

A Theology of Corruption

***Mark Lovatt** brings together his academic work and his practical experience of tackling corruption to advance a theology of corruption. He traces the roots of corruption to a natural desire for security, which results in anxiety and what Friedrich Nietzsche called the will-to-power. The common solution to this anxiety is accumulation of money and power. However, faced with the enormity of the threats to our security, and ultimately our own death, there is never enough money or power. The only solution is to treat money and power as an idol and instead opt for Christ-centred servant-leadership which benefits others rather than oneself.*

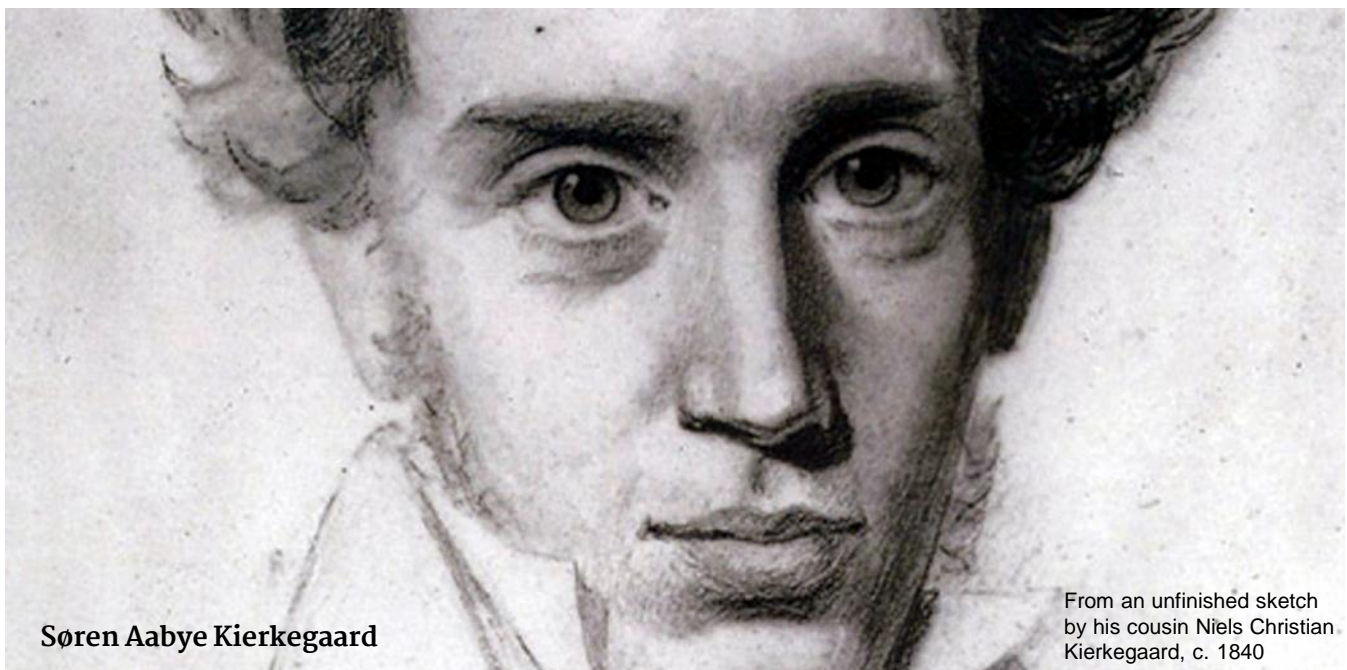
A few years ago in 2012, I wrote an article for FiBQ on our anticorruption work in Malaysia and some of the theological elements which I was bringing to bear in that work to make it effective. In this issue, I would like to go into some depth regarding a theology of corruption I have developed over a number of years, building on my PhD research and supplemented by my practical experience engaging directly with the problem in Asia. I also plan to write soon on some of the developments since 2012 which have shown how

God has been at work through our enterprise here in some very practical ways.

Theory and Practice: the Academy and Business

First then, let us look at the origin of the force of corruption which is having such a major impact on our lives today, and in fact has done so throughout history. I studied existentialism in some depth during the course of preparing my PhD thesis, which was published by Paternoster in 2001 as *Confronting*

the Will – to – Power: a Reconsideration of the Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr. Two philosopher-theologians who particularly interested me were Søren Kierkegaard, especially his doctrine of anxiety; and Friedrich Nietzsche, especially his concept of the will-to-power. Both these thinkers had a significant impact on the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, who was the main subject of my thesis. Niebuhr, who was writing at the time of the American industrial oligarchs, the rise of Nazism in Europe and the



Søren Aabye Kierkegaard

From an unfinished sketch
by his cousin Niels Christian
Kierkegaard, c. 1840