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The Category and the Office of Proclamation, with Particular Reference to Luther and Kierkegaard

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1.

Proclamation is a category of address. This means that what is proclaimed to a human being comes into force for them [tritt für ihn in Kraft].[1] What is proclaimed is valid for them from the moment that it is proclaimed to them.

If one wanted to characterize proclamation more precisely, distinguishing it from a related phenomenon in order to gain a certain perspective on it, then a comparison with the category of communication might naturally come to mind, since they are entirely different from one another. For in contrast to what is proclaimed, what is communicated—simply as communicated—leaves the life of the human being in question completely untouched. What is communicated to a human being—always simply as communicated—does not need to intervene in any way in their existence.

Proclamation presupposes some authority that establishes the validity of that which is proclaimed. Proclamation therefore stands or falls with the existence of the authority guaranteeing it. By contrast, that which is communicated is—simply as communicated—something purely objective. Communication is not grounded on or supported by something else that stands behind it; rather, the relation between the informant and the recipient is exhausted in the message, as it were, so that what is communicated is, as such, of a wholly impersonal nature.

Because proclamation constitutes a special form of relationship—namely a relationship of authority between the one from whom the proclamation comes in the

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[1] The German phrase "in Kraft" suggests not just that the proclamation is in force for the person and has validity or authority for them, but also that it has an impact on them.

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last instance,[2] and the one who receives it—the relationship can be characterized further, depending on what receiving it amounts to. If what is proclaimed is something good for the recipient, then this relationship of authority can be further characterized as either one of trust or mistrust, depending on how what is proclaimed is received. If the proclamation has threatening content, then the manner of its reception gives the relationship of authority the further characteristic of either obedience or rebellion. Once again, communication is wholly different. Because, as I said, that which is communicated is—simply as communicated—something objective, its reception leaves the impersonality of the relationship untouched. As such, whether the recipient is cognizant of the communication or fails to observe it changes nothing in the relationship between the informant and the recipient.

This attempt to fix the difference between the categories of proclamation and communication should not be taken to imply that the content of what is proclaimed might not prove wholly insignificant, or, on the other hand, that the content of what is communicated cannot have major significance for the recipient. For we must distinguish between proclamation and communication as two forms of address, on the one hand, and the factual content of that which is proclaimed and communicated, on the other. It is one thing to understand an utterance with regard to its category as proclamation or communication (that is, how that which is proclaimed functions as proclamation and how that which is communicated functions as communication); it is quite another thing to understand proclamation or communication in terms of their purely factual content. An utterance is understood as falling under the category of pronouncement or proclamation if it comes into force for the recipient, even though they may experience the content of the proclamation as a most insignificant matter. We understand an utterance as communication when the informant—from the perspective of the category of address—communicates something to us that is objective and is not intended to intervene in our existence [Dasein], even when we experience its content as changing our life in decisive ways and thus having great subjective significance. Furthermore, nothing essential changes regarding the categorization of something as communication whether the receiver of a communication is furious at the informant or feels pleased with them; the relation

[2] [Here, Løgstrup uses the word "Instanz," which has a judicial meaning that is closely connected to authority.—Trans.]

between the informant and the recipient is of an impersonal nature, independent of the manner in which it is received. In relation to the categorization of something as communication, whether the reception is hostile or friendly is an entirely contingent reaction to the content of that which is communicated. This distinction between the category of communication and its factual, historical content, which I will come back to later, is presupposed in Kierkegaard's raising of the complex of problems comprised under the term "the dialectic of communication."

This is not the place to go into this relation any further, since our investigation is not into the philosophy of language—though this would be a matter of great theological interest. It ought only to be remarked that proclamation constitutes a category of address akin to, for example, the question, the command, the request, the promise, and so on. It is characteristic of these forms of address that the content does not exist as something given independently of the corresponding category. What a person asks, promises, or commands is not present independently of their question, their promise, or their command. Attempting to abstract the content—what one experiences purely objectively—from the category always means a change of content. This difficulty does not arise with communication; it is rather characteristic of the category of communication that one disregards the category in order to stress explicitly that one comes to know something; this is what the objectivity of this category consists in.

As I have already said, the content of what is proclaimed can be without special significance. However, normally what is proclaimed is something special that comes into force for the person in question, such that the proclaimed word is of higher significance (this proclaimed word need not have a religious content).

{Before I proceed with my analysis of the category of proclamation, in order to characterize it more precisely, it might be helpful to very briefly introduce a third category into the investigation, namely that of the message. A message is of a very different character from a communication because a message is more personal. The person delivering a message takes the message to be of importance to the person receiving it, and they assume that it will have an influence on the existence [*Tilværelse*] of the recipient. In communication, however, the personal character is, so to speak, entirely erased in favor of the purely objective matter that the one party gives and the other party receives via the communication. That there have to be two parties for communication to take place is a precondition that is just as objective as

the content of the communication itself. In the message, however, the fact that there is one person who delivers it and one person who receives it figures in a very different way, because the content is not purely objective, but rather is of some personal importance for the recipient. There is something fateful in receiving a message. By contrast, whether that which is communicated has any significance or influence on the person receiving it is set aside; it is of no consequence for the communication.

Both proclamation and message are therefore different from communication due to the presence of personal significance. But furthermore, a proclamation is different from a message in that what is proclaimed has significance because it comes into force for the recipient, whereas, by contrast, a message has significance because, in one way or another (whether joyfully or painfully), it is fateful for the recipient.

It is therefore indeed no wonder that proclamation and message are given a religious meaning to such an extent that they are both religious terms.}

In any case, proclamation presupposes authority; without authority, nothing can come into force effectively for another human being. But in order to be able to exercise authority, a person must be in possession of an office. The category of proclamation therefore cannot in any way be analyzed without the office of the proclamation being brought into the picture.

The success of the proclamation, by virtue of authority, presupposes (so to speak) the office of the proclamation, and this is shown by the fact that, among other things, the proclamation always also has a public character. This is the case not only when the authority comes into force for all, or for a group of people who are under its sovereignty, but also when an authority establishes its position with respect to an individual—for example, when the judgment of a court is pronounced on an individual, in which case the proclamation has a public character in virtue of the authority of the office that comes with it.

It is not always the case that the bearer of the authority presupposed by the proclamation does the proclaiming themselves; often what they wish to come into force, they permit someone else or some other people to proclaim, such that the authority's proclamation is spoken not by the authority themselves but by ambassadors or heralds. This is particularly true of the Christian proclamation. With this, we have come from the characterization of the category and of the office of proclamation in general to the question of the Christian proclamation in particular. Luther's remarks are of special interest here because of his view of the relation

between the office of the proclamation and the apostolate and also because of his account of the relation between the office of proclamation and the office in the worldly government [das weltliche Regiment].[3]

2.

In his interpretation of the introduction to the Epistle to the Galatians, Luther claims (in his commentary published in 1535) that St. Paul's emphasis on his office as an apostle—in the face of doubting opponents—should only serve "to make each servant of the Word of God certain of his calling."[4] And he bases this on the fact that the preacher does not demand authority for himself as a private person but rather on the grounds that God and Christ have sent him, and he serves their authority, just as, on earth, ambassadors serve the authority of the kings who send them [WA40.1 56; LW26 16]. What is characteristic here is that, for Luther, St. Paul's foundation of his apostolate through a revelation of the word of God to each servant provides certainty regarding one's calling (unusquisque minister verbi Dei) [ibid.]. In short, the office of

[3] [By "das weltliche Regiment" Luther means to refer to human government or, as we have translated it, "worldly government," which he contrasts with "das geistliche Regiment," which is the spiritual government or regiment. This contrast thus forms the core of his "two kingdoms" doctrine (for a description of this doctrine, see, for example, Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed [1523]," trans. J.J. Schindel and Walther I. Brandt, in The Christian Society II, trans. Walther I. Brandt et al., ed. Walther I. Brandt and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 45 of Luther *'s Works*, trans. George V. Schick et al., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962], pp. 75–129). It is important to note that, for Luther, the worldly government or kingdom is not different from the spiritual government or kingdom in being based in secular authorities only, as God is also the authority behind the worldly kingdom. Rather, what makes it "worldly" is that it is a matter of law rather than grace. It is in order to avoid this confusion that the term is often translated as "regiment." However, the association of "regiment" with the army in English makes this confusing in other ways, so we have chosen to use "government." We have flagged this here as a translation problem to keep in mind throughout the text.—Trans.]

[4] Martin Luther, "In epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas Commentarius ex praelectione D. Martini Lutheri (1531) collectus 1535," ed. U. Freitag, in pt. 1 of Galatervorlesung, vol. 40 of Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, ed. Karl Drescher (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus, 1911), p. 56; henceforth WA 40.1, followed by page number; Lectures on Galatians 1535: Chapters 1–4, trans. Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, vol. 26 of *Luther's Works*, trans. George V. Schick et al., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), p. 16; trans. mod; henceforth LW26, followed by page number.

the apostolate is used as the basis for the usual offices that belong to the Church today.

Luther distinguishes between two types of calling, an immediate calling [vocatio immediata] and a mediated calling [vocatio mediata]—in other words, he distinguishes between apostolate and the office of the proclamation in general [WA40.1 59; LW26 17]. The apostle is directly called through Christ, without the mediation of another human being: he is called to his apostleship through a revelation. By contrast, Luther says that "in our own time" the bearer of the office of the proclamation in general is called to it by another human being [per hominem], rather than by Christ [ibid.]. This distinction between two types of calling follows St. Paul, who begins his Epistle to the Galatians by saying that he is not an apostle "through man" (*δι' ἀνθρώπου*) but "through Jesus Christ" (*διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*) [Gal. 1:1].

This difference does not in any way mean that the immediate calling is divine in a way that the mediated one is not; they are both divine. The calling per hominem is also God's calling, the other man being only the instrument (medium) for the calling of God. The apostle, who is directly called by God, and the proclaimer, who is called by God through another human being, still stand on the same side, in opposition to the false teacher and the enthusiast who set themselves up as proclaimers by themselves [WA40.1 59; LW26 17]. The latter do not have their calling per hominem but ab hominibus: the calling does not have its origin in God mediated through another person but in a human being, namely in the individual themselves [ibid.]. The individual calls themselves, which means that fundamentally it is not a calling at all [ibid.]. This distinction is, moreover, grounded in St. Paul's distinction between "through man" (*δι' ἀνθρώπου*) and "from man" (ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων) [Gal. 1:1].

This distinction between the office of the proclamation and the apostolate leads Luther to his view of the relation between the office of the proclamation and the worldly office. The calling is therefore the decisive thing. The "power" [Gewalt] to preach and to conduct the sacrament is something that each Christian has in themselves. However, this power is not enough. The authorization of the performance of the office must come about through the community for it to be carried out correctly. In "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," Luther famously says that whoever has crawled out of baptism [aus der Taufe gekrochen] may boast that he

has already been consecrated pastor, bishop, and pope.[5] However, it is not fitting for everyone to exercise such an office. Because we all have the same power, such matters concern everyone, and no one ought to claim it for themselves without everyone being in agreement. The ordination of a pastor by a bishop therefore amounts to nothing more than the bishop choosing, in the name of the congregation, one person from that congregation—which consists of a multitude of people who all have the same "power"—and commanding that person to use this "power" for the good of others.

This necessity for the calling [vocatio] is due to the public character of proclamation. Luther also emphasizes in the Galatians commentary that the proclaimer has to remain within their own area of jurisdiction [see WA40.1 50–1; LW26 11]. To take up an initiative in public life that lies outside the jurisdiction of one's office is, for Luther, an absurdity—as it also is, incidentally, for Calvin; it is, in truth, tantamount to the impudence of taking on responsibility for what God has reserved for himself. And because proclamation is an activity of public life—a "common" thing, as Luther calls it in An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility —everything that the pastor does must fall within the domain of his office [WA6 408; LW44 129].

Luther thus operates here—both when he claims that calling is necessary for the office of the proclamation, and when he lays it down that the pastor should confine himself to his office—with a point of view that does not concern the proclamation and office exclusively but rather any public activity and all offices. That a human being ought to have a calling in order to proclaim the gospel, and that they ought to remain in their parish, is due not to the proclamation and its special content and character but rather to the fact that proclamation is a public activity.

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[5] [Martin Luther, An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung (1520), in vol. 6 of Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, ed. D. Anais (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1888), p. 408; henceforth WA6, followed by page number; "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian State (1520)," trans. Charles M. Jacobs and James Atkinson, in The Christian in Society I, ed. James Atkinson and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 44 of *Luther's Works*, trans. George V. Schick et al., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 129; henceforth LW44, followed by page number. Luther's original German is "aus der Taufe gekrocken ist," which is translated by Jaroslav Pelikan in the *Luther's Works* edition as "comes out of the water of baptism," perhaps because "krochen" has been mistakenly read as "trocken."]

From a modern perspective, the following question automatically arises here: whether such a viewpoint, which holds for all public activity, means that the religious grounding has been replaced with a purely social grounding, i.e., that the requirement of a calling for the exercise of proclamation could be imposed simply for the sake of public peace and order. But this is in no way what Luther meant; he could only have meant this if he had had merely social reasons for requiring that an individual had a calling for all other public activity—that is, all worldly or civil activity. But we know that this is not the case. Work in the other estates [den anderen Ständen][6] is prescribed by God; authority in the other offices is given so that it can be exercised in the name of God; and, therefore, a person must have a calling for their worldly activity as much as for their spiritual activity. Luther can have the same view regarding these particular fields of the office of proclamation and worldly office because God has prescribed both and is active in both. A worldly office has a religious grounding just as much as a spiritual office does. The viewpoint of the calling itself, which holds for both forms of office, is religious, and it follows self-evidently that, because it is valid for the worldly office, it is appropriate for the spiritual. That a calling is required for the exercise of the office of proclamation thus does not mean that a social interest is superior to the religious viewpoint.

This therefore means that authority of any kind among human beings belongs to God: either it is entrusted to human beings by God or human beings have stolen it from God. This is true not only for the authority of apostles and preachers but also for that of princes, governing bodies, heads of household, masters, teachers, and parents. As such, authority sets up a difference and a dissimilarity between those who exercise it and those who obey it or do not obey it—a difference that cannot be conceived within the immanence of a doctrine of sociality. This very understanding, according to which there is no authority without God, equates the office of proclamation with that of the worldly government in a determinate and decisive relation.

The difference between the apostolate and the office of proclamation is therefore not a difference in the kinds of authority. On the contrary, such authority is

[6] [The other estates Løgstrup is referring to here are the household and the state. For discussion, see our commentary also published in this issue (Christopher Bennett, Paul Faulkner, and Robert Stern, "Indirect Communication, Authority, and Proclamation as a Normative Power: Løgstrup's Critique of Kierkegaard," Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal 40:1 (2019), pp. XXX)].

godly in the activity of an apostle as much as in the activity of any other preacher. It is the manner of the calling that makes the difference and whether it happens mediately or immediately. Furthermore, in his talk of God's "great men" [Wunderleuten], Luther reckons on a corresponding immediate calling and an "exception ethics" [Ausnahmeethik] also within the worldly government.[7] I cannot go into this further here. Instead, we must be satisfied with this short presentation of Luther's characterization of the office of proclamation, an office that is intrinsic to the category of proclamation itself.

3.

To return now to the task that we set ourselves at the beginning, namely to characterize the difference between the category of proclamation and the category of communication: what is striking is that when Kierkegaard deals with similar issues, he deliberately chooses to use the category of communication.

Kierkegaard proceeds from the decisive characteristic of communication, namely from the idea that what is communicated {in a straightforward manner} is something objective, known, factual.[8] For him, it is therefore the case that an essential (thus, a decisive) truth can never be the content of a direct communication; an essential truth can, qua decisive truth, never be objective but must always address the subject and their existence. Kierkegaard adds as a further characteristic that direct

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[7] [For Luther's discussion of God's "great men," see Martin Luther, "Auslegung des 101. Psalms (1534–35)," ed. E. Thiele and O. Brenner, in Predigten 1545/46; Auslegung des 23. und 101. Psalms 1534/36; Schriften 1540/41; Sprichwörter-Sammlung, vol. 51 of Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, ed. Karl Drescher (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus, 1914), pp. 207–16; [our trans.]; "Psalm 101," trans. Alfred von Rohr Sauer, in Selected Psalms II, trans. Martin H. Bertram et al., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 13 of *Luther's Works*, trans. George V. Schick et al., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), pp. 143–224. In Etiske begreber og problemer, Løgstrup explains that this "exception ethics" applies when "a hero with a special calling from God and a special ability punishes an unjust ruler and liberates a people" (Etiske begreber og problemer [Aarhus: Klim, 2014], p. 103; [our trans.])].

[8] [See, for example, Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, vol. 12.1 of *Kierkegaard's Writings*, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 73–80; henceforth CUP, followed by page number; Afsluttende Uvidenskabelig Efterskrift, vol. 7 of Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Copenhagen: Gads, 2002), pp. 74–80; henceforth SKS7, followed by page number.]

communication—where what is communicated is something objective—starts with the fact that a human being has something to give to another and thus that direct communication presupposes community [see CUP 73–80; SKS7 74–80].

It is therefore the case that a decisive truth can never constitute the content of a direct communication because the only decisive thing for a human being is the reshaping of their existence in inwardness, which is incompatible with community. Ethical and religious opinion is clear that absolute passion lies beyond any mutual understanding:

> all understanding between individuals [Menneske] must always be in some third, something more abstract, which is neither of them. But in absolute passion, which is subjectivity's extremity, and in the intense "how" of this passion, the individual is definitely [netop] most removed from this third. (CUP 509; SKS7 462; trans. mod.)

In other words, the individual is faced with two options. If their life is directed outward, occupied with the objective and community with the other, then the world of objectivity and other human beings are their lords, and they relate themselves absolutely—immediately or in a petty bourgeois way—to all these relative things; in short, their own existence is a trivial matter to them. A life of obedience to a truth that is decisive because it reshapes one's existence is ruled out. But if, on the other hand, the truth only exists as the truth for the individual, as the truth of their own existence, it follows that it can also only be communicated accordingly. However, as the communicator can only communicate to another human being the truth as the truth of the communicator's own existence, they thereby make the other dependent on them: for the recipient, the truth is not the truth of their own existence, as this exists only in inwardness and not in the form of community where one person is dependent on others. It is therefore simply the case that the direct communication of the truth defrauds the recipient out of the truth [CUP 75; SKS7 57]. Direct communication, if it concerns a decisive truth, is a contradictory undertaking.

It is not possible here to go further into Kierkegaard's concept of existence. Therefore, we must make a leap of thought and state that life in inwardness—where alone the decisive truth belongs, having no home in the life of outwardly directed immediacy and petty bourgeois existence—means, for Kierkegaard, to be in relation to oneself before God. To put it more clearly: where decisive truth is concerned, one human being has nothing to give to another; each is wholly independent of the other;

the decisive truth is that the human being, individual and alone, depends on God and that only God gives everything to a human being. Therefore, the decisive truth cannot be directly communicated, as that would make the recipient dependent on the communicator instead of on God. Or, as Johannes Climacus puts it in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, the direct communication of an essential truth, i.e., the truth of the existence of a human being before God, is "a fraud toward God (which possibly defrauds him of the worship of another person in truth), a fraud toward themselves (as if they had ceased to be an existing person), a fraud toward another human being (who possibly attains only a relative God-relationship)" (CUP 75; SKS7 57; trans. mod.).

It might now be tempting to come to the conclusion that where it is a matter of an essential truth, concerning a truth of existence, communication as such is not at all appropriate. However, Kierkegaard does not draw this conclusion. Instead, he issues a demand for the "dialectic of communication" [CUP 72; SKS7 55], which means that the form of the communication should express that one person has nothing to give to the other. The communication ought to be indirect, so that the communicator and the receiver are distanced from one another, and existence in inwardness—each one for themselves—is made possible (CUP 248–9; SKS7 224–6).

What I indicated at the beginning is now clear, namely that the difference between the category and the content of communication as a form of address is a presupposition of Kierkegaard's dialectic of communication. To briefly repeat the result of the analysis of communication: according to the categorical form of communication itself, what is communicated is something objective, which for the relation between the communicator and the recipient has the significance (1) that it is impersonal; (2) that communication does not involve the intention to interfere with the existence of the recipient; and (3) that the relation between communicator and recipient remains unaffected by the manner of the reception. None of this need prevent it being the case that the factual content of what is communicated can have very great significance for the recipient and that therefore the danger can arise that they are made dependent on the communicator. Indeed, this is precisely the case when the content of the communication is an essential and decisive truth, since such a truth has the greatest possible significance for the recipient. Therefore, the task that is taken up by the dialectic of communication must be to avoid a relationship of dependence between the recipient and the communicator.

Such dependence can only be avoided if, despite the decisive subjective significance that the communication has in its content for the recipient, the category of communication—with its impersonal or (to use Kierkegaard's term) its "aesthetic" relationship between the communicator and the recipient—is maintained. However, the impersonal relationship between the communicator and the recipient—in which they are independent of one another—now is due to the objectivity of what is communicated. It follows from this that the task must be to communicate a truth that is decisive for the recipient as if it concerned something objective.

How can this be carried out? We can find the answer to this question if we recall that when the truth is something decisive it reshapes existence, whereas the objective as knowledge is merely the possible. The task of communicating decisive truth to the recipient as though it were something objective can therefore be completed through the dissolution of ethical reality in possibility, as happens precisely in what Kierkegaard calls "indirect communication" [CUP 248–9; SKS7 226].

An example would be where the decisive truth is communicated as one of two contradictory possibilities, where what is emphasized to the highest possible degree is not only the mutual exclusiveness of these possibilities but also—and this is important—their equivalence, and where the communicator thus in no respect forestalls the choice of the recipient through their communication. In this way, the truth, which can only be known in the reshaping of existence, is dissolved into a possibility in the indirect communication, i.e., into something objective that as such constitutes an impersonal relation in which the communicator and the recipient are distanced from one another, and where the communication in its category has thus, so to speak, done what it can to isolate each from the other.

The task that Kierkegaard sets himself with his demand for the dialectic of communication is, among other things, to prevent the recipient from becoming dependent on the communicator in their ethical-religious reality through admiration. Admiration is justifiable if it concerns what Kierkegaard calls a "difference"—a talent, a characteristic, an ability, etc.—but unethical if it concerns the ethical-religious reality of another person, for in admiration no demand is heard [CUP 27–8; SKS7 34]. Therefore, the ethical-religious reality of the communicator must remain alien to the recipient: it is simply no concern of theirs. The recipient has to do only with their own ethical-religious reality, and any other ethical-religious reality can only

concern them as a possibility for their own reality. The reality of the other must therefore be represented to the recipient as a mere possibility; only in this way can the attention of the recipient be directed away from the communicator and back on to the recipient themselves since the possible consists in the universal—in the ideal—that contains a demand. In indirect communication about a matter of decisive truth, the communication thus communicates the truth of the communicator's own existence under the guise of an objective possibility.

If Christianity is the truth, a new element [Moment] is added to what we have said so far. While each human being knows the truth by themselves, insofar as it lies within the sphere of the ethical and of human religiosity, nonetheless they do not know the Christian truth by themselves. The Christian truth must therefore be communicated to them, and because it has a wholly determinate content, it is an objective form of knowledge that can only be transmitted through direct communication.

In his posthumously published work The Book on Adler, Kierkegaard goes more deeply into the difference between the undetermined and indefinable in religiosity immanent to the human sphere and the objective in Christian religiosity. Religious emotion is common to pious pagans, pious Jews, and to Christians; it is universal.[9] The individual is seized by something higher, something eternal, an idea, which involves an inwardness within the sphere of immanence that simply rouses and awakens the individual to find themselves [BA 113; SKS15 268–9]. If this emotion is given expression in words, it does so within the sphere of pure humanity.

Things are wholly different with a Christian emotion. Here, the individual is in the sphere of transcendence because what is Christian is objective and external to all believers; it exists even without the existence of Christians [BA 114; SKS15 269]. The Christian has allowed themselves to be seized by a revelation in the concrete and the historical; Christian belief has an historical precondition [ibid.]. In order to be able to give their Christian emotion expression, the individual must therefore—as Kierkegaard emphasizes repeatedly—be trained, indeed strenuously educated in

[9] [See, for example, Søren Kierkegaard, The Book on Adler, vol. 24 of *Kierkegaard's* Writings, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 112–3; henceforth BA, followed by page number; Bogen om Adler, in vol. 15 of *Søren Kierkegaard's Skrifter*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Copenhagen: Gads, 2012), p. 268; henceforth SKS15, followed by page number.]

specific Christian conceptual determinations [ibid.]. Correspondingly, this awakening must be tested and checked through this specific concept-language, to see whether it is really Christian and not merely universal: "What is demanded [Fordres] for a Christian awakening is on the one hand the Christian emotion and on the other the firmness and definiteness of conceptual language. But in our age there is a shortage of both" (BA 114–5; SKS15 270; trans. mod.).

In the outlines of a lecture series on the dialectic of communication—to be found in his papers from 1847—Kierkegaard therefore indicates that the difference between communication that is only ethical and communication that is ethical-religious in the Christian sense is that in the latter there is a moment of knowledge that requires that communication be not exclusively indirect (as in the ethical case) but also direct, if only temporarily so.[10]

However, now the following question arises: does the Christian message—because its objectivity requires a direct form of communication—preclude that mode of reception that would lead to a necessary rebuilding of existence, and is it instead a matter of shared concern whereby the recipient comes to be dependent on the communicator? If the forming of a fixed concept language, in which the individual is to be schooled and trained, is made essential to objective Christianity, how can Christianity not become an objective doctrine that has nothing to do with the existence of the individual?

In response to this, Kierkegaard points to the special status of what is objective in Christianity. The objective here is in itself a contradiction, which bears the features of the paradox and thus becomes an offense. Through the paradox that God became human, and with the offense that follows, the objective in Christianity is in a certain sense itself an indirect communication.

In Practice in Christianity, Kierkegaard distinguishes two forms of indirect communication. The first—which was dealt with by Johannes Climacus in the Unscientific Postscript and is more deeply explained there—is the art that consists in "the communicator [making themselves] . . . into a nobody, purely objective, and then

[10] [Søren Kierkegaard, A–E, vol. 1 of *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong, and Gregor Malantschuk (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 267–308; henceforth JP, followed by page number; "Den ethiske og den ethisk-religieuse Meddelelses Dialektik," in Løse papirer, vol. 27 of *Søren Kierkegaard's Skrifter*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Copenhagen: Gads, 2011), pp. 387–434; henceforth SKS27, followed by page number.]

continually placing the qualitative opposites in a unity."[11] Anti-Climacus gives two examples: "to place jest and earnestness together in such a way that the composite is a dialectical knot—and then to be a nobody oneself" and "to bring attack and defense into a unity in such a way that no one can directly say whether one is attacking or defending" (PC 133; SKS12 137). It is "communication in double reflection": the communicator reflects not only on what they want to say but also on how to say it, since getting the form wrong can distort the content [ibid.]. It is thus characteristic of this form of indirect communication: (1) that qualitative opposites are put together, and (2) that this comes about by the communicator eliminating themselves in order to direct the recipient internally so that they become free [ibid.]. This is the form of indirect communication of the maieutic.

In the second form of indirect communication, the communicator is not a nothing; on the contrary, it is precisely their existence—in which the qualitative opposites are combined, as in the case of the God-man—that makes communication indirect [PC 134; SKS12 137–8]. Christ's statement that he is God, which could not be more direct, contradicts the fact of his existence as an individual man; his own existence—simply through the contradiction—therefore makes his own direct statement into an indirect communication [ibid.]. This communication cannot be met with indifference, for the contradiction confronts the individual with the choice between faith and offense [ibid.]. Every choice provides information about what lives within the one who has to choose; but the thoughts of the heart reveal themselves most clearly when the choice is between offense and faith. This means that the contradiction in the objective fact that God has become human puts together infinite qualitative opposites, and thus the communication regarding this is indirect and the recipient can only meet the choice between faith and offense with their own existence (PC 136; SKS12 139).

Thus, in Practice in Christianity, Kierkegaard speaks not only of an indirect communication between human beings but also of indirect communication of God in

[11] [Søren Kierkegaard, Practice in Christianity, vol. 20 of Kierkegaard's Writings, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 133; henceforth PC, followed by page number; Indøvelse i Christendom, in Indøvelse i Christendom, En opbyggelig Tale, To Taler ved Altergangen om Fredagen, vol. 12 of *Søren Kierkegaard's Skrifter*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Copenhagen: Gads, 2008), p 137; henceforth SKS12, followed by page number.]

the paradoxicality of revelation—though he usually only has in mind communication between human beings when he deals with the dialectic of communication.

The exposition of this in Practice in Christianity raises the question of whether God's own indirect communication makes the dialectic of communication as communication between human beings superfluous. If it is the contradiction contained in the content itself that makes communication indirect insofar as it comes from God himself, can the communication of Christianity from human being to human being not retain the direct form, as the objective in Christianity requires? Kierkegaard answers in the negative [see JP 267–308; SKS27 399–406, 408–14, 430–4]. In the sketch of lectures on the dialectic of communication that I previously mentioned [ibid.], Kierkegaard emphasizes that the communication of the Christian message between human beings is only temporarily direct. In its essence, ethical-religious communication in the Christian sense is also indirect (ibid.).

Why should this be the case? Because Christianity has become a universal cultural tradition, such that one is a Christian simply by living in a Christian country [BA 310; SKS15 125]. People have forgotten that Christianity addresses and concerns the individual as such, and have instead made being Christian into a matter of custom and tradition:

> The trouble is not that Christianity is not voiced . . . but that it is voiced in such a way that the majority eventually think it utterly inconsequential . . . . Thus the highest and holiest things make no impact whatsoever, but they are given sound and are listened to as something that now, God knows why, has become routine and habit like so much else.[12]

We now turn to an opposition that we run into throughout Kierkegaard's thought, namely between living as an individual or being submerged in the crowd. In the crowd, the human being is wholly captivated by temporal and worldly interests. Engaged with earthly things in all their manifoldness, in a kind of absentminded

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[12] Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening, vol. 19 of *Kierkegaard's Writings*, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 102–3; trans. mod.; henceforth SUD, followed by page number; Sygdommen til Døden, in Lilien paa Marken og Fuglen under Himlen, Tvende ethisk-religieuse Smaa-*Afhandlinger, Sygdommen til Døden, "Ypperstepræsten"–"Tolderen"–"Synderinden,"* vol. 11 of *Søren Kierkegaard's* Skrifter, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Copenhagen: Gads, 2006), p. 214; henceforth SKS11, followed by page number.

busyness, one loses oneself and begins to compare oneself with others, making oneself dependent on others; one goes under in the crowd. Through dependence on all that is earthly and manifold, the individual lets the other defraud them of themselves [see, for example, SUD 33–4; SKS11 150].[13]

It is therefore clear that if a human being is to summon their self from life in the crowd, it can only be through an ethical-religious relating of oneself to the eternal; only thus can they snatch away their life from the temporal and the earthly that abandons them to the crowd. If anything, it is Christianity in particular that prevents the individual from being part of the crowd; the paradox confronts the individual with the choice between faith and offense that they can only meet alone.

Nevertheless—despite the paradox, despite the possibility of the offense—, one imagines oneself to be Christian precisely as a member of the crowd. The cause of this mistake is the inclusion of Christianity in the temporal and the worldly. Christianity has become so self-evident that neither paradox nor the possibility of offense are recognized:

> Christendom's basic trouble is really Christianity, that the teaching about the God-Man (please note that, Christianly understood, this is safeguarded by the paradox and the possibility of offense) is profaned by being preached day in and day out, that the qualitative difference between God and man is pantheistically abolished (first in a highbrow way through speculation, then in a lowbrow way in the highways and byways). (SUD 117; SKS11 229)

Here, we come up against the polemical situation in which Kierkegaard finds himself, and which makes the problem of the dialectic of communication particularly pressing for him—not only in regard to the communication of the ethical and ethical-religious, of the immanent truth from human being to human being {, but also as regards the communication between human beings of the Christian transcendent truth}. Indirect communication must come on the scene. It must make present the paradox of objective content in Christianity. Faith and offense must be highlighted as

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[13] [Løgstrup discusses this issue in more detail in K.E. Løgstrup, **chapter title?,** chap. 1 of Kierkegaards und Heideggers Existenzanalyse und ihr Verhältnis zur Verkündigung (Berlin: Erich Bläschker, 1950), pp. ???; *Kierkegaard and Heidegger's* Analysis of Existence and Its Relation to Proclamation, trans. Robert Stern et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.)]

equivalents so that Christianity is portrayed as a matter of the greatest difficulty and danger, and thus the recipient is put in the situation of having to make their decision.

For Kierkegaard, this is the special reason why the historical situation points to the necessity of indirect communication. Moreover, the truth of Christianity still applies to the existence of the individual, even though it has an objective content. It is the same with Christian truth as with immanent ethical-religious truth: it becomes known and communicated only in the reshaping of existence. Kierkegaard expresses this in The Concept of Anxiety thus: "Preaching means really conversing with one another; that is the art of preaching. But appropriation is the secret of this form of conversation."[14] But then the truth of Christianity must also be communicated indirectly so that the recipient does not thereby defraud God and themselves out of the appropriation by being dependent on the communicator's appropriation.

But this demand for indirect communication does not apply to the apostle [see CUP 243; SKS7 221]. By contrast their communication is direct, even though it concerns the decisive and essential truth [ibid.]. The direct communication of the apostle does not make the recipient dependent on the apostle rather than on God. Of course, the apostle communicates the essential and decisive truth, but not as the truth of their own existence. This is not to say that the truth is not of their own existence but merely that such truth is not the basis of their communication. The basis for their communication is not the transformation of their own existence through this truth but rather that through a revelation they are called to proclaim the truth. So, no one to whom the apostle directly communicates the truth becomes dependent on them; the

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[14] Here, Løgstrup is paraphrasing, though misquoting, Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin, trans. and ed. Reidar Thomte and Albert B. Anderson, vol. 8 of Kierkegaar*d's Writings*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 16; trans. mod.; Begrebet Angest, in Gjentagelsen, Frygt og Bæven, Philosophiske Smuler, Begrebet Angest, Forord, vol. 4 of *Søren Kierkegaard's* Skrifter, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Copenhagen: Gads, 1998), p. 323. [We have translated the quote as he wrote it, but here is the full quote given in the above-cited translation: "But to preach is really the most difficult of all arts and is essentially the art that Socrates praised, the art of being able to converse. It goes without saying that the need is not for someone in the congregation to provide an answer, or that it would be of help continually to introduce a respondent. What Socrates criticized in the Sophists, when he made the distinction that they indeed knew how to make speeches but not how to converse, was that they could talk at length about every subject but lacked the element of appropriation. Appropriation is precisely the secret of conversation" (ibid.).]

apostle has, as it were, no individual existence to which anyone can be bound; their existence is all taken up with their task. So, what they have to give is what God—who assigned them the task—has to give; their communication can thus be direct without it leading to the deception that would be the meaning of direct communication by any other Christian. In short, the apostle has no individual existence of their own from which the other must be liberated through indirect communication; their own existence is completely transfigured [aufgehoben] by the task they have received through revelation {—the task to deliver the truth}.

Kierkegaard gives a further reason for why the communication of the apostle is direct, namely that the content of Christianity was unknown for their audience. In the Postscript, he puts it as follows: "The position of an apostle is something else, because he must proclaim an unknown truth, and therefore direct communication can always have its validity temporarily" (CUP 243; SKS7 221). But the moment of knowledge is not the decisive reason why the communication of the apostle is direct, as it can only justify this directness temporarily. We can thus dispense with it here.

The crucial reason why the communication of the apostle is direct is, to put it briefly, the task. The apostle—simply through this task—is outside the aforementioned alternative that otherwise faces each Christian: that being-before-God is only possible in inwardness and not in the being-outwardly-directed that is a life in immediacy and petty bourgeois existence, where one lets oneself be determined by the world and other human beings.

Of course, the life of the apostle, like life in inwardness, consists in being-before-God; for if there is any existence that has been reshaped in relationship with God, it is the existence of the apostle. Nevertheless, the life of the apostle is oriented to the outside. The reason the apostle's being-outwardly-directed does not exclude the relation to God is that they are called to this life through the paradoxical fact of a revelation. By virtue of this calling through a revelation, the reshaping of their existence consists in their being completely taken up by the task. In "The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle," Kierkegaard puts it like this:

> So an apostle primarily has only to be faithful in his duty, which is to carry out his mission. Even if an apostle is never persecuted, his sacrificial life consists essentially in this: 'that he, himself poor, only makes others rich,' that he never dares to take the time or the quiet or the freedom from care in pleasant

> days. . . . Spiritually understood, he is like the busy housewife who herself, in order to prepare food for the many mouths, scarcely has time to eat.[15]

The apostle is called "to go out into the world, to proclaim the Word, to act and to suffer . . . [is called] to the unceasingly active life as the Lord's messenger" (DGA 106; SKS11 109–10).

The life of the apostle is thus directed externally just as much as the life in immediacy and in petty bourgeois existence. The being-outwardly-directed, however, does not involve the world and other people being the lords of their life but is rather a life for the other, which is ruled by God—the being-outwardly-directed is grounded in their life as one single task, to which they are called through a revelation.

The difference between the apostle and every other Christian can be further determined in a way that is closely connected to the difference between direct and indirect communication. If, for every other Christian except the apostle, the truth only exists as the truth of their own existence, and as such can only be communicated in a way that takes account of the demand of the dialectic of communication, it is clear that such a communication is without authority. By contrast the apostle—whose existence does not draw attention to itself, and whose communication can be direct, because their existence is wholly taken up with their task—speaks in the name of God and with godly authority. For this reason, and with regard to the question of authority, Kierkegaard characterizes direct communication in the mouth of the apostle as proclamation [see DGA 106; SKS11 109]. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard has no sense for what is peculiar in the category of proclamation—characterized by authority—namely that what is proclaimed comes into force; he therefore continues to use the category of communication also for the case of the apostle.

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We now come to an especially distinctive and, I would like to say, far reaching difference between Luther and Kierkegaard. As we saw, for Luther, the difference between the apostles and every other Christian does not consist in a difference in the

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[15] [Søren Kierkegaard, "The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle," in Without Authority, vol. 18 of *Kierkegaard's Writings*, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 106; trans. mod.; henceforth DGA, followed by page number; "Om Forskjellen mellem et Genie og en Apostel," in SKS11 109.]

authority with which they speak, as this is equally godly in both cases. This is why the office of the apostle can also be used to give each servant of God the certainty of their calling. The difference lies only in the type of calling, whether it is immediate or mediate. By contrast, for Kierkegaard, the difference lies in authority; there is authority only in the case of an immediate calling [vocatio immediata]—or, as Kierkegaard puts it, in the paradoxical fact of the calling through a revelation. But it follows from this that, since the office of proclamation in general stands or falls with authority, he has no place for such an office of proclamation; beside the authorized speech of the apostle, there is only the indirect communication of the Christian. Thus, the Book On Adler tells us that he who is called by God in a special sense, that is to say through a revelation, "can be known straightaway by the fact that they invoke his authority" (BA 25; SKS15 110; trans. mod.). This difference between Luther and Kierkegaard is essential insofar as it connects precisely with their widely varying views on life within the worldly government. Luther's discussion concerning an office of proclamation in general, where the pastor speaks with authority without being an apostle, presupposes, as we saw, that in respect of divinity there is no difference between the authority of the proclamation and the authority of any office of worldly government. By contrast, if Kierkegaard does not recognize any office of proclamation other than the apostolate, it is, among other things, because he denies that the authority exercised in any worldly office is in any way divine.

It ought to be conceded that Kierkegaard makes comments on proclamation and its authority throughout his work. For example, he writes the following in a footnote to "On the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle": "Authority is a specific quality either of an Apostolic calling or of ordination. To preach is precisely to use authority, and that this is what it is to preach has simply been altogether forgotten in our day" (DGA 99n.52; SKS11 103n.). The parallel between a calling through revelation for the apostle, and ordination for the pastor is implied in a remark in the Postscript: "A pastor is essentially what he is by ordination, and ordination is a teacher's paradoxical transformation in time" (CUP 273; SKS7 248). However, these and similar remarks—in particular, the reference to ordination—are neither justified nor further investigated; they are just bare assertions. The decisive presupposition of the authority of the apostles—that their existence is taken up by the task—is precisely not available to the pastor; ordination does not bring this about. But then what is the basis of the parallel between calling through revelation (which provides for the

authority of the apostle) and through ordination (which secures the authority of the pastor)? We are not told. And indeed Kierkegaard cannot tell us, for the idea of an office of proclamation lies beyond the horizon of his categories. That there is a connection between this and Kierkegaard's {secularized} conception of the life of worldly government can now finally be shown.

To illustrate the fact that authority is the decisive qualitative feature in the case of the apostle, Kierkegaard first of all uses worldly authority. In neither case does a person's word possess authority because of that person's aesthetic, philosophical or moral qualifications:

> To ask if a king is a genius, and in that case to be willing to obey him, is basically high treason, because the question contains a doubt about submission to authority. To be willing to obey a government department if it can come out with witticisms is basically making a fool of the department. To honor one's father because he is exceptionally intelligent is impiety. (DGA 101; SKS11 105)

A person's qualifications may make their words stand out aesthetically, philosophically, or morally, but such qualifications never confer authority on them—just as little as a fault in their personal qualifications might rob them of authority: "On the other hand, whether a police officer, for example, is a scoundrel or an upright man, as soon as he is on duty, he has authority" (DGA 99; SKS11 103). If this were not the case, then authority would only replicate profundity, brilliance, or morality, and it would not have its own distinctive character. But authority is something distinctive, and its distinctive character lies in the fact that a human being always derives their authority from somewhere else. An apostle has authority because they derive it from another place—from God. An envoy has authority because they derive it from another place—from the king. A police officer has authority because they derive it from another place—from the government. In short, in relation to all the individual's own qualifications, authority is something completely different [τὸ ἕτερον], whether it concerns an apostle or a human being who has authority conferred on them through a worldly office. Up until this point there is complete agreement between Luther and Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's observations on this correspond completely to those of Luther in the commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Indeed, Kierkegaard even writes that: "In the sphere of immanence, authority is utterly unthinkable" (DGA 99; SKS11 103).

But this is as far as their agreement goes. That is, Kierkegaard does not draw Luther's conclusion that any authority among human beings, including the authority of the worldly government, belongs to God, whether this has been entrusted to human beings by God or stolen by human beings from God. On the contrary, Kierkegaard maintains that among human beings only the apostles are under godly authority. What is the situation, then, with the authority of the worldly government, or as Kierkegaard puts it, "in the political, civic, social, domestic, and disciplinary realms" [ibid.]? Kierkegaard does not express himself clearly on this point. The citation given just above—"In the sphere of immanence, authority is utterly unthinkable"—which doubtless means that there is no authority that is not bestowed by God—is followed immediately by a contradictory claim: "or it can be thought only as transitory" (ibid.). Two points show the nature of the unclarity that causes such a contradiction.

The first point is that the difference between the godly authority of the apostles and worldly authority can only be determined metaphysically. The difference is that human authority is said to be something "vanishing"—either already in temporality or at least along with temporality—, while divine authority stands in eternity. The difference between authorities and subjects, between parents and children, disappears in eternity, but the difference between the apostle and other human beings remains for eternity. Kierkegaard puts it like this: "By this paradoxical fact the apostle is for all eternity made paradoxically different from all other human beings" (DGA 95; SKS11 99).

This must be metaphysics! Why does the authority of the apostle not disappear in eternity, as does the authority of public authorities and of parents? The answer is: because the authority of the apostles is godly. But then must it not disappear precisely because it is godly—i.e., in eternity, where God himself gives everything to human beings? We can explain Kierkegaard's metaphysics by reference to his {secularized} views on life in vocation and estate; he disqualifies life in the worldly ordinances [Lebens in den weltlichen Ordnungen**]** as nothing but immanence and relativity. For if Kierkegaard gave up his—metaphysical—view that the apostle in all eternity is different from all other human beings, and if he were instead to advocate that in the eternal where God himself gives everything to human beings the authority of the apostle also disappears, then the office of the apostle and its authority would become like any other; and then its office and its authority in worldly life would be godly, the

"sphere of immanence" would not simply be "immanence," and the "relativity of human life" would not simply be "relativity."

The second point of unclarity in Kierkegaard's argument is that his positive characterization of authority, namely that human beings derive it from elsewhere, does not hold, according to Kierkegaard's own definition of genuine authority in the worldly government.

We were told that as the apostle has authority from God, the envoy has authority from the king, and the police officer has authority from the government. But from where does the king, the government, or—we might add—the parents, get their authority? About this we are told nothing. Thus, for those who, in worldly life, have their own authority, only the negative characteristic holds—that they do not have it by way of their personal qualifications: the king does not have authority because he is a genius; the government does not have authority because it makes wise decrees; the father does not have authority because he is clever. The positive characteristic, according to which human beings acquire authority from elsewhere, is, on the contrary, only valid for secondary authorities whose authority is derivative—for example, that of the envoy or the police officer—but it is not valid of those who have real authority, such as governing bodies or parents. Regarding these latter we are left wholly in the dark.

The reason for this is that Kierkegaard does not recognize and will not draw Luther's conclusion: that governing bodies and parents also have authority in the one way through which a human being can have it, namely by it being conferred on them by God. With his determination of authority as completely different [τὸ ἕτερον] in relation to all personal qualities, Kierkegaard has in reality determined it as that which a human being has by virtue of their office. The concept of an office, however, lies beyond his horizon, and he cannot take this last step. And this cannot but lead to unclarity.

Thus, because Kierkegaard denies a godly character to authority in the worldly government—on the basis that only the apostle stands in godly authority through immediate calling [vocatio immediata], which no one else has—the office of proclamation, as already mentioned, lies beyond the Kierkegaardian categories.

However, we must observe that although the content, the message, and the Word to be proclaimed are the same in the proclamation of the apostles as in that of any other Christian, the authority and office of proclamation in general does not

behave like that of the apostle but rather like authority and office in the worldly government. That is to say, the call to the office of proclamation does not come about, as in the case of the apostle, through an immediate calling, but rather through man [per hominem], as in the call to an office of the worldly government.

After this confrontation between Kierkegaard's and Luther's views on the relation between the apostolate, the office of proclamation, and the office of worldly government, we can now return to the reason for making this comparison: the problem of the dialectic of communication. Here the crucial thing in the apostolate in and for itself was not the immediate calling but its consequence: that the task transfigures the existence of the apostle. The position of an apostle, as Kierkegaard writes in the Postscript, is "qualitatively different from that of others, and his existence justified when it is as no one else's can possibly be" (CUP 453; SKS7 412). Therefore, the existence of the apostle does not present the danger of binding the recipient authoritatively or through admiration; it does not stand in the way of the relation of the recipient to God himself, which is also why the apostle does not need to make use of the dialectic of communication but can employ direct speech with divine authority.

Correspondingly, for any other Christian, it is not crucial that they do not have an immediate calling. Rather, what matters is what follows from this: namely that their existence is thus not transfigured in their task; their existence is like the existence of other human beings, which is why the Christian—without any godly authority—can only communicate the truth as a truth concerning their own existence using the dialectic of communication.

On this point, it must be said that what the task does to the existence of the apostle—namely that it transfigures it and liberates the apostle from the dialectic of communication—is carried out in the existence of the proclaimer by the office. This, however, lies beyond Kierkegaard's horizon.

Kierkegaard does not pose the question whether, among all the address- and speech-categories that are available to us and that are not used for the transmission of knowledge, there are any that are appropriate for Christian truth. To such a question the answer must be: the category of proclamation is appropriate for Christian truth. The content of proclamation is God's forgiveness and judgment—not knowledge, but something that comes into force for those who hear the Word spoken to them. That the category of proclamation presupposes an authority that brings into force what is

proclaimed ultimately means that God is the source of all authority, such that here the sole bearer of authority, by performing what is proclaimed, brings it into force for those to whom it is proclaimed.

Kierkegaard also does not pose the question of whether Christian truth may require one of the address- or speech-categories that do not impart knowledge, and that therefore do not make the hearer dependent on the speaker. It must be answered that proclamation, by virtue of the office that it presupposes, corresponds to Christian truth. That is to say, the office prevents the proclaimer imagining that they themselves, as a private person, have something to give the other, as is also the case for the hearer; the office renders the private relation of the proclaimer to the content of the proclamation null and void.

If one wanted to put the divergence between Luther and Kierkegaard into a neutral formula, one could say that for each proclaimer, except the apostle, two opposed demands are valid: a demand that proceeds from the office, which requires direct communication, and a demand that proceeds from the existence-form of the proclaimer, which requires the opposite, namely indirect communication. For Luther, the demand proceeds from the office; for Kierkegaard, by contrast, it proceeds from the existence-form.

Of course, this connects with the different polemical situations in which Luther and Kierkegaard found themselves. Luther's emphasis on the office occurs in a battle against the self-chosen and self-fabricated action of justification by works, which makes the life of occupation and status despicable. Kierkegaard's demand for the dialectic of communication for the sake of the recipient and the communicator arises in a battle against speculation (which makes Christianity into a doctrine and a form of knowledge) and against petty bourgeois life (which takes being Christian to be a matter of course and to be nothing disturbing).

We cannot conclude our investigation without addressing another question that emerges here—though it leads beyond the subject and so can only be treated briefly.

For Kierkegaard, there is nothing in finitude that pulls a human being up short; there is nothing that creates an ethically-religiously relevant situation in which the human being is called to a decision. Rather, finitude is levelled out to nothing but relative ends and nothing but immanence.

By contrast, for Luther, finitude itself gives occasion for a human being to be brought up short; the ethical situation and its decision comes with finitude—as a finitude ordered into offices. Life in finitude exists for him as a life in offices—as child, as father or mother, as spouse, as master or servant, as public authority or subject, and so on. For Luther, finitude is in no way mere immanence. In finitude, God places his demand on the individual, God contradicts the egoism of the individual through the neighbor that he forces on the individual by ordering life in finitude into a life in offices. According to Luther, the Christian should not trouble themselves with how the ethical situation with its demand and decision comes into being.

By contrast, Kierkegaard has nothing to expect from a finitude leveled down into relativity and immanence. It gives him no answer to the question as to when and where the ethical situation and its demand comes in; the Christian must create this moment for themselves, making their life stressed and troubled. The life of the Christian consists in the concern to create the ethical-religious situation by oneself at every moment through extreme effort. As Johannes Climacus says: "A singer cannot incessantly sing vibrato; once in a while a note is tremolo. But the religious person whose religiousness is hidden inwardness strikes the vibrato, if I may so speak, of the relationship with God in everything" (CUP 475; SKS7 431). He continues, "The absolute conception of God consumes him like the fire of the summer sun when it refuses to set, like the fire of the summer sun when it refuses to cease" (CUP 485; SKS7 439).

It is indeed correct that the individual levels down finitude in immediacy and in finite ways of thinking, and in selfishness makes everything into their own—relative—goals, to which they relate themselves absolutely. But that does not mean that finitude as such—that is, in its ordering through God—is only of relative value. It is only of relative value in the leveling of immediacy and of finite ways of thinking in selfishness.

Christianity cannot amount to an endorsement of this leveling. But isn't that what Kierkegaard does? Is this not precisely the difference between Luther and Kierkegaard? If, for Kierkegaard, Christianity amounts to the Christian creating the ethical-religious situation, at each moment, for themselves, in their own internality, must the precondition for this not be the levelling of the finite? By contrast, Luther's

ethics of calling is based on an understanding of the levelling as a destruction of the divine ordering of finitude.

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It is naturally a risky undertaking—critically—to contrast the thought of two men as far apart in time and place as Luther and Kierkegaard. The polemical situation in which they spoke, the thought and world that they attacked, are very different from one another. Playing the one off against the other can easily lead to an ignoring of the polemical situation of the person whom one criticizes. And certainly, many theologians would believe that such a critical confrontation is a bad thing. From the standpoint of rational inquiry, they will say, the surest thing is to stick to an account dominated by historical perspective; only in this way can proper consideration be taken of the historical and polemical situation.

But however crucial it might be to recognize that the opinions of any thinker are historically and polemically determined, it is equally important that the truly engaging questions and problems remain the same. It is simply one of the preconditions of systematic theology that, if we only dive deep enough into the thought-world of an epoch, a school, or a theologian, we come up against a series of questions that are always the same.

It will therefore not do, out of a pure will to understand earlier thinkers objectively in their different polemical context and historical situation, to close our eyes to the fact that the answers they give to the same questions are incompatible and that their theological positions are not only different but contradict one another. It is, for example, not enough to show, as I intimated above, how Luther's understanding of the category and the office of proclamation is determined by his argument with the Catholic Church, or how Kierkegaard's thought on the dialectic of communication is occasioned by his argument with the philosophy of Hegel, and then to state that each has something especially decisive to say in these arguments. From the pure will to understand and appreciate each contribution in its own right and develop their ideas against the background of their situation, we should not make it seem as though what they said was otherwise the same, or as if the difference was only to be explained historically. If their answers to certain fundamental questions are not only different but incompatible, it is the task of systematic theology to account for these differences.

Translated by Christopher Bennett and Robert Stern

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