PREFACE

Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, is acknowledged to be one of the most important thinkers of the nineteenth century. His contribution to the contemporary philosophical thought is abiding because of his stress upon inner life and human subjectivity. He stands as one of the greatest among those thinkers who believe that Christian truth is best realised without official authority and dogma; it is rather to be 'lived' individually in freedom. Kierkegaard's chief significance for contemporary philosophy lies in his analysis of the deep inwardness of religious experience. His influence extends not only to contemporary theologians but also to those writers who are representative of Christian, non-Christian and atheistic forms of the philosophies of existence. It is well-known that all the existentialist thinkers owe a great debt to Kierkegaard and interpret human existence in the light of his philosophy. Kierkegaard puts forth the problems of freedom, subjectivity, faith and God in a new perspective, challenging all the traditional standpoints. The fundamental difference between existential thinking and abstract speculation, the revolt against objectivity, scientific mechanism, emphasis on uniqueness, authenticity
and freedom of the individual — all these ideas have
been transmitted by Kierkegaard to the whole existentialist
movement.

The present work may be looked upon as a study
of Kierkegaard's basic thoughts in relation to his
religious views. It has been emphasised that Kierkegaard's
analysis of religious experience is not a speculative
rational analysis but an existential one. In fact this
whole philosophy revolves around his fundamental thesis
that truth is subjectivity. The attempt has been made
in this work to show that though Kierkegaard opposes
building of a philosophical system yet his own philosophy
is a systematic development of his fundamental standpoint.
If we examine Kierkegaard's philosophy from various
perspectives, its shortcomings can be seen. But this
should not cloud his importance to the contemporary
philosophical thought. In fact no philosophy, including
Kierkegaard's, can ever be absolute, it always has some
limitations; indeed, this is one of the conclusions
which follows from Kierkegaard's individualistic thought.

In the succeeding pages, Kierkegaard's fundamental
standpoint is first presented in sharp contrast to the
traditional rationalistic philosophy. Secondly a
criticism of dogmatic speculative theology and inter-
pretation of Christianity as an existential process is
attempted. It must be emphasised that what Kierkegaard says about Christianity might as well apply to other rationalist religious philosophies of the world. Further, a critical analysis of the ideas of subjectivity and freedom is taken up along with critical statements of Kierkegaard's views of God, faith, reason and passion. Kierkegaard's emphasis on faith rather than on reason, forms the burden of his entire thought. Finally there is a resume of Kierkegaard's basic position regarding religious experience and his relevance to the contemporary philosophical situation, which concludes this modest undertaking.

The bibliography given at the end does not claim to be extensive, in view of exhaustive bibliographies on Kierkegaard already available.¹ Only such works are mentioned which have been found to be relevant for the purposes of this dissertation.

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¹(a) Bibliography on Kierkegaard by Régis Jolivet.
(b) Bibliography on Kierkegaard by T.H. Croxall.
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