

# PRACTICE IN CHRISTIANITY



Søren Kierkegaard

*Edited and Translated by*

Howard V. Hong and

Edna H. Hong

*with Introduction and Notes*

**PRACTICE IN CHRISTIANITY**  
**KIERKEGAARD'S WRITINGS, XX**

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**PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS  
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY**

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41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540  
In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, Chichester, West Sussex

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kierkegaard, Søren, 1813–1855  
[*Indøvelse i Christendom* English]  
*Practice in Christianity* / by Søren Kierkegaard ; edited and translated with  
introduction and notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong  
p. cm. — (Kierkegaard's writings ; 20)  
Translation of: *Indøvelse i Christendom*.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 0-691-07396-1 — ISBN 0-691-02063-9 (pbk.)  
1. Christian life. 2. Psychology, Religious. 3. Atonement.  
4. Grace. I. Hong, Howard Vincent, 1912–. II. Hong, Edna  
Hatlestad, 1913–. III. Title. IV. Series: Kierkegaard, Søren,  
1813–1855. Works. English. 1978 ; 20.  
B4373. 1532E5 1991  
248—dc20 91-9575

*Preparation of this volume has been made possible in part by a grant from the Division of Research Programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency*

*Princeton University Press books are printed on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources*

Designed by Frank Mahood

<http://pup.princeton.edu>

Printed in the United States of America

13 15 17 19 20 18 16 14 12

ISBN-13: 978-0-691-02063-1

ISBN-10: 0-691-02063-9

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At the end of 1847 and early in 1848, Kierkegaard again considered terminating his work as a writer and seeking an appointment as a country parish pastor<sup>1</sup> “Then came the year 1848—for me, beyond a comparison the richest and most fruitful year I have experienced as an author.”<sup>2</sup> During that year, Kierkegaard began and/or completed the writing of *Christian Discourses*, *The Sickness unto Death*, *Practice in Christianity*, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, *Armed Neutrality*, “A Cycle of Ethical-Religious Essays,” *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air*, and a piece on the actor J. Ludvig Phister as Captain Scipio.<sup>3</sup>

For him it was also an important period of self-understanding. “How true it is to me now that all my recent productivity has actually been my personal upbringing, my humiliation. Youthfully I have dared—then it was granted to me to set forth the requirement of ideality in an eminent sense—and quite rightly I am the one who feels humbled under it and learns in a still deeper sense to resort to grace.”<sup>4</sup>

The numerous manuscripts and his own sense of an inverse relation to their ideality plunged him into months-long wrestling with the question of publication—should they be published, and also, some or all, and under his own name or under a pseudonym?<sup>5</sup> Initially the decision was “to lay aside everything I had finished writing”; yet “it might be unjustifiable for me to let these writings just lie there...”<sup>6</sup> One possibility was to publish “all the last four books (‘The Sickness unto Death,’ ‘Come Here,’ ‘Blessed Is He Who Is Not Offended,’<sup>7</sup> ‘Armed Neutrality’) in one volume under the title ‘Collected Works of Completion [*Fuldendelse*]’ with ‘The Sickness unto Death’ as Part I. . . . Perhaps rather: ‘Collected Works of Consummation [*Fuldbringelse*]’ and the volume should be quarto.”<sup>8</sup>

Eventually the two works (*The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice*) were published separately,<sup>9</sup> but because of the ideality of the presentations Kierkegaard concluded that they should not appear under his name but under a pseudonym.<sup>10</sup> The exclusion of a direct personal relation to the writings of 1848 meant not only the adoption of a pseudonym for the two works but also the withholding of *Armed Neutrality* and *Point of View* (although *On My Work as an Author*, a considerably modified and selective substitute for the latter, was published as a signed work on August 7, 1851, three years later). Two of the essays from the “Cycle of Ethical-Religious Essays” appeared May 19, 1849, under the pseudonym H. H. and with the title *Two Ethical-Religious Essays*. *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air* was published under Kierkegaard’s name on May 14, 1849 (accompanied the same day by the second edition of *Either/Or*).

The new pseudonym chosen for *Sickness unto Death* and *Practice* was Anti-Climacus.<sup>11</sup> Obviously the name bears a relation to Johannes Climacus, the pseudonymous author of *Philosophical Fragments*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and *Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est*. The prefix “Anti” may, however, be misleading. It does not mean “against” but “before,” a relation of rank, the higher, as in “before me” in the First Commandment. “There is something (the esthetic) that is lower and is pseudonymous, and something that is higher and is also pseudonymous, because as a person I do not correspond to it.”<sup>12</sup> “Anti-Climacus will be the higher pseudonym, and thus the piece ‘Climacus and Anti-Climacus’<sup>13</sup> cannot be used unless it should be by a new pseudonym.”<sup>14</sup>

Retrospectively, *Practice* is related to the themes of *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Philosophical Fragments* and more directly to the theme of the first Anti-Climacus volume *Sickness unto Death*. In the first half of that work the various aspects of despair in itself are analyzed and described. The

second half of the volume is an analysis of despair as sin and of the despairing self before God. *Practice* constitutes the third part of the sequence, the healing of the sin-conscious self and the indicative ethics gratefully expressive of the redemptive gift.

In May 1848, Kierkegaard did indeed consider forming a single volume that would include all three parts of the sequence:

... A new book ought to be written entitled: **Thoughts That Cure Radically, Christian Healing**

It will deal with the doctrine of the Atonement. First of all it will show that the root of the sickness is sin. It will have two parts. [*Deleted*: Perhaps it is better to have three.

First comes:

(1) Thoughts that wound from behind—for upbuilding. This will be the polemical element, something like “The Cares of the Pagans,”<sup>15</sup> but somewhat stronger; Christian discourses should be given in an altogether milder tone.]

(1) [*changed from*: (2)] On the consciousness of sin.

### **The Sickness unto Death**

Christian Discourses

(2) [*changed from*: (3)] **Radical Cure**

[*changed from*: Thoughts That Cure Radically]

Christian Healing

The Atonement<sup>16</sup>

The original Part One was not written. The subtitle “Thoughts That Wound from Behind” had been used in *Christian Discourses* (April 26, 1848) as the heading of Part Three.<sup>17</sup> The first of the remaining two parts was published (July 30, 1849) as *The Sickness unto Death*, and the second, “Radical Cure,” became *Practice in Christianity* (September 25, 1850).

In relation to later writings, *Practice*, together with *For Self-Examination* and the posthumously published *Judge for Yourself*, constitutes the beginning of Kierkegaard’s attack on the established order of Christendom. Initially, however, he regarded *Practice* as a defense.<sup>18</sup> The emphasis in *Practice* is on the requirement of Christian ideality and on the need for institutional (ecclesiastical) and personal admission<sup>19</sup> of the accommodation of Christianity to the culture and to the individual misuse of grace. A contemplated subtitle of *Practice* was “A Contribution to the Introduction of Christianity into Christendom,”<sup>20</sup> and Kierkegaard was convinced that a beginning could be made only by an admission of the actual situation by the primary Danish spokesman for the Church, Bishop Mynster. “This is the Christian requirement. The lenient, the most lenient form of this is undoubtedly that which I used in *Practice in Christianity*, namely, that you admit that this is the requirement, and then have recourse to grace.”<sup>21</sup>

In *On My Work as an Author*, Kierkegaard affirmed that *Practice* was a corrective defense of the established order: “Provided an ecclesiastical established order understands itself, it will to the same degree understand the latest book, *Practice in Christianity*, as an attempt to find, ideally, a basis for a new established order,” and that “the preface expresses [this] directly by stating my understanding of the book.” But the nature of the book lends itself also to understanding it as an attack.

It cannot be said *directly* that the book (except for the editor’s preface, which stands by itself) is a defense of the established order, since the communication is doubly reflected; it can also be just the opposite or be understood as such. This is why I directly say only that an established order that

understands itself must understand it in this way; all doubly reflected communication makes contrary understandings equally possible; thus the one who passes judgment is disclosed by the way he judges.<sup>22</sup>

Bishop Mynster and Kierkegaard had conversations about the book,<sup>23</sup> but Kierkegaard was disappointed in Mynster's silence and in the silent treatment generally given to the book. When the second edition was published in 1855, it was unaltered, "as a historical document,"<sup>24</sup> and he reaffirmed that on the basis of an admission it was a defense of the established order. If, however, it had been initially published in 1855, it would, with two omissions and one change, have become an attack, because the admission had not been forthcoming and the situation was essentially unchanged.

If it were to come out now, now when both pious consideration for the late bishop has lapsed and I have convinced myself, also by having this book come out the first time, that, Christianly, the established order is indefensible, it would be altered as follows: it would not be by a pseudonym but by me, and the thrice-repeated preface<sup>25</sup> would be dropped and, of course, the Moral to No. 1,<sup>26</sup> where the pseudonym turns the matter in a way I personally agreed to in the preface.<sup>27</sup>

My earlier thought was: if the established order can be defended, this is the only way to do it: by poetically (therefore by a pseudonym) passing judgment on it, by then drawing on grace in the second power, Christianity would become not only finding forgiveness for the past by *grace*, but by *grace* a kind of indulgence from the actual imitation of Christ and the actual strenuousness of being Christian. In this way truth still manages to come into the established order; it defends itself by judging itself; it acknowledges the Christian requirement, confesses its own distance, yet without being able to be called a striving in the direction of coming closer to the requirement, but resorts to *grace* "also in relation to the use one makes of *grace*."<sup>28</sup>

In my opinion this was the only way Christianly to defend the established order; and lest I in any way incur the guilt of setting to work too fast I dared to give the matter this turn in order to see what the old bishop would do about it. If there was power in him, he would have to do one of two things *either* decisively declare himself for the book, venture to go along with it, let it be the defense that wards off what the book poetically contains, the charge against the whole official Christianity that it is an optical illusion "not worth a pickled herring," *or* as decisively as possible throw himself against it, stamp it as a blasphemous and profane attempt, and declare the official Christianity to be the true Christianity. He did neither of the two, he did nothing; he only wounded himself on the book; and to me it became clear that he was powerless.

Now, however, I have completely made up my mind on two things: both that the established order is Christianly indefensible, that every day it lasts it is Christianly a crime; and that in this way one does not have the right to draw on *grace*.

Thus, take away the pseudonym, take away the thrice-repeated Moral to No. 1: then *Practice in Christianity* is, Christianly, an attack upon the established order; but out of pious consideration for the old bishop and out of cautious slowness it [the attack] was concealed in the form of: the final defense of the established order.

Incidentally, I am well aware that the old bishop saw the attack in this book; but, to repeat, he powerlessly chose to do nothing more than condemn it in the living room, but not once in private conversation with me, despite my asking him to do it after I was told of his verdict in the living room.<sup>29</sup>

April [30] 1855

S. Kierkegaard<sup>30</sup>

Although the first edition of *Practice* was sold out in five years (a much better record than for

*Postscript* and many other Kierkegaard volumes), there was only one scant review<sup>31</sup> at the time of publication. In 1851, a lengthy piece in a Swedish journal,<sup>32</sup> with *Practice* as the point of departure, gave no discussion of the work but provided biographical information and a discussion primarily of the earlier pseudonymous works, because Kierkegaard, unlike Martensen, was “almost unknown in Sweden.”<sup>33</sup> In 1855, the second edition of *Practice* received an announcement stating that the “work will surely create more of a stir than when it first appeared.”<sup>34</sup> A long Danish review,<sup>35</sup> like the Swedish article, took *Practice* as a point of departure and then concentrated on a critical presentation of the works preceding it. In 1885, the author of a long review of *Practice* and other works concluded that Kierkegaard, although an “overstrained interpreter,” was “right in his criticism of ‘official’ Christianity with all its self-satisfaction and lack of criticism, its carnality and worldliness, its sham and hypocrisy, in order to alarm the apathetic, the sleeping, the moribund, and to raise the flag of truth and honesty. But he ought to have shown that the witness, the earnest, the alarming, the true and vigorous witness, is not silenced in established Christendom, and that he, by taking his standpoint *outside*, outside the congregation, must lose his right to act as a *Christian* guide.”<sup>36</sup>

Kierkegaard’s own appraisal of *Practice in Christianity* is at odds with that of the few contemporary reviewers. He called the 1848 writings (including *Practice*) “the most valuable I have produced”<sup>37</sup> and *The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice* “extremely valuable.”<sup>38</sup> Of *Practice* in particular, he wrote: “Without a doubt it is the most perfect and truest thing I have written; but it must not be interpreted as if I am supposed to be the one who almost censoriously bursts in upon everybody else—no, I must first be brought up myself. . . .”<sup>39</sup> Kierkegaard scholar Emanuel Hirsch agrees with this high estimate and judges that of the 1848 writings “*The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*, his two masterpieces as a Christian writer, as well as *The Point of View*, . . . have greater prospect of being placed among the imperishable writings of the Christian Church than any other Christian-religious or Christian-theological productions of the nineteenth century.”<sup>40</sup>



<sup>1</sup> See Supplement, pp. 285-86 (*Pap.* X<sup>1</sup> A 571, 593, 615).

<sup>2</sup> *Pap.* X<sup>6</sup> B 249, p. 412.

<sup>3</sup> “Phister as Captain Scipio,” with *Christian Discourses KW XVII* (*Pap.* IX B 67-68).

<sup>4</sup> See Supplement, pp. 288-91 (*Pap.* X<sup>2</sup> A 157).

<sup>5</sup> See Supplement, pp. 276-78, 280, 283, 285-87, 288-96 (*Pap.* X<sup>1</sup> A 422, 450, 517, 520, 593, 594, 615, 678, X<sup>2</sup> A 157, 177, 180, X<sup>3</sup> B 76, 77).

<sup>6</sup> *JP* VI 6517 (*Pap.* X<sup>2</sup> A 147).

<sup>7</sup> The second and third “books” eventually became the first two parts of *Practice*.

<sup>8</sup> See Supplement, p. 275 (*Pap.* IX A 390).

<sup>9</sup> In 1849, about a year before the publication of *Practice* (September 27, 1850), Kierkegaard considered private circulation of the parts under the title “S. Kierkegaard’s Later Writings” in quarterly installments. See Supplement, pp. 296-306 (*Pap.* X<sup>5</sup> B 34-36, 38, 40, 42).

<sup>10</sup> See Supplement, pp. 276-80, 285-87, 291-93 (*Pap.* X<sup>1</sup> A 422, 450, 510, 517, 593, 594, 615, 678; X<sup>2</sup> A 177). See also p. 81 and note 19.

<sup>11</sup> See Supplement, pp. 271, 280, 285-86, 291-95 (*Pap.* IX A 9, X<sup>1</sup> A 517, 593, 594; X<sup>2</sup> A 177, 184). See also *Kierkegaard Letters and Documents*, Letter 213, KW XXV.

<sup>12</sup> See Supplement, pp. 278-80 (*Pap.* X<sup>1</sup> A 510).

<sup>13</sup> See Supplement, pp. 281-83 (*Pap.* X<sup>6</sup> B 48).

<sup>14</sup> See Supplement, pp. 285-86 (*Pap.* X<sup>1</sup> A 594).

<sup>15</sup> Part One of *Christian Discourses*, KW XVII (SV X 9-93).

<sup>16</sup> *JP* V 6110 (*Pap.* VIII<sup>1</sup> A 558).

<sup>17</sup> *Christian Discourses*, KW XVII (SV X 163).

<sup>18</sup> See Supplement, pp. 358-60 (*Pap.* X<sup>3</sup> A 586, 599).

<sup>19</sup> See p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> See Supplement, pp. 306-07 (*Pap.* IX B 45:1). Kierkegaard’s distinction is between Christianity in its essential nature and Christendom, the culture and regions in which Christianity presumably prevailed. He was an advocate of the first and a critic of the second.

<sup>21</sup> *The Moment*, 8, September 11, 1855, in *The Moment and Late Writings*, KW XXIII (SV XIV 302).

<sup>22</sup> *Point of View*, KW XXII (SV XIII 507-08).

<sup>23</sup> See Supplement, pp. 356-58, 364 (*Pap.* X<sup>3</sup> A 563, 564; X<sup>4</sup> A 9).

<sup>24</sup> “For the New Edition of *Practice in Christianity*,” *Fædrelandet*, 112, May 16, 1855, in *The Moment*, KW XXIII (SV XIV 80).

<sup>25</sup> Pp. 7, 73, 149.

<sup>26</sup> Pp. 67-68.

<sup>27</sup> Another alteration would have been a consistent change of capitals to lowercase letters in references to Christ. This change has been made in the present volume. See Supplement, p. 341 (*Pap.* X<sup>5</sup> B 33b:13).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> See Supplement, pp. 356-58, 364-66 (*Pap.* X<sup>3</sup> A 563, X<sup>4</sup> A 365).

<sup>30</sup> “For the New Edition of *Practice in Christianity*,” *Fædrelandet*, 112, May 16, 1855, in *The Moment*, KW XXIII (SV XIV 80-81).

<sup>31</sup> R. T. Fenger and C. J. Brandt, *Dansk Kirketidende*, V, 63, December 15, 1850, col 1047.

<sup>32</sup> Albert Lysander, “*Indøvelse i Christendom*,” *Tidskrift for Litteratur* (Upsala), 1851, pp. 227-52.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>34</sup> Anon., *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, 115, May 21, 1855, col. 3.

<sup>35</sup> J. Paludan-Müller, “*Dr Søren Kierkegaards Indøvelse i Christendom*,” *Nyt theologisk Tidsskrift*, VI, 1855, pp. 318-405 (offprint, Copenhagen 1855).

<sup>36</sup> J. Victor Bloch, “*Indøvelse i Christendom, af Anti-Chmacus (Paany fremdraget af J. Victor Bloch)*,” *Dansk Kirketidende*, XL, 14-15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, April 12, 19, May 3, 17, 24, 31, 1885, col. 220-30, 241-49, 281-87, 305-20, 326-32, 337-42, esp. col. 337-38.

<sup>37</sup> JP VI 6337 (*Pap. X<sup>1</sup> A 95*).

<sup>38</sup> JP VI 6361 (*Pap. X<sup>1</sup> A 147*).

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<sup>39</sup> See Supplement, pp. 287-88 (*Pap. X<sup>2</sup> A 66*).

<sup>40</sup> Emanuel Hirsch, *Kierkegaard-Studien*, I-II (Gütersloh: 1933; repr., Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Topos Verlag, 1978), I, p. 229.

# PRACTICE IN CHRISTIANITY

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By  
ANTI-CLIMACUS

NO. I, II, III

Edited  
by  
S. KIERKEGAARD

# Practice in Christianity

---

by  
Anti-Climacus  
No. I

“COME HERE, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE BURDENED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU  
**REST**”<sup>1</sup>

---

FOR AWAKENING<sup>2</sup> AND INWARD DEEPENING  
by  
ANTI-CLIMACUS

*Procul o procul  
este profani*  
[Away, away, O  
unhallowed ones]<sup>3</sup>

In this book, originating in the year 1848, the requirement for being a Christian is forced up by the pseudonymous author to a supreme ideality.

Yet the requirement should indeed be stated, presented, and heard. From the Christian point of view, there ought to be no scaling down of the requirement, nor suppression of it—instead of a personal admission and confession.

The requirement should be heard—and I understand what is said as spoken to me alone—so that I might learn not only to resort to *grace* but to resort to it in relation to the use of *grace*.<sup>5</sup>

S. I.

It is indeed eighteen hundred years since Jesus Christ walked here on earth, but this is certainly not an event just like other events, which once they are over pass into history and then, as the distant past, pass into oblivion. No, his presence here on earth never becomes a thing of the past, thus does not become more and more distant—that is, if faith is at all to be found upon the earth;<sup>7</sup> if not, well, then in that very instant it is a long time since he lived. But as long as there is a believer, this person, in order to have become that, must have been and as a believer must be just as contemporary with Christ's presence as his contemporaries were.<sup>8</sup> This contemporaneity is the condition of faith, and, more sharply defined, it is faith. Lord Jesus Christ, would that we, too, might become contemporary with you in this way, might see you in your true form and in the surroundings of actuality as you walked here on earth, not in the form in which an empty and meaningless or a thoughtless-romantic or a historical-talkative remembrance has distorted you, since it is not the form of abasement in which the believer sees you, [XII 2] and it cannot possibly be the form of glory in which no one as yet has seen you. Would that we might see you as you are and were and will be until your second coming in glory, as the sign of offense and the object of faith, the lowly man, yet the Savior and Redeemer of the human race, who out of love came to earth to seek the lost, to suffer and die, and yet, alas, every step you took on earth, every time you called to the straying, every time you reached out your hand to do signs and wonders, and every time you defenselessly suffered the opposition of people without raising a hand—again and again in concern you had to repeat, “Blessed is the one who is not offended at me. Would that we might see you in this way and that we then might not be offended at you!

## The Invitation

---

COME HERE TO ME, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE BURDENED, AND [XII 5] I WILL GIVE YOU REST.

How amazing, amazing that the one who has help to bring is the one who says: Come here! What love! It is already loving, when one is able to help, to help the one who asks for help, but to offer the help oneself! And to offer it to all! Yes, and to the very ones who are unable to help in return! To offer it, no, to shout it out, as if the helper himself were the one who needed help, as if he who can and wants to help everyone were nevertheless in one respect himself a needy one, that he feels need, and thus needs to help, needs those who suffer in order to help them!<sup>10</sup>

### I [XII 6]

“Come here!”—Well, there is nothing amazing when someone who is in danger and needs help, perhaps fast and immediate help, shouts: Come here! Nor is there anything amazing in a quack’s shouting: Come here, I have a cure for every disease! Alas, for the quack the untruth is all too true that it is the physician who needs the sick. “Come here, all you who can pay an exorbitant price for healing—or at least for the remedies. Here is medicine for everyone—who can pay—come here, come here!”

But ordinarily it is the case that the person who is able to help must be searched for, and once he is found it may be hard to gain access to him, and when one has gained access one perhaps must still plead with him for a long time, and when one has pleaded with him for a long time, he perhaps at last lets himself be prevailed upon—that is, he sets a high price on himself. And at times, especially when he refuses payment or magnanimously renounces it, this is simply an expression of the very high price he sets upon himself.

But he who sacrificed himself, sacrifices himself here also, he is himself the one who seeks those who have need of help, he is himself the one who goes around and, calling, almost pleading, says: Come here. He, the only one who is able to help and help with the one thing needful,<sup>11</sup> who is able to rescue from the only, in the truest sense, life-threatening illness, he does not wait for anyone to come to him; he comes on his own initiative, uncalled—for he is indeed the one who calls to them; he offers help—and such help!

[XII 7] Yes, that simple wise man of old<sup>12</sup> was just as infinitely much in the right as most people, when they do the opposite, are in the wrong when he did not set a high price on either himself or his instruction, even though in another sense he thereby expressed with noble pride the dissimilarity of the value. But he was not out of love so concerned that he asked anyone to come to him—should I not say “although” or should I say “because”—he was not quite sure of the significance of his help, for the more sure someone is of his help, sure that it is the one and only help, the more reason, humanly speaking, to set a high price on it, and the less sure, the more reason to offer with greater readiness one’s possible help in order at least to do something. But he who calls himself the Savior and knows himself to be that says in concern: Come here.

“Come here, *all you!*”—Amazing! It is not so amazing, people being the way they are, that someone who perhaps in the end cannot help one single person foolishly bites off more than he can chew and invites everybody. But when a person is entirely sure that he can help and when he is also willing to help, when he is willing to devote all his time to this and with every sacrifice, then as a rule he does reserve for himself one thing—to make a selection. However willing a person is, he still does not wis

to help everyone—he will not abandon himself in that way. But he, the only one who in truth can help and in truth can help all, consequently the only one who in truth can invite all, he makes no condition whatsoever. These words, which seem to have been designed for him from the beginning of the world he does in fact say: Come here, all you. O human self-sacrifice, even when you are most beautiful and noble, when we admire you the most, there is still one more sacrifice—to sacrifice every qualification of one's own self so that in one's willingness to help there is not the slightest partiality. O love—thus to set no stipulation whatever of price upon oneself, completely to forget oneself, so that one is someone who helps, completely blind to who it is that one is helping, seeing with infinite clarity that whoever that person [XII 8] may be, he is a sufferer—to be unconditionally willing to help all in this way, alas, therein different from everyone!

“Come here *to me*.” Amazing! Human sympathy does, after all, willingly do something for those who labor and are burdened; we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, make philanthropic donations, build philanthropic institutions, and if the sympathy is deeper we probably also visit those who labor and are burdened. But to invite them to come to one, that cannot be done; then one's entire household and way of life would have to be altered. It will not do, when one is living in abundance<sup>13</sup> oneself or at least in joy and gladness, to reside together in a house and live together in a common life and in daily association with the poor and wretched, with those who labor and are burdened. In order to invite them to come to one in this way, one must oneself live in the very same manner, poor as the poorest, poorly regarded as the lowly man among the people, experienced in life's sorrow and anguish, sharing the very same condition as those one invites to come to one, those who labor and are burdened. If someone wants to invite the sufferer to come to him, he must either alter his condition and make it identical with the sufferer's or make the sufferer's condition identical with his own, for if not, the contrast makes the difference all the greater. And if someone wants to invite all the sufferers to himself (of course one can make an exception in the case of an individual and alter his condition), it can be done in only one way, by altering one's condition in likeness to theirs if it is not already originally so designed, as was the case with him who says: Come here to me, all you who labor and are burdened. This he says, and those who lived with him saw and see that there truly is not the slightest thing in his way of life that contradicts it. With the silent and veracious eloquence of action, 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.

[XII 9] “*All you who labor and are burdened.*” Amazing! The only thing he is concerned about is that there might be one single person who labors and is burdened who does not hear this invitation; as for the possibility that too many might come, he has no fear of that. Ah, where there is heart-room, there is indeed always room, but where was there heart-room if not in his heart! How the single individual will understand the invitation he leaves up to the individual. His conscience is free, he has invited all who labor and are burdened.

But what is it, then, to labor and be burdened; why does he not explain it more specifically so that one can know exactly what he means; why is he so sparing of words? O you of petty mind, he is so sparing of words in order not to be petty; you of narrow heart, he is so sparing of words in order not to be narrow-hearted. Precisely this is love [*Kjerlighed*] (because *love* is for all), lest there be one single person who may become anxious by brooding over whether he, too, is included among those invited. And might not someone who could demand a more specific definition be a self-lover who reckoned that this would be especially suitable and appropriate for him without considering that the more

numerous such increasingly specific definitions become the more unavoidable it would in turn become that there might be individuals and individuals for whom it would become increasingly indeterminate whether they were invited. O man, why does your eye see only to its own interest; why is it evil because he is good!<sup>14</sup> The invitation to all opens the inviter's arms, and thus he stands as an eternal image.<sup>15</sup> As soon as there is the more specific definition, which perhaps would help the single individual to another kind of certainty, the inviter looks different, then a shadow of change,<sup>16</sup> as it were, speedily comes over him.

*"I will give you rest."*—Amazing! Then those words "Come here *to me*" presumably must be understood in this way: Remain with me, I am that rest, or to remain with me is that rest. It is not as usually is—that the helper who says "Come here" thereupon must say "Now leave" as he explains to each individual where the particular help he needs is to be found, where the analgesic herb grows that can heal him, or where [XII 10] there is that quiet place where he can relax from his labor, or where there is that happier part of the world where people are not burdened. No, he who opens his arms and invites all—ah, if all, all you who labor and are burdened, were to come to him, he would embrace them all and say: Now remain with me, for to remain with me is rest. The helper is the help. Amazing! He who invites all and wants to help all—his method of treating the patient is just as if intended for each one individually, as if in each patient he had only this one patient. Ordinarily a physician must divide himself among his many patients, who, no matter how many they may be, are very far from being all. He prescribes the medication, tells what should be done, how it is to be used—and then he goes to another patient; or if the patient has come to him, he lets the patient go. The physician cannot sit all day long with one patient, even less have all his patients at home with him and yet sit all day with one patient—without neglecting the others. Therefore the helper and the help are not really one and the same. Throughout the day, the patient keeps with him the help that the physician prescribes in order to use it continually, whereas the physician checks on him only occasionally or the patient visits the physician only occasionally. But when the helper is the help, he must remain with the patient all day long, or the patient with him—how amazing, then, that this helper is the very one who invites all.

## [XII 11] II

**COME HERE, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE BURDENED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.**

What an enormous variety, what almost limitless differences among the invited guests. A human being, a lowly human being, certainly can attempt to portray a few specific differences—the inviter must invite all, although each one separately or as an individual.

So, then, the invitation goes out, along the highways and along the lonely ways, and along the loneliest way—yes, where there is a way so lonely that only one person knows it, one solitary person (otherwise no one knows it), so there is only one track, that of the unhappy one who fled down that way with his wretchedness (otherwise no track, and no track to show that anyone can come back along this way)—there, too, the invitation finds its way, easily and unerringly finds its way back itself, most easily when it brings the fugitive along with it to the inviter. Come here, come here all of you—and you and you and you, too, you loneliest of all fugitives!

In this way the invitation goes out, and wherever there is a crossroad, it stands still and calls. Ah, just as the soldier's bugle call turns to all four corners of the world, so the invitation sounds wherever there is a crossroad, and not with an uncertain sound—for who, then, would come!—but with the trustworthiness of eternity.

It stands at the crossroad, there where temporal and earthly suffering placed its cross, and calls.

Come here, all you poor and wretched, you who must slave in poverty to secure for yourselves—not [XII 12] a carefree but a hard future. What a bitter contradiction: to have to slave in order to *secure* [sikkre] for oneself what one sighs [sukke] under, what one *shuns*! —You despised and disregarded ones, whose existence no one, no one cares about, not even as much as for a domestic animal, which has more value! —You sick, lame, deaf, blind, crippled, come here! —You who are confined to your beds—yes, you come too, for the invitation has the nerve to invite the bedridden—to come! You lepers! The invitation blasts away all distinctions in order to gather everybody together; it wants to make up for what happens as a result of distinction: the assigning to one person a place as a ruler over millions, in possession of all the goods of fortune, and to someone else a place out in the desert—and why (what cruelty!), because (what a cruel human conclusion!), *because* he is wretched, indescribably wretched—why, then, because he needs help or at least needs compassion, and because human compassion is a miserable invention that is cruel where the greatest need is to be compassionate and compassionate only where in the truest sense it is not compassion!

You sick at heart, you who only through pain learn to know that a human being has a heart in a different sense than an animal does and what it means to suffer there, what it means that a physician may be correct in saying that someone has a sound heart and yet is heartsick; you whom faithfulness deceived, whom human sympathy then made a target for mockery (for human sympathy is rarely long in coming); all you who have been treated unfairly, wronged, insulted, and mistreated; all you noble ones who, as everyone is sure to tell you, well-deservedly reaped the reward of ingratitude, for why were you so stupid as to be noble, why were you so foolish as to be loving and unselfish and faithful; all you sacrifices to cunning and deceit and slander and envy, whom villainy singled out and cowardice deserted, whether you are sacrificed in some out-of-the-way and lonely place after having gone aside to die or you are trampled down in the human mob,<sup>17</sup> where no one asks what right you have, no one asks what wrong you suffer, no one asks where it pains or how it pains, while the mob in its animal health tramples you in the dust—come here!

The invitation stands at the crossroad, where death distinguishes death from life. Come here, all you sorrowing ones,<sup>18</sup> you who, burdened, labor in futility! There certainly is rest in the grave, but to sit beside a grave,<sup>19</sup> or to stand beside a grave, or to visit a grave is still not the same as lying in the grave; and to read again and again one's own writing, which one knows by heart, the epitaph that one placed there oneself and [XII 13] oneself best understands who it is who is buried *here*—this is not the same as lying buried there oneself. In the grave there is rest, but *beside* the grave there is no rest; it says: up to here and no further,<sup>20</sup> so you may go home again. But however often you return to *that* grave day after day, in thought or on foot—you never come any further, do not move from the spot—and this is very strenuous and does not express rest. Therefore come here—here is the way on which one makes headway: here is rest beside the grave, rest from the pain of loss, or there is rest in the pain of loss—with him who eternally reunites the separated ones more firmly than nature unites parents and children, children and parents—alas, they did become separated; more closely than the pastor unites husband and wife—alas, separation did occur;<sup>21</sup> more indissolubly than the bond of friendship unites friends—alas, it was loosened. Separation forced its way in everywhere to bring pain and unrest, but here is rest! —Come here also you,<sup>22</sup> you whose residence has been assigned among the graves,<sup>23</sup> you who in the eyes of society are regarded as dead but are not missed, are not lamented—not buried, yet dead—that is, belonging neither to life nor to death; you to whom human society cruelly locked its doors and for whom no grave has yet mercifully opened; you, too, come here, here rest, and here is life!

The invitation stands at the crossroad, there where the road of sin veers away from the hedge row innocence<sup>24</sup>—come here, you are so close to him; one single step onto the other way and you are so infinitely far away from him. It may well be that as yet you do not feel the need of rest, do not really

understand what it means; nevertheless, accept the invitation so that the inviter may save you from what is so hard and dangerous to be saved from, so that, saved, you may be with him who is the Savior of all, of innocence also. For even if it were possible that utterly pure innocence was to be found somewhere, why should it not also need a Savior who could keep it safe from evil!<sup>25</sup>—The invitation stands at the crossroad, there where the way of sin turns more deeply into sin. Come here, all you who are lost and gone astray, whatever your error and sin, be it to human eyes more excusable and yet perhaps more terrible, or be it to human eyes more terrible and yet perhaps more excusable, be it disclosed here on earth or be it hidden and yet known in heaven—and even if you found forgiveness on earth but no peace within, or found no forgiveness because you did not seek it, or because you sought it in vain: oh, turn around [*vende om*] and come here, here is rest!<sup>26</sup>—The invitation stands at the crossroad, there where the way of sin turns off for the last time and disappears from view in—perdition. Oh, turn around, turn around, come here; do not shrink from the difficulty of retreat, no matter how hard it is; do not be afraid of the laborious pace of conversion [*Omvendelse*], however toilsomely it leads to salvation, whereas sin leads onward with winged speed, with mounting haste—or leads downward so easily, so indescribably easily, indeed, as easily as when the horse, completely relieved of pulling, cannot, not even with all its strength, stop the wagon, which runs it into the abyss. Do not despair over every relapse, which the God of patience<sup>27</sup> has the patience to forgive and under which a sinner certainly should have the patience to humble himself. No, fear nothing and do not despair; he who says “Come here” is with you on the way; from him there is help and forgiveness on the way of conversion that leads to him, and with him is rest.

Come here, all, all, all of you; with him is rest. And he makes no difficulty; he does only one thing: he opens his arms. He will not first ask you, you suffering one—alas, as righteous people do even when they are willing to help: You are not yourself to blame for your trouble, are you? You have nothing to reproach yourself for, have you? It is so easy, this human propensity, to judge by externals and by results: if someone is a cripple or is deformed or has an unfavorable appearance—then to judge that ergo he is an evil person; if someone is so unfortunate as to get along badly in the world, so that he amounts to nothing or is down and out—then to judge that ergo he is a bad person. What an exquisitely contrived kind of cruel enjoyment to want to feel one’s own righteousness in relation to someone who is suffering by explaining his suffering as God’s punishment upon him, so that one hardly dares to help him, or by asking him that censorious question that flatters a person’s own righteousness before one helps him. But he will not question you in this way, does not want to be your benefactor in a cruel way. And if you are conscious of yourself as a sinner, he will not question you about it, he will not break the bruised reed even more,<sup>28</sup> but will raise you up when you accept him; he will not identify you by contrast, by placing you apart from himself so that your sin becomes even [XII 15] more terrible; he will grant you a hiding place with himself, and hidden in him he will hide your sins. For he is the friend of sinners.<sup>29</sup> When it is a question of a sinner, he does not merely stand still, open his arms and say, “Come here”; no, he stands—and waits, as the prodigal son’s father waited,<sup>30</sup> or he does not stand and wait, he goes to seek the sinner as the shepherd sought the strayed sheep, as the woman sought the lost penny.<sup>31</sup> He walks—but no, he has walked, but infinitely farther than any shepherd and any woman. —Indeed, he walked the infinitely long way from being God to becoming man; he walked that way in order to seek sinners!

### [XII 16] III

**COME HERE TO ME, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE BURDENED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.**

“Come here!” He assumes that those who labor and are burdened feel the burden to be ever so heavy, feel the labor to be heavy, and now are standing there irresolute and sighing, one person looking in at

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