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SØREN KIERKEGAARD

Training *in* Christianity
and the Edifying Discourse *Which "Accompanied" It*

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Invocation

It is eighteen hundred years and more since Jesus Christ walked here on earth. But this is not an event like other events which, only when they are bygone, pass over into history, and then as events long bygone, pass over into forgetfulness. No, His presence here on earth never becomes a bygone event, and never becomes more and more bygone—in case faith is to be found on earth. And if not, then indeed at the very instant it is a long, long time since He lived. But so long as there is a believer, such a one must, in order to become such, have been, and as a believer must continue to be, just as contemporary with His presence on earth as were those [first] contemporaries.[3] This contemporaneousness is the condition of faith, and more closely defined it is faith.

O Lord Jesus Christ, would that we also might be contemporary with Thee, see Thee in Thy true form and in the actual environment in which Thou didst walk here on earth; not in the form in which an empty and meaningless tradition, or a thoughtless and superstitious, or a gossipy historical tradition, has deformed Thee; for it is not in the form of abasement the believer sees Thee, and it cannot possibly be in the form of glory, in which no man has yet seen Thee. Would that we might see Thee as Thou art and wast and wilt be until Thy return in glory, see Thee as the sign of offense and the object of faith, the lowly man, and yet the Savior and Redeemer of the race, who out of love came to earth in order to seek the lost, in order to suffer and to die, and yet sorely troubled as Thou wast, alas, at every step Thou didst take upon earth, every time Thou didst stretch out Thy hand to perform signs and wonders, and every time, without moving a hand, Thou didst suffer defenselessly the opposition of men—again and again Thou wast constrained to repeat: Blessed is he whosoever is not offended

[3] Contemporaneousness with Christ is from this time forth an emphatic and persistent theme of S. K.'s. What he means by it is nowhere so clearly expressed as here. Cf. the *Fragments*, chaps. iv and v. In *The Instant* this thought is again pungently pressed.

in Me. Would that we might see Thee thus, and then that for all this we might not be offended in Thee.

Come hither to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.

Oh! Wonderful, wonderful! That the one who has help to give is the one who says, Come hither! What love is this! There is love in the act of a man who is able to help and does help him who begs for help. But for one to offer help! and to offer it to all! Yes, and precisely to all such as can do nothing to help in return! To offer it—no, to shout it out, as if the Helper were the one who needed help, as if in fact He who is able and willing to help all was Himself in a sense a needy one, in that He feels an urge, and consequently need to help, need of the sufferer in order to help him!

1

"Come hither!" There is nothing wonderful in the fact that when one is in danger and in need of help, perhaps of speedy, instant help, he shouts, "Come hither!" Neither is it wonderful that a quack shouts out, "Come hither! I heal all diseases." Ah, in the instance of the quack there is only too much truth in the falsehood that the physician has need of the sick man. "Come hither, all ye that can pay for healing at an exorbitant price—or at least for physic. Here is medicine for everybody . . . who can pay. Come hither, come hither!"

But commonly it is understood that one who is able to help must be sought out; and when one has found him, it may be difficult to gain access to him, one must perhaps implore him for a long time; and when one has implored him for a long time, he may perhaps at last be moved. That is, he sets a high value upon himself. And when sometimes he declines to receive any pay, or magnanimously relinquishes claim to it, this merely expresses the value he attaches to himself. He, on the other hand, who made the great self-surrender here surrenders himself anew. He Himself it is that seeks them that stand in need of help; it is He Himself that goes about and, calling them, almost beseeching them, says, "Come hither!" He,

the only one who is able to help, and to help with the one thing needful, to save from the sickness which in the truest sense is mortal, does not wait for people to come to Him, but He comes of His own accord, uncalled for—for He indeed it is that calls them, that offers help—and what help! That simple wise man, too, of ancient times[4] was just as infinitely right as the majority who do the opposite are wrong, in that he did not set a high value upon himself or his instruction though it is true that, in another sense, he thereby gave expression with a noble pride to the incommensurability of the pay. But he was not so deeply concerned through love to men that he begged anyone to come to him. And he behaved as he did—shall I say, in spite of the fact? or because?—he was not altogether certain what his help really amounted to. For the more certain one is that his help is the only help, just so much more reason he has, humanly speaking, to make it dear; and the less certain he is, so much the more reason he has to offer with great alacrity such help as he disposes of, for the sake of accomplishing something at least. But He who calls Himself the Savior, and knows Himself to be such, says with deep concern, "Come hither."

"Come hither *all* ye!" Wonderful! For that one who perhaps is impotent to give help to a single soul—that he with lusty lungs should invite all is not so wonderful, human nature being what it is. But when one is perfectly certain that he can help; when one is willing, moreover, to devote oneself entirely to this cause and to make every sacrifice, it is usual, at least, to reserve the liberty of selecting the objects of one's care. However willing a person may be, still it is not everyone he would help, he would not sacrifice himself to that extent. But He, the only one who can truly help, the only one who can truly help all, and so the only one who truly can invite all, He stipulates no condition at all. This word which was as though coined for him from the foundation of the world he accordingly utters: "Come hither all." O, human self-sacrifice! even at thy fairest and noblest, when we admire thee most, there still is one act of sacrifice beyond thee, the sacrifice of every determinant of one's

[4] Socrates, who took no fees for the instruction he imparted. S. K. was constantly engrossed by the figure of Socrates.

own ego, so that in the willingness to help there is not the least prejudice of partiality. What loving-kindness, thus to set no price upon oneself, entirely to forget oneself, to forget that it is he who helps, entirely blind to the question who it is one helps, seeing with infinite clearness only that it is a sufferer, whoever he may be; thus to will unconditionally to help all—alas, in this respect so different from us all!

"Come hither *to* me!" Wonderful! For human compassion does indeed do something for them that labor and are heavy laden. One feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, gives alms, builds charitable institutions, and, if the compassion is more heartfelt, one also visits them that labor and are heavy laden. But to invite them to come to us, that is a thing that cannot be done; it would involve a change in all our household and manner of life. It is not possible while one is living in abundance, or at least in joy and gladness, to live and dwell together in the same house, in a common life and in daily intercourse, with the poor and wretched, with them that labor and are heavy laden. In order to be able to invite them thus one must live entirely in the same way, as poor as the poorest, as slightly regarded as the lowliest man of the people, familiar with life's sorrow and anguish, sharing completely the same conditions as they whom one invites to one's home, namely, they that labor and are heavy laden. If a man will invite the sufferer to come to him, he must either alter his condition in likeness to the sufferer's or the sufferer's in likeness to his own. Otherwise the difference will be all the more glaring by reason of the contrast. And if a man will invite all sufferers to come to him (for with a single individual one can make an exception and alter his condition), it can be done in only one way, by altering one's own condition in likeness to theirs, if originally it was not adapted to this end, as was the case with Him who says, "Come hither to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." This He said, and they that lived with Him beheld, and lo! there is not the very least thing in His life which contradicts it. With the silent and veracious eloquence of deeds His life expresses, even if He had never given utterance to these words, "Come hither to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." He is true to His word, He is what He says, and in this sense also He is the Word.

* * *

"All ye that labor and are heavy laden." Wonderful! The only thing He is concerned about is that there might be a single one of those that labor and are heavy laden who failed to hear the invitation. As for the danger that too many might come, He had no fear of it. Oh, where heart-room is, there house-room always is to be found. But where was there ever heart-room if not in His heart? How the individual will understand the invitation He leaves to the individual himself. His conscience is clear: He has invited all them that labor and are heavy laden.

But what then is it to labor and to be heavy laden? Why does He not explain it more precisely, so that one may know exactly who it is He means? Why is He so laconic? O, thou petty man, He is so laconic in order not to be petty; thou illiberal man, He is so laconic in order not to be illiberal; it is the part of love (for "love" is toward all) to prevent that there be a single person who is thrown into alarm by pondering whether he also is among the invited. And he who might require a closer definition—would he not be a self-loving person, reckoning that this ought especially to take care of his case and apply to him, without considering that the more of such closer and closer definitions there were, just so much the more inevitable that there must be individuals for whom it became more and more indefinite whether they are the invited. O, man, why doth thine eye look only to its own? Why is it evil because He is good? The invitation to all throws open the Inviter's arms, and there He stands, an everlasting picture.[5] So soon as the closer definition is introduced, which perhaps might help the individual to another sort of certainty, the Inviter has a different aspect, and there passes over Him as it were a fleeting shadow of change.

"I will give thee rest." Wonderful! For these words, "Come hither to me," must thus be understood to mean, abide with me, I am that rest, or, to abide with me is rest. So it is not as in other instances,

[5] Here (as also in one of his *Edifying Discourses* which he delivered within sight of it) S. K. is presumably thinking of Thorwaldsen's famous and noble representation of Christ, the statue with outspread arms which was placed over the altar of the cathedral in Copenhagen, where Bishop Mynster commonly preached and S. K. always went to hear him.

when the helper who says, "Come hither," must thereupon say, "Go hence again," declaring to each individual severally where the helper he needs is to be found, where there grows the pain-quenching herb which can heal him, or where the tranquil place is where he can cease from labor, or where is that happier region of the world where one is not heavy laden. No, He who opens His arms and invites all—oh, in case all, all they that labor and are heavy laden were to come to Him, He would embrace them in His arms and say, "Abide with Me, for in abiding with Me there is rest." The Helper is the help. Oh, wonderful! He who invites all and would help all has a way of treating the sick just as if it were intended for each several one, as if each patient He deals with were the only one. Commonly a physician must divide himself among his many patients, who, however many they are, are very far from being all. He prescribes the medicine, tells what is to be done, how it is to be used—and then he departs . . . to another patient. Or else, in case the patient has come to see him, he lets him depart. The physician cannot remain sitting all the day long beside one patient, still less can he have all his sick people in his own home and yet sit all the day long beside one patient . . . without neglecting the others. Hence in this case the helper and the help are not one and the same thing. The patient retains beside him all the day long the help which the physician prescribes, so as to use it constantly; whereas the physician sees him only now and then, and only now and then does he see the physician. But when the Helper is the help, He must remain with the patient all the day long, or the patient with Him. Oh, wonderful! that it is this very Helper who invites all!

II

Come hither, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.

What prodigious multiplicity, what almost boundless diversity, among the people invited! For a man, even a mere man, can well enough attempt to conceive of some of the individual differences; but the Inviter must invite all, yet every one severally as an individual.

So the invitation fares forth, along frequented roads and along

the solitary paths, along the most solitary, aye, where there is a path so solitary that only one knows it, one single person, or no one at all, so that there is only one footprint, that of the luckless man who fled along that path with his misery, no other indication whatsoever, and no indication that in following that path one might return again. Even there the invitation penetrates, finding its own way back easily and surely—most easily when it bears the fugitive back with it to the Inviter. Come hither, all ye—and thou, and thou . . . and thou, too, most solitary of all fugitives!

Thus the invitation fares forth, and wherever there is a parting of the ways it stops and calls aloud. Like the trumpet-call of the warrior which turns to all four quarters of the world, so the invitation resounds wherever there is a parting of the ways—and with no uncertain sound (for who then would come?), but with the unequivocal sureness of eternity.

It halts at the crossways, where suffering temporal and earthly has planted its cross, and there it calls aloud. Come hither, all ye poor and miserable, ye who in poverty must toil to ensure for yourselves not a carefree but a toilsome future. Oh, bitter contradiction—to have to toil to *attain* what one groans under, what one *flees* from! Ye who are despised and disdained, about whose existence none is concerned, not a single one, not even so much as for the beasts, which have a higher value! Ye sick, lame, deaf, blind, crippled, come hither! Ye bedridden, yea, come ye also hither! For the invitation makes bold to bid the bedridden . . . come! Ye lepers! For the invitation abolishes every barrier of difference in order to bring all together. It proposes to make amends for the inequalities chargeable to the difference which allots one a place as a ruler over millions, possessing all the favors of fortune, and relegates another to the desert. And why? (Oh, the cruelty of it!) Because (oh, cruel human logic!), *because* he is miserable, indescribably miserable; consequently for this further reason, because he craves help, or at least compassion; and consequently for this further reason, because human compassion is a paltry invention, cruel where the need of compassion is most evident, and compassionate only where in a true sense it is not compassion!

Ye sick at heart, ye who only through pain learn to know that a man has a heart in a sense quite different from the heart of a beast, and learn what it means to suffer in that part, learn how it is that

the physician may be right in declaring that one's heart is sound while nevertheless he is heartsick. Ye whom unfaithfulness deceived, and then human sympathy (for human sympathy is seldom in delay) made a target for mockery.[6] All ye who have been discriminated against, wronged, offended, and ill-used; all ye noble ones who (as everybody can tell you) deservedly reap the reward of ingratitude. For why were ye foolish enough to be noble, why stupid enough to be kindly, disinterested, and faithful? All ye victims of cunning and deceit and backbiting and envy, whom baseness singled out and cowardice left in the lurch,[7] whether ye be sacrificed in remote and lonely places whither ye have crept away to die, or whether ye be trampled underfoot by the thronging human crowd where no one inquires what right ye have on your side, no one inquires what wrong ye suffer, or where the smart of your suffering is, or how ye smart under it, while the throng, replete with animal health, tramples you in the dust[8]—come hither!

The invitation halts at the parting of the ways where death parts death from life. Come hither, all ye sorrowful, all ye that travail in vain and are sore troubled! For it is true that there is rest in the grave; but to sit beside a grave, to stand by a grave, or to visit a grave, all that is not yet to lie in the grave; and to scan again and again the production of one's own pen, which one knows by heart, the inscription which one placed there oneself and which the man himself can best understand, telling who lies buried there—that, alas, is not to lie buried there oneself. In the grave there is rest, but *beside* the grave there is no rest—the meaning of it is: hitherto and no farther . . . then one can go home. But often as you return to *that* grave, day after day, whether in thought or on foot—one gets no farther, not one step from the spot; and this is very exhausting, far from expressing rest. Come ye therefore hither, here is the path along which one goes farther, here is rest beside the grave, rest from

[6] For his own part S. K. found it hard to endure the sting of human sympathy, with its implication of *Schadenfreude*, and the humiliation of selfish compassion.

[7] This is an echo of S. K.'s own personal experience in connection with the *Corsair*, of which he writes so much in the *Journal*.

[8] S. K. says in the *Journal* that he was being "trampled to death by geese"—thinking of the popular ridicule he was exposed to as a consequence of the cartoons in the *Corsair*. He shuddered at the sheer "animal health" of the "louts" who derided him.

the pain of loss, or rest in the pain of loss—with Him who eternally reunites the separated, more firmly than nature unites parents and children, children and parents (alas, they were parted), more inwardly than the priest unites husband and wife (alas, separation occurred), more indissolubly than the bond of friendship unites friend with friend (alas, that was dissolved). Separation everywhere forced its way between, bringing sorrow and unrest; but here is rest!—Come hither, ye whose abodes were assigned to you among the tombs, ye who are accounted dead to human society, yet not missed and not mourned—not buried, although dead, that is, belonging neither to life nor to death; ye, alas, to whom human society cruelly closed its doors, and yet for whom no grave mercifully opened—come ye then hither; here is rest and here is life!

The invitation halts at the parting of the ways where the path of sin deviates from the hedged road of innocence. Oh, come hither, ye are so near to Him; a single step on the other path, and ye are so endlessly far from Him. It may well be, perhaps, that ye have not felt as yet the need of rest and hardly understand what it means; yet follow nevertheless the invitation, so that the Inviter might save you *from* a state which only with great difficulty and peril ye might be saved out of, so that as the saved ye might abide with Him who is the Savior of all men including the innocent. For if it were possible that somewhere there might be found innocence entirely unsullied, why should it not also require a savior who could preserve it safe from the evil one? The invitation halts at the parting of the ways where the path of sin veers more deeply into sin. Come hither, all ye that have strayed and lost your way, whatever your error and sin may have been, whether it be one which in human eyes was more pardonable and yet perhaps more dreadful, or one more dreadful in human eyes and yet perhaps more pardonable, one which was revealed here on earth, or one which is concealed here yet known in heaven[9]—did ye find forgiveness here on earth and yet no rest in your inward mind, or found ye no forgiveness because ye sought it not or sought it in vain—oh, turn about and come hither, here is rest! The invitation halts at the

[9] Anyone who knows S. K. will not fail to detect here (as in so many, many other places in his works) a reflection of his intimate personal experience. One who ignores it will find such a passage as this less moving, perhaps even banal.

parting of the ways where the path of sin again veers, for the last time, and is lost to view . . . in perdition. Oh, turn about, turn about, come hither! Shrink not at the difficulty of the journey back,[10] however hard it be; fear not the toilsome path of conversion, however laboriously it leads to salvation, whereas sin with winged speed, with ever-increasing velocity, leads onward . . . or downward, so easily, with such indescribable ease, as easily indeed as when a horse, relieved entirely of the strain of pulling, cannot with all his might bring the wagon to a halt which thrusts him over into the abyss. Be not in despair at every relapse, which the God of patience possesses patience enough to forgive and which a sinner might well have patience enough to be humbled under. Nay, fear nothing and despair not. He who says, "Come hither," is with you on your way; from Him come help and forgiveness in the path of conversion which leads to Him; and with Him there is rest.

Come hither, all, all, all of you, with Him is rest, and He makes no difficulties, He does but one thing, He opens his arms. He will not first (as righteous people do, alas, even when they are willing to help)—He will not first ask thee, "Art thou not after all to blame for thy misfortune? Hast thou in fact no cause for self-reproach?" It is so easy, so human, to judge after the outward appearance, after the result—when a person is a cripple, or deformed, or has an unprepossessing appearance, to judge that *ergo* he is a bad man; when a person fares badly in the world so that he is brought to ruin or goes downhill, then to judge that *ergo* he is a vicious man. Oh, it is such an exquisite invention of cruel pleasure, to enhance the consciousness of one's own righteousness in contrast with a sufferer, by explaining that his suffering is God's condign punishment, so that one hardly even . . . dares to help him; or by challenging him with that condemning question which flatters one's own righteousness in the very act of helping him. But He will put no such questions to thee, He will not be thy benefactor in so cruel a fashion. If thou thyself art conscious of being a sinner, he will not inquire of thee about it, the

[10] S. K., during his own laborious return from "the path of perdition," remarked that one was compelled to tread backward the whole way one had gone, and he remembered a fairy tale, which recounted that deliverance from an enchantment wrought by a piece of music was possible only when one was able to play it backward without an error.

bruised reed He will not further break, but he will raise thee up if thou wilt attach thyself to Him. He will not single thee out by contrast, holding thee apart from Him, so that thy sin will seem still more dreadful; He will grant thee a hiding place within Him, and once hidden in Him he will hide thy sins. For He is the friend of sinners: When it is question of a sinner He does not merely stand still, open His arms and say, "Come hither"; no, he stands there and waits, as the father of the lost son waited, rather He does not stand and wait, he goes forth to seek, as the shepherd sought the lost sheep, as the woman sought the lost coin. He goes—yet no, he has gone, but infinitely farther than any shepherd or any woman, He went, in sooth, the infinitely long way from being God to becoming man, and that way He went in search of sinners.

III

Come hither to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.

"Come hither!" For He assumes that they that labor and are heavy laden feel the burden all too heavy, the labor heavy, and now stand in perplexity, heaving sighs—one glancing searchingly around to see if no help is to be found, another with eyes bent down upon the ground because he descried no comfort, a third gazing upward as though from heaven it still must come, but all of them seeking. Therefore He says, "Come hither." Him who has ceased to seek and to sorrow He does not invite. *"Come hither!"* For He, the Inviter, knows it as a sign of true suffering that one goes apart to brood alone in disconsolate silence, lacking the courage to confide in anyone, not to say the confidence to hope for help. Alas, that demoniac was not the only person possessed by a dumb spirit.[11] Suffering which does not begin by making the sufferer dumb does not amount to much—no more than love which does not make the lover silent. Sufferers whose tongues run easily over the story of their sufferings neither labor nor are heavy laden. Lo! for this reason the Inviter dare not wait till they that labor and are heavy laden come to Him of their own accord: He Himself lovingly

[11] Mk 9:17, 25.

summons them. All His willingness to help would perhaps be no help at all if He did not utter this word and thereby take the first step. For in this summons, "Come unto me," it is He in fact that comes to them. Oh, human compassion! Perhaps it may sometimes indicate praiseworthy self-restraint, perhaps also sometimes a genuine and heartfelt sympathy, when thou refrainest from questioning a man who, as may be surmised, is constantly brooding over a hidden suffering; yet how often it may be only worldly wisdom which has no desire to learn to know too much. Oh, human compassion, how often was it merely curiosity, not compassion, which prompted thee to venture to penetrate a sufferer's secret! And what a burden didst thou feel it to be—almost a punishment upon thy curiosity—when he followed thine invitation and came to thee! But He who utters this saving word, "Come hither," was not deceived in Himself when He uttered the word, neither will He deceive thee when thou comest to Him to find rest by casting thy burden upon Him. He follows the prompting of His heart in uttering it, and His heart accompanies [follows] the word—follow then thou the word, and it will accompany [follow] thee back to His heart. It is a matter of course [*selvfølge*]; the one thing follows the other—oh, that thou wouldst follow the invitation.[12] *"Come hither!"* For He assumes that they that labor and are heavy laden are so tired and exhausted, in a state of swoon, that they have forgotten again, as in a stupor, that there is comfort; or, alas, He knows that it is only too true that there is no comfort and help unless it is sought in Him; and so He has to call them to "come hither."

"Come hither!" For it is characteristic of every society that it possesses a token or a sign of some sort by which one who is a member can be recognized. When a young girl is adorned in a certain manner, one knows that she is on her way to a ball. Come hither, all ye that labor and are heavy laden. *"Come hither!"* Thou dost not need to wear a distinctive outward and visible mark . . . come also with anointed head and a face newly washed,[13] if only thou dost inwardly labor and art heavy laden.

[12] In brackets I have sought to indicate that there is a play on words: "follow," with its two meanings and its derivative.

[13] Mt 6:17.

* * *

"Come hither!" Oh, stand not still, considering the matter. Consider rather, oh, consider that for every instant thou standest still after hearing the invitation, thou wilt in the next instant hear its call fainter and fainter, and thus be withdrawing to a distance though thou be standing at the same spot. *"Come hither!"* Oh, however tired and weary thou art with thy labor, or with the long, long quest in search of help and salvation, although it seem to thee as if thou couldst not follow one step farther or hold out a moment longer without sinking to the ground—oh, but this one step more, and here is rest! *"Come hither!"* Ah, if there were only one so wretched that he could not come—a sigh is enough, to sigh for Him is also to come hither.

The Obstacle

Come hither unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.

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

I

[In the sense, namely] that the Inviter is and insists upon being the definite historical person He was 1,800 years ago, and that as this definite person, living under the conditions He then lived under, He uttered those words of invitation. He is not, and for nobody is He willing to be, one about whom we have learned to know something merely from history[14] (i.e., world history, secular history, in contrast to sacred history); for from history we can learn to know nothing about Him, because there is absolutely nothing that can be "known"[15] about Him. He declines to be judged in a human way by the consequences of His life, that is to say, He is and would be the sign of offense[16] and the object of faith. To judge Him by the consequences of His life is mere mockery of God; for, seeing that He is God, His life (the life which he actually lived in time) is infinitely more decisively important than all the consequences of it in the course of history.

a

Who spoke these words of invitation?

The Inviter. Who is the Inviter? Jesus Christ. Which Jesus Christ? The Jesus Christ who sits in glory at the right hand of the Father? No. From the seat of His glory he has not spoken one word. Therefore it is Jesus Christ in His humiliation, in the state of humiliation, who spoke these words.

Is then Jesus Christ not always the same? Yes, He is the same yesterday and today, the same that 1,800 years ago humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, the Jesus Christ

[14] In this paragraph, as in an overture, the principal themes of the whole work are suggested. It needs to be noted that they do not emerge here for the first time. They had been more fully elaborated in earlier works, although they are more tellingly presented here in the style of "direct communication." In this and in subsequent notes I refer to earlier works where these themes are more fully discussed. For the significance of history—and its irrelevance for faith—see e.g., the *Fragments*, chap. iv; *Postscript*, Part I, chap. i, § 1; Part II, second division, chap. iv, section I, § 3.

[15] S. K.'s definition of faith was in part determined by its opposition to knowledge: e.g., *Postscript*, Part I, chap. i, § 1.

[16] The "offense" of Christianity is very emphatically dwelt upon later in this book, but it had already been considered in the *Fragments*, e.g., chap. iii, appendix.

who uttered these words of invitation. In His coming again in glory He is again the same Jesus Christ; but this has not yet occurred.

Is He then not now in glory? Yes indeed; this the Christian *believes*. But it was in the state of humiliation He uttered these words; from the seat of His glory he has not uttered them. And about His coming again in glory nothing can be known; in the strictest sense, it can only be believed. But one cannot have become a Christian without having already come to Him in His state of humiliation—without having come to Him, who is the sign of offense and the object of faith. In no other wise does He exist on earth, for it was only thus that He existed. That He shall come in glory is to be expected, but it can be expected and believed only by one who has attached himself and continues to hold fast to Him as He actually existed.

Jesus Christ is the same; but He lived 1,800 years ago in His humiliation and becomes changed first [for us] with His coming again. As yet He has not returned, so He remains still the lowly one about whom it is believed that He shall return in glory. What He said and taught, every word He has spoken, becomes *eo ipso* untrue when we make it appear as if it were Christ in glory who says it. No, *He* maintains silence, it is the *lowly one* who speaks. The interval (between His humiliation and His coming again in glory), which at this moment is about 1,800 years and may possibly be protracted to many times 1,800—this interval, rather, all that this interval makes of Him, secular history and church history, with all the worldly information they furnish about Christ, about who Christ was, and consequently about who uttered these words, is a thing completely indifferent, neither here nor there, which merely distorts Him, and thereby renders these words of invitation untrue.

For it is untruth if I imaginatively ascribe to a man words which he never uttered, affirming that *he* said them. But it is also untruth if I imaginatively represent him as essentially different from what he was when he spake certain words. I say, "essentially different," for a falsehood which has to do only with some accidental trait does not make it untrue that he said the thing. And so, when God is pleased to walk here on earth in a strict incognito such as only an almighty being can assume, an incognito impenetrable to the most

intimate observation, when it pleases Him to come in the lowly form of a servant, to all appearance like any other man (and why He does it, with what purpose, He surely knows best; but whatever the reason or purpose may be, they testify that the incognito has some essential significance), when it pleases Him to come in this lowly form to teach men—and then somebody repeats exactly the words he uttered, but makes it appear as if it was God that said them, the thing becomes untrue, for it is untrue that He uttered these words.

b

Can one learn from history[17] anything about Christ?

No. Why not? Because one can "know" nothing at all about "Christ"; He is the paradox,[18] the object of faith, existing only for faith. But all historical communication is communication of "knowledge," hence from history one can learn nothing about Christ. For if one learns little or much about Him, or anything at all, He [who is thus known] is not He who in truth He is, i.e., one learns to know nothing about Him, or one learns to know something incorrect about Him, one is deceived. History makes out Christ to be another than He truly is, and so one learns to know a lot about . . . Christ? No, not about Christ, for about Him nothing can be known, He can only be believed.

c

Can one prove from history that Christ was God?

Let me first put another question: Is it possible to conceive of a more foolish contradiction than that of wanting to prove (no matter for the present purpose whether it be from history or from anything else in the wide world one wants to *prove* it) that a definite individual man is God? That an individual man is God, declares himself to be God, is indeed the "offense" κατ' ἐξοχήν. But what is the offense, the offensive thing? What is at variance with (human)

[17] By "history" is to be understood throughout profane history, world history, history as ordinarily understood, in contrast to sacred history. [S. K.]

[18] The thought of the paradoxical character of Christianity, culminating in the paradox of the God-Man, appears first in the *Scraps* (chap. iii) and the *Postscript* (Part II, second division, chap. iv, section 4).

reason?[19] And such a thing as that one would attempt to prove! But to "prove" is to demonstrate something to be the rational reality it is. Can one demonstrate that to be a rational reality which is at variance with reason? Surely not, unless one would contradict oneself. One can "prove" only that it is at variance with reason. The proofs which Scripture presents for Christ's divinity—His miracles, His Resurrection from the dead, His Ascension into heaven—are therefore only for faith, that is, they are not "proofs," they have no intention of proving that all this agrees perfectly with reason; on the contrary they would prove that it conflicts with reason and therefore is an object of faith.

But to return to the proofs from history. Is it not 1,800 years since Christ lived, is not His name proclaimed and believed on throughout the whole world, has not His doctrine (Christianity) changed the face of the world, triumphantly permeated all relationships—and in this way has not history abundantly, and more than abundantly, established who He was, namely, that He was God? No, history has not established that, either abundantly or more than abundantly; that is something which history in all eternity cannot establish. So far, however, as the first assertion is concerned, it is sure enough that His name is proclaimed in all the world—whether it is believed on I will not decide. It is sure enough that Christianity has changed the face of the world, triumphantly permeated all relationships—so triumphantly that all now say that they are Christians.

But what does that prove? At the most it might prove that Jesus Christ was a great man, perhaps the greatest of all; but that He was . . . God—nay, stop there! The conclusion shall by God's help never be drawn.

If, in order to lead up to this conclusion, one begins with the assumption that Jesus Christ was a man, and then considers the history of the 1,800 years[20] (the consequences of His life), one may conclude, with an ascending superlative scale: great, greater, greatest,

[19] The opposition between faith and the understanding (or reason) was sharply expressed in the *Scraps* (chap. iii, appendix, and chap. iv, § 4) and the *Postscript* (Part II, second division, chap. 2 and chap. 5).

[20] The argument from the 1,800 years was demolished already in the *Postscript* (e.g., Part I, chap. 1, § 3) and S. K. returned to the assault in *The Instant*.

exceedingly and astonishingly the greatest man that ever lived. If on the contrary one begins with the assumption (the assumption of faith) that He was God, one has thereby canceled, annulled, the 1,800 years as having nothing to do with the case, proving nothing *pro* nor *contra*, inasmuch as the certitude of faith is something infinitely higher. And it is in one or the other of these ways one must begin. If one begins in the latter way, everything is as it should be.

If one begins in the first way, one cannot, without being guilty at one point or another of a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος, arrive suddenly by an inference at the new quality . . . God; as if the consequence or consequences of . . . a man's life might suddenly furnish the proof that this man was God. If this could be done, then one might answer the following query: What consequences must there be, how great the effects produced, how many centuries must elapse, in order to establish a proof from the consequences of a man's life (this being the assumption) that he was God? Whether perhaps it might be said that in the year 300 Christ was not yet completely proved to be God, something approaching that having been attained, namely, that He was already a little more than the exceedingly, astonishingly greatest man that ever lived, but there still was need of several centuries more? If such be the case, the further consequence presumably follows, that they who lived in the year 300 did not regard Christ as God, and still less they who lived in the first century, whereas on the other hand the certitude that He is God increases regularly with each century, so in our time, the nineteenth century, it is greater than it had ever been before, a certitude in comparison with which the first centuries seem barely to have glimpsed His divinity. One may make answer to this or leave it alone—it makes no essential difference.

What can this mean? Is it possible that by contemplating the consequences of something as they unfold themselves more and more one might by a simple inference from them produce another quality different from that contained in the assumption?[21] Is it not a sign of insanity (supposing man in general to be sane) that the

[21] Brandes conjectured that if S. K. had lived in his time he might have been perverse enough to reject Darwin's celebrated theory of evolution. In fact, he did emphatically reject it in advance, as we see from this passage. Exactly the same argument was urged by Benjamin Warfield, who was my teacher of theology in 1890. In those days it was scoffed at or ignored, but in the end it brought *that* theory of evolution into disrepute.

first proposition (the assumption with which one starts out) is so far astray about what is what that it errs to the extent of a whole quality? And when one begins with this error, how shall one at any subsequent point be able to perceive the mistake and apprehend that one is dealing with another and an infinitely different quality? The print of a foot along a path is obviously a consequence of the fact that some creature has gone that way. I may now go on to suppose erroneously that it was, for example, a bird, but on closer inspection, pursuing the track farther, I convince myself that it must have been another sort of animal. Very well. But here we are far from having an infinite qualitative alteration. But can I, by a closer inspection of such a track, or by following it farther, reach at one point or another the conclusion: *ergo* it was a spirit that passed this way? A spirit which leaves no trace behind it! Just so it is with this thing of concluding from the consequences of an (assumed) human existence that *ergo* it was God. Do God and man resemble one another to such a degree, is there so slight a difference between them, that I (supposing I am not crazy) can begin with the assumption that Christ was a man? And, on the other hand, has not Christ Himself said that He was God? If God and man resemble one another to that degree, if they have that degree of kinship, and thus essentially are included in the same quality, the conclusion, "*ergo* it was God," is nevertheless humbug; for if God is nothing else but that, then God doesn't exist at all. But if God exists, and consequently is distinguished by an infinite difference of quality from all that it means to be a man, then neither can I nor anybody else, by beginning with the assumption that He was a man, arrive in all eternity at the conclusion, "therefore it was God." Everyone who has the least dialectical training can easily perceive that the whole argument about consequences is incommensurable with the decision of the question whether it is God, and that this decisive question is presented to man in an entirely different form: whether he will believe that He is what He said He was; or whether he will not believe.

Dialectically understood—that is, with the understanding that one gives himself time to understand it—this ought to be enough to throw a spike into the gears of that argument from the consequences of Christ's life: *ergo* He was God. But faith, in the province

of its jurisdiction, raises a still more essential protest against every attempt to approach Christ by the help of what one happens to know of Him through history and the information history has preserved about the consequences of His life. Faith's contention is that this whole attempt is . . . *blasphemy*. Faith's contention is that the one and only proof which unbelief allowed to stand when it demolished all the other proofs of the truth of Christianity, the proof which unbelief itself discovered (yes, the situation is curiously complicated), which unbelief discovered, and discovered as a proof of the truth of Christianity (mighty good! Unbelief discovers proofs in defense of Christianity!), the proof which Christendom has since made so much ado about, the proof of the 1,800 years—faith's contention is that this is . . . *blasphemy*.

In the case of a *man* it may justly enough be said that the consequences of his life are more important than his life. When a person then seeks to find out who Christ was, and essays to draw a logical conclusion from the consequences of His life—he makes Him out *eo ipso* to be a man, a man who like other men has to pass his examination in history, which, moreover, is in this instance just as mediocre an examiner as a seminarist is in Latin.[22]

But strange! People are eager by the help of history, by considering the consequences of His life, to reach by logical inference the *ergo*, *ergo* He was God—and faith's contention is exactly the opposite, that he who even begins with this syllogism begins with a blasphemy. The blasphemy does not appear already in the hypothetical assumption that He was a man. No, the blasphemy is what lies at the bottom of the whole undertaking, the thought without which one would never begin, the thought which therefore is entertained without the slightest doubt that it is applicable also to Christ, the thought that the consequences of His life are more important than His life—which effectively is to say that He was a mere man. One says hypothetically, Let us assume that Christ was a man; but at the bottom of this hypothesis (which is not yet blasphemy) lies the thesis that this notion (that the consequences of a man's life are more important than his life) applies also to Christ. If one does not

[22] S. K. must have reflected that he, even before he became a seminarist, was a teacher of Latin. He was always ready to satirize himself.

assume this, one must admit that one's whole undertaking is nonsense. And since this admission must be made at the start, why begin at all? But if one makes the foregoing assumption and begins the argument, the blasphemy is fairly started. The more profoundly one considers the consequences of His life (if it be with the aim of reaching a conclusion as to whether He was God), the more blasphemous one's undertaking is, and such it remains at every moment, as long as this consideration continues.

Curious coincidence! One would like to make it appear that if only the consequences of His life are justly considered and to due effect, one will surely arrive at this *ergo*—and faith condemns the very beginning of this attempt as a blasphemous mockery of God, and the continuation of it therefore as a crescendo of blasphemy.

"History," says faith, "has nothing whatever to do with Christ. As applying to Him, we have only sacred history (qualitatively different from history in general), which recounts the story of His life under the conditions of His humiliation, and reports moreover that He himself said that He was God.[23] He is the paradox, which history can never digest or convert into a common syllogism. In His humiliation He is the same as in His exaltation—but the 1,800 years (or if there were 18,000 of them) have nothing whatever to do with the case. The brilliant consequences in world history which well nigh convince even a professor of history that He was God—these brilliant consequences are surely not His return in glory! But this is really about what they mean by it: it appears here again that they make out Christ to be a man whose return in glory can be nothing more than the consequences of His life in history—whereas Christ's return in glory is something entirely different, something that is believed. He humbled Himself and was swaddled in rags—He will come again in glory. But the brilliant consequences (especially

[23] About this frequent assertion of S. K.'s I would say once for all that, however shocking it may be to modern ears, it does not essentially misrepresent even the Synoptic Gospels. It has been said that the result of the Unitarian controversy in America was a general agreement that "the Bible is an orthodox book." More recently the general recognition of the eschatological expectation of Jesus, and His self-chosen title, "the Son of Man," indubitably implies the consciousness and the claim that essentially He was "beyond man," possessing what S. K. calls another quality—an infinite qualitative difference.

upon closer inspection) turn out to be a shabby sort of glory, at all events entirely incongruous, about which faith never speaks when it speaks of His glory. So on earth He exists still in a state of humiliation, and thus He will continue to exist until (as one believes) He shall come again in glory. History may be a very reputable science, but it must not become so conceited as to undertake to do what the Father is to do, to array Christ in glory, costuming Him in the brilliant robes of the consequences, as though that were the Second Advent. That in His humiliation He was God, that He will come again in glory—this is considerably beyond the comprehension of history, and only by a peerless lack of dialectic can it be got out of history, however peerless one's knowledge of history otherwise may be."

Strange! And they want above all things to make use of history to prove that Christ was God.

d

Are the consequences of Christ's life more important than His life?

No, by no means, quite the contrary—if this were so, Christ was merely a man.

There is surely nothing noteworthy in the fact that a man lived; millions upon millions of them of course have lived. If this fact is to become noteworthy, the man's life must acquire some noteworthy distinction, which means that with respect to a man's life noteworthiness emerges only in the second instance. It is not noteworthy that he lived, but his life exhibited one or another noteworthy trait. Among such traits may be included what he accomplished, the consequences of his life.

But the fact that God lived here on earth as an individual man is infinitely noteworthy. Even if it had no consequences whatsoever, the fact is the same, it remains just as noteworthy, infinitely noteworthy, infinitely more noteworthy than all consequences. Make the attempt of introducing here the noteworthy distinction in the second instance, and you will readily perceive the foolishness of it. How could it be noteworthy that God's life had noteworthy consequences? To talk in such a way is to twaddle.

No, the fact that God lived is the infinitely noteworthy, the in-and-for-itself noteworthy. Assume that Christ's life had no consequences—to say then that His life was not noteworthy would be blasphemy. For it is noteworthy all the same; and if anything need be said about noteworthiness in the second instance, this would be: the noteworthy fact that His life had no consequences. If on the contrary someone says that Christ's life is noteworthy because of the consequences, this again is blasphemy, for this life is in-and-for-itself noteworthy.

No emphasis falls upon the fact that a man lived, but infinite is the emphasis which falls upon the fact that God lived. God alone can attach to Himself such great weight that the fact that He lived and has lived is infinitely more important than all the consequences which are registered in history.

e

A comparison between Christ and a man who in his lifetime suffered the same opposition from his age that Christ suffered.

Let us think of a man,[24] one of those glorious figures who was unjustly treated by his own age but afterward was reinstated in his rights by history, which, by means of the consequences of his life, made it evident who he was. Incidentally be it said, however, that I am not disposed to deny that this proof from consequences is calculated rather for the *mundus qui vult decipi*. For, a noncontemporary who perceived who this glorious one was after he had reached this knowledge by aid of the consequences, only fancied that he perceived it. But this I do not intend to press; and in relation to a man it remains nevertheless true that the consequences of his life are more important than his life.

So let us think of one of those glorious ones. He lives among his contemporaries, but he is not understood, not recognized for what he is, he is misunderstood, then derided, persecuted, and finally put to death as a malefactor. But the consequences of his life make

[24] S. K. is thinking, of course, especially of Socrates. His first considerable work was characterized in the subtitle as having "constant reference to Socrates." This phrase might well have stood in front of the whole great literature he created, for he became constantly more and more engrossed with the figure of Socrates, learning gradually to know him better and to revere him more highly than when he wrote *The Concept of Irony*.

it manifest who he was; history which records these consequences does him justice, he now is acclaimed century after century as a great and noble man, his humiliation being as good as forgotten. It was due to the blindness of his age that it did not recognize him for what he was, it was due to the impiety of that generation that they scorned and derided him and finally put him to death. But let that now be forgotten; it was only after his death that he really became what he was, through the consequences of his life, which were indeed more important than his life.

Should the same be true also of Christ? It was indeed a blindness, an impiety on the part of that generation—but let that now be forgotten, history has now reinstated Him in His right, we now know from history who Jesus Christ was, we now do Him justice.

Oh, impious heedlessness, which reduces sacred history to profane history, Christ to a mere man! Can one then from history learn to know anything about Christ? (Cf. above under § *b*.) By no manner of means. Jesus Christ is the object of faith; one must either believe on Him or be offended. For to "know" signifies exactly that the reference is not to Him. It is true enough that history furnishes knowledge in abundance, but knowledge demolishes Jesus Christ.

Again, Oh, impious heedlessness! if anyone were to have the presumption to say of Christ's humiliation, Let us now forget all that has to do with His humiliation. Yet surely Christ's humiliation was not something which merely happened to Him (even though it was the sin of that generation that they crucified Him), something which happened to Him and perhaps would not have happened to Him in a better age. Christ Himself willed to be the humiliated and lowly one. Humiliation (the fact that it pleased God, to be the lowly man) is therefore something He Himself has joined together, something He wills to have knit together, a dialectical knot which no one shall presume to untie, which indeed no one can untie before He Himself has untied it by coming again in glory. With Him it is not as with a man who by the injustice of his age was not permitted to be himself or to be accounted for what he was, whereas history made this manifest; for Christ Himself willed to be the humble man, this is just what He would be accounted. Hence history must not incommode itself to do Him justice, nor must we with impious heedlessness fancy presumptuously that we

know as a matter of course who He was. For no one *knows* that, and he who *believes* it must be contemporary with Him in His humiliation. When God chooses to let Himself be born in lowly station, when He who holds all possibilities in His hand clothes Himself in the form of a servant, when He goes about defenseless and lets men do with Him as they will, He surely must know well what He does and why He does it; it is He nevertheless who has men in His power, not men who have power over Him—so let not history pretend to be such a wiseacre as to explain who He was.

Finally, oh, blasphemy! if anyone presume to say that the persecution Christ suffered expresses something accidental. Because a man is persecuted by his age, it does not follow that he has a right to say that this would have happened to him in any age. So far forth there may be something in it when posterity says, Let now all that be forgot which he suffered unjustly while he lived. Very different is the case with Jesus Christ! It is not He that, after letting Himself be born, and making his appearance in Judea, has presented Himself for an examination in history; it is He that is the Examiner, His life is the examination, and that not alone for that race and generation, but for the whole race. Woe to the generation that dared to say, Let now all the injustice He suffered be forgotten, history has now made manifest who He was and reinstated Him in His rights.

By assuming that history is capable of doing this we put Christ's humiliation in an accidental relation to Him, i.e., we make Him out to be a man, a distinguished man to whom this happened through the impiety of his age, a thing which for his part he was very far from wishing, for he would fain (that is human) have been something great in the world—whereas on the contrary Christ freely willed to be the lowly one, and though His purpose in this was to deliver man, yet he also would express what "the truth" had to suffer in every generation and what it must always suffer. But if such is His royal will, and if only at His return will He show Himself in glory, and if He has not yet returned; and if no generation can contemplate without the compunction of repentance what that generation did to Him, with a sense of guilty participation—then woe to him who presumes to take His lowliness from Him, or to let it be forgot what injustice He suffered, decking Him fabulously in

the human glory of the historical consequences, which is neither the one thing nor the other.

f

The misfortune of Christendom.

But this precisely is now the misfortune of Christendom, as for many, many years it has been, that Christ is neither the one thing nor the other, neither what He was when He lived on earth, nor what (as is believed) He shall be at His return, but one about whom in an illicit way through history people have learned to know something to the effect that He was somebody or another of considerable consequence. In an unpermissible and unlawful way people have become *knowing* about Christ, for the only permissible way is to be *believing*. People have mutually confirmed one another in the notion that by the aid of the upshot of Christ's life and the 1,800 years (the consequences) they had become acquainted with the answer to the problem. By degrees, as this came to be accounted wisdom, all pith and vigor was distilled out of Christianity; the tension of the paradox was relaxed, one became a Christian without noticing it, and without in the least noticing the possibility of offense. One took possession of Christ's doctrine, turned it about and pared it down, while He of course remained surety for its truth, He whose life had such stupendous results in history. All became as simple as thrusting a foot into the stocking. And quite naturally, because in that way Christianity became paganism. In Christianity there is perpetual Sunday twaddle about Christianity's glorious and priceless truths, its sweet consolation; but it is only too evident that Christ lived 1,800 years ago. The Sign of Offense and the object of Faith has become the most romantic of all fabulous figures, a divine Uncle George.[25] One does not know what it is to be offended, still less what it is to worship. What one especially praises in Christ is precisely what one would be most embittered

[25] The name S. K. employs is "Godmand," alluding to Uncle Franz Godmand, a benevolent figure in a German story for children which was translated into Danish. I allude to the wise and versatile tutor in Abbott's *Rollo Books*. But though this perhaps is the nearest analogy in English (more properly American) literature, alas, I know that nowadays the reading even of our children is so various that literary allusions no longer allude.

by if one were contemporary with it, whereas now one is quite secure in reliance upon the upshot; and in reliance upon this proof from history, that He quite certainly was the great one, one draws the conclusion: *Ergo* that was the right thing. This is to say, That is the right, the noble, the sublime, the true thing, if it was He that did it; this is the same as to say that one does not trouble oneself to learn to know in a deeper sense what it was He did, still less to try according to one's slender ability by God's help to imitate Him in doing the thing that is right and noble and sublime and true. For what that is one does not apprehend and may therefore in the situation of today form a judgment diametrically opposite to the truth. One is content to admire and praise, and may be (as was said of a scrupulous translator who rendered an author word for word and therefore made no meaning) "too conscientious," perhaps also too cowardly and too feeble of heart really to wish to understand.

Christendom has done away with Christianity, without being quite aware of it. The consequence is that, if anything is to be done, one must try again to introduce Christianity into Christendom.[26]

[26] No proof could be desired more cogent than this last paragraph to demonstrate the continuity of S. K.'s thought—and, I might add, the persistence along with it of the same mental tone or feeling. Previous notes have pointed out several salient thoughts which had already emerged in the *Fragments* (1844) or in the *Postscript* (1846) and are here, not further developed, but more briefly and pointedly expressed in the style of "direct communication." Now it must be remarked that these same thoughts persisted to the end and constituted the spearhead of the open attack upon the Church (1855): the Christian paradox, the opposition of faith and reason, the possibility of the offense, the necessity of being contemporaneous with Christ, the vanity of the 1,800 years. Seeing that the total lapse of time here involved is only about twelve years, it might be thought that such continuity as is here remarked upon indicates no remarkable persistence. This would be true in the case of a sluggish mind; but we must remember that this includes almost the whole period (thirteen years) of S. K.'s restless literary activity, which produced so abundantly and in such astonishing variety. Between the *Training in Christianity* (begun in 1848) and the open attack of 1855 we have a period which is relatively long, although it was characterized by a halt in production. And inasmuch as it is here especially that one may be tempted to assume a break in the continuity, an inexplicable cleft in the life of a conservative religious writer who suddenly launches a pamphleteering attack upon the Church, it is especially important to note that the thoughts which are trenchantly enough expressed in the conclusion of this section constitute the prime contention of the open attack: that "Christendom has done away with Christianity," and that "Christianity must be introduced again into Christendom." These thoughts were never more strongly

II
THE INVITER

The Inviter, therefore, is Jesus Christ in His humiliation, and He it was who uttered these words of invitation. It was not from His glory that He uttered them. If such had been the case, Christianity is paganism and Christ is in vain—wherefore this supposition is not true. But supposing the case were such that He who sits in glory were disposed to utter this word, "Come hither," as though it were an unambiguous invitation to rush straight into the arms of glory—what wonder then if a crowd were to come rushing up! But they who run in that fashion are on a wild-goose chase, vainly fancying that they *know* who Christ is. But that no one *knows*, and in order to believe, one must begin with the humiliation.

The Inviter who utters these words, consequently He whose words these are (whereas in the mouth of another these same words would be a falsehood), is the humiliated Jesus Christ, the lowly man, born of a despised maiden, His father a carpenter, His kindred people of the lowest class, the lowly man who at the same time (like pouring oil upon fire) declared that He was God.

It is this Jesus Christ in His humiliation who spoke these words. And you have no right to apply to yourself one word of Christ's, not one single word, you have not the least part in Him, no society with Him in the remotest way, unless you have become so contemporary with Him in His humiliation that, exactly like His immediate contemporaries, you must take heed of His warning: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." You have no right to appropriate Christ's words and mendaciously elimi-

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expressed than here, but they were later urged more relentlessly and with frequent reiteration to ensure that they would not be ignored. "My *one* thesis," said S. K., "is that Christianity no longer exists"; and "my task is to reintroduce Christianity into Christendom." His complaint against Christendom was that "all are Christians." S. K. was justified in saying that *Training in Christianity* (1848) would be seen to be an attack upon the Church if only the "Preface" and the "Moral" were omitted. Bishop Mynster saw that clearly enough. Others, having slight acquaintance with S. K.'s works and no understanding of his purpose, were naturally dumbfounded by the attack and were inclined to attribute it to a mental disorder. We who know the *Works*, and also the *Journal* with its revelation of persistent purpose, cannot be surprised by an attack, which was so long preparing.

nate Him. You have no right to appropriate Christ's words and then transform Him fantastically into something other than He is, by means of the vain chatter of history, which while it chatters about Him really has no notion what it is chattering about.

It is Jesus Christ in His humiliation who speaks. It is historically true that *He* uttered these words. It is false that these words were uttered by *Him* the moment we alter His historical reality.

So then it is this lowly man, living in poverty, with twelve poor fellows as His disciples who were drawn from the simplest classes of society, who for a while was singled out as an object of curiosity, but later was to be found only in company with sinners, publicans, lepers, and madmen; for it might cost a man honor, life, and property, or at any rate expulsion from the synagogue (for this punishment we know was imposed), if he merely suffered himself to be helped by Him. Come now hither, all ye that labor and are heavy laden! Oh, my friend, though thou wert deaf and blind and lame and leprous, etc., though thou wert to unite (a thing never before seen or heard of) all human wretchedness in thy wretchedness, and though He stood ready to help thee by a miracle—it yet is possible that thou (for this is only human) wouldst fear more than all these sufferings the suffering imposed for letting oneself be helped by Him, the punishment of being banished from the society of other men, of being scorned and scoffed at day in and day out, of losing, perhaps, life itself. It would be human (only too human) if thou wert to say within thyself: No, I thank you; I had rather continue to be deaf, and dumb, and blind, etc., than to be helped in such a way.

"Come hither, hither, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; oh, come hither; behold how He bids you some, how He openeth His arms!" Oh, when these words are uttered by a fashionable man in a silk gown, with a pleasant and sonorous voice which resounds agreeably from the lovely, vaulted ceiling, a silken man who bestows honor and repute upon all who hear him; oh, when a king says this who is clothed in purple and velvet, with the Christmas tree in the background on which hang the splendid gifts he proposes to distribute[27]—then indeed thou wilt agree that there is some sense in

[27] According to continental custom one of the Three Kings (Magi) appropriately distributes the Christmas gifts.

what he says. But make what sense out of it thou wilt, one thing is sure, it is not Christianity, it is exactly the opposite, as contrary to Christianity as could be—for remember who the Inviter is.

And now judge for thyself—for thou hast a right to do that, whereas on the other hand thou hast no right to do what people so commonly do, to deceive thyself. That a man who makes such an appearance as that, a man who is shunned by everybody who has the least particle of common sense in his noddle and has anything in the world to lose, that He (surely that is the absurdest and craziest thing of all—one hardly knows whether to laugh or to weep at it), that He (surely that is the very last thing one might expect to hear from Him—for if He had said, "Come hither and help me," or "Let me alone," or "Spare me," or in a proud tone, "I despise you all," that might be understandable), but that He says, "Come hither to me!"—what an uninviting invitation! And then further: "All ye that labor and are heavy laden"—just as if people like that hadn't already enough troubles to bear, and then in addition would expose themselves to all the consequences of associating with Him. And finally: "I will give you rest." That caps the climax—He will help them! It seems to me that even the most good-natured of the scoffers who were actually His contemporaries might well say, "That is the very last thing He should undertake—to wish to help others when He Himself is in such a plight. It is as if a beggar were to notify the police that he had been robbed. For that one who does not own anything and never has owned anything declares that he has been robbed is self-contradictory, and so also it is if one offers to help others when he himself is in need of being helped." Humanly speaking, this is indeed the craziest contradiction, that He who literally "has nowhere to lay his head," that a person of whom (humanly) it was appropriately said, "Behold the man!" that He says, "Come hither to me, all ye that suffer—I will help!"

Now examine thyself—for that thou hast a right to do. On the other hand, thou hast properly no right, without self-examination, to let thyself be deluded by "the others," or to delude thyself into the belief that thou art a Christian—therefore examine thyself. Suppose that thou wert contemporary with Him! True enough, He said—ah, it was *He* that said it—that He was God! Many a madman has done the same—and His whole generation was of the opinion that

He "blasphemed." That, indeed, was the reason for the punishment imposed upon those who let themselves be helped by Him. On the part of the established order and of public opinion it was god-fearing care for souls, lest anyone be led astray. They persecuted Him thus out of godly fear. Therefore before a man resolves to let himself be helped he must consider that he has not only to expect the opposition of men, but consider this too, that even if thou couldst bear all the consequences of such a step, consider this too, that human punishment is God's punishment upon the blasphemer—the Inviter!

Now come hither, all ye that labor and are heavy laden!

Here obviously there is no call for haste. There is a brief halt which might appropriately be turned to account by going round by another street. And if thou, supposing that thou wert contemporary, wilt not sneak away thus by another street, or in present-day Christendom wilt not be one of the sham Christians—then truly there is occasion for a tremendous halt, for a halt which is the condition for the very existence of faith: thou art brought to a halt by the possibility of the offense.

In order, however, to make it quite clear and vivid that the halt is due to the Inviter, that it is the Inviter who brings one to a halt by making it evident that it is not just such a simple matter, but really quite an awkward thing, to follow the invitation, because it is not permissible to accept the invitation and reject the Inviter—to make this clear I shall briefly review His life in its two periods, which, though they exhibit a certain diversity, fall *essentially* under the concept of humiliation. For it is always a humiliation for God to be man, though He were Emperor of all emperors, and *essentially* He is not more humiliated by being a poor, lowly man, mocked and (as the Scripture adds) spat upon.

A.
The First Period of His Life

And let us now speak about him quite freely, just as His contemporaries spoke about Him, and as we speak about a contemporary, a man like the rest of us, whom one encounters occasionally in the street, knowing where he lives, on what floor of the house, what his business is, what he has to live on, who his parents are, his family