kierkegaard himself said that "an existential system" was impossible. If we look to Kierkegaard for a ready-made system we shall be disappointed. In fact, Lutheran theology may not be able to accept all his insights uncritically. He, too, has some missing links which should not be surprising since he viewed his work as a "corrective." Pelikan observes:

> From what has been said here, as well as in our first chapter, we can draw the conclusion that the existential philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard performed a great service toward a solution of the problem of a philosophy for Lutheran theology. The many affinities between his point of view and Luther's theology suggest that contemporary Lutheran theology could do much worse than to look more deeply into Kierkegaard for the categories in which to articulate its faith. This is not to say that theology can accept him uncritically; for his opposition to "systems" and "schools" would make such uncritical acceptance a violation of his own ideas. There are several blind spots in his thought, notably the individualism and subjectivism which have prevented most of his followers from articulating an adequate doctrine of the Church. But when compared with the other philosophies to which Lutheran theology has been linked, Kierkegaard's philosophy has much to say to Lutheran theology.[9]

In chapter four it was pointed out that Kierkegaard and the Confessions often agreed in their conclusions, but disagreed in the methods used to arrive at an identical conclusion. It appears to this writer that Kierkegaard's methodology with its existentialist categories could well serve both as a corrective and as a complement to current Lutheran theological methodology. To fail to utilize the insights of Kierkegaard where they are in harmony with Scripture and

---

[9] Ibid., p. 118.

our Confessions would be Lutheran theology's loss. But what of those instances where they seemingly do not agree?

The Implications of Kierkegaard's View of the Fall

To accurately analyze Kierkegaard's position on the Fall it is necessary to trace his theological and philosophic development in greater detail than was done in chapter three. The distinctions Kierkegaard makes will enable us to evaluate his position regarding the Fall fairly.

We must first ask: What is the relationship of the individual to the human race? What is Adam's relationship to humanity? Kierkegaard answers:

> To explain Adam's sin is therefore to explain original sin and no explanation is of any avail which explains original sin and does not explain Adam. The deepest reason for this is to be discovered in the essential characteristic of human existence, that man is an individual and as such is at once himself and the whole race, in such wise that the whole race has part in the individual, and the individual has part in the whole race. If one does not hold fast to this, one either gets into the singularity of Pelagianism, Sociniamism, or philanthropy, or else falls into the fantastic.[9a]

One frequent criticism of Kierkegaard is his failure to sense the need for community, yet here he emphasizes the corporate nature of man's involvement in humanity. Adam was a man and as such is a part of the human race. Any explanation of original sin must seriously recognize this fact. But

---

[9a]Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 26.

> According to traditional conceptions, the difference between Adam's first sin and the first sin of every man is this: Adam's sin conditions sinfulness as a consequence; the other first sin assumes sinfulness as a condition. If that were so, then Adam would really be outside the race, and the race did not begin with him but had a beginning outside itself, and this runs contrary to every concept.[10]

We agree that Kierkegaard has correctly summarized the traditional view of the Fall. But the alternative he suggests poses a problem even though it may solve the problem of keeping Adam within the race. Kierkegaard's position must predicate a state of innocence analogous to Adam's of every man, and this is something Lutheran theology would be reluctant to admit. But what is this "innocence?"

For Kierkegaard "innocence is not a perfection one ought to wish to recover." Innocence is rather ignorance of the evil.[11] This is what Adam lost, and in Kierkegaard's opinion man loses this innocence with his first sin. How?

> As Adam lost innocence by guilt, so does every man lose it. If it was not by guilt he lost it, neither was it innocence he lost; and if he was not innocent before he became guilty, he never became guilty. . . .
>
> But only by guilt is innocence lost; every man loses innocence in essentially the same way that Adam did, and it is not in the interest of ethics to represent all men as troubled and interested spectators of guilt, but not guilty, nor is it to the interest of dogmatics to represent all as interested and sympathetic spectators of redemption, but not redeemed.[12]

---

[10] Ibid., p. 27.

[11] Ibid., p. 34.

[12] Ibid., pp. 32, 33.

It seems that Kierkegaard is saying that it takes our first conscious sin to convince us subjectively of our involvement in the Fall. So, too, like Adam we bring sin into the world through our sin.

> With the first sin came sin into the world. Exactly in the same way is this true of every subsequent first sin of man, that with it sin comes into the world. The fact that it was not there before Adam's first sin is (in relation to sin itself) an altogether accidental and irrelevant reflection which has altogether no significance, and is no justification for making Adam's sin greater or the first sin of every other man less.[13]

Kierkegaard points out in a footnote that the point of his reasoning here is to "get Adam back into the human race, exactly in the same sense in which every other individual is." This, he further points out, theologians ought to look after especially in view of the Atonement.[14]

Objectively, Kierkegaard acknowledges the reality of inherited sin. His position is clarified by the following:

> It is quite true that every man can say with profound seriousness that he was born in misery and his mother conceived him in sin; but really he can only sorrow rightly over it when he himself has brought guilt into the world and brought all this upon himself, for it is a contradiction to want to sorrow aesthetically over sinfulness. The only one who innocently sorrowed over sinfulness was Christ, but He did not sorrow over it

---

[13] Ibid., p. 28.

[14] Ibid., p. 30.

> as a destiny which He must put up with, but He sorrowed as one who freely chose to bear all the sin of the world and to suffer its punishment.[15]

Kierkegaard views sinfulness as a quantitative thing whereas he views the Fall or the first sin as a qualitative thing because it alters man's existence and his understanding of it. He, therefore, can claim:

> In the foregoing I have several times called attention to the fact that the view presented in this work does not deny the propagation of sinfulness through generation, or in other words that sinfulness has its history in the fact of generation; I have only said that sinfulness moves by quantitative determinants, whereas sin comes in constantly by the qualitative leap of the individual.[16]

For Kierkegaard, sin and freedom are transcendent categories. Sin entered into man by dread and in turn brought dread with it. Dread for Kierkegaard was the primary category, an alien power which lays hold on an individual and renders him impotent. It makes him fear what he desires and desire what he fears. Hence, the first sin always occurs in impotence. It would seem then that man could not be held accountable, but he is, and this very disregard of accountability is what ensnares him.[17] Kierkegaard seeks to guard and buttress individual accountability with his position.

---

[15] Ibid., p. 35.

[16] Ibid., p. 42.

[17] Ibid., p. 45, 47.

How does this understanding of the qualitative Fall or first sin and the subsequent quantitive sinfulness affect Kierkegaard's view of human freedom? Much, for "freedom," too, is a concept without antecedent. Kierkegaard asserts that the distinction "between good and evil certainly exists for freedom," but always in concrete form. This is misunderstood when freedom is made an object of thought. No one, he affirms, makes the choice between good and evil without being at the moment of choice in either one or the other position.[18]

Thus it appears that Kierkegaard's understanding of the Fall and its consequences are not as radical a departure from traditional Christianity as it at first may have seemed to some. He makes a distinction between the objective significance of the Fall of Adam and our subjective apprehension of its significance. On the other hand, the Lutheran Confessions do not stress the subjective apprehension of the Fall in the same manner.

Ultimately, both Kierkegaard and the Confessions include all men in the category of spiritual impotence apart from God's grace. So in spite of a difference of method both Kierkegaard and the Confessions reach the same conclusion.

---

[18] Ibid., p. 99.

Some Implications for Systematic Theology

At the beginning of this chapter it was noted that the task of theology was to describe "the workings of faith" in faith's own terms. In the foregoing we have noted how Pelikan viewed Kierkegaard's potential contribution to Lutheran theological formulation. In the previous section we observed that Kierkegaard's view of the Fall may not be at odds with the Confessions' understanding because of his distinction between the objective Fall and our subjective perception of our Fall. In view of the foregoing we might be predisposed to favor existence categories for systematic theology's descriptive task. But Kierkegaard himself has observed that an "existential system" is impossible. Without a system the systematic theologian's work will be confusing at best. Perhaps Lutheran theology needs to revise its outlook on systems. Luther himself said: "To have God, you see, does not mean to lay hands upon him, or to put Him into a purse, or shut him up in a chest" (L.C. I,13).[19]

What significance does Kierkegaard's methodology and insights into "free" will provide for systematic theology. Heinecken observes that Kierkegaard's existential categories mean:

> That there shall be an end of the wrong kind of system-building, precisely the end of that to which Luther objected. There can be no fixed system of doctrine, fixed and formulated for all times. But there must be

---

[19] The Book of Concord, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 366.

> the perpetuation of those categories which require the inner transformation. How at any given time this shall be done cannot be stated in advance. This is the constant task of systematic theology: to formulate the credo for today in opposition to alternatives, to do what the New Testament does, to witness to the "event" which constitutes the center of both history and the fulness of time and to do it precisely in the terms of each today. Kierkegaard did it for his day, and I think we are still a part of his day.[20]

If we accept Heinecken's judgment, the task for systematic theology becomes a challenging one, indeed. Implicit in this challenge is the summons to relevance. To be relevant, we need to communicate. Here, Kierkegaard can help us with his emphasis on the "how" of Christian faith. Perhaps in the past the "what" of the Christian faith has been emphasized in Lutheran theology at the expense of the "how."

Communication of spiritual realities is at best difficult. We previously noted that sincere attempt of the Confessions to draw a tight distinction between outward performance in achieving "civil righteousness" and true inward realization in "spiritual righteousness." Bonhoeffer suggests that either these categories are clumsy or the distinction cannot be so neatly drawn.

> The first step must be regarded to start with as an external work, which effects the change from one existence to another. It is a step within everybody's capacity, for it lies within the limits of human freedom.

---

[20]Martin J. Heinecken, The Moment Before God (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), p. 382.

> It is an act within the sphere of the natural law (justitia civilis) and in that sphere man is free. Although Peter cannot achieve his own conversion, he can leave his father's nets. In the gospels the very first step a man must take is an act which radically affects his whole existence. The Roman Catholic Church demanded this step as an extraordinary possibility which only monks could achieve, while the rest of the faithful must content themselves with an unconditional submission to the Church and its ordinances. The Lutheran confessions also significantly recognize the first step. Having dealt effectively with the danger of Pelagianism, they find it both possible and necessary to leave room for the first external act which is the essential preliminary to faith. This step there takes the form of an invitation to come to the Church where the word of salvation is proclaimed. To take this step it is not necessary to surrender one's freedom. Come to Church! You can do that of your own free will. You can leave your home on a Sunday morning and come to hear the sermon. If you will not, you are of your own free will excluding yourself from the place where faith is a possibility. Thus the Lutheran confessions show their awareness of a situation where faith is a possibility, and of a situation where it is not. Admittedly they tend to soft-pedal it as though they were almost ashamed of it. But there it is, and it shows that they are just as aware as the gospels of the importance of the first external step.[21]

Kierkegaard likewise recognizes the "choice" that Bonhoeffer is pointing up here with his distinction between the religion of immanence and paradoxical Christianity. The difference is that he does it without apology or any attempt to "soft-pedal" the need for this choice. The Confessions also had difficulty communicating the nature of the "image of God." A "dim spark" is for some a quantitive term. Is not man's relationship to God that of a derived and dependent being? Is not the image of God more clearly understood when described as

---

[21]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, translated by R. H. Fuller (New York: The macmillan Company, 1958). p. 57.

man's reflexive nature received from God by grace, perceived by faith and expressed by trust and obedience? Is it not dangerous to speak of the "image of God" as something concreated in man as though it were his possession? It seems to leave the gate open for pantheistic or idealistic deification of man with its imagery of the "Divine Spark."

If Lutheran theology is to communicate meaningfully, it must use categories with which people can relate. As an example contrast the two following quotations on the nature of man.

> Man, created by God, is placed in the Garden, and commanded "to dress and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). He is given power and authority over the beasts of the field, but he is solemnly forbidden to eat "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17). Man's powers, according to the Biblical revelation, are conferred and bestowed: they are neither absolute nor original. Man's relation to God is one of creaturely dependence, in which he enjoys delegated authority; and, as a created being, he is called to live in trust and obedience. He is called to respond to fatherly goodness with filial trust: to grace with faith. Consequently, he is called to recognize and confess that the true center of his life is not within himself but beyond himself. The Biblical story is the record of the destruction of this relationship by willful self-assertion and rebellion. The result is man's undoing, and the experience of God's love as wrath.[22]

This quotation reflects existence categories, whereas the following citation uses scholastic terminology.

> The divine image, that is, the true knowledge of God and the conformity of the human will to the will of God, was not subsequently and externally added to man at creation, as the Papists contend, who regard the divine image

---

[22]Stuart Barton Babbage, Man In Nature and In Grace (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), p. 16.

> (holiness and righteousness) as a donum superadditum, a superadded gift. Rather was man created with the divine image, as Gen. 1:26 shows: "Let us make man in Our image, after Our Likeness." The divine image was a donum concreatum, donum naturale, donum intrinsecum. It follows that now, after the Fall, the human nature is no longer perfect (natura integra or in puris naturalibus), as the Papists and modern theologians and philosophers teach, but thoroughly and in its innermost parts corrupt (natura corrupta, natura sauciata). It is true, the iustitia originalis did not constitute the nature of man. Even after the Fall, man is still ἄνθρωπος (Rom. 5:12), inasmuch as the original righteousness was not the substance, but a non-essential attribute or accident. . . .[23]

The danger implicit in the scholastic method and terminology is its hidden rationalism. In Lutheran theology we may strive to define the relationship between the two natures of Christ until at the end of the study of the "Genus Apotelesmaticum" we have forgotten the mystery and the paradox of the God-man, Jesus Christ.[24] Kierkegaard noted that once we feel we comprehend something we feel at the same time we have mastered it. Subtle, indeed, is the appeal to pride in the present framework of Lutheran theology.

Heinecken observes:

> Luther made the God-relationship in Christ a matter of Word alone without "objective" guarantees, as, e.g., reason, the church. This is what Kierkegaard too is asserting. It is possible to live in Aristotelian categories, it is possible to live in ethical categories, but this must not be confused with Christianity. Both Luther and Kierkegaard, therefore, removed Christianity from the area of speculation and put it where it belongs,

---

[23] Pieper, Dogmatics, I, 521.

[24] Cf. James 1:23,24.

> im Sitz des Lebens--in the midst of life--where the battles must be fought. Both of them were concerned to let God be God, to take seriously the Triune God, not to discard Pentecost, to make sure that a man was not living after all after the flesh instead of in accordance with the spirit, glorying in his own wisdom and the feeling that he was a devil of a clever fellow to recognize the true God when he was confronted by him.[25]

If we seek seriously to utilize Kierkegaard's contribution to Lutheran theology it will mean that systematic theology will have to address itself to the whole man, and not just to man's intellect. Systematic theology must confront the whole man with God's claim upon him as a creature and God's gift to Him in Christ. Psychiatry today is recognizing man's fragmented condition as a cause of his spiritual dissolution. Paul Tournier in his book, The Whole Person in a Broken World, appeals to the churches to speak with relevance to man's spiritual need. His thesis is that the repressed spiritual consciousness of man today is responsible for the "neurosis of defiance" that characterizes our age. He condemns the churches for withdrawing from the real battles of life, and one of the methods of this withdrawal is the intellectualizing of the Christian faith.[26]

Kierkegaard like Luther leaves behind no completed system. He poses problems, a few of which are the relation of thought to existence, of reason to faith, of nature to grace, of immanence to transcendence.

---

[25]Heinecken, The Moment Before God, p. 352.

[26]Paul Tournier, The Whole Person in a Broken World, translated by John and Helen Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1947), passim.

Can these be viewed as co-ordinates or must they be held in tension? Can they be synthesized as they were in Thomistic scholasticism or must they, as Luther seems to indicate, remain in irreconcilable tension and opposition? But isn't this the business of systematic theology? This study too poses questions and fails to answer them. Perhaps it is the destiny of systematic theology always to have more questions than answers. The experience of not being able to answer is a humbling one, a reminder that God remains God and that His foolishness is wiser than our wisdom.

All who involve themselves in the task of systematic theology are also sinners. We too might well pray with Kierkegaard:

> Father in heaven, to Thee the congregation often makes its petition for all who are sick and sorrowful, and when someone amongst us lies ill, alas of mortal sickness the congregation sometimes desires a special petition; Grant that we may each one of us become in good time aware what sickness it is which is the sickness unto death, and aware that we are all of us suffering from this sickness. O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst come to earth to heal them that suffer from this sickness, from which, alas, we all suffer, but from which Thou are able to heal only those who are conscious that they are sick in this way; help Thou us in this sickness to hold fast to Thee, to the end that we may be healed of it. O God the Holy Ghost, who comest to help us in this sickness if we honestly desire to be healed; remain with us so that for no single instant we may to our own destruction shun the Physician, but may remain with Him--delivered from sickness. For to be with Him is to be delivered from our sickness and when we are with Him we are saved from all sickness.[27]

---

[27]Søren Kierkegaard, Fear And Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death, translated by Walter Lowrie, Doubleday Anchor Books (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1941), pp. 133, 134.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources

Bible, Holy. Revised Standard Version.

Bretall, Robert., editor. A Kierkegaard Anthology. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946.

The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer, and Arthur C. Piepkorn. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959.

Kierkegaard, Søren. Attack Upon "Christendom." Translated, with an introduction, by Walter Lowrie. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1944.

-----. The Concept of Dread. Translated with introduction and notes by Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944.

-----. Concluding Unscientific Postscript. Translated from the Danish by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941.

-----. Edifying Discourses. Vol. II. Translated from the Danish by David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1945.

-----. Either/Or. Vol. II. Translated by Walter Lowrie and revisions and a foreword by Howard A. Johnson. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1941.

-----. Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death. Translated with introductions and notes by Walter Lowrie. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1941.

-----. The Journals of Kierkegaard. Translated, selected, and with an introduction by Alexander Dru. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958.

-----. Philosophical Fragments or A Fragment of Philosophy. Translated from the Danish with an introduction and notes by David F. Swenson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936.

Luther, Martin. The Bondage of the Will. Translated by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston. Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1957.

B. Secondary Sources

Allbeck, Willard Dow. Studies in The Lutheran Confessions. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952.

Babbage, Stuart Barton. Man in Nature and in Grace. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. The Cost of Discipleship. Translated by R. H. Fuller. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958.

Elert, Werner. The Structure of Lutheranism. Vol. I. Translated by Walter A. Hansen. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962.

Heinecken, Martin J. The Moment Before God. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956.

Heinemann, F. H. Existentialism and the Modern Predicament. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1953.

Klumpp, David J. "Concept of Personal Freedom in Berdyaev." Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1959.

Lueker, Erwin L., editor. Lutheran Cyclopedia. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954.

Martin. H. V. The Wings of Faith. A consideration of the nature and meaning of Christian faith in the light of the work of Søren Kierkegaard. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1951.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. From Luther to Kierkegaard. A Study in The History of Theology. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950.

-----. "The Doctrine of Creation in Lutheran Confessional Theology," Concordia Thelological Monthly, XXVI (August 1955), 569-579.

Pieper, Francis. Christian Dogmatics. Vol. I. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950.

Pinomaa, Lennart. Faith Victorious. An Introduction to Luther's Theology. Translated by Walter J. Kukkonen. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963.

Schlink, Edmund. Theology of the Lutheran Confessions. Translated by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961.

Smith, John E. and Others. A Handbook of Christian Theology. Definition Essays on Concepts and Movements of Thought in Contemporary Protestantism. New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958.

Thomte, Reidar. Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949.

Tournier, Paul. The Whole Person In A Broken World. Translated by John and Helen Doberstein. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964.

Zuidema, S. U. Kierkegaard. Translated by David H. Freeman. Grand Rapids: The Baker Book House, 1960.