

**Transformation in the Hands of the Triune God:
The Pneumatology of Kierkegaard's Anti-Climacus
in Conversation with 2 Corinthians 3:17-18**

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This thesis is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This paper considers the person and work of the Holy Spirit, in the transformation of believers, through the thought of Søren Kierkegaard. In recent research, Kierkegaard's theology of transformation has been increasingly clarified, however, the role of the Holy Spirit has been difficult to ascertain. By exploring *The Sickness & Practice*, this paper seeks to illuminate the Spirit's role in the theology of Anti-Climacus (Kierkegaard's pseudonym). In addition, Anti-Climacus is brought into conversation with 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, incipient references to 2 Corinthians in *Practice* are shown to produce sustained reflection on the role of the Spirit in directing believers to Jesus and transforming their lives into a cruciform likeness. This exposition of Anti-Climacus makes possible a fuller Trinitarian account of transformation in the thought of Kierkegaard.

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Abbreviations

Kierkegaard's Works

- CD* Søren Kierkegaard, *Christian Discourses* and *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- CUP1*,
- CUP2* Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. 2 vols. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- EUD* Søren Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- EPW* Søren Kierkegaard, *Early Polemical Writings*. Ed. and trans. Julia Watkin. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- FSE*,
- JFY* Søren Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination* and *Judge for Yourself!* Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- JP* *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*. 7 vols. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967–78.
- KJN* *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*. 11 vols. Ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, George Pattison, Vanessa

- Rumble, and K. Brian Söderquist. Princeton, N.J.:Princeton University Press, 2007–
- Pap.* Søren Kierkegaards *Papirer*. 16 vols. 2nd., ed. Niels Thulstrup. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968–70.
- PC* Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- PF* Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments* and *Johannes Climacus*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- PV* Søren Kierkegaard, *On My Work as an Author: The Point of View for My Work as an Author* and *Armed Neutrality*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- SKS* Søren Kierkegaard *Skrifter*. 28 vols. Ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakin Garff, Jette Knudsen, Johnny Kondrup, Alastair Mckinnon, Finn Hauberg Mortensen, Tonny Aagaard Olesen and Steen Tullberg. Copenhagen: Forskningscenteret, 1997-2013.
- SUD* Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- TA* Søren Kierkegaard, *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age. A Literary Review*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- UDVS* Søren Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

- WA* Søren Kierkegaard, *Without Authority*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- WL* Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*. Ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Other Works

- DBWE 4* Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in English Volume 4: Discipleship*. Ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey. Trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.
- DBWE 14* Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in English Volume 14: Theological Education at Finkenwalde: 1935-1937*. Ed. H. Gaylon Barker and Mark S Bocker. Trans. Douglas W. Scott. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.
- DBWE 16* Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in English Volume 16: Conspiracy and Imprisonment: 1940-1945*. Ed. Mark S Bocker. Trans. Lisa E. Dahill and Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.
- LW* *Luther's Works*. 55 vols. Eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957-1986.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*, NIV, Biblica, 2011.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

At the summit of his work *Practice in Christianity* Kierkegaard's pseudonym Anti-Climacus speaks of a young man transfixed by an image of the crucified Christ shown to him in his childhood.

So the youth goes out into the world with this image before his eyes. He does not need to do what piety felt the urge to do – to walk the long way to the Holy Land in order to put himself back in time, because this image is so vivid to him that in another sense he still can be said to have journeyed abroad, although he remains in his customary place in the old surroundings – but occupied solely with wanting to resemble this image. And it exercises its power over him, the power of love, which is indeed capable of everything, above all of making alike; his whole deepest inner being is transformed little by little, and he seems to be beginning to resemble, however imperfectly, this image that has made him forget everything – also the world in which he is, which now regards him with astonishment and alienation.”¹

“And just as it so beautifully happens with lovers that they begin to resemble each other, so the young man is transformed in likeness to this image, which imprints or impresses itself on all his thought and on every utterance by him, while he, to repeat, with his eyes directed to this image – has not watched his step, had not paid attention to where he is.”²

Anti-Climacus vividly portrays, what it looks like for the reality of Jesus Christ crucified to not be a fact of history but be a person with transformative impact on the life of the believer. The young man walks transfixed by the love of Christ and with eyes set on Christ's person as little by little he is led to become like him. Anti-Climacus describes a present, personal and captivating vision of the person of Christ which goes beyond any personal reflection. In this

¹ PC, 193.

² PC, 189.

personal encounter, the image is slowly ‘impressed’ on his inward self and leads him to the ultimate destiny of outwardly becoming alienated as Christ was in his death before the world.

These words allude to the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” Here Paul describes the transforming encounter of a believer with the Triune God of grace. There is no question more central or fundamental to the faith than the means of experiencing the transforming effects of the gospel. At the culmination of Anti-Climacus’ two-fold corpus we see him showing, theologically and personally, how the Triune God is at work remaking human lives. This paper seeks to make sense of how far Anti-Climacus can take us into that picture of transformation, by asking, ‘*What can Anti-Climacus tell us about transformation in the hands of the Triune God?*’ I seek to answer this through exploring Anti-Climacus’ two works, *The Sickness Unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity* in conversation with 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

1. Anti-Climacus and Kierkegaard’s authorship

Transformation was a central concern for Kierkegaard as evidenced in his unpublished work *The Point of View*. Scholars have suggested a vast array of possibilities to make sense of *PV* as a work.³ When we read *PV*, we feel the lack of resolution and understanding of someone trying

³ Lee C. Barrett, “A Cacophony of Voices: The Multiple Authors and Readers of Kierkegaard’s Point of View as My Work as an Author,” in *The Point of View*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 22 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Macon, Georgia USA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 13–14. Fenger is the original voice of skepticism suggesting that Kierkegaard himself wrote “literature with his life” and it was the fault of commentators to take him at his word. Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard, the Myths and Their Origins*, trans. George C Schoolfield (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 31. Garff likewise considers the movement between objective account and personal defence to relegate *PV* to fiction. Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard. A Biography*, trans. B.H. Kirmmse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 562

to grapple with their own life and God's work in it.⁴ Even though it is "an attempt to work out Kierkegaard's relationship to the remarkable authorship he produced", we do get a window into the nature of Kierkegaard's corpus.⁵

"The content, then, of this little book is: what I in truth am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that my whole authorship pertains to Christianity, to the issue: becoming a Christian, with direct and indirect polemical aim at the enormous illusion, Christendom, or the illusion that in such a country all are Christians of sorts."⁶

Curiously, Kierkegaard is not interested in what a Christian is, but what it looks like to *become* a Christian. Kierkegaard sees this as necessary because of the state of Christendom: "my work as an author: it makes manifest the illusion of Christendom and provides a vision of what it is to become a Christian."⁷ Through his life and work as an author, he has a deep sense of God's presence with him, upholding and transforming him in the midst of his work.⁸ Indeed, "my God-relationship, is in many ways the happy love of my unhappy and troubled life."⁹ As a result, few "philosophers have captured the variety and complexity of human psychology as the 'connoisseur of the human heart'".¹⁰ Kierkegaard is not someone who speaks abstractly about the transformation of Christian faith but is experienced from his encounters with the God of Jesus Christ.

I will seek to consider the theme of transformation in conversation with Anti-Climacus. Each of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms addresses and aids his aim in different ways requiring careful

⁴ Murray A. Rae, "A Life Directed by Governance: Kierkegaard's Confessional Autobiography," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 32.2 (2017): 199.

⁵ Barrett, "A Cacophony of Voices," 40.

⁶ PV, 23.

⁷ PV, 88.

⁸ PV, 74-75.

⁹ PV, 71.

¹⁰ Patrick Stokes, *Kierkegaard's Mirrors: Interest, Self and Moral Vision* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 7.

treatment in order to retrieve coherent answers.¹¹ “Kierkegaard’s thought, though programmatic, is not systematic”, according to Stokes; we cannot assume a commonality between different pseudonyms in particular.¹² “A Pseudonym is excellent for accentuating a point, a stance, a position. It creates a poetic person.”¹³ This means each “pseudonymous writing represents the point of view of its author in style and in content.”¹⁴ Respecting the voice and character of pseudonyms is vital, along with resisting the urge to create cohesive theological themes that squash the contours of the variety of voices. In contemplating transformation in the hands of the Triune God, we are asking exactly how the Christian God of the Trinity is active in remaking human lives, in alignment with Kierkegaard’s aims, and will accomplish this by listening to the voice of Anti-Climacus.

In the midst of a varied array of pseudonyms, Anti-Climacus is Kierkegaard’s superior spiritual voice. Anti-Climacus authors two works in Kierkegaard’s corpus, *The Sickness Unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*. Before the publication of *Sickness*, the author suggests, Anti-Climacus is “extremely valuable.”¹⁵ It is best to introduce Anti-Climacus in the words of his creator:

Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus have several things in common; but the difference is that whereas Johannes Climacus places himself so low that he even says himself that he is not a Christian, one seems to be able to detect in Anti-Climacus that he regards himself to be a Christian on an extraordinarily high level... I would place myself higher than Johannes Climacus, lower than Anti-Climacus.¹⁶

¹¹ Mark C. Taylor, *Kierkegaard’s Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 14.

¹² Stokes, *Kierkegaard’s Mirrors*, 62.

¹³ JP 6, 6421 / SKS 22, 88 [NB11:150].

¹⁴ Taylor, *Pseudonymous Authorship*, 55.

¹⁵ JP 6, 6361 / SKS 21, 293 [NB10:69].

¹⁶ JP 6, 6433 / SKS 22, 130 [NB11:209].

Kierkegaard places Climacus and Anti-Climacus in relation to one another. The ‘anti’ is not meant to suggest opposition but rather a sense of ‘before’. Anti-Climacus is spiritually ‘higher’ than his counterpart Climacus. Indeed, Anti-Climacus was to be Kierkegaard’s final pseudonym closing his corpus with a rigorous Christian voice.¹⁷ The preface to *Practice* gives more clues, here “being a Christian is forced by the pseudonymous author to a supreme ideality.”¹⁸ In the preface to *Sickness*, the work is described as appearing “too rigorous to be upbuilding and too upbuilding to be rigorously scholarly.”¹⁹ So, Anti-Climacus has both theological acuity and spiritual fervour. It is precisely his position as an extraordinary believer that gives him both practical and theological insight into the reality of transformation.

There is much we could say about Anti-Climacus, but the most obvious is that he works theologically from passages of scripture. Indeed, Anti-Climacus is a “servant of the Word...whose task it is, as far as a human being is capable of it, to draw people to” Christ.²⁰ *Sickness* is an exposition of Jesus’ saying at the tomb of Lazarus: “This is not the sickness unto death” (John 11:4). What follows is an exploration of what it means to be eternally sick, the despair hidden in every human spirit. It is in fact a theological diagnosis from a spiritual physician given to an individual on their sickbed. Kierkegaard’s journals reveal a desire for “genuine anthropological contemplation, which has not yet been undertaken.”²¹ Likewise, *Practice* is structured around three sayings of the Lord Jesus found in the gospel accounts Matt 11:28, Luke 7:23 and John 12:32. These texts are connected theologically to form a picture of approach to Christ, the reality of offence at his lowly life and how he draws people to himself

¹⁷ Jakub Marek, “Anti-Climacus: Kierkegaard’s ‘Servant of the Word,’” in *Kierkegaard’s Pseudonyms*, ed. Jon Stewart and Katalin Nun, vol. 17 of *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 39.

¹⁸ PC, 7.

¹⁹ SUD, 5.

²⁰ PC, 262.

²¹ JP 1, 37 / SKS 27, 234 [Papir 264:3].

despite this. Hence when asking Anti-Climacus to theologically expound 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, I am simply appealing to the ordinary methodology employed by himself as a character. The resonance at the summit of *Practice* with this passage makes it a fruitful text to ask Anti-Climacus to unpack for us.

A more pertinent question is whether Anti-Climacus can provide us with a Trinitarian portrait of transformation, given the relatively few explicit mentions of the Holy Spirit or the Father in either of his works. Despite this, the person of Christ is explicitly central to both of Anti-Climacus' works. It is not the quantity of references but the quality of them which gives a sense of Anti-Climacus' Trinitarian theology. The common Trinitarian thread in both of Anti-Climacus' works is his mention of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, referring to Jesus' reply to religious leaders who called him demonic. In the gospel accounts it is suggested that to misunderstand the person of Jesus Christ is to reject the truth mediated by the Holy Spirit. Rae's summary of pneumatology in Kierkegaard marks Anti-Climacus' contribution as this understanding of sin against the Spirit.²² However, the potential deeper insights of Anti-Climacus' theology remain unexamined. Most studies of pneumatology in Kierkegaard look to either his journals or the more explicit work of *Judge For Yourself* or *For-Self Examination*.²³ Anti-Climacus mentions of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit suggest he holds a particular place for the double mediation of God's purposes through the Son and the Spirit—it is this theology we are looking for Anti-Climacus to unpack. Of course, we must also pay attention to Anti-Climacus' dislike of doctrine for its own sake. "Anti-Climacus is a voice against

²² Murray A. Rae, "The Holy Spirit: Kierkegaard's Understated Pneumatology," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Theology of Kierkegaard*, ed. Aaron P. Edwards and David J. Gouwens (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 368.

²³ The most prominent example is Paul Martens, "The Emergence of the Holy Spirit in Kierkegaard's Thought: Critical Theological Developments in *For Self-Examination* and *Judge for Yourself!*," in *For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself!*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 21 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Macon, Georgia USA: Mercer University Press, 2002), 200–222.

doctrine, in so far as it does not do justice to the reality of life”.²⁴ Thus Anti-Climacus will not provide simple propositions regarding the nature of the Trinity, instead he will summon us to the “prevailing mood required” to relate to each member of the Trinity.²⁵

We see further evidence of the depth of Anti-Climacus’ Trinitarian reflection in his creedal statements and prayers.

God’s only begotten Son, our Lord, who from eternity was with God, was God, came to the world, the ascended into heaven, where he now sits at the Father’s right hand glorified with the glory he had before the world was.²⁶

The prayers are full of not just abstract knowledge of Christ but full of relation to him, and longing after him. In other words, Anti-Climacus is interested in the relation of humanity to the Trinity, not only God as a notion. It is the combination of clear psychological explanation and theological orthodoxy that gives Anti-Climacus a unique capacity to articulate the Trinitarian picture of transformation. We see similar in the prayer deleted from *Sickness* before publication.

Father in heaven!... grant that each one of us may rightly become aware of which sickness is the sickness unto death, and of how we are all sick in this way! And you, Lord Jesus Christ, you who came to the world to heal those who suffer from this sickness... help us in this sickness to turn to you to be healed! And you, God the Holy Spirit...be with us so that we never to our own ruination elude the physician’s help but remain with him.²⁷

²⁴ Lee C. Barrett, “Kierkegaard on Doctrine: The Grammar of Christian Pathos,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Theology of Kierkegaard*, ed. Aaron P. Edwards and David J. Gouwens (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 52.

²⁵ Barrett, “Kierkegaard on Doctrine,” 63–64.

²⁶ PC, 167.

²⁷ KJN 4, 287 [NB4:2] / SKS 20, 285.

It makes sense for Anti-Climacus to delete this prayer from *Sickness* given his placement of the Holy Spirit at the climax of his argument. However, it does give a window into the theological vision that accompanies Anti-Climacus' journey through *Sickness*: a living relation to the triune God heals the sickness of sin. It is a living relation to Christ established and maintained by the Holy Spirit which makes someone a Christian. Anti-Climacus thus conceives faith in Trinitarian terms.

If we trust the characterization of Anti-Climacus, he is given to us as a theological voice with a clear Trinitarian insight into the working of God in ordinary life. In an autobiographical moment, Anti-Climacus admits to being “one of those rare human beings” who bears Christ’s likeness, yet came to that position not through “virtues but rather on account of my sins” and is able to illuminate “what is humanly true...an awareness of the Holy” for all believers.²⁸ In asking him to unpack 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, we are simply asking him to reproduce his methodology upon another text which requires an explanation of his Trinitarian insights. In asking this of Anti-Climacus, we ask a question in line with both his character and the wider concerns of Kierkegaard’s corpus.

2. The modern theological imagination and transformation

The extensive proliferation of Kierkegaard scholarship has come of age and now needs to come “into dialogue with living questions and problems” in philosophy and theology.²⁹ Articulating the Trinitarian transformation of believers is such a living theological question because of a variety of theological assumptions inherent in the imagination of present day believers. “Moral

²⁸ PC, 139.

²⁹ Stokes, *Kierkegaard’s Mirrors*, 6.

Therapeutic Deism” is one way to explain some of these implicit ideas, in this view, God “wants people to be nice, and happy (hence “moralistic” and “therapeutic”) but is not actively involved in the process of transforming people (hence “deism”)”.³⁰ Rather than the vision of 2 Corinthians 3:18, we have here a version of self-transformation patterned after modern ideals of happiness. Such a vision also introduces a “spiritualistic therapeutic Trinitarianism”. In other words, it involves a misunderstanding of God’s relation to the world.

Central to many modern theological assumptions is a grappling with the radical self-assertion of human agency in modernity, as suggested by Pippin. “The general ‘German’ idea of self-determination or a self-grounding is, Hegel says, the principle of modernity”.³¹ In classical thought, humanity conducted “peaceful contemplation of the order of the cosmos”, following the enlightenment, nature was “to be mastered, not contemplated ... a kind of technological self-assertion, was born.”³² However, there was no basis for this self-assertion: Descartes based it in human rationality, but Kant radically maintained it requires no ground or frame. Hegel’s answer was to ground the emergence of radical autonomy in the history of human culture as part of a divine self-realisation. Pippin suggests Hegel was masterful in his historization of Kant’s project but does not think the metaphysical claim of an “absolute subject” who becomes “self-conscious” through this process is as influential on human life. However, if Hegel’s metaphysic is not popularly held, then why the modern longing to identify “that part of you that was itself an emanation of the energy or life or world-soul of nature as a whole” as he later suggests?³³

³⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 164.

³¹ Robert B. Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 13.

³² Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 5.

³³ Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 61.

The inherent deism in this view is revealed more clearly by Taylor's account of the *social imaginary* of the secular age. Taylor's thesis is that faith has not been abandoned in modern life, but has instead been replaced by an "exclusive humanism" which eclipses "all goals beyond human flourishing".³⁴ Key to this was a decline in the Christian providential vision of the world. A movement away from "God as an agent interacting with humans and intervening in human history" and instead "God as architect of a universe operating by unchanging laws".³⁵ The result was a loss of transcendence and the rise of an immanent view of reality which was accompanied by a decline in divine agency and an increase in human agency. The secular self is a "disciplined agent, capable of remaking the self, who has discovered and thus released in himself the awesome power of control".³⁶ The reality of finding "our moral sources within" is the rise of the need for self-transformation to unlock the divine energy in the human heart.³⁷

Within Christian theology, this deism results from a failure to articulate God's relation to the world and the individual. In modernity, God was not dismissed as the unifying reality of life but simply replaced. Gunton looks to Kierkegaard's lament of the rise of a "phantom" "a monstrous abstraction, an all-encompassing something that is nothing...and this phantom is *the public*..."³⁸ Modernity was supposed to lead to a liberation of the many but instead led to "new forms of slavery to the one".³⁹ Hegel's concept of Spirit was not a solution but a repeat of the same issue: "Spirit is that which at once unifies and gives meaning to what happens in the human cultural enterprise."⁴⁰ However, this leads to an elevation of culture to kingdom status and "the Spirit displaces the Father and the Son" and a "demonic immanentism" results.⁴¹

³⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 19.

³⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 270.

³⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 257.

³⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 258.

³⁸ TA, 90.

³⁹ Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34.

⁴⁰ Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 147.

⁴¹ Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 148.

Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel is precisely this loss of the uniqueness of the Son of God in the eternal movement of Spirit.

Gunton suggests Christianity is culpable for these failings because both prior to and during the rise of modernism there was an "absence of a rich comprehensive Christology and a Pneumatology of religious experience."⁴² Without a Trinitarian account, God's relation to creation is through an arbitrary will and "self-assertion". Modernity's struggle with its own assertion of radical autonomy is simply a replication of the self-asserting God on an individual human level. Gunton suggests this is not simply a Hegelian problem, but one of Western theology's continual elevation of the one over the many in Trinitarian terms. Hence without a Trinitarian account, the individual will not make sense of their place in the world.

What emerges is not simply a philosophical issue regarding agency or a social issue of secularity, but a theological issue of God's relation to the world. Modernity's assertion of self-autonomy, relocated the freedom once uniquely ascribed to divinity into human will and agency. The roots of this radical change lie in an inability to relate the one God to the world in a way which holds together the unity of all things and the individual agency of creatures. To help modern people, what is needed is a theological vision of the way that the Father relates the world to himself through his Spirit and his Son. Importantly, Gunton locates Kierkegaard's importance in both perceiving and challenging the Hegelian resolution of this problem. Our conversation with Anti-Climacus will help answer these problems inherent in the modern theological imagination.

⁴² Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 55.

3. Outline of method and chapters

As mentioned, this paper asks the question: ‘*What can Anti-Climacus tell us about transformation in the hands of the Triune God?*’ Specifically, can Kierkegaard’s pseudonym provide an account of how the Triune God works in the world. To do this, I am asking Anti-Climacus to unpack theologically 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. In doing this, I am asking Anti-Climacus to continue his work with an eye on Paul’s Trinitarian theology. Methodologically I will follow the contours of Anti-Climacus’ arguments in both *Sickness* and *Practice* respectively, honouring his integrity as a pseudonym. To bring Anti-Climacus into conversation with 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, I will firstly seek to examine the text theologically to formulate two questions for Anti-Climacus, one for each book respectively, focusing on the Trinitarian content in his works.

In chapter two, I will answer the question of *why* we should ask Anti-Climacus about transformation in the hands of the Triune God. Through a brief survey of the theological milieu of Kierkegaard’s Copenhagen, it becomes clear that articulating God’s relation to the world was vital for Kierkegaard. However, recent scholarship, though increasingly clarifying God’s agency in transformation, still leaves the role of the Holy Spirit unclear. Additionally, Anti-Climacus, though consulted in many treatments is rarely asked in isolation for his opinion on the theological matters of transformation. Putting these two realities together, it appears Anti-Climacus has a contribution in comprehending Kierkegaard’s Trinitarian theology of transformation.

In chapter three, I will consider *what* to ask Anti-Climacus. Kierkegaard’s high regard for scripture is well known, but his relation to Paul’s epistles less so. However, there is a central

place for the Corinthian epistles in Kierkegaard's work, particularly the theological understanding of Paul's life of suffering in 2 Corinthians. Hence, I unpack 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 theologically, with the assistance of Luther and Bonhoeffer, to formulate two theological questions for Anti-Climacus. Centred on the work of the Holy Spirit, it emerges that we need to ask Anti-Climacus about how the Holy Spirit unveils believers and how the Holy Spirit enables the inward captivation of the believer with Christ and the concrete outer conformity to Christ's likeness.

In chapter four, I ask Anti-Climacus, '*How does the Holy Spirit unveil believers and set them free?*' The veiled nature of humanity, as expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians, is the inability of anyone to access the glory of God in their sinful fallen state. The removal of the veil is how the Holy Spirit, through the gospel, brings about the remarkable access promised in the new covenant. For this I consider his work *Sickness Unto Death* and its understanding of the human malady of despair. Anti-Climacus' escalating picture of despair begins with the psychological and ends with the theological, concluding with the relation of the self to the Son and Spirit. Despair can only be finally understood in relation to the Triune God. The Holy Spirit unveils believers by enabling them to receive the forgiveness of sins by beholding the glory of Christ crucified. In this process, the old self, forged through their own despairing and agency, is put to death.

In chapter five, I ask Anti-Climacus, '*How does the Holy Spirit inwardly captivate and outwardly conform believers to Christ crucified?*' For this I consider Anti-Climacus' second work, *Practice in Christianity*, and how it describes the progress of believers in relation to Christ. Anti-Climacus' understanding of contemporaneity makes clear that the Holy Spirit mediates a vision of Christ which increasingly takes over the inner life of believers. At the

same time, the concrete details of believers' lives are ordered through governance so that they image Christ crucified. The believer is led by the Spirit, held by Christ's love, in and through situations which lead to their cruciformity. In this way, the Spirit forms particular disciples through the events of their own lives.

Hence, Anti-Climacus has much to tell us about transformation in the hands of the Triune God; throughout his works there is a clear vision of the double mediation of God's purposes through Son and Spirit. The Holy Spirit, as the agent of transformation, is forming lives into the likeness of Christ for the glory of God the Father. There are clear limitations to where Anti-Climacus can take us, but with his help we can see some important parts of Kierkegaard's Trinitarian theology and discern an answer to the theological issue apparent in the modern imagination.

Chapter 2 – Why we need to ask Anti-Climacus

In this chapter, I will seek to answer the question: ‘*Why* should we ask Anti Climacus about transformation in the hands of the Triune God?’ Firstly, I will demonstrate that if Kierkegaard was to show how to become a Christian in the nineteenth century Danish world, he needed to articulate it in Trinitarian terms. Through a look at the Hegelian debates prevalent in his era, it will become clear that the problem was in understanding the relationship of God to the world. Secondly, I will show that present research into transformation in Kierkegaard is seeking clarification exactly at this point. An overemphasis on human agency in transformation has resulted from a diminished understanding of the Holy Spirit in Kierkegaard’s writing. Thirdly, I will consider the concurrent methodological issue of the underuse of the pseudonym Anti-Climacus. The varied ways of assembling Kierkegaard’s disparate corpus usually assign Anti-Climacus a supporting role rather than a central one, particularly in understanding the role of the Holy Spirit. Thus, scholarship is yet to thoroughly consult his theology of transformation, even though Anti-Climacus is the character most likely to answer in Trinitarian terms.

1. The Trinitarian theology of Kierkegaard's day

The Hegelian influence on nineteenth-century theology dissolved Christian doctrine into a speculative framework. Hegel's God was somewhat defined in Trinitarian terms, but vastly different from the vocabulary of the Christian tradition. “Speculative theology, then, was a wave of theological issues that engage the generation of the 1830’s and 1840’s.”¹ However, it was not Hegel's unmediated voice which resounded in the Copenhagen of Kierkegaard’s day.

¹ George Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century: The Paradox and the ‘Point of Contact’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 33.

Stewart in particular has demonstrated that Danish Hegelianism was complex, even the strongest proponents of Hegel did not accept his system without reservation. “Often what Kierkegaard criticizes as “Hegelian” is in fact a specific appropriation or misappropriation of Hegel by people like them.”² In addition, there were critics from whom Kierkegaard may have found the beginnings of his own theology. Hans Friedrich Helweg in his commentary on Danish Hegelianism at the end of the nineteenth considered Kierkegaard to sit at the centre of the Hegelian debate: “Hegelianism came to an end in Kierkegaard, and yet he never completely rejected Hegel.”³ Kierkegaard was the firm opponent of and yet also student of the theological traditions of his time. My aim is not to decipher Kierkegaard’s exact position in these debates, but to demonstrate that he was in conversation with a variety of theological ideas which involved a problematic understanding of God’s relation to the world. If Trinitarian theology was a significant issue in Kierkegaard’s day then he needed to address it in order to show how someone became a Christian.

It is worth exploring the breadth of the theological debates in Kierkegaard’s world. Keeping in mind the complexity of Hegel’s reception in Denmark, Pattison considers both the “right-wing” Hegelianism of Kierkegaard’s principal theological teacher Hans Lassen Martensen and also the “left-wing Hegelianism of Strauss” *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* to be influential on Kierkegaard.⁴ Stewart also considers Martensen to be one of the most significant voices in Danish Hegelianism. Johan Ludvig Heiberg was considered to be a foundational voice in Denmark, with a focus on “logic and aesthetics”.⁵ However, despite his association and at times clear derision of Heiberg, Kierkegaard’s criticism of Martensen is more substantial and

² Jon Stewart, “Kierkegaard and Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark,” in *Kierkegaard and His Contemporaries: The Culture of Golden Age Denmark*, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 10 of *Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 144.

³ Cited in Stewart, “Kierkegaard and Hegelianism,” 144.

⁴ Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century: The Paradox and the ‘Point of Contact*, 33.

⁵ Stewart, “Kierkegaard and Hegelianism,” 112.

consistent over time, making him a more significant theological opponent. Martensen is also of interest because of the fullness of his Trinitarian reflection.

In making sense of Kierkegaard's Trinitarian context, I will be making sketches of significant streams of thought. Firstly, I will consider Hegel—although not comprehensively adopted, he still lays the theological foundation of the discussions that follow. Secondly, I consider Schleiermacher as the theological resonance between Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher is hard to dismiss, especially as presented by Pattison.⁶ He also provides an important precursor to the work of Strauss, who we will consider thirdly because of his influential publication of *The Life of Jesus*. Finally, I will explore Martensen's thought as the immediate precursor to Kierkegaard's own theological perspective. What will become apparent in all of them is the breakdown of Trinitarian theology—both the place of Christ the Son in the work of redemption and the work of the Holy Spirit in mediating the person of Christ are relegated by historical or philosophical reflection.

a. Georg W. F. Hegel

Kierkegaard directly deals with the works of Hegel early in his student life. In the *Concept of Irony* (1841), Kierkegaard appears to use Hegel's dialectic method and dialogues with Hegel as he discusses Socrates.⁷ Significantly, Kierkegaard refers to Hegel's major lectures on the *Philosophy of History* and *History of Philosophy*. In a later journal entry, Kierkegaard reflects upon the longing in theology to create a final conceptualization and then leave it behind: "Along came Hegel and the Hegelianism... all this about trinity was shadow-boxing; it was

⁶Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 7–8.

⁷ Jon Stewart, "Kierkegaard's View of Hegel," in *A Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Jon Stewart (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 52.

the old logical trilogy (thesis-antithesis-synthesis), and the ‘personhood’ which resulted from it”.⁸ Kierkegaard also responds to a form of Hegel’s theology taught in a lecture by Philipp Marheineke, who was also the editor of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Religion*. Marheineke’s understanding of revelation demonstrated “the philosophical evaporation of the Chr. Concept of doctrine – the logical principle that the finite is the infinite”, Marheineke’s lecture on the image of God was similarly “an evaporation of this kind.”⁹ For Marheineke, the divine image is brought forth in “the intensity that is Spirit” through the bridging of difference through the Son.¹⁰ This leads Stewart to conclude that it is “conceptual understanding of the Trinity to which Kierkegaard objects”.¹¹

Within Hegel's thought, the Trinity are stages in God's transition to a self-conscious subject. The three persons of the Trinity correspond to three *kingdoms*. Hegel articulates:

- (1) First, in and for itself, God [is] in his eternity before the creation of the world and outside of the world.
- (2) Second, God creates the world and posits the separation. He creates both nature and finite spirit. What is thus created is at first an other, posited outside of God. But God is essentially the reconciling to himself of what is alien...
- (3) In the third place, through this process of reconciliation, spirit has reconciled itself with itself what it distinguished from itself in its act of diremption, of primal division, and thus it is Holy Spirit, Spirit [present] in its community.¹²

⁸ JP 2, 1615 / SKS 23, 68 [NB 15:96].

⁹ KJN 3, 239-240 [NB 8:52-53] / SKS 19, 246.

¹⁰ KJN 3, 249-250 [NB 9:1] / SKS 19, 255-256.

¹¹ Stewart, “Kierkegaard’s View of Hegel,” 56.

¹² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel: Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: Volume III: The Consummate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 273–74. Hereafter, LPR III.

Hegel does not understand the members of the Trinity as persons, but as “vanishing moments” in the divine life.¹³ Along with this is a rejection of the distinction between immanent and economic Trinity. Hegel’s *Geist*, initially, resides in itself, like the Father, then becomes its opposite and overcomes it, like the Son, and finally returns to itself, like the Holy Spirit. In essence, this appears to be a sophisticated form of modalism.

Jesus Christ is still a necessary mediator in Hegel’s system, but only as the revealer of divine and human unity. Christ makes humanity conscious of their divinity because he is, “the absolute Idea, the Son of God.”¹⁴ Christ also annuls death and particularity, “the immediacy of existing particularity, is annulled, and this is brought about by death; the death of Christ”.¹⁵ After this, the historical reality of Jesus Christ is of no subsequent significance, “when Christianity is carried back to its first appearing, it is brought down to the level of unspirituality.”¹⁶ Rather than historical investigation, rationality and philosophy are required to make sense of the symbols of Christianity. Following the death of Christ and the negation of finitude, there is a transition from Christ’s specific physical presence to a general spiritual presence.¹⁷ The kingdom of Spirit is the time in which individuals internalise the reality of Christ’s revelation and take up their place collectively as Spirit.

Christ, man as man, in whom the unity of God and man has appeared, has in his death and his history generally, himself presented the eternal history of spirit – a history that

¹³Cyril O’Regan, “The Trinity in Kant, Hegel, and Schelling,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 261.

¹⁴ LPR III, 72-73.

¹⁵ LPR III, 92.

¹⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1896), 3:14.

¹⁷ Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 175.

every man has to accomplish in himself in order to exist as Spirit, or to become a child of God, a citizen of his kingdom.¹⁸

Each person is required to take up their place in Spirit and enact the history of Christ, especially through the eucharist. Rather than the Spirit bringing people into relationship with the Father through the Son, we are assimilated into the corporate history of Spirit.

Hegel dissolved the significance of Jesus Christ and confused the presence of the Holy Spirit with the existence of the historical community. In addition, Jesus is mediated not by the person of the Spirit but the rational capacity of humanity in community. For Hegel, the Spirit was the end point of victory over the difficulty of the world and the consummation of a new full reality in each person. Despite all the other philosophical claims Hegel makes the fundamental issue is a shift in the understanding of the nature of the Trinity.

b. Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher

Kierkegaard's direct interaction with Schleiermacher is confirmed by Martensen who personally tutored Kierkegaard through parts of *The Christian Faith*.¹⁹ Kierkegaard's relationship with Schleiermacher is especially interesting because scholars both claim him as a fervent disciple and also as a vehement opponent. The fundamental difference between the two is on the issue of God's relation to the individual. Schleiermacher saw the presence of God-consciousness in every human regardless of their stance toward their maker. Kierkegaard demonstrated the alienation that was inherent for each person despite the possibility of a God-relationship. "To put the point as briefly as possible: if Schleiermacher is the representative par

¹⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007), 328.

¹⁹ Garff, *Biography*, 30.

excellence of the synthesis of theology and culture, Kierkegaard is the representative par excellence of their entire opposition.”²⁰

Schleiermacher’s use of the Trinity differs markedly from Hegel, he refuses the speculative approach, yet also dismisses the ultimate need of Trinitarian doctrine. Schleiermacher’s placement of the doctrine of the Trinity at the end *The Christian Faith* is itself enough to make sense of the place of the doctrine in forming his ideas. Of importance to Schleiermacher is “the union of the Divine Essence with human nature, both in the personality of Christ and in the common Spirit of the Church.” He declares that without this doctrine, there is no way for Christ to demonstrate the “idea of redemption” nor could the Church be “the Bearer and Perpetuator” of the redemption.²¹ Hence all that mattered was the “God-consciousness given in our self-consciousness” and “consciousness of the world” and hence there was no need for a “formula for the being of God in himself.”²² Hence Schleiermacher had little regard for the doctrine of the Trinity, for the simple reason that it was not demonstrable from the gospels or necessary for articulating the faith experience of believers. He at least considered the uniqueness of Christ as necessary for all people obtaining God-consciousness.

Schleiermacher saw Christ as a “type or ideal of humanity, and in whom this typical character was truly historical.”²³ Schleiermacher’s beginning point was the existential feeling of belief inherent in the biblical community. The “common element in all those determinations of self-consciousness... is the *feeling of dependence*.”²⁴ Evil consists in the “arrest of the vitality of the higher self-consciousness” which in its most extreme form is “*God-forgetfulness*,”

²⁰ Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 7.

²¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh, and J. S. Stewart (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 738.

²² Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 748.

²³ David Friedrich Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1865), 1:10.

²⁴ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 13.

however, even then there remains the possibility of a re-kindling of God-consciousness.²⁵ Christ as redeemer reveals the fullness of God-consciousness in himself and announces the potential in the human race as a whole. In this way “what is peculiar in the Redeemer’s kind of activity belongs to a general aspect of human nature” which does not diminish “the personal dignity” of Christ.²⁶ It “is only through him that the human God-consciousness becomes an existence of God in human nature”, he is the one who “develops the potency of God-consciousness.”²⁷ Christ appears as the archetypal picture of that religious fervour and feeling in a human being.²⁸ Christ himself, as the essential ideal, works to strengthen that consciousness within believers.

Kierkegaard’s notes on *The Christian Faith* show particular interaction with Schleiermacher’s understanding of the relation of divine and human agencies. Initially, Kierkegaard questions the collapse of feeling and self-consciousness into the same category.²⁹ He then considers a more profound issue of the freedom of relating to God in prayer. “But if the feeling of absolute dependence is the highest how does this relate to prayer? Wouldn’t prayer then have to be regarded as a fiction?”³⁰ Here is a query about the way that all passivity and activity in religious experience is dissolved into the one ultimate relation to God. We see here the beginnings of Kierkegaard’s understanding of the human-divine relationship which contrasts with Schleiermacher. A similar issue follows: “how can Schleiermacher at the same time assert that Christianity tends to the type of teleological piety and at the same time accept predestination?”³¹ Here we find Kierkegaard taking issue with precisely the role of human

²⁵ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 54–55.

²⁶ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 386.

²⁷ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 388.

²⁸ David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot (New York: C. Blanchard, 1860), 881–82.

²⁹ Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 13.

³⁰ SKS 27, 42 [Papir 9:6] cited in Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 14.

³¹ SKS 27, 42 [Papir 9:7] cited in Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 14.

agency and divine interaction. Pattison wants to suggest that Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher have a similar theology of God's relation to the world. However, there is initial evidence to suggest that this is precisely where the two differ. Christ's mediation of the absolute difference between God and man is the obvious full expression of this difference, as expressed by Anti-Climacus and Climacus respectively.

c. *David F. Strauss*

Given the widespread use of Strauss' *The Life of Jesus* in Europe at the time, it is "surprising that Kierkegaard says virtually nothing about Strauss" in his published works.³² Kierkegaard does mention "the Straussian evaporation that dissolves everything historical into myths".³³ In addition, Climacus refers to "the modern mythical allegorizing trend".³⁴ Kierkegaard appears to come into contact with Strauss through the critical work of Schaller and the lectures of Marheineke. We see in Strauss the development of both Hegel's methodology and Schleiermacher's insight about the *ideal* revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In this way, the Trinitarian confusion of both is deepened in Strauss' work. Strauss' work is a continuation of Hegel's call for the historical truth of Christianity to be left behind and mediated through the lens of speculative work. "The phenomenal history of the individual, says Hegel, is only a starting point for the mind... When the mind has thus gone beyond sensible history, and entered into the domain of the absolute, the former ceases to be essential."³⁵ Strauss seeks to move from the history of the person of Christ presented in the gospels to the reality of the idea behind them. This leaves very little room for Trinitarian reflection in his work on the life of Jesus Christ.

³² Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 58.

³³ EPW, 94n.

³⁴ CUP1, 218.

³⁵ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 896.

Strauss suggests that myth is the right category to deepen interpretation of the *Sacred History* of the gospels. He is distressed by the historical work of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which left “the public an irregular and confused mass of criticisms, impugning the authenticity and credibility of the scriptures.”³⁶ He is thankful for their work of divesting the biblical stories of the supernatural—miracles are “in the sacred history as a drapery which needs only to be drawn aside.”³⁷ However, he is most interested in Kant’s pursuit of the *idea* inherent in history, particularly its *moral imperative* which he attributed “not to the Divine Spirit, but to its philosophical interpreters”.³⁸ Strauss perceives an incomplete progression in speculation, but it is “impossible to rest satisfied with modes of proceeding so unhistorical on the one hand, and so unphilosophical on the other.”³⁹ The mythical interpretation is able to hold both the historical nature of Christ and also make sense of the idea behind the stories. For Strauss, the gospels are filled with mythical elements, “whether formed gradually by tradition or created by an individual author – is in each case the product of an *idea*.”⁴⁰

Instead of Schleiermacher’s revelation of God-consciousness in the individual, for Strauss, the mythical reality of the life of Christ was that *humanity* was the place where God was present. Strauss considers Schleiermacher’s theology a beautiful failure. On the one hand, Schleiermacher lets go of too much Christian orthodoxy, and on the other, his claim of the unique residence of God-consciousness in Christ is unprovable by science. Strauss has no interest in the person of Christ, only the idea which the sacred writings concerning him exhibit.

³⁶ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 18.

³⁷ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 25.

³⁸ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 25.

³⁹ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 27.

⁴⁰ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 70.

This is the key to the whole of Christology, that, as subject of the predicate which the Church assigns to Christ, we place, instead of an individual, an idea; but an idea which has existence in reality, not in the mind only, like that of Kant. In an individual, a God-man, the properties and functions which the church ascribes to Christ contradict themselves; in the idea of the race they perfectly agree.⁴¹

Thus, in line with Hegel, the sacred history of Christ reveals the ultimate union of humanity and divinity. The miracle-working of Christ demonstrates the capacity for mankind to subdue the natural world around them. The perfection of Christ is the blameless reality of humanity as a whole, despite our failures. “It is humanity that dies, rises and ascends to heaven, for from the negation of the phenomenal life...proceeds a higher spiritual life.” Transformation of humanity involves the “kindling” of the idea of divine-human unity and a subsequent corporate ascent to a “true spiritual life.”⁴²

Strauss’ work strengthened the dependence of believers upon the speculative work of philosophy. Rather than trust in Christ’s redemption, belief is in the capacity of man to comprehend divine realities. Transformation becomes a form of idealism: a spiritual awakening to the ultimate idea of divine relation to humanity. The person of Christ is completely subsumed in this theology. Christ is little more than the idea that rational minds come to in their search for the higher spiritual life. The power of the Holy Spirit is replaced by the power of the human mind and heart. There is no Trinity in Strauss’ understanding of the world. Kierkegaard makes this comment himself in a journal quoting Marheineke’s lectures:

⁴¹ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 895.

⁴² Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 896.

Div. and hum. nature are united in Xt as never before and never afterwards; for neither can the Xn community take Xt's place, since in that case one would confuse the incarnation with the indwelling of Xt's Spirit in the individual.⁴³

We see this work in Anti-Climacus himself, who takes up the idea of *Sacred History* as the historical reality of the person of Christ mediated to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. In this way Anti-Climacus answers Strauss' confusion with the two-fold mediation of Son and Spirit.

d. Hans L. Martensen

Martensen's appropriation of Hegelian thought varied markedly from Strauss: rather than considering the human collective, he focused upon the liberty of the individual. Martensen was Kierkegaard's teacher, and also the object of Kierkegaard's attacks later in life. Kierkegaard's notebooks contain Martensen's lectures on speculative dogmatics.⁴⁴ So, it is true in particular; "Martensen stands strategically between Hegel and Kierkegaard", although he is, as already stated not the only mediator of Hegel's thought.⁴⁵ Martensen was at times praised for his Danish contribution to speculative theology, "in Danish literature the system of moral philosophy stands theologically-philosophically as a typical expression of the triumph of speculative philosophy".⁴⁶ Martensen was a master of the speculative theological approach which sought to mediate truth through the lens of reason and philosophy. Of particular interest is Martensen's delicate balancing of the freedom between God and man.

⁴³ KJN 3, 267 [NB 9:1] / SKS 19, 271.

⁴⁴ KJN 2, 342-352 [KK:11] / SKS 18. 374-386.

⁴⁵ Curtis L. Thompson, "Introduction," in *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 2.

⁴⁶ Skat Arildsen, H. L. Martensen (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1932), 203 cited in Thompson, "Introduction," 20.

Martensen praises the Christian account of providence which in his mind avoided both pantheism and deterministic theism. In *Outline to a System of Moral Philosophy*, Martensen states how pantheism leads to a fatalistic determinism that “considers the Godhead as the world’s unconscious ground and the world as the ground’s necessary result”.⁴⁷ Theism is guilty of a similar fatalism because God’s “omnipotence and inscrutable wisdom” makes him into “the all-determining supernatural *cause*” denying any creaturely freedom.⁴⁸ However, the Christian view of providence “unites” the freedom of divinity with that of humanity. The “God of providence according to his free love ...fulfils its eternal decrees of wisdom through the very dialectic of human freedom.”⁴⁹ The God of providence lovingly releases human potential. In the note beneath his contemplation of Providence, Martensen further explains that providence is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

The complete knowledge of Providence contains the knowledge of the human's redemption and reconciliation, of the highest Good's incarnation in Christ, and of the kingdom of God's coming in the middle of the finite and sinful world. God's kingdom is the full actuality and revelation of Providence, for the reason that the human who is in God's kingdom *believe* in Providence and *act* in this belief. But this belief and action are moments in Providence itself; only in these does Providence step forward as Providence.⁵⁰

Christ is the place of the full revelation of divine purpose: the unity of divine and human freedom. A knowledge of providence leads to a submission to God’s kingdom purposes, even in the midst of suffering, in view of God’s purposes accomplished on the cross of Christ, which

⁴⁷ Hans L. Martensen, “Outline to a System of Moral Philosophy,” in *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen’s Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 263.

⁴⁸ Martensen, “Outline,” 264.

⁴⁹ Martensen, “Outline,” 265.

⁵⁰ Martensen, “Outline,” 265.

results in “a blessed ataraxia, a peace of mind” because believers are “one with the power which conquers the world.”⁵¹

Martensen’s further reflections, in his work *Meister Eckhart*, demonstrate the organic growth of Hegelianism from Lutheran mysticism. Essentially, Martensen sees the movement from Luther’s insistence on the real presence of the divinity to the development of Hegelianism by way of Lutheran mysticism.⁵² Quoting Luther’s words, “You shall be merged with Christ that out of you with confidence will say, ‘I am Christ, that is the righteousness, victory, and life of Christ are mine.’ And Christ likewise will say, ‘I am this sinner, that is, his sin, death, etc are mine.’”⁵³ The double *union mystica* in Lutheranism suggests both a general presence of God in all of creation and a second presence specifically with the believer. The Lutheran vision complicates the relation of “God’s Son and the world” on which the “*Christian* character of every doctrine of the Trinity turns”.⁵⁴ The conflation of God’s presence in creation and Christ leads to the idea that the Son is ultimately the “*world’s personal soul*, as the universe’s most interior self, its reconciler and mediator.”⁵⁵ Finally, creation and the incarnation of the Son become “moments in the Trinitarian process” which are brought forth together.⁵⁶ The problem of relating the uniqueness of the Son to creation is a vital problem in Lutheran theology.

Martensen looks to speculative theology as a way beyond these problems of relating the immanent and economic Trinity which leads to a fascinating statement of the nature of human transformation:

⁵¹ Martensen, “Outline,” 294.

⁵² Hans L. Martensen, “Meister Eckhart: A Study in Speculative Theology,” in *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen’s Philosophy of Religion.*, trans. Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 240.

⁵³ Martensen, “Meister Eckhart,” 236–37.

⁵⁴ Martensen, “Meister Eckhart,” 208.

⁵⁵ Martensen, “Meister Eckhart,” 210.

⁵⁶ Martensen, “Meister Eckhart,” 212.

It is the Father's essence to give birth to the Son; it is the Son's essence to be born, and also that *I am born in him*; it is the Spirit's essence that I am burned up in it and transformed into pure love. The negativity of [the human soul] is thus necessary for the Son's and Spirit's manifestation...Therefore God compels and drives us so that we might birth him the Son.⁵⁸

The word *necessary* stands out in this statement: the Son's and Spirit's embodiment are dependent *upon* the transformation of man. Providence, ultimately, is the initiative of the Father, through the Spirit, to give birth to the Son. Divine freedom is fulfilled through human freedom, the Son comes forth through the transformation of man. Transformation involves inwardly expelling evil and joining "hands with the divine will."⁵⁹ The practical outworking was to take up a vocation in the world: "to transform the world into God's kingdom, or to liberate it to its ideal... as a cooperating moment towards the absolute end of history."⁶⁰ Thus in the age of the Spirit, humanity realizes the kingdom of the son and God's purpose for creation through their own ethical freedom. Curiously, this leads to a rejection of martyrdom, as we are to live Christ's victory not bear the likeness of his defeat.⁶¹

Martensen ultimately presents a picture of Hegelianism which allows clearer places for the persons of the Trinity. However, Martensen cannot conceive of God's relation to the world without some version of panentheism. Creation in this way mediates the purposes of God rather than the Father mediating his purposes for creation through his Son and Spirit. The Spirit brings about a type of victory for the believer that denies the life of suffering which belonged to the person of Christ himself. In Martensen, we see most clearly the Trinitarian confusion which

⁵⁸ Martensen, "Meister Eckhart," 212.

⁵⁹ Martensen, "Outline," 278.

⁶⁰ Martensen, "Outline," 284.

⁶¹ Martensen, "Outline," 284.

Hegelian thought brought into the Danish theological context. Martensen himself describes Kierkegaard's relation to him and his theology:

In the beginning his relation to me had been friendly, but it assumed an increasingly hostile character. He was moved to this in part by the differences in our views and in part by the recognition I enjoyed from students.... which he clearly viewed.... as an unjustified overestimation...He sought to annihilate and extinguish every bit of activity that emanated from me.⁶²

Stewart further suggests that Kierkegaard was particularly incensed because Martensen grew his acclaim from Hegel's genius.⁶³ Despite this, it is clear that part of the issue to be taken with Martensen was his view of the Trinity and the transformation of human life—something we also see in the work of Anti-Climacus, an aversion to visions of transformation that preclude the life of suffering as a part of the life of faith.

e. Kierkegaard's Trinitarian challenge

This short survey of prominent Hegelian thinkers that influenced the theological climate of Copenhagen demonstrates the vital issue of the relation of God to the world. Whether it is Hegel's adoption of Trinitarian terms into a speculative system that dissolves their personhood and substance; Schleiermacher's denigration of the Trinitarian theology except in the service of affirming God-consciousness; Strauss' effective dismissal of the revelation of Trinity in search of the ideal behind the person of Christ; or Martensen's attempt at a theology of providence which still inflates the human self and confuses the role of the Holy Spirit and the

⁶² Cited in Stewart, "Kierkegaard and Hegelianism," 126.

⁶³ Stewart, "Kierkegaard and Hegelianism," 124.

cross of Christ, we see that for Kierkegaard to demonstrate what it means to become a Christian, he needed to show it in relationship to the Triune God.

The question raised by Karl Barth is whether Kierkegaard was really able to rise above the theology of his age at all. In reflection upon an early positive reaction to Kierkegaard, Barth said, to “sum up, Kierkegaard was bound more closely to the nineteenth century than we were willing to believe at the time.” At best, Kierkegaard provides a “holy individualism” without a view of church and its socio-political mission. Barth suggests Kierkegaard is not useful in solving the theological problems he claimed. “We could not attack its foundation, man-centred Christianity as such from a Kierkegaardian basis, because he himself had not attacked but rather fortified it immensely.”⁶⁴ Kierkegaard was good at awakening people to the “otherness of his Christianity” and the problems of modern theology.⁶⁵ However, interchanging theology with “existential philosophy” was problematic and only by moving on from Kierkegaard can a theologian “learn to walk.”⁶⁶

Torrance suggests Barth’s reception of Kierkegaard was coloured by Emmanuel Hirsch’s own theology and interaction with Kierkegaard.⁶⁷ Hirsch’s admiration for Kierkegaard is apparent in his exclamation of Anti-Climacus’ books as “among the imperishable writings of the Christian Church.”⁶⁸ Hirsch positioned Kierkegaard within the German theology of the nineteenth century, particularly “German Romanticism, Schleiermacher, and German

⁶⁴ Karl Barth, “A Thank-You and a Bow - Kierkegaard’s Reveille,” in *Fragments Grave and Gay*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London: Collins, 1971), 100.

⁶⁵ Karl Barth, “Kierkegaard and the Theologians,” in *Fragments Grave and Gay*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London: Collins, 1971), 103.

⁶⁶ Barth, “Kierkegaard and the Theologians,” 104.

⁶⁷ Andrew B. Torrance, “Beyond Existentialism: Kierkegaard on the Human Relationship with the God Who Is Wholly Other,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16.3 (2014): 297–99.

⁶⁸ Emmanuel Hirsch, *Kierkegaard-Studien, I-II* (Lichtenstein: Topos Verlag, 1978), I, p.229 cited in PC, xix.

idealism.”⁶⁹ Barth’s opposition to Hirsch’s anthropocentric theology led him to also distance himself from Kierkegaard’s theology.⁷⁰ Barth appears to “accept the portrait of Kierkegaard as a father of existentialism” who “perpetuated the Pietistic pre-occupation with the individual experience of salvation”.⁷¹ Barth fails to see Kierkegaard’s theological richness:

The problem, however, with Barth’s reading of Kierkegaard is that he failed to appreciate the more theological Kierkegaard who, as we shall see, really does seek to put the God revealed in Christ at the centre of the Christian faith.⁷²

Mackintosh considered Kierkegaard’s vision a vital antidotes to the theology of the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard was able to avoid: “Schleiermacher’s “psychologism,” Hegel’s “intellectualism,” and Ritschl’s “rationalistic moralism.””⁷³ Mackintosh considers Kierkegaard “in some degree a precursor of Karl Barth.”⁷⁴ Kierkegaard was definitely influenced by the subjectivity of his context, yet despite this he was able to re-establish some of the central theology of the Christian faith.

Martens suggests that while Kierkegaard does not give classic Trinitarian summaries of God’s action, his reflections show how the persons of the Trinity relate to individuals.⁷⁵ In one journal entry we see how God’s relation to humanity is mediated by Spirit and Son.

⁶⁹ Matthias Wilke, “Emmanuel Hirsch: A German Dialogue with ‘Saint Søren,’” in *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology Tome I: German Protestant Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 10 of *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 173.

⁷⁰ Lee C. Barrett, “Karl Barth: The Dialectic of Attraction and Repulsion,” in *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology Tome I: German Protestant Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 10 of *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 15.

⁷¹ Barrett, “Karl Barth: The Dialectic of Attraction and Repulsion,” 16.

⁷² Torrance, “Beyond Existentialism,” 299.

⁷³ David J. Gouwens, “Hugh Ross MacKintosh: Kierkegaard as a ‘Precursor of Karl Barth,’” in *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology Tome II: Anglophone and Scandinavian Protestant Theology*, ed. Jon Stewart, vol. 10 of *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 96.

⁷⁴ H. R. Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology*, The Fontana Library: Theology and Philosophy (London: Collins, 1964), 209.

⁷⁵ Paul Martens, “Trinity: A Concept Ubiquitous Yet Unthematized,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Theology of Kierkegaard*, ed. Aaron P. Edwards and David J. Gouwens (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 178.

Thus it is not the Spirit who leads to the Son, and the Son that leads to the Father – no, it is the Father who points to the Son, the Son who points to the Spirit, and only then is it the Spirit who leads to the Son and the Son who leads to the Father.⁷⁶

The first movement concerns the revelation of the persons of the Trinity. The second movement involves the bringing of humanity into the relationship. As Kierkegaard said, God “remains “my Father...through the Spirit in the Mediator.”⁷⁷ Kierkegaard, in light of the Trinitarian confusion of his time, looks to the Triune God to ultimately define what it means to be a Christian:

What does it mean to be a Christian? It means walking hand in hand with one's saviour under the eye of a heavenly Father, that is, under the eye of a truly loving father, strengthened by the testimony of the spirit.⁷⁸

Kierkegaard does not clarify the Trinity by relation to a theological system “but instead seeks to clarify the emotions, passions and dispositions that constitute a life lived with the Trinity.”⁷⁹ If we are to make sense of Kierkegaard's theology, we need to make sense of his Trinitarian response to the theological issues of his age. Kierkegaard, while remaining in the subjective key of much German theology, reestablished the uniqueness of Christ the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit on behalf of the Father.

2. Present Kierkegaard research on transformation

Kierkegaard's theological challenge is Trinitarian. As his theology of transformation is understood, there should be a clear reflection of his view of Trinity. However, a brief examination of the current literature on transformation in Kierkegaard seems to invariably run

⁷⁶ KJN 9, 141 [NB 27:23] / SKS 25, 142.

⁷⁷ KJN 9, 142 [NB 27:23] / SKS 25, 142.

⁷⁸ KJN 7, 471 [NB 20:133] / SKS 23, 463.

⁷⁹ Barrett, “Kierkegaard on Doctrine,” 62–63.

into problems at the same point. For Rae, this issue is connected directly to the absence of the Holy Spirit:

The widespread neglect of Kierkegaard's understanding of the Holy Spirit is undoubtedly responsible for a propensity among some scholars to seek for the *dynamis* of conversion elsewhere.⁸⁰

Rae's point concerns the *means* of transformation, whether it is in the immanent work of God himself or the capacities of humanity. When the role of the Holy Spirit is missing in the process of transformation, the part of human imagination, reason and will expand to fill it. There is a large variety of opinions, according to Rae, on the Holy Spirit's place in the work of Kierkegaard. Some scholars claim he is not present while others claim the Holy Spirit is vital to his entire corpus.⁸¹ The main problem as evidenced in the research is that the most comprehensive treatment of the Spirit is in the later works *For Self-Examination* and *Judge for Yourself*. Martens' analysis of these two works looks for further supporting evidence for the Holy Spirit's role in Kierkegaard's journals and considers the Holy Spirit to be largely absent from the prior and later corpus.⁸² The problem of relating the few explicit mentions of the Spirit with the wider corpus creates clear issues in articulating Kierkegaard's pneumatology, particularly in the theology of transformation. A vast number of scholars have commented on Kierkegaard's process of becoming a self. The authors included below provide a non-exhaustive sample which demonstrates the theological problems present and the development towards their clarification. They also represent a rich vein of commentary specifically on the theme of transformation.

⁸⁰ Murray A. Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation: By Faith Transformed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 170.

⁸¹ Rae, "The Holy Spirit," 353–54.

⁸² Martens, "The Emergence of the Holy Spirit," 200–201.

An example of Rae's concern is Ferreira's work on the role of imagination in transformation. Ferreira seeks to re-examine the problem of the 'leap of faith', primarily in Climacus, through the category of imagination. The basic premise for Ferreira is that the leap of faith does not need to be understood purely as a function of the 'will' but must be extended to include a conceptual understanding of imagination. As Anti-Climacus states, what "feeling, knowledge or will a man has, depends in the last resort upon what imagination he has."⁸³ The problem of transformation is how to become a new self when you exist within the old self, or, "how is it possible to transcend a given context in these ways from within it?"⁸⁴ Imagination allows the *active* picturing "of the actual and ideal self together, at the same time in tension...essential to transformation is both an active and paradoxical holding of elements in tension... involves the activity of imagination."⁸⁵ This happens through an imaginative interaction between the old and new self:

The actual is put imaginatively in tension with potential in another domain, and they interact so as to achieve a transfer – the self is carried through imaginative involvement with a potential self to achieve a new self-understanding.⁸⁶

The variety of stages apparent in Kierkegaard's understanding of faith requires a series of movements along the road to faith, from the aesthetic to the ethical, and finally to the religious.

Ferreira's view is concerned with the work of scholars of the 'leap' in the pseudonym Climacus' writings, particularly Stephen Evans, who dismiss the need for human activity in the work of

⁸³ SUD, 163-164.

⁸⁴ M. Jamie Ferreira, *Transforming Vision: Imagination and Will in Kierkegaardian Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 62.

⁸⁵ Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, 62–63.

⁸⁶ Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, 79–80.

transformation. For Evans, “faith is not produced by an act of will on the part of the believer, but rather is an act of God. All that the believer can will to do is to be open to God’s gift of Grace.”⁸⁷ Openness is the work of humanity, “what is required in the leap of faith is... to transform myself so that I can be open to an encounter with the truth which will totally transform my life.”⁸⁸ Ferreira sees a false dichotomy between grace and human volition in the work of Evans. Imagination, for Ferreira, allows a better balance of the passivity and activity involved in the process of transformation. Imagination is closer to seeing which is “at the same time a kind of reflection and a kind of doing.”⁸⁹ C.S Lewis’ understanding of interaction with art is an example. Engagement in a work of art requires a decision of the will to surrender completely to the experience of beholding. The will is involved, but it is in terms of ‘wanting, affirming, loving’, which, for Ferreira, is more of the ‘classical sense’ of will in connection with desire.⁹⁰

Curiously, one of Ferreira’s final quotes from Kierkegaard suggests a complication. “Imagination is what providence uses to take men captive in actuality, in existence, in order to get them far enough out, or within, or down into actuality.”⁹¹ Kierkegaard seems to suggest that imagination is not merely a human tool of transformation, but one used by God. Ferreira is right to highlight Kierkegaard’s use of imagination and its importance for transformation. However, Ferreira does not demonstrate how it relates to the mediation of Christ or the immanent power of the Holy Spirit. Without an understanding of how transformation refers to the triune God, it is difficult to make sense of the place of imagination in the work of renewal. Anti-Climacus also employs imagination, but the object is the crucified person of Christ rather

⁸⁷ C. Stephen Evans, “Does Kierkegaard Think Beliefs Can Be Directly Willed?,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*.26 (1989): 182.

⁸⁸ Evans, “Beliefs Can Be Directly Willed?,” 183.

⁸⁹ Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, 155.

⁹⁰ Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, 129.

⁹¹ JP, 1832 / SKS 25, 471 [NB30:104].

than the self. What we shall see is that the power for this apprehension exists not in human capacity but in God's Holy Spirit.

b. George Pattison

Pattison balances more clearly the need for God to transform the human self through the surrender of believers. Pattison anchors Kierkegaard's theology of transformation in the repeated theme of the sea reflecting the heavens. In Kierkegaard's *One Who Prays Aright*, prayer deepens when it moves from longing for external worldly good and stretches in search of its maker:

Only when he himself becomes utterly nothing, only then can God shine through him, so that he becomes like God. Whatever he may otherwise amount to, he cannot express God's likeness but God can only impress his likeness in him when he has become nothing. When the sea exerts all its might, then it is precisely impossible for it to reflect the image of the heavens, and even the smallest movement means that the reflection is not quite pure; but when it becomes still and deep, then heaven's image sinks down into its nothingness.⁹²

Importantly, in this picture, human agency is less central than Ferreira's view. To become "*utterly nothing*" and renounce all capacity of the will is the way to bear the divine likeness. The notion of image is easily identifiable as humanity's unique gift of image-bearing. In this, Pattison rightly assesses the doctrine of creation that precedes Kierkegaard's understanding of redemption. In becoming nothing, prayer turns "from an 'explanation' to a 'transfiguration', in which the self reflects or becomes transparent to the divine glory."⁹³ The same theme is reprised

⁹² EUD, 399.

⁹³ George Pattison, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard* (Chesham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2005), 140.

in the work *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* with a slight alteration. The sea there becomes “deep and transparent” and “longs for the heavens” in its restful repose.⁹⁴ Adoration is the stance of the believer who reflects the glory of God. For Pattison, in *Purity* “there is a threefold interconnection between the unity of the will, truth and the good.”⁹⁵ Pattison perceives in this a diversion from Hegelian self-creation to a need to rest “transparently in the power that established it.”⁹⁶ The resulting anthropological truth is that absolute dependence is the underlying reality in the life of transformation. We find in Pattison echoes of Schleiermacher’s interpretation of Kierkegaard’s theology of transformation—the action of surrender continues to appear as an action of the human agent.

Pattison’s understanding of Kierkegaard’s journey of transformation is further complicated when he transitions from theocentric to Christocentric texts. Pattison looks to Kierkegaard’s use of the weeping woman in Luke 7 in *Love Will Hide a Multitude of Sins* as a demonstration of how this dependence leads to transformation: “As she wept, she finally forgot what she had wept over at the beginning; the tears of repentance became tears of adoration.”⁹⁷

It is in a concrete encounter with the person of Jesus Christ that humanity can become nothing and have the divine image implanted upon them. However, this becomes indistinct when Pattison suggests Christ “moves us to seek and be able to receive forgiveness.”⁹⁸ Specifically, “atonement is what brings about the possibility of the individual entering into a relationship of love with his or her creator through a concrete encounter with the person of the redeemer, Jesus Christ.”⁹⁹ Pattison suggests that an encounter with Christ leads, in the words of Torrance, to “a

⁹⁴ UDVS, 121

⁹⁵ Pattison, *Philosophy*, 100.

⁹⁶ SUD, 14.

⁹⁷ EUD, 76-77

⁹⁸ Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 159.

⁹⁹ Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 160.

process of self-transformation that takes place in response to the truth that is given in revelation.”¹⁰⁰ Pattison's view necessitates additional redefining of forgiveness, from a sense of acquittal from condemnation to the healing of the self. The power for conversion resides within the person, rather than in the savior—the mediation of Christ and the role of the Spirit are missing in Pattison's account.

c. Simon D. Podmore

Simon Podmore demonstrates Kierkegaard's insistence on the mediation of Christ because of the *infinite qualitative abyss* between humanity and divinity. Despair is the right response to the difference between God and man. However, following despair, the abyss takes on an infinite quality of blessing rather than melancholy. The abyss is not bridged, but with “the gift of forgiveness”, this “gulf of qualitative difference between god and man” becomes transfigured. Through the revelation of the forgiveness of Christ, the true meaning of the infinite abyss is revealed: “the infinite quality of mercy.”¹⁰¹ God's unlikeness to us is his holy ability to mediate salvation despite our willful sinfulness. Forgiveness is divine in two senses: “no one is able to do it except God” and “no one can do it without God”.¹⁰² Hence, Christ's mediation of mercy transforms our response to the abyss from despair into faith.

It sometimes happens that our eyes turn toward heaven, and we are astonished at the infinite distance, and the eye cannot find a resting place between heaven and earth – but when the eye of the soul seeks God and we feel the infinite distance then it is a matter of confidence – but here we have a mediator.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Andrew B. Torrance, “Kierkegaard on the Christian Response to the God Who Establishes Kinship with Us in Time,” *Modern Theology* 32.1 (2016): 61.

¹⁰¹ Simon D. Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self Before God*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 176.

¹⁰² JP 2, 1224 / SKS 26, 178 [NB32:89].

¹⁰³ KJN 1, 266 [DD:195] / SKS 17, 275.

Podmore returns to the metaphor of the ocean used by Pattison but suggests it is not an apprehension of divinity but of the mediator which leads to the imprinting of the image of God upon man. The higher the perception of the glory of forgiveness in Christ, the more a believer will be like Christ. Unlike Pattison, the mediation of Christ is essential to salvation for the individual because of the infinite qualitative abyss between humanity and divinity.

Podmore also demonstrates the place in Anti-Climacus' theology for the mediation of Christ's forgiveness by the Holy Spirit, when he describes Anti-Climacus' statement that the sin against the Holy Spirit is despair over sin. As Anti-Climacus says: "Despair of the forgiveness of sins is a definite position over against an offer of God's mercy.... the sin of renouncing Christianity as untruth and as a lie is offensive war."¹⁰⁴ Here the Holy Spirit is the agent through which the forgiveness of Christ is received. To reject the revelation of the mediator is to deny the Holy Spirit. In this way, Podmore develops a picture of the double mediation of God's purposes through the Son and Spirit. We are provided with a starting point to make sense of Anti-Climacus' theology through this insight.

However, Podmore goes on to suggest that Kierkegaard does not operate with a traditional theology of the Holy Spirit. Kierkegaard operates like Hegel with an understanding of spirit as desire, the difference is the purpose and aim of that desire.¹⁰⁵ For Hegel, unity is the fundamental longing, for Kierkegaard, desire is for 'God as Other'. Rather than a longing for communal unity, it is a passionate longing for the living God.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to traditional pneumatological terms, the idea of spirit "is also realisation of true selfhood... through the metamorphosis of Spirit's fire, burnt out to ashes, now resting transparently grounded in God,

¹⁰⁴ SUD, 125.

¹⁰⁵ Simon D. Podmore, *Struggling with God: Kierkegaard and the Temptation of Spiritual Trial* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013), 222.

¹⁰⁶ Podmore, *Struggling with God*, 223.

transfigured as the image of God.”¹⁰⁷ The Holy Spirit sanctifies “the heart through its presence within each individual” and as “a presence of otherness” inspires “a burning holy desire”.¹⁰⁸ The Holy Spirit’s role as a divine spark appears to diminish his personhood and conflate the human and divine spirit. Podmore clarifies the place of the Holy Spirit in the work of transformation but given the premise that Kierkegaard operates with a version of the Hegelian vision of ‘spirit’, it becomes indistinct whether the spiritual resources to apprehend the mediation of Christ reside in the believer or the Holy Spirit. Podmore, like Pattison, does not really move beyond Schleiermacher’s indistinct vision of God-consciousness. The relation and distinction of the Holy Spirit to the individual is vital to ascertain.

d. Murray A. Rae

Rae clarified what is left implicit and perhaps conflated in Podmore: becoming a Christian involves an *epistemological* renewal which is comparable to the biblical concept of *metanoia*. From the work of Climacus in *Philosophical Fragments*, he maintains that to abandon truth is to come into the bondage of *untruth*. The result is that “the teacher gives not only the truth but also the condition to understand it.”¹⁰⁹ A saviour is required and a complete conversion of the whole of the learner. Indeed, the saviour's work must precede the repentance of the learner who is in bondage. Ultimately, “it is contingent upon the grace of God who has come among us, both as a servant who gives himself as Truth and as the Spirit who makes eloquent the testimony.”¹¹⁰ Climacus rationally concludes that there are no intellectual resources that can bring a learner from untruth to truth without a radical act of renewal and conversion.

¹⁰⁷ Podmore, *Struggling with God*, 218.

¹⁰⁸ Podmore, *Struggling with God*, 215; 227.

¹⁰⁹ Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation*, 8.

¹¹⁰ Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation*, 19.

Christianity confesses that the Truth is 'learned' neither by speculation, nor through imagination, nor by historical investigation, but rather by the 'condition' which is given by God. Receipt of the donation by the individual brings about a radical transformation, a new birth, which carries ontological, epistemological, and ethical significance.¹¹¹

Rae suggests that although *metanoia* is not a notion used explicitly by Kierkegaard; it does seem to accord with the required renovation of the whole human self.

Rae unpacks the reality of the incarnation as both means of this transformation from the work of Climacus and the end of all human wisdom.

When an oak nut is planted in a clay pot, the pot breaks; when new wine is poured into old leather bottles, they burst. What happens, then, when God plants himself in the frailty of a human being if he does not become a new person and a new vessel.¹¹²

Christ's incarnation demonstrates the futility of a knowledge of God through the imagination of man. The pure absurdity of the incarnation is a stumbling block. Coming to the Christ by any other means than by the incarnation and crucifixion is to disregard him. Rae is careful to distinguish his view from some serious attempts at making sense of the newness of mind prescribed by Kierkegaard. He notes Evans' suggestion of "plausibility structures", Ferreira's comparison to "*Gestalt* switches and paradigm shifts", and Hannay's discussion of "life-view."¹¹³ The renewal described is more than a temporary "perspective-shift" by the thinker. It is the theological reality of sin which makes all previous analogies for approaching the shift in knowledge inadequate. Sin places human reason in bondage that is ultimately "utterly dependent upon God."¹¹⁴ There is an "epistemological transformation" which takes Christian faith out of the realm of any other category of knowledge.

¹¹¹ Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation*, 109.

¹¹² PF, 34.

¹¹³ Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation*, 117.

¹¹⁴ Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation*, 143.

It is the notion of new birth, and especially its epistemological implications, that clarifies the need and place of the Holy Spirit in the work of transformation. Importantly, “the individual” is never Kierkegaard’s concern but instead “the individual *before God*”.¹¹⁵ It is impossible to separate the new *epistemology* of transformation from a new relationship with God. For Kierkegaard, the Spirit is the means of this relationship with God and the concurrent epistemological renewal. The “Spirit is the Comforter. It is not only vitalizing, enabling power for ‘dying to the world’ – but is also the Comforter concerning ‘imitation’.”¹¹⁶ The Holy Spirit enables someone to renounce their former capacities and gives them the power to believe instead in Christ. In contrast to Podmore, Kierkegaard does have an orthodox doctrine of the Holy Spirit: “There is only one proof for the truth of Christianity – the inward proof, *argumentum spiritus sancti*.”¹¹⁷ However, though Rae demonstrates the place of the Spirit in his theology of transformation, there is more to be clarified about the way the Holy Spirit relates to the individual. We need further exploration of how the Holy Spirit does not simply epistemically renew the believer but relate to them and lead them back into intimacy with God the Father.

e. Andrew B. Torrance

The work of Torrance specifically seeks to make sense of this unfolding and complicated process of transformation. His research aims to ask: “How are we to conceive of God’s relationship to a person in and through that process?”¹¹⁸ Christianity is a *transformative journey*

¹¹⁵ Rae, *Kierkegaard’s Vision of the Incarnation*, 145.

¹¹⁶ JP 2, 1919, 360 / SKS 25, 158 [NB27:44].

¹¹⁷ KJN 6, 104 [NB11:179] / SKS 22, 108.

¹¹⁸ Andrew B. Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian: A Kierkegaardian Account of Human Transformation in Relationship with God* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 2.

affected by relationship with the triune God. Theological discussions of transformation that *dichotomize* divine and human agency or reduce its complexity replace the living God with dogma.¹¹⁹ It is a series of ongoing encounters with God in Jesus Christ that remake the human self. Anthropologically, Torrance considers the view of Climacus and the need for a passionate relationship to the truth of Christianity: “Passion is the key to interpreting our *conscious* response to situations - the *intentional* nature of our engagement with the world.”¹²⁰ Encounters with the majesty of Jesus Christ awaken a passion and longing to be with and like him, here is a more relational view of Podmore’s insights. In contrast to both Ferreira and Pattison, the resources of humanity are left behind through encountering grace which causes a believer to “lose continuity with himself” and become “a new creation.”¹²¹ For Torrance in Kierkegaard’s *The Woman who was a Sinner* it is the woman’s total captivation with the person of Christ which makes her forget herself at Jesus’ feet: “In her encounter with Jesus, she becomes a new person.”¹²²

Torrance is careful to suggest that the capacity for human transformation involves human passion but is the result of divine power and initiative—through the theological category of mediation. Climacus delineates the difference between two types of religiousness or spirituality. This *immanent* religiousness or “religiousness A” is founded upon an individual’s self-mediation of the truth of Christianity. It is grounded in “a person’s subjective commitment to her own understanding of what Christianity is”.¹²³ However, Climacus separates it from a *transcendent* religiosity or “religiousness B”:

¹¹⁹ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 2–3.

¹²⁰ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 45.

¹²¹ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 158. CUP2, 576.

¹²² Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 152.

¹²³ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 95.

In Religiousness B, the upbuilding is something outside of the individual; the individual does not find the upbuilding by finding the relationship within himself but relates himself to something outside of himself in order to find the upbuilding... That is why I have never called Religiousness A Christian or Christianity.¹²⁴

The continual spiritual mediation of Jesus Christ is needed to uphold communion with God. Through a relationship with Jesus Christ, there is “*both* mediation between God and humanity *and* reconciliation from the sin that totally alienates human beings from God.”¹²⁵ Hence in rejection of Westphal’s view that “apart from sin God is not Wholly other”, there is always a qualitative difference between God and humanity.¹²⁶

Torrance’s understanding that the process of transformation is spiritually upheld by Christ opens up space for Kierkegaard’s theology of the Holy Spirit while remaining a little indistinct. Like Rae, he cites evidence of Kierkegaard’s orthodoxy, “Spirit brings *faith, the faith* – that is, faith in the strictest sense of the word, this gift of the Holy Spirit”.¹²⁷ However, it is Torrance’s descriptions of the *spiritual activity* of the risen Christ which seem to cloud the place of the Holy Spirit. For example, “God interacts with a person *spiritually*; that is, with an entirely new spiritual activity that cannot be reduced to a person’s own immanent spirituality.”¹²⁸ There is no clarity here about what this spirituality is other than being in some way from Jesus Christ. Of course, much of the New Testament depicts the ascended Christ completing his purposes through his position at the right hand of the Father. However, emphasizing the immanent presence of Christ to the believer clouds the role of the Spirit.

¹²⁴ CUP1, pp.560-1n.

¹²⁵ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 34.

¹²⁶ Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1998), 246.

¹²⁷ JFY, 81.

¹²⁸ Torrance, “Kingship with Us in Time,” 74.

First, God creates an eternal-historical union with human beings in and through the person of Jesus Christ... Second, following the crucifixion, the risen and ascended Christ continues to relate to persons spiritually – that is, by way of a gracious activity and presence that comes to us from beyond our physical existence but yet maintains the kinship that was created in the incarnation.¹²⁹

The role of the Holy Spirit is vital in maintaining kinship with Jesus as he was the one who enabled Christ's incarnation in the first place: we need to make sense of how the gracious activity of Christ is mediated by the Spirit.

Despite this, Torrance provides an essential reason why the role of the Holy Spirit is largely absent and easy to misconstrue in Kierkegaard. The Hegelian philosophy of Kierkegaard's time taught that the Holy Spirit would make life easy for the Christian rather than harder. So, Kierkegaard concluded:

I have so much respect for the Holy Spirit that I have not dared speak of him because I understand that as soon as I begin doing so I must present the existential even more strongly... When I underscore the existential in the essentially Christian (alas, not nearly as strongly as the N.T.!) the cry goes up: This is exaggeration, this is law, not gospel. They say: You forget to talk about the Holy Spirit and his aid, for thereby what is heavy becomes light.¹³⁰

It appears that what Kierkegaard meant by the existential was the difficulty and struggle which the Holy Spirit brought into the life of a believer. Of particular interest is the assumption in his culture that the Holy Spirit would enable the heavy to become light—the Holy Spirit was synonymous with ease rather than struggle. In Kierkegaard's understanding of the Bible, the

¹²⁹ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 97.

¹³⁰ KJN 8, 475-476 [NB25:48] / SKS 24, 468.

Holy Spirit instead introduced trouble into the Christian life. Thus, Kierkegaard held biblical pneumatology, but also withheld it, so it would not be confused with the spiritual understanding of his time.

Conclusion

The present research into transformation in Kierkegaard continually comes up against the relation of divine and human agencies. We have not covered all possible suggestions in this arena, but enough to establish the difficulties in the field, especially the way that the spiritual capacities of the individual interact with the immanent work of the Holy Spirit. There is clarity around Christ's role in mediating God's purposes, however, it is less clear how the Holy Spirit mediates the person of Christ. Kierkegaard's reticence is, of course, problematic in making sense of his pneumatology. Kierkegaard's orthodox pneumatology expressed in his journals gives confidence and impetus to the suggestion that Anti-Climacus may be able to express the Spirit's role. If Kierkegaard had a clear vision of the Spirit's role in transformation, then perhaps his theologically astute pseudonym can articulate it.

3. The need for Anti-Climacus to find his voice

Subsequently, I will establish that in the midst of assembling the Trinitarian picture of transformation in Kierkegaard, there is methodological neglect of Anti-Climacus. The studies of transformation have utilised different means of gathering theological images from the disparate theological voices of Kierkegaard's corpus. Whether a systematic account of Kierkegaard's view of transformation can be collated is disputed. However, any attempt requires a balance of listening to individual voices of the pseudonyms and also assessing the themes of the whole authorship. In the midst of this, Anti-Climacus' relation to the theology

of transformation is yet to be sufficiently assessed. In saying this, it is clear that Anti-Climacus is a vital part of most scholars' work on the nature of sin and the self, he is in that way always present, however, I am arguing that his role is genuinely relegated in relation to other pseudonyms or theological ideas.

For Pattison, Kierkegaard's theological portrait of transformation is so pervasive in his writing that there is no methodological need to consider the pseudonymous authors separately. The overall themes across Kierkegaard's corpus are more significant than their components. Kierkegaard's aim was not the creation of a system of thinking but rather a process of "theological journeying" with certain textures and commitments. For this reason, the best approach to Kierkegaard's authorship is to be swept up into the fluid motion of the journey:

Kierkegaard's world is a world of perpetual motion, in which we are constantly being summoned to picture or to enact the movement of repetition, of resignation, and the *double movement* of faith; to *go out* to be with the lilies and the birds or to *run to* where we find the Saviour – even if he is seated in the midst of those who are waiting to judge us.¹³¹

His theology is itself offered as a call to them to get moving and to rise up and to follow where and wherever incarnate love will lead them.¹³²

Pattison is correct in highlighting the importance of where Kierkegaard's writings *take* you. Despite this, Pattison still has to find an anchor for his investigations and seeks this in various edifying discourses. The advantage of this is that they give clear scriptural and theological reflections. However, it leads Pattison to value Kierkegaard's clear writing over his pseudonymous accounts.

¹³¹ Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 218.

¹³² Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 228.

Intriguingly, Pattison is dismissive of Anti-Climacus' place in understanding transformation, especially his second work *Practice in Christianity*. Pattison states that the latter parts of Kierkegaard's corpus are "obverse of accepting the forgiveness offered and received in love."¹³³ It is mainly the call for imitation and "conforming oneself to the pattern of Christ's suffering and death."¹³⁴ The admission here is that they do not fit the paradigm he sets out from Kierkegaard's discourses. Oddly enough, Pattison aligns with some of Kierkegaard's contemporary critics with this remark. Hegelianism had no room for the imitation of Christ crucified either. *Practice in Christianity* has much more to say about how the encounter with Christ occurs and admits it concerns "the resort to grace".¹³⁵ Pattison's understanding of transformation is adversely effected by this lack of consultation with the work of Anti-Climacus.

Podmore, follows the same methodology as Pattison, looking at the corpus rather than the pseudonymous voices, focusing on the theme of the "infinite qualitative abyss" between humanity and divinity. The difference is that Podmore seeks to anchor his thinking in Kierkegaard's journals. "There is an infinite, radical, qualitative difference between God and man".¹³⁶ The presence of the theme in the journals and across the corpus of Kierkegaard makes it a fruitful point of discussion. Podmore also makes much of Anti-Climacus and the alteration of the *abyss* in *Sickness*. Although there is a clear need to consider how different theological themes come together across the whole of Kierkegaard's thought, the approach of Podmore and Pattison is only reliable when each voice of the pseudonyms is heard distinctly.

¹³³ Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 170.

¹³⁴ Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 169.

¹³⁵ PC, 7.

¹³⁶ JP 2, 1383 / SKS 21, 235 [NB9:59].

In contrast, Rae's main work on transformation focuses on Climacus' voice in *Philosophical Fragments*. Rather than anchoring in Kierkegaard's journals or edifying discourses, Rae traces Climacus' logic through the book to arrive at Kierkegaard's thought. The advantage of Rae's approach is that Climacus' pseudonymous role is considered a part of the work itself. Climacus "commensurate with his name, is indeed like that of a mountain climber. He stands at the foot of the mountain, contemplating the ascent to Christian faith but without having made such an ascent himself."¹³⁷ Climacus takes on the problem of faith from the same position of rational contemplation that Kierkegaard's culture assumed; his job was to unmask the absurdity of a speculative appropriation of Christian faith. Climacus seeks to remake the readers' understanding of faith to knowledge, that "they are not tasks at all, but are received as a single gift of grace in that 'Moment' of encounter which is both ontologically and epistemologically transformative."¹³⁸

Torrance, like Rae, respects the difference between Kierkegaard's voice and the individual personas of the Pseudonyms. Kierkegaard himself said that "it would be ludicrously confusing to attribute to me everything the poeticized individualities say."¹³⁹ Torrance helpfully equates the content of each Pseudonym's message with their personality, as they are "poeticized personalities, poetically maintained so that everything they say is in character with their poeticized individualities."¹⁴⁰ Torrance explores the authorship of Climacus and Anti-Climacus, of the two, Climacus is the focus because of Kierkegaard's own claim that Climacus' *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, is the "turning point" in Kierkegaard's authorship.¹⁴¹ Torrance uses Anti-Climacus extensively, but also finds a reason to mistrust his perspective on

¹³⁷ Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation*, 4.

¹³⁸ Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation*, 2.

¹³⁹ JP 6, 6786 / Pap X-6 B 145.

¹⁴⁰ JP 6, 6786 / Pap X-6 B 145.

¹⁴¹ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 7–8.

transformation. Anti-Climacus is vital because he can label the same realities as Climacus but as a believer, however, his ideality makes him unpractical.

While Anti-Climacus can offer a first-hand account of the complexities, the fact that he is ‘more than a human being’ holds him back from witnessing to the torment and uncertainty, the confusion and caprice, the anxiety and restlessness that will burden the ordinary person’s journey to become a Christian.¹⁴²

For this view, Torrance looks to Kierkegaard's more tormented descriptions of faith in his journals and his admissions of inferiority to Anti-Climacus as support. Anti-Climacus focuses on the ideal picture of transformation rather than the long-tortured journey that Kierkegaard himself undertook. However, this puts Torrance in the position of not hearing the voice of Anti-Climacus unaided by Climacus. Even if Anti-Climacus is not a model for imitation, he is still a voice that speaks from the position of faith for the sake of awakening. It is precisely his theological credentials which will aid the development of the role of the Trinity in human transformation.

A variety of other suggestions about the methodology of Anti-Climacus appear to borrow heavily from other parts of Kierkegaard's authorship and don't listen carefully to Anti-Climacus' remarks. A common example is the relation of *Sickness* to Climacus' distinction between ‘religiousness A’ and ‘religiousness B’. Roberts understands *sickness* as describing one type of religiousness in each half.¹⁴³ Westphal disagrees suggesting Anti-Climacus in *Practice in Christianity* demonstrates a ‘religiousness C’.¹⁴⁴ Likewise, Glenn considers the three aspects of the self presented by Anti-Climacus as *synthesis*, *self-relation* and *dependence*

¹⁴² Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 9.

¹⁴³ Robert C Roberts, “The Grammar of Sin and the Conceptual Unity of the Sickness unto Death,” in *The Sickness Unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 19 of (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2006), 138.

¹⁴⁴ Merold Westphal, “Kenosis and Offense: A Kierkegaardian Look at Divine Transcendence,” in *Practice in Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 20 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2004), 19–46.

on God which align with Kierkegaard's three-fold progression of categories, the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Hannay suggests that Anti-Climacus advances Judge William's work in *Either/Or* by expanding the variety and specifics of despair. While William considers aesthetic despair, Anti-Climacus further considers the broader issue of "a weakness that one might describe as an addiction to the world."¹⁴⁶ Tietjen combines both ideas, beginning with Anti-Climacus' definition of despair, he maintains a route out of despair, through the stages of selfhood, arriving finally at Climacus' definition of religiousness A and B.¹⁴⁷ Relating Anti-Climacus' method to Kierkegaard's wider corpus is essential; however, it must not be done apart from hearing his unique voice.

Similarly, in the research concerning the Holy Spirit, Anti-Climacus has only a supporting role. Anti-Climacus' work concerning the sin against the Holy Spirit is mentioned repeatedly but is not further developed. Rae considers how the Spirit gives life in FSE, how he brings sobriety from JFY, how he testifies inwardly from PF and journals, the help and comfort given from the journals as well, then finally Anti-Climacus' mention of the sin against the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁸ Martens delves into the way the Holy Spirit puts to death the old self and develops faith, hope and love in the new self.¹⁴⁹ Leo suggests further the work of Holy Spirit in the individuation of believers as they face trial, giving assistance that forms their inward self into Christ's likeness.¹⁵⁰ Anti-Climacus insight is noted but not developed thoroughly, especially its place

¹⁴⁵ John D. Glenn, Jr., "The Definition of the Self and the Structure of Kierkegaard's Work.," in *The Sickness Unto Death*, vol. 19 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1987), 5–21.

¹⁴⁶ Alastair Hannay, "Kierkegaard and the Variety of Despair," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 339.

¹⁴⁷ Mark A. Tietjen, *Kierkegaard: A Christian Missionary to Christians* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2016), 107–8.

¹⁴⁸ Rae, "The Holy Spirit," 354–70.

¹⁴⁹ Martens, "The Emergence of the Holy Spirit," 201–8.

¹⁵⁰ Stan Leo, "Holy Spirit," in *Kierkegaard's Concepts: Envy to Incognito*, ed. Jon Stewart, William McDonald, and Steven M. Emmanuel, vol. 15 of (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 157–58.

and meaning in Anti-Climacus' theology as a whole. It appears that Anti-Climacus could announce the place of the Holy Spirit in transformation, if allowed to develop his insights.

Instead, we can treat Anti-Climacus's corpus as one work on its own terms. Possen follows the work of Malantschuk that saw in the two seemingly disparate works of Anti-Climacus the one theme repeated negatively and then positively. There is evidence for this opinion in the journals of Kierkegaard as the vision for *Sickness* and *Practice* take shape.

A new book ought to be written entitled: *Thoughts that Cure radically, Christian Healing...* It will have two parts, perhaps it is better to have three (1) First comes: Thoughts that wound from behind – for upbuilding...(1) On the consciousness of Sin, *The Sickness Unto Death...* (2) *Radical Cure...*¹⁵¹

Though the name of the second changed, there is clear evidence of a two-fold work with a negative and positive aspect. Both books have a focus on spiritual outcomes, *Sickness* is for “upbuilding and awakening” and *Practice* is “for awakening and inward deepening”. The two come together in the necessity of bodily imitation of the God-man. It is both that “I become myself only to the extent that I imitate the gracious, forgiving God-man”.¹⁵² Anti-Climacus' idealistic nature is a ploy, “one ‘effectively learns to flee to faith in grace by facing the impossible, rigorous requirements of imitation Christi.’”¹⁵³ Anti-Climacus presents idealistic piety and theology, in order to drive people “to resort to *grace*.”¹⁵⁴ In this way Anti-Climacus is a very Lutheran theologian who confronts us with theological realities of our sickness and Christ's glory as a type of *law* in order to drive us to the *gospel*.

¹⁵¹ JP 5, 6110 / SKS 20, 324 [NB4:76].

¹⁵² David D. Possen, “The Works of Anti-Climacus,” in *Practice in Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 20 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2004), 206.

¹⁵³ David D. Possen, “The Voice of Rigor,” in *Practice in Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 20 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2004), 174.

¹⁵⁴ PC, 7.

At the centre of this summons to imitate Christ, is a presentation of the reality of the person of Christ in all of his glory. Anti-Climacus presents “a *phenomenological interpretation of human existence*” specifying “a course of therapy (defeating despair by accepting the God-man as paradigm) that is both supremely urgent and supremely difficult (resort to Christ’s grace).”¹⁵⁵ Accepting a life in relation to the person of Christ as the key example and coming into relationship with the person of Christ are the vital goals of Anti-Climacus’ work. Pattison raises the question of Anti-Climacus’ relation to the philosophical school of phenomenology, Heidegger’s thought that Kierkegaard’s work “never knows a moment of vision”.¹⁵⁶ It is perhaps better to consider Anti-Climacus as “pre-philosophical, pre-phenomenological, pre-ontological”.¹⁵⁷ We do not need to place such a lens over Anti-Climacus’ work, it would be contrary to what Kierkegaard intended.¹⁵⁸ Anti-Climacus’ work is fundamentally theological, the psychological approach is a means of reinvigorating “the Christians’ understanding”.¹⁵⁹ Anti-Climacus uses an understanding of Christ’s uniqueness to drive people to a need of his grace. As he does this, he unearths a whole range of realities about the human self.

Simultaneous with the issues surrounding expressing Kierkegaard's Trinitarian theology is a widespread underuse of Anti-Climacus. Anti-Climacus is extensively used, especially in discussions of sin and redemption. However, there is generally some framework placed over his voice, whether that be another pseudonym, Kierkegaard’s journals, or an existential framework. Climacus has been rightly prized as a pivotal centre to Kierkegaard’s corpus, but as a non-believer, he cannot make sense of the immanent reality of faith, especially the work

¹⁵⁵ Possen, *Anti-Climacus*, 209.

¹⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. Dennis J Schmidt, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 323 n3 (338).

¹⁵⁷ Pattison, *Philosophy*, 85.

¹⁵⁸ George Pattison, “Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Phenomenology,” in *Kierkegaard as Phenomenologist*, ed. Jeffery Henson (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 193–95.

¹⁵⁹ Tietjen, *Kierkegaard*, 93.

of the Holy Spirit. Anti-Climacus presents the simultaneous theological and immanent spiritual credentials to articulate what is missing in Kierkegaard's Trinitarian picture.

Conclusion

In answer to the question: *Why* should we ask Anti Climacus about transformation in the hands of the Triune God? Firstly, we have noted that the Trinitarian confusion of Kierkegaard's day required a reinstatement of a Triune understanding of discipleship and transformation. Yet, secondly, we have seen that scholarly discussion of Kierkegaard's theology of transformation comes unstuck when articulating this point. Thirdly, and concurrently, there is a methodological underuse of Anti-Climacus in making sense of this Triune theology. Given Anti-Climacus' credentials as the rigorous theological pseudonym it makes sense to consider his contribution more thoroughly to the Trinitarian issues posed both by Kierkegaard's day and recent discussion in scholarship. In doing this, we need to allow Anti-Climacus to explain his theology without unnecessarily overlaying his answers with other parts of Kierkegaard's corpus.

Chapter 3 – What we need to ask Anti-Climacus

In the previous chapter, I established the worth of conversing with Anti-Climacus. In this chapter I will ask another preliminary question: What is it about transformation in the hands of the Triune God that we will ask Anti-Climacus? In keeping with Anti-Climacus' pseudonym, I am asking him to expound the vision of transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. To get clear answers, I will need to ask specific theological questions that can be answered by his works. To further the case for the use of 2 Corinthians in this conversation I will firstly establish Kierkegaard's reading of the suffering life of the Apostle Paul and his ruminations on the Corinthian epistles, particularly his incessant mentions of Paul's thorn. In this way, we see that Kierkegaard considered the theological picture of 2 Corinthians to be particularly compelling and instructive about the Christian life. Hence the reference to 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 by Anti-Climacus is part of a wider contemplation of the epistle. Following this, I will seek to formulate two questions from Paul's words to ask Anti-Climacus. In forming these questions, I will look closely at the details of Paul's words in their context and bring in the reflection of two great Lutherans, Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Kierkegaard's reflection follows Luther's and is repeated closely in Bonhoeffer's subsequent work. By starting the conversation with Bonhoeffer and Luther, I am placing Anti-Climacus' work in a line of Lutheran theology distinct from his contemporary Copenhagen. Keeping close to the details of scripture but arriving theologically at some questions, in a similar Lutheran vein, will best serve our conversation with Anti-Climacus.

1. Kierkegaard and 2 Corinthians

Kierkegaard considered scripture not as a human tool best utilized by speculative philosophy, but as something used by the Father to lead us back to himself. Kierkegaard laments how scripture is considered “an obsolete ancient book” one puts aside, while some consider it “an extremely remarkable ancient book” which requires constant speculation.¹ Instead, the Father with “patience sits and spells out the Word with the single individual so that he may understand it aright; and then with divine – patience takes him by the hand... when he strives to act according to it.”² Later in the same work, it is the Holy Spirit, poured out at Pentecost who enables human beings to become imitators of Christ.³ The Father gives scripture as the means of the Spirit forming the Son in the lives of believers.

Kierkegaard’s relation to scripture is well attested in scholarship, the place of the Apostle Paul is less so. Brandt remarks that in “a field with so many resources dedicated to the examination of every aspect of Kierkegaard’s life and writings, it is remarkably surprising how few scholars have analyzed the significant influence of Paul upon that *corpus*.”⁴ The most significant commentator on Kierkegaard’s use of scripture does not seem to spend much time considering his relation to the teachings of the Apostle. Undoubtedly, the references to the synoptic gospels in the later works of Kierkegaard far outnumber the mentions of Paul.⁵ For example, Anti-Climacus draws all the texts for his expositions from the gospel accounts of the life of Christ. However, Brandt suggests that around half of Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* and a quarter of the edifying discourses are Pauline in origin.⁶ Ferreira does consider the centrality of 1 Corinthians 13 in *Works of Love* and Fishburn looks at the letter of Galatians in Kierkegaard’s

¹ FSE, 34.

² FSE, 14.

³ FSE, 69.

⁴ Lori Unger Brandt, “Paul: Herald of Grace and Paradigm of Christian Living,” in *Kierkegaard and the Bible: The New Testament*, ed. Lee C. Barrett and Jon Bartley Stewart, vol. Kierkegaard and the Bible of Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources 1 (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 189.

⁵ Joseph Rosas III, *Scripture in the Thought of Søren Kierkegaard* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 144.

⁶ Brandt, “Herald of Grace,” 190.

thought.⁷ The influence of 2 Corinthians on Kierkegaard's writing is one of the many less explored connections with the Pauline Epistles. It is interesting that Rosas, in his examination of the scripture citations and allusions in *Practice*, completely misses the allusions to 2 Cor. 3:17-18 in the young man narrative.⁸ This is probably due to the reality that Kierkegaard "approached the bible with imaginative freedom" with a wide variety of allusions and direct references utilising a whole host of methodologies.⁹

Recent research demonstrates a connection between Kierkegaard and 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 1:21-25 "plays an important role throughout the Kierkegaardian corpus" according to Westphal.¹⁰ Specifically, the works of Climacus exhibit a relationship to the early statements of Paul about the foolishness of the gospel. Given the self-confessed centrality of Climacus to Kierkegaard's authorial project, that puts the Corinthian discourse at the centre of Kierkegaard's thought. The vital piece of evidence is the link between the Corinthian theology of glory and the Hegelian obsession with speculative theology.

The Hegelian, speculative philosophy that claims to go beyond faith and to achieve divine knowledge shares significant connections with the Corinthians view of wisdom.

Both claim that humans possess the ability as humans to possess divine knowledge.¹¹

The Hegelian dismissal of imaginative religious thought in favour of Absolute knowledge made the cross of Christ offensive to the advance of philosophical thought. Hegel calls for a "withering away of the religious point of view."¹²

⁷ M. Jamie Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137–38. Janet Forsythe Fishburn, "Søren Kierkegaard, Exegete," *Interpretation* 29.3 (1985): 229–45.

⁸ Rosas III, *Scripture in the Thought of Søren Kierkegaard*, 192–94.

⁹ Joel D. S. Rasmussen, "Kierkegaard the Reader of Scripture," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Theology of Kierkegaard*, ed. Aaron P. Edwards and David J. Gouwens (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 121.

¹⁰ Merold Westphal, *Becoming a Self: A Reading of Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (West Lafayette: Purdue, 1996), 133 fn25.

¹¹ Harris B. Bechtol, "Paul and Kierkegaard: A Christocentric Epistemology," *Heythrop Journal* 54.2 (2013): 929.

¹² Bechtol, "Paul and Kierkegaard," 929.

Bechtol suggests that in 1 Corinthians the fundamental issue is the difference between the anthropocentric epistemology of the Corinthians and the Christocentric epistemology of Paul. The cross, in particular, as the wisdom and power of God displeases Corinthian epistemology.

The cross becomes the beginning of ‘an epistemological revolution’ that reverses the Corinthians’ epistemic values, view of the power of human wisdom, and emphasis on their own self-sufficiency.¹³

Climacus explicitly refers to Corinthians when he refers to the “absolute paradox” which is “an offense to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks”.¹⁴ Just as Paul placed Jesus at the centre of his thought in an affront to Corinthian wisdom, so too Climacus puts Jesus at the centre to denigrate the intellectual and spiritual capacities of sinful human wisdom. “Wisdom and truth are no longer ultimately cognitive because Jesus redefines wisdom and knowledge as a salvific act.”¹⁵ No other human wisdom can transform a person so that they have salvation. Only faith in the absurdity of the cross is the way of Christianity; this requires the end of all speculative and intellectual endeavours in favour of a personal relationship with the crucified Christ.

Interestingly, Paul’s solution to the incapacity of human wisdom to comprehend the cross is the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit enables someone to “recognize that the crucified Christ is the true power and wisdom of God.”¹⁶ It is the Spirit who reveals the mind of Christ to believers (2:16) and puts them in a relationship with Christ. Climacus’ limitations become apparent at this point. As a non-believer, he understands that Christianity requires the renunciation of human wisdom to take hold of the divine paradox of the God-man. However, he has not experienced the revealing work of the Spirit, nor does he understand it. Climacus

¹³ Bechtol, “Paul and Kierkegaard,” 930.

¹⁴ CUP1, 213.

¹⁵ Bechtol, “Paul and Kierkegaard,” 940.

¹⁶ Bechtol, “Paul and Kierkegaard,” 935.

can only take the reader so far into Paul's theology. Anti-Climacus, with the Spirit's revelation, can make sense of the full Trinitarian reality of the new covenant.

In considering the place of 2 Corinthians in the thought of Kierkegaard, we also consider Kierkegaard's overall vision of the Apostle. Kierkegaard's view of the Apostle Paul is established as he carefully distinguishes apostleship from the category of genius.¹⁷ The Pseudonym H.H. holds the Apostle Paul in particular esteem not because of the eloquence or genius. "I am not to listen to Paul because he is brilliant or matchlessly brilliant, but I am to submit to Paul because he has divine authority."¹⁸ Apostleship is such that no one "gradually becomes what he is."¹⁹ God's truth comes into the world as "God empowers, even overpowers, certain individuals for the task of direct communication."²⁰ Paul's authority is as if "God himself or the Lord Jesus Christ" were speaking.²¹ The only sign of Paul's legitimacy is his suffering on behalf of the truth. Paul is a legitimate Apostle by the command of God, revealing the truth of God as he suffers like Christ.

It is precisely this outward suffering fuelled by an inward life of faith which Kierkegaard finds so compelling in the life of Paul. "For Kierkegaard central to Paul's apostleship was the paradox of his faithful witness. When he suffered, he transformed his suffering into testimony."²² From 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, Brandt notes that Kierkegaard sees in Paul "a paradigm of faithfulness for Christians to imitate in the life of faith, taking special note of his

¹⁷ Gregory R. Beabout and Randall Colton, "Ethical-Religious Education in Kierkegaard's 'The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle,'" in *Without Authority*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 18 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Macon, Georgia USA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 244.

¹⁸ WA, 96.

¹⁹ WA, 95.

²⁰ WA, 241. Jack Mulder, Jr., "The Catholic Moment? On the Apostle in Kierkegaard's 'The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle,'" in *Without Authority*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 18 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Macon, Georgia USA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 210.

²¹ WA, 96-97.

²² Brandt, "Herald of Grace," 198.

perseverance despite suffering”.²³ Of course, in 2 Corinthians, Paul exposes this most clearly about his life and ministry as he comes under attack for his weak appearance. The “essence of the assault upon his apostolic authority was a concentrated ‘exposure’ of his weakness.”²⁴ Paul demonstrates his genuine Apostolic status *because* he replicated the death and resurrection of Christ in his life. The “Messiah gives ‘cruciform shape’ to a ministry that is offered in his name.”²⁵ If Kierkegaard finds Paul’s faithful suffering witness compelling, it is not surprising to see a theological affinity with 2 Corinthians as a letter. Indeed Kierkegaard sees in Paul’s life and ministry a demonstration of a suffering transformed by God’s power into a living testament to Christ.

Kierkegaard also exhibits a clear personal connection to Paul’s depiction of outward suffering and inward renewal in 2 Corinthians. When deliberating upon what scriptural texts to include in a book entitled “the gospel of sufferings”, Kierkegaard considers the passion of Christ or the persecution in Acts: “Or the many passages in the letters to the Corinthians where there is one oxymoron after another: poor ourselves, we make everyone rich; or rejoice and I say rejoice”.²⁶ By this he refers to such passages as 6:8-10 which he explicitly mentions in an exposition on Ephesians 3:13: “But Paul was an apostle. Even though distressed, he nevertheless was always happy; even though he was poor, he always made many rich; even though he had nothing, he nevertheless possessed everything.”²⁷ In addition there are two expositions upon 4:17-18 considering the eternal glory that outweighs present suffering. Kierkegaard appears to receive this notion from Luther himself.

²³ Brandt, “Herald of Grace,” 205.

²⁴ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 38.

²⁵ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 38.

²⁶ KJN 4, 47 [NB:34] / SKS 20, 35-37.

²⁷ EUD, 82.

Luther is quite right in giving as one of the marks of a Christian No 7: that their (Christians') inner cares are grievous, that they are anxious and yet do not give up, but outwardly are poor, despised, sick, pitiful, so that they might in all things become like their head, Xt, and receive the blessedness he promises to all who suffer persecution for his name's sake.²⁸

Kierkegaard found solace in this thought when considering the plight of his own life. Though inwardly pained through his melancholic disposition, outwardly he was considered to be proud.²⁹ The oxymoron of 2 Corinthians—outward suffering and inward strength—was a fruitful way for Kierkegaard to understand the Christian life.

The most prominent example of this is Kierkegaard's frequent explicit and implicit allusions to Paul's thorn. A whole discourse is dedicated to explicating the spiritual reality of Paul's thorn. Kierkegaard considered from the thorn that "the highest life also has its suffering, has the hardest suffering."³⁰ Climacus considers Paul's religious suffering was "a sign of blessedness."³¹ Anti-Climacus considers the thorn as part of the despair of existence for all people.³² So too satisfaction in God's grace is the perfection of humanity and sometime requires a Satanic thorn.³³ In a meditation upon how *God Makes the Weak Strong*, he considers the difference between the outward weakening of circumstances and the inward strengthening of God.³⁴ Kierkegaard's affinity for 2 Corinthians resonates theologically with this picture of suffering and strength.

²⁸ KJN 4, 372 [NB5:4-7] / SKS 20, 372.

²⁹ KJN 4, 170 [NB2:73] / SKS 20, 171.

³⁰ EUD, 346.

³¹ CUP1, 454.

³² SUD, 75.

³³ CD, 64-65.

³⁴ CD, 127.

Even more prominent is the motif of the thorn in Kierkegaard's reflections upon his own life. He understands the thorn to be the reason for the power of his authorship:

From that moment I made my choice. I have regarded that grievous misrelation, with all its sufferings (which undoubtedly would have made suicides of most of those who had spirit enough to comprehend fully the appalling nature of their suffering), as my thorn in the flesh, my limitation, my cross. I have thought of it as the costly bargain in which God in Heaven sold me a spiritual strength that is unequalled among my contemporaries. This does not make me conceited, for *I am indeed crushed*; my desire has become my bitter daily pain and mortification.³⁵

He considers the difference between people who stare longingly and resentfully at their thorns to those who perceive the potential blessing. "For however strange it may be in a certain way, this is true: with the help of the thorn in my foot I leap higher than anyone with sound feet."³⁶ In *Point of View*, God uses the thorn to prepare him for his public life as a writer.³⁷ Paul's own suffering in 2 Corinthians is the key which Kierkegaard used to understand suffering in his own life.

Given Kierkegaard's affinity with Paul's portrait of inward life and outward suffering, the two verses of 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, apart from their appearance at the summit of the work of Anti-Climacus, provide a theological explanation of how the Triune God is at work in Paul's life. At the heart of the letter is how Paul, the humiliated captive of Jesus Christ (2:14) could be a genuine messenger of almighty God. The issue of Paul's appearance (10:1, 10; 11:5-7) is given specific attention at the latter end of the book with the whole letter bracketed with descriptions of a severe affliction (1:8-11) and the thorn (12:1-10). In making sense of his ministry, Paul

³⁵ KJN 4, 34-35 [NB:34] / SKS 20, 36-37.

³⁶ KJN 4, 157 [NB2:48-49] / SKS 20, 158-159.

³⁷ PV, 83, 86.

contrasts it with the old covenant ministry of Moses (3:3). Paul considers himself a minister (v.6) of a new covenant mediated by the Spirit of God himself, not by Moses or the law. Hence the Spirit's mediation of the new covenant is at the heart of Paul's defence. The passage of transformation (3:17-18) describes how God is at work in the life of Paul and the new covenant.

Hence, we can see Kierkegaard's regard for scripture is particularly evident in his vision of the faithful life of the Apostle Paul. The suffering Apostle, so apparent in 2 Corinthians, provides a theological paradigm through which Kierkegaard understood his own life and the nature of the Christian life. The place of 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 in making theological sense of how the Triune God is at work in Paul's new covenant ministry makes it a fruitful section to ask Anti-Climacus to expound. An appeal to these verses makes sense within Kierkegaard's wider thought, is present in Anti-Climacus' work itself, and is consonant with the life of inward and outward transformation which Anti-Climacus prescribes.

2. Questioning Anti-Climacus from 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

We will now establish from 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 the substance of our conversation with Anti-Climacus, by paying close attention to these verses and situating them in a Lutheran conversation with Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. "Kierkegaard may very well have been more of a Lutheran than he was aware."³⁸ Of course there is much discussion about Kierkegaard's relation to Luther and Lutheranism.³⁹ As already mentioned, Kierkegaard's reading of Paul's suffering life in 2 Corinthians is at times credited to Luther's own

³⁸ Claudia Welz, *Humanity in God's Image: An Interdisciplinary Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 122.

³⁹ Lee C. Barrett, "Kierkegaard's Appropriation and Critique of Luther and Lutheranism," in *A Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Jon Stewart (West Sussex: Blackwell, 2016), 180–81.

understanding of the Christian life.⁴⁰ “Kierkegaard was aware that Luther was a theologian of the cross, and appreciated the dimension of potential suffering in the Christian.”⁴¹ Anti-Climacus, in *Sickness and Practice*, uses the Lutheran dynamic of law and grace, a reflection of Luther’s emphasis on the “anguished conscience as prerequisite for forgiveness of sins.”⁴² Kierkegaard, though dissenting from the Lutheran theology of his day, draws on Luther’s understanding of the suffering Christian life. Luther also reads 2 Cor. 3:17-18 theologically with other texts as Anti-Climacus does.⁴³ In involving Luther we are not trying to over-complicate our reading of Paul but make sense of where Anti-Climacus’ Lutheran theology might lie.

Bonhoeffer, coming the century after Kierkegaard, affirms Kierkegaard’s Lutheran lineage and directly reflects upon Anti-Climacus’ writings. Bonhoeffer considers Kierkegaard to be “in the same line of genuine Christian thinking as Paul, Augustine, Luther and Barth.”⁴⁴ Concepts like “cheap grace” appear to have compelling sources in both Luther and Anti-Climacus.⁴⁵ Bonhoeffer prescribes Anti-Climacus’ works “as an antidote” to his fiancé when discussing an area of theology.⁴⁶ Indeed, Anti-Climacus’ *Practice* and Bonhoeffer’s *Discipleship* are similar in their “devotional and dogmatic” style. In addition, they provide an important place for Matt 11:28 and exist within a similar national church background.⁴⁷ Theologically the *promise* of

⁴⁰ JFY, 169; KJN 7 309 [NB 18:74] / SKS 23, 303.

⁴¹ Barrett, “Luther and Lutheranism,” 187.

⁴² WL, 201.

⁴³ In reference to Rom 12:2-4, the mind is ‘changed “from one degree of glory to another”, LW 25, 105. A number of times Luther does this as he contemplates Genesis 41; Psalm 8, 95 and 119; Romans 1 and 12; Hebrews 2 and 9.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey B. Kelly, “Kierkegaard as ‘Antidote’ and as Impact on Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Concept of Christian Discipleship,” in *Bonhoeffer’s Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, ed. Peter Frick (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 145.

⁴⁵ Kelly, “Kierkegaard as ‘Antidote,’” 149.

⁴⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Maria von Wedemeyer, *Love Letters From Cell 92*, ed. Ruth-Alice von Bismarck and Ulrich Kabitz, trans. John Brown (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 185–86.

⁴⁷ DBWE 4, 38-40.

Christ is central to both of their understandings of the Christian life.⁴⁸ Most pivotally for this piece of research, Bonhoeffer reflects upon 2 Cor. 3:17-18 at a similar summit of his work *Discipleship*. The similarities between *Practice* and *Discipleship* mean we have in Bonhoeffer a commentator on Anti-Climacus' work who will ensure we are not importing theology into our reading of Anti-Climacus.

Together, Luther and Bonhoeffer establish for us the line of Lutheran theology to which Anti-Climacus prescribes in contrast to the speculative Lutheranism of Kierkegaard's day. In the theological reflection of Luther, Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer we see a place for the Spirit's mediation of the person of Christ inwardly in such a way that outwardly they become conformed to the suffering likeness of Christ. It is this theological idea, growing out of 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, that we will ask Anti-Climacus to explain for us. Three theological realities become clear as we form questions from Paul's words. Firstly, our questions will need to make sense of the Holy Spirit as the agent of transformation. Secondly, there is complexity in how the Spirit mediates freedom through Christ and the gospel and thirdly, how he captivates the inward life of the believer while also conforming the outward particulars of their life.

a. The Holy Spirit as the agent of transformation

Initially, when we consider Paul's words, what is evident is the way the immanent work of the Holy Spirit is given the vital place in the work of transformation. The Holy Spirit as a personal agent is at work on individual believers. Paul bookends his picture of transformation with references to the Spirit of God:

⁴⁸ Philip Ziegler, "Christ For Us Today – Promeity in the Christologies of Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15.1 (2013): 30..

Now the **Lord is the Spirit**, and where the **Spirit of the Lord** is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the **Lord, who is the Spirit**. (2 Corinthians 3:17–18, emphasis mine)

In contrast to the conflation of human and divine agencies in both the theology of Kierkegaard's day and in some Kierkegaard scholarship, the Holy Spirit here is the direct agent of the work of God in transformation. The last mention of the Spirit particularly and explicitly states how all transformative work comes from the Spirit.⁴⁹

Paul wishes to affirm that the work is of God, who, whether one thinks in terms of the Father, Son or the Spirit, is Lord; and to add that the divine work of transformation is in fact to be ascribed the third of these agencies.⁵⁰

It is Paul's emphasis on the Spirit's role that suggests if we are to ask Anti-Climacus questions about 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, then we need to ask him questions about how the Holy Spirit mediates the work of transformation in the believer: "The Spirit, his person and work, is the hallmark of the new covenant."⁵¹

For Paul, in the new covenant, the presence of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the transformation of the human self.⁵² "The Spirit of the Lord" is a reference back (v.6) to Yahweh who spoke with Moses (Exo 34:34).⁵³ "The Lord who spoke with Moses is the Spirit of whom the Scriptures speak, and who in speaking gives himself through the apostle to the

⁴⁹ The use of ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος is causative, referring back to the initial phrase where the Spirit brings freedom.

⁵⁰ C. K. Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A&C Black, 1973), 126.

⁵¹ Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, vol. 7 of *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), 318.

⁵² 'The Spirit of the Lord' (v.17a) frequently occurs in the LXX. The genitive κυρίου 'indicates origin and belonging' and not an identification of the Spirit and Yahweh. Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (Yale University Press, 2005), 213.

⁵³ The article ὁ in front of δὲ κύριος is anaphoric, referring back to Moses. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 311.

Corinthians.”⁵⁴ The double identification of the Spirit (v.17) serves to both connect him to Yahweh and also distinguish his personhood.⁵⁵ Alternatively, Barnett insists the Lord is the person of Christ who dispenses the Spirit in the new covenant. The age of the Spirit comes only as the age of the Christ.⁵⁶ However, it appears more natural to read this verse in connection with the narrative concerning Moses. The emphasis is on access to the Spirit of Yahweh who spoke with Moses; Paul’s ministry is legitimate because of this continuity with Moses.

The work of the Spirit is connected to the central verb of these two verses, transformation (μεταμορφούμεθα). The same verb is used of Jesus’ transfiguration scenes in the gospels in Matt 17:2 and Mark 9:2. Jesus’ face also shone like the sun, which, together with the appearance of Moses, suggests a strong connection to the shining face of Moses in the Exodus account. Höhne further contends the presence of the Spirit in Luke’s account of the transfiguration, revealing the fullness of Jesus’ glory, as the Spirit enables all of the ministry of Jesus.⁵⁷ As Jesus’ transfiguration is a revelation of his full glorious identity, so also the transformation of the believer is the forming of Christ’s identity in them. “When Jesus was transfigured, the change was outwardly visible (Matt 17:2), but when Christians are transformed, the change is essentially inward, the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2), and becomes visible only in their Christ-like behaviour.”⁵⁸ As we shall see, it is the revelation of the fullness of Christ’s identity in the believer which leads to the transformation into their future and final self. Paul repeats the verb in Rom 12:2 in contrast to the conforming of believers to the standards of the world. There are a number of derivations of the notion of

⁵⁴ Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 175.

⁵⁵ ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου. In the first phrase there is an identification of the Spirit as Yahweh, in the second, the Spirit proceeds from Yahweh.

⁵⁶ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 200–201.

⁵⁷ David A. Höhne, *Spirit and Sonship: Colin Gunton’s Theology of Particularity and the Holy Spirit*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 135–36.

⁵⁸ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 316.

“forming” as established by Furnish, all of these have a connection to the forming of Christ’s identity in the believer.⁵⁹

Paul’s clarity about the Holy Spirit’s mediation of transformation contrasts markedly with the theological presumptions that assume the power of human beings to re-create themselves, according to Bonhoeffer. The following reflection is connected with 2 Cor. 3:18 by Bonhoeffer’s colleague Bethge.⁶⁰

Hence we must understand by 'formation' something quite different from what we are accustomed to mean, and in fact the Holy Scripture speaks of formation in a sense that at first sounds quite strange. It is not primarily concerned with formulations of the world by planning and programs, but in all formation it is concerned only with the one form that has overcome the world, the form of Jesus Christ.⁶¹

The nature of Christian formation is not that they try and form themselves or the world into Christ’s image, but rather that God transforms them into Christ’s. Bonhoeffer contrasts the transformation of Christ with the rise of “super-humanity” who seek to “outgrow one’s nature as human” and attempts to make a “false uniformity” through enforced submission to a universal ideal. Formation in Christ is to “be in freedom the creature of the Creator...the human beings that we really are.”⁶² The Holy Spirit brings about a free and unique conformity to the person of Christ rather than a false relation to an ideal.

⁵⁹ In Romans 8:29, *image* follows the use of the adjective *συμμόρφους*, the moulding of the believer into the likeness of Christ. The same adjective occurs in Phil 3:21 in describing how the risen Lord Jesus will share his glorious resurrected state. The use of the verb form *μετασχηματίζει* to describe the transformation confirms and extends the idea. In addition, there is a similar use of the verb *συμμορφιζόμενος* to describe the likeness of the believer to the crucified and suffering Lord Jesus. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 316.

⁶⁰ DBWE 16, 94 n75.

⁶¹ DBWE 16, 93.

⁶² DBWE 16, 94.

Bonhoeffer is also careful to keep the mediation of the Spirit together with Christ and the word of God. Bonhoeffer connects the word of the gospel with the presence of the Spirit and the subsequent entry of Christ into the life of the believer. “Thus does the word of Christ bring the Holy Spirit, and thus does the Holy Spirit bring Christ...Christ gives the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit gives Christ – hence Paul can say: the Lord is *the* Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17).”⁶³ Here the Holy Spirit imparts freedom to the believer through mediating Christ as the gospel is preached. The mediation of Christ to the individual is different to the “collective spirit” of German idealism. “It has been said: the Spirit is a neutral power, a collective spirit proceeding out from the overall activity of Christ (Schleiermacher).”⁶⁴ Bonhoeffer relates the place of a personal Spirit in accomplishing a formation of the human self but not separate from the preaching of the gospel or person of Christ.

Therefore the Holy Spirit is the one who enables the transformation of believers. If we are to ask Anti-Climacus questions about Paul’s account, we need to make them questions about the work of the Spirit in transformation. As Bonhoeffer clarifies, we need to distinguish the work of the Holy Spirit from the moral effort of humanity to conform themselves and the world to Christ and the collective Hegelian Spirit. We also need further illumination of how the Spirit mediates Christ through the word of the gospel. Bonhoeffer tightly keeps the three together, perhaps we need to keep them distinct but related as we make sense of the Spirit’s work, appropriating the agencies of Son and Spirit in such a way as one does not dismiss the other. Bonhoeffer perhaps does not carefully delineate how the Spirit mediates Christ because of his emphasis on Christology. We need Anti-Climacus to make sense of the unique place of the Holy Spirit within transformation.

⁶³ DBWE 14, 454.

⁶⁴ DBWE 14, 482.

b. *Freedom comes through the mediation of the Christ of the gospel*

The Holy Spirit in these verses uniquely mediates freedom through Christ and the word of the gospel. We need Anti-Climacus to make sense of how the Holy Spirit brings freedom while neither combining with human agency, like Martensen, nor consuming human agency into a greater movement, like Hegel. Anti-Climacus' work *Sickness* considers the nature of human despair and how a self can exist without it, providing commentary precisely on the nature of human freedom. We will be considering how the Holy Spirit relates to sinfully bound human agency to bring new life.

In 2 Corinthians, the Spirit's presence brings about a freedom (ἐλευθερία) for the believer as part of their transformation. Paul's lack of qualification for the type of freedom the Spirit offers leaves it open to unfold all the types of freedom imaginable in the context.⁶⁵ Where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there the fullness of God's purposes are realised.⁶⁶ In the context of Moses' interactions with God face to face, the freedom that the Spirit brings is most clearly that "of hearing and responding to God...a freedom of communication."⁶⁷ ἐλευθερία is only used once in 2 Corinthians and may have a connection to the sense of *boldness* in Paul's ministry (3:12) towards others.⁶⁸ Philo connected a boldness of character where words and actions met and a freedom concerning taking "refuge in virtue".⁶⁹ "For Paul, freedom comes as a gift and means as it were, 'taking refuge' in God's grace, thus being ruled by his love."⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 313.

⁶⁶ The locative use of the pronoun οὗ connects the Spirit to localised effects of God's Spirit in the Old Testament.

⁶⁷ Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 177.

⁶⁸ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 237.

⁶⁹ Philo cited in Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 238.

⁷⁰ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 238.

In this way, the Holy Spirit brings about a bold new life in which believers find refuge in grace and take on a life which comports to the same reality: a freedom to know the grace of Christ and live out its ramifications.

The freedom of the Spirit is closely related to what Paul means by the “unveiling” of believers. The veil is used by Paul to stress an irreversible spiritual state without the intervention of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ The veil is a physical reality for Moses (3:13) which is described as a spiritual reality for all people as the Old Testament is read (3:14). Within its context, the glorious appearance of Moses (Ex. 34:29) is the climax to a narrative section of Exodus which began with the golden calf.⁷² The golden calf was a hand-crafted self-mediation of the divine reality who had won Israelite redemption from Egypt.

Exodus 25-40 address basically a single topic: how will Yahweh be present among his people? As a Messenger? In the Tabernacle? Through the Covenant? As the Golden Calf? As Moses’ face? As his own Face?⁷³

Moses’ radiance is the result of his interactions with the divine presence of Yahweh, enabling him to become a mediator of Yahweh’s will.⁷⁴ All of Yahweh’s goodness comes before Moses (33:19) in response to his request to see the glory of Yahweh (v.18). The fearful response of the Israelites gives him a reason to “veil” himself before the people (v.33). The veil is only removed when he is encountering and communicating the word of Yahweh to the people.⁷⁵

⁷¹ The use of ἀνακαλυμμένῳ in the perfect middle tense serves to highlight and point back to the previous discussion of the Mosaic covenant and the relative glory of the new. Within context, the ‘perfect participle ἀνακαλυμμένῳ stresses the permanence and irreversibility of their unveiled state.’ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 313.

⁷² Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 610.

⁷³ William Henry Propp, *Exodus 19-40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 619.

⁷⁴ The causative use of the preposition marks out speaking with Yahweh as the reason for Moses’ radiance (Ex. 34:29).

⁷⁵ Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 618.

The radiance on his face was to affirm his status as mediator so Israel received the word of Yahweh.

In this way, through the unveiling of believers, there is a new, mediated access to God. Rather than the glorious face of Moses and the tablets of the covenant, there is the “face of the Lord” beheld in the power of God’s Spirit. The Mosaic mediation still brought death (2 Cor. 3:6) and condemnation (v.7). Though Moses mediated the written covenant to Israel, he was unable to mediate the glorious presence of God, nor was he able to behold the glory of God and live. The notion of Moses’ veil is then taken by Paul to explore the reality of bound human agency despite the revelation of the OT. It is a veil over the hearts of the Israelites and a dullness of mind which stands in the way of their ability to receive the glory of God (v.14-15). For Seifrid, the Spirit frees the believer from “the hardening that is God’s judgement on our rebellion. Our blindness to the lord and his goodness has been overcome in Christ.”⁷⁶ Paul emphatically declares all believers to be part of this new covenant (v.18).

Anti-Climacus’ discussion of the universal reality of human despair will explore further the nature of the veil and bound human agency, the key question is how the mediation of the presence of God unveils believers and frees them from despair. Here the reading of Luther and of Bonhoeffer suggests a problem of internal image formation at the heart of human sinfulness. For Luther, core mental pictures of God influenced the lives of believers. Pastorally, he sought to minister by displacing and reforming internal imagery. Welz draws particular attention to a sermon on Matthew 8:13, focused on the phrase, “Go! Let it be done just as you believe it!”.

Luther concatenates this text with 2 Corinthians 3:18...faith is synonymous with correct inner image formation, which determines the believer’s attitude to Christ...

⁷⁶ Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 179.

Christ's message to the centurion is: 'Just as you imagine me, so you have me. If you form the right image of me, you have me in the right way.' Since the centurion has formed the image of Christ as a comforting, friendly man, Christ appears and speaks to him just as the centurion has imagined him.⁷⁷

In the background is an understanding of the original 'image of God' in Adam. The loss of the image of God occurred because "Adam now bears a hostile image in his mind."⁷⁸ To recover the image of God, believers must hold the correct vision of God in Christ internally.

Like Luther, Bonhoeffer connects the need for a vision of Christ with the lost image of God from the fall. The fall of man involved the decision to become like God (Gen. 3) through their strength rather than allowing the mystery of divine image-bearing to come to its fruition in God's power. The irony of this decision was that the more humanity strove to restore their lost purpose, the greater the alienation. Ultimately, all attempts to fulfil divine destiny utilised distorted images of God:

"Their distorted form, which they modelled after the image of the god of their own imaginative projections, resembles more and more the image of Satan, even though they may be unaware of this. The image of God, as the Creator's gracious gift, has been lost on this earth."⁷⁹

For Bonhoeffer, it is the internal image that drives action: "Every human being bears an image... As a human being we are not merely word, thought or will."⁸⁰ The internal image of humanity drives forward their life and movement. Whatever image is central holds the form of the person. It is impossible for a human to rethink their way out of the distortion; instead, their whole being must be remade. Hence the veiled nature of humanity consists in their loss of a

⁷⁷ Welz, *Humanity in God's Image*, 145.

⁷⁸ Welz, *Humanity in God's Image*, 145.

⁷⁹ DBWE 4, 282.

⁸⁰ DBWE 4, 283-284.

vision of God—that must be remedied internally in order for them to recover the fullness of their humanity. The Holy Spirit must reform and remake the believer through mediating a new vision of God in the person of Christ.

Vital to an understanding of the relation of the Holy Spirit and human freedom is an understanding of the idea of *reflecting* or *beholding* in this image-formation. When it comes to reflecting, κατοπτριζόμενοι, Welz makes clear that there are two different but interrelated understandings of the text. On the one hand, “Christ is viewed as the mirror through which we behold the glory of the Lord” and on the other “the mirror could also be another person, who carries the image of God and therefore reflects the glory of the Lord”.⁸¹ Either Christ or humanity is the mirror in which the glory of God is reflected. Welz seems to conclude that both interpretations of the verb are possible at the same time because of the reality of what a “mirror” is. “The mirror is not only the place of intersection but also the location of the transformation where the observer becomes the image of the observed.”⁸² But Welz’s conflation of the two views does not seem to fit with the way *beholding* is used in other contexts.⁸³ In addition, Furnish suggests that the translation “reflecting as a mirror does”, is not consistent with Philo’s use of the same phrase in explaining Moses’ reflection of divine glory.⁸⁴

The idea of ‘a mirror’ is only present as a means of describing the indirect nature of the encounter, rather than the combination of passivity and activity.

⁸¹ Welz, *Humanity in God’s Image*, 183.

⁸² Welz, *Humanity in God’s Image*, 185.

⁸³ Heath states that κατοπτριζόμενοι as *reflecting* is unattested in the middle form of this verb. Likewise, transformation by ‘reflection’ is not an idea present in Jewish or other sources of the time. J. M. F. Heath, *Paul’s Visual Piety: The Metamorphosis of the Beholder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 218.

⁸⁴ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214.

Mirror-vision, then, is widely associated with the indirectness of encounter with the divine that is best suited to those who are still at some spiritual, temporal, or physical remove from him.⁸⁵

Beholding as in a mirror is perhaps the best translation—an indirect sight of Christ makes the most theological sense of the idea that the Spirit is mediating the person of Christ to the believer. “It is in the incarnate crucified, and risen Christ and in the Gospel that we behold the glory of the Lord (4:3-6), not in any moral transformation of our persons.”⁸⁶ If believers can directly reflect the glory of God, then creation mediates God's glory rather than Christ through the freedom of the Spirit. Philo distinguishes between viewing God in the mirror of creation or Moses’ longing to view him “in the mirror of God in God himself.”⁸⁷ Paul’s use of mirror concerns his eschatological awareness that a full vision of God’s glory cannot occur until the world to come. We see ‘only in a mirror’ because a full personal encounter is the final destiny of the believer rather than their present reality (1 Cor 13:12). It is the Spirit-enabled beholding of the present which unveils and frees believers.

The Holy Spirit is able to bring a real revelation of Christ before his final unveiling in glory. Luther is helpful in distinguishing a present real revelation of the person of Christ and a final complete vision of God’s glory to come. We know Christ “only through faith, as 2 Cor. 3:18 states: “But we with unveiled faith, reflecting” – namely, through faith...”⁸⁸ Importantly, the believer has “the very revelation of the divinity of Christ, which was veiled under the letter and the humanity, as was the face of Moses under a veil (2 Cor. 3:13).” Yet, “He revealed it through the Holy Spirit as he promised saying: “He will glorify Me” (John 16:14).”⁸⁹ The final reality

⁸⁵ Heath, *Paul’s Visual Piety*, 220.

⁸⁶ Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 180.

⁸⁷ Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 181.

⁸⁸ LW 29, 203.

⁸⁹ LW 11, 253.

of this redemption will be fulfilled “when he appears in glory”. The Holy Spirit mediates a faith-filled beholding of Christ in the present before the final day when believers will dwell in Christ’s presence. Anti-Climacus in *Practice* speaks of the contemporaneity of Christ in a similar way; the present glory of Christ is mediated by the Spirit before his final revelation by the Father.⁹⁰ In *Sickness*, Anti-Climacus similarly understands how the Holy Spirit mediates forgiveness, as I have already suggested. It is this revelation of Christ to the bound human self which is the unique freedom given by the Spirit.

It is the notion of *sight* which raises questions about where the power resides to transform the human self. Seifrid suggests what Paul means is not seeing but hearing: ““seeing” serves as a synesthetic metaphor: our present “seeing” is “hearing””. It is through hearing and “believing the apostolic proclamation” that leads to the “opening of the heart, mind, and “eyes”” to Christ’s glory.⁹¹ Seifrid is correct to emphasise that Paul’s ministry concerns the proclamation of the gospel. Following the vivid description of the transformation in the new covenant, he describes his ministry as “setting forth the truth plainly” (4:2); “our gospel” (v.3) and “what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord” (v.5). The “beholding” of the Spirit becomes by means of the gospel preached. However, Paul swiftly moves between hearing and beholding Christ in chapter four. Paul preaches Jesus Christ as Lord (v.5) and says if it is rejected then it is not *seen* (v.4). If the hearing of the gospel is not accompanied by seeing, then the veil remains over a heart. The gospel brings *light* that displays Christ’s glory, the coming of light into the heart is a comparable event to the creation of light in Genesis 1 (3:6). It is Yahweh who speaks light into the heart so that the heart beholds the face of Christ. Here, given

⁹⁰ The Spirit’s mediation of Christ is evident in both references to the ‘sin against the Holy Spirit’ (SUD, 125; PC, 63) which will be discussed at length in its respective sections in SUD and PC.

⁹¹ Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 182..

that the Spirit is the agent of transformation, we might suggest that the Father sends the Spirit to enlighten the heart with the glory of Christ. As Barnett notes:

In common are (1) the use of optical verbs... and (2) the object of the verbs, “glory”...

When these verses are read together, it emerges that what “we all behold as in a mirror” is the “face of Christ”, who is “the image of God,” radiant with the glory of God.⁹²

Similarly, Paul had a vision of the glory of God which shone around him (Acts 22:11; 26:13). So too when the gospel is preached, believers see the glory of God in their hearts. The Holy Spirit enables the believer, through the word of the gospel, to see Christ in the heart. Hearing is for ears, but seeing is for the core of the human self—the heart.

Anti-Climacus’ vision of the youth transfixed by the image of Christ in *Practice* perfectly announces the way that the *sight* of the glory of Christ overwhelms the self without overriding agency.⁹³ Bonhoeffer’s almost parallel passage suggests the same:

The image of Jesus Christ which is always before the disciple’s eyes, and before which all other images fade away, enters, permeates, and transforms them, so that the disciples resemble, indeed become like, their master... For disciples, it is not possible to look at the image of the Son of God in aloof, detached contemplation; this image exerts a transforming power.⁹⁴

A vision of Christ is at once arresting and restorative for the whole of a human person. It is the image “which exerts the power, not the disciple’s imagination or vision”.⁹⁵ The visual nature of Christ is vital for forming an “image” in a believer. The way the image of Christ overwhelms suggests its reforming of the internal images at the centre of the human person. Without the ability to *see* Christ, someone can remain detached and aloof from his person.

⁹² Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 205.

⁹³ PC, 174-193.

⁹⁴ DBWE 4, 281.

⁹⁵ Welz, *Humanity in God’s Image*, 154.

Luther speaks of Christ as “Idea and Exemplar” who is the raised “Ensign” of Isaiah (11:12). It is the image of God placed before men, through the word of the Gospel which draws them away from falsehood and towards a true life in Christ:

Thus through the gospel as through a spectacle exhibited to the whole world (cf. 2 Cor. 4:9) Christ attracts all men by the knowledge and contemplation of himself and draws them away from the things to which they have clung in the world. This is the meaning of the statement that they are transformed and become like Him. In this way he says that Christ is the Cause and Leader of salvation, for He draws and leads sons to glory through Him.⁹⁶

The “visual” element of “seeing” Christ as an image is the reality that the Spirit, through the gospel, compels people to trust the work of the crucified Christ. “For God does not compel men to salvation by force and fear, but by this pleasing spectacle of His mercy and love”. The language of seeing is vital for making sense of the way that the Father through means of his Spirit draws people to the love and glory of his son.

Hence, the Spirit-enabled mediation of Christ overwhelms the believer as they hear the word of the gospel. The veiled nature of humanity means Christ is not mediated by speculation or historical process, but by the Spirit of God. The Spirit mediates the glory of Christ in a vivid and compelling way freeing the self to relate to God. The Spirit frees human agency to know and see Christ without coercion. Bonhoeffer and Luther demonstrate how the heart sight enabled by the Spirit reforms the internal vision of Christ and leads away from all other idols. However, we need a clearer sense of how the Spirit, as a person, relates to the self. Bonhoeffer and Luther show his place in transformation but don’t show us his personal nature as clearly.

⁹⁶ LW 29, 132.

Anti-Climacus in *Sickness* considers the reality of spiritual sickness and its remedy through faith in Christ. Anti-Climacus' careful unpacking of the nature of despair and how it is overcome in Christ take us inside this vision of transformation and show us how the Spirit acts upon the self in transformation. And so, we will ask Anti-Climacus, "how does the Holy Spirit unveil believers and set them free?" In answering this question, we will be looking for him to make sense of how the Spirit *relates* to believers in and through the work of unveiling.

c. Freedom comes through outward conformity to his suffering likeness

The freedom given by the Spirit is not simply to see the image of Christ but to be drawn into his likeness. We need Anti-Climacus to not only explain the inward mediation of Christ's glory but also how the particularity of believers' lives are drawn concretely into Christ's likeness. In contrast to Hegel's or Strauss' understanding of a collective spirit, how does the Holy Spirit enable individuals to bear the image of Christ? Here again we must reckon with Martensen's account of how providence functions in the life of faith; in contrast we are looking for ways of this occurring without the combining of divine and human agency. Anti-Climacus, in *Practice*, through the young man narrative in particular, speaks of how *governance* leads believers through the substance of their life enabling their conformity to Christ. The Holy Spirit's role in the circumstances of life is necessary to make sense of transformation.

Furnish suggests the Christological gravity of the text lies in the announcement of Christ's likeness (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα) into which believers are drawn. 2 Cor. 4:4 suggests that Christ's glory which shines in the gospel is the revelation of the image of God.⁹⁷ "Christ is God's image

⁹⁷ In the phrase τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, the preposition ὃς connects Christ's glory to the idea of the image of God.

because he is God's Son in whom God is beheld, and the image into which believers *are being transformed* is the same one they see mirrored there.”⁹⁸ Furnish also mentions a Midrash of Deut 34:7 which connected the shining face of Moses with the loss and regaining of the divine image of Adam. Barnett suggests that ‘image’ appears in these verses because of the language of sight rather than the reference to the creation account.⁹⁹ However, Furnish is correct in the immediate Christological and theological impact of the idea of image. The remaking of humanity in the image of Christ is the fundamental idea with an implicit connection to the broader category of biblical image-bearing.

Jesus Christ displays the image of God in human flesh as a means of humanity finding its identity again according to Bonhoeffer. Rather than humanity reforming itself to be like Christ, it is Christ who takes “shape within us (Gal 4:19)”¹⁰⁰ Specifically, it is those “who behold Christ” that are “drawn into Christ’s image, changed into the likeness of Christ’s form.”¹⁰¹ Through beholding Christ, he takes residence within the believer. The “incarnate, crucified, and transfigured one has entered into me and lives my life” (Gal 2:20).¹⁰² Beholding the crucified and resurrected Christ draws the believer into the life of the Triune God:

On this basis, we are now actually able to do those deeds, and in the simplicity of discipleship, to live life in the likeness of Christ... I no longer cast even a single glance on my own life, on the new image I bear. For in the same moment that I would desire to see it, I would lose it. For it is of course, merely the mirror reflection of the image of Jesus Christ upon which I look without ceasing.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 215.

⁹⁹ Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 125.

¹⁰⁰ DBWE 4, 285.

¹⁰¹ DBWE 4, 286.

¹⁰² DBWE 4, 286-287.

¹⁰³ DBWE 4, 287-288.

It is not the power of the believer to accomplish the likeness of Christ but only the work of God within them. Their gaze must be upon the likeness of Christ continually, not on themselves, so that they can bear and grow into his image. “In Bonhoeffer's interpretation, Christ casts a mirror image on us when we look upon him. As soon as we look away from him and try to see our own image, we immediately lose the *imago Dei*.”¹⁰⁴ Indeed, gazing on Christ pulls hearts free from “defiling images” and “various wishes and intentions” to be “fully absorbed in seeing God.”¹⁰⁵ From the Sermon on the Mount, the “pure” in heart are those who bear the internal image of Christ.

An important part of Paul’s description of transformation is the gradual nature of transformation, “from glory to glory”. Seifrid suggests it is not to be “understood as signifying linear progress of some sort” rather “transformation as an exchange” where our sin and shame are removed and replaced with Christ’s glory.¹⁰⁶ However, Harris contends that the entire sentence ends up “expressing the nature or direction of the transformation.”¹⁰⁷ Luther references Paul’s verses frequently in relation to the slow growth of a vision of Jesus Christ in the believer. Like seeing someone from a distance and at first they seem to be “a horse or a tree”, then “a man” until they are “a particular person”. So too “the knowledge of Christ” needs to be “exercised and daily increased until it is perfected” and we grow “into a perfect man”.¹⁰⁸ In the renewal of our minds we are “changed ‘from one degree of glory to another,’ 2 Cor. 3:18, always more and more laying aside the old state”.¹⁰⁹ The righteousness of God (Rom.

¹⁰⁴ Welz, *Humanity in God’s Image*, 155.

¹⁰⁵ DBWE 4, 108

¹⁰⁶ Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 183.

¹⁰⁷ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 316. Harris suggests that the use of the present for both the main verb and participle in addition with the ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν. For this to work, ἀπὸ must refer to the source or the ground of the transformation and εἰς the destination or final result of the transformation.

¹⁰⁸ LW 7, 139.

¹⁰⁹ LW 25, 105. Again, he suggests, “there are degrees of living and working; then why not of understanding? The Apostle says (2 Cor. 3:18) that we are being changed from one degree of clarity to another”. LW 14, 285-286

1:19) comes only by faith, yet it “becomes a clearer faith according to that expression in 2 Cor. 3:18”.¹¹⁰ The clarity of relationship can grow, through the mediation of the Spirit, and a spiritual remaking of the inner self comes along with it. It is the relational nature of the Spirit’s mediation of Christ’s person which makes the gradual idea of transformation coherent.

However, Luther would agree with Seifrid’s idea of the hidden glory of transformation. Just as the cross obscures God’s glory behind the humiliation of Christ’s execution, so too the transformed glory is hidden in the life of the Apostle and believer:

The image is that of deliverance and comfort given in suffering and distress, life given in death itself. This transformation is thus larger and greater than moral improvement, even if it includes a moral dimension.¹¹¹

He looks to Paul’s explanation of the difference between the inner and outer person (4:16-18) as a clue to how hiddenness works. “Transforming power is present only where there is weakness.”¹¹² Bearing the likeness of the crucified Christ in the resurrection power is what the transformation looks like for believers. Paul is not speaking about the ongoing moral transformation of the believer but about how the believer is summoned into the life of the crucified and risen Christ. It seems strange to separate the moral transformation of the believer from the outward manifestation of their conformity to Christ in a weak appearance. “Our transformation is nothing else than a transformation into the moral and spiritual likeness of the now glorified Christ.”¹¹³

Indeed, Paul speaks of an outward decay and inward renewal (2 Cor. 4:16), at the same time, he bears in his body the death of Jesus so that Christ’s life will become apparent (v.10-11).

¹¹⁰ LW 25, 153.

¹¹¹ Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 184–85.

¹¹² Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 186.

¹¹³ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 208.

Paul lists a series of antitheses (v.8-9) and then suggests that it is a sure knowledge of the resurrection from the dead which gives him hope in the midst of life (v.14). For Paul, a growing inward vision of God in Christ is necessary for bearing his suffering likeness. Paul gives two examples from his own life that exhibit how this works. In chapter one, he speaks of a circumstance of where he “despaired of life itself” (v.8). Yet, in the midst of this, he came to “rely on...God who raises the dead” (v.9). Paul walked into a circumstance with a clear possibility of death and came out with a dependence upon the goodness of God.

In the same way, in chapter twelve, Paul speaks of a *thorn*, which he labels a “messenger from Satan” (v.7). Paul pleads for it to be taken away, yet is told by Christ himself, ““My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”” (1 Cor 12:9) Again, Paul bears a suffering and at the same time has an inward growth in dependence upon the grace of Christ and his power comes to more perfect effect within him. For Paul, the inward and the outward happen at the same time, bearing the suffering life of Christ and growing in faith and knowledge of his person.

Bonhoeffer’s theological reflections take us to the crucial point that the freedom imparted by the Spirit is the replication of the life of Christ in the particulars of a believer’s life: “The Spirit appropriates Christ’s act in forming the historical acts of this spirit, of the form of Christ.”¹¹⁴ Believers are to love as Christ did in the incarnation and die, through baptism, as Jesus died. “Christ marks the life of his own with their daily dying in the struggle of the spirit against the flesh, and with their daily suffering the pains of death which the devil inflicts on Christians.”¹¹⁵ It is impossible to be free without this connection to the *form* of Christ, crucified and risen.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ M. J. Knight, “Christ Existing in Ordinary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sanctification,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16.4 (2014): 432.

¹¹⁵ DBWE 4, 285.

¹¹⁶ DBWE 16, 97.

Bonhoeffer is firm on the need for the Spirit to form Christians in the actuality of existence.¹¹⁷ The work of discerning God's will (Rom. 12:2) is vital to transformation, to become like Christ is to be "in unity with the will of the Father".¹¹⁸ Therefore, there is a daily practical outworking of this conformation to the image of Christ:

For the knowledge of Jesus Christ the metamorphosis, the renewal, the love, and whatever else one may call it, is, of course, a living reality... with every new day, therefore, the question arises, how, today, here, in this situation, can I remain and be preserved within this new life with God, with Jesus Christ?¹¹⁹

The Spirit thus enables the believer to concretely enact their unity with the will of the Father in conformity to the person of Jesus Christ.

Bonhoeffer takes us close to an understanding of how the Spirit forms believers but questions still remain. We need to ask how the Holy Spirit is able to lead believers through concrete circumstances into Christ-likeness; how through the immanent governing work of God believers look like Jesus. Here the idea of *governance* in Anti-Climacus' *Practice* will prove useful. In addition, we need to connect the concrete conforming of believers to the mediation of the person of Christ inwardly. How does the inward mediation of Christ to the heart lead to Christ-likeness in the particulars of life? We find this in Anti-Climacus' discussion of *contemporaneity* with Christ. So, if we relate these two questions together, we need to ask Anti-Climacus: "How does the Holy Spirit inwardly captivate believers and outwardly conform them to the image of Christ?" Here we will seek to make sense of the way the Holy Spirit transforms believers in *their* lives through the vision of Christ's glory.

¹¹⁷ Knight, "Christ Existing in the Ordinary," 434.

¹¹⁸ DBWE 16, 322.

¹¹⁹ DBWE 16, 323.

Conclusion

We have seen that Kierkegaard has a high regard for scripture and for the Apostle Paul's faithful life of suffering articulated in 2 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 articulates God's work in the new covenant ministry of Paul, transforming himself and believers. As we examine the particulars of 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, three theological realities become clear. Firstly, the Holy Spirit is the agent of transformation in the life of the believer; secondly, he frees believers by his mediation of Christ's glory in the word of the gospel; and, thirdly, he conforms the concrete particulars of a believer's life to Christ's cruciform likeness as he shares Christ's glory. We now need Anti-Climacus to articulate further for us what the reality of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer looks like. "How does the Holy Spirit unveil believers and set them free?" and, "How does he inwardly captivate and outwardly conform believers to Christ's likeness?" We will look to answer each of these questions from Anti-Climacus' works.

Chapter 4 – Anti-Climacus, how does the Holy Spirit unveil believers and set them free?

In the previous chapter, I established what we will be asking Anti-Climacus to expound with respect to the nature of triune transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. To Anti-Climacus' first book, *Sickness Unto Death*, my question is: "How does the Spirit unveil believers and set them free?" The language of unveiling we have already noted relates to the way the Triune God mediates a unique access to himself which overturns the sinful hardness of the human heart and its inability to reestablish connection with the living God. *Sickness* is an unfolding exposition concerning the nature of sin, beginning with the psychological and finishing with the theological it brings the nature of human rebellion into increasing clarity. Later in the work, Anti-Climacus describes his structure as awakening the "knowledge of having a self in which there is something eternal" and that this is "a self directly before God".¹ Trinitarian language is mostly absent from the first half and only appears significantly at the very end of the second half. However, its placement at the climatic end of the volume suggests its importance to the work as a whole.

Hence, before letting Anti-Climacus answer this question directly, we will need to establish the place of the Holy Spirit. Firstly, I will consider the structure of *Sickness unto Death*, in particular, the escalating depiction of despair. Language concerning the Trinity is placed at the height of despair to strategically demonstrate the need for a right relation to Son and Spirit. Despair can only be understood and dealt with through the revelation of Jesus Christ, a revelation itself mediated not by human intelligence but by the work of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, I will proceed to show how the Spirit unveils believers. Through the escalating

¹ SUD, 113.

picture of despair, Anti-Climacus shows us the nature of the veil on human hearts. The veil consists of the complete misalignment of the human self and binding of all human capacity in sin so that self-transformation is impossible. Without a mediated knowledge of Christ, all of the intellectual, spiritual, imaginative and religious resources are unable to free the self from despair. Also, God's final condemnation of the self means that the self will be eternally bound to its malformed state. The Spirit unveils believers by persuading them to rest in the Father through adoring faith in the Son. In the process, the Spirit enables the old despairing self to die, so that a new self can exist in close relationship with God.

1. Despair understood in light of the Triune God

I will begin by considering the reason for Anti-Climacus' placement of overt mentions of the Trinity at the climax of *Sickness* and what this means for the work as a whole. The lack of Trinitarian language is far from the theological vision we might expect from Kierkegaard's most astute pseudonym. However, Anti-Climacus has carefully structured his argument to lead his readers to a conclusion—the Triune God is not absent from *Sickness*; he is instead the destination of the whole discourse. Anti-Climacus accuses his Christian age of rejecting the Father's double mediation of himself through Son and Spirit. I will establish this by firstly considering the initial definition of despair supplied by Anti-Climacus. Secondly, I will elaborate on how the absence of Trinitarian language is part of an escalating portrayal of despair. Thirdly, I will consider how Anti-Climacus finally defines despair with reference to Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the end, the sickness can only be understood and remedied through a relationship with the Triune God. In this, I am extending beyond the widely held Christological shape of the *Sickness* to suggest that the issue of Kierkegaard's age was that they had also rejected the Holy Spirit.

a. The definition of despair

The self, for Anti-Climacus, is a dynamic relational process: “The human self is such a derived, established relation, a relation that relates itself to itself, and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another.”² A human being, in particular, is a synthesis of opposites, infinite/finite, freedom/necessity and temporal/eternal. The reality of self-consciousness means that there is a self that relates to this synthesis. Hampson and Pattison both suggest the fundamental connection to Hegel at this point. In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “the self is the identity and simplicity that relates itself to itself.”³ Hegel and Anti-Climacus follow Luther who “broke with the Catholic medieval Aristotelian understanding of the self as substance derived from God.”⁴ Instead, the self is a dynamic process by which the elements of the human self are brought into a final unity as spirit. “Spirit, the self, is not to be construed in terms of some pre-existent essence or nature but as the free and active process whereby the differentiated structures of the self are brought into a unity.”⁵

However, for Hegel, this occurs in the “purely immanent sphere”, and for Anti-Climacus the self exists before God.⁶ Anti-Climacus is clear that if another power establishes the self, then a relationship of “complete dependence” is necessary. Human beings are thus “outwardly relational” as well as “inwardly relational” making them “a multilayered and complex entity.”⁷ Hampson suggests that the Danish translation of “complete dependence”, “*hele Afhaengighed*” is the Danish equivalent of Schleiermacher’s *schlechtinnige Abhängigkeit*.⁸ Indeed for

² SUD, 13-14.

³ Cited in Taylor, *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self*, 106.

⁴ Daphne Hampson, *Kierkegaard: Exposition & Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 222.

⁵ Pattison, *Philosophy*, 62.

⁶ Hampson, *Kierkegaard*, 221.

⁷ Tietjen, *Kierkegaard*, 90.

⁸ Hampson, *Kierkegaard*, 229.

Pattison, if the fundamental aim of Kierkegaard's project was an opposition to the speculative theology of some Hegelian influences, then Schleiermacher's flawed system provided a foundation. At the end of the book, Anti-Climacus employs the Lutheran antithesis of sin and faith. Podmore perceives in this a concern to "rehabilitate older theological truths" while "speaking within and critiquing the lexicon of modernity."⁹ At the heart of this rehabilitation is the recovery of the "soteriological understanding of the self that modernity had rendered philosophically untenable".¹⁰ Anti-Climacus is establishing a vision of the self, in the tradition of Luther, within the grammar of the theological and philosophical agendas of his day.

With Anti-Climacus' definition of the self in mind, the nature of despair is to exist short of the human being you were made to be. As Evans suggests, despair "is a failure to be myself, a failure to be a self at all."¹¹ So Hampson comments on the Danish word *fortvivelse*, for despair, made from the word for doubt (*tvivl*) which contains "the root for 'two' (as indeed does 'doubt', compare 'double')."¹² The Danish has a direct link to the notion of misrelation, "a gap between the being that one is and the being that one ought to be."¹³ Two different types of despair are possible from the definition that Anti-Climacus supplies. Either "not to will to be oneself" or "in despair to will to be oneself." The first is also true of Hegel, but the second is only possible before God. Anti-Climacus suggests that ultimately all despair can be traced to the second form. Refusing to rest in divine power and instead making an "attempt to be a self by oneself", is a "form of 'justification by works' a wager at self-sufficiency."¹⁴

⁹ Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self Before God*, p.xx.

¹⁰ Patrick Stokes, *The Naked Self: Kierkegaard and Personal Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 16.

¹¹ C. Stephen Evans, *Søren Kierkegaard's Christian Psychology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990), 65.

¹² Hampson, *Kierkegaard*, 225.

¹³ Gregory R. Beabout, "Kierkegaard on the Self and Despair," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 62 (1988): 113.

¹⁴ Hampson, *Kierkegaard*, 229.

Hence despair can be traced back to a willfulness that refuses to rest in divine power and instead trusts in its own strength. The question of agency in transformation is not secondary to Anti-Climacus, but primary:

The formula that describes the state of the self when despair is completely rooted out is this: in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it.¹⁵

In the final sentence of the book, revisiting this same statement, he says it is “the definition of faith”.¹⁶ By collapsing all varieties of despair into the category of “in despair to will to be oneself”, a fundamental contrast is set up between a self formed through human agency and a self formed through faith, a contrast that continues through the whole of Anti-Climacus’ work. Through the descriptions of despair there are allusions to the possibility of the self accepting external help to cure the sickness but where instead the self continues to proudly trust their own will, imagination or strength. It is not surprising then to find the need for the immanent power of the Holy Spirit as an answer to the despairing self.

b. Anti-Climacus’ methodology: an escalating depiction of despair

The Trinity is notably absent in the opening definition of despair which raises the question: why does Anti-Climacus start in such an interesting place? We are left with a conceptual picture of the self with overtones of Hegel and Schleiermacher which is curious for such a theologically clever pseudonym. The majority of the first half of the book is taken up with psychological descriptions of the self in various states of despair. It is only in the second half of the book that we awaken to the theological category of sin and then an understanding of the Triune God.

¹⁵ SUD, 14.

¹⁶ SUD, 131.

There is a crucial question of methodology to be answered here. I contend that Anti-Climacus presents an intensifying portrait of despair as part of his strategy. He begins where his audience is, proceeds through immanent descriptions of despair to demonstrate its pervasiveness then finally reflects on the need of the Triune God.

As mentioned in chapter two, Anti-Climacus' work, particularly *Sickness*, suffers from having the methodology of other pseudonyms overlaying it, particularly the stages of existence. Carlisle is more helpful seeking to understand Anti-Climacus' unique descriptions of inwardness; she considers the twin intensification of "inwardness" and the revelation of God's power to be the common thread in Kierkegaard's theology of transformation. The stages of selfhood "are not external but internal to one another, connected by an internalizing movement."¹⁷ From the pseudonym Constantin Constantius' book, *Repetition*, becoming involves "intensification and expansion (deepening) of inwardness".¹⁸ Rather than a movement between stages, there is an intensifying "inwardness" as Anti-Climacus moves from the psychological to the theological. In Anti-Climacus, she sees the link between deepening discovery of the self and an appreciation of the power of God.

Here again we find that the individual is a center of power, and that God is the source of all power, 'in whom you live, move, and have your being.' It is only in inwardness that one discovers that God is the source of existence—for inwardness is this discovery, this unconcealing movement, this becoming of truth.¹⁹

Carlisle sees simultaneously growth in a deepening sense of the self and an understanding of God. Though helpful and clarifying, Carlisle still overlays Anti-Climacus with Constantin Constantius. Barnett similarly reads *Sickness* as a spiritual manual with successive steps up a

¹⁷ Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Becoming: Movements and Positions*, SUNY Series in Theology and Continental Thought (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 113.

¹⁸ Carlisle, *Philosophy of Becoming*, 114.

¹⁹ Carlisle, *Philosophy of Becoming*, 117.

ladder, progress requires the surrender of layers of resistance, or despair, to arrive at the realization of our connection with God.²⁰ The evidence of Kierkegaard's acquaintance with spiritual writers makes it likely for him to use a variety of categories in the service of spiritual growth.²¹ We do not need to place one type of imagery over another but instead allow each work to show its own spiritual progression.

Anti-Climacus portrays the nature of despair with increasing clarity as he considers the various aspects of the self, moving from an immanent to a transcendent perspective. Initially, different types of despair can be unearthed "by reflecting upon the constituents of which the self as a synthesis is composed."²² Anti-Climacus proceeds to consider the various aspects of the self or the *objective* view of the constituents of the self and their misalignment. Then he considers how despair is "primarily within the category of consciousness", leading Anti-Climacus to explore the *subjective* experience of those elements.²³ Spirituality is an "ineradicable element in the self" but it can be "developed to different degrees" making possible "different degrees of despair."²⁴ In consciousness the self becomes self-pitying or self-applauding or self-hating in awareness of its own despair.²⁵ Finally, he arrives at the self before God:

The point is that the previously considered gradation in the consciousness of the self is within the category of the human self, or the self whose criterion is man. But this self takes on a new quality and qualification by being a self directly before God. This self

²⁰ Christopher B. Barnett, *From Despair to Faith: The Spirituality of Søren Kierkegaard* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 59.

²¹ Barnett, *Despair to Faith*, 23.

²² SUD, 29.

²³ Evans, *Christian Psychology*, 69.

²⁴ C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard and Spirituality: Accountability as the Meaning of Human Existence*, Kindle Edition. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), kindle location 680.

²⁵ Barnett, *Despair to Faith*, 50.

is no longer the merely human self but is what I, hoping not to be misinterpreted, would call the theological self, the self directly before God.²⁶

The shift in criteria is vital. The first half considers the problem of despair in a kind of immanent frame. However, there is another dimension to selfhood through a shift from an anthropological view of the self to a theological perspective. Concurrently, Anti-Climacus moves from understanding despair as sickness to the idea of sin. Despair before the self is merely sickness, but despair before God is sin: “Sin is: before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself.”²⁷

However, the theological view of the self is not complete until it arrives at the final Trinitarian vision of God and the self's relation to Christ and the Spirit. Anti-Climacus reflects toward the end of Part 2:

First came (in Part One) ignorance of having an eternal self, then knowledge of having a self in which there is something eternal. Then (in the transition to Part Two) it was pointed out that this... has man as criterion. The counterpart to this was a self directly before God... Now a self comes directly before Christ.²⁸

The final two types of despair in the book relate to Christ and the Holy Spirit. Hence an ultimate understanding of despair is not possible without a vision of the Triune God. Consequently, Anti-Climacus moves through four distinct categories in making sense of despair: the parts of the self, the consciousness of the self, consciousness of the self before God and finally consciousness of the self before the Triune God. The sickness unto death can only be understood in relation to the full revelation of God. This differs from Barnett's suggestion of the need of a revelation of “the potential to unite with God” to be free from despair.²⁹ Barnett

²⁶ SUD, 79.

²⁷ SUD, 81.

²⁸ SUD, 113.

²⁹ Barnett, *Despair to Faith*, 58.

suggests Anti-Climacus' destination is an awareness of a fundamental dependence upon God, like Schleiermacher, at the base of every being. In contrast, Anti-Climacus begins with words similar to this only to arrive at the reality that divinity only comes to humanity by means of Son and Spirit.

Anti-Climacus, in this gradual approach, appears to emulate a methodology suggested in Kierkegaard's autobiographical writings. "If one is truly to succeed in leading a person to a specific place, one must first and foremost take care to find him where he is and begin there."³⁰ Anti-Climacus gives a clue to this in the introduction when he describes the natural man's relation to the sickness as "similar to the pagan's relationship to God: he does not recognise the true God...he worships an idol as God."³¹ Just as pagans mistake idols for the true God, so the sickness is mistaken for mild earthly maladies and so Anti-Climacus approaches his contemporaries on their Hegelian terms. He begins with a definition and exploration that makes some sense of their experience and fits within their present ideology. In this way, he mimics the approach of Paul in Athens (Acts 17:22-34) who revealed to the Athenians the *unknown God* to which they had left a shrine. Paul persuaded by appealing to familiar ideas of divinity and quoting their own poets before reaffirming the resurrection of Christ. Anti-Climacus understands that he must begin with his audience and lead them to a knowledge of the true God.

³⁰ PV, 45.

³¹ SUD, 8.

c. *Despair in light of the Triune God*

Hampson suggests that Kierkegaard's dramatic theological shift through the work ultimately does not seem to work. She finds the change from the phenomenological to the theological particularly jarring:

But then, in Part II, Kierkegaard takes off from a quite other premise; the necessity of acknowledging a Christological proposition predicated on a belief in revelation. If this is the truth of the matter, why commence the book with a discourse on the maladies of humankind?³²

Hampson contends that Kierkegaard shifts propositions in the middle of his work, moving from an existential premise to a theological premise. Hampson does not consider Christ's divinity to be a question which disquiets modern people: "he may speak of some kind of spirituality, even of 'God', but the idea that this man Jesus is in a second nature the second persona of a triune God would strike them as farcical."³³ For Hampson, it would have been better for Anti-Climacus to have stayed with general categories of transcendence or divinity. There is no way that a modern self could understand that confession of Jesus soothes the angst of the human soul.

However, Christ does not appear as a *proposition* but as a *person* in whom the self can find its ground and identity. The first half of the book is not about existential resonance but the internal relations of the self. The second half is about the relationship with the triune God. Alfsvåg suggests that Christ is presented as a "demonstration of the dignity of the human being" which can only be "maintained by believing in and worshipping the reality of the divine as the

³² Hampson, *Kierkegaard*, 249.

³³ Hampson, *Kierkegaard*, 250.

grounding of the human self.”³⁴ Someone can only become a self through adoration and worship of Christ. The psychological opening half is logical in light of the second. Both halves are defined by the dichotomy of sin/despair and faith. The first psychological half demonstrates the experience of faith's absence in the manifest maladies of life. The second theological half presents the object of faith—the Christ who removes those ailments. Indeed, Anti-Climacus leads us “to the concept of sin by examining a phenomenon such as despair which *can* be understood psychologically, and which has certain continuities with sin”.³⁵ Anti-Climacus is then able to demonstrate the position of sin for an unbeliever in the hope that, through revelation, they may apprehend sin as it is.

There is thus a Christological centrality to Kierkegaard's understanding of despair; however, this can be extended to a fuller Trinitarian picture. The final two types of despair are related explicitly to Son and Spirit. The penultimate category of despair is “THE SIN OF DESPAIRING OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.”³⁶ This is a rejection of the reconciliation offered in the person of Jesus Christ—the belief that what Christ accomplished in his life, death and resurrection is not able to deal with the problem of sin. However, the final type of despair is “THE SIN OF DISMISSING CHRISTIANITY *MODO PONENDO* [POSITIVELY], OF DECLARING IT TO BE UNTRUTH.”³⁷ Anti-Climacus declares this final type of despair to be the “sin against the Holy Spirit”. Hence despair does not climax with Christ, but the Holy Spirit. The great problem of Kierkegaard's age was exactly their rejection of the Spirit's mediation of the true knowledge of Christ. “Here the self is at the highest intensity of despair.” To despair over the forgiveness of sin is to believe that there is no possibility of overcoming

³⁴Knut Alfsvåg, “In Search of the Self's Grounding Power: Kierkegaard's The Sickness Unto Death as Dogmatics for Unbelievers,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16.4 (2014): 389.

³⁵ Roberts, “The Grammar of Sin,” 160.

³⁶ SUD, 113.

³⁷ SUD, 125

the sinful weakness of the self, a “negative” form of despair. However, the sin “against the Holy Spirit is the positive form of being offended”, an offensive war against Christianity declaring it to be untrue. Sin, in all of its previous forms “makes the admission that the adversary is the stronger. But now sin is attacking.”³⁸ To declare Christianity untrue is to resist the one who mediates its truth, demonstrating the Spirit’s role in revealing the truth of Jesus Christ.

The reason why the Holy Spirit appears at the summit of this work is that Anti-Climacus believes his entire age rejects the Spirit's mediation of the truth in Christ. Both the Hegelian denial of the uniqueness of Christ's person and Strauss’ search for the mythological truth of Christ's history are denials of the Holy Spirit. In this way Anti-Climacus responds to Hegel, Strauss and Schleiermacher:

The last form of offense is the one under discussion in this section, the positive form. It declares Christianity to be untrue, a lie; it denies Christ (that he existed and that he is the one he said he was) either docetically or rationalistically so that either Christ does not become an individual human being but only appears to be, or he becomes only an individual human being – thus either he docetically becomes fiction, mythology, which makes no claim upon actuality or he rationalistically becomes an actuality who makes no claim to be divine. Of course, in this denial of Christ as the paradox lies, in turn, the denial of all that is essentially Christian: sin, the forgiveness of sins, etc.³⁹

Effectively, Anti-Climacus sees a connection between Jesus' contemporaries’ denial of Christ and his contemporary age. Just as the Jews were in danger of sin against the Holy Spirit by

³⁸ SUD, 125

³⁹ SUD, 131.

making “Christ out to be an invention of the devil”, so too his age was in danger of dismissing the orthodox theology of Christ as a delusion.

The problem of Kierkegaard's age was its relation to the mediating work of the Holy Spirit. Anti-Climacus' introduction does give clues to the importance of the mediation of Christ. The presence of the Son of God, the fountain of resurrection life, at the tomb of Lazarus, means a much worse sickness exists. “Does not the mere fact that He who is ‘the resurrection and the life’ (11:25) approaches the grave signify that this sickness is not unto death!”⁴⁰ Jesus Christ alters the way that people understand ordinary sickness and suffering, the sickness is not any of the “earthly and temporal” sufferings of humanity.⁴¹ Christ’s presence makes known the nature of the sickness, to reject the Holy Spirit's witness of his uniqueness is to continue in darkness.

The extent that the reality of Jesus Christ is mediated to someone is the extent to which they are a self. “As stated previously, the greater conception of God, the more self; so it holds true here: the greater the conception of Christ, the more self.”⁴² Christ as the *criterion* demonstrates what it means to be a self. In the incarnation God declares: “Here you see what it is to be a human being.”⁴³ The incarnation demonstrates the goal of humanity.

Qualitatively a self is what its criterion is. That Christ is the criterion is the expression, attested by God, for the staggering reality that a self has, for only in Christ is it true that God is man’s goal and criterion, or the criterion and goal.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ SUD, 7.

⁴¹ SUD, 8.

⁴² SUD, 113-114.

⁴³ SUD, 127.

⁴⁴ SUD, 114.

Here we find an echo of 2 Cor 3:17-18, the fullness of someone's humanity correlates with the clarity of their vision of Jesus Christ. To remove the veil is to mediate Christ to the centre of the human self. As Paul suggests, divine light needs to shine directly into the heart 'to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ' (2 Cor. 4:4). It is the mediation of Christ to the heart which enables a believer to become a self.

Ultimately, we arrive at a vision of transformation in *Sickness* which connects with the theology of the Apostle Paul. The despairing misalignment of the human self can only be related back to the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. Jesus Christ as the object and criterion of man and the Spirit as the means of apprehension of Christ's reality. Anti-Climacus' final revelation of their despairing rejection of the Spirit's mediation is designed to shock them into repentance, to leave behind their misguided attempts at making sense of Christ and instead apprehend him in the power of the Spirit. In this way, Anti-Climacus is countering the Trinitarian errors of his age not by summoning his contemporaries to a new system of orthodoxy, but by calling them to respond to Christ in the power of his Spirit.

2. How the Holy Spirit unveils believers

I have established that despair for Anti-Climacus is coherent only in light of the Triune God and thus the self can only come to its rest through the mediation of Son and Spirit. I will now proceed to make sense of how the Holy Spirit unveils believers. Firstly, I will establish the nature of the veil in relation to Son and Spirit according to Anti-Climacus. I will proceed, secondly, to how the Holy Spirit enables the self by faith in Christ to rest in the goodness of the Father. The forgiveness of sins offered in Christ pardons the malformed attempts at selfhood and reconciles the self through Christ with the Father. However, this raises the

question of what happens to the old condemned self. Thirdly, when a self chooses to trust the aid of the Spirit rather than its own agency, its despairing self, founded on despair formed through human agency, is put to death.

a. The nature of the veil

Anti-Climacus' understanding of the veil over human hearts is inextricably linked with the need for Son and Spirit to become a self. Torrance locates *Sickness Unto Death* as the centre of Kierkegaard's work on sin and relates it to Climacus' notion of a sinner who "who holds himself captive."⁴⁵

It is a state for which the individual is culpable and yet, because it is totally self-perpetuating, it is a state from which a person cannot escape unless he is reconciled by the grace of God. As such he requires God, as judge, to give him a consciousness of sin, an awareness of his total inability to relate to God through his inherent understanding.⁴⁶

Anti-Climacus is clear that all imaginative, intellectual and spiritual resources of humanity are mired in despair. In this way he seeks to lead us to a consciousness of sin and a need of Christ.⁴⁷ However, further, Anti-Climacus' account of the self is fundamentally relational.⁴⁸ Anti-Climacus at the same time as demonstrating bound human agency, develops a contrast between a self formed in relation to the Holy Spirit and one formed through self-reliance. Christ as the criterion of humanity also becomes the means of their condemnation in judgment. The veil consists in a bound self who rejects the Spirit's work and is destined for judgement before Christ.

⁴⁵ PF, 17, 226.

⁴⁶ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 27.

⁴⁷ Stephen C. Davis, "Kierkegaard on the Transformation of the Individual in Conversion," *Religious Studies* 28 (1992): 157–58.

⁴⁸ Evans, *Kierkegaard and Spirituality*, kindle location 388.

Anti-Climacus understands sin to be a position humanity is stuck in that comes from within the self. The escalating picture of despair through objective and subjective descriptions shows how “despair come from the outside but from within”.⁴⁹ Sin is neither Socratic ignorance, nor a lack of Schleiermacher’s God-consciousness, nor a part of Geist’s movement, nor can it be *transitioned* out of, as Martensen states.⁵⁰ Instead, Christianity understands the problem of sin in “willing and arrives at the concept of defiance”. Sin as a position is fastened by Christian doctrine by “hereditary sin” on one end and “by the means of the paradox” on the other.⁵¹ We are both born into sin and confined in sin by the reality of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, sin is defined eternally in *relation* to Christ. In eternity, our lack of a self is exposed in relation to the one we were made to be like.

Anti-Climacus’ movement through the synthetic pairs of human capacity demonstrates how a self could attempt to form a self through favouring either the “expansive pole” or the “limiting pole” of a pair but ultimately fail to become a self.⁵² A self could look to their infinite imaginative capacity or their belief in possibility to find self-transcendence or find new possibilities. However, without finite context, imagination will not lead to anything.⁵³ Without necessity: “The self... flounders in possibility until exhausted but neither moves from the place where it is nor arrives anywhere”.⁵⁴ Rather than beholding Christ as in a mirror, the self looks into the “mirror of possibility” in which “a self appears to be such and such”, however this is “only a half-truth”. In an interesting parody of Paul’s words, the self, who imagines a new self and trusts self-strength is unable to arrive at rest, it can make someone “high with boldness” or

⁴⁹ SUD, 99-100.

⁵⁰ Martensen, “Outline,” 278.

⁵¹ SUD, 93.

⁵² Tietjen, *Kierkegaard*, 91.

⁵³ SUD, 32.

⁵⁴ SUD, 36.

“crushed in despair”.⁵⁵ Without Son and Spirit, the poles of human capacities cannot form a self.

Anti-Climacus’ subsequent examination of the levels of awareness or consciousness of despair continues this contrast and shows how all spiritual and religious capacity of humanity result from despair apart from the Holy Spirit. Evans notes how the relational nature of the self means that it can choose to rest in a power or object other than the Triune God.⁵⁶ The self “vaguely rests in and merges in some abstract universality (state, nation etc.)” or finds an “object” with the “illusory appearance of having anything eternal in it.”⁵⁸ These are effectively “God-substitutes or idols” found in creation, society or even another individual.⁵⁹ In regards to the desire to become “like someone else”, Anti-Climacus considers such an idea to be the “most lunatic of lunatic metamorphoses”.⁶⁰ Religion too can become “a sort of legal righteousness, or in despair plunges into sin again.”⁶¹ In religion, sin can be viewed and understood and then becomes a reason for self-reliance, a part of sin's longing to “be internally consistent.”

No, it insists on listening only to itself, on having dealings only with itself; it closes itself up within itself, indeed, locks itself inside one more inclosure, and protects itself against every attack or pursuit of the good by despairing over sin.⁶²

Here religion is described as locking the self up in pride rather than opening itself to Christ.⁶³ The religious person likewise, becomes “proud of himself” when resisting evil and nurtures “a secret selfishness and pride”. In refusing to rest in faith, religion is little more than a “self-love

⁵⁵ SUD, 42

⁵⁶ Evans, *Kierkegaard and Spirituality*, kindle location 300.

⁵⁸ SUD, 46, 51.

⁵⁹ Evans, *Kierkegaard and Spirituality*, kindle location 964.

⁶⁰ SUD, 53.

⁶¹ SUD, 82.

⁶² SUD, 109.

⁶³ Yusuku Suzuki, “On Kierkegaard’s Concept of ‘Inclosing Reserve’ in the Sickness unto Death,” *Heythrop Journal* 53 (2012): 6.

that wants to be proud of itself.’⁶⁴ Despite appearances, religious pride over sin, is a double break: “the first may be termed the break with the good and the second with repentance.”⁶⁵ For Anti-Climacus, what appears as well-balanced and ethical existences are bound up either in a refusal to acknowledge the presence of a self, or in the willful decision to deal with sin through despair.

Anti-Climacus claims the orthodox definition of sin is far superior to those offered by speculative philosophy and demonstrates the need for the Spirit’s mediation of forgiveness. Orthodox Christianity “rejects as pantheistic any definition of sin” which makes it out to be merely a negative in reality like “weakness, sensuousness, finitude or ignorance.”⁶⁶ The need for revelation makes clear that sin is much more than a negation, it requires external intervention.

That is why Christianity begins in another way: man has to learn what sin is by revelation from God; sin is not a matter of a person’s not having understood what is right but of being unwilling to understand it, of his not willing what is right...sin has its roots in willing, not knowing, and this corruption of willing affects the individual’s consciousness.⁶⁷

Sin is clear in the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ—it cannot be comprehended or mediated away by any human capacity. Sin demonstrates the complete unlikeness of humanity with God, as “sinner man is separated from God by the most chasmal qualitative abyss.”⁶⁸ There is no capacity possible to remake the human self apart from Son and Spirit mediating divinity. Hence Podmore’s conclusion that the distance between God and humanity is not

⁶⁴ SUD, 111-112.

⁶⁵ SUD, 109.

⁶⁶ SUD, 96.

⁶⁷ SUD, 95

⁶⁸ SUD, 122.

dismissed but *transfigured* by grace, there is “one way in which man could never in all eternity come to be like God: in forgiving sins.”⁶⁹ The complete isolation of the position of sin requires the mediation of forgiveness, which Anti-Climacus shows is the role of the Holy Spirit.

The reality of sin is revealed and condemned by an individual judgement. Anti-Climacus positions the self eschatologically, the despairing self is revealed at a point in time.⁷⁰ Anti-Climacus uses the ambiguous notion of the Eternal in the first half of the book to explain the potential horror of living unaware of your obligations to a divine creator. The great tragedy for Anti-Climacus is to walk through life so deceived that a person never becomes aware of their infinite identity. So that when “the hourglass has run out” and eternity questions everyone separately, they will be left with their paltry attempts to form a self that they have mustered in their half-reality.⁷¹

And if so, if you have lived in despair, then regardless of whatever else you have won or lost, everything is lost for you, eternity does not acknowledge you, it never knew you – or still, more terrible, it knows you as you are known and it binds you to yourself in despair.⁷²

The person who does not take up their privilege of selfhood will be bound by eternity in their malformed state. The gift of a self is so immense that Eternity holds every person accountable for how they use it. “Eternity is obliged to do this, because to have a self, to be a self, is the greatest concession...but it is also eternity's claim upon him.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Podmore, *Kierkegaard and the Self Before God*, 176. SUD, 122

⁷⁰ Stokes, *The Naked Self*, 162.

⁷¹ SUD, 27.

⁷² SUD, 28.

⁷³ SUD, 21.

In light of the Christological second half, the final criterion for this judgement is relation to Christ. Contrary to Stokes, it is not whether someone related to themselves in a “self-constituting way”.⁷⁴ The charge to every individual in light of eternity, is to believe or not to believe in the forgiveness offered in Christ. “‘Now I have spoken,’ declares God in heaven; ‘we shall discuss it again in eternity.’”⁷⁵ As the category of the self is “before God”, the judgement of eternity does not fall on the general mass of humanity, but individuals, who carry their guilt with them. Each arrives at eternity with their guilt written in “invisible ink” which “becomes legible” in “the light in eternity.” Everyone arrives with such a clear record that “a child could hold court in eternity.”⁷⁶ Importantly, the final verdict is dependent upon the relation to Christ as a person. It is only through worshipful faith in Christ that someone can arrive at eternity with a self after his likeness.

The veil involves the rejection of the Spirit’s power in favour of a self-reliance which binds all agency in despair, a despair revealed and judged before Christ who is the criterion of every person. Podmore summarises:

Anti-Climacus therefore rejects the notion that the self could be established within its own power. Such selves, as captive to power itself, inevitably collapse in on themselves. Even in seeking to establish oneself in one’s own freedom, one will inevitably fall into unfreedom, whether by oneself or by relation to the other.⁷⁷

The freedom described by Paul in 2 Corinthians cannot be gained by anything in human strength or power. Indeed, all action simply deepens the despairing response of the self. The unfreedom of the self apart from the Holy Spirit is the nature of the veil.

⁷⁴ Stokes, *The Naked Self*, 200.

⁷⁵ SUD, 122.

⁷⁶ SUD, 124.

⁷⁷ Simon D. Podmore, “Theological Anthropology: Spirit as the Self ‘Before’ and ‘Resting in God,’” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Theology of Kierkegaard*, ed. Aaron P. Edwards and David J. Gouwens (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 249.

b. *The Holy Spirit enables the self by faith in Christ to rest in the Father*

Anti-Climacus is clear that the opposite of sin is not virtue, not a human capacity, but instead faith. “Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself, rests transparently in God.”⁷⁸ Anti-Climacus quotes Romans 14:23 as scriptural evidence of how faith is the opposite of sin. It is the “antithesis sin/faith” that “Christianly reshapes all ethical concepts”. The final line of sickness is an affirmation that the self who “rests transparently in the power that established it. This formula...is the definition of faith.”⁷⁹ Faith for Anti-Climacus involves belief in the paradox of the person of Christ. Anti-Climacus refers to the “criterion” of Christianity earlier in his definition of sin and faith. “Christianity’s crucial criterion: *the absurd, the paradox, the possibility of offense*.” Anti-Climacus considers Christianity to be absurd because “it wants to make man into something so extraordinary that he cannot grasp the thought.”⁸⁰ The infinite qualitative difference between God and man makes the offense a possibility. “The father and I are one; yet I am this simple, insignificant man, poor, forsaken, surrendered to man’s violence – blessed is he who takes no offense at me.”⁸¹ The Holy Spirit must mediate Christ in such a way that someone is not offended by Christ but instead places faith in him.

Anti-Climacus’ penultimate category of despair is helpful to contemplate at this point—“despairing over the possibility of forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ”. Effectively, the person in despair sees their own sin and refuses the reconciliation of forgiveness offered in Jesus. Anti-Climacus suggests that, despite opinions to the contrary, claiming the impossibility of

⁷⁸ SUD, 82.

⁷⁹ SUD, 131.

⁸⁰ SUD, 83.

⁸¹ SUD, 127.

forgiveness is a form of despair. It conflates “what one can forgive oneself for with what God can forgive for”. In particular, it means “judging God and the self according to the self’s own interior standards.”⁸² Hence accepting forgiveness requires an “act of self-abnegation or self-surrender to the heterogeneity of the forgiveness of sins.”

The Holy Spirit needs to reveal Christ in such a way as to enable admiration, worship and surrender. The category of *offense* introduced is helpful as Anti-Climacus compares it to the emotion of envy. Envy involves admiration, love for what someone else has, resulting in considering the remarkable thing a trifle. “Admiration is happy self-surrender; envy is unhappy self-assertion.”⁸³ Here the surrender is not an act of the will in making oneself nothing, as Pattison suggests. Instead it is the natural result of comprehending the person of Christ in all of his glory. Anti-Climacus connects this idea of admiration to worship. Worship happens “in faith” and is an acceptance and delight in the distance between God and man, in the uniqueness of the person of Christ. Believers are to be as lovers, “the lover of all lovers is but a stripling compared with a believer.”⁸⁴ So the Spirit proclaims Christ’s glory to the heart until it surrenders in the worship of faith. Torrance suggests:

Faith arises as and when a person encounters God in the presence of Jesus Christ and finds that his choices are becoming caught up with the love of God, and thereby drawn away from the possibility of offence.⁸⁵

It is the Holy Spirit that enables a believer to be swept up into the love of God despite the initial offence felt towards the reality of the Christ crucified.

⁸² Simon D. Podmore, “Kierkegaard as Physician of the Soul: On Self-Forgiveness and Despair,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology, Kierkegaard as Physician of the Soul* 37.3 (2009): 183.

⁸³ SUD, 86.

⁸⁴ SUD, 102.

⁸⁵ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 73–74.

The sheer incomprehensibility of divine love is the reason why the work of the Holy Spirit is so necessary for this process, which hints at the adoption to sonship offered. Anti-Climacus tells a parable of “the mightiest emperor who ever lived” who wills to make a day labourer his friend and son-in-law. The exclamation of the labourer is that such “a thing is too high for me, I cannot grasp it; to be perfectly blunt, to me it is a piece of folly.”⁸⁶ Such is the teaching of Christianity, a God who invites people to “live on the most intimate terms” with him. We see something emerge at this point: the reconciliation offered in the incarnation of Christ, through his death and resurrection, offers relationship on a new level of love and intimacy. The use of ‘son-in-law’, though part of a story, alludes to the adoption of sonship offered in Christ. Indeed, the believer may “speak with God any time he wants to, assured of being heard by him”.⁸⁷ How else are we to make sense of the new intimacy but as the unique privilege of adoption by a divine Father? The “Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”” (Romans 8:15) Perhaps it is that the Spirit, through a revelation of the glory of Christ, enables the self to rest by faith in God as Father. There the self can live in new intimacy, only possible through the work of Son and Spirit.

It is difficult to work out if Anti-Climacus connects the final *rest* of faith with relationship with God as Father. Hefner connects the notion of the rest of the self to the divine immutability of the Father. Hefner sees, in Anti-Climacus’ work *Practice*, how the self comes together through the mediation of Christ. “But when the self rests in God’s changelessness, mediated through Jesus Christ, the self receives from God a new kind of narrative coherence.”⁸⁸ Here God’s changelessness is connected with God as Father, yet Anti-Climacus does not quite lead us to this conclusion. Kierkegaard connects the idea of an Archimedean point in his journals directly

⁸⁶ SUD, 84

⁸⁷ SUD, 85

⁸⁸ Craig A. Hefner, “‘In God’s Changelessness There Is Rest’: The Existential Doctrine of God’s Immutability in Augustine and Kierkegaard,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20.1 (2018): 81.

with fatherhood, “divine fatherly love, the one single unshakable thing in life, the true Archimedean point.”⁸⁹ Rae suggests that “the *disclosure* of the Archimedean point is synonymous with the new birth by which the individual becomes a person of faith.”⁹⁰ In an exposition of Ephesians 3:13, Kierkegaard further suggests when we “call God “father”, we rest happily and confidently in this name as the most beautiful, the most uplifting”.⁹¹ Hence, it would make most sense for Anti-Climacus to be referring to a final relation to God the Father in his understanding of ‘rest’, but it is difficult to be definitive.

Barnett explains that the phrase “rests transparently” means “to place something on, or to keep something in contact with, a foundation” indeed “in the very foundation of being” so that someone “sees and wills as God sees and wills”.⁹² It is about finding the intimate place of stability from which to live life wholeheartedly. Barnett connects this to the mystic idea of finding the divine ground for the soul in connection with Acts 17:28 and quoting Martin Laird: “the more we realize we are one with God, the more we become ourselves, just as we are, just as we were created to be.”⁹³ Of course, this leaves us in the Trinitarian confusion of Kierkegaard’s day, where creation appears to mediate divinity. Here *grounding* is identifying the pre-existent divine connection, such as Schleiermacher’s God-consciousness or finding our place in Hegel’s Spirit. Within the context of Anti-Climacus’ relational ontology of the self and his theological orthodoxy, it is better to find the foundation in relationship with God the Father. The self in the Spirit, through the Son, rests with the Father and finds a basis for life.

⁸⁹ JP 2, 2089 / SKS 23, 482 [NB20:168].

⁹⁰ Rae, *Kierkegaard’s Vision of the Incarnation*, 154.

⁹¹ EUD, 98-99.

⁹² Barnett, *Despair to Faith*, 57–58.

⁹³ Barnett, *Despair to Faith*, 60–61. Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 17.

There is some evidence for creation finding its basis in the Father when Anti-Climacus refers to God reconciling with us in Christ. For example, when Kierkegaard says for “God in Christ” there exists only individual sinners, he alludes to God’s “care of the sparrows” from Matthew 10:29-31. Here Jesus speaks of the way that the “Father in heaven” looks after the individual sparrows.⁹⁴ God as Father, can be present to the whole and each individual part of his creation and each individual. God, though absolutely distinct from man, mediates a relationship with himself through the incarnation of Christ. To come to rest in him, is to come happily into a new intimacy with him as a loving Father through Christ. Indeed, it is the oneness of Christ and the Father, which is the very reality of the offence which can be taken.⁹⁵ Here Anti-Climacus is not explicit enough, but if the self comes to rest in faith and finds a new relation to God, then we must suggest it is in relation to God as Father to avoid the confusion of his day.

c. The Holy Spirit puts the old despairing self to death

The reality of a new self in relation to the Triune God, raises questions of what happens to the old self. What also becomes apparent in *Sickness* is that the only way out of the sickness of despair is death. The preface introduces this theme in the final sentence: “death is...the state of deepest spiritual wretchedness, and yet the cure is simply to die, to die to the world.”⁹⁶ The self is perpetually stuck outside of its rest, and it cannot extinguish its despair nor itself, “this sickness of the self, perpetually to be dying, to die and yet not die, to die death.”⁹⁷ Podmore suggests that the existential presence of Lazarus looms over Anti-Climacus’ entire description of despair. “Lazarus despairs because he is immortal, and yet neither fully alive nor dead.”⁹⁸

⁹⁴ SUD, 121.

⁹⁵ SUD, 128

⁹⁶ SUD, 6.

⁹⁷ SUD, 18.

⁹⁸ Podmore, “Lazarus and the Sickness Unto Death,” 510–11.

Through some hints throughout *Sickness*, it becomes apparent that the Holy Spirit is the power by which the old self can die, that it might finally come to a new rest.⁹⁹ When understanding the “despair of the eternal” the self makes a choice to turn to faith and humble “himself under his weakness” but instead “he entrenches himself in despair and despairs over his weakness.”¹⁰⁰ And so, weakness can take someone through to a new self but “you must go through the despair of the self to the self.” Their evaluation of weakness is correct “but that is not what you are to despair over; the self must be broken in order to become itself.”¹⁰¹ As Kierkegaard will state later in his authorship: “Faith is given to the individual by the Spirit after stripping away ‘all confidence in yourself or in human support’ and leaves us instead with a faith of eternal victory.”¹⁰²

The notion that the Holy Spirit brings death into the life of the believer is a polemic contrast to the understanding of the Spirit’s work in Copenhagen. In Kierkegaard’s Hegelian context the Holy Spirit simply heightened human capacity. For example, Martensen suggests the “God of providence ... has released both nature and the human for free existence and fulfills its eternal decrees of wisdom through the very dialectic of human freedom.”¹⁰³ The self was not required to die; its natural trajectory was perfected through the entry of the Holy Spirit. As we look closely at *Sickness*, we see precisely this distinction between divine and human strength and the way that accepting the divine help of the Spirit puts to death the human self. Fundamentally, this means a destruction of the self-centeredness and self-assertion that defines human

⁹⁹ Kierkegaard states this explicitly in his later work in connection with the Spirit: the “life-giving Spirit is the very one who slays you; the first thing the life-giving Spirit says is that you must enter into death.” FSE 76-77.

¹⁰⁰ SUD, 61.

¹⁰¹ SUD, 65.

¹⁰² FSE, 82.

¹⁰³ Martensen, ‘Outline to a System of Moral Philosophy’, 265.

existence apart from the intervention of the Spirit.¹⁰⁴ In this way, the Holy Spirit, by mediating to us the person of Christ, condemns and ends our old self and way of life.

In the section, “Despair to will to be Oneself: Defiance,” we see more clearly how human agency inflates in despair and also why it must be dismissed to receive a new self. Fundamentally, in this form of despair, the self has become an “imaginatively constructed god” for “no derived self can give itself more than it is in itself by paying attention to itself.” Though the self appears as its own master, “this absolute ruler is a king without a country, actually ruling over nothing; his position, his sovereignty... building only castles in the air...only shadowboxing.”¹⁰⁵ Anti-Climacus is at his most ingenious and helpful at this point, enlarged human agency is an imagined power of transformation that adds nothing. However, to trust instead in divine agency requires the self to lose this godlike sense and to leave behind the person formed from an infinite interest in some aspect of their being. As such, the reality that a self exists before God “demands a radical rupture of interiority – whether the implosion of the Cartesian *cogito* or the ‘inclosing despair’ [*Indesluttethed*] or the ‘spiritless’ [*Åndløsheden*] and the ‘demonic’.” It is this rupture of the self that “opens the self” “in relation to an Other.”¹⁰⁶

Anti-Climacus’ second category of defiant despair concerns circumstances in life where the self is defined negatively by its circumstances. “He has convinced himself that the thorn in the flesh gnaws so deeply that he cannot abstract himself from it.”¹⁰⁷ Here Paul’s thorn is understood to be a suffering so severe it becomes an all-consuming self-identification. The allusion to Paul suggests the alternative path of trusting in the power of God brought to

¹⁰⁴ David R. Law, “Cheap Grace and the Cost of Discipleship in Kierkegaard’s *For Self Examination*,” in *For Self Examination and Judge for Yourself*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 21 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Macon, Georgia USA: Mercer University Press, 2002), 131.

¹⁰⁵ SUD, 69.

¹⁰⁶ Podmore, “Theological Anthropology,” 243.

¹⁰⁷ SUD, 70.

perfection in weakness. Antithetically, the self uses the thorn as a testimony against the goodness of its maker and the thorn becomes a justification for its existence. “Rebelling against all existence, it feels that it has obtained evidence against it, against its goodness.”¹⁰⁸ A twisted form of self-justification and pride comes to light in this type of defiant individual:

he is afraid of eternity, afraid that it will separate him from ... his justification, demonically understood, for being what he is...What demonic madness – the thought that most infuriates him is that eternity could get the notion to deprive him of his misery.¹⁰⁹

The thorn gives a significance to the existence of a self as an negative witness against the divine creator: “No, I refuse to be erased; I will stand as witness against you, a witness that you are a second-rate author.”¹¹⁰ A transformation of a suffering life into a living witness of the evil of being.¹¹¹ To accept aid is the end of the self, the end of the court-case against the maker and their cruel design.

Defiant despair refuses aid or consolation because to keep the problem is ultimately to maintain a sense of existence. Comfort “would be his undoing – as a denunciation of all existence.”¹¹²

But when having to be helped becomes a profoundly earnest matter, especially when it means being helped by a superior, or by the supreme one, there is the humiliation of being obliged to accept any kind of help unconditionally, of becoming a nothing in the hand of the ‘Helper’ for whom all things are possible, or the humiliation of simply having to yield to another person, of giving up being himself as long as he is seeking

¹⁰⁸ SUD, 73.

¹⁰⁹ SUD, 72

¹¹⁰ SUD, 74.

¹¹¹ Podmore, “Lazarus and the Sickness Unto Death,” 512.

¹¹² SUD, 74.

help... therefore it fundamentally prefers the suffering along with the retention of being itself.¹¹³

Here we see a mention of the “‘Helper’ for whom all things are possible”—the one able to bring about a new existence. To receive what he offers is to put to an end to the charade of self-justification, to let go of the kingdom of shadow-boxing, from clinging to the painful reality that makes life livable and instead accept the goodness of God. Podmore considers this to be “death to despair and an opening of the self from human impossibility to divine possibility.”¹¹⁴ In the midst of this, Podmore sees Spirit as the *burning* desire after God conflating again the presence of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit.¹¹⁵ Instead, the Spirit as helper, is a personal agent who relates to the self and puts the self to death.

In describing the way that God relates to individuals, Anti-Climacus appeals to the presence of God to all of creation, in a way which keeps the particularity of each person.

God is indeed a friend of order, and to that end he is present in person at every point, is everywhere present at every moment (in the textbook this is listed as one of the attributes of God, something people think about a little once in a while but certainly never try to think about continuously).¹¹⁶

Anti-Climacus is careful to distinguish how God is present to the individual, “he comprehends actuality itself, all its particulars”. The immanent presence of God to every person is not explicitly tied to the work of the Spirit. Kierkegaard does this much more clearly himself in his journals.¹¹⁷ However, if, as we have seen, Anti-Climacus is firm on the need for the Holy Spirit

¹¹³ SUD, 71.

¹¹⁴ Podmore, “Lazarus and the Sickness Unto Death,” 514.

¹¹⁵ Podmore, “Theological Anthropology,” 256.

¹¹⁶ SUD, 121.

¹¹⁷ The assistance of the “Spirit who, when a person calls upon it, creates a pers. entirely anew, renews him, gives him the strength for renunciation, all possible renunciation” (KJN 9, 155 / SKS 25, 155-156 [NB 27: 41-43]). And again, “...the Spirit is sure to come to your aid) ...to be transformed from the natural man into spirit, and this road goes through dying away, and dying away is immensely painful” (KJN 9, 69-70 / SKS 25, 71 [NB 26: 68]). The Spirit comes to aid someone in their death from the old self to the new.

to mediate the person of Christ, rather than anything in human agency, than we can plausibly suggest that it is the Holy Spirit who is the near and present *help* for every person. It is clear from the way despair is understood, that to accept this help is to let go of the imaginary self mediated by human agency. The two are presented antithetically, to exist in the power of one is to let go of the other—the entry of the Spirit brings death.

Carlisle suggests something similar, but ultimately it is the self who draws strength from the Spirit rather than the Spirit who enables the self. The inward movements of repetition lead the self to the source of its real power. She considers Kierkegaard's discourse on inner strengthening and the craving for inward truth and power. “The soul sustains itself, preserves its freedom, by drawing on the source of its power.”¹¹⁸

Here again we find that the individual is a center of power, and that God is the source of all power, “in whom you live, move, and have your being.” It is only in inwardness that one discovers that God is the source of existence—for inwardness is this discovery, this unconcealing movement, this becoming of truth.¹¹⁹

There is a truth to the inward drawing on strength to which Carlisle refers. It makes some sense of Kierkegaard's vision of how strength is found in weakness. She suggests that the “vocabulary of power and weakness expresses something integral to Kierkegaard's awareness of himself”.¹²⁰ However, this directly misses the action of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The power awakened comes not from humanity drawing on God's strength, it is the power of the Spirit remaking the self.

¹¹⁸ Carlisle, *Philosophy of Becoming*, 118.

¹¹⁹ Carlisle, *Philosophy of Becoming*, 117.

¹²⁰ Carlisle, *Philosophy of Becoming*, 121.

In some ways, the notion of *help* adds too much space for a human response. Perhaps the description of divine and human agency is too close to a Hegelian pantheism. Martensen described the moment of conversion as a decision of the will and combining with divine strength, “In that living resentment over sin the will expels evil from itself and joins hands with the divine will and its own eternal essence.”¹²¹ Again his doctrine of providence is about how God “unites human freedom with divine without the one being absorbed by the other.”¹²² Is Anti-Climacus in danger of placing human moral agency alongside the divine? Anti-Climacus diverges from Martensen by creating a vital dichotomy between self-strength and divine-strength throughout *Sickness*. The sense of *help* is relational. The Holy Spirit approaches the human self not as a naked power but as a divine person. The Spirit convinces the self of Christ’s glory, respecting the freedom of the creature. The Spirit condemns the self in Christ and draws the self to forgiveness and intimacy with the Father. When the despairing self is mediated the person of Christ, they realise their divergence from their destiny. As the Spirit does this, the self comes to rest in God and is no longer defined by the suffering, religion, idols, or tasks which is used to form a self. Instead, resting in God as Father, the self can now walk in life as a self free to use all of the good gifts of God’s creation. At the same time, the Holy Spirit in demonstrating the criterion of Christ also convinces them of the glory of the cross and the possibility of forgiveness.

Conclusion

Anti-Climacus, in expounding the nature of the *sickness*, demonstrates where the human self ends up apart from the grace of God. All of human intellectual, imaginative, spiritual and religious energy is bound up in despairing rebellion against God. It is this *veil* which is pulled

¹²¹ Martensen, “Outline,” 278.

¹²² Martensen, “Outline,” 265.

away by the revelation of Christ to the heart by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit puts to death the despairing self by summoning it away from its imagined dominion into the hands of God the Father through the reconciliation of Christ's cross. The freedom the Spirit brings is one of relationship as the self finds its rest through intimate relationship with the Triune God.

Chapter 5 - Anti-Climacus, how does the Holy Spirit inwardly captivate and outwardly conform believers?

In the previous chapter, I considered Anti-Climacus' *Sickness Unto Death* and how the Holy Spirit puts to death a despairing self by enabling relationship with God where the self rests in the Father by worshipful faith in Jesus Christ. The 'freedom' the Spirit gives is realised in intimate relationship with the persons of the Triune God. With reference to Anti-Climacus' second work *Practice in Christianity*, I hope to extend and deepen this work by elaborating Anti-Climacus' vision of ongoing transformation in the life of the believer. For this, I will ask the question, '*How does the Spirit inwardly captivate and outwardly conform the believer to Christ?*' Anti-Climacus' theological ideas of contemporaneity and governance, which come into focus in *Practice*, illuminate the work of the Holy Spirit. In *Practice*, we see the necessity of the Holy Spirit in both the inward and outward aspects of the believer's conformity to the person of Christ.

Anti-Climacus' discourse is itself a law-grace dynamic in which believers are confronted with Christ *and* Christ actively draws them to himself. In *Practice*, Christ summons us (Matt 11:28), pronounces the need for non-offense (Luke 7:23) and declares once "lifted up" he "will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). Coming into contact with the suffering Christ leads a believer to lean onto his grace more firmly.

Very simply, and if you wish that also, very Lutherany: only consciousness of sin can force one...And at that very same moment the essentially Christian transforms itself into and is sheer leniency, grace, love and mercy.¹

¹ PC, 68.

The reason for this dynamic is that Christendom, like the Pharisees of Jesus day, has allowed faith to become an “empty, indeed, an ungodly externality”, Christ himself emphasized “inwardness in contrast to empty outwardness”.² Perkins suggests that Anti-Climacus thus has an emphasis on reversing the pattern of Christendom in order to “apply the insights of the inner to the understanding of the outer...Here the inner is the outer and the outer is the inner.”³ Christendom made the mistake of considering its life as the “result” of what Christ has done, rather than living out his being. Instead Christ calls us to his cross. “Deny Yourself – and then suffer because you deny yourself. That was Christianity.”⁴ In Christendom, self-denial was considered to be a matter of “hidden inwardness” rather than external imitation. The result was that Christendom resembled “the Church Militant as little as the silence of death” resembles “the loudness of passion.”⁵ Anti-Climacus summons his readers to a life of Christ-likeness, by depending upon the grace given in Jesus Christ for an inward dependence and outward conformity to his likeness.

To make sense of the inward and outward life of faith, I will proceed by considering Anti-Climacus’ use of *contemporaneity* and gather together a theology of *sovereign grace*. Firstly, I will consider how Anti-Climacus’ *contemporaneity* is a direct encounter with the lowly Christ which unveils the human heart and demonstrates the believer’s unlikeness to Christ’s person. Secondly, Anti-Climacus presents the *sovereign grace* of God drawing them to his mercy in Christ by awakening desire within them, then, through the details of their lives providing opportunities to image him. Here God’s *governance* directs and upholds believers in the midst of life. What will become apparent is that it is the Holy Spirit who both overwhelms believers

² PC, 86.

³ Robert L. Perkins, “Kierkegaard’s Anti-Climacus in His Social and Political Environment,” in *Practice in Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 20 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Macon, Georgia USA: Mercer University Press, 2004), 283.

⁴ PC, 213.

⁵ PC, 215.

with Christ and opens real moments of decision, without coercion, enabling the Christian creature to become their true self, the likeness of Christ crucified.

1. Contemporaneity with Christ

When Anti-Climacus describes what it looks like to be a contemporary of Christ, he speaks in similar language to 2 Cor. 3:17-18, the faith-filled beholding of the living Christ. The opening invocation to the first part of *Practice* introduces the need to be a “contemporary” of Christ. Contra Hegel, Anti-Climacus suggests that Christ’s life was “not an event just like other events, which once they are over pass into history...pass into oblivion...No, his presence here on earth never becomes a thing of the past.”⁶ It is important to notice the subtlety of Anti-Climacus’ point—Christ is not present in the same way, but his history is still available to every age. “This contemporaneity is the condition of faith, and, more sharply defined, it is faith.”⁷ In connection with 2 Cor 3:17-18, Anti-Climacus asks Christ to enable us to “see you in your true form... that we might see you as you are and were...that, we might see you... not be offended at you!”⁸ A believer beholds Christ as he was, not the empty form mediated by “thoughtless-romantic or a historical-talkative remembrance” which instead *distort* Christ. The lowly “sign of offence” needs to be *seen* by believers, the “savior and Redeemer of the human race, who out of love came to earth to seek the lost to suffer and die.” Anti-Climacus makes sense of the visual aspects of 2 Corinthians through the encounter believers have with Christ crucified in the Spirit.

It is therefore no coincidence that Anti-Climacus chooses three sayings of Jesus to exposit his view. Anti-Climacus wants his readers to hear the words of the present and living Christ; he is

⁶ PC, 9.

⁷ PC, 9.

⁸ PC, 10.

not interested in explaining Christ but giving Christ to his readers. Anti-Climacus sees in these words, the very life and essence of who Christ is:

his life expresses – even if he had never said these words – his life expresses: Come here to me, all you who labor and are burdened. He stands by his word, or he himself is his word; he is what he says – in this sense, too, he is the Word.⁹

The incarnation of Christ, his willingness to live and associate with the lowly to save them, is the divine initiative and expression of the being of God. Christ is the one Word of the Father; to behold him, to receive him, is to accept God and to respond rightly to scripture. “The helper is the help. Amazing!”¹⁰ Most physicians when dealing with patients, sit with them and then prescribe the medication to be taken in another place. If Christ is the help, then he must be continuously present to the patient. Faith is to live in his presence.

Cockayne sees in Anti-Climacus’ use of contemporaneity a way that goes beyond the moralistic and ascetic visions of transformation which Schleiermacher typified. If Christ’s life is purely history, then all that Christian faith attempts to accomplish is understanding and imitating who he was through human wisdom and strength.

The key difference between moralism and the account of the imitation Kierkegaard endorses, then, is the nature of the relation between the individual and Christ. For the moralist, the relation to Christ is a historical one—we must understand Christ’s actions as clearly as possible and replicate them. In contrast to this, for Kierkegaard, the individual relates to Christ individually and personally as a contemporary.¹¹

The ability to relate to Christ as a contemporary is a vital difference in Anti-Climacus’ theology.

“It involves reconciliation into relationship with the truth: that is, into a relationship with the

⁹ PC, 14.

¹⁰ PC, 15.

¹¹ Joshua Cockayne, “Imitation and Contemporaneity: Kierkegaard and Imitation of Christ,” *Heythrop Journal* (2017): 4, doi: 10.1111/heyj.12786.

actuality of God who is present for us as one of us in history.”¹² How relationship and connection to the history and person of Christ are possible is the problem raised by this theology. Anti-Climacus’ mention of the Holy Spirit gives us a way to make sense of this radical claim.

a. The problem of contemporaneity

Stokes is a scholar who demonstrates the difficulty of contemporaneity and exemplifies the resolution of the issue in an elevation of the human spirit rather than the Holy Spirit. Stokes perceives that contemporaneity (*samtidighed*) is a central theological idea to Kierkegaard’s authorship as a whole. The term first appears in *Either/Or* (1843) and in his final work “in 1855 he declares contemporaneity to be ‘the decisive point’ and ‘my life’s thought.’”¹³ From the writings of Climacus emerges a conception of contemporaneity less to do with direct sensory connection and instead a type of spiritual sight. Climacus speaks about the “autopsy of faith” “a type of vision with the eyes of faith.”¹⁴ Here the autopsy “literally means ‘the personal act of seeing’” while “Gregor Malantschuk too equates the ‘autopsy of faith’ with ‘personal inspection’ or ‘witnessing’”.¹⁵ Contemporaneity is a real experience, and yet it stretches beyond the human resources of perception. Importantly for Stokes, “certain modes of thought have the power to negate the historical distance between contemplator and contemplated”.¹⁶ Imagination can be used to keep a historical reality in the distant past or bring a distant object into present focus. Quoting Anti-Climacus, Stokes comes to the thought that a contemporary

¹² Torrance, “Beyond Existentialism,” 308.

¹³ Patrick Stokes, “‘See For Yourself’: Contemporaneity, Autopsy and Presence in Kierkegaard’s Moral-Religious Psychology,” *British Journal for History of Philosophy* 18.2 (2010): 297.

¹⁴ PF, 102.

¹⁵ Stokes, “See For Yourself,” 301.

¹⁶ Stokes, “See For Yourself,” 304.

experiences the past as “actuality for me.”¹⁷ Stokes perceives a type of imaginative anchoring of a self in the person of Christ Crucified in “what is encountered imaginatively is for me” is the substance of contemporaneity.¹⁸

However, Stokes rejects the Lutheran account of real presence.

This appeal to ‘experience-as’ takes us beyond the metaphorical and elevates contemporaneity to the same status, on the phenomenal level, as direct experience. (Bonhoeffer, too, insists that the ‘presence’ of Christ is not merely metaphorical, though here presence is taken to refer more to the presence of Jesus in the body of the church than to any imaginatively mediated experience).¹⁹

Likewise, Westphal claims Anti-Climacus is not speaking of a “mystical” experience. “It is rather an epistemic contemporaneity of which he speaks”.²⁰ Westphal claims that the inaccessibility of Christ to his contemporaries renders the idea of a direct encounter inadequate. Taylor goes further to suggest that it is the relation of Christ to time that Kierkegaard does not correctly identify. Kierkegaard’s assumption that such contemporaneity is possible reflects a “failure to appreciate the processive nature of historical development.”²¹ It is pure naivety to claim knowledge of Jesus Christ without the aid of theological or philosophical mediation.

If, as Westphal and Stokes suggest, it is impossible to actually experience Christ, Anti-Climacus must refer to experiences within the self. Stokes suggests a self-reflexive vision in which someone apprehends their “relation to what is imagined within the imaginative experience” with the result that she does “not reflect on the putative religious meanings of the

¹⁷ PC, 64.

¹⁸ Stokes, “See For Yourself,” 311.

¹⁹ Stokes, “See For Yourself,” 305.

²⁰ Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard’s Concept of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 257.

²¹ Taylor, *Pseudonymous Authorship*, 358.

incarnation; rather, she is present with the incarnation.”²² At this moment one can both see for themselves and begins to see their self in a new light. For Westphal, it involves a type of self-transcendence through relation to the person of Christ. “It is not just *finding* oneself...as the Inviter’s immediate contemporaries; it is *choosing* not just to receive his help but also to share his life...the way of the cross.”²³ Hence it is the imagination and will of the self which propel the believer to a new life. Unfortunately, this returns faith to the realm of moralism and the need to replicate Christ with their effort. The difficulty of contemporaneity is dismissed, but so is the possibility suggested by Cockayne.

Anti-Climacus’ doctrine of the real presence of Christ leaves no doubt about what contemporaneity means. Cockayne looks further into *Practice* for the moment when Anti-Climacus describes communion:

...[t]oday he is indeed with you as if he were closer to the earth; he is as if touching the earth; he is present at the altar when you are seeking him; he is present there – but only in order once again from on high to draw you to himself.²⁴

The Lutheran understanding of communion is the means of making sense of Anti-Climacus’ claims about the present reality of Christ. According to Lutheran doctrine. “Christ must be present *to* an individual when she receives Communion.”²⁵ Anti-Climacus demonstrates the necessity of the real presence of Christ at the communion for it to be effective. Coming to communion is obedient response to the summons of the living Christ. Kierkegaard expounds the nature of Christ’s presence at communion as essential in a similar Lutheran way.²⁶ Just as

²² Stokes, “See For Yourself,” 314.

²³ Westphal, “Kenosis and Offense,” 37–38.

²⁴ PC, 156.

²⁵ Cockayne, “Imitation and Contemporaneity,” 10.

²⁶ Kierkegaard when unpacking John 10:27, understands communion as a relational event which we are summoned to by Christ himself “At the communion table there is no speaking about him; there he himself is present in person; there it is he who is speaking... in the spiritual sense, it is actually *there* only if you hear *his* voice *there*” (CD, 271).

Christ is really present at communion, so too is Christ present to the believer at all times when they are seeking relationship with him.

Nonetheless, the problem posed by contemporaneity is a significant theological problem to solve. The solution raised by Stokes and Westphal is that Anti-Climacus refers to a type of imaginative mediation of the truth and self-reflexive placement of the person of Christ before the self. Here we return to a version of Ferreira's understanding of transformation as an internal transformative work of the self. Rather than allowing the problem of contemporaneity to drive us to the need for self-mediation, it should instead drive us to the need for the Holy Spirit's mediation. Contra Westphal, it is not purely epistemic moment to which Anti-Climacus refers, but also a relational one. The only possibility for contemporaneity is for the Holy Spirit to open us relationally to the person of Christ in his lowly abasement. Gunton suggests that this is precisely the work of the Holy Spirit; he enables the "crossing [of] boundaries" by "opening" people and created things to one another.²⁷ The Holy Spirit is the necessary agent without whom contemporaneity, as presented by Anti-Climacus, does not make sense.

b. The Holy Spirit mediates the sacred history of Christ

As we delve into Anti-Climacus' understanding of sacred history, the Trinitarian reading of Christ's contemporaneity is not out of place. When establishing the difference between the history of Christ and normal historical process, Anti-Climacus exclaims that God the Father alone has the right to reveal Christ in his ascended glory.

History may be an excellent branch of knowledge, but it must not become so conceited that it undertakes what the Father will do, to array Christ in glory, clothing him in the

²⁷ Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 182.

glittering trappings of results, as if this were the second coming. That in his abasement he was God, that he will come again in glory – this goes not a little beyond the understanding of history.²⁸

The Father alone has the authority to display the glory given to Christ through his abased life. To suggest that the historical mediation of Christ's life can reveal the Father's final verdict is incoherent. Further, it suggests that Christ's life is no different from any other. “What ungodly thoughtlessness that makes sacred history into profane history, Christ into a human being!”²⁹ God himself must reveal the unique history of Jesus Christ.

Anti-Climacus takes up Christ's life as ‘sacred history’, using Strauss' term to declare the utter uniqueness of Christ's life. Rather than human mediation of the truth of Christ's life, each human life is to be transformed into Christ's likeness.

‘History,’ says faith, ‘has nothing at all to do with Jesus Christ; with regard to him we have only sacred history (which is qualitatively different from history in general), which relates the story of his life in the state of abasement, also that he claimed to be God. He is the paradox that history can never digest or convert into an ordinary syllogism. He is the same in his abasement as in his loftiness – but eighteen hundred years, or if it came to be eighteen thousand years, has nothing to do with it.’³⁰

Anti-Climacus here distinguishes between Strauss’ understanding of sacred history and his own. Rather than a distilled *syllogism* concocted from Christ's life as a piece of mythology, the sacred history of Christ is his whole life of abasement which subsequently is the absolute and measure of every human life. “He wills not to be transformed by human beings into a cozy—a human god; he wills to transform human beings, and he wills it out of love.”³¹

²⁸ PC, 30-31.

²⁹ PC, 33.

³⁰ PC, 30.

³¹ PC, 62.

The sacred history is what the believer must spiritually see to be conformed to Christ's likeness. Christ's existence as absolute makes him accessible to the generations that follow.

The past is not actuality for me. That with which you are living simultaneously is actuality – for you. Thus every human being is able to become contemporary only with the time he is living – and then with one more, with Christ's life upon earth, for Christ's life upon earth, the sacred history, stands alone by itself, outside of history...A historical Christianity is nonsense and un-Christian...because whatever true Christians there are in any generation are contemporary with Christ...His life on earth accompanies the human race and accompanies each generation as the eternal history, his life on earth has the eternal contemporaneity.³²

Here we meet the critical point for Taylor and others—Kierkegaard's complete lack of respect for the historical process. How can Christ's life stand outside of time? Douglas Farrow suggests “the sacred history stands alone not because it negates time, or is somehow ahistorical, but because here and only here time is linked with eternity, the life of man with the life of God.”

³³ Christ's identity as the God-man makes him the vital mediated link between the life of God and man. It is the utter uniqueness of his incarnation which sets him apart. Christ's unique mediation of the Father as the only Son of God is the key to understanding his history.

However, this is an incomplete thought without the Holy Spirit. Pivotaly, this is the one moment in the book when he is mentioned by name. Anti-Climacus, after expounding the need for believers to be contemporaries of Christ, explains this means suffering like Christ as well. “Christianity came into the world as the absolute, not, humanly speaking, for comfort, on the

³² PC, 64

³³Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 224..

contrary, it continually speaks about how the Christian must suffer.”³⁴ At the end of the section, he suggests that anyone who makes Christianity about anything but Christ crucified and living out his likeness blasphemes the Holy Spirit.

And if becoming a Christian does not come to mean this, then all talk about becoming a Christian is futility and fancy and vanity, and in part blasphemy and sin against the second commandment of the Law and sin against the Holy Spirit.³⁵

The link between the second commandment and the sin against the Holy Spirit is illuminating. To call the Christian life anything other than what Christ is, in his abased and humiliated life, is to not only get faith wrong but to create an idol and to self-mediate Christ. The sin against the Holy Spirit is what it was in *Sickness*, a refusal of the Holy Spirit's mediation of the person of Christ. The sacred history of Christ can come to a believer in no other way than through the work of the Holy Spirit. Rae describes how Christ is “pneumatologically extended through time” so that he can be contemporary to every generation.³⁶ The real presence of Christ is only possible through the mediation of the work of the Spirit to the believer. Inextricably tied to this is the need to also suffer after his likeness. The direct encounter with the suffering Christ and imitating him can only happen by way of the Holy Spirit's opening of the self to Christ. The history of Christ cannot be understood outside of the work of the Triune God. The Holy Spirit enables relation to his abased life and the Father will unveil his glorified fullness. All else is self-mediated religion.

³⁴ PC, 63.

³⁵ PC, 63.

³⁶ Murray A. Rae, “The Forgetfulness of Historical-Talkative Remembrance in Kierkegaard's Practice in Christianity,” in *Practice in Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 20 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2004), 90.

c. The Holy Spirit presents and overcomes offense at Christ

The key question that arises then is: how does the Holy Spirit, in opening the believer to the sacred history of Christ, enable inward captivation and outward conformity? The answer is that the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to overcome their offense at Christ. The nature of offense is defined straight away by Anti-Climacus:

And whatever a person's suffering for the sake of faith is to be in this world, even though for the sake of faith he is laughed to scorn, persecuted, put to death, blessed is the one who is not offended but believes that he, the abased one, the lowly despised man, he who only in a sorry way showed what it is to be a human being when it was said of him: 'See what a man' – blessed is the one who is not offended but believes that he was God, the only begotten of the Father and that this belonged to Christ and belongs to those who want to belong to Christ.³⁷

There are two aspects to the offense described by Anti-Climacus. The first is about the nature of Christ, that he is indeed the begotten of the Father in his lowly humiliated state. The second is to hang onto belief in Christ even when the worst realities befall the believer. There is a reference to adoption here too. Anti-Climacus states that the begotten nature of the Son belongs to Christ and also belongs to believers. Part of overcoming offense is thus perceiving Christ's status as the Son, and the believer's standing as a son, despite the suffering that befalls both in life. Hence Anti-Climacus understands offense as an inward battle, "faith conquers the world by conquering at every moment the enemy within one's own inner being, the possibility of offense."³⁸ Transformation looks like trusting in Christ despite his appearance and despite the

³⁷ PC, 75-76.

³⁸ PC, 76.

life that comes from following him. As in *Sickness*, there is a need to worship Christ in faith and rest in the goodness of God as Father.

The Holy Spirit of course first confronts the believer with Christ's crucified likeness. "No Christ's life here on earth is the paradigm; I and every Christian are to strive to model our lives in likeness to it."³⁹ Indeed living in contemporaneity allows someone "at every moment" to see how much they "resembled the master."

...to be a Christian is to mean, in the world, to human eyes, to be the abased one, that is to mean suffering every possible evil, every mockery and insult, and finally to be punished as a criminal!

...for truly to be a Christian certainly does not mean to be Christ (what blasphemy!) but means to be his imitator, yet not a kind of prinked-up, nice-looking successor ... to be an imitator means that your life has as much similarity to his as is possible for a human life to have.⁴⁰

It is only when someone voluntarily decides to suffer on behalf of the word and Christ that they demonstrate a similar contradiction to the suffering likeness of Christ. The whole of the Christian life is bound up in contradiction: "They go to the Word to seek help – and then come to suffer on account of the Word."⁴¹ Christianity has the strange character of looking like a *torment* or a *burden* when it is, in fact, infinite help. The Holy Spirit enables a believer to live within the contradiction of this offense.

Anti-Climacus' insistence on the need for Christians to suffer on behalf of Christ is where Pattison, Torrance and Evans all take issue; in this teaching Anti-Climacus lives up to his status

³⁹ PC, 107.

⁴⁰ PC, 106.

⁴¹ PC, 114.

as an extraordinary Christian.⁴² Evans states, “it is a mistake to claim that suffering and persecution will be the inevitable fate of all true Christians, and so anyone who fails to experience this fate thereby manifests a spiritual flaw.”⁴³ The concern here is that “genuine Christianity simply cannot be combined with... a normal human life, in which one marries, raises a family, seeks to make a living, and enjoys some of the features of human life.”⁴⁴ Evans does also express how Anti-Climacus helpfully enables self-reflection for comfortable believers. Indeed, Anti-Climacus’ talk of suffering, at this point of *Practice* is part of bringing believers to a “halt” so that they can reflect on their position before Christ and take hold of his grace.⁴⁵ While it is true that Anti-Climacus doesn’t describe ordinary imitation of Christ, he does later suggest how Christ uses all manner of things to draw people to himself.⁴⁶ Anti-Climacus’ insistence on suffering in discipleship is also Jesus’ summons to deny oneself, take up one’s cross and follow (Mark 8:34). Jesus’ teaching is similarly polemic, demonstrating what it will take to follow, and yet requires ordinary obedience. Though Anti-Climacus does not describe ordinary imitation, he seeks to enable it.

It is precisely Christ’s life as a ‘contradiction’ that turns him into a transformative mirror for those who encounter him. The summons to imitate the person of Christ and bear his suffering image, exposes both the outward unlikeness of people to him while also uncovering the thoughts of their hearts.

And only the sign of contradiction can do this: it draws attention to itself and then it presents a contradiction. There is a something that makes it impossible not to look – and look, as one is looking one sees as in a mirror, one comes to see oneself, or he who

⁴² Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*, 169. Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 9.

⁴³ Evans, *Kierkegaard and Spirituality*, kindle location 3289.

⁴⁴ Evans, *Kierkegaard and Spirituality*, kindle location 3198.

⁴⁵ Marek, “Anti-Climacus: Kierkegaard’s ‘Servant of the Word,’” 40.

⁴⁶ PC, 155.

is the sign of contradiction looks straight into one's heart while one is staring into the contradiction. A contradiction placed squarely in front of a person – if one gets him to look at it – is a mirror; as he is forming a judgement, what dwells within him must be disclosed. It is a riddle, but as he is guessing the riddle, what dwells within him is disclosed by the way he guesses. The contradiction confronts him with a choice, and as he is choosing, together with what he chooses, he himself is disclosed.⁴⁷

Encountering the abased person of Christ leads to a revelation of what lies inside every person. Through that work of unveiling, the believer is forced to a decision about their life and Christ. When the life and heart of someone are revealed to be far from who Christ is, then they are also driven to need his grace and the gift of faith.

Stokes considers how the “evaluative aspect of the experience of looking into a mirror is essential to the power Kierkegaard finds in the mirror metaphor.”⁴⁸ In his view, Kierkegaard views scripture as a means of seeing ourselves properly. Likewise, viewing the contradiction of the God-man is a task which requires our subjective interest to be engaged. The “contemplator is revealed to herself in the contemplation through her subjective engagement with it.”⁴⁹ Here, the subjective interest of the observer turns the object into a means of experiential evaluation. Stokes is helpful at this point; the experience of Christ is evaluative. The presentation of the God-man discloses exactly who we are, down to the depth of our inward self. We are defined by our relation to Christ. However, it is not human subjectivity which makes this experience powerful. Christ is not an object requiring our interest, he is a person whose very presence demands an answer. To be present with him is to finally understand all of what a human should be. Likewise, scripture is not an object with which we need to draw

⁴⁷ PC, 126-127.

⁴⁸ Stokes, *Kierkegaard's Mirrors*, 113.

⁴⁹ Stokes, *Kierkegaard's Mirrors*, 125.

an imaginative connection, it is a voice to which we need to listen. In *Practice*, we do not imagine a connection to a distant Christ, we hear the voice of the present Christ summoning and requiring an answer.

How does the Spirit inwardly captivate and outwardly conform the believer to the likeness of Christ? Through mediating the presence of the crucified Christ revealed in sacred history. Presenting the crucified Christ, the self-contradiction and offense, becomes the mark by which both the outward and inward life are measured. Here we see the law aspect of the Lutheran doctrine of transformation—Christ crucified, as the prototype, becomes what the believer strives toward. The Holy Spirit's opening of the believer to the presence of Christ enables them to see the life which they are to become. The disparity between his heavenly status as God's Son and his abased condition reveals the inward life of a person. The Holy Spirit confronts the self with the person of Christ and by doing so draws them to need his grace.

2. Sovereign grace

We come now to the second part of Anti-Climacus' Lutheran dynamic. Once the self has been confronted with the crucified likeness of Christ, by grace God now summons them to himself and forms Christ's image in them. Throughout this section of *Practice*, the sovereign power of God is on view. We see the work of the ascended Christ in 'drawing' all to himself and the work of *governance*, ordering the particulars of life so that a believer voluntarily suffers on Christ's behalf. It is both the Spirit who mediates the work of the ascended Christ, as seen at Pentecost, and is immanently at work ordering the particularity of believers' lives. I will explore Anti-Climacus' depiction of God's sovereign work by looking firstly at his descriptions of the ascended Christ, secondly, his portrait of a young man and finally his understanding of

governance. Anti-Climacus depicts transformation as an inward drawing to Christ and an outward ordering of life to display his suffering likeness.

a. *The ascended Christ draws believers to himself by the Spirit*

Anti-Climacus is clear, from Jesus' words in John, how it is Christ's work which enables transformation rather than any spiritual capacity in believers.

So he is not resting on high, but he is working, is occupied and concerned with drawing all to himself. Wonderful! Yet, you likewise do see many forces stirring in nature around you, but the power that supports it all you do not see, you do not see God's omnipotence – and yet it is just as fully certain that he, too, is working, that one single moment without him and then the world is nothing. Thus, invisible on high, he is also present everywhere, occupied with drawing all to himself – alas, while there in the world the talk is secularly about everything else – as if he did not exist at all. He uses the most varied things as a way and as a means of drawing to himself, but we cannot develop this here, least of all today, when just an unusually brief time is stipulated for this discourse, because the sacred act is primary and the celebration of Holy Communion is the service. But even though the means he uses are ever so many, all the ways still converge at one point: the consciousness of sin; through that goes *the way* along which he draws a person, the penitent, to himself.⁵⁰

Anti-Climacus compares the work of the ascended Christ to the omnipotent power of God working in all of creation. The world is contingent upon the constant upholding benevolence of God as creator. Thus also, Christ is invisibly working and is *present everywhere*, drawing people to himself. Not only is he present everywhere but he is using the variety of things in

⁵⁰ PC, 155.

ordinary life to draw people to himself—quite a remarkable picture of Christ's providential action in all of the earth. Anti-Climacus draws dangerously close to his Hegelian opponents by ascribing a similar mystical presence to Christ in creation, particularly as he seems to separate it from God's work of preserving creation.

In the book of Acts, Christ draws people to himself through the work of the Spirit poured out at Pentecost. Through the work of the Spirit in the community of believers, the sovereign work of 'drawing all' to himself can occur. Importantly, if there is no Holy Spirit in Anti-Climacus' description of Christ's work, then he falls into an error of describing some form of the cosmic Christ present to the world. If this is true, it becomes more difficult to distinguish the theology of Anti-Climacus from Hegelian speculation.

However, the opposite is true. Anti-Climacus' insistence on the ascended work of Christ demonstrates how Christ does not recede into the background after his resurrection. He remains the lowly servant now exalted in heaven. Rather than describing the movement from the historical Christ to the Spiritual community, Anti-Climacus describes the ascended work of the risen Christ drawing individuals to himself. He is theologically emphasising the present reality of Christ in contradistinction to the speculative theology of his day. As a result, the work of the Holy Spirit is not precluded, just not explicitly mentioned. The biblical reality of Christ's ascension means that it is in the Spirit that he draws people to himself.

The Lord's supper for Anti-Climacus is a real moment of contact with the ascended Christ, a type of what can happen in everyday life. "Today he is indeed with you as if he were closer to the earth; he is as if touching the earth; he is present at the altar where you are seeking him; he

is present there – but only in order once again from on high to draw you to himself.”⁵¹

Describing the experience of communion, Anti-Climacus pronounces.

God grant that at the sacred moment you might feel wholly drawn to him, be aware of his presence, the presence of him who is present there, of him from whom you are indeed separated when you leave the altar but who will not forget you if you do not forget him...

The Lutheran theology of real presence at the supper is on full display here. We need to ask some questions at this point. Does Anti-Climacus avoid a merely speculative vision of the cosmic Christ's presence in all of creation? The unarticulated theology of the Spirit appears to be more problematic at this point. Surely demonstrating the way the Spirit mediates Christ's presence is a vital distinctive for a generation mistaking the work of the Spirit with the community of grace?

In Kierkegaard's communion discourses, he presents a similar vision of Christ's immanent presence to the believer but describes more specifically the 'inner longings' which are prompts of the Holy Spirit. Kierkegaard is particularly interested in the few people who come to communion on Fridays rather than the mass who come on Sundays.⁵² Christ's longing for the last supper (Luke 22:15) makes longing an intrinsic part of the Lord's supper. Longing comes from the Holy Spirit through a passing reference to John 3:8. "The wind blows where it will... So also with longing for God...the longing for our Saviour and Redeemer."⁵³ He then describes how lavishly the Holy Spirit interacts with people, "every prompting of the Spirit, every pull of the soul, every fervent longing, which are indeed God's gifts in a far deeper sense than food and clothing".⁵⁴ Kierkegaard implores his hearers to receive and respond to the Spirit's

⁵¹ PC, 156.

⁵² CD, 270.

⁵³ CD, 253.

⁵⁴ CD, 253.

prompts, quoting John 12:32 and Christ's *drawing* of people to himself. Here we see how the issue of *offense* is finally overcome in the inward battle of faith, through the Spirit's prompting and the Spirit-enabled encounter with the benefits of Christ's death on the believer's behalf. And so, "the longing for fellowship with your Saviour and Redeemer should increase every time you remember him."⁵⁵ The Spirit leads believers to long after Christ, through continual application and reception of his crucified life. Kierkegaard's use of the same text gives us reason to see similarities with Anti-Climacus' theology, even though Anti-Climacus does not take us there.

Here we find a more precise alternative statement to some of the more ambiguous comments of Torrance. Torrance speaks of how Christ relates to persons spiritually by his "gracious activity and presence" from "beyond our physical existence."⁵⁶ The work of God brings a "new spiritual activity" alternative to the innate spirituality of every human being.⁵⁷ Torrance strains to clarify that the work of God is not in continuity with the capacity inherent in someone. It seems to be strange to not attribute this more clearly to the person of the Holy Spirit. He does suggest at one point that,

By responding to Christ in this way, a person expresses a willingness to let Christ transform her: a willingness to let the Spirit of Christ draw the human spirit to himself.⁵⁸

Here the Holy Spirit enters after interaction with Christ; it is better to consider that the Spirit is both the means of our encounter with Christ as well as the deepening power to draw him to ourselves. Torrance is trying to leave space for the messy reality of human freedom but does not leave adequate space for the Holy Spirit's role in perfecting human agency. He suggests that the conversions rest upon "dynamics that transcend the inner workings of the created order

⁵⁵ CD, 261.

⁵⁶ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 97.

⁵⁷ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 74.

⁵⁸ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 63.

per se. Christian existence rests upon divine acts of grace: free acts of God”.⁵⁹ Here we begin to see the issue, the dichotomy between the work of God in the creation and the work of God in redemption. A clearer vision of the Holy Spirit's work in both human freedom and creation is required to clarify these issues.

It could be suggested that Kierkegaard does not significantly diverge from the panentheism of Martensen. Both thinkers sought to move on from the pantheism of their context. Martensen understood that “loving Spirit, potentiates the human into genuine freedom that gives itself in love”.⁶⁰ Likewise in Kierkegaard Thompson perceives the “pantheistic power of eternity or substance becomes united with the created power of human freedom”.⁶¹ Kierkegaard is vehement about the qualitative difference between humanity and divinity, yet we can understand the ambiguity that leads to this conclusion. While Torrance seeks to distinguish the work of God and the freedom of the created order, he does not clarify how the grace of God operates with creation. The unmediated presence of Christ working over and through creation leaves questions to be answered. If Anti-Climacus is as theologically perspicuous as we understand him to be, he must chart a way for human beings to exist in freedom without the essential merging of divine and human agencies. A fuller Trinitarian vision is required to clarify the relation of God to the freedom of his creatures. Torrance does not want to speak beyond the complex picture of transformation that Kierkegaard explains. Freedom in the process of transformation “occurs both *with* God and *in response to* God.”⁶² But in both of these terms we find the work of the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁹ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 76.

⁶⁰ Curtis L. Thompson, “From Presupposing Pantheism’s Power to Potentiating Pantheism’s Personality: Seeking Parallels between Kierkegaard’s and Martensen’s Theological Anthropologies,” *The Journal of Religion* 82.2 (2002): 245.

⁶¹ Thompson, “Presupposing Pantheism’s Power,” 247.

⁶² Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 4.

b. *The Holy Spirit grips the young man with the image of Christ's love*

Subsequently, Anti-Climacus makes clear that it is the passive spiritual sight of the crucified Christ, enabled by the Holy Spirit which allows the self to be captivated without violating their agency. Anti-Climacus' clearest portrait of change is in the imaginary story of a child's transformation through their adolescence into adulthood. Here we see how the inward captivity to the suffering Christ also leads to outward conformity to his suffering likeness. The opening prayer in this section connects directly to 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. Anti-Climacus describes how no one is naturally drawn to 'suffering and abasement'. The ascended Christ wishes to draw people to him without violating their agency. The only solution is akin to Paul's description, "would that the image of you in your abasement might stand before us so vividly, so awakening and persuasive, drawn to want to be like you in lowliness."⁶³ The Holy Spirit's work is thus to convince the self of the love of Christ behind the image of the crucified one.

And he, this abased one, he was love; he wanted only one thing – to save humankind.

He wanted it on any terms, would leave the heavenly glory because of it; he wanted it on any terms – would sacrifice his life for it... What suffering, what suffering of love!

Is this sight not able to move you?⁶⁴

It is the compelling vision of the love of Christ behind the cross which ignites a longing in the human heart after Christ. A person is not coerced by God, but is instead powerfully persuaded by Christ's image. So powerful is the love of Christ crucified that a believer is willing to not only trust him but also to suffer like him in response to what they see.

⁶³ PC, 167.

⁶⁴ PC, 170-171.

Anti-Climacus describes a gradual process where the image of Christ takes on more and more significance. Anti-Climacus takes us on a journey with a child who first stumbles across the image of Christ crucified and is initially confused and uncomfortable. An adult then proceeds to “tell him that this crucified man was the most loving person who ever lived.”⁶⁵ The fullness of Christ's story as the incarnate son of God is essential for making sense of God's love in Christ. When his identity as the eternal Son who comes in suffering love is understood in its fullness, the child forgets other heroic images. The initial flood of passion for Christ becomes a want to avenge those who crucified him. However, as the child grows, he realises:

He no longer wished to strike, because, he said, then I am not like him, the abased one, who did not strike, not even when he was struck. No now he wished only one thing, to suffer approximately as he suffered in this world⁶⁶

The Apostles were likewise enamoured of Christ and became sufferers. “This is how it moved the apostles, who knew nothing and wanted to know nothing except Christ and him crucified.”⁶⁷

When Christ crucified persuades the inward affections of the human heart, he becomes a criterion by which the believer also measures their life. Christ's life “is the very judgement by which we shall be judged.”⁶⁸ The language of 2 Corinthians continues in this section. The believer's “mind and his eyes are turned toward the loftiness you entered into, which he expects to share with you”. Christ learned obedience through suffering, when he finished his course, he can enable and help others in their obedience. Christ “has passed his test, has developed the

⁶⁵ PC, 175.

⁶⁶ PC, 178.

⁶⁷ PC, 178.

⁶⁸ PC, 181.

prototype [*Forbillede*], is now on high...and now as one who has finished is occupied in guiding others.”⁶⁹

There is a connection between ‘prototype’ (*forbillede*) and ‘image’ (*billed*) which takes us to the core of 2 Corinthians again; it is the ascended crucified one who is the ‘image’ viewed by believers. The imagination, for Anti-Climacus’, “is the first condition for what becomes of a person”, becoming involves “some image of perfection” to be perceived.⁷⁰ In viewing Christ in his perfection, the youth “becomes infatuated with this image, to this image becomes his life, his inspiration, for him his more perfect (more ideal) self.”

It is the image of the crucified Christ which exerts power over the believer rather than their apprehension of the image. It is the love of Christ in the image which influences and remakes the interior of the believer:

And it exercises its power over him, the power of love, which is indeed capable of everything, above all of making alike; his whole deepest inner being is transformed little by little, and he seems to be beginning to resemble, however imperfectly, this image that has made him forget everything – also the world in which he is, which now regards him with astonishment and alienation.⁷¹

Here we see the work of the ascended Christ, who through the power of his love alters the interior of a person so that they more perfectly resemble who he is. The enticing nature of Christ's love in the image of the crucified leads the young man to walk in such a way that he solely seeks the image of Christ. He begins to “walk like a dreamer” in the world, “like a

⁶⁹ PC, 184.

⁷⁰ PC, 186.

⁷¹ PC, 193.

stranger and yet he seems to be at home". The persuasion of the image leads him to walk in life with one clear objective on his mind and heart, to become as Christ crucified.

And just as it so beautifully happens with lovers that they begin to resemble each other, so the young man is transformed in likeness to this image, which imprints or impresses itself on all his thought and on every utterance by him, while he, to repeat, with his eyes directed to this image – has not watched his step, had not paid attention to where he is.⁷²

Walking with eyes fixed on Christ all of his thinking and speaking has Christ's glory impressed upon it. Such is the power of the imagination over the life of someone, according to Anti-Climacus. Whatever is in the imagined heart will flow into one's outward life, thus the image of Christ exerts an influence over the believer.

Stokes perceives a parallel with the mystic Meister Eckhart at this point too. "Whoever possesses God in their being" begins to find that "all things taste of God and in all things it is God's image that they see."⁷³ Here we start to see the divergence of Anti-Climacus' understanding of the imagination. Rather than a subjective task which grows a sense of God-consciousness, Anti-Climacus is demonstrating how imagination is a tool used by God to reform and remake the self: "imagination is what providence uses to take men captive in actuality, in existence, in order to get them far enough out, or within, or down into actuality. And when imagination has helped them get as far out as they should be – then actuality genuinely begins".⁷⁴ Here imagination does not grow a sense of a general unmediated divinity in the world, but is a tool of the Holy Spirit to draw believers into Christ's likeness. Gregor suggests someone shifts from admirer to imitator by a confrontation with the person of Christ,

⁷² PC, 189.

⁷³ Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, trans. Oliver Davies (London: Penguin, 1994), 11.

⁷⁴ JP, 1832 / SKS 25, 471 [NB 30:104].

to do this he invokes the idea of “saturated phenomenon”. When a phenomenon is so remarkable that it cannot remain simply an object, our relation to it changes. Rather than calling the object into question, we are called into question. “Christian truth reverses my gaze, pulling me out of my detached, observing posture into responsible subjectivity – asking me to give an account of myself, calling me to respond, to follow after Christ.”⁷⁵ In this way, Christ *ruptures* our being so that we no longer understand ourselves apart from who we know ourselves to be before him.

However, Gregor still struggles to make sense of the passive and active elements of this alteration of the human self. We passively receive this image of Christ, and yet there is an intense need to take up his likeness in our person and life. He takes Anti-Climacus’ discussion of art as a lens in which to understand the Christian view of aesthetics. However, this misses the point of the image in Anti-Climacus’ work. The power comes from the image of Christ, which arouses a passion which soon forgets the medium through which it came.

The “gripping sight” of the image of Christ...The power of reconciliation arises from the image of suffering, which discloses human guilt and sympathy, and brings the passion of the religious to its highest pitch, to belief in the God-man.⁷⁶

Torrance helpfully describes the *saturated phenomenon* of Christ as encountering “something that thought cannot think”.⁷⁷ Such an encounter awakens passion so that someone loses “continuity with themselves”. As a result of this growth in passion, a believer finds “her choices become caught up with the love and grace of God...she finds herself drawn away from offense toward belief...she finds that her passions find new direction and her existence finds new

⁷⁵ Brian Gregor, “Thinking Through Kierkegaard’s Anti-Climacus: Art Imagination, And Imitation,” *Heythrop Journal* 50.3 (2009): 457.

⁷⁶ Hermann Deuser, “Religious Dialectics and Christology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 394.

⁷⁷ Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian*, 40.

substance.”⁷⁸ The believer is swept up into their passionate response to the reality of Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who enables this encounter with the glory of the ascended Christ, drawing the imagination unto the person of Christ.

c. *The Holy Spirit and the work of governance*

However, Anti-Climacus also makes clear that imagination is not sufficient to form the image of Christ in someone. Anti-Climacus describes the moment when the youth realises that they have been pulled so strongly along by the image that they have completely forgotten the real world around them. So, “now he suddenly discovers the surrounding world of actuality in which he is standing and the relation of his surrounding world to himself.”⁷⁹ It is not enough to be inwardly captivated with the perfected image of Christ, that image needs to be formed in the concrete circumstances of actuality. “No however great the efforts of imagination to make this imagined image actual, it cannot do it.”⁸⁰ The Holy Spirit is required not merely to captivate and prompt the inward self with the crucified Christ, but also to order and form the outward life of the believer, so they resemble Christ's likeness. Here the role of governance in *Practice* becomes essential. Anti-Climacus' descriptions of governance seem to refer to God's planning and continual sculpting of life. Governance entrusts the suffering Christ with his vocation as Messiah while also constructing the human self around the imagination.⁸¹ We get the idea that Governance is the sovereign action of God over the power of human agency upholding and stewarding human life. Anti-Climacus does not explicitly link the work of

⁷⁸ Andrew B. Torrance, “Do You Have The Heart to Come to Faith? A Look at Anti-Climacus’ Reading of Matthew 11.6’,” *Heythrop Journal* 55 (2014): 864.

⁷⁹ PC, 189.

⁸⁰ PC, 188.

⁸¹ PC, 44.

governance with the Holy Spirit. However, it is difficult to make sense of the immanent work of God in the life of believers without the Spirit.

It is Governance who enables the youth to move from an idealised picture of Christ to live like him in the concrete particulars of life. Life is about expressing “the perfection (ideality) in the dailyness of actuality”.⁸² The young man ends up in a situation where he cannot “abandon the image” because of its place in his imagination, yet “since the actuality... is anything but perfection, suffering is in store and is not to be avoided.”⁸³ Governance is the love that both leads the believer into suffering and carefully upholds them through it.

It depends upon Governance – but let us never forget that it is love – however tight it will turn the screws on him, if I may put it this way, and however hot it will heat the oven, if I may put it this way, in which the youth must be tested like gold. Perhaps he as yet is a long way from having fully assessed the truth of the matter, for Governance is love, and even if this ordeal is in earnest, there is nothing cruel in its earnestness; it handles a person gently and never tries a person beyond his ability.

Governance tests believers in circumstances with gentleness and care, aiding them to bear up under suffering. The reality of suffering is that as a result “now he loves that image of perfection twice as much, for one always loves more something for which one has suffered.”⁸⁴ A pattern begins to emerge at this point—the internal love for Christ drives an outward life which in turn intensifies the inward devotion of belief.

Governance leads the young man through many small situations of actuality, driving him further into danger little by little until he conforms to the image.

⁸² PC, 190.

⁸³ PC, 190.

⁸⁴ PC, 191.

This is how Governance deals with him many times, and every time helps him further and further out into suffering, because the youth does not want to abandon that image he so desires to resemble...Now existence has turned the screws as tight as it can tighten the screws on a human being. If existence had done this at the outset, it would have crushed him. Now he is probably able to bear it – yes, he must be able to, since Governance does it with him – Governance who is indeed love.⁸⁵

It is the accumulation of different particular life circumstances that is the occasion for the image of Christ to be formed in the believer. The transformation consists of small everyday situations of actuality which governance uses as a means for the believer to outwardly bear the image of Christ and inwardly adore his suffering glory. Governance in this sense gathers together the different suffering shards of his existence and through them forms him inwardly and outwardly to the Christ crucified.

Kierkegaard reflects similarly upon his own life and Governance's place in moulding him: “It is Governance that has brought me up, and the upbringing is reflected in the writing process.”⁸⁶ Governance led him “step by step” so that he was “precisely the kind of author I became.”⁸⁷ It was many different, specific circumstances in Kierkegaard's life that led to his vocation:

I had a thorn in the flesh, intellectual endowments (especially imagination and dialectic), and education in abundance, an enormous development as an observer, a truly rare Christian upbringing, an altogether unique dialectical relation to Christianity....As I now see it, it seems as if from the very first moment another power had been watching this and said as the fisherman says of the fish: Just let it run; it is

⁸⁵ PC, 191.

⁸⁶ PV, 77.

⁸⁷ PV, 79.

still too soon to pull it in... I continually... prayed to God to give me the zeal and patience for the work he himself would assign to me. In this way I became an author.⁸⁸

Rae reflects on Kierkegaard's autobiographical words and hears them resonate in the mouth of Anti-Climacus. He suggests that Kierkegaard “attributes to Governance the coherence and overall direction of his work”.⁸⁹ Kierkegaard is reticent in his autobiographical writings to distinguish too clearly between the work of God and his own work as an author.⁹⁰ Rae looks to Anti-Climacus' account of the *examination* of faith to make sense of the relation of agencies. “The trial to which Governance subjects a person can be met. But it can be met, Kierkegaard explains, only with God's help, and (here's the rub!) only by venturing the decisive act.”⁹¹ Hence Governance is superintending all of the particulars of life into a coherent whole, allowing each human creature to become their self. As God operated in Kierkegaard's life, so he longed for God to work in the lives of others.

However, Kierkegaard's personal experience of Governance does not necessarily clarify Anti-Climacus' theology. Dalrymple suggests that a translation issue has hindered a full comprehension of the doctrine of Governance in Kierkegaard's thought.

Although *Forsyn* is almost always rendered ‘providence’, *Styrelse* is variously translated “providence”, “guidance”, “Governance,” “dispensation” and “direction.” ... the distinction is significant for Kierkegaard's understanding of faith and divine activity.⁹²

⁸⁸ PV, 84.

⁸⁹ Rae, “A Life Directed by Governance,” 198.

⁹⁰ Lee C. Barrett, *Eros and Self-Emptying: The Intersections of Augustine and Kierkegaard* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 285.

⁹¹ Rae, “A Life Directed by Governance,” 202.

⁹² Timothy Dalrymple, “Modern Governance: Why Kierkegaard's *Styrelse* Is More Compelling Than You Think,” in *The Point of View*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, vol. 22 of *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Macon, Georgia USA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 162.

An example of this is Walsh's statement, "God's providence (*Forsyn*) and governance (*Styrelse*), which are synonymous terms" where their meaning is not differentiated.⁹³ Dalrymple looks to a well known Danish Catechism and its understanding of *Forsyn* as a general term "encompassing the Governance of worldly affairs" and the preservation "of the created order". While Governance is connected to "*Providentia specialissima*, God's provision for the sake of the pious".⁹⁴ For Kierkegaard, "the New Testament directs *providential speicalissima* to the Christian who has "plunged into all sufferings, a sacrifice and sacrificed"". ⁹⁵ Dalrymple finds in Kierkegaard a distinct vision of providence and suffering.

In its focus on the single individual, in its dialectic of divine and human freedom, and in its emphasis upon the outworking of Governance through the individual's circumstances, psychology and suffering, I find that Kierkegaard's *Styrelse* is both distinctly Kierkegaardian and distinctly modern⁹⁶

Through suffering, Governance guides the individual to a new life of faith and suffering imitation of the person of Christ.

d. *The Holy Spirit and the particularity of imitation*

What is the place of the Holy Spirit in Anti-Climacus' description of Governance? Dalrymple does not go as far as to distinguish the operations of the persons of the Trinity in the work of Governance. Surely such an important term for making sense of God's relation to the world must be understood in Trinitarian terms. Kierkegaard connects the immanent help in becoming like the Son to the Holy Spirit. The Father "directs us to the Son as our personal mediator and

⁹³ Sylvia Walsh, *Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 76.

⁹⁴ Dalrymple, "Modern Governance," 164.

⁹⁵ Dalrymple, "Modern Governance," 165.

⁹⁶ Dalrymple, "Modern Governance," 180–81.

prototype, and the Son in turn directs us to the Holy Spirit for help in striving to become like the prototype”.⁹⁷ However, this does not help us with Anti-Climacus’ supposed view, the clearest indication is that the Holy Spirit mediates the relation of Christ to the individual in both *Sickness and Practice*. If we take the Holy Spirit’s place in mediating the work of the ascended Christ, we may also suggest that the Holy Spirit enacts the will of the Father in conforming the life of believers to the image of Christ through the particular elements of each person’s life.

Anti-Climacus’ theological gesturing leads in the direction of Gunton’s theology of particularity. The Holy Spirit, in Gunton’s thought, not only opens Father and Son to each other but constitutes their particularity. In the person of Jesus Christ, we see that just as “the Spirit frees Jesus to be himself, so it is with those who are ‘in Christ’”.⁹⁸ The Holy Spirit enabled the Son to incarnate and fulfil his particular mission as Christ on behalf of God’s people. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is operative in the lives of believers constituting their particularity. “Accordingly, the Spirit’s distinctive mode of action in both time and eternity, economy and essence, consists in the constituting and realization of particularity.”⁹⁹ The Holy Spirit *releases* creatures “to be what they have been created to be...liberating things and people to be themselves.”¹⁰⁰ Importantly, this only occurs with the prototype, Christ, whose “death and resurrection” are “the model for all providential action”.¹⁰¹ It is the cruciform shape of Christ which is the pattern into which the Holy Spirit forms the particulars of believers after the will of God the Father. Here we see a picture of Anti-Climacus’ theological vision in fully

⁹⁷ JP 2, 1432 / SKS 25, 140-1 [NB27:23].

⁹⁸ Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 183.

⁹⁹ Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 190.

¹⁰⁰ Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 184.

¹⁰¹ Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 190.

Trinitarian terms: the Holy Spirit leads believers into the outward suffering form of Christ as he inwardly captivates them with Christ's extraordinary love.

Anti-Climacus' theology of particularity is best seen in contrast to the Hegelian thought. Hegel's providence does away with particularity through the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ was "the form of appearance, being-for-other, particularization which is then dissolved into 'absolute individuality.'" ¹⁰² Anti-Climacus instead sees the work of the Holy Spirit as preserving and bringing to fulfilment the particularity of Christ and believers. Martensen views providence as the sure certainty that a believer's pain is part of the eternal victory of spirit. The believer knows "in her innermost self she is one with the power which conquers the world." ¹⁰³ Here again, the freedom of the individual is subsumed into the movement of spirit. By contrast, Anti-Climacus sees the Holy Spirit as enabling the particulars of a believer's story to image the form of Christ in the circumstances of their life. Unlike Podmore, the outward life of suffering does not simply form an inward self, but is itself an outward likeness to Christ. It is true that believers are to depend upon "the consolation of the Holy Spirit as Comforter". ¹⁰⁴ However, the consolation of the Spirit is the means of bearing the outward form. Anti-Climacus understands the work of the Holy Spirit as that of supporting inwardly and governing outwardly the cruciform likeness of particular believers.

Conclusion

Anti-Climacus displays for us a compelling, vision of the work of the Holy Spirit in the inward and outward renewal of believers. The Spirit mediates contemporaneity with Christ which forces believers to confess their need of Christ's grace because of their unlikeness to him. Then

¹⁰² LPR III, 186.

¹⁰³ Martensen, "Outline," 294.

¹⁰⁴ Podmore, *Struggling with God*, 238.

also, in all of a believer's life, the Holy Spirit is enabling them to look like Christ crucified. The inward and outward actions of the Spirit are not two works, but necessarily one: cyclical and interconnected. Inward captivation with the suffering love of Christ leads to a willingness to suffer outwardly on his behalf. Likewise, suffering on Christ's behalf leads to a greater love of his person. Together the inward life of believers is increasingly held by the vision of the exalted Christ while the outward life of the believer is increasingly conformed to his suffering likeness. At times, Anti-Climacus' theology of the Spirit is so obscured but is nevertheless consistent with the wider Kierkegaard corpus. In the end Anti-Climacus' Trinitarian theology at times lacks sufficient appropriation of divine actions to each of the divine persons. Nonetheless, he presents a wholistic vision of how the Holy Spirit both captivates and conforms believers.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

The present thesis seeks to answer the question, ‘*What can Anti-Climacus tell us about transformation in the hands of the Triune God?*’ In order to gain coherent answers, we have asked Anti-Climacus theological questions prompted by 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. In response, Anti-Climacus has described how the Holy Spirit’s ongoing mediation of the person of Christ puts to death the despairing self and creates a new one in the form of Christ crucified. Fundamentally, transformation looks like a new relationship with the Triune God, an inward worship of the glory of Christ, a dependence upon the Holy Spirit and a rest in God’s Fatherly goodness. Of course, this has not been a simple answer, and we have needed to work hard to see what Anti-Climacus has been trying to articulate. So we find in Anti-Climacus a theological sketch that answers some of the Trinitarian problems of his age although somewhat incompletely. We can make a number of observations about the way Anti-Climacus has answered our questions from 2 Corinthians and what to do with them.

Firstly, Anti-Climacus’ Trinitarian theology is a clear answer to the theological situation of much of Copenhagen. Contra Hegel, Anti-Climacus does not dissolve the persons of the Trinity into the movement of the Spirit of God through human history. The person of Christ is real, present and vital for any living faith. The Father summons us to himself through the work of Son and Spirit, to live in relationship with him. Contra Schleiermacher, imitation of Christ is not something that can be accomplished without the work of the Spirit. In addition, without the Spirit we remain in ignorance of our fallen state, there is no capacity within humanity to simply remember or discover a primitive divine connection. Even further, the Spirit must draw us out of our sinful self-assertion into the life of Christ crucified. The Trinity is not an optional extra but vital to the way we understand the work and result of transformation. Contra Strauss, the

Holy Spirit alone can mediate a true and lively sense of who Christ was; without the Spirit, the discernment of a divine ideology, embedded in the Christ of history, will simply deny Christ's identity. Contra Martensen, the work of the Holy Spirit can enable the freedom of the creature, without needing to cooperate with their agency, by precisely mediating the person of Christ to the heart. The Spirit's work in the particulars of a believer's life draws the moments of their life into the shape of Christ crucified. Anti-Climacus is able to theologically answer the denial of Trinitarian theology in Danish culture.

Secondly, though Anti-Climacus' mentions of the Holy Spirit are sparing, they nevertheless suggest the theological place of Spirit in his work as a whole. This is seen most clearly in *Sickness* with the position of the Spirit at the summit of the work, indicating its importance to the work as a whole. The repetition of the sin against the Holy Spirit in the description of contemporaneity in *Practice* shows the common idea of the Spirit's mediation of the work of Christ. Pivotal to Anti-Climacus' vision of transformation is the presence and work of the Spirit of God. In some ways, it is the age's relation to the Spirit which leads them to take Christ in vain and dismiss his importance. By listening to Anti-Climacus' voice, we have seen a place for the Holy Spirit clarified which appears to be missing from the research on transformation. We need to maintain both the mediation of Christ by the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's personal relationship to the believer.

However, at times, Anti-Climacus does not carefully define how the Spirit mediates God's purposes. The relation of the particular details of a believer's life to their cruciform image is particularly difficult to ascertain, as well as how the reigning Christ works by means of the Spirit given him by God the Father. In addition, we are left wondering about the place of the Father, as we only find hints at his position in Anti-Climacus' theology. As a result Anti-

Climacus is in need of Barth's doctrine of appropriation, attributing the work of each member of the Trinity in the one work of transformation.¹⁰⁵ Of course, we do see many places in the New Testament where believers are ascribed a direct relation to Christ without mention of the Spirit's mediation: Paul's conversion (Acts 9), Paul's thorn (2 Cor. 12) It is the place of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) and in Paul's description of transformation (2 Cor. 3:17-18) which give us confidence to ascribe his role in these encounters without mention of him.

Thirdly, as previously stated, there is a growing understanding of the importance of the Holy Spirit in Kierkegaard's work. However, the main focus is upon the internal spiritual assistance given, particularly in the midst of trial, the gifts of "the cardinal virtues of hope faith and love in the suppliant's interiority."¹⁰⁶ This is undoubtedly correct but, Anti-Climacus makes clear the relational nature of the Spirit's ministry. The Spirit does not simply give believers virtues but gives them the Son and the Father. I want to suggest that Anti-Climacus, as theological pseudonym, clearly announces how the Triune God transforms believers through mediating himself to them. In addition, Anti-Climacus is clear that the Holy Spirit is not simply working to remake the human heart and internal life but is working in and through the concrete particulars of the life he gives believers—outwardly conforming and inwardly remaking.

One key question is how to relate Anti-Climacus' theology with Kierkegaard's wider corpus, Anti-Climacus' relation to Kierkegaard's escalating exhortation to rigor is perhaps fruitful. Possen locates Anti-Climacus' discussion of rigor within Kierkegaard's increasing stress on the need for rigor for the life of imitation. In the year of writing *Practice* Kierkegaard concludes that a "resort to grace" is pivotal in the Christian faith, which "requires...a corresponding

¹⁰⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume 1: The Doctrine of the Word of God, Part 1.*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 370–72.

¹⁰⁶ Leo, "Holy Spirit," 159.

presentation of Christianity's rigor."¹⁰⁷ The trajectory continues after *Practice*, in Kierkegaard's journals he "intensifies the idea of imitation still more".¹⁰⁸ The arrival of *For Self Examination* increases an emphasis on imitation and simultaneously develops the work of the Holy Spirit. We can place Anti-Climacus' voice and assertion of the Holy Spirit's mediation of God's purposes as part of this escalation. To make sense of its place and purpose requires a greater relation of Anti-Climacus' work to the writings which proceed and follow it. Martens notices some of the connections between these later works and Anti-Climacus, namely, death to self and contemporaneity, however, he does not develop the connections.¹⁰⁹ Such work extends beyond the scope of this study, though I have noted the relation of some of Anti-Climacus' theology to other parts of Kierkegaard's work as a starting point.

Fourthly, we would do a disservice to Anti-Climacus if we did not let him answer the modern theological imagination which hinders believers from apprehending the transformative work of the Triune God in everyday life. Anti-Climacus' works in the end are supposed to awaken and upbuild believers who read them. In response to the deism of the modern mind, Anti-Climacus presents the ascended Christ who, by the Holy Spirit, is prompting and summoning believers to himself through the ordinary occurrences of life. The Holy Spirit is constituting their particular selves in the context and concrete details before them. Here, God the Father gathers together brothers and sisters for the Lord Jesus by forming sons and daughters by the Spirit's work. Far from a God who relates to creation through the laws established in nature, it is the Son and Spirit who relate creatures back to God their Father.

¹⁰⁷ Possen, 'The Voice of Rigor', 174.

¹⁰⁸ Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Thought*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 362.

¹⁰⁹ Martens, "The Emergence of the Holy Spirit," 201; 205.

Anti-Climacus declares the moralistic heightened agency of modern selves to be despair. In the light of eternity, against the glory of Jesus Christ, the false selves will be condemned to their pathetic existence forever. All attempts to become a true self apart from the Holy Spirit's mediation of Christ will end in disaster. The modern self must be graciously condemned by Christ and reconciled through the forgiveness of sins to God the Father. Discerning the difference between an enlarged belief in human agency and the power of the Holy Spirit is vital. Encountering the crucified Christ, and realizing their distance from him, will necessarily bring them to this realization.

Of course, Anti-Climacus would be his most vehement in response to the supposed therapeutic understanding of modern spirituality. Like the theological views that were prevalent in Copenhagen in his days, the modern theological imagination expects the Holy Spirit to bring life and fulfillment. Instead, Anti-Climacus declares how the Holy Spirit specializes in pronouncing the glory of the crucified Christ so that believer's willingly bear their own cross. The work of the Holy Spirit is in convincing the heart of the love of Christ so that they willingly bear his cruciform likeness. The work of transformation is the work of forming believers into the suffering likeness of their savior. Vital to this work, is the captivating vision of Jesus given by the Spirit as the gospel is preached. It is by the power of Christ crucified and by a deepening appreciation of him, that believers will become like him in the situations of life.

In conclusion, Anti-Climacus proves an important theological voice in the midst of Hegelian Copenhagen. He summons his readers not simply back to theological orthodoxy or a classical Trinitarian doctrine, but to renewed relationship with Triune God. Anti-Climacus' works leave us needing and asking for an apprehension of the grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit. We are propelled into a life confident that the Holy Spirit, in

the midst of all things, will gather the circumstances of our lives into the image of Christ to the glory of God the Father. We are called to turn aside from our attempts at self-transformation to the power of the Holy Spirit who looks to aid us, as we seek to know Christ and be like him.

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