

The stadia of the Aesthetic, the Ethical, and the Religiosity A, are all characterized by immanence (they arise out of our own inward self-decision and the self-determination of our individual existence); whereas Religiosity B destroys all immanence, and places man before the face of the transcendent God, before the strange, foreign fact of the Absolute Paradox.

Having mythologized and thus transformed the Christian doctrine of the incarnation into the concept, "the eternal becoming of God", S. K. immediately added the crucifixion and the death of Christ to the Absolute Paradox. Thus the Absolute Paradox signifies also that God is a God of grace, and looks toward man in forgiveness. He will be encountered only as the God of the forgiveness of sins in Christ.

This leads to a transvaluation of all existential values (*Umwertung alle Werte*). For in the encounter with God, we discover ourselves to be sinners. From an existential standpoint, we thought that our infinite passion to attain our infinite self, our individual being, our existential individuality, our activity toward existential self-emancipation, was truth. But now we discover that it is the very essence of human sin!

Thus the encounter with the Absolute Paradox demands a Reversal of man's existence. It requires the self-renunciation of one's self as one's own history, the renunciation of one's own freedom as a definitive power of decision. At this point, faith, as infinite passion, prompted by the Absolute Paradox, chooses the irrational and uncertain, i.e., the truth, and believes. At this point our existence transcends itself in a super-existential active choice, which it experiences at the same time as a gift of grace. And in this union of man's freedom and the grace of God before the Absolute Paradox, the process of becoming a Christian is a completed fact.

This, then, is the course by which one becomes a Christian. In fact, to be a Christian means to become a Christian. It is to take this same course ever anew. It is to -- actually and existentially -- repeatedly take this path from offense to faith. Since being is becoming, then being a Christian is becoming a Christian!

Summary

Soren Kierkegaard's existentialist-dialectic philosophy-theology may be seen to comprise two basic elements: his theory of human existence and his theory of the Absolute Paradox. The former is united with the latter only with violence. The radical transition from the immanence of human existence to the transcendence of the Absolute Paradox is so abrupt that those who have come after Kierkegaard have been able to completely reject one of the two elements. Thus Dialectical Theology (Brunner, but especially Barth) is dependent upon Kierkegaard's Absolute Paradox. Thus also Existentialist Theology (Bultmann, Niebuhr, Tillich) is dependent upon Kierkegaard's theory of human existence. And contemporary existentialist philosophers have been able to entirely set aside the Absolute Paradox of Christian Revelation, and yet fully develop the idea of human existence.