

**KIERKEGAARD'S
ILLUSION OF CHRISTENDOM AND ATTACK ON CHRISTENDOM
An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria.
• *Philosophical Investigations, Section 580***

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What is the place of *Attack Upon "Christendom"* in Kierkegaard's authorship? Is the *Attack* consistent with Kierkegaard's authorship, as he explains it in *The Point of View*? Walter Lowrie in the "Translator's Introduction" to the *Attack* says this:

At all events, it is clear to us now that the Attack was the consistent conclusion of his life and thought.^{i[i]}

And Howard Johnson in "Kierkegaard and the Church, A supplement to the Translator's Introduction" writes:

He [Kierkegaard] was to be nothing more than a "corrective".^{ii[ii]}

Being 'nothing more than a corrective' involves the Socratic stance which Kierkegaard takes and explains in *The Point of View*; there Kierkegaard does not claim to have any authority beyond what one human being can do for another. He claims to have no authority and to say that it is not important whether he is a Christian or not.

What requires the corrective is the illusion of Christendom or, in other words, the misunderstanding of *what it means to be a Christian*. To that end, there are two aspects (1) the presentation and explanation of what is to be corrected, what is amiss, the misunderstanding, and (2) the correction or the cure, the presentation and explanation of the correct understanding. In order to call the misunderstanding *an illusion* of Christendom, Kierkegaard must hold that those under the spell of the illusion possess what is essential to Christianity and only need to be reminded or awakened. Kierkegaard provides the wake-up call. The Christian Socrates cannot claim authority and must assume that the truth is present in the Christians of the society. Introducing the truth of Christianity is not Kierkegaard's task, just as Socrates did not claim to introduce the truth to his interlocutors.

The Attack is not consistent with Kierkegaard's Socratic, corrective authorship. The *Attack* abandons the idea that those, whom Kierkegaard once believed were under the spell of an illusion, have everything which was essential concerning Christianity in their possession. As Kierkegaard puts it in a Journal entry from the 1850-53 period:

...the current preaching in Christendom leaves out *something essential* in the proclamation of Christianity - 'imitation, dying away, being born again, etc.' (my emphasis)^{iii[iii]}

If something essential is left out, then the Socratic or maieutic approach is inappropriate and the problem is not the problem of correcting a misunderstanding or exposing an illusion. The problem requires direct attack. Unfortunately, Kierkegaard retains the language of illusion in the direct attack; but the new 'illusion' is not the illusion set forth in *The Point of View*. I will try to explain this.

I.

"... 'Christendom' is a prodigious illusion."^{iv} --- Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard believed he had discovered an illusion, which he called "the illusion of Christendom." One expression of it might be this: the Danes (circa 1850) believed they were Christians, but they were not Christians. This involves, I take it, not only each believing oneself to be a Christian, but believing everyone else is a Christian, too. Another expression of the illusion might be: everyone is a Christian "as a matter of course." There may be other expressions of it as well.

My interest concerns the intelligibility of certain expressions that Kierkegaard uses, in particular, the word "illusion" in the expression "illusion of Christendom". The word "illusion" suggests that those persons, who believed they were Christians, but were not Christians, had confused Christianity with something that is very similar to Christianity, as it were, confusing counterfeit money with good money.^v Accordingly, it should be possible to present the counterfeit and the good money, showing in particular the differences, since the similarities create the illusion. The task is to present the differences, dispelling the illusion.

With respect to counterfeit money there can be an innocence or ignorance: not knowing it is counterfeit and not noticing the differences. One of my questions is whether that aspect of innocence can exist with respect to the situation which Kierkegaard calls "the illusion of Christendom." It is a question, which, I believe, began to bother Kierkegaard. I will consider this aspect and its bearing on the role of *Attack Upon "Christendom"* in Part II.

How *did* Kierkegaard discover 'the illusion of Christendom'? The possibility of such a discovery seems *prima facie* at odds with Kierkegaard's various remarks about 'hidden inwardness' and 'the essential secret', since no one can discover or know another's hidden inwardness. Kierkegaard remarks in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* that "Judge not lest you be judged" expresses an impossibility^{vi}. No human being can judge another with respect to faith or one's relationship to God, unless God has given one that authority (apostolic authority). Kierkegaard insists on numerous occasions that he is 'without authority'. Was Kierkegaard's detection of the illusion of Christianity a matter of a keen observation, as it is in the detection of the counterfeit money?

Kierkegaard is making a *judgment* about certain people when says, "There is an illusion of Christianity", for he is implying: "They believe they are Christians" and "They are not Christians". He is not confessing that he is or was under the spell of the illusion. He knows and detects the differences. Is Kierkegaard's detection of the illusion connected to his observations of the daily behavior of these people, what they do or not do? Did Kierkegaard watch and listen as he went about his daily life and thereby, by what he saw and heard, detect the illusion?

Consider this passage from *The Point of View*^{vii[vii]}.

Every one with some capacity for observation, who seriously considers what is called Christendom, or the conditions in a so-called Christian country, must be assailed by profound misgivings. What does it mean that all these thousands and thousands call themselves Christians as a matter of course? These many, many men of whom the greater part, so far as one can judge, live in categories quite foreign to Christianity! Any one can convince himself of it by the simplest observation. People who perhaps never once enter a church, never think about God, never mention his name except in oaths! People upon whom it has never dawned that they might have any obligation to God, people who either regard it as a maximum to be guiltless of transgressing the criminal law, or do not count even this quite necessary! Yet all these people, even those who assert that no God exists, are all of them Christians, call themselves Christians, are recognized as Christians by the State, are buried as Christians by the Church, are certified as Christians for eternity!

Note these expressions in that passage: “*Everyone* with some capacity for *observation*...must be assailed by profound misgivings [about these ‘Christians’ being Christians]” and “*Any one* can convince himself of it by the simplest *observation*” (my emphases). The word “observation” suggests that Kierkegaard was looking at and listening to his fellow Danes, as he met and knew them in everyday life, and observed something, which tipped him off concerning the illusion. The words “everyone” and “any one” suggest that no special talent or skill is involved. It is a matter, I suppose, of paying attention—and knowing what to pay attention to, to look for. And what is that?

What is an example of a “simple observation” (much less “the simplest observation”)? A simple observation might be like this: our streets are filled with litter. It is unsightly, but no one seems to notice. One day a civic-minded Kierkegaard points it out: our streets are an embarrassment. “Look about you, as you walk about; see the litter everywhere”. This is a simple observation. There is nothing obscuring the litter. Perhaps some have noted the litter, but not thought about it or thought it a problem. Others simply had not paid attention. I am not sure whether the observation of litter in the streets would be one of the simplest observations. It is one that does not require a telescope or microscope; it does not require a special vantage point or education. Anyone going about daily activities could notice the litter.

But what in particular did Kierkegaard observe in the streets and lives of the Danes—something anyone could observe—which prompted him to say: There is a monstrous illusion. That the persons he met and saw in his daily life were not Christians, but believed they were, does not seem to be something one could observe as simply as observing the litter in the streets. It does not seem a simple observation and perhaps not an observation at all.

I want to consider in Kierkegaard’s own words, what he suggests that he observed and what any one could observe. Kierkegaard observed the following of some persons who believed they were Christians:

- • never once entering a church
- • never thinking about God
- • never mentioning the name "God" except in oaths
- • never thinking they might have an obligation to God
- • feeling that not breaking the criminal law is the maximum criterion
- • feeling that not breaking the criminal law is not quite necessary
- • asserting that no God exists

I want to consider each of these on the basis of observation, what anyone might observe. Let us note that Kierkegaard does use the expression "as far as one can judge", which acknowledges that in the detection of this illusion, in the observing and judging involved, there are limitations. What kind of limitation he was thinking of is not explained. If the observations came from his participation in normal social activities, going for walks, going to the store, going to church, reading the newspaper, etc., then Kierkegaard would obviously be limited to what he could observe publicly. Another kind of limitation might be that Kierkegaard doesn't intrude in these people's lives by coming out and asking them: do you ever think about God? do you ever think of your obligation to God? He observes them without their knowing he is observing them or knowing the purpose of the observations. I do not mean that someone might not have noticed Kierkegaard looking out his window or looking at someone from a table in a café. Rather they did not know he was observing them to judge whether they were Christians or not. It would be wrong to think that the limitation on judgement is that Kierkegaard cannot *know* their hidden inwardness, because that is not a *limitation*.

Entering a church is observable. Kierkegaard might have known persons who never went to church, yet believed themselves to be Christians. However, it seems superficial to judge that someone is not a Christian ¹⁴ use of not going to church. Just as it would be superficial to judge that someone *is* a Christian solely because the person went to church. *That* seems a symptom of the illusion of Christendom: by going to church every Sunday, some believe they are Christians. But did Kierkegaard really detect the illusion, in part, because he knew persons who were considered Christians but did not go to church?

What observations might support the assertion that someone never thought about God? One might think about God at night when one cannot sleep or when a severe illness occurs or when someone dear dies unexpectedly. Perhaps Kierkegaard watched certain mean spirited, avaricious, empty-headed persons on a daily basis and said, "They never think about God." It does not occur to Kierkegaard or does not suit his particular purpose to suppose that perhaps in these persons' hidden inwardnesses, they do at times think seriously about God and their obligation to God. How did Kierkegaard judge that some persons *never thought* about their obligation to God? Is there certain behavior one might observe that shows that there is no thought of God in these people's lives, behavior they would not be doing if they thought about God or their obligation to God. This "not thinking about" might be in the sense of: "If he had thought about his fiancée, he would not have done that". Or: "She was not thinking about her health, when she did that." But in these cases "never thinking about" doesn't seem quite right. It would be strange if the betrothed *never* thought about each other or one *never* thought about one's health in what one

did. It is not clear what Kierkegaard means by the expression “never thinking about God” with respect to what is observable, i.e. the criteria for using that expression.

The search for a simple observation is just as problematic with: never thinking about one’s obligation to God. Someone, who has an obligation, has an obligation to *do* (or not *do*) certain things. An obligation is part of a relationship. What is difficult with respect to an obligation to God is that the kinds of relationship with which we are familiar—such as, between husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee, creditor and debtor, physician and patient, master and slave, king and subject—provide analogies and disanalogies to the relationship between the individual and God. Certainly there is the aspect of God the father and the idea that Christians have obligations to God as children do to their fathers. Would Kierkegaard say that Christians have an obligation to God to obey his commandments, say, to obey the Ten Commandments? Let us say yes. Then Kierkegaard observes that the Danes never think about their obligation to God because they live a certain way and do not obey the Ten Commandments. Of course, those who do not obey might still think about their obligation.

One possibility in lieu of specific behavior would be that certain persons simply told Kierkegaard, “I never think about my obligation to God.” However, this assumes that those persons realized that they had such an obligation. Perhaps someone might have said, “There is no obligation to God.” It is unclear in what circumstances someone would tell that to Kierkegaard or say it at all. Certainly, it does not seem consistent with Kierkegaard’s remarks to think of him as conducting a survey. But if these people are under the spell of the illusion, they might well say, “Of course, I have an obligation to God, and I think of my obligation to God. I donate my time and money to the church and say my prayers.” I do not think that would have satisfied Kierkegaard.

Consider the idea that certain persons think that by not breaking the criminal law (“the maximum criterion”), they are Christians. This might be the expression of an attitude that the distinction between law-abiding citizens and criminals is the same as between Christian and non-believer. I can imagine Kierkegaard hearing someone call another a “good Christian” because the other had a decent job, paid one’s bills, and did not break the law—or perhaps only broke a few minor laws. We could imagine that someone who had never heard of Christianity could have visited Kierkegaard’s Copenhagen, observed the Danes, and noted that these people call themselves Christians because they go to church regularly or because they are law abiding citizens. Along with that I imagine there would be an attitude toward the Scriptures, such that the story of Abraham, for instance, is a kind of exaggeration or, if not, is a story of events that took place long ago, in an uncivilized world. Such an attitude would not accept that God might tell someone in Copenhagen to do something like what He told Abraham to do. In the *Attack* there is the following remark (under the heading *Short and Sharp*):

It is related of a Swedish priest that, profoundly disturbed by the sight of the effect his address produced upon the auditors, who where dissolved in tears, he said soothingly, “Children, do not weep the whole thing might be a lie.”^{viii[viii]}

The editors provide the following note to that passage:

In the fifteenth century this story was told of a friar at Naples, who on Good Friday had harrowed the congregation by his description of the Lord's Passion, and seeing them in tears had tried to comfort them by the reflection that "all this was a long time ago, so let us hope it is not true."^{x[ix]}

The last observation in the passage from *The Point of View* concerns this: there are persons who assert that no God exists, and either call themselves Christians or are recognized, despite their assertion to the contrary, as Christians. This seems most odd, for it does not seem possible that those persons, who *assert* there is no God, nevertheless call themselves Christians. If Kierkegaard meant that others call them Christians or they are listed on the parish register as Christians, then it is clearer. Perhaps they call themselves Christians in doing their daily business, as it is required for licensing, etc. But are they, then, under an illusion?

Here I want to bring out as aspect of the grammar of the word "illusion". I will borrow from Bouwsma, for he has already pointed this out with some clear examples:

My interest is confined to the general context of language with which the word "illusion" is connected. Notice for this purpose, the following sentences:

I thought I saw a mouse, but it wasn't a mouse.

I thought I saw a dead dog lying in the street, but it wasn't a dead dog.

I thought I heard someone at the door, but there was no one.

...And now notice the question that goes with these expressions of illusion, and the sorts of answers one gives. The question is: "And what was it?" or "And what was it you saw?" And we get such answers as these, answers which also commonly enter into the explanation of the illusion.

It wasn't a mouse; it was a rubber ball rolling across the floor.

It wasn't a dead dog lying in the street; it was an old brown coat.

There was no one at the door. It must have been the wind rattling the windows.^{x[x]}

In the case of an illusion there is always what something seemed—a mouse, a dead dog, someone at the door—and what something actually is—a rubber ball, an old brown coat, the wind rattling the windows. In these cases we know what it is to see a mouse and to see a rubber ball, to see a dead dog and to see an old brown coat, and to hear someone at the door and to hear the wind rattling the windows. An aspect of the grammar is that one might have thought the rubber ball rolling across the floor and under the couch was a mouse and never find out it was not a mouse. *But being able to find out* is an essential part of the grammar. Someone can bring out the rubber ball from under the couch and show how the rolling ball looked like a mouse.

Kierkegaard encapsulates his detection of the illusion in the expression " [they] live in categories quite foreign to Christianity". This expression, I think, means: correct

descriptions of their lives only use words from pagan and natural categories. The pattern of life is aesthetic. It is not the pattern of a Christian life. This does seem a matter of observation, for those descriptions are the results of the observations of human lives. That the particular descriptions do not accord with the pattern of a Christian life is not an observation, unless it is a grammatical (conceptual) observation. Here, it seems, there is the aspect of the grammar of illusion which we need: the pattern of an aesthetic life and the pattern of a Christian life. These two kinds of life are mixed up. Are these two kinds of life observable and describable? Are they so similar that they can be confused, one taken for the other? What does "finding out" come to in this case?

What is the pattern of a Christian life that Kierkegaard is looking for and does not find? Certainly, Christ's life as a human being is the pattern. Kierkegaard also uses this expression: "Christ is *the prototype*"^{xix}. But what would it look like for someone to live a life following that pattern? As I am presenting it, Kierkegaard finds a pattern, which is called "Christian", but which is not Christian—it is pagan.

Let us consider the expression "pattern of a Christian life." I am thinking of *pattern* as in the expression:

"Grief" describes a pattern [ein Muster] which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life.^{xii}

There is certainly a wide range of behavior, even contradictory behavior, which would still count as part of the expression of grief. Someone might cry incessantly; someone might show no emotion, being stony faced, yet consumed with grief. There are also thoughts, memories, feelings, dreams, longing, and a variety of facial expressions, which are tied in with a hurly-burly of occasions. There are also, one could say, different stages of grief, as time from the immediate occasion of grief passes. To describe grief would be to describe a good part of someone's life. There is also insincere or feigned grief. How do we describe that? Do we begin with a description of someone in grief, then add: they do not really mean it? Suppose a part in a play called for "feigned grief." How would that be conveyed to the audience?

We could also substitute "pride" in the above sentence. "Pride" describes a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life. When Bouwsma was talking with Wittgenstein about ethics and pride, Wittgenstein asked: "How do you exhibit 'pride'?" Bouwsma responded, "By reading from *The Brothers Karamazov*."^{xiii} Bouwsma then writes:

W. seemed to approve of this but he made some objection which I did not understand. He said somebody else might write a different book, apparently exhibiting pride in a different light. The point seemed to be that what is relevant is *patterns of life which are enmeshed with all sorts of other things*, and so this makes the matter much more complex than at first it seemed. Perhaps this is it. Pride is, in anyone's life, always only a part. No man is pride alone. Pride is specified in a context off other interests and other human beings. It is this *total situation* in which pride infects with evil. (my emphases)^{xiv}

The expressions "patterns of life which are enmeshed with all sorts of other things" and "total situation" are relevant to the expression "pattern of Christian life". What I

want from this is: one might describe various lives, as Dostoevsky does in *The Brothers*, and show, say, Ivan's pride a certain way, but someone else might show pride in a very different way. What Dostoevsky gives in *The Brothers* is a vast context with all kinds of details. This suggests that to describe what the pattern of a Christian life is would be just as problematic and particular. The "the" in the expression "the pattern of a Christian life" should not suggest that there is a single pattern at all. But how can there be a *pattern*, at all? A pattern provides for the recognition and detection and the application of the expressions "Christian" and "not Christian" and "seems Christian."

Is the illusion of *misunderstanding* what it means to be a Christian a misunderstanding of the Scriptures? I should add, that if we say yes, then the misunderstanding might best be understood as a nest of misunderstandings. To be under the spell of the illusion, there cannot be mere ignorance of the Scriptures or what it means to be a Christian. If it were from ignorance, then it would not be proper to call the situation "an illusion." The situation of the illusion involves a familiarity with the Scriptures, perhaps one beginning in childhood. Now what kind of misunderstanding is involved? Are they misunderstandings concerning different expressions and stories in the Scriptures? Who is to say what the proper understanding is?

Consider the following passage from Bouwsma's "The Invisible":

...I said we do not know how to read the Scriptures. I think I had better say that we cannot say what understanding the Scriptures is. In the sense in which I was saying that we do not know how to read the Scriptures there is also no human being who can teach us. The idea is that when God speaks or God writes only God himself can give the understanding. ...God does not speak or write English or any other earthly language, no matter how much like English or any other language the language of Scripture looks like and sounds like English. I realize that this sounds paradoxical and like the divine language is almost unintelligible. ^{xv[xv]}

Kierkegaard must have the proper understanding, it seems, of the Scriptures in order to say: there is a *misunderstanding*, which is at the root of the illusion of Christendom. Kierkegaard does not speak of a misunderstanding of Scripture in the passage I cited from *The Point of View*. He refers to aspects of the lives of those around him. Would it be right to say that Kierkegaard learned of that pattern of life, which he does not find, from his understanding of Scripture? Should we say God gave that understanding to him?

Kierkegaard is sometimes presented as concerned to clear up certain conceptual confusions or misunderstandings of Scripture. For instance, he shows that the opposite of the Christian concept "faith" is the concept "sin", and not the concept "doubt" (and that the opposite of "sin" is "faith", not "virtue"). Certainly, there are cases in which doubt is contrasted with faith, as in "You don't have faith in me to succeed" when someone raises doubts. When the concept of doubt is seen as the opposite of the Christian concept of faith, it leads to the confusion that faith is a matter of removing doubt and providing grounds for certainty. For Kierkegaard, Christian faith is not an intellectual matter of proof or right grounds, but of obedience and passion.

These remarks seem to support the idea Kierkegaard is, among other things, clearing up conceptual confusions, confusions of biblical concepts. I have suggested that he was doing that with the concepts of faith and offense. However, if, as Bouwsma remarks, "there is also no human being who can teach us [how to understand Scripture]", perhaps this account of Kierkegaard clearing up conceptual confusions is itself a confusion. Would any person (without authority) presume to explain to another what God has said or written? to provide conceptual analyses of divine language? I am not saying it cannot be done or that Kierkegaard did not do it.

I have suggested that Kierkegaard's detection of the illusion of Christendom concerned the observation of a pattern of human life, in particular Kierkegaard's observations of his fellow Danes. The expression "observation of a pattern of human life and behavior" is wide, for at times it refers (1) to observations about personal behavior, such as going to church, working and living as people concerned with security and happiness, and betraying (to Kierkegaard) lives "in categories not Christian", (2) to thinking or not thinking about God or one's obligation to God, and (3) to more general, perhaps conceptual, issues, in terms of what the customs might be, such as everyone being baptized shortly after birth, the State requiring all state positions be filled by registered Christians, or the Church providing every deceased person a Christian burial. I am noting and not objecting to this. It does not seem to be, as Kierkegaard says, a simple observation at all.

In *Training in Christianity* Kierkegaard has an imagined interlocutor raise the question about what is observed, about the hidden inwardness, about being a "knower of hearts".

"What! Are you presuming to be a knower of hearts who judges people's innermost being; when a man himself says that he is a Christian, you surely do not presume to deny it?"...But does he really say that? I thought that in established Christendom it was hidden inwardness that we were supposed to keep it hidden. "Yes, we certainly are supposed to keep it hidden, simple because it is a given that all are Christians." Then how is it a given if everyone individually keeps it hidden—because it is a given that all are that?

The situation is this. If everyone around defines himself as being a Christian *just like* "the others", then no one, if it is looked at this way, is really confessing Christ. On the other hand, it is well known that everyone, if it is looked at this way, is a Christian of sorts. ^{xvi[xvi]}

Here Kierkegaard adds something to the expression "Everyone is a Christian" (as an expression of the illusion) by specifying "just like 'the others'" and contrasting that with "*personally* confessing Christ". Hence it isn't simply that everyone is a Christian, but the objective manner in which each is a Christian, being just like everyone else. I get the feeling that Kierkegaard almost objects to any plural subject for the adjective "Christian", since only the individual can use it and use it with respect to oneself and perhaps only use in talking to oneself (or God) about oneself. Yet Kierkegaard is also saying: there is the illusion of Christendom.

II.

"...official Christianity, the official preaching of Christianity is in no sense the Christianity of the New Testament." xvii[xvii]

"The Christianity of the New Testament simply does not exist. Here there is nothing to reform...." xviii[xviii]

THE CONCEPT OF WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

<u>Christ's Use</u>	<u>Martensen's Use</u>
Renunciation of all things	Agreeable profession
Poverty	Comfortable livelihood
Lowliness	Social honor
Prepared for suffering	No danger
Hostile reception	Friendly reception

At Bishop Mynster's memorial service Martensen, who wished to be and did become Mynster's successor, called him "a witness to the truth." That Mynster's comfortable and worldly life bore no resemblance to the biblical witnesses to the truth was obvious to Kierkegaard (another one of the simplest observations?). To Kierkegaard's objection concerning Mynster being a witness to the truth, Martensen was baited into seeming to agree that *all* the priests and pastors were witnesses to the truth.

Consider this passage from *Attack Upon "Christendom"*.

Now what I protested against was the *linguistic solecism* of *calling* what we mean by priests, deans, bishops, "witnesses" or "witnesses to the truth"; it was against this *linguistic usage* I protested, because it is blasphemous, sacrilegious...In the New Testament Christ *calls* the Apostles and the disciples "witnesses," requires them to witness to Him. Let us see now what it to be understood by this. These are men who by the renunciation of all things in poverty, in lowliness, and thus ready for every suffering, were to go out into the world which expresses mortal hostility of the Christian way of life. This is what Christ *calls* "witnesses" and "witnessing".

What we *call* "priest," "dean," "bishop," indicates a livelihood, like every other employment in the community, and in a community, be it noted where, since all *call* themselves "Christians," no danger is in the remotest degree connected with teaching Christianity, where on the contrary this profession may be considered one of the most agreeable and the most highly honored. (my italics)^{xix[xix]}

Are Martensen's remarks about Mynster and subsequent remarks that imply that there are other witnesses to the truth part of the illusion of Christendom, namely, a misunderstanding of the concept "witness to the truth", which had been watered down so as to apply to anyone who has an official position in Christianity? The expression "linguistic solecism" could be replaced with the expression "conceptual confusion" and connected to the idea of a misunderstanding of Scripture. Clearly, Kierkegaard is objecting to "this linguistic usage", namely, *calling* the priests, deans, bishops, "witnesses to the truth".

For Kierkegaard, the proper use of the expression "witness to the truth" is shown in Christ's use, which is revealed by noting those whom he called "witnesses".^{xx[xx]} Kierkegaard's point is: those whom Martensen calls "witnesses" do not meet the same grammatical criteria.

Kierkegaard makes a distinction between the attack on the illusion of Christendom and the attack on Christendom. The attack on the illusion is indirect, the attack on Christendom is direct. Kierkegaard in *The Point of View* has a rationale for the indirect attack and why illusions *cannot* be attacked directly. What this comes to, as I have noted, is that those enmeshed in the illusion have what is essential to understanding their situation and breaking free; hence the attack on the illusion focuses on a presentation of concepts and expressions which are misunderstood.

Given that, it is not clear why the "illusion" cannot be attacked directly. Look at what Kierkegaard does with the expression "witness to the truth." He presents the biblical use and the current use, side by side. The immense difference is easily noted. Is that indirect or direct? Perhaps the indirection is the grammatical nature of the *Attack*. But is the illusion of Christendom an illusion of understanding? Or does Kierkegaard come to the idea that the New Testament is well enough understood, but it is too difficult. The young rich man understood well enough when Christ told him to give away to the poor all he had and follow him. The man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

The Instant No. 10, which was the last of the *Attack* and was on Kierkegaard's desk as he was dying in the hospital, begins with "What I call optical illusion" . The first two sentences are:

This [the optical illusion] consists in what looks as if it were serving a higher interest, the infinite, the idea, God; but upon closer inspection proves to be serving the finite, low things, profit. And it was this Bishop Mynster practiced with rare virtuosity^{xxi[xxi]}

Kierkegaard is once again using the grammar of illusion in order to articulate his problem with the state of Christendom. The expressions "looks as if" and "optical illusion" mean that Kierkegaard conceived of the problem as a kind of switch between two things which look alike, but are different. It isn't, however, a question of a misunderstanding of some expression. The expression "with rare virtuosity" (Kierkegaard also uses the expression "virtuosity in ambiguity") implies that Mynster knew the difference. Is the illusion that Mynster appears to be serving God, preaching and ministering, but is not serving God?

Kierkegaard does not mention any particular person in treating the illusion during his authorship, as put forth in *The Point of View*. But the attack on Christendom focuses on two particular men. Perhaps this is part of what makes the attack on Christendom 'direct'. Kierkegaard is still talking about conceptual misunderstandings ("linguistic solecisms"), but now he mentions two men who have *intentionally* misused the concepts, two men in positions of authority, respect, and power. There is the suggestion in *Training in Christianity* that New Testament Christianity has been preached in a false spirit by Mynster; for example: the preaching of Abraham or Job's suffering as a condolence to the suffering of the loss of a spouse or a child. Kierkegaard wants to say that such losses occur in paganism and are felt with the human heart, as shown in the great pagan writings, for instance. Religious suffering is *different*..

We understand the word "suffering" and can describe cases or refer to cases to display the concept. It is, as with the earlier examples of "grief" and "pride", involved with a broad weave of life. But when it comes to "religious suffering", Kierkegaard wants to separate it *categorically* from what we normally understand. If we learn our everyday language in aesthetic categories, that is through our shared interests and natural expression of pain, pleasure, fear, etc ("the universally human" in Kierkegaard's language), then how do we move into the religious categories? That a child smiles, cries, likes sweet tastes, makes a face at bitter tastes, etc. is as suffering. But to use the word "suffering" is to make the connection. There is a similar difficulty with Kierkegaard's use of the word "despair", as in "Sin is despair". We have the word "despair" in our everyday language. We can describe cases. Now Kierkegaard comes along and says: all of these cases, even some in which you say this is not despair, are cases of despair. We might say of someone who lost all his money in a venture that he was in despair. But upon finding that the investor had not put his money into the scheme and he was saved, he was happy. But Kierkegaard says: he is in despair. But whatever Kierkegaard goes on to do with the word "despair", doesn't he launch from our normal understanding of it?

Here is a passage from Kierkegaard's Journals:

Especially at the end of *A Literary Review* I have said that none of the 'unrecognizable ones' dares at any price to communicate directly, or assume recognizability-- yet in my *On My Activity as an Author* I have owned up to the aesthetic foreground of my authorship and said: 'The whole thing is my own upbringing.' How is this to be understood?

As follows. Granting that the illusion 'Christendom' is the truth and must be left standing, then the maxim is unrecognizability. But if the illusion is to go away we must take it in this way: You are not really Christians. Then there must be recognizability. And here I have intimated the lowest level: that it is I who am being brought up in Christianity.

If the illusion 'Christendom' is the truth, if the current preaching in Christendom is in order, then we are all Christians and all that matters is to increase inwardness: so maieutic and unrecognizability are the maxim.

But then suppose (as I was not aware at the start) that the current preaching in Christendom leaves out something essential in the proclamation of Christianity - 'imitation, dying away, being born again, etc', then we in Christendom are not Christians, and here the stress must be towards recognizability. As I said, my own proclamation is the lowest in direct recognizability: that the whole thing is my upbringing.

O my God! Oh, thank you! How clear everything becomes to me!^{xxii[xxii]}

What I want from this passage, as it relates to my paper, is this. The attack on the illusion seeks to retain the structure of Christianity ("the illusion 'Christendom' is turth"), as it existed in Denmark, and, so to speak, remodel it by bringing the illusion to attention. The *Attack*, on the other hand, seeks to alter in a radical way the structure, because it "leaves out something essential in the proclamation of Christianity." With the illusion nothing essential is left out, but something essential has been misunderstood; with the *Attack* something essential ("imitation, dying away, being born again, etc.") has been left out. People do not want to hear that part of the Gospel. This is a big difference.

The treatment of the illusion from within the church does not require 'recognizability' on the part of the dispeller; that is, the person under the spell of the illusion is to come to the idea on one's own that something is amiss and not be *told*. The dispeller is invisible in order to create the proper unrest and to provide the cure; this is the Socratic aspect of

Kierkegaard. The attack on Christendom requires 'recognizability', for it requires *Kierkegaard* to say directly and plainly: this is not Christianity, Christianity is not being preached, Mynster is not a witness to the truth, and you are not Christians

A succinct way of expressing the theme of this paper is the following. In the-illusion-of-Christendom works and their period, such sentences as "These people are Christians" or "Everyone is a Christian" are misunderstandings rooted in assimilating the concept "Christian" to various worldly concepts. In the *Attack* period those sentences are not expressions of misunderstanding; they are false.

ⁱ[ⁱ] *Attack Upon Christendom*, p. xiii.

ⁱⁱ[ⁱⁱ] *Ibid.* p. xix.

ⁱⁱⁱ[ⁱⁱⁱ] *Papers and Journals: A Selection*, ed. Hannay, p. 542. I quote the full passage at the end of this paper.

^{iv}[^{iv}] *The Point of View*, p. 22.

^v[^v] See *The Point of View*, p. 40. "...one does not begin directly with the matter one wants to communicate, but begins by accepting the other man's illusion as good money."

^{vi}[^{vi}] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 322.

^{vii}[^{vii}] *The Point of View*, p. 22.

^{viii}[^{viii}] *Attack*, p. 181.

^{ix}[^{ix}] *Ibid.* p. 298.

^x[^x] *Toward a New Sensibility*, "Are Dreams Illusions?", pp. 67-69.

^{xi}[^{xi}] *Training in Christianity*, p. 239.

^{xii}[^{xii}] *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 179.

^{xiii}[^{xiii}] *Wittgenstein, Conversations 1949-1951*, p. 5.

^{xiv}[^{xiv}] *Ibid.* p. 5.

^{xv}[^{xv}] *Without Proof or Evidence*, pp. 30-31.

^{xvi}[^{xvi}] *Training in Christianity*, pp. 219-220.

^{xvii}[^{xvii}] *Attack Upon "Christendom"*, p. 24.

^{xviii}[^{xviii}] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

^{xix}[^{xix}] *Ibid.*, p. 23

^{xx}[^{xx}] See, e.g., Acts 10: 34-43.

^{xxi}[^{xxi}] *Attack Upon "Christendom"*, p. 275.

^{xxii}[^{xxii}] *Papers and Journals: A Selection*, ed. Hannay, p. 542.