

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The year 1848 was a momentous time for Denmark, as for all of Europe, and also for Søren Kierkegaard. Internally, the crucial event for the country was the termination of absolute monarchy and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. Externally, there was the open collision with Prussia over the duchies of Slesvig and Holsten.¹ For Kierkegaard, it was on the one hand the year of his “richest productivity”² in a direct, intensified Christian mode. On the other hand, it marked the beginning of an open collision with the established order of Christendom, and during that time he wrestled with the question of publishing the finished works, which in most cases contained an explicit critique of the established order. Of the many completed works, only *Christian Discourses* (April 26) and *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress* (July 24–27) were published that year. Kierkegaard intended to terminate his writing with them,³ just as he had planned to end with *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* in 1845. But then “it was the tension of actuality that put a new string in my instrument. . . . And so again in 1848.”⁴

During the first eight months of 1847, Kierkegaard was immersed in the writing of *Works of Love*. The manuscript was delivered to the printer on August 17 and the volume published on September 29, 1847. Early in June 1847, a sketch of Part Two⁵ of *Christian Discourses* was written, and elements of Part Four⁶

¹ See Supplement, p. 402 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 602) and note 36.

² *JP* VI 6356 (*Pap.* X¹ A 138). See also, for example, *JP* 6370, 6418, 6438, 6444, 6501, 6511, 6721, 6801 (*Pap.* X¹ A 167, 424, 529, 541; X² A 66, 106; X⁴ A 6, 545). During 1848 Kierkegaard began and/or completed the writing of *Christian Discourses*, *A Cycle of Ethical-Religious Essays*, *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air*, *Armed Neutrality*, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, *The Sickness unto Death*, *Practice in Christianity*, and a piece on the actor Joachim Ludvig Phister as Captain Scipio.

³ See *JP* VI 6356 (*Pap.* X¹ A 138).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See Supplement, pp. 367–68 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 180–84).

⁶ See Supplement, pp. 393, 396, 397 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 265, 266, 260).

were entered in the journals of August–September 1847. Thereafter, the various parts were substantially written in quick succession: Part Four by the end of October 1847, Part Two in November, Part One by New Year’s Day 1848, and Part Three in January–February 1848. At the same time, work was being done on *Practice in Christianity*.

From the very beginning of his authorship, when *Two Upbuilding Discourses* was published within a few weeks of *Either/Or*, discourses under Kierkegaard’s name constituted a series of signed works parallel to the series of pseudonymous works. After *Postscript* and the review of Thomasine Gyllembourg’s *Two Ages*, Kierkegaard wrote only discourses (*Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, *Works of Love*, and *Christian Discourses*). In the substance and emphasis of the whole series of discourses, there is movement in continuity. The substance of the six volumes of 1843–1844 that make up *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* is within the ethical–religious categories of immanence, what Climacus in *Postscript* calls Religiousness A. The three discourses in *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (March 13, 1847) Kierkegaard characterizes as “related to one another esthetically, ethically, religiously.”⁷ Part Three, “The Gospel of Sufferings,” has the subtitle “Christian Discourses,” a designation that is here used for the first time. This is in accord with a journal entry from August, a few months after the volume was published. “From now on the thrust should be into the specifically Christian.”⁸ Accordingly, *Works of Love* (September 29, 1847) has the subtitle “Some Christian Deliberations in the Form of Discourses,” and the next publication has as its main title *Christian Discourses*. The term *discourse* is used rather than *sermon* because a sermon presupposes authority and does not deal with doubt.⁹

The temporal order of the writing of the four parts of *Christian Discourses* is consonant with the changes in tone and intention. Parts Four and Two, written first, are a reassuring affirmation of the joy and blessedness of the Christian life in a world of adversity and tribulation. In Parts One and Three, there is a polemical

⁷ JP V 5975 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 15).

⁸ JP V 6037 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 229).

⁹ See Supplement, p. 359 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 6).

tone. In fact, Part Three, the more polemical, was not intended for *Christian Discourses* and was included in the manuscript at the last minute. Originally it was to be the first section of a three-part volume, “Thoughts That Cure Radically, Christian Healing,” which was also to include *Sickness unto Death* and what eventually became *Practice*. “First comes: (1) Thoughts that wound from behind—for upbuilding. This will be the polemical element, something like ‘The Cares of the Pagans,’¹⁰ but somewhat stronger than that, since Christian discourses should be given in an altogether milder tone.”¹¹ The polemical character of Part Three is epitomized in an early subtitle: “Christian Attack.”¹² Because of its polemical character, Kierkegaard had some misgivings about having included Part Three in the final manuscript of *Christian Discourses*,¹³ but subsequently he regarded the contrasting Parts Three and Four as being first “a temple-cleansing celebration—and then the quiet and most intimate of all worship services—the Communion service on Fridays.”¹⁴

The presence of Part Three in *Christian Discourses* gave rise also to misgivings about the intended dedication of Part Four to Bishop Mynster.¹⁵ But since Part Three was the overture to Kierkegaard’s collision with the established order of Christendom and because he did not want to attack Mynster, whom he both admired and criticized and from whom he still hoped for an admission of the misrepresentation of Christianity,¹⁶ he withdrew the dedication.¹⁷

The contemporary reception of *Christian Discourses* was very quiet. Apparently there were no reviews of the volume.¹⁸ Three

¹⁰ Pp. 3–91.

¹¹ See Supplement, p. 399 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 558).

¹² See Supplement, p. 377 (*Pap.* VIII² B 101).

¹³ See Supplement, p. 399 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 559) and pp. 402–03 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 602).

¹⁴ See Supplement, p. 402 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 590) and pp. 400–01, 402–03 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 560, 602).

¹⁵ See Supplement, p. 384 (*Pap.* VIII² B 116, 118).

¹⁶ See, for example, Supplement, pp. 384–87, 405–06 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 414, 415; X⁴ A 511) and *JP* I 376 (*Pap.* IX A 60).

¹⁷ See Supplement, pp. 387–88, 400–01 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 438, 560).

¹⁸ None is listed in the copious volume edited by Jens Himmelstrup, *Søren*

appreciative letters from readers are extant, including one in which attention is called to a care of poverty not mentioned in the book, “a care not about what one is going to eat, but about what one *has* eaten and—*not paid for*.”¹⁹ The second edition of the discourses was published in 1862. The contemporary silence notwithstanding, a twentieth-century translator and critic sees in *Christian Discourses* a work in which Kierkegaard writes in ordinary language a devotional book that combines simplicity and inwardness with reflection and presents crucial Christian concepts and presuppositions with unusual clarity. And among the discourses are some of Kierkegaard’s masterpieces.²⁰

Kierkegaard had always been very interested in drama and opera as well as in literature. In the published works there are, for example, insightful discussions of *Don Giovanni*, ancient and modern tragedy, and Scribe’s *First Love* in *Either/Or*,²¹ of drama, farce in particular, in *Repetition*,²² and of Hamlet in *Stages on Life’s Way*.²³ It is not surprising, therefore, that this interest in drama, particularized in his admiration of Johanne Luise Heiberg²⁴ and J. Ludvig Phister,²⁵ eventuated in appreciative writing about them.

The piece on Mrs. Heiberg was completed before the summer of 1847²⁶ and was not published until over a year later. In October of that year, Kierkegaard contemplated a pseudonymous volume to include *Crisis* with a special purpose that eventually was fulfilled in published form by *Crisis* alone.

Kierkegaard International Bibliografi (Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1962).

¹⁹ *Kierkegaard: Letters and Documents*, KW XXV, Letter 174. See also Letters 277 and 280.

²⁰ Emanuel Hirsch (ed.), *Sören Kierkegaard: Christliche Reden* (Düsseldorf, Cologne: Diederichs Verlag, 1959), pp. viii–ix.

²¹ *Either/Or*, I, KW III, pp. 45–135, 137–64, 231–79 (SV I 29–113, 115–41, 205–51).

²² *Repetition*, KW VI, pp. 156–69 (SV III 196–207).

²³ *Stages on Life’s Way*, KW XI, pp. 452–54 (SV VI 421–23).

²⁴ See pp. 455–56, note to overleaf of *Crisis*.

²⁵ See note 27 below.

²⁶ See Supplement, p. 415 (*Pap.* VIII² B 90:26).

I would like to create a little literary mystification by, for example, publishing something I would call “The Writings of a Young Man”; in the preface I would appear as a young author publishing his first book.

I would call myself Felix de St. Vincent. The contents would include:

1. The Crisis in the Life of an Actress
2. A Eulogy on Autumn
3. Rosenkilde as Hummer
4. Writing Sampler²⁷

The “mystification” Kierkegaard had in mind was the same mystification initiated by the appearance of two series of publications, the signed *Two Upbuilding Discourses* and the pseudonymous *Either/Or*, both published in the first half of 1843. Now in 1848, when he intended to terminate his writing²⁸ after a series of religious discourses, the publication of a pseudonymous esthetic work would be appropriate. At one point he even considered as a subtitle “From the Papers of One Dead,”²⁹ a variation of the title of his first publication, *From the Papers of One Still Living* (1838). Inasmuch, however, as he regarded *Either/Or* as the beginning of the authorship proper, he dropped the subtitle and used a pseudonym, Inter et Inter.

The pseudonym itself is mystifying. The phrase had been used earlier as the heading of a proposed section of a work³⁰ that ulti-

²⁷ JP V 6060 (*Pap.* VIII¹ A 339). Although the book was never written and the pseudonym was never used, no. 1 appeared separately in *Fædrelandet*, 188–91, July 24–27, 1848, under the title *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*. At least parts of no. 2 (*Pap.* VII¹ B 205–10) were completed but remained unpublished. Work on no. 3 (*Pap.* VIII² B 172–74) on the Danish actor Christen Niemann Rosenkilde (1786–1861) in the part of Hummer in Johan Ludvig Heiberg’s *De Uadskillelige* was begun, but after writing little more than one draft page, Kierkegaard turned to another Danish actor, Joachim Ludvig Phister (1807–1896). If the projected volume had been published in its entirety, the final copy of the piece on Phister (*Pap.* IX B 67–68) would most likely have been no. 3. Therefore it has been included in the present volume as an addendum to the published section no. 1 on Johanne Luise Heiberg.

²⁸ See Supplement, pp. 420–21 (*Pap.* IX A 227).

²⁹ See Supplement, p. 412 (*Pap.* VIII² B 90:1).

³⁰ “New Year’s Gift,” ed. Nicolaus Notabene. See JP V 5708 (*Pap.* IV B 126). See also *Pap.* VIII² B 77.

mately became *Prefaces. Inter* as a Latin word simply means “between”—between what? Work on a new pseudonymous series (by Anti-Climacus, author of *Sickness unto Death* and *Practice*) had been initiated before the publication of *Crisis*, which would then be a pseudonymous work between the first pseudonymous series concluding with *Postscript* and the new Anti-Climacus works, a point between the two sections of a discontinuous linear series. Why, then, *Inter et* [and] *Inter*? The second “between” may refer laterally to the relation between the entire twofold pseudonymous series and the parallel series under Kierkegaard’s own name. The first pseudonymous series needed to be “terminated in the normal dialectical structure”³¹ with a pseudonymous work as the companion piece to what was planned as the terminating religious work (*Christian Discourses*).³² In the journals there are repeated references to how good it was, how right and fitting, to have published “that little article” at that particular juncture.³³

It was not, however, simply for the sake of literary mystification in itself, in order to maintain the dialectical structure of the dual authorship, that the publication of *Crisis* was important to Kierkegaard. The important thing was his conception of the religious life, that it is not a substitute satisfaction for those who have grown old and that the entire complicated authorship was an expression of that view.

Yes, it was a good thing to publish that little article. I began with *Either/Or* and two upbuilding discourses; now it ends, after the whole upbuilding series—with a little esthetic essay. It expresses: that it was the upbuilding—the religious—that should advance, and that now the esthetic has been traversed; they are inversely related, or it is something of an inverse confrontation, to show that the writer was not an esthetic author who in the course of time grew older and for that reason became religious.³⁴

³¹ See Supplement, pp. 424–25 (*Pap. IX A 263*).

³² See *JP VI 6356* (*Pap. X¹ A 138*).

³³ See Supplement, pp. 417–18, 418–23, 424–25 (*Pap. IX A 181, 189, 205, 216, 218, 227, 228, 234, 241, 263*).

³⁴ See Supplement, p. 420 (*Pap. IX A 227, p. 124*). See *On My Work as an Author*, with *The Point of View*, *KW XXII* (*SV XIII 522*).

How *Crisis* was received by Danish readers is not known. Mrs. Heiberg's husband, the leading literary figure of that time, thought well of it.³⁵ In that single individual to whom *Crisis* was addressed, Kierkegaard definitely found an appreciative reader. Mrs. Heiberg may or may not have guessed the author of the piece before he wrote to her three years later, but she did discern that it must be about her.

Upon reading this in more than one respect remarkable piece, I had to believe that he had made me and my artistic work the subject of his thinking, of his psychological reflections. It could not be anything but reassuring and pleasing for me to read the judgment of me in a type of role that people would have liked to insist lay outside my sphere. . . .

Before Kierkegaard himself had sent this essay, I had, of course, read it again and again and felt happy and was encouraged by it. . . .

For a working artist it is a wonderful surprise to read what the inspired theoretician manages to express clearly and unambiguously, what one to a high degree has *felt* without being able to find the words to clarify and illustrate this feeling. Thus I have always been surprised by what Kierkegaard says on page 162 in this piece. . . .

These remarks from a nonactor were what surprised me. They are altogether correct. I have many times felt precisely as it is described here.³⁶

When Laurence Olivier received the Sønning Prize (the highest Danish honor given to authors, artists, and actors), Professor F. J. Billeskov Jansen presented him also "an intellectual gift," a translation of *Crisis*. For Kierkegaard, *Crisis* was his gift of appreciation to Mrs. Heiberg and at the same time a crucial element in the "dialectical structure" of the authorship. To readers over a century later, "that little article" is a valuable contribution to an understanding of Kierkegaard's esthetics and of his complex authorship.

³⁵ See p. 456, note on overleaf.

³⁶ Johanne Luise Heiberg, *Et Liv gjenoplevet Erindringen*, I–IV, ed. Aage Friis (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1944), II, pp. 134–37 (ed. tr.).