

An Analysis of Fabro's Catholic Interpretation of Kierkegaard

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Abstract

This paper will aim to examine the Catholic interpretation of the thought of the Lutheran philosopher Søren Kierkegaard proposed by Cornelio Fabro, an Italian Catholic philosopher. Its main aims will be to clarify Fabro's argument and understand whether his interpretation can be assessed positively. Firstly, it will describe Fabro's context, which is essential in order to understand his attempt to make Kierkegaard acceptable to the Catholic Church. Secondly, it will provide an overview of Fabro's interpretation of Kierkegaard and of his relationship with Catholicism, particularly through reference to the concept of the "Imitation of Christ" and Mariology. Thirdly, it will try to find evidence for his main claims in Kierkegaard's own works, particularly the *Journals and Papers*. Finally, it will interpret Fabro's argument as an attempt to identify Catholic sensibilities in Kierkegaard's thought and it will endorse his interpretation overall, though with minor disagreements on more specific issues, such as Kierkegaard's opinions on celibacy and on the possibility of a counter-reformation. This interpretation of Fabro, who is widely unknown in the English-speaking world, will provide a new insight and perspective on the analysis of Kierkegaard's theology which could challenge the dominant Protestant interpretation through an in-depth analysis of his works.

Introduction

The aim of this paper will be to examine the Catholic interpretation of the thought of the Lutheran philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) proposed by Cornelio Fabro (1911-1995), an Italian Catholic philosopher.

Fabro's interpretation challenges the dominant Protestant understanding of Kierkegaard's philosophy while also providing innovative arguments within the Catholic literature on the topic (represented by authors such as Haecker and Przywara) (Furnal 2015). Therefore, the importance of this research is given by the fact that it widens our understanding of Kierkegaard's theology, providing the interpretation of an author who is widely unknown in the English-speaking world (Furnal 2015) and who has presented a perspective on the topic which is antithetical to the dominant one.

This paper will try to achieve two main goals:

- To clarify Fabro's argument by interpreting it as an attempt to make Kierkegaard acceptable to the Catholic world (rather than as an attempt to make a Catholic out of him). It will describe how he identifies in Kierkegaard a disappointed Lutheran who is using Catholicism as a corrective for Protestantism, without fully embracing it.
- To understand whether Fabro's Catholic interpretation of Kierkegaard can be assessed positively. A balanced approach, which analyses both strengths and weaknesses, is necessary to ensure that Fabro's interpretation can be used correctly to provide a good insight into the relationship between Kierkegaard and Catholicism.

Firstly, I will describe Fabro's context, which is essential in order to understand his argument as an attempt to introduce Kierkegaard in the cultural environment of the twentieth century Catholic Church. Secondly, I will provide an overview of Fabro's interpretation of Kierkegaard and his relationship with Catholicism. I will particularly look at the issues of the "Imitation of Christ" and Mariology, two highly relevant concepts in Catholic theology that Kierkegaard seems to be praising. Thirdly, I will try to find evidence for Fabro's main claims in Kierkegaard's work, particularly the *Journals and Papers*. Finally, I will show some minor inaccuracies in Fabro's interpretation of Kierkegaard's use of Catholicism as a corrective for Protestantism, and I will exemplify this with the issue of "celibacy". Notwithstanding this, I will argue that his interpretation of Kierkegaard as a disappointed Lutheran with Catholic sensibilities is correct overall.

Fabro's Context

Cornelio Fabro was an Italian Catholic priest, academic and philosopher, known for his works on Thomism. However, his name was often related to the works of Kierkegaard, which he translated and reinterpreted.

Although well known in Italy, Fabro's interpretation of Kierkegaard was, and still is, largely unknown in the English-speaking world (Furnal 2015: 182). Moreover, his argument is not always clear. In his interpretation, there is certainly an attempt to identify Catholic sensibilities in Kierkegaard, although it is unclear to what extent this interpretation depicts Kierkegaard as a Catholic or as a proto-Catholic. Part of the confusion is given by the fact that in many of his works, Fabro lets Kierkegaard speak for himself through direct quotations from the *Journals and Papers*. That is not to say that Fabro does not provide us with his own comments, but it means that he often relies on direct evidence from Kierkegaard without the mediation of his own view.

Nevertheless, I believe that one thing can be clarified immediately: Fabro is not trying to make a Catholic out of Kierkegaard. Although he makes reference to German philosophers like Haecker and Przywara, who have tried to find in the Danish philosopher the possibility of a conversion to Catholicism (1956: 68), he distanced himself from them, providing a slightly different argument and clarifying explicitly that it is absurd to depict Kierkegaard as a Catholic (1948: 1033-1034).

However, the question remains: what is the message that Fabro is trying to convey? I believe that the best way to understand it is by looking at the context in which Fabro lived. Joshua Furnal has followed this path by focusing on the situation of the Catholic Church and using it as the key to understanding Fabro's interest in Kierkegaard (2015). Fabro writes in the context of the Thomistic revival in the Catholic cultural environment, which started after Pope Leo XII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) and which continued with Pope Pius X's condemnation of Modernism (1907). The Catholic Church looked back at the Middle Ages in theology, being suspicious of the new changes in continental philosophy. This caused the reaction of the *Resourcement*, which supported the idea of being open to Modernism

(Furnal 2015: 185-186). As Furnal noted, Fabro became close to this movement and Kierkegaard's philosophy (2015: 190).

At this point, as Furnal explains, Fabro, who was a Thomist, found in Kierkegaard several similarities with Thomas Aquinas (2015: 191-192). This began with a reinterpretation of Kierkegaard's relationship with the role of reason (Furnal 2015: 192). On this last point, Fabro challenged those philosophers who interpreted Kierkegaard as an irrationalist thinker. Instead, he argued that Kierkegaard depicted reason as separate from faith but in a positive relationship with it (similarly to Aquinas) (1956: 69-70). Reason helps in recognising its own limits in front of the paradoxes of religion, and it collaborates with faith by avoiding speculations on what is believed (1956: 69-70).

This information helps us in understanding what message Fabro is conveying. He is not trying to interpret Kierkegaard as a Catholic, but he is instead trying to make Kierkegaard acceptable to the Catholic Church (Furnal 2015: 199). In order to do so, he has tried to identify in Kierkegaard some Catholic sensibilities. Some of them are listed by Furnal, such as Kierkegaard's Mariology or his Ecclesiology (2015: 198-210). However, Fabro also talks about Kierkegaard's views on Imitation, from which his views on the saints, celibacy and the monastery are derived, and which bring the Danish philosopher closer to the Catholic Church without making him a Catholic. This concept of Imitation will be explored more in depth in the next section.

Nevertheless, Fabro's attempt to make Kierkegaard acceptable to the Catholic cultural environment does not imply that he fabricates facts and statements about his philosophy. On the contrary, in the following sections I will show how Fabro depicts Kierkegaard as a disappointed Protestant with some Catholic sensibilities which he uses to correct the degeneration of Protestantism. I will also highlight how Fabro's claims are based upon an overall accurate reading of Kierkegaard's own works.

Fabro's interpretation: Kierkegaard, Protestantism and Catholicism

Having clarified that Fabro is not re-interpreting Kierkegaard as a potential Catholic, it is now necessary to analyse his positive interpretation of the Danish philosopher. Fabro's idea of Kierkegaard is that of a Protestant, but a "disappointed" one because of the status of Christianity in Protestantism and in Denmark in particular.

Fabro identified in Kierkegaard several criticisms against Protestantism, among which we can list the influence of Hegelianism (1959: 852-857), the excessive secularisation (1957: 127), the theological role of the Virgin Mary (1948) and the abandonment of the concept of the *Imitatio Christi* ("Imitation of Christ") (1973). Although all these issues are fascinating and worth analysing, I will explore only the last two for the sake of conciseness. That is because Imitation is an issue which has rarely been explored and, along with Mariology, is the point on which Kierkegaard appears to be closest to Catholicism.

To understand what the idea of "Imitation" is, it is worth starting from the role it plays in Fabro's interpretation of Kierkegaard.

According to the Italian thinker, Kierkegaard accuses later Protestantism of having abandoned the idea of Christ as a "prototype", i.e., an example to follow and imitate. This has contributed to an extent to the victory of worldliness and, overall, has led Protestantism to focus solely on 'grace' as a path to salvation, and to ignore 'good works' (1973: 260-261).

In Fabro's view, Kierkegaard's criticisms are not solely directed at the condition of later Protestantism. Effectively, the Danish philosopher also ascribes some responsibilities to Luther's actions and preaching (1984).

Kierkegaard is particularly harsh in those passages cited by Fabro in which Luther is described as an anti-apostle who has defended and created a more 'human' and 'worldly' version of Christianity (1984: 9-10), and who is responsible for the excessive attention of later Protestantism to the idea of Christ as a gift and the rejection of Christ as a prototype. This finds its origins in the fact that Luther himself focused too much on the first and ignored the latter (1984: 9).

However, Fabro admits that Kierkegaard still agrees with Luther, justifying most of his errors (1984: 10). Here Fabro's argument appears in line with that of Kim and Rasmussen. In their interpretation, Kierkegaard is acknowledging that Luther has overstressed the idea of Christ as a gift, but Luther is also contextualised as responding to the traditional importance of the concept of Christ as a prototype in Catholicism and the Middle Ages (Kim and Rasmussen 2016). In this context, Luther focused more on the idea of Christ as a gift, and less as a model to imitate, as a form of counterbalance.

In Fabro's interpretation, Catholicism has in Kierkegaard the role of a corrective for these degenerate aspects of Protestantism, as it has kept in its tradition the importance of Christ as a model to imitate (1957; 1973). In other words, for Kierkegaard, by looking at how Catholicism positively understands the concept of Imitation and by comparing it with the Protestant rejection of it, we can identify where Protestantism has committed some mistakes and we can manage to solve them.

The relevance of the Imitation of Christ in Kierkegaard is depicted by Fabro as inherently connected to the importance of the communication of truth. The two models that Kierkegaard uses to exemplify this concept, Socrates (for the natural truth) and Christ (for the supernatural truth), lived without writing and communicated the truth directly through their actions (1957: 131-133). Hence, what has to be done, or at least ought to be tried by men, is to live and be in the truth by striving to be Christ-like, while also being conscious of their inability to be Christ.

From this conception of Imitation, Kierkegaard derives his Catholic corrections to Protestantism. An example is when he praises Catholicism for worshipping the saints and martyrs, who followed the path of the Imitation of Christ (1957: 127), something which Protestants rejected. There is also the case of the monasteries. Fabro identifies in Kierkegaard several critiques against the monastic life of the Middle Ages, as a misunderstanding of how the Imitation of Christ should be properly performed. However, he also recognises in him a sentiment of regret for the Protestant abolition of the monastery, which still represented an admirable attempt to imitate Christ (Fabro 1973: 259-260).

Celibacy is also an interesting case in Fabro's interpretation of Kierkegaard. The Protestant pastor who lives with his wife and children and whose role in society is nothing more than that of a normal person with a job and a family is, in Kierkegaard's view, the symbol of the rejection of the *Imitatio* in favour of worldliness. The pastor's life is one of contradiction between the New Testament and his own actions (Fabro 1974). From here comes, according to Fabro, Kierkegaard's praise of celibacy in the Catholic clergy, and his critique of Protestantism for the way in which it is suspicious of celibacy and labels it as wrong. Moreover, Catholicism has also the merit of venerating the "virgin", rather than the common woman as Protestantism does (Fabro 1974).

This last point is connected to Fabro's overview of another Catholic sensibility in Kierkegaard: his Mariology. In contrast with Karl Barth as well as with most of the Protestant intellectuals, Kierkegaard praises on several occasions the Virgin Mary (Fabro 1948: 1026-1028).

She becomes prominent in his philosophy and is even compared to Abraham as a person who accepted the radical choice imposed by religious life (Fabro 1948: 1028-1029). Her acceptance to be the virgin mother of God and, more generally, her acceptance of the paradox, the scandal and the suffering that will derive from it, make her as great as Abraham and even more, as no angel came to save her child from suffering (Fabro 1948: 1029).

Nevertheless, it is important to be reminded that Fabro is not depicting Kierkegaard as a Roman Catholic (1948: 1033-1034). Although Fabro has shown us that Kierkegaard possessed several Catholic sensibilities, he accepts that the Danish philosopher remains incompatible with Catholicism in many ways.

He is ultimately loyal to the Lutheran interpretation of Grace and Faith, and he admires and praises Luther and the Reformation as right and necessary (Fabro 1984: 6-7).

Hence, Fabro interprets Kierkegaard's relationship with Catholicism in terms of a dialectic, in which Kierkegaard does not embrace but uses Catholicism, through his own "Catholic sensibilities", in order to correct the degeneration of Protestantism.

Kierkegaard's Thought

After having clarified what Fabro's view is, I will now show whether we can find evidence for it in Kierkegaard's works. It seems evident that the issue of Imitation is a central one in Fabro's analysis. Nevertheless, it is not immune to criticisms.

It is true that there are several passages in which Kierkegaard praises the concept of the Imitation of Christ, complaining that it has been left out in Protestantism (X3A666*n.d.*, 1850; X³ A 750 *n.d.*, 1851) and by Luther, as this quote seems to confirm: 'It is "imitation" (to suffer for the doctrine and what belongs to it) which must be emphasized again; in this way the task relates itself dialectically to the point where Luther eased up' (X⁴ A 349 *n.d.*, 1851).

However, Daphne Hampson identified in Kierkegaard a coherence with a Lutheran "Nachfolge" rather than the Catholic idea of the Imitation of Christ (2006: 266-267). The difference between the two is quite subtle and has been widely debated. In order to simplify this issue, we could say that a person who accepts the Catholic "Imitatio" does not limit himself to follow as a disciple the words and preaching of Christ, but strives to become Christ-like instead, i.e., to model his actions on those of Jesus. This is well exemplified by the attention to the saints in Catholicism, as they are seen as "holy individuals" like Christ (Hampson 2006).

On the contrary, the concept of "Nachfolge" (which might be translated as "discipleship") in a Lutheran sense does not imply the idea that one should strive to be Christ-like, but it tries to convey the message that one should accept through faith the preachings of Christ and to follow them as a disciple of his thought. As Lutheranism tries to give more importance to salvation through "grace" and acceptance from God (irrespective of merits) than Catholicism does, it also tends to focus less on the idea that one should act and be like Christ (Hampson 2006).

Hampson's interpretation could be confirmed by the fact that "imitation" and "imitate me" are respectively translated from the Danish "Efterfølgelsen" and "Følge mig efter" (2006: 266), which conveys an idea closer to that of "following" (and hence discipleship) rather than to that of "imitating".

However, Fabro translated Kierkegaard from Danish into Italian, and his choices are not lacking some good reasons to support them. Notwithstanding the semantic inaccuracy of the translation, the context in which these expressions are used seems to convey a clear reference to the Catholic *Imitatio Christi*. For example, the following quote appears to convey an idea of imitation: ‘What he says, therefore, is essentially this: Imitate me [*følge migefter*]; hate yourself; forsake all things; crucify the flesh; take up the cross; hate father and mother, etc.’ (XI¹ A 199 *n.d.*, 1854).

This seems to be a case of imitation, given that the actions of the disciple are modelled on those of Christ himself. Moreover, even more compelling are those quotes in which he explicitly refers to Catholicism: ‘There is more significance in Catholicism simply because "imitation" ("*Efterfølgelsen*") has not been relinquished completely’ (X⁴ A 354 *n.d.*, 1851).

In this last quote, it seems impossible that Kierkegaard might be referring to a Lutheran “*Nachfolge*”, as he is clearly specifying that the concept to which he is referring to is present in Catholicism. Moreover, in the following quote he clearly refers to “*Efterfølgelsen*” as something that existed and was established in Christianity before Luther’s reformation and against which Luther reacted. Hence, if it existed before the Lutheran reformation, how can it be a “Lutheran *Nachfolge*”?

‘Luther’s situation was quite different in his time. Then "imitation" was in full motion and off course. Now, however, imitation has been completely abolished.’ (X⁴ A 349 *n.d.*, 1851)

In other words, Fabro’s interpretation seems to be coherent with Kierkegaard’s works.

Compelling evidence that suggests the existence of Catholic sensibilities in Kierkegaard is also given by those passages about the Virgin Mary and the Annunciation. In his *Journals and Papers*, he depicts her as a woman worthy of honour (XI¹ A 40 *n.d.*, 1854), who must be praised for her “Yes” which represented the acceptance of the miracle and of the paradox of being the virgin mother of God (X⁴ A 454 *n.d.*, 1852), against all the prejudices she was going to face (VIII¹ A 338 *n.d.*, 1847; X⁴ A 520 *n.d.*, 1852). Fabro is right in citing *Fear and Trembling* in his analysis. In it, Kierkegaard compares the Virgin Mary with Abraham, the Knight of Faith, by focusing on the suffering which she accepted in her life by her leap of faith (1843).

Nevertheless, in other cases Fabro’s interpretation appears to be somewhat biased, for example when he talks about Celibacy. As I outlined earlier, Fabro stresses Kierkegaard’s critique of the way in which Celibacy is treated in Protestantism and of the way in which the pastor regards marriage as something which must be done in order to be a good Christian. Although these criticisms are part of Kierkegaard’s thought, and are confirmed by several quotes in which he also praises celibacy (VIII¹ A 369 *n.d.*, 1847), it is also true that his views are far from an endorsement of the Catholic idea of celibacy.

On the contrary, Kierkegaard often criticizes Catholicism and the Middle ages on this point, clarifying that it was wrong to think that ‘it was a sacrilege for a priest to marry’ (X¹ A 440 *n.d.*, 1849) or ‘to regard [...] the unmarried state, etc. as something which in and for itself could please God’ (X² A 181 *n.d.*, 1849). Kierkegaard might have been a champion of celibacy as Fabro describes him, though only as a personal choice. Therefore, that does not make him an opponent of the idea of marriage for priests. What he is opposing is instead the Protestant degeneration which criticizes and ridicules celibacy (X³ A419*n.d.*,1850). Fabro does not explicitly deny the criticisms against the Catholic celibacy, but he simply ignores them, providing an unfair depiction of Kierkegaard’s view.

However, notwithstanding this last point, I believe that Fabro is right in finding some Catholic sensibilities in Kierkegaard, as has been established above.

The Catholic Corrective in Kierkegaard

On the relationship between the Danish philosopher and Catholicism, Fabro's interpretation appears to be right. The same can be said of his interpretation of Kierkegaard's opinion regarding Protestantism as 'altogether indefensible' and 'a mitigation of Christianity' (XI² A 162 n.d., 1854). From these criticisms and disappointment, the Catholic corrective which Fabro identified arises. A clear example is provided in the entry on *Catholicism-Protestantism* from the *Journals and Papers*.

Here, Kierkegaard depicts both Catholicism and Protestantism as necessary to each other, making Protestantism 'not qualified to stand alone' (XI² A305 n.d., 1853-54). This is shown in the differences between the two in judging their clergy. While Catholicism's corruption would take the form of "surface sanctity", in which the Catholic will admit to not be in a position to judge the clergy spiritually but will recognize its worldliness, Protestantism's corruption would take the form of "spiritless secularism", in which the Protestant would see in the worldliness of the pastor nothing more than religiousness (XI² A162 n.d., 1854).

Therefore, through comparing with Catholicism, the Protestant could be able to recognize the worldliness of the pastor.

This is just a general overview of Kierkegaard's use of Catholicism as a corrective, but there are several cases in which the correctives are related to more specific issues, such as for monasteries or celibacy.

I believe that it is when discussing these latter specific points that Fabro's interpretation loses its accuracy. I think that Fabro is interpreting Kierkegaard as somebody who is using those Catholic correctives to "counter-reform" certain specific aspects of the Reformation (such as celibacy or the monasteries), while remaining a Lutheran overall. It is necessary to clarify that this is not something that Fabro claims explicitly. Nevertheless, by looking at how he frames certain debates, this view tends to emerge. A clear example of this is the issue discussed above: celibacy. We have already seen how Fabro omits the parts in which Kierkegaard criticizes the compulsory nature of celibacy for priests in Catholicism. In the same article, Fabro claims the following: 'He (Kierkegaard) praises [...] Catholicism, which forces celibacy upon its priests as a guarantee of the authenticity of their mission and the transcendence and freedom of Christianity' (1974). He later states that this is the reason why Kierkegaard called for the return of the Religious Orders (1974) and wrote: 'back to the monastery from which Luther broke out' (XI 1A 134 n.d., 1854).

Firstly, the main sentence quoted is ambiguous, particularly in its original Italian version. It could either mean that Kierkegaard praised Catholicism because it has kept the institution of obligatory celibacy (which, as we have seen earlier, would not be coherent with Kierkegaard's own views); or it could simply mean that he praises Catholicism, and that Catholicism happens to enforce this rule for the reasons he has given. I leave it to the reader to decide which interpretation sounds more plausible. However, it is worth noticing that this is one of the few cases in which Fabro makes a claim about Kierkegaard's view without directly citing or referencing his original texts, suggesting that he might be aware that Kierkegaard has never written anything in support of compulsory celibacy for the clergy and that the ambiguity of the sentence could be intentional (1974).

Secondly, notwithstanding this ambiguity, one thing seems clear from Fabro's following claims. According to him, Kierkegaard believes that Protestantism has got celibacy completely wrong and that it is necessary to reform it and to go back to the Catholic model (1974). Although Fabro does not explicitly say it, this is what seems to be suggested by the last claims cited from the article. Whether

Fabro truly believed this or did it simply to make Kierkegaard more acceptable to the Catholic Church is difficult to say. In my opinion, the first option is unlikely considering Fabro's in-depth knowledge of Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, which clearly show the Danish philosopher does not want to go back to the Catholic model of Celibacy (X¹ A 440 *n.d.*, 1849).

Kierkegaard accepts that celibacy should be a choice and accepts this aspect of the Reformation. He simply disagrees with how Protestants have interpreted this change, i.e. as a statement of the fact that celibacy is wrong (X³ A 419 *n.d.*, 1850). That is what Kierkegaard is saying. He does not want to counter-reform; he simply wants people to understand the meaning of the Reformation correctly. His unwillingness to go back to Catholicism on specific points through a "new Reformation" is explicitly stated:

'No, the evil in our age is the frivolous, profane conceit that we are fit to reform the Church; the evil in our age simply wants to take the concept of reformation in vain. [...] My idea is: the true task in our age is not to reform but to get clear about our present situation, where we are' (X4A 345 *n.d.*, 1851).

Hence, the Catholic corrective must not be interpreted as a Reformation of the Reformation, as a way of bringing back several Catholic features to Protestantism. It should instead be understood as a model of comparison, something which should lead Kierkegaard's contemporaries to think critically and to compare how Protestantism is and how it should have been.

The difference between using Catholicism as a corrective or as a way to counter-reform is quite subtle but is fundamental, which is why it is worth clarifying it. Going back to the example of celibacy, Fabro seems to be claiming that Kierkegaard wants to counter-reform the Reformation on this point (1974). What Kierkegaard is claiming instead, is that the Reformation was right, but that the Protestants misunderstood it by thinking that celibacy is to be ridiculed (X³ A 419 *n.d.*, 1850). Therefore, Kierkegaard's solution is to compare Protestantism with Catholicism. By doing this, it is possible to see that Catholicism got the idea of making celibacy compulsory to priests wrong (X¹ A 440 *n.d.*, 1849). However, it is right in its praising and encouraging chastity (VIII¹ A 369 *n.d.*, 1847). Therefore, Protestants should take this as a "corrective" for how the concept of celibacy has been understood after the Reformation. In other words: he wants to keep the Protestant freedom of choice on the matter, but he also wants to change how people see celibacy.

One thing is to reform certain aspects of Protestantism and to go back to Catholicism on specific points while remaining Lutheran overall. A different one is to say that, by comparing Catholicism to Protestantism, it is possible to learn something valuable and to correct some of the interpretations which contemporary Protestants have given of the Reformation. The first one seems to be Fabro's interpretation; the latter seems to be what Kierkegaard is arguing.

It is on these points that I believe that Fabro's interpretation of Kierkegaard involves some inaccuracies. Yet, as shown earlier, he is right in finding Catholic sensibilities in Kierkegaard, in defining him as a disappointed Lutheran and recognizing in his theology an attempt to improve Protestantism by using Catholicism as a corrective, without being a Catholic overall. Moreover, on other points (like *Imitation*) Fabro clearly specifies that Kierkegaard does not want to counter-reform, but only to correct (1957; 1973), meaning that issues like that of celibacy are only minor inaccuracies which do not excessively undermine the overall validity of his claims.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has tried to provide an account of Cornelio Fabro's interpretation of Kierkegaard. It has tried to understand his argument better, interpreting it as a depiction of Kierkegaard not as a "proto-Catholic" (as other Catholic interpreters have described him) but as a disappointed Protestant with Catholic sensibilities. The paper has also endorsed this overall interpretation, but it has disagreed with Fabro on his depicting those Catholic sensibilities in Kierkegaard (although not explicitly) as a way of going back to Catholicism on specific issues (such as celibacy), while remaining a Lutheran overall.

The importance of this research is not simply exemplified by the fact that it has provided an account of an author widely unknown in the English-speaking world, but also that it has presented an in-depth analysis of an interpretation of Kierkegaard which is alternative to the dominant Protestant understanding of his theology, this being well represented by Hampson's rejection of the presence of an idea of "Imitation" in Kierkegaard (2006). Therefore, a balanced assessment of Fabro's argument which recognizes and highlights both its strengths and (minor) weaknesses, can provide researchers with a new understanding of the relationship between Kierkegaard and Catholicism.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare

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