

Jon Stewart

## Hans Lassen Martensen's "The Present Religious Crisis"

**Abstract:** This article provides an English translation of Hans Lassen Martensen's "The Present Religious Crisis" from 1842. In this work Martensen outlines two important trends that were much discussed at the time. The first part of his article is dedicated to the Anabaptist movement in Denmark, which was in open conflict with the Danish State Church about the question of infant baptism. In the second part, Martensen treats the work of the left Hegelian David Friedrich Strauss and his followers, who regarded the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus as, by and large, myths. Although polar opposites, these two movements are, for Martensen, symptoms of the religious confusion of the day. Martensen attempts to defend the Danish State Church in the face of these criticisms. Kierkegaard seems to refer to Martensen's article in his "Public Confession," where he refers to the rise of sects in Denmark and makes explicit reference to both the Anabaptists and the Straussians. Like Martensen, he is at pains to distance himself from Strauss and his followers. Martensen's article also represents a landmark in the history of the Danish Hegel reception since it signals the alarm about the new Straussian trend.

Hans Lassen Martensen is well known as the constant target of Kierkegaard's critique. He was also an important and influential figure in the Danish cultural and religious life of the day. On April 15, 1842, he published an article in the *Intelligensblade*, the newly inaugurated journal edited by his friend Johan Ludvig Heiberg. This article, entitled "The Present Religious Crisis,"<sup>1</sup> is significant for a number of different reasons.

By using the term "crisis" in the title, Martensen picks up on a central motif of Heiberg's treatise from almost a decade earlier, *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*.<sup>2</sup> In that work Heiberg gives a negative diagnosis of his

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1 Hans Lassen Martensen, "Nutidens religiøse Crisis," *Intelligensblade*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1842, pp. 53–73.

2 Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1833 (ASKB 568). (English translation in *Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the*

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own age, which he regards to be in a period of crisis. He characterizes this crisis as one of relativism and nihilism that has resulted in the lapse of older beliefs and traditions that took place in the context of the Enlightenment's criticism of religion, absolute monarchy and different forms of culture. Like Heiberg, Martensen is concerned that the Church is losing its meaning for educated people and is being transformed into an institution that caters only to the lower classes. Martensen is thus keen to make a case for the continued relevance of the Church among educated people. Like Heiberg, he believes that the erosion of faith is a worrying tendency for which a solution urgently needs to be found.

Martensen's understanding of the crisis is somewhat different from that of Heiberg but can be understood as building on Heiberg's interpretation of the then current *Zeitgeist* in Denmark. For Martensen, the undermining of religious belief in the Enlightenment led in his time to a general confusion surrounding religion. In "The Present Religious Crisis," he tries to sketch two trends in modern religious thinking which he takes to be symptomatic of this confusion. One trend is that of the Anabaptists who were in open conflict with the Danish State Church. Bishop Mynster attempted to impose his will and ordered the children of the Anabaptists to be removed from their parents by force and baptized.<sup>3</sup> But when some of the pastors of the Church, including Peter Christian Kierkegaard, refused to participate in this heavy-handed practice, Mynster was obliged to relent. This was a major controversy of the day, and much ink was spilled on it. A year after his article, Martensen himself dedicated an entire treatise to the topic,<sup>4</sup> and Kierkegaard owned a copy of it. Kierkegaard treats this issue in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and it is clear from his drafts that he is responding in part in to this work.<sup>5</sup>

The second disturbing trend that Martensen describes is the academic movement of left-Hegelianism that found expression in the work of the theolo-

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*Present Age and Other Texts*, ed. and trans. by Jon Stewart, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2005 (*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, vol. 1), pp. 85–119.)

<sup>3</sup> See Hal Koch and Bjørn Kornerup, *Den Danske Kirkes Historie*, vols. 1–8, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1950–66, vol. 6, p. 305; Jens Rasmussen, *J.P. Mynster Sjællands Biskop 1834–54. Kampen for en rummelig kirke. Forholdet til N.F.S. Grundtvig og Grundloven*, Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag 2000, pp. 175 f.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Lassen Martensen, *Den christelige Daab betragtet med Hensyn paa det baptistiske Spørgsmaal*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1843 (ASKB 652).

<sup>5</sup> *SKS* 7, 49 / *CUP1*, 43 f. *SKS* 7, 331–335 / *CUP1*, 363–368. *SKS* 7, 347–350 / *CUP1*, 381–384. See also *Pap.* VI B 98:15 / *CUP2*, 29 f. *Pap.* VI B 24:1 / *CUP2*, 30.

gian David Friedrich Strauss. In his controversial *The Life of Jesus*,<sup>6</sup> Strauss analyzes in detail the gospel writings in order to demonstrate that much of what they contain amounts to no more than myths constructed after the fact. This work had caused a stir in Prussia and the German-speaking states and was important in defining the schools of right and left Hegelianism. In 1835 during his long *Bildungsreise*, Martensen had been a first-hand witness to the controversy surrounding the publication of Strauss' *The Life of Jesus*. He recalls in his memoirs, "During my stay in Heidelberg an incident occurred that contributed much to the tremor in the Hegelian school...the publication of David Strauss's *The Life of Jesus*. This work created an enormous sensation, one can say, in the whole of Christendom."<sup>7</sup> Shortly after this, Martensen met Strauss personally in Tübingen and was skeptical of Strauss' views from the start.<sup>8</sup>

Martensen's article appeared at an important juncture in Danish cultural life. Heiberg had been leading a pro-Hegelian campaign for years, and although he was often criticized for this, his views were not regarded as overtly seditious or dangerous to the Danish Church. But now with the rise of the left Hegelians, the specter of free thinking appeared to be a real threat. Hans Brøchner had caused a controversy at the University of Copenhagen towards the end of 1841 when the Faculty of Theology refused to allow him to sit for his examination after it became known that he shared some of Strauss' views.<sup>9</sup> Although not directly involved, Martensen followed this controversy

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6 David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, vols. 1–2, Tübingen: C.F. Osiander 1835–36. (In English as *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, ed. by Peter C. Hodgson, trans. by George Eliot, Ramsey, New Jersey: Sigler Press 1994.)

7 Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet. Meddelelser*, vols. 1–3, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1882–83, vol. 1, p. 122.

8 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 129 ff. For the Danish reception of Strauss, see Rudolf Schmidt, *Grundtvig og den tyske Orthodoxy. En historisk Sammenstilling*. Copenhagen: F.H. Eibes Forlag 1883, pp. 98 ff.

9 For accounts of this scandal, see Jon Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome II, *The Martensen Period: 1837–1842*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2007 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 3), pp. 678–686. S.V. Rasmussen, *Den unge Brøchner*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1966, pp. 16–31. Harald Høffding, "Hans Brøchner," in his *Danske Filosofer*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag 1909, pp. 196–206. Frederik Nielsen, *Minder, Oplevelser og Iagttagelser*, Aalborg: M. M. Schultz 1881, pp. 43 f. F.L. Liebenberg *Nogle Optegnelser om mit Levnet*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag 1894, pp. 26 f. Robert Leslie Horn, *Positivity and Dialectic: A Study of the Theological Method of Hans Lassen Martensen*. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2007 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 2), pp. 183 ff. Otto Borchsenius, *Fra Fyrre. Litterære Skizzer*, vols. 1–2, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels og Otto B. Wroblewskys Forlag 1878–80, vol. 2, pp. 40–42.

closely.<sup>10</sup> Ever since his popular lectures at the University of Copenhagen in the second half of the 1830s, Martensen himself had been associated with Hegel's philosophy, and due to this, the rise of Strauss' popularity was potentially damaging for him. He had seen the example that the Faculty had set with Brøchner and presumably feared that given his interest in Hegel, he would be associated with Hegel's student Strauss and his free-thinking views. So a part of Martensen's motivation for writing "The Present Religious Crisis" was presumably to distance himself publicly from Strauss and his followers. This has been interpreted to mean that Martensen modified his views on Hegel and that this article marks the change.<sup>11</sup> However, this view is problematic since although he played an important role in disseminating knowledge of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark, Martensen was in fact consistently critical of certain aspects of Hegel's philosophy.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it is inaccurate to claim that this article signaled a major shift in his position. Admittedly, it does, however, show that Martensen was becoming increasingly alarmed by the rise of left Hegelianism.

The article is thus framed by an analysis of two completely different trends, representing opposite ends of the social-political spectrum. The Anabaptists tend to be highly conservative and claim that they have the correct understanding of the Bible and Christianity. They are in a sense at war with the world since they are critical of all forms of secular life. They believe that the Danish State Church has drifted away from the original Christian truths and, as a secular institution, is corrupt and thus in no way qualified to be a representative of true Christianity. By contrast, far from being immediate believers, the Straussians tend to be educated intellectuals, whom Martensen refers to as the *Dannede*. They believe that if there is anything at all about Christianity that can be rescued, then it is imperative to get to the bottom of the myths and misrepresentations in the scriptures in order to be able to isolate the true elements. Their goal seems to be to reduce the Church and Christianity to secular knowing. Although the nature of these movements is very different, this is a case where opposites converge since both camps are eager to criticize the Danish State Church. Both of these

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**10** As a member of the Faculty of Theology, Martensen closely followed the events surrounding the examination scandal, which he recounts in great detail in a letter to Dörner. *Briefwechsel zwischen H.L. Martensen und I.A. Dörner 1839–1881*, vols. 1–2, Berlin: Reuther 1888, vol. 1, pp. 46–50.

**11** See Jens Holger Schjørring, *Teologi og filosofi. Nogle analyser og dokumenter vedrørende Hegelianismen i dansk teologi*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag 1974, p. 33.

**12** Martensen consistently insists on this in his memoirs: see, for example, Martensen, *Af mit Levnet. Meddelelser*, vol. 2, p. 6.

movements are the result of the religious confusion that constitutes, for Martensen, the central element of the crisis of the age.

Martensen's goal in the article is to try to make a case for the Danish State Church, which he regards as a rational middle course that runs between fanatical extremes. However, he is measured in his polemics against both the Anabaptists and the Straussians and even recognizes that their complaints against the State Church are in part legitimate. While he grants that modern philosophy has given rise to dangerous movements like that led by Strauss, nonetheless it can still be used in the service of religion and the Church. Martensen proposes a compromise by acknowledging that the State Church contains both a religious and a secular element. To the question, "How should the State Churches react to this crisis?"<sup>13</sup> he responds, "Their existence rests on precisely the unity of religion and the mundane consciousness. They should solve the problem by at first asserting the independence of religion and its external difference from the state, and in addition by letting it become the all-penetrating principle of the world in the large national masses."<sup>14</sup> While it is important that religion be autonomous and free from state interference (*per* the Anabaptists), it is equally important that it play a role in the world and not regard itself as detached from it.

Martensen thus readily recognizes that there is some truth in the views of both the Anabaptists and the Straussians. They both expose a shortcoming in the State Church. He writes,

In appearing thus "Look at yourselves in the mirror!," these phenomena complete their destinies in history; they are indirect revelations of ideas. From this point of view both the religious sects and the impertinent, destructive philosophy can be observed. They are the negative expositions of the moments of truth, which have been neglected by the Church.<sup>15</sup>

Martensen's plea is then that the Church should acknowledge these shortcomings and correct them. Only in this way can it return to a healthy dialectical balance. The Church itself should undertake the necessary reforms itself instead of suffering more serious damage by simply denying the problems and allowing the inevitable reforms to be brought about by external forces. The Church needs to find a fruitful way to unite faith and reason, religion and the world.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Some months after his article, Martensen received a letter dated November 27, 1842, from the Tübingen theologian Eduard Zeller (1814–1908). Martensen had a number of contacts in the German-speaking world and enjoyed a certain reputation there among scholars interested in Hegel's philosophy. Zeller had recently founded a new journal, the *Theologische Jahrbücher*, and the purpose of his letter was to ask Martensen to submit an article to it.<sup>16</sup> Presumably being unaware of Martensen's recent article and its criticism of Strauss, Zeller, in order to convince Martensen to contribute to the new journal, indicates that both Strauss and Bruno Bauer were contributing to it. Zeller's hope was presumably that names such as these would legitimize and establish the new journal, thus making it attractive for Martensen to write a piece for it. However, the result was exactly the opposite. At precisely this juncture the last thing that Martensen wanted was to be associated with Strauss and the left Hegelians. Apparently, he never responded to Zeller's invitation.

Martensen found himself in an awkward position. He had inspired a generation of students with his lectures on Hegel and German philosophy in the second half of the 1830s. Now, however, in 1842 the times were changing, and he saw some of his own students take up the left Hegelian view. He recalls this as follows in his autobiography: "It was soon evident that the Hegelian left also made an inroad among several of my auditors, who opposed me from a pantheistic position."<sup>17</sup> Martensen was thus pressed to distance himself from his own students in order to avoid being charged with preaching free thinking from the lectern. In fact, in 1840, he had been publicly attacked by an anonymous critic in the journal *Kjøbenhavnsposten*.<sup>18</sup> The critic argued directly that Hegel's philosophy leads people away from faith, and thus Martensen was doing no service teaching it to the impressionable young students at the University of Copenhagen. Although Martensen defended himself against this criticism, this public episode was presumably vexing for him. This exchange can be seen as constituting a part of the inspiration for "The Present Religious Crisis," which Martensen used to distance himself from left Hegelianism and demonstrate his loyalty to the mission of the Danish State Church.

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<sup>16</sup> See Schjørring, *Teologi og filosofi*, pp. 27–35.

<sup>17</sup> See Martensen, *Af mit Levnet. Meddelelser*, vol. 2, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> [anonymous], "Nogle Træk til en Charakteristik af den filosofiske Aand, som for Tiden findes hos de Studerende ved Kjøbenhavns Universitet," *Kjøbenhavnsposten*, vol. 14, no 25, January 26, 1840, pp. 97–99. For an account of this exchange, see Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome II, *The Martensen Period: 1837–1842*, pp. 377–397.

Martensen's article was apparently important for Kierkegaard, who seems to refer to it in his "Public Confession,"<sup>19</sup> which was published on June 12, 1842, that is, just after the publication of Martensen's piece. There he, like Martensen, thematizes the rise of sects in Denmark and makes explicit reference to both the Anabaptists and the Straussians. In his own inimitable way Kierkegaard makes fun of the different sects and intellectual movements that had arisen in Denmark. While his tone is clearly satirical, his point seems to be very much the same as that of Martensen: there is a widespread religious confusion that has given rise to these different groups.

In his article Kierkegaard adds a "Postscript," in which he discusses the work of the left Hegelian Andreas Frederik Beck (1816–61), who had just published *The Concept of Myth or the Form of Religious Spirit*, which was in large part inspired by Strauss.<sup>20</sup> Kierkegaard first dedicates some space to mocking Beck's recent book review of *The Concept of Irony*.<sup>21</sup> But then he refers to *The Concept of Myth* as follows: "In the book Herr Doktor recently published, I see that he has most incredibly thrust me in among the Straussians."<sup>22</sup> Here Kierkegaard seems to refer to a footnote, where Beck appeals to *The Concept of Irony* in support of a point made by Strauss about the nature of myth.<sup>23</sup> As was the case with the book review, so also here with the book, Kierkegaard was concerned that Beck had seriously misunderstood some aspects of his project in *The Concept of Irony*. He was vexed that Beck was disseminating these misunderstandings to the reading public. With regard to the footnote in question, Kierkegaard found himself associated with the Straussians, which, given the stigma surrounding this movement, must have been unpleasant for him. So Kierkegaard thus responds in "Public Confession" by explicitly distancing himself from this movement. Thus Kierkegaard had with his archenemy Martensen a common motivation to take up the pen. The two men had a similar diagnosis of the religious confusion of the day, and both were at pains to assure their readers and the religious establishment that they did not share the view of Strauss and his followers, despite what some people might think. This at least in retrospect more than unexpected point of commonality

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19 SKS 14, 41–45 / COR, 3–12.

20 Andreas Frederik Beck, *Begrebet Mythos eller den religiøse Aands Form*, Copenhagen: P.G. Philipsen 1842 (ASKB 424).

21 Andreas Frederik Beck, "Om Begrebet Ironi, med stadigt Hensyn til Socrates af Søren Kierkegaard," *Fædrelandet*, nos. 890 and 897, May 29, and June 5, 1842, columns 7133–7140, 7189–7191.

22 SKS 14, 45 / COR, 10.

23 Beck, *Begrebet Mythos eller den religiøse Aands Form*, p. 31n.

between the two authors seems to be one reason, among others, to make the original piece by Martensen accessible for the international reader.

## The Present Religious Crisis

The Christian and specifically the Protestant State Churches rest on the presupposition that Christianity is a world religion and thus is able to be the center of the life of nations and states, the center for their moral and political, artistic and scholarly strivings and goals. In our day these Churches find themselves in an apparently difficult position. Their existence is attacked spiritually from many sides since it is declared that they are no longer in a position to fulfill their intended goal. The reality of the State Church rests specifically on the existing harmony between the religious consciousness and the consciousness of the world, between faith and revelation, on the one hand, and the free self-development of humanity, on the other hand, between the cult and culture. Only under this | [54] condition is the State Church a truth. The actual split that is taking place at present between these elements seems to many people to be so large, so irreconcilable, that they predict the collapse of the State Church as imminent, after which the political power will not be able to maintain that which is not in a position to maintain itself from its own inner strength. The following remarks are made not in order to give an exhaustive investigation of this question but only in order to awaken attention for it and occasion closer consideration.

A famous author once said that the sudden change in the manner of thinking which took place at the end of the last century can be characterized briefly in terms of a change in linguistic usage which arose at the same time as the change of ideas. The words "faith" and "love," which at an earlier time were generally valid terms, came at precisely that time to be substituted with two others, in that instead of "faith" one substituted "truth" and instead of "love" one substituted "freedom." These latter terms became the watchword of the age, just like newly minted coins which one could now spend everywhere, whereas it became precarious to use "faith" and "love." This remark still finds its application | [55] today, for still today humanity is busy with transferring its faith into truth and its love into freedom. The more perspicuous people have in the interim come to the realization that this rapid change can only be regarded as a real shift, insofar as one with the same levity is able to make the opposite change, insofar as one again is able to reduce one's knowledge to faith, one's freedom to the fullness of love, and thus is able to possess the same contents under both forms simultaneously. The one-sided change, which

would have as its result that religion would be destroyed in philosophy, the church in the state, would only be the same as to change its duties to rights without also accomplishing the opposite. Nevertheless, this one-sided change has again made significant progress in the most recent past. Right in the midst of Protestant Christianity there has arisen a party whose philosophy is supposed to be *the newest* and which in the name of world spirit and modern culture [*den moderne Dannelses Navn*] proclaims that now the time has come to secularize the church and all its spiritual goods. Indeed, these educated people [*disse Dannede*] even want to prove, based on Christianity itself, that religion and the church only achieve their | [56] goal by letting their immediate, independent existence be destroyed in philosophy and the state. According to Christ's own statement, the kingdom of heaven resembles the leaven which shall penetrate the entire mass. Just as it lies in the nature of every ferment that it should not remain in its immediate, compact condition, but is destined to be changed into an organism, so also the most adequate mode of existence for religion and the church, must be precisely their state of dissolution, when they are changed and have passed over into something other than themselves. The religious metamorphosis is thus supposed to consist in the fact that the church becomes the world, that the realm of revelation is changed into that of humanity, that the cult is changed into culture. But in order that the free Protestant state nevertheless might not lack any cult, they instead thought out a humanistic cult of their own instead of the church cult. They have already parceled out the one sun among the many stars and changed the one Christ into the many god-men. Just as Catholicism took it upon itself to transfer the immediate worship of Christ into the worship of the many saints, with which religion became more human, so also the Catholic cult of the saints is supposed to be externally changed into the corresponding Protestant one, which finds | [57] its point of contact not in the saints of the church but in the saints of humanity, in the highly gifted people, whom we call geniuses. The cultivation of the genius—the cult of the genius—is according to Strauss the only cult, which is left to the educated people of this age. According to the opinion of the same author, the State Church will soon have difficulties finding teachers and will need to select its servants from among craftsmen and peasants, since only such people could still have interest in the Christian representations in their immediacy, while the educated can only enjoy these when they are dissolved in philosophy, art or politics.

Just as from this side there has been expressed in the name of science an apparent protest against the State Church, whose existence is declared to be a merely apparent existence, so also from another side the same protest is

expressed, not in the name of science but rather in the name of religion. It is strange, but yet in good historical order, that an age which presents the drama of Straussianism, at the same time presents the various forms of religious sect life, including the Anabaptists. Religious revivals and conventicles belong to the order of the day, and these phenomena arise independently of each other with so many different points of | [58] Protestant Christianity that they cannot be regarded as the same, but rather as merely bearing the stamp of a historical natural necessity. While the trend sketched above demands the dissolution of the church in the state, it is claimed here that the kingdom of God must be separated from the world. While Christianity now counts only as a fermentation, which is destined to be changed, to be dissolved and to be weakened in the world-historical process, it is maintained here that the kingdom of God is to be compared with a pearl which a merchant has found. When he found it, he went and sold all his goods in order to get the one pearl. This party has chosen the better part and regards the whole world's treasure and magnificence as nothing in contrast to the one thing that is needed. They would like to hold onto religion in its undissolved independence and original purity, in the spotless luster of its first immediacy, but since they have not understood the Lord's other parable, they merely come into a discord with the life of the world instead of ennobling it. In Pietism, which is still found inside the State Church, this appears as a passive and thus innocent indifferentism toward the interests of the world, which is, so to speak, a pendant for the indifferentism which many educated people show towards religion. It is true of many Pietists | [59] in a literal sense that they are in the world like those who are not in the world. For in the midst of the transitory conditions of the world, they exist in a somnambulant condition, while they only have their consciousness in the world of faith and prayers. In this respect, they could be regarded as the counterpart to the great crowd of educated people [*Dannede*], who are, as it were, paralyzed by the religious organ. However, the pietistic indifferentism towards the life of the world develops in many people into an open polemic against it. They demand that the consciousness of the world give up its independence and be dissolved in religion. They find in the State Church an unbearable mixing together of the sacred and the profane, of God's kingdom and the world, and since they doubt that God's kingdom can penetrate the hard mass of the world, they give up the bitter work, abandon the mass of depravity to itself, and resign from the State Church since they only want to take "the pearl" with them. Thus, the pietistic heart remains the hard heart which negates society; its love becomes fanaticism [*Sværmeri*], which places itself above the law, and this is where the manifold ramifications of the sects arise which have alarmed the State Church for a long time. Recently, there have

appeared the Anabaptists as well, who find a point of | [60] contact in the many revivals which appear in many places outside the auspices of the public church services. Since the Anabaptists turn against child baptism with which Christianity reproduces itself forever anew as the religion of the world, they aim to bring about the most fundamental dissolution of the existing church, the most radical negation of the unity of the state and church. This is the most extreme of Protestantism's religious sects. Just as it is the principle of the political revolution to tear itself free from all historical context and to introduce a new calendar, so also the same principle appears in the sphere of the church among the Anabaptists. These "*Schwarmgeister*" would not accept Christianity through the statement of the historical church, but try themselves to improvise a Christian Church in order thus to be able to begin the history of the church from the start again since, in their eyes, the previous one has utterly failed. In this manner, the Anabaptists appeared at the time of the Reformation, and they seem now to be reappearing at the present critical turning point, when something new and reform-like is unmistakably in the wind. They seem to come like birds who, with their flocks, portend changes in the spiritual atmosphere of the church. | [61] In connection with this phenomenon another thing of an entirely opposite nature may be named, namely the catholicizing tendencies, which appear even in the Protestant Church. We do not need to think here simply of the great catholicizing party, which at the moment threatens the Anglican Church, for related sympathies can easily be found outside England.

If there is thus, on the one hand, a powerful religious element in the age, but one which is unclearly developing and in many respects in conflict with the principle of the State Church, and, on the other hand, a mundane consciousness which demands the abolition of Christianity, then the question arises: How should the State Churches react to this crisis? Their existence rests on precisely the unity of religion and the mundane consciousness. They should solve the problem by at first asserting the independence of religion and its external difference from the state, and then by letting this become the all-penetrating principle of the world in the large national masses. Their task is to put into motion both of the named parables of Christ, that is, that religion is at once the ferment of life and the pearl of life. By contrast, the sects merely stick one-sidedly | [62] to the latter parable, and the world in a certain sense always needs to affirm the former. It is up to the State Churches to maintain the unity of faith and truth, love and freedom. Whoever now is convinced that this idea is not an empty thought but a reality, even if the actuality of the State Church in many respects contrasts with this principle, will also be convinced that this principle in its inner force will be strong enough both to speak and to overcome the hostile forces. But in order that the proper

tolerance and the proper polemic can come about, it will be necessary that the church not merely turn its glance *ab extra* but also *ad intra*. If it does not want to come into a mistaken relationship with its opponent, it must institute a self-criticism in order to know how far a reformation *ad intra* will be the fundamental condition for a successful polemic *ad extra*.

This is a remark which everywhere confirms that the negative, revolutionary powers, which appeared disturbing and confusing in history, must always be seen under a double viewpoint, since they, on the one hand, must be seen as those which should be judged and condemned, and, on the other hand, as those which have | [63] passed judgment on the existing order. What among the existing is only something passive, a lack, a non-being, and thus a secret, appears here in a surprising manner as some false, destroying active thing. Insofar as they are not merely individual and accidental, these phenomena can be understood as a kind of historical mirror which reveals every secret defect in society by casting it back as a false positivity. All sinners of neglect are here revealed as sinners of offense; the inadmissible not-knowing is reflected as an impertinent knowledge; the false silence is revealed as a thousand-tongued hydra. In appearing thus “Look at yourselves in the mirror!,” these phenomena complete their destinies in history; they are indirect revelations of ideas. From this point of view both the religious sects and the impertinent, destructive philosophy can be observed. They are the negative expositions of the elements of truth which have been neglected by the Church.

When we thus observe the religious conventicles, whose appearance cannot be seen as something accidental, seeing that without any previous agreement they have arisen at the same time in the most different places, then these apparently are evidence | [64] of the fact that the existing church’s sermons do not produce the satisfaction that they should; the participants in these assemblies of God, who most often belong to the peasants and the uneducated class, complain that the church’s sermons are too much about the world and too little about the suffering of God and Jesus, and although what is false and fanatical in their direction is often evident here, nonetheless it would be unfair not to recognize that they are partially right. What they seek is a greater originality, a greater primitiveness of the religious life, and when they complain that they do not find faith’s proper inwardness and simplicity in the church, then these simple people say in their way the same thing that many educated people say who have turned away from the church because in the religious preaching they find the real presence of the idea to be lacking, because religion comes forth only as something derived, as something which is possessed second-hand, and which therefore seems to them to be able to be

reduced to the historical, the past. The educated people now obtain their surrogates in the life of the world's intellectual realities; they turn to art and science. But the simple people do not know these surrogates, and they could only use the one thing that is needful. The religious revivals, which have | [65] taken place in many parts of the country, have ensured a deeper meaning than many would attribute to them, since they must be observed as the raw, elementary beginnings of a new development of religious life. It should have been the State Church's task to lead this breakthrough of a new religious life, in order that what here can still only be expressed as a religious natural force could be taken up and ennobled in the State Church's historical communal life, with which it itself would be refreshed and stimulated. Where this now has not happened, where the unfortunate conflicts have arisen between erring religiosity left to its own devices and the mundane power, there it seems that the existing church must take its portion of the blame. The lack of ecclesial productivity cannot lie in the principle of the Protestant Church, which now has exhausted its reforming stock, since, on the contrary, we must assume that our church's principle contains an inexhaustible source of new inspiration and regeneration. The reason can thus only lie in the fact that the church at its present level still must be far from its own *original basic consciousness*, by the strength of which it would be powerful to order and rule everything that develops inside its spiritual precincts. One would greatly misunderstand this | [66] assertion of the church's lack, if one thought that it should be established as unconditioned, and should rule out the recognition of the life of the church which in many respects has come forth as reconciling and overcoming the world. It is only the sects inside and outside the State Church which cast out such assertions without grounding them, but one often will not be able to deny the partial validity of this. To take an example close to home, what lack of religious and ecclesial productivity has not appeared in many places in relation to the Anabaptists! The church, as church, has been as good as passive, while the state has had to be an uninterrupted activity. One has essentially kept oneself to the ecclesiastical and political side of the question, while what is actually the central question, namely, the dogma of the sacramental validity and necessity of childhood baptism, this so important question for the church, has remained as good as untouched. The reason for this is in part the fact that there are many people who condemn the practice of the Baptists, but secretly are in agreement with them in theory. They only blame the Baptists because they make what is in and for itself unessential into the essential thing. They condemn the Baptists' morality because it fanatically opposes the decrees of the | [67] state, but they see in principle nothing essential to find fault with in their dogmatics. As long as one, however, does not console oneself by support-

ing the church's dogma against the Baptists, as long as one cannot teach the congregations another way of viewing baptism than the one that in its essence is the one the Baptists advocate, one will only be able to counteract Baptism's spiritual progress in a superficial manner. The church must have its strength in its dogma, and for the dogma there are no practical surrogates; there are neither moral nor aesthetic surrogates. The dogmatic deficit in the existing church's own view of baptism has now been made visible with the Baptists' second baptism, which in a negative manner reveals the truth which has been neglected in the church.

When we turn now from these phenomena to those which from the opposite side contest the validity of the church, namely, the *philosophical* Anabaptists, who would like to rebaptize the intelligence of the age into the dogmatics of Strauss in order in this way to purify it for Christianity, then this occasions a similar comment. Just as the religious Anabaptists have made progress in attaching themselves to the so-called "awakened," that is, to those who perceive the strong emotions of the spirit, but still | [68] have not become real believers, and are still religiously not of age and weak, so also the philosophical Anabaptists likewise fish in troubled waters and find inroads especially among the philosophically awakened, this means in the present context, among those in which free thinking has begun its powerful movement and called forth a spiritual condition of unrest, but which nevertheless still is philosophically not of age. When the religious revivals in our age have especially appeared among the common people, then, by contrast, a corresponding philosophical revival and condition of ferment has appeared among many people of the educated classes. A craving for higher knowledge, a restless search for light and clarity, an aspiration for total perception has come to a breakthrough among them. Their eyes have been opened to individual truths of philosophy, and they now demand a new earth and a new heaven, although they themselves do not know which. They seek a satisfaction which can only be granted them when they could find a point of rest not merely for their feeling but also for their thought. It should have been the duty of the church and the duty of scholarship connected with the church, as far as it is concerned and inside its own limits, to lead this movement, but in many respects the church seems so far only to have taken a position | [69] on the discussed religious revivals. The philosophical revival in our age, from which a false philosophy has developed among many, stands directly or indirectly in connection with the strivings which the real philosophy has undertaken in order to reform the sciences and thus all culture. But a reform of the religious fields of study will never be able to be carried out successfully, when it does not find the proper cooperation from the organs of the church and theology, which are the ones actually

called upon to lead the reform in this field. If religion should in truth be the power in which all of the moments of the culture of the age find their midpoint, in which not only feeling but also searching reflection finds rest—and religion may be able to be everything for everyone—then the intelligence of the church must also be able to cope with the philosophy of the age. But it is an experience which was repeated almost everywhere that many people who wanted to protect the interests of religion and the church and who precisely because of this ought to have placed themselves in a living reciprocal relation with philosophy in order to make use of the means it offers for renewal and the further development of religious knowledge, placed themselves in a hostile relation to all | [70] speculation. Others declared that nothing should be more welcome than a reconciliation of religion and speculation, but they immediately rejected every real attempt to put this goal into action as wholly mistaken and as something which could not be taken into consideration anymore. They wanted to support the reforming strivings, but on the condition that everything nonetheless remain as it was. Yet others kept up, right from the beginning, a complete indifferentism and continue to behave as if absolutely nothing had happened. Thus, the blame is just as much on the side of the church when the revolutionary party in scholarship made the progress which it has made, about which one can convince oneself with a glance at the situation in which the German literature finds itself at the moment. One contributed to giving this party a foothold in that one assured others that it alone possessed the true consequences of philosophy. Thus, one hoped indeed to have proved that all philosophy was reprehensible and that the ecclesial intelligence ought to keep clear of philosophical reforms. But in this way the dualism between the believers and the knowers had to become sharper day for day. At last it had to reach the point where | [71] it now has come, namely, that it has for many people become a kind of axiom that whatever is true in religion is false in philosophy and vice versa; that faith and truth are related to one another as the two masters, which one cannot serve at the same time, and one of which must necessarily be hated if one loves the other. Let the believers keep their faith if only we can keep our philosophy, calls the one party: Should the believers lock us out of their church, then we would see it only as a gain! — Let the knowers keep their knowledge, if only we keep our faith, say the pious: There is no community between faith and human wisdom! —Already both faithful and apostate are united in requesting the state to dissolve the State Church and to establish a general freedom of cult, according to which the ecclesiastical unity of the state's community is only a mere appearance, where the knowers in society cannot also be the faithful, where at bottom

there exist two congregations alongside each other, which mutually exclude each other.

We naturally assume that the principle of a State Church will have sufficient strength to prevent this dualism as well as the aforementioned sect-life from becoming widespread. The opposite would result in the [72] inevitable dissolution of the State Churches. But in order that these phenomena might not become widespread, it will be necessary that the State Church's deficiency of faith and knowledge which is evident at present, be recognized and gradually made up for. Political guarantees in themselves will be able to achieve nothing, against either philosophical fanaticism or religious fanaticism. The Church must essentially guarantee itself by making progress in spiritual self-consciousness, and it lies in the state's own interest that it not deprive the church of the opportunity to do so by too much interference. But heretofore the opportunity has been given only when the conflict has been fought in the purely spiritual field. If thus, for example, among us the conditions should make it necessary to allow the existence of Baptist communities here in Denmark in order to dam up in time the stream, whose unchecked development could be pernicious, then such a thing would certainly by no means be desirable in itself. But just as from the one side it would be a partial loss for the State Church, so also from the other side it could be regarded as a gain. The opposition which exists would thus serve to evoke a stronger confessional consciousness among our own congregations and to bring many people to reflection about [73] what we ourselves possess in Lutheranism. In general, a State Church is not strong, which is unable to tolerate any sect inside its district; on the contrary, a State Church possesses the true strength, which can suffer these particularities but with its spiritual superiority can posit them as a random, on the whole, disappearing element.

H. Martensen