

## Being an Authentic Christian: an Analysis Based on the Philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard

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**Abstract:** Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of each individual being an authentic person. In his works, he gives an overview and direction to become an authentic person. Realizing whether someone authentically is not easy. Nowadays, I see many Christians who do not really live their lives as a Christian. The focus of this research is to present Kierkegaard's view on the criteria of an authentic Christian. The method used is a critical reading analysis of Kierkegaard's works (particularly *Purity of Heart* and *The Sickness unto Death*), previous research studies, observations, and interviews with several individuals. The author finds six criteria about authentic Christian individuals, namely: (1) Living in repentance, (2) Personal relationship with God, (3) Fear of God, (4) Willingness to suffer, (5) Being a loving person, and (6) Living in silence.

**Keywords:** authentic, existence, subjectivity, faith

**Abstrak:** Kierkegaard menekankan pentingnya bagi setiap individu untuk menjadi pribadi yang otentik. Dalam karya-karyanya, ia memberi gambaran dan arahan untuk menjadi seorang pribadi yang otentik. Mewujudkan diri secara otentik bukanlah sesuatu yang mudah. Penulis melihat banyak orang kristiani yang tidak sungguh-sungguh menghayati kehidupannya sebagai seorang Kristen. Fokus penelitian ini adalah untuk memaparkan pandangan Kierkegaard tentang kriteria seorang kristiani yang otentik. Metode yang digunakan adalah analisis pembacaan kritis atas karya Kierkegaard (secara khusus *Purity of Heart* dan *The Sickness unto Death*), studi penelitian terdahulu, pengamatan dan wawancara terhadap beberapa orang individu. Penulis menemukan setidaknya ada enam kriteria individu kristiani yang otentik, yaitu: (1) Hidup dalam pertobatan terus-menerus, (2) Memiliki relasi yang mendalam dengan Allah, (3) Takut akan Allah, (4) Kesiediaan untuk menderita, (5) Pribadi yang mencintai, dan (6) Hidup dalam keheningan.

**Kata Kunci:** otentik, eksistensi, subjektivitas, iman

### Introduction

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard reveals that man is a synthesis between the temporal and the eternal (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 13). The Christian faith believes that the body will corrupt, but the soul is immortal and was created to achieve union with God. However, many Christians try to reconcile the tension between these two aspects by immersing themselves in temporal matters. Kierkegaard saw this in the Danish Christians of his time. At the time, many people claim to be Christians, but in practice, they do not live their lives as Christians. Many of them live only for the pursuit of pleasure, and the religious are no exception. Using the words of Russell Johnson, at the time “Christianity becomes a matter of church membership, doctrinal confessions, and culturally-sanctioned rituals,” (Johnson, 2020, p.3). Christianity was merely an accessory or title worn by many individual and completely unrelated to the practice of everyday life. Kierkegaard described the situation “as Christianity’s ‘accommodation’ to or ‘compromise’ with ‘worldliness’ or the ‘secular mentality’ (*Verdslighed*)” (Plekton, 1983). For him, “Christendom had forgotten what it means to deny the self,” (Cates, 2009, p. 120). In fact, that is the call of Christians, to deny oneself, take up the cross and follow Jesus (Matthew 16:24). This situation

raises deep concern in Kierkegaard. He loudly called for criticism of the churches in Denmark. According to him, many Christians live in falsehood and hypocrisy.

As a figure who initiated the philosophy of existentialism, Kierkegaard emphasized the importance for every individual to have existence. Existentialism focuses on the subject and emphasizes the importance of existential involvement in human experience. According to Kierkegaard, those who exist are those who firmly and freely dare to make decisions in their lives and are responsible for them. Choice is related to the total commitment of every individual. Those who exist live their lives and are aware of everything they do. They do not “just live” but really live their lives. They do not just follow the mass group but become themselves. In Kierkegaard's view, individuals who exist are an authentic individual.

However, to achieve and live an authentic life is not something easy. There are many challenges and obstacles that must be faced by everyone in realizing his authentic identity. This is also experienced by Christians who live today. Many Christians do not realize and do not care about the purpose of life which is none other than to achieve union with God. Many Christians do not make God the centre and goal in their lives. Many of them profess to be a Christian but their attitudes do not reflect that of a follower of Christ. Their lives are no different from those of those who do not know Christ. Many Christians do not rely on God and live according to their own desires. They rely on worldly possessions and seem to be competing to get as much money and enjoyment as possible. Many Christians live without commitment. They fall into promiscuity and do not heed the commandments of the church. Many Christians also fall into the routine of carrying out their religious activities. They go to church without ever really realizing what they are really doing. In Kierkegaard's language, many Christians live in falsehood and hypocrisy. If this continues, over time they will lose their identity as subjects or actors in this life. They lost the direction and the real meaning of life as a Christian.

In his dialectic, Kierkegaard suggests that there are three stages of an individual's existential life, namely the aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages. According to Kierkegaard, the religious stage is the highest in the existential life of an individual. At this stage, man surrenders himself to God, an infinite being. This is “the life in which one recognizes the impossibility of actualizing the eternal through positive action and instead attempts to grasp it through repentance and suffering” (Evans, 2006, p. 87). Given the very limited human knowledge of God, then to reach this stage man need faith, which indeed cannot be separated from man freedom in responding to God's grace. Man takes a leap of faith, which allows him to realize his sinfulness and entrust himself to God the Merciful. For Kierkegaard, faith goes beyond ethical action. Individuals who are at the religious stage make God the centre and goal in their lives. This is indeed the calling of all Christians of all ages, namely, to attain union with God and to live in loving fellowship with Him. In order to answer this calling, it takes commitment and firmness from every individual who is facing the temptations in his life.

Christianity requires one to live a God-centred life and not something temporary. Therefore, it is proper for every individual to make God the centre and goal in his life and to establish a personal relationship with Him. Only God is worthy of being pursued with passionate infinity. Seeing that many Christians today are not living their lives as Christians, I am interested in analyzing them based on Kierkegaard's existential philosophy. In my opinion, Kierkegaard's view is very relevant in answering the problems faced by many Christians today. In the second period of his works, we can see how Kierkegaard gives directions on how Christians should live their lives. For him, it is very important for every individual to truly be himself and not live in falsehood. So, what is Kierkegaard's view of truly authentic Christians? What are the criteria? These questions are the focus of my research in this article.

This article is intended to answer these questions. I hope that through this article, many Christians will increasingly realize the importance of realizing themselves authentically and truly living their Christian life. Since in my opinion the concept of existence in the thought of Kierkegaard is the basis in answering these problems, first, I will analyse the concept of existence as subjective truth in Kierkegaard's thought. Then, I will enter the religious stage as the fullness of individual's existence. I will relate it with the concept of faith in his thought, considering that faith is a condition for an individual to be able to surrender himself completely to God. At the end, I will present the results of the analysis to answer the problems that I raised in this article.

## **Method**

The method that is applied in this article is a critical reading analysis of the works of Kierkegaard, especially *Purity of Heart* and *The Sickness unto Death*, and previous research studies on Kierkegaard's concept of Christianity. In addition, I also observed the life of Christian nowadays and made interviews with several Christian individuals about their spiritual lives and the challenges they face today. I present Kierkegaard's concept of existence, particularly his view on an individual who is in the 'religious sphere' since according to him, it is the fullness of an individual's existence. I also present Kierkegaard's concept of faith. Kierkegaard argues that faith is a subjective issue and goes beyond ethical actions. Then, I analyze the life of Christians today based on Kierkegaard's concept of Christianity. Finally, I present the results of my analysis. I concluded that they are at least six criteria based on Kierkegaard's works about authentic Christian individuals.

## **Result and Discussion**

### ***Existence as Subjective Truth***

Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes the subject as an actor in his or her life. Kierkegaard stated that a man is an individual who exists in his life. For him, individuals who exist are individuals who have strong determination and desire to live a certain way of life. The individual who exists is an individual who consciously makes decisions and is responsible for the decisions that have been taken. Individuals who exist are individuals who become themselves and do not live in "mass groups". For Kierkegaard, the *group* or *crowd* is an abstraction of the concrete individuals who gather in it. *Groups* or *crowds* make individuals lose their identity and adopt a group's identity as his or her own identity.

Existence is a subjective truth since it depends on the decision of man. Kierkegaard distinguishes between objective and subjective thinking. For him, "objective thought translates everything into results" while "subjective thought puts everything in the process and omits the result," (Kierkegaard, 1974, p. 68). He is against Hegel's view who stated that truth is an objective totality. For Kierkegaard, Hegel's ideas are not under the reality of human existential life because they are abstract and speculative. Kierkegaard argues that man cannot fully understand objective truth no matter how hard the efforts made by man (Kierkegaard, 1974, pp. 171-172). Man will always have objective uncertainty since this is "the paradoxical character of the truth" and "this uncertainty is an expression for the passionate inwardness," (Kierkegaard, 1974, p. 183).

Kierkegaard asserts that truth is subjectivity, which means that truth is obtained by the subject and belongs to the subject completely. For Mooney, subjectivity is nothing more than my response and my vow that "I'll answer for it," (Mooney, 2008, p. 44). The truth must be related to the real experience of

man and have meaning in the life of an individual. Subjective truth is an existential truth. Subjective truth is always concrete and related to the existence of man. Those who have subjective truth are those who eagerly build a relationship based on what they believe. Willows says: “the truth cannot be the truth unless it is lived,” (Willows, 1996, p. 5). Truth is essentially something that must be realized in the subject and must be assimilated in his mind. Truths must directly relate to the daily life of man, the values held by man, and the decisions made by man.

### ***The Religious Sphere as the Fullness of Individual’s Existence***

The existential dialectic initiated by Kierkegaard describes the spheres of existential life development experienced by man. Kierkegaard tries to answer every struggle experienced by individuals in their lives, especially when individuals are required to make decisions from the various options available. There are three spheres in the existential dialectic initiated by Kierkegaard, namely the aesthetic, ethical, and religious sphere. According to him, the movement from one sphere to another occurs based on the will or choice of the individual.

The religious is the highest in the stage of individual existence according to Kierkegaard. At this stage, individual is aware of his finite being and acknowledge the existence of God as an infinite being. He realizes that only in God he can feel security and hope. The individual also experiences repentance and deep regret for all the sins he has committed. He begins to establish a relationship with God and recognize Him as absolute paradox and reality. Quoting Pojman’s words, “As the Paradox, the central affirmation of Christian faith corresponds perfectly to the requirements of faith; by being highly improbable (even seemingly impossible in that it entails an apparent contradiction) it requires the most strenuous and passionate effort, the greatest risk and sacrifice of finite reason to believe,” (Pojman, 1977, p.87). An individual must dare to take a leap of faith to reach the religious stage. According to Ferreira, leap of faith refers to a qualitative transition to Christian religiousness (Ferreira, 1998, p.207). Surrendering oneself to God is an absolute decision of the individual and with full awareness and freedom he makes the decision to surrender himself to God’s providence.

### ***Faith as a Subjective Issue***

Kierkegaard considers that faith has a paradoxical character since Christian truths contradict reason (Malantschuk, 2003, p.231). Faith is something absurd and beyond reason. He defines faith as “an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness,” (Kierkegaard, 1974, p. 182). For him, faith is “the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty in man,” (Kierkegaard, 1974, p. 182). Man can only approach objective knowledge and cannot fully achieve it. Reality or objective truth can only be fully known by God as the Absolute Paradox. Objectively, this creates uncertainty in man, hence, it can make individuals dare to embrace objective uncertainty with unlimited inner desires. That is faith, where we dare to trust God even though we do not know God fully. Faith means putting aside all thoughts and accepting God as the Absolute Paradox even though there is no evident proof. Kierkegaard says, “If I am (Kierkegaard, 1974, p. 182). For Kierkegaard, “genuine faith can only be placed in an eternal and unchanging being,” (Kemp & Mullaney, 2018, p.7).

Kierkegaard realized that faith is a gift from God. However, this still requires the cooperation of the individual concerned. Man has the freedom to choose without anyone having the right to impose his choice on him (Kierkegaard, 1958 p. 152). Man must be willing to take risks when deciding to accept

or reject this universal gift. For Kierkegaard says: “if you wish to avoid all risk, then you want to be sure that you can swim before you enter the water,” (Kierkegaard, 1974, p. 182). However, man's acceptance of the faith “may be harder or easier depending on one's personal history,” (Jackson, 1998).

Faith is an existential problem that has subjective characteristics and relates to the meaning of an individual's life. Man reaches his maximum subjectivity in faith. As Kierkegaard says, “Faith is the highest passion in this sphere of human subjectivity,” (Kierkegaard, 1974, p. 118). Faith is the highest value in one's life. Faith is not simply accepting a factual statement, holding of beliefs about God, nor is it eternal communion between the faithful and Christ (Gouwens, 1996, p.140). A life of faith is a life lived in a relationship with God. A true believer trusts in God's promise and obeys His commandments (Westphal, 2011, p.84). Faith is more about imitating the life of Christ. This is also pointed out by Cockayne in his article, “that true Christianity is forfeited when one gives up on, or scales down, the task of imitating Christ,” (Cockayne, 2017, p.1). Faith demands a change in the individual so that the individual's entire life is carried out in a new way.

### ***Faith Goes Beyond Ethical Action***

Kierkegaard describes Abraham as the greatest figure of faith (Kierkegaard, 1983, pp.16-17). Abraham is an individual paradigm that puts obedience to God above all. He fully believed in God even though he was unable to understand God's plan. He acts transcendently, in which he overcomes and surrender himself to God by sacrificing Isaac. For Johannes de Silentio, the pseudonym used by Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling*, what Abraham did was something human reason cannot accept (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 9). Abraham's whole life was based on unconditional love and trust in God.

Kierkegaard views Abraham's act of sacrificing Isaac has double movements (Kierkegaard, 1983, pp. 34-52). The first movement is an infinite and negative movement of surrender, in which Abraham surrenders Isaac (Palmer, 2007, p.113). The second movement is a movement of faith which has a positive element, in which Abraham received Isaac back. Abraham who decided to sacrifice Isaac still believed in God's promise that his descendants would become a great nation (Palmer, 2007, p.113). Abraham's action is a paradox of faith, where both elements occur at the same time in the same action. Abraham's absurd faith and motivation are incomprehensible to human reason. For Palmer, “the absurdity is that Abraham had already given up Isaac indefinitely and yet at the same time he believed that he would not have to give up Isaac,” (Palmer, 2007, p.122).

Abraham's act of sacrificing Isaac surpassed his highest ethical obligations as a father. Abraham left his position as a moral agent and abandoned his rights and obligations in society and his duties towards the family. In their analysis, Li and Crabtree stated: “The paradox of faith means that the individual's private and inward relationship to God comes before the individual's duty to the universal, or the ethical,” (Li & Crabtree, 2019, p.377). What Abraham did was a form of unconditional surrender to God and beyond ethics. There is an attitude of faith and surrendering to God in Abraham that cannot be justified and understood in a social context (Palmer, 2007, p.117).

Abraham went beyond the ethical sphere for a goal to be viewed as higher, namely, to do what was God's will. Kierkegaard says: “By his act he transgressed the ethical altogether and had a higher *τέλος* outside it, in relation to which he suspended it,” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 59). Reed argues that “This telos itself produces something like spiritual trial in relation to the universal,” (Reed, 2019, p. 499). The reason Abraham went beyond ethics was none other than for God's sake as well as for himself (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 59). Kierkegaard calls such action as *a teleological suspension of ethical*

(Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 56). According to him, one can put ethics in second place if he has a higher purpose. Duty towards God can call a person to transcend ethical boundaries in response to a command from God (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 74,81). Walsh revealed, “to become the single individual is to become a whole and unified self before God, which is a possibility for every human being and our common ethical-religious task in life,” (Walsh, 2009, pp.1-2).

### ***Being an Authentic Christian***

Kierkegaard strongly emphasizes the importance for man to exist in his life. Man is unique and has his own way of being. Man will lose their identity if he “just lives” without really realizing what he is doing. For Kierkegaard, an authentic individual is an individual who consciously and courageously make choices in his life based on the subjective truth he embraces. He dares to make decisions on their own without being influenced by groups or crowds, other people around him, current trends, or other views prevailing in society. He acts as a main actor in this life, not just as spectator. He also takes responsibility for his actions, as Socrates took responsibilities for his actions (Kierkegaard, 2014, p. 433). For Kierkegaard, this courage of taking responsibility cannot be separated from his unwavering commitment to convey the subjective truth he believes in.

Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of man to be himself and not live in hypocrisy and falsehood. This applies to every man, including Christians. Christianity is the practice of living as individual who truly lives his life as a follower of Christ. Mooney argues, “Christianity is not scholarly knowledge, not priestly edicts, not revelation used to gavel questioning to silence; not rote adherence to creeds, authorities, or routines,” (Mooney, 2007, p.55). Christianity is the way followers of Christ exist. Kierkegaard clearly says: “If Xnty... does not reduplicate itself in the person who presents it, then what he is presenting is not Xnty,” (Kierkegaard, 2003, p.39; 6, p. 323,358-359).

Many Christians today do not live their existential life as Christian. Becoming an authentic Christian is not easy. There are many challenges and obstacles that must be faced by man to become a true follower of Christ. Kierkegaard provides some guidance for Christians on how they should live their life according to their Christian faith. The following is my analysis of Kierkegaard's view regarding criteria for an authentic Christian.

### **Living in Repentance**

Total surrender to God makes man realize all his weaknesses and limitations. Man realizes and regrets all sins he has committed. Kierkegaard describes sin as a form of guilt, anxiety, and restlessness in the heart before God (Gouwens, 1996, p.136). Sin is “a state characterized by disobedience to and estrangement from God,” (Lippitt, 2003, p.162). For Kierkegaard, the only way to return to God is through repentance. A personal relationship with God begins with regret and repentance (Kierkegaard, 2020, p. 38). Kierkegaard also links man's awareness of sin to his love for God. A person who is not aware of his sinfulness cannot love God, and when he does not love God, he cannot realize his sin before God (Kierkegaard, 2020, p. 191). God's love encourages man to truly repent and turn from his negative habits in the past. Man tries to get away from all temporary goals and focus their whole being on God by establishing a relationship with Him. For Kierkegaard, remorse for sins is very important. A sense of remorse will guide man towards a deeper self-understanding in his relationship with God. Man realizes himself as a sinner and his dependence on the merciful God. This regret means reorienting the

relationship with God with the right motivation. However, repentance is not a one-time process. Repentance is an on-going process.

#### Fostering a Personal Relationship with God

God and man are two very different beings. Kierkegaard firmly said that there is “an infinite qualitative difference” between God and man (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 126). God is infinite, while human is finite. Man’s thought is very limited because of the character of his existence. In Kierkegaard's view, man cannot know God fully, since God is completely different from humans. Edwards argues, “In order to be a Christian, one must relinquish his understanding and his thinking and keep his soul fixed upon the absurd,” (Edwards, 1971, p.92).

Kierkegaard believes that “the highest self-actualization of the individual is the relating oneself to God, not as the universal, absolute Thought, but as the absolute Thou” (Kierkegaard, 1974, p.341; Cfr. Marino, 2001, p.14). Man cannot just have certain religious truths without having a deep relationship with God. It is only by establishing a personal relationship with God that a man becomes a man. Faith includes an individual’s commitment to living in a subjective relationship with God. A life of faith is a life lived in a personal relationship with God and surrender totally to God’s providence.

Kierkegaard adds that man has a duty to God. In this relation, an individual relates absolutely to the Absolute (Kierkegaard, 1983, p.62). For him, the relationship with God is something subjective since it is related to man’s decisions. Relationships with God cannot be measured using objective standards. We cannot determine whether a person is in a personal relationship with God simply by relying on outward signs. However, Kierkegaard provides a picture that can be used to judge whether a person is in a relationship with God. According to him, a person who wants to become a Christian must bravely and wholeheartedly risk everything for the sake of wanting to belong to Christ, live in a relationship with God, and make God the center of his life.

#### Having a Fear of God

Fear of God is different from one's fear of punishment. “The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge,” (Proverbs 1:7). In this life, one should be afraid and respect God. Kierkegaard says: “Spirituality understood there is ruinous illness, namely, not to fear what a man should fear: the sacredness of modesty, God in heavens, the command of duty, the voice of conscience, the accountability to eternity,” (Kierkegaard, 1956, p.80). Man has an absolute obligation to God that must be carried out for the sake of the obligation itself. For Kierkegaard, a person who fears punishment has a forked mind and is unlikely to develop a loving relationship with God. The fear of punishment opens the opportunity for the evil one to work (Kierkegaard, 1956, p.98). Man, who fears of punishment, has no genuine motivation and has double-mindedness,” (Kierkegaard, 1956, p.83). Many of Christians have double-mindedness in the sense that they lack pure motivation when they come to God (Kierkegaard, 1956, p.69).

#### Suffering as a Must for Christians

Kierkegaard argues that suffering is necessary for a Christian. Suffering is “the expression of the highest inward passion in relation to God,” (Kierkegaard, 2015, p.488). Every Christian must imitate Jesus Christ as “the clear witness of this sacrificial love for the other person,” (Tangyin, 2013, p.159). A genuine Christian must suffer from Christ’s passion by their own voluntarily. By bearing his cross in

daily suffering, a Christian “come to experience the identity of abasement and exaltation that was present in Christ,” (Hinkson, 1992, p.92). Suffering is necessary since through suffering man can have “a loving relationship with God which is necessarily reciprocal: one can’t love God without being loved by God” (Žalec, 2020, p.5). Through suffering, man’s love for God is further purified.

In the Gospel of Suffering, Kierkegaard develops a picture of the relational virtues of the Christian faith (Gouwens, 1996, p.141). He emphasizes self-denial, bearing the cross, and imitating Christ as a practice in everyday life. Man, who tries to set his heart on God and puts other temporary things in second place will always face suffering in his life since he must oppose the various desires that exist within him and the general tendency of the wider community. Kierkegaard also says that the passive suffering of a religious person is not denying the world, but an active process that opens the way for God to work within a person (Kierkegaard, 1974, p.182). Just as Jesus during His lifetime was marginalized and rejected by society, so it is also faced by individuals who try to make God the center of their lives. Kierkegaard believes that followers of Christ should also experience suffering in their lives. For him, suffering is an important outcome and participation of discipleship. Suffering is a kind of test for a Christian (Kierkegaard 1944, p.194). However, there is joy behind the suffering he must endure (See Kierkegaard CD, x101-160).

### Becoming a Loving Person

In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard emphasizes the very high quality of love, impartiality, and giving love. Such love is eternal. The source of that love is God himself, who remains hidden and secret (Kierkegaard, p.8). Mahn argues, “only through God’s unconditional love is human freedom conditioned, grounded, given shape,” (Mahn, 2011, p.156). Without remembering God, no one can speak properly of love (Kierkegaard, 1995, pp.3-4). God instills love in man and man shall develop that love. But no individual knows for sure where this love flows, for it remains in remoteness and hiddenness,” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p.8). For Kierkegaard, only in its fruit can we recognize this love (Kierkegaard, 1995). Love manifests in man’s actions.

Kierkegaard describes the existential relationship in the life of a Christian which is manifested in love. Houmark in her article claims, “That being subjective is a matter of receiving and interpreting love in the right way, of grasping the demand of subjectivity in such a way,” (Houmark, 2018, p.68). Love is a basic human need. “The need for love is rooted in human nature,” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p.154). In the religious sphere, love is directed to God as well as to others. Only individuals who have completely surrendered themselves to God can share a genuine love for God and others.

Loving God and neighbor is a “human response to God’s grace”, and this is “the follow-through to faith,” (Russell, 2015, p.66). Using Ferreira’s words, “genuine love must come out of a “sincere faith,” (Ferreira, 2001, p.73). Love for God and neighbor, as stated in Matthew 22:37-40, is a form of manifestation of the Christian faith. For Kierkegaard says: “The object of faith is thus God’s reality in existence as a particular individual,” (Kierkegaard, 1974, p.290). Loving is a must for Christians. Kierkegaard emphasizes as the bible says, “person should love God unconditionally in obedience and love him in adoration,” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p.19). Obedience to God is absolute and non-negotiable, even though at that time the individual may not be able to understand God’s plan.

Love for God encourages man to also love each other (Verhagen, 2020, p.8). It is a contradiction if man claim to love God but does not practice that love for the neighbors (Cockayne, 2020, p.13). Love for neighbor needs to be based on love for God, so this love is divine. “Neighbourly love is self-denial’s

love” that “opposed the kind of love that is focused on the self” (Krishek, 2008, p.597). Kierkegaard invites every Christian to “love your friend honestly and devotedly but let love for the neighbour be what you learn from each other in your friendship's confidential relationship with God” (Kierkegaard, 1995, p.62).

#### In the Silence of One's own Heart

A personal relationship with God is a subjective matter that involves “silence as much as utterance,” (Howland, 2003, p.21). Kierkegaard emphasized the importance of an individual to remain silent. For him, God's call can encourage the emergence of an attitude of silence in a person. Silence is the essence of inner life. The Individual who has a deep relationship with God is a quiet individual. He is not afraid to live in silence and solitude. He left the busyness and crowds and did not dissolve in the mass group that made him not of himself. Kierkegaard sees busyness as one of the barriers that prevent individuals from experiencing silence. Busyness causes one to give a very small role to God even to the point of forgetting God. A person who wants to achieve purity of heart and establish a personal relationship with God will be tempted by the busyness and various activities in his life.

Kierkegaard emphasized the importance of remaining silent in the heart, waiting and listening attentively to the Eternal in prayer. Through praying, a man will be enabled to understand himself. Understanding oneself is something important because then one will arrive at wisdom or purity of heart, where he is enabled to know himself before God. Kierkegaard says “For purity of heart is the very wisdom that is acquired through prayer. A man of prayer does not pour over learned books for he is the wise man “whose eyes are opened”- when he kneels down” (Kierkegaard, 1956, p.89). Only a wise person can say and act essentially (Kierkegaard, 1978, p.97). By staying silent, the subject will arrive at a deep knowledge and understanding of his existence before God. In silence, the subject can do a deep reflection about himself and all the experiences that occur in his life.

Silence leads individuals to love God more and reject personal pleasures and self-aggrandizement. By staying in silence, the individual can defeat the selfish nature in him that can lead to arrogance. Since for Kierkegaard, service that is egocentric and leads to pride is one of the obstacles in a man who is developing a personal relationship with God (Kierkegaard, 1956, p.7). This barrier is difficult to detect because it is related to the purity of an individual's heart.

#### **Conclusion**

Soren Kierkegaard emphasizes that every individual should manifest themselves authentically. An individual is said to be authentic if with his free will and full awareness he dares to make decisions and is responsible for his actions. In his works, Kierkegaard specifically invites Christians to truly live his life as Christian. In fact, there are many Christians today who just profess to be Christian, but their actions are not in accordance with the Christian faith. For Kierkegaard, they are not authentic individuals.

Kierkegaard argues, it is very important for every Christian to do some inner reflection so that he can truly reach the “religious sphere”. An individual who reaches this stage is able to surrender himself totally to God. In fact, faith plays an important role here. However, a man with his free will has the freedom to respond or refuse to the grace of faith bestowed by God. An individual who surrenders himself totally to God is an individual who lives in repentance, has a fear of God, and develops a personal relationship with God. A deep relationship with God will ultimately encourage an individual

to willingly suffer for the sake of their love for God and others. Surrendering the self totally to God will also lead man to live in silence. In silence, he leaves all his activity and busyness and enters an intimate personal relationship with God. However, fostering a personal relationship with God need strong motivation and commitment from the individual concerned.

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