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Abstract

ATTFIELD, D. G.

A critical examination of the concept of Christian nurture with special reference to the work of Horace Bushnell

Physical and psychological nurture are set aside and spiritual nurture as edification is distinguished from educational nurture.

In Christian history the nurture approach to child-rearing, assuming the child is already a Christian, is found to predominate over the alternative conversion approach, which supposes the child is a pagan or sinner. Zinzendorf's eclectic outlook is noted.

Bushnell's background and theory of Christian nurture are described in detail, including his criticism of revivalism, his view of church-growth and his concept of organic connexion of child and parent. Nineteenth century criticisms are assessed, particularly of his alleged naturalistic conception of regeneration. Modern objections are also urged, based on the autonomy of ethics and the inappropriateness of induction as the aim of child-rearing by Christians, in the light of the controversial nature of Christian truth.

Bushnell's defence of infant baptism is considered in the context of the sense in which original and actual sin may be properly predicated of children. Baptismal regeneration of babies is argued to be unintelligible and delayed until the child comes to faith.

The claim Bushnell makes that children can be church-members is contested and similar positions in the recent The Child in the Church report are also criticised. It is denied that the young child can be a Christian and, while admitting the older child may in fact be one, commitment before adulthood is deprecated.

A positive theory of educational nurture for all children is sketched. Christian communication must be controlled by truth, autonomy and the disputed nature of religious claims. Doctrine must be described, explored with alternatives, while conversion may be desired but not intended. Educational nurture has stages of Motivation, Information, Exploration and Challenge, spread over childhood. Parents and others should play roles of teacher, witness, evangelist and neutral pastor.

In an appendix the evolution of Bushnell's Christian Nurture is described.

A critical examination of the concept
of Christian nurture with special reference
to the work of Horace Bushnell

by David George ATTFIELD

a thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts
to the University of Durham in 1980,
research conducted in the Department of Theology

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Declaration

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CHAPTER I

Introduction(1) Purpose and Programme

The purpose of this study is to investigate the upbringing and rearing of children in the Christian faith today on the part of churches, believing parents, Church and Sunday Schools etc. What should be the aim and end of this upbringing and what procedures should be followed? Clearly the answers to these questions will turn on the assumptions made about the spiritual or theological status of children and a defensible position in this matter will be argued. We shall consider whether baptised infants and youths are really Christians, if immature and unformed in faith, but steadily and gradually growing in grace and requiring only nurture of the kind any Christian needs; or whether the young are sinners urgently demanding conversion, as soon as moral responsibility arrives and a sense of sin dawns and repentance and faith become intelligible possibilities; or again, whether children are neither little saints nor sinners but are children, morally and spiritually neutral or innocent beings, and only potential Christians in so far as they are potential men.

Answering questions such as these also presupposes views about the status of Christian truth, the religious options open to rational men today and also about the respect Christians, parents and teachers, like other kinds of people, owe to truth and to children as free



and reasonable agents or as potentially free and reasonable agents.

These problems will be approached at first historically in terms of Christian tradition in the area of the spiritual formation of children. We shall concentrate especially on the thought of Horace Bushnell, the nineteenth century American Congregationalist divine. His epoch-making book Christian Nurture⁽¹⁾, contemporary objections to his thesis and such modern criticisms as may be made today are principally to be discussed in this study. Bushnell's background will be sketched and in an Appendix, the evolution of the book Christian Nurture itself will be set out and clarified. Current late twentieth century discussion of the rearing of children in a Christian context, as found in the recent British Council of Churches' report The Child in the Church⁽²⁾, will then be critically assessed. Finally a constructive alternative to Christian nurture will be propounded.

During the course of our discussion, it will be necessary to consider briefly problems of infant baptism, church membership and sin in children. These issues will be presented mainly in relation to Bushnell's account of them, since conclusions on such matters will determine the acceptability of any theory of Christian nurture (or its alternatives), both in Bushnell's day and our own.

(11) Two Views of Child-Rearing

In Christian history there have been two main views of how children become Christians and as to how religious upbringing of children should be conceived. These views are what may be called the nurture approach and the conversion approach.

The nurture approach sometimes assumes the child of Christian parents - and we shall ignore in the main other children - can be regarded as Christians from the womb. It has often been held that infant baptism gives grace and the status of being a Christian and that this is real from infancy onwards. Even where infant baptism is not practised or regarded as only symbolic, the mere fact of Christian parentage is considered enough for the claim that a child, although lacking in his earliest years knowledge of Christianity, faith and moral responsibility, is nonetheless truly a Christian.

Throughout childhood, therefore, the task of home and church is often conceived to be nurture, that is to surround the little believer with spiritual influence and models, to teach the faith and to induct into Christian life and practice. In due time the child, it is assumed, comes to personal faith and this is recognised in various ways, e.g. the Anglican and Lutheran procedure of teenage confirmation and admission to Holy Communion; but such a religious coming-of-age ceremony only builds on what is essentially present already. The young person is long since a saved, redeemed and regenerate soul and all that is needed is gradual, smooth growth in awareness

until faith becomes explicit, articulate and self-conscious; the youthful Christian must make his own his heritage, in which he has been nurtured by priest and parent. The support and treatment he has received are no different in principle, theologically and educationally, from what adult converts receive.

The other main view of how children are to be inducted into Christianity may be termed the conversion approach. This sometimes assumes that positive and explicit faith is needed before a person can become a Christian, before he can be regenerate and receive saving grace. Hence a child cannot be a Christian until he is mature enough to be instructed, reach minimal understanding of the faith and come himself to belief. Moreover since Christianity thinks all men are sinners, children - if not always very young children - themselves are regarded as sinners. Often, too, the doctrine of original sin has led to treating children from birth as sinful, in a state of alienation from God, being guilty of Adam's transgression and as having a tendency to actual sin from babyhood manifesting itself in every form of childish misbehaviour. In the extreme theories of Augustine or Calvin, the young are thus totally corrupt or depraved.

Thus a child, it is sometimes thought, cannot become a Christian unless and until he repents, as well as putting his trust in Christ. Particularly in non-sacramental forms of Christianity, where less emphasis is placed on pedobaptism, - if it is practised at all, there is held to be,

especially in times of revival, no substitute for personal conversion. The mark of this is an emotional about-turn and upheaval, often sudden and dramatic, known usually as crisis-conversion. All Christians are expected to be of the twice-born type.

Such conversions in respect of children may occur in adolescence or middle-childhood, or even earlier if the verbal forms for expressing spiritual rebirth have been learnt. Before this crisis the child may even be abandoned to sin and not regarded as a church-member. At best he is instructed or evangelised like a pagan or unbeliever. Should an unconverted child die, as was common in past centuries, there would be considerable worry over his eternal destiny. Once converted, the young person becomes a Christian and requires nurture like any other convert.

Through Church history, as we shall briefly show⁽³⁾, there has been an oscillation between the two views. It should be noted that both approaches assume the truth of Christianity and the propriety of inducting children into it, an assumption which has been unquestioned until recent years. Bushnell, we shall see⁽⁴⁾, sharply criticised the conversion approach and in this we partially follow him⁽⁵⁾. But we hope to demonstrate that some of the strands in the nurture approach are also unsatisfactory for both the theological and educational reasons⁽⁶⁾, and that a new approach to Christian child-rearing is needed for our own day.

(111) The Concept of Nurture

This study concerns Christian nurture and the concept of nurture is central to it. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss this notion at the outset of our work and to clarify its nature. What is nurture and how is this word used? 'Nurture' has three proper and useful meanings: there is physical, psychological and spiritual nurture.

First, physical nurture is the literal feeding of children with food and the nourishment of their bodies. This use of the term does not concern our study.

Secondly psychological nurture means showing love, warmth and care for an infant. In child-development the term covers giving attention, embracing, touching, caressing a child, through which an attachment-relationship is built up with the mother⁽⁷⁾. In secular thought nurturant behaviour establishes a close bond between the care-taking figure and the baby. This bond is regarded as crucial to mental health and to satisfactory social and emotional growth⁽⁸⁾. Such a psychological use of 'nurture' will not greatly concern us, though it may be relevant to a Christian upbringing at some stages, as we shall show in Chapter V.

Third comes spiritual or religious nurture. In a Christian context this can mean edification, building up the believer in faith. In this sense nurture is a central church activity in the training and pastoral care of Christians. Clearly this variety of nurture presupposes the person nurtured is already a Christian. One can only build upon a foundation of repentance and faith already laid. 'Nurture' may also though be used

in another religious sense. It might be held, as we shall see Bushnell held in the nineteenth century, that in a Christian home a child is nurtured in faith and holiness in such way he is always a Christian and is never left outside the faith. This too presupposes debatable beliefs about what a Christian is and Christian initiation, that will later need substantial discussion.

Conceivably the term 'spiritual nurture' could be used also for modern child-centred education in its task of promoting all-round growth and development especially in the spheres of emotional and social life, in art and personal relations. Contemporary open-minded Religious Education might also be called nurture when it is conducted by Christian parents and churches as the only proper way to communicate the faith to a child. This usage will in the end, in Chapters III to V, emerge to describe the type of Christian upbringing which we shall ultimately defend and support.

For the central thread of our positive argument, we shall thus use 'nurture' in that sub-variety of the third, the spiritual or religious sense, in which education is meant. Hence the importance of determining the theological status of children. Indeed nurture can only sensibly be applied in this way to the spiritual rearing of the offspring of Christians, if these children may not be considered Christians from birth or baptism. But before we try to resolve this issue, the nurture theories that have actually arisen in Christian history, in particular Bushnell's, must be discussed, their precise nature

clarified and their presuppositions set out and assessed. The remainder of this introductory chapter will be occupied in preparing the way for the presentation of Bushnell's nurture theory by setting the stage.

(1v) The Christian Tradition

In Christian history, there has been an oscillation between the two views of spiritual child-rearing outlined in section (11), though probably many Christians for much of the time have held to some mixture of these approaches. In this section we shall present a brief and very selective review of the attitudes and policies that have been maintained down the centuries toward the children of believers. Cases will be chosen that illustrate the problems this study is concerned with and which prepare the way for the main controversy we seek to explore.

The Jews of biblical and later times assumed their children were within the covenant. The sign of this was circumcision. They proceeded to teach the Torah, the Hebrew language and letters, the Schema and Jewish customs⁽⁹⁾. Children, it was believed, must become God-fearing members of covenant and nation⁽¹⁰⁾. They were taught in the home⁽¹¹⁾, by their fathers⁽¹²⁾, and also in the synagogue-school⁽¹³⁾ from the first century B.C. onwards. Sometimes the young children were considered sinless by the rabbis⁽¹⁴⁾ and it was generally held Jewish boys and girls became morally responsible at 12 or 13⁽¹⁵⁾, when they could take obedience to the law upon their own shoulders. Here then is a case of the nurture approach

with some provision for personal appropriation of religious faith and responsibility when adolescent. Such a way of behaving was appropriate in a religion that was largely a praxis, with an unchallenged doctrinal background. Doubtless Jewish child-upbringing served as a model for the church and, of course, in traditional non-pluralistic societies, such socialisation was little more than common sense.

In the New Testament it is hard to tell how children were viewed. They may have been included in the baptism of whole households (see later discussion page 85). They were regarded certainly by Paul as holy if one parent in a mixed marriage was a Christian (i Cor 7:14). Doubtless children of believers were nurtured at home, like Jews (Eph 6:4)⁽¹⁶⁾. As the church developed, the general practice at first was for adult converts to be prepared for baptism by a lengthy period of instruction in the catechumenate. The children of Christians, when old enough, joined the catechumenate⁽¹⁷⁾ and would thus respond personally by faith and repentance before Christian initiation. Hence, in the earliest age of the church, something approximating to the conversion approach was held, though believers' infants were not always regarded as sinners⁽¹⁸⁾.

With the spread of infant baptism⁽¹⁹⁾, and the growth of the later belief from Augustine onwards that baptism removes original guilt⁽²⁰⁾, in the Catholic tradition the nurture approach became predominant. Children were assumed to be Christians and members of

the church after their baptism in infancy. All that was then necessary was to nurture the child in the faith, though for centuries not much was done in practice to this end, beyond elementary education and instruction in virtue based on pagan models and procedures⁽²¹⁾.

Over the Christian centuries there has indeed been very little self-conscious theorising about the religious upbringing of children. The situation has remained much the same in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions up to the present, until the twentieth century Catholic interest in Religious Education and catechetics⁽²²⁾.

In the Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed communions the nurture approach has always been qualified, at least implicitly, by the practice of Confirmation at the years of discretion. Here the idea of renewing baptismal vows, particularly in evangelical and pietist circles, has introduced stress on personal faith on the part of a young person, who is not held to be simply growing in what he is already.

At the Reformation the issue of how to conceive the Christian upbringing of children was opened up in a new way by the challenge to infant baptism that was made from that time on. Calvin approved of the baptism of the children of believers because of the analogy with the old covenant and with circumcision⁽²³⁾. Baptism was a seal and sign of the regeneration of the elect and it was hoped the offspring of Christians were among them⁽²⁴⁾. Infant baptism enabled us to extend the covenant to our children so that we do not neglect to instruct them,

taught Calvin⁽²⁵⁾. "They (children) are baptised into future repentance and faith, for that, though these graces have not yet been formed in them, the seeds of both are nevertheless implanted in their hearts by the secret operation of the Spirit ⁽²⁶⁾". The children of Christians were already in a real sense themselves Christians and therefore they needed to be nurtured in home and church. The covenant was with believers and their children 'to you and your seed' as in Gen 17 7. Both were presumed regenerate, born of God and members of the invisible church. Baptism then admits persons to the visible church, the external covenant, born of God upon profession of faith or on their being the children of Christians⁽²⁷⁾. The regeneration of the child who knows not sin, good or evil, was mysterious and wonderful and by the power of God⁽²⁸⁾. Similar teaching is found in other Reformers⁽²⁹⁾, in the early 'covenant theology'⁽³⁰⁾ and in the Westminster Confession⁽³¹⁾. Thus in the Reformed tradition the nurture approach was firmly espoused.

The whole position of pedobaptism and the nurture approach that goes with it were contraverted by the early Baptists. They maintained a child, even of Christian parentage, must come to personal faith and be converted like any other adult. Then and only then was it proper to baptise and admit to church-membership⁽³²⁾. There was, however, some scope for pre-baptismal teaching to children of believers⁽³³⁾. The child was innocent of actual sin but still burdened with original guilt. as the early Baptists put it, committing no sin as acts but guilty of sin as a state⁽³⁴⁾. Some Baptists, the Particular Baptists,

were more Calvinist and assumed election would take care of this problem of birth-sin. An elect child dying before baptism was free of sin and would be saved⁽³⁵⁾. Other Baptists, the General Baptists, (and a few Particulars), held under Mennonite influence that all infants from birth, although unbaptised, were redeemed by the Incarnation and work of Christ, the Second Adam⁽³⁶⁾. They were already members of the invisible church⁽³⁷⁾.

Children came under the care of the church and among the early Baptists there may have been infant Dedication services⁽³⁸⁾, but these babes were certainly not thereby thought of as little Christians. For the covenant theology of Calvin, which sought to find a close analogy with the old covenant of the Jews, was rejected. The new covenant was held to be determined by Christ, based on individual faith and character and not on racial descent⁽³⁹⁾. Hence the conversion approach was strongly adhered to, as it is by Baptists to the present day⁽⁴⁰⁾. Indeed Baptist scholars, like Dr. Beasley-Murray, maintain it best reflects the NT position⁽⁴¹⁾.

Many English Puritans, following Calvin, espoused the nurture approach. A prominent example is Richard Baxter. Bushnell himself points to Baxter as foreshadowing his views -

"Of those baptized in infancy, some do betimes receive the secret seeds of grace, which, by the blessings of a holy education, is stirring in them according to their capacity, and working them to God by actual desires, and working them from all known sin, and entertaining further grace, and turning them into actual acquaintance with Christ, as soon as they arrive at full natural capacity, so that they never were actual ungodly persons."⁽⁴²⁾"

"Ungodly parents do serve the devil so effectually, in the first impressions on their children's minds, that it is more than magistrates and ministers and all reforming means can afterwards do to recover them from that sin to God. Whereas, if you would first engage their hearts to God by a religious education, piety would then have all the advantages that sin hath now. (Prov. 22·6) The language which you teach them to speak when they are children they will use all their life after, if they live with those that use it. And so the opinions which they first receive, and the customs which they are used to at first are very hardly changed afterward. I doubt not to affirm that a godly education is God's first and ordinary appointed means for the begetting of actual faith and other graces in the children of believers. Many may have received grace before, but they cannot sooner have actual faith, repentance, love, or any grace, than they have reason itself in act and exercise. And the preaching of the word by public ministers is not the first ordinary means of grace to any but those that were graceless till they come to hear such preaching that is, to those on whom the first appointed means have been neglected or proved vain . . . therefore it is apparent that the ordinary appointed means for the first actual grace is parents godly instruction and education of their children. And public preaching is appointed for the conversion of those only that have missed the blessing of the first appointed means." (43)"

A particularly interesting case of the clash of the two approaches to Christian child-rearing occurred among the German Pietists in the early eighteenth century. Both Francke at Halle and Zinzendorf at Herrnhut and elsewhere organised the religious training of children on a large scale. Schools and orphanages were maintained to give care, elementary education and spiritual instruction in an atmosphere of intense devotion and fervour. Francke believed, despite his Lutheran heritage of pedobaptism, that all children needed to be converted, that there had to be for everyone a painful struggle (Busskampf) and a breakthrough (Durchbruch), guilt and a sense of sin had to be induced in the child, love of Christ and gratitude for his saving work, so that peace and joy would follow. To this end children were preached at and individuals pressurised . Pupils in the school progressed

from the class of the 'dead' to that of the 'awakened' and then to that of the 'converted', as they came alive with a Piestic-type religious experience⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Zinzendorf at first took the same line but then came to doubt the need for conversion in the light of his own development, as he had always been a Christian since infancy⁽⁴⁶⁾. He accepted, as the loyal Lutheran he always was, even when ministering to the Moravian community, original sin, natural depravity and baptismal regeneration⁽⁴⁷⁾. Gradually, however, his experience of educating real children made him soften his emphasis upon and move away from these doctrines⁽⁴⁸⁾. Through Christ, he claimed, we were all lost, damned and redeemed at once⁽⁴⁹⁾. Everyone born started innocent or saved, including heathen who had not yet heard the Gospel:-

"All children are blessed; whether Tartars, Turks or pagans, all have already been redeemed."⁽⁵⁰⁾

Further Zinzendorf believed the child of Christian parents had a great advantage. Such a child even had the Holy Spirit before birth⁽⁵¹⁾. The offspring of an evangelical marriage (in the Moravian community) was consecrated in the womb⁽⁵²⁾. Baptism for these children was unnecessary, though desirable, provided the parents were believers⁽⁵³⁾. Christian, baptised children could be maintained in grace and conversion was unnecessary⁽⁵⁴⁾:-

"All baptised children of the world must be converted, but children of the congregation not so."⁽⁵⁵⁾ By proper nurture children may be "preserved in the baptismal covenant."⁽⁵⁶⁾ "We do not acknowledge any of our descendants as brother or sister unless he has been either preserved in his baptismal covenant or reborn through the word (converted)."⁽⁵⁷⁾

The nurture of Christian children was crucial. In a phrase Bushnell a century later echoes, Zinzendorf wrote -

"What then, is child nurture? It is a sacred, priestly method whereby children are brought up from infancy so as never to think otherwise than that they are the children of God . . ." (58)^f

When a child reaches maturity in his spiritual development, he does need to come to a conscious awareness of his faith in Christ (59). (Indeed, after Zinzendorf's death, a ceremony of adolescent dedication to mark this coming-of-age was provided in Moravianism (60).) This arrival at an adult religious experience was, however, to be sharply distinguished from conversion, because it included no repentance or disavowal of a sinful past (61). Of course, the children of the church might lapse from grace during childhood and then conversion would be required but this should be exceptional (62).

Nurture primarily was to be by parents in the home established through Christian marriage (63). Parental example, Zinzendorf believed, like Bushnell, was paramount (64). Unfortunately the actual Moravian parents of Herrnhut were not adequate for the task and so Zinzendorf came to rely for nurture more and more on his schools with their famous system of choirs for people of varying ages and sexes (65). Religious education consisted, in Zinzendorf's system, largely of devotional exercises and song, since in his view experience precedes comprehension (66). Spiritual advisers to each child, 'Kinder-Eltern', were appointed as priestly or parental surrogates (67).

Zinzendorf's aims in nurture, although in tone what today would be called evangelical or confessional, were open-ended and have a truly contemporary ring. The purpose of church, school and home should be to offer a free choice for or against faith.-

"We do not presume to require of a son that he should follow the same maxims as his father. In conjunction with that training which duty requires of us, we allow the greatest possible freedom with the hearts of our children(68)."

"There is no foundation in the Bible for the idea that parents should force their children to become children of God(69)."

"The reason why we place the children in institutions is not that they shall by this means be converted, but, rather, that there may be place and room for the Saviour to approach the child's heart unhindered and to achieve his purpose in the individual life. . . . When the time arrives that the child thinks logically and can himself resolve to belong or not to belong to Christ, then it is useless or harmful for adults to attempt to force the issue(70)."

Thus in the history of the Christian rearing of children, Zinzendorf is a figure of outstanding significance and interest. Here is a thinker who through his actual experience of work with children swung from the conversion to the nurture approach. In his views on the aim of nurture, he adumbrates the late twentieth century emphasis on the child's freedom and begins to approach the kind of educational theory of Christian upbringing that will be championed at the end of this study. The theoretical weakness of Zinzendorf's thought on this subject lies in the lack of logical coherence between the different stresses he laid and the positions he tried to hold together: depravity and a coming-of-age without repentance, baptismal regeneration and sanctity from the womb, nurture and free choice are not easy bedfellows in logic, however much

experience elicits them all. Zinzendorf's insights arose from practice and were never woven into a theory. It is also remarkable that, as will appear in Chapter II, Zinzendorf anticipates in many ways the nurture approach in the mature form Bushnell gave it, though it does not seem there was any direct historical dependence of the latter on the former.

Finally, before turning to the American background to Bushnell, it is well to note that many ordinary Christians down the ages, in bringing up their children, based their practice on an unclear mixture of the nurture and conversion approaches. In the late eighteenth century, for example, a cleric named Abbott, in a book on child-rearing that was widely popular in Britain and America and reproduced in many editions⁽⁷¹⁾, places religious upbringing in the context of general 'child-government' as it was then called. He asserted that spiritual instruction should be given at all ages⁽⁷²⁾ and mothers should expect their offspring to become Christians⁽⁷³⁾. However young a child was, he was capable of turning to God and there was no need to wait for maturity⁽⁷⁴⁾. Conversion might come so early that it could not be remembered⁽⁷⁵⁾. The time when a person became a Christian should not be stressed so much as whether the child is now one. Many cannot recall their new birth⁽⁷⁶⁾. It is unclear here which theory Abbott held. Perhaps the conversion approach is more clearly reflected but there are also echoes of nurture apparent.

(v) The New England Background

The historical background and setting for Bushnell is the Protestantism of New England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Particularly are we concerned with Congregationalism, and in a minor way with other denominations in Connecticut and other states from the time of the Pilgrim Fathers to about 1830. Still more narrowly we must focus on Hartford, Connecticut, as a flourishing town with the North Church as a leading congregation in it. The main events in Congregationalism in this period must be outlined, revivals and their theology must be described, the development of Calvinism and its teaching on original sin must be sketched and the pastoral situation Bushnell faced must be depicted.

The Congregationalism of Connecticut was defined by taking over the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession (1648) at the Cambridge Synod (1646-48) and the Savoy Declaration (1658) at the Saybrook Synod (1708) - the so-called Cambridge and Saybrook Platforms - and also at the Reforming Synod of Massachusetts (1679-80)⁽⁷⁷⁾. So began a tradition of church-life and theology which was championed and defended by Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), the great New England Calvinist preacher and theologian in the mid-eighteenth century⁽⁷⁸⁾. Congregational life had become cold and indifferent with numbers in decline, when the famous revival called the Great Awakening (1734-44) occurred through the preaching of Whitfield and Edwards. In many churches large numbers were converted amid scenes of great emotion.

Then another period of quiescence and spiritual decline followed the War of Independence. Rationalist and liberal ideas of the Age of Reason came to New England from the France and Britain of the European Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Calvinism, indeed Christianity itself and morality, seemed threatened⁽⁷⁹⁾. In Massachusetts, centering on Boston, a liberal religious trend led away from the rigours of Edwardean Calvinism towards the Unitarianism of the nineteenth century⁽⁸⁰⁾. In response to this situation there arose the Second Great Awakening (c. 1799-1830). Wave after wave of revival spread across the New England (and other American) churches for about thirty years right up to the time when Bushnell began his pastorate⁽⁸¹⁾. Passionate preaching was directed against rationalism and Unitarianism and produced multitudes of converts, even though the tone of the meetings was less tempestuous and more subdued than in the first Great Awakening⁽⁸²⁾.

Revival sought individual conversions, a 'technical experience' as Bushnell later called it⁽⁸³⁾. Every Christian was required to be regenerated through such an experience. There was a definite sequence of three stages converts were expected to pass through. First came conviction of sin, awareness of guilt, fear of death and hell, often taking very emotional and even hysterical or pathological forms. Second was submission to God, being - as it was graphically put - prepared to be damned for the glory of God (as a Calvinist, the convert would think that he might not be among the elect and he had to

acquiesce joyfully in this until election in his own case was proved by the experience of stage three). Third, there finally followed the consolations of religion, peace and joy, which demonstrated the reality of regeneration and election⁽⁸⁴⁾.

Now it was commonly held in the New England Protestant churches that children needed conversion, just like adults. The revivalists were in the grip of the conversion approach. Calvin's doctrine of infant baptism and the family covenant was obscured during both Great Awakenings⁽⁸⁵⁾. Baptised children were at best thought to be nominal church-members, in terms comparable to the old New England institution of the Half-Way Covenant. (This was a custom dating from early settlement times, whereby to qualify for the franchise, baptised believers of good character but without an experience of regeneration could go on a church-roll but not normally receive Holy Communion and their children could be baptised⁽⁸⁶⁾). Children had no real spiritual status and hence revivalist sermons, books and schools (at first state schools and then when these were secularised, church-run Sabbath Schools) all aimed to pressurise the child through the emotional trauma of a crisis-conversion⁽⁸⁷⁾. Children often went about proclaiming their religious experience and preached to adults with remarkable precocity⁽⁸⁸⁾. Such was the background against which Bushnell advanced his form of the nurture approach.

The theology of the dominant New England Congregational and Presbyterian churches was Calvinist. This formidable

doctrinal system during the period before Bushnell split into rival schools over such issues as the exact nature of the Fall and its consequences and over whether men could be converted by their own or others' efforts. Different groupings of divines emerged who developed and refined competing varieties of interpretation of the basic Calvinist tradition.

The Old Calvinists (the Old Light) were conservatives who opposed revivals and the emotionalism that went with them⁽⁸⁹⁾. Reacting against this was the New Divinity or New Light of Jonathan Edwards and his successors. This was the theology of the first Great Awakening. It was opposed to 'means'. If the sinner employed the means of grace, e.g. reading the Scriptures and prayer to further his own regeneration, he was all the worse spiritually because, as these theologians, later to be called 'consistent Calvinists' thought, man had lost the power to choose good⁽⁹⁰⁾.

In the early nineteenth century there was a break-away movement of a liberal Calvinism under Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858), Pastor of the First Church New Haven (1811-22) and first professor of theology in Yale Divinity School from 1822. This set of ideas was called the New Haven Divinity. Taylor was one of the great preachers of the Second Great Awakening and sought conversions through 'means'. Men can choose God and have the power not to sin⁽⁹¹⁾. Taylor was opposed by Bennet Tyler (1783-1858), an 'old guard' Calvinist, who led a schism in Connecticut Congregationalism. Tyler founded the East Windsor Hill

seminary in 1834, later the Hartford Theological Seminary, to train ministers unsullied by the New Haven Divinity. The controversy lasted until Taylor and Tyler both died in 1858⁽⁹²⁾. Bushnell began his ministry against this background, being taught by Taylor at Yale and with Tyler the fiercest critic, as will be seen⁽⁹³⁾, of Christian Nurture.

To appreciate Bushnell's theology, which underlies Christian Nurture, it is necessary to know in outline the teaching on sin of Taylor, as opposed to that of conservative Calvinist critics like Tyler. In his Concio ad Clerum of 1828 Taylor maintained original sin as a fact but disputed the theories of federalism, imputation and hereditary taint. He did not believe all men from birth were guilty of Adam's sin, because Adam was the 'federal head' of the race, a 'public person' or 'parliament man', as the older New England Calvinists held, nor was Adam's sin imputed by legal fiction to every child of man. Taylor also did not accept S. Augustine's hereditary taint. Moral depravity did not mean men were morally identified with Adam and there was no sinful tendency prior to actual sin itself (as opposed to non-sinful causes of sin). Every human being chose sin despite the varying circumstances of their environment due to his moral nature. This latter was not created by God, nor was it physical in character. The exact connection between Adam and sinners was left obscure⁽⁹⁴⁾.

Another movement on the theological stage at this time was the growth of Unitarianism. This evolved from Arminianism in the late eighteenth century. Total depravity and eternal punishment were denied as immoral and an Arian Christology was gradually arrived at. In 1805 Henry Ware, a Unitarian, took the Hollis Chair of Divinity at Harvard. In East Massachusetts and Connecticut, Unitarianism split off from Congregationalism in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. Controversy over the Trinity was secondary and debate mainly raged between the orthodox who held a low view of human nature and the more idealized and optimistic conceptions of men like Channing. By the mid-nineteenth century Unitarians were also denouncing penal substitution⁽⁹⁵⁾. Bushnell's own liberal theology had something in common with or at least approaching towards these Unitarian positions. His critics accused him of going too far in this direction and often charged him with not being sound on depravity and the need for supernatural regeneration, as he was later to be in trouble over his too liberal ideas on Christology and the Atonement⁽⁹⁶⁾.

Finally we reach Bushnell's immediate background. He became the pastor of the North Church in Hartford in 1833 and found the congregation and elders split between the Old and New Schools of Calvinism (Tylerism and Taylorism). There were also non-theological factors that helped lead to the development of his nurture approach. The early nineteenth century growth of commerce and industry made Hartford a flourishing city with a

sophisticated culture. Parents were worried over their children growing up in an urban society and as young men being corrupted by a sinful world⁽⁹⁷⁾. It would be better to teach godliness when young. Bushnell learnt from his own pastoral experience that children were easier to influence than hardened adult sinners⁽⁹⁸⁾. He had tried his hand at revivals with little success in gaining older converts⁽⁹⁹⁾. From the associationist psychology of the day Bushnell knew children were said to be impressionable like wax and therefore a more fruitful field to sow than their elders⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. Yet family religion was neglected. How much could the solid middle-class family Bushnell idealised do for faith and morals if only parents took their responsibilities seriously! To challenge and instruct them he composed his original Two Discourses on Christian Nurture.

Chapter I Footnotes

- (1) (New York 1861). In this study the 1916 revision, ed. Weigle L.A , is used.
- (2) Report of the Working Party on The Child in the Church by the British Council of Churches' Consultative Group on Ministry among Children, 1976
- (3) pp.12-21
- (4) Ch. II (1)
- (5) Chs. III (111) and IV (111)
- (6) Ch. II (v)
- (7) Bowlby J., Child Care and the Growth of Love (London 1953) pp.50-66, Mussen P.H., Conger J J. and Kagan J., Child Development and Personality 3rd edition (New York 1969) pp.210-238.
- (8) Rutter M. Maternal Deprivation Reassessed (London 1972)
- (9) Weber H-R. Jesus and the Children (W.C C. Geneva 1979) pp.11,72-3, Barclay W. Educational Ideals in the Ancient World (London 1959) pp.11-15.
- (10) Weber op.cit. p.37; Barclay op.cit. pp.46-48.
- (11) Weber op.cit. pp.38-39, Barclay op.cit. p 15
- (12) Weber op.cit. pp.40-42, Barclay op.cit. pp.16-17
- (13) Weber op.cit. pp.40-42, Barclay op.cit. pp.23-46
- (14) Weber op.cit. pp.11,75
- (15) Weber op.cit. p.72
- (16) Barclay op.cit. pp.234-238
- (17) Rusling G.W. The Child and the Church (London 1966) p.23, Beasley-Murray G.R. Church and Child in the NT (Baptist Quarterly, 1965-66) p.215, Rusling G.W. The Status of Children (Baptist Quarterly, 1959-60) pp.247-249, Marrou H.I. A History of Education in Antiquity (E.T. Lamb G) (New York 1956) pp.420-421.
- (18) Tertullian may have taught this. v. Jeremias J. Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries (E T. Cairns D.) (London 1960)pp.81-3, The Origins of Infant Baptism (E.T. Barton D.M.) (London 1963) pp.64-69 Also Aland K. Did the Early Church Baptise Infants? (London 1963) pp.104-108 Also Clement, v. Tennant F.R. The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin (Cambridge 1903) pp.294-295. For Barnabas and Hermes, v. Beasley-Murray op.cit. p.211.
- (19) Jeremias (1960) pp.59-98, Aland op.cit. pp.100-112.
- (20) Kelly J.N.D. Early Christian Doctrines (London 1958) pp.364,370, 430, Williams N.P Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin (London 1927) pp.367,403.
- (21) Barclay op.cit. pp.250-262
- (22) ed. Jebb P. Religious Education (London 1968) esp. Chs. 2,9,10, v. also ed. Abbott W.M. and Gallagher J. The Documents of Vatican II (London 1965) Declaration on Christian Education p.640 ¶ 2.
- (23) Inst.IV 16,46
- (24) Inst.IV 14,15, IV 15,101
- (25) Inst.IV 16,32
- (26) Inst.IV 16,20
- (27) Shenk L.B. The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant (London 1940) pp.6-24
- (28) ibid. p.17, also Calvin,Inst.IV 16,18
- (29) Shenk op.cit. pp.24-33
- (30) ibid pp.33-34.
- (31) ibid. pp.46-52
- (32) Walker M J. The Baptist Theology of Infancy in the Seventeenth Century (Baptist Quarterly 1965-66) p.245
- (33) ibid. p.257
- (34) ibid. p.246
- (35) ibid. pp.246,258

- (36) ibid. p.247
(37) ibid. p.248
(38) ibid. p.250
(39) ibid. p.254
(40) Rusling (1966) p.19, (1959-60) pp.245-246
(41) op.cit. pp.212-215
(42) Confirmation fol.vol. iv p.267 cited in Views on Christian Nurture etc (1847) pp.58-60
(43) Christian Directory Vol.II cap.6 para.4 fol. p.516, cited as in (42)
(44) Weinlich J.R. Count Zinzendorf (New York 1956) p.113
(45) Meyer H.H. Child Nature and Nurture according to N.L. von Zinzendorf (Abingdon, New York 1928) p.152
(46) Weinlich op.cit. p.113, Meyer op.cit. pp.155,157
(47) ibid. pp.105-109
(48) ibid. pp.110-111
(49) ibid. p.113
(50) ibid. p.114
(51) ibid. pp.114,119
(52) Uttendörfer O. Das Erziehungswesen Zinzendorfs und der Brüdergemeine in seinen Anfängen (Berlin 1912) pp.181-182
(53) Meyer op.cit. pp.115,117
(54) ibid. pp.120,127
(55) ibid. p.120
(56) ibid. pp.121-122
(57) ibid. pp.121,156
(58) ibid. p.136 Cf. also p.123
(59) ibid. p.124
(60) ibid. p.171
(61) ibid. p.129
(62) ibid. p.126
(63) ibid. pp.131-141
(64) ibid. p.138
(65) ibid. pp.141-142,159-176
(66) ibid. p.152
(67) ibid. pp.172-175
(68) ibid. p.103
(69) ibid. p.104
(70) ibid. p.104
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(72) ibid. chs. VI and VII
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(74) ibid. pp.119-120
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(77) Shelton Smith H. Changing Conceptions of Original Sin (New York 1955) Ch.I, Adamson W.R. Bushnell Rediscovered (Philadelphia 1966) p.44
(78) Buckley E.F. The Theology of Horace Bushnell (Oxford B.Litt. thesis 1953) pp.2-17, Mead S.E. Nathaniel Taylor (Chicago 1942) pp.12-18
(79) ibid. pp.47-51
(80) ibid. pp.137-139,173-177,190-191, Buckley op.cit. pp.18-21
(81) Mead op.cit. passim, Keller C.R. The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (Yale U P 1942) pp.36-69,188-201,221-239
(82) ibid. pp.53-54
(83) Christian Nurture p.4
(84) Fleming S. Children and Puritanism (Yale U.P. and Oxford U P. 1933) Ch.III

- (85) Shenk op.cit. pp.153-158
- (86) Fleming op.cit. Ch.VII, Buckley op.cit. pp.2-17,
 Bushnell Christian Nurture pp.156-157, Carr W.
Baptism Conscience and Clue for the Church
 (New York 1964) pp.117-120
- (87) Fleming op.cit. Chs.VIII,IX,X
- (88) ibid. Ch.XIV
- (89) Buckley op.cit. Ch.I
- (90) ibid. Ch.I
- (91) Shelton Smith op.cit. Chs.IV and V
- (92) Buckley op.cit. Ch.I
- (93) Ch.II v
- (94) Shelton Smith op.cit. Chs. IV and V
- (95) Buckley op.cit. pp.18-21
- (96) God in Christ (1849). For the controversy v. Cheney
Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell (New York 1880)
 Chs. XI and XII
- (97) Cross B.M. Horace Bushnell Minister to a Changing America
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- (98) ibid. pp.60-64
- (99) ibid. pp.54-57
- (100) ibid. p.67

CHAPTER II

Bushnell's Theory of Christian Nurture

In this chapter we shall expound Bushnell's theory of Christian nurture in the mature form in which he presented it in the final form of his famous book Christian Nurture (1861), though the core of his views is to be found in his Two Discourses on Christian Nurture originally published in 1847. (For the evolution of his book in its various forms, see the Appendix.) First we shall state what Bushnell was opposed to, then his positive theory will be described including his wider approach to the propagation of Christianity, next his key concept of the organic unity of the family and his views on sin, grace and regeneration will be presented; the responsibility of parents will be discussed; lastly we shall assess his doctrine in the light of contemporary criticism and of the criticisms we may make today.

(1) What is rejected

Bushnell opposed the view that, although the children of Christian parents were to be instructed in faith and morals, their spiritual status was and remained that of unregenerate, unconverted sinners. He castigated the idea that they should be left to languish in sin and only be converted in maturity.

'There could not be a worse or more baleful implication given to a child, than that he is to reject God and all holy principle, till he has come to a mature age. What authority have you from the Scriptures to tell your child, or, by any sign, to show him, that you do not expect him truly to love and obey God, till after he has

spent whole years in hatred and wrong? What authority to make him feel that he is the most unprivileged of all human beings, capable of sin, but incapable of repentance; old enough to resist all good, but too young to receive any good whatever (1)?'

'We thrust our children out of the covenant first, and insist, in spite of it, that they shall grow up in the same spiritual state as if their father and mother were heathens. Our only idea of increase is that which accrues by means of a certain abrupt technical experience (2).'

Children were being told that they could not be a Christian until God gave them a new heart

'But my child is a sinner, you will say; and how can I expect him to begin a right life, until God gives him a new heart? . . . Who then has told you that a child cannot have the new heart of which you speak (3)?'

A concept of Christian education along these lines was no better than a non-Christian one.

'Now it is the very character and mark of all unchristian education, that it brings up the child for future conversion (4).'

Was it sensible to let a child be hardened in sin before he became a Christian?

'Assuming the corruption of human nature, when should we think it wisest to undertake or expect a remedy? When evil is young and pliant to good, or when it is confirmed by years of sinful habit? . . . And who can think it necessary that the plastic nature of childhood must first be hardened into stone, and stiffened into enmity towards God and all duty, before it can become a candidate for Christian character (5)?'

Were children to be trained up in sin?

'Does it then accord with the known character of God to appoint a scheme of education, the only proper result of which shall be that children are trained up under it in sin? It would not be more absurd to suppose that God has appointed church education to produce a first crop of sin, and then a crop of holiness (6).'

If parents were pious, God's will was always to save their child, not ever so to exercise his sovereignty as to leave their offspring to perdition, as some contemporaries taught.

'But show me the case, where the whole conduct of the parents has been such as it should be to produce the best effects, and where the sovereignty of God has appointed the ruin of the children, whether all or any one of them (7).'

It was discouraging to children to teach them they needed a new heart and, therefore, conversion, before they could be good⁽⁸⁾. Such an approach made nonsense of infant baptism

'It is the prevalence of false views on this subject which creates so great difficulty in sustaining infant baptism in our churches. If children are to grow up in sin, to be converted when they come to the age of maturity, if this is the only aim and expectation of family nurture, there really is no meaning or dignity whatever in the rite. They are even baptised into sin, and every propriety of the rite as a seal of faith is violated (9).'

It was astounding, Bushnell claims in tones of bitter irony that Christ, on the view under scrutiny, appeared to have no place for the child.

'And it would certainly be very singular if Christ Jesus, in a scheme of mercy for the world, had found no place for infants and little children; more singular still, if he had given them the place of adults; and worse than singular, if he had appointed them to years of sin as the necessary preparation for his mercy (10).'

Parents should beware of their bad influence, the real factor that keeps their children away from God.

'Parents who are not religious in their character, have reason, in our subject, seriously to consider what effect they are producing, and likely to produce, in their children. Probably you do not wish them to be irreligious; few parents have the hardihood or indiscretion to desire that the fear of God, the salutary restraints of religion, should be removed from their children (11).'

There was bound to be a bad effect on children if they were excluded from the church.

'And what could be worse in its effect on a child's feeling, than to find himself repelled from the brotherhood of God's elect, in that manner. What can the hapless

creature think, either of himself or of God, when he is told that he is not old enough to be a Christian, or be owned by the Saviour as a disciple (12)?' 'There is yet another and widely prevalent misconception . . . that Christ allows no place in the church for such as are only children (13).'

The parents might be converted and thereby cut off, by being in the ecclesia, from their child.

'Consider again the remarkable and certainly painful fact that, in the view which excludes infant baptism and the discipleship of children, the conversion itself of a parent operates a kind of dissolution in the family state than which nothing could be more unnatural. It is much as if our process of naturalization in state, were to naturalize the parents and not the children; leaving these to be foreigners still and aliens (14).'

How fair Bushnell was being to his contemporaries in these strictures it is hard to tell. We have seen that in New England Calvinism there was an emphasis on total depravity and the necessity for conversion⁽¹⁵⁾. The Reformed tradition of pedobaptism had certainly been overshadowed in periods of revivals⁽¹⁶⁾. But Bushnell's great critic, Bennet Tyler, maintained he misrepresented the practice of Christian parents. No parents, he said, aimed to train up their children in sin, just because they did not always expect immediate conversion. Of course they wanted it as soon as possible⁽¹⁷⁾! Perhaps we may conclude that Bushnell probably exaggerated the outlook and procedure he condemned. Doubtless he also wrote in high rhetorical style in what was meant to be a polemical tract, as the extracts quoted above show. Anyhow, since the concern of this study is theological, there is no need to delve further into the actual practice of New England parents.

Behind Bushnell's opposition to letting children grow up for future conversion, what we have earlier termed the conversion approach, lay a wider criticism he made of sudden individual conversion as the only or chief way of propagating Christianity. Revival, as we have seen, had been and was in Bushnell's day a great feature of New England Christianity⁽¹⁸⁾. Bushnell admitted its value but claimed too much emphasis was being put upon it. Revival was not the only way to introduce children to the Christian life, as was commonly supposed.

'Our very theory of religion is that men are to grow up in evil, and be dragged into the church of God by conquest. The world is to lie in halves, and the kingdom of God is to stretch itself side by side with the kingdom of darkness, making sallies into it, and taking captive those who are sufficiently hardened and bronzed in guiltiness to be converted (19)!'

Children were being neglected in the hope of being converted in a time of revival.

'Again there is another and different way in which parents, meaning to be Christian, fall into the ostrich nurture without being at all aware of it. They believe in what are called revivals of religion, and have a great opinion of them as being, in a very special sense, the converting times of the gospel. They bring up their children, therefore, not for conversion exactly, but, what is less dogmatic and formal, for the converting times (20).'

Too much weight was being put on expanding the church by conquest.

'The former is the grand idea that has taken possession of the churches of our times - they are going to convert the world. They have taken hold of the promise, which so many of the prophets have given out, of a time when the reign of Christ shall be universal, extending to all nations and peoples, and the expectation is that, by preaching Christ to all the nations, they will finally convert them and bring them over into the gospel fold (21).'

The world, however, would never be converted if the church relied on individual conversions.

'It is an argument which ought to be convincing, that the universal spread of the gospel, and the universal reign of Christian truth - that which prophets and apostles promise, and which we, in these last times, have taken up as our fondest, most impelling Christian hope - plainly enough never can be compassed by the process of adult conversions . . . (22).'

Certainly as many as possible should be missionized from the inferior races (as Bushnell called them) but the earth would not become populated with Protestant Christians in that way.

'We are not, of course, to suspend our efforts to convert the heathen nations - we shall never become a thoroughly regenerate stock, save as we are trained up into such eminence, by our works of mercy to mankind. It is for God to say what races are to be finally submerged and lost, and not for us. Meantime, we are to gain over and save as many as possible by conversion, and so to hasten the day of promise. And what feebler and more pitiful conceit could we fall into, than to assume that we have the grand, over-populating grace in our own stock, and sit down thus to see it accomplish by mere propagation . . . (23).'

Piety had been too individualistic and began too late in life.

'One principal reason why we are so often deficient in character, or outward beauty, is, that piety begins too late in life, having thus to maintain a perpetual war with previous habit (24).'

In a sermon Bushnell wrote,

'Religion never does its will completely in a man, or so as to prove its power, unless it can have its way in childhood or youth (25).'

There had been over-reliance on revivals.

'Piety becomes inconstant, and revivals of religion take an exaggerated character from the same causes. If all Christian success is measured by the count of technical conversions from without, then it follows that nothing is done when conversions cease to be counted. The harvest closes not with feasting out with famine (26).'

Too frequently the churches had depended on the immediate agency of the Spirit, on 'ictic' grace, coming as a bolt from the blue.

' . . . how great is the mistake, when we virtually assume, in our efforts and expectations, that he will come upon souls, only as the lightning is bolted from the sky. How desultory and irruptive is the grace he ministers, how little respective of the work he has already begun in others, whom he might employ to be the medium of his power (27)!'

The current view of the divine 'ictus' was excessively supernatural.

'It makes nothing of the family, and the church, and the organic powers God has constituted as vehicles of grace. It takes every man as if he had existed alone; presumes that he is unreconciled to God until he has undergone some sudden and explosive experience in adult years, or after the age of reason; demands that experience, and only when it is reached, allows the subject to be an heir of life. Then, on the other side, or that of the spirit of God, the very act or ictus by which the change is wrought is isolated or individualised, so as to stand in no connection with any other of God's means or causes - an epiphany, in which God leaps from the stars, or some place above, to do a work apart from all system, or connection with his other works. Religion is thus a kind of transcendental matter, which belongs on the outside of life, and has no part in the laws by which life is organised - a miraculous epidemic, a fire-ball shot from the moon, something holy, because it is from God, but so extraordinary, so out of place, that it can not suffer any vital connection with the ties, and causes, and forms, and habits, which constitute the frame of our history (28).'

Before he wrote the Discourses on Christian Nurture, he had already worked out his ideas on revivalism in his famous early article on Spiritual Economy of Revivals in Religion (1838). God, he there asserted, worked in different ways at different times, as He did in the natural seasons⁽²⁹⁾. At times He was active in quietness, at other times in excitement⁽³⁰⁾. In revivals there were excesses to be deplored⁽³¹⁾. The divine Spirit operated in the ordinary as well as the extraordinary⁽³²⁾. Conversion is important but so is building up⁽³³⁾. There was not only a time for revival but also for consolidation

in the faith of those converted⁽³⁴⁾. In his sermon The Scene of the Pentecost and a Christian Parish he criticised American religion for over-excitement and reliance on revivals and a desire to imitate the infant church of the period of Pentecost before it had to settle down to quiet growth⁽³⁵⁾.

Such was the background to Christian Nurture and it shows the direction in which Bushnell's mind was moving. We should also bear in mind his own comparative lack of success in preaching revival⁽³⁶⁾ and also that he was not alone. The Episcopalian Bishop Brownell also criticised this type of evangelism⁽³⁷⁾.

(11) The Theory

Bushnell's positive theory of the Christian upbringing of children was summed up in his famous principle first formulated in its present form in the 1861 volume Christian Nurture:

'That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise (38).'

He explained it thus:

'In other words, the aim, effort, and expectation should be, not, as is commonly assumed, that the child is to grow up in sin, to be converted after he comes to a mature age; but that he is to open on the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remembering the time when he went through a technical experience, but seeming rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years (39).'

Such nurture was feasible only when parents took their responsibilities seriously. If, as might be objected, the children did not in fact turn out to be Christians, this was due to the parents' failure and to that of the church in not planting and nourishing the spiritual seed in the child.

'Possibly, there may be seeds of holy principle in them, which you do not discover. A child acts out his present feelings, the feelings of the moment, without qualification or disguise. And how, many times, would you all appear, if you were to do the same? Will you expect of them to be better, and more constant and consistent than yourselves . . . (40).' 'But suppose there is really no trace or seed of holy principle in your children, has there been no fault of piety and constancy in your church? no want of Christian sensibility and love to God? no carnal spirit visible to them and to all, and imparting its noxious and poisonous quality to the Christian atmosphere in which they have had their nurture (41)?' 'Then, again, have you nothing to blame in yourselves? no lack of faithfulness? no indiscretion of manner or of temper? no mistake of duty, which, with a better and more cultivated piety, you would have been able to avoid? Have you been so nearly even with your privilege and duty, that you can find no relief but to lay some charge upon God, or comfort yourselves in the conviction that he has appointed the failure you deplore (42)?'

Sometimes the fault lay in the character of parents.

'An objection from observation - asking why it is, if our doctrine be true, that many persons, remarkable for their piety, have been so unfortunate in their children? Because, I answer, many persons, remarkable for their piety, are yet very disagreeable persons, and that, too, by reason of some very marked defect in their religious character . . . Sometimes they appear well to the world one remove distant from them, they shine well in their written biography, but one living in their family will know what others do not; and if their children turn out badly, will never be at a loss for the reason (43).'

A harsh style of upbringing might explain the failure in Christian nurture.

'There are, too, I must warn you, many who talk much of the rod as the orthodox symbol of parental duty, but who might really as well be heathens as Christians, who only storm about their house with heathenish ferocity, who lecture, and threaten, and castigate, and bruise, and call this family government. They even dare to speak of this as the nurture of the Lord . . . It is frightful to think how they batter and bruise the delicate, tender souls of their children, extinguishing in them what they ought to cultivate, crushing that sensibility which is the hope of their being, and all in the sacred name of Jesus Christ (44).'

The church too may have been to blame.

'Sometimes Christian parents fail of success in the religious training of their children because the church counteracts their effort and example. The church makes a bad atmosphere about the house, and the poison comes in at the doors and windows. It is rent by divisions, burnt up by fanaticism, frozen by the chill of a worldly spirit, petrified in a rigid and dead orthodoxy. It makes no element of genial warmth and love about the child, according to the intention of Christ in its appointment, but gives to religion rather a forbidding aspect, and thus, instead of assisting the parent, because one of the worst impediments to his success (45).'

Bushnell conceded not every child properly nurtured would grow into a Christian but this should be the aim.

'To sum up all, we conclude, not that every child can certainly be made to grow up in Christian piety - nothing is gained by asserting so much, and perhaps I could not prove it to be true, neither can any one prove the contrary - I merely show that this is the true idea and aim of Christian nurture as a nurture of the Lord. It is presumptively true that such a result can be realised, just as it is presumptively true that a school will forward the pupils in knowledge, though possibly sometimes it may fail to do it (46).'

Children, he affirmed, were able to grow in grace from infancy.

'And why should it be thought incredible that there should be some really good principle awakened in the mind of a child? For this is all that is implied in a Christian state. The Christian is one who has simply begun to love what is good for its own sake, and why should it be thought impossible for a child to have this love begotten in him (47)?'

The Holy Spirit could counter the depravity human beings had from birth.

'Take any scheme of depravity you please, there is yet nothing in it to forbid the possibility that a child should be led, in his first moral act, to cleave unto what is good and right, any more than in the first of his twentieth year. He is, in that case, only a child converted to good, leading a mixed life as all Christians do. The good in him goes into combat with the evil, and holds a qualified sovereignty. And why may not this internal conflict of goodness cover the whole life from its dawn, as well as any part of it? And what more appropriate to the doctrine of spiritual influence itself, than to believe that as the Spirit of Jehovah fills all the worlds of matter, and holds a presence of power and government in

all objects, so all human souls, the infantile as well as the adult, have a nurture of the Spirit appropriate to their age and their wants (48)?'

There could even be, Bushnell added in another chapter⁽⁴⁹⁾, an antenatal nurture.

'Bring into view the very important, but rather delicate fact, suggested or distinctly alluded to in the apostle's words, that there is even a kind of antenatal nurture which must be taken note of, as having much to do with the religious preparations or inductive mercies of childhood (50).' 'This being true, it is impossible, on mere physiological principles, that the children of a truly sanctified parentage should not be advantaged by the grace out of which they are born. And, if the godly character has been kept up in a long line of ancestry, corrupted by no vicious or untoward inter-marriages, the advantage must be still greater and more positive (51).'

The seeds of regeneration would begin to be sown in 'the age of impressions', Bushnell's term for the pre-language period of the baby's life.

'So when a child, during the whole period of impressions, or passive recipiencies, previous to the development of his responsible will, lives in the life and feeling of his parents, and they in the molds of the Spirit, they will, of course, be shaping themselves in him, or him in themselves, and the effects wrought in him will be preparations of what he will by-and-by do from himself; seeds, in that manner possibly, even of a regenerate life and character (52).'

And this was the work of the Spirit.

'Of course these regenerated dispositions and affinities, this general disposedness to good, which we call a new heart, supposes a work of the Spirit; and, if the parents live in the Spirit as they ought, they will have the Spirit for the child as truly as for themselves, and the child will be grown, so to speak, in the molds of the Spirit, even from his infancy (53).'

Again

'It only remains to add that we are not to assume the comparative unimportance of what is done upon a child, in his age of impressions, because there is really no character of virtue or vice, of blame or praise, developed in that age. Be it so - it is so by the supposition. But the power, the root, the seed, is implanted nonetheless,

in most cases, of what he will be. Not in every case, but often, the seed of a regenerate life is implanted - that which makes the child a Christian in God's view, as certainly as if he were already out in the testimony and formal profession of his faith (54).'

Calvin was appealed to

'Even as Calvin, speaking of the regenerative grace there may be in the heart of infancy itself, testifies - "the work of God is not yet without existence, because it is not observed and understood by us" (55).'

(Theologically it is important to notice that regeneration here covers any beneficent religious change, whether sudden or gradual, conscious or unconscious, empirical or metaphysical. Bushnell's usage was very imprecise and Henderlite in her thesis maintained he always used this concept in a very wide sense (56). Yet in his late sermon Regeneration (57) he was more traditional, showing the Protestant emphasis on a once-for-all qualitative change in spiritual status, expressed in images such as the giving of a new heart, being reborn etc. (58).)

The importance of early nurture was summed up in a striking aphorism that might well appear in a modern book on child-care.

'Let every Christian father and mother understand, when their child is three years old, that they have done more than half of all they will ever do for his character (59).'

Parents desire, Bushnell asserted in the Discourses, their offspring should become Christians, why was this impossible?

'It is a fact that all Christian parents would like to see their children grow up in piety, and the better Christians they are, the more earnestly they desire it, But why should a Christian parent, the deeper his piety and the more closely he is drawn to God, be led to desire, the more earnestly, what, in God's view, is even absurd or impossible (60)?'

Mature Christian experience and knowledge might be impossible for the child but the gospel could be received by the young from their parents as a living reality.

'He cannot understand, of course in the earliest stage of childhood, the philosophy of religion as a renovated experience, and that is not the form of the first lessons he is to receive. He is not to be told that he must have a new heart and exercise faith in Christ's atonement. We are to understand that a right spirit may be virtually exercised in children, when, as yet, it is not intellectually received or as a form of doctrine . . . Nay, the operative truth necessary to a new life may possibly be communicated through and from the parent, being revealed in his looks, manners and ways of life, before they are of an age to understand the teaching of words, for the Christian scheme, the gospel, is really wrapped up in the life of every Christian parent and beams out from him as a living epistle, before it escapes from the lips or is taught in words. And the Spirit of truth may as well make this living truth effectual as the preaching of the gospel itself (61).'

Children in the home could be sensitive to God's truth.

'Nor is there any age which offers itself to God's truth and love, and to that Quickening Spirit whence all good proceeds, with so much of ductile feeling and susceptibilities so tender (62).'

Christian nurture did not imply an optimistic view of human nature, such as Unitarians held.

'There are many who assume the radical goodness of human nature, and the work of Christian education is, in their view, only to educate or educe the good that is in us. Let no one be disturbed by the suspicion of a coincidence between what I have here said and such a theory (63).'

The reality of sin was taught in Scripture, to be expected from heritability or would arise from the child's free experiment.

'The natural pravity of man is plainly asserted in the Scriptures and, if it were not, the familiar laws of physiology would require us to believe what amounts to the same thing. And if neither Scripture nor physiology taught us the doctrine, if the child was born as clear of natural prejudice or damage as Adam before his sin, spiritual education, or, what is the same, probation, that which trains a being for a stable, intelligent virtue hereafter, would still involve an experiment of evil, therefore a fall and a bondage under the laws of evil (64).'

Redemption in children was indeed required.

'The growth of Christian virtue is no vegetable process no mere onward development. It involves a struggle with evil, a fall and a rescue. The soul becomes established in holy virtue, as a free exercise, only as it is passed round the corner of fall and redemption, ascending thus to God through a double experience, in which it learns the bitterness of evil and the worth of good, fighting its way out of one, and achieving the other as a victory (65).'

Not all Christians, Bushnell averred, could recall their conversion and he cited the examples of Baxter, German believers and the Moravians, who all practised nurture with great success⁽⁶⁶⁾. (At this point Bushnell was presumably in contact indirectly with Zinzendorf, whose similar views have already been noted⁽⁶⁷⁾, and whose influence Bushnell most probably encountered in the Moravian communities in America.) The Bible also prescribed nurture along the lines he favoured.

'The phraseology of the New Testament carries the same import. "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," a form of expression, which indicates the existence of a Divine nurture that is to encompass the child and mold him unto God, so that he shall be brought up, as it were, in Him (68).'

With nurture, Bushnell further believed, a much deeper quality of piety could be achieved than was possible with the adult only converted in later years in a revival.

'It is to be deeply considered, in connection with this view of family nurture, whether it does not meet many of the deficiencies we deplore in the Christian character of our times and the present state of our churches (69).'

'Then, also, the piety of the coming age will be deeper, and more akin to habit than ours, because it began earlier. It will have more of an air of naturalness, and will be less a work of will. A generation will come forward, who will have been educated to all good undertakings and enterprises - ardent without fanaticism, powerful without machinery. Not born, so generally, in a storm, and brought to Christ by an abrupt transition, the latter portion of life will not have an unequal war to maintain with the beginning, but life will be more nearly one and in harmony with itself (70).'

Finally the nurtured child could be received into the church and make his own his inheritance, without being considered a convert from without.

'Then, when they come forward to acknowledge their baptism, and assume the covenant in their own choice, they ought not to be received as converts from the world, as if they were heathens coming into the fold, but there should be a distinction preserved, such as makes due account of their previous qualified membership, a form of assumption tendered in place of a confession - something answering to the Lutheran confirmation, passed without a bishop's hands (71).'

Just as behind Bushnell's opposition to the conversion approach to Christian child-rearing lay a wider disquiet over revivals, so behind or associated with his theory of nurture was his view of how the church itself should increase. He held that, if only Christian parents would nurture their children properly so they grew into Christians, over the generations the church itself would grow and expand.

'Let us turn now, not away from revivals of religion, certainly not away from the conviction that God will bring upon the churches tides of spiritual exercise, and vary his divine culture by times and seasons suited to their advancement, but let us turn to inquire whether there is not a fund of increase in the very bosom of the church itself. Let us try if we may not train up our children in the way that they should go. Simply this, if we can do it, will make the church multiply her numbers many fold more rapidly than now, with the advantage that many more will be gained from without than now (72).'

In this way Christianity would be propagated more surely and effectually in the long run. Bushnell called this the principle of 'the outpopulating power of Christian stock (73).'

The Christian population would increase and, by the superior culture and civilisation to which it gave rise, would displace lesser peoples.

So the Christian future of the world would be secured and even the eschatological hope of the glory of God filling the earth be realised. Bushnell summarised his views in an aphorism,

'God is, from the first, looking for a godly seed; or, what is nowise different, inserting such laws of population that piety itself shall finally over-populate the world (74).'

Parents and families have a place in providence to this end.

'The whole scheme of organic unity in the family and of family grace in the church, is just what it should be, if the design were to propagate religion, not by conversions only, but quite as much, or more, by the populating force embodied in it - just that force which, in all states and communities, is known to be the most majestic and silently creative force in their history (75).'

A Christian majority could be bred - and Bushnell sees no incongruity in using biological categories.

'Now if it be true that what gets power in any race, by a habit or a process of culture, tends by a fixed law of nature to become a propagated quality, and passes by descent as a property inbred in the stock; if in this way whole races of men are cultivated into properties that are peculiar - off into a savage character, down into a servile or a mercenary, up into civilisation or a high social state - what is to be the effect of a thoroughly Christian fatherhood and motherhood, continued for a long time in the successive generations of a family (76)?'

The consequence would be a regeneration of the race.

'In this view it is to be expected, as the life of Christian piety becomes more extended in the earth, and the Spirit of God obtains a living power in the successive generations, more and more complete, that finally the race itself will be so thoroughly regenerated as to have a genuinely populating power in faith and godliness. By a kind of ante-natal and post-natal nurture combined, the new born generations will be started into Christian piety, and the world itself over-populated and taken possession of by a truly sanctified stock (77).'

Moreover the greatly multiplied Christian stock would produce a superior culture.

'By the well-known fact, that the populating power of any race, or stock, is increased according to the degree of personal and religious character to which it has attained. Good principles and habits, intellectual culture, domestic virtue, industry, order, law, faith - all these go immediately to enhance the rate and capacity of population. They make a race powerful, not in the mere military sense, but in one that, by century-long reaches of populating force, lives down silently every mere martial competitor (78).'

Protestant Christianity in North America would triumph in the long run over the Catholicism of South America.

'What a lesson also could be derived, in the same manner, from a comparison of the populating forces of the Puritan stock in this country, and of the inferior, superstitious, half Christian stock and nurture of the South American states. And the reason of the difference is that Christianity, having a larger, fuller, more new-creating force in one, gives it a populating force as much superior (79).'

Bushnell's prejudices make the twentieth-century reader raise his eyebrows, as do his similar views on the victory that was or would be Christianity's over Islam.

'Now the fact is that these two great religions of the world had each, in itself, its own law of population from the beginning, and it was absolutely certain, whether it could be seen or not, that Christianity would finally live down Mohammedanism, and completely expurgate the world of it (80).'

Fortunately it is not for us to assess the historical or sociological accuracy or fairness of Bushnell's opinions, nor their moral propriety. They do not affect his theological argument. It is clear, indeed, that shorn of rhetorical excesses, the theory stands that the church as an institution does grow through the natural reproduction of its members. It is a fact that most or many of the children of Christians remain Christians all their lives (and the same is true moreover of every religion and ideology).

As with his criticism of revivals, so with his theory of church-growth, Bushnell had long thought along these lines and anticipated his Discourses. In his early article The Kingdom of Heaven as a Grain of Mustard Seed (1844), reproduced in his Views on Christian Nurture etc. as Growth, Not Conquest the True Method of Christian Progress) he argued that the church should grow like an oak and not like a snowball. It was a matter of inner organic expansion and not external mechanical accretion⁽⁸¹⁾. The church should grow in various ways, in piety⁽⁸²⁾ and character⁽⁸³⁾, in the refinement of Christian truth⁽⁸⁴⁾, in the assimilation of outsiders by the mediate and immediate (ictic) work of the Spirit⁽⁸⁵⁾, above all in family nurture⁽⁸⁶⁾. Piety too often began late^m in life, the church should not be a foundling hospital, parents could do so much while children were ductile⁽⁸⁷⁾.

(111) The Organic Unity of the Family

Bushnell's theory of nurture is based on a crucial premiss or principle. This is what he calls the organic unity of the family. Two theses are combined here. First is the truism that children are powerfully affected by their parents' example and behaviour, their religion, morality and character. Second, children especially when young are not, therefore, independent, moral agents but rather it is the case that their parents are responsible for what they do and are. Infants are not themselves sinners, as they were often regarded in New England. Hence it follows parents can so nurture their offspring

that the latter's faith and moral growth are largely predetermined, yet without detracting from the child's freedom.

The original statement and description of the organic unity of the family is brief and is to be found in Bushnell's first Discourse⁽⁸⁸⁾. There was, he asserted, something analogous to an organic connection as regards character between parent and child.

'Once more, if we narrowly examine the relation of parent and child, we shall not fail to discover something like a law of organic connection, as regards character subsisting between them (89).'

In consequence the parent could determine the child's faith.

'Such a connection as makes it easy to believe, and natural to expect, that the faith of the one will be propagated in the other. Perhaps I should rather say, such a connection as induces the conviction that the character of one is actually included in that of the other, as a seed is formed in the capsule, and being there matured, by a nutriment derived from the stem, is gradually separated from it (90).'

The child was included in the parents' will and was not a distinct agent, even long after the physical separation of birth, when the baby's body parted from the mother's.

'According to the most proper view of the subject, a child is really not born till he emerges from the infantile state, and never before that time can he be said to receive a separate and properly individual nature . . . And the parental life will be flowing into him all that time, just as naturally, and by a law as truly organic, as when the sap of the trunk flows into a limb (91).'

Children only gradually become separate persons.

'The tendency of all our modern speculations is to an extreme individualism, and we carry our doctrines of free will so far as to make little or nothing of organic laws, not observing that character may be, to a great extent, only the free development of exercises previously wrought in us, or extended to us, when other wills had us

within their sphere . . . (the child) is never, at any moment after birth, to be regarded as perfectly beyond the sphere of good and bad exercises, for the parent exercises himself in the child, playing his emotions and sentiments, and working a character in him, by virtue of an organic power (92).'

The child's nature was at first entirely determined by the parent.

'Will, in connection with conscience, is the basis of personality or individuality, and these exist as yet only in their rudimental type, as when the form of a seed is beginning to be unfolded at the root of a flower.

At first the child is held as a mere passive lump in the arms, and he opens into conscious life under the soul of the parent streaming into his eyes and ears through the manners and tones of the nursery (93).'

This truth Bushnell elaborated at great length and further quotation is superfluous. Modern individualism, he said, looking back at his Protestant New England tradition, had been overdone and had overlooked this great truth of the organic unity of the family.

Hence Christian nurture was possible.

'And this is the very idea of Christian education, that it begins with nurture or cultivation. And the intention is that the Christian life and spirit of the parents, which are in and by the Spirit of God, shall flow into the mind of the child, to blend with his incipient and half-formed exercises, that they shall thus beget their own good within him - their thoughts, opinions, faith and love, which are to become a little more, and yet a little more, his own separate exercise, but still the same in character (94).'

Indeed everyone was influenced by the organic nature of the corporate bodies to which he belonged.

'All society is organic - the church, the state, the school, the family, and there is a spirit in each of these organisms, peculiar to itself and more or less hostile, more or less favorable to religious character, and to some extent, at least, sovereign over the individual man (95).'

Bushnell was, of course, careful not to deny individual responsibility.

'As regards the measure of personal merit and demerit, it is doubtless true that every subject of God is to be responsible only for what is his own (96).'

Yet there was an unconscious operation prior to the individual will.

'But virtue still is rather a state of being than an act or series of acts, and if we look at the causes which induce or prepare such a state, the will of the person himself may have a part among these causes more or less important, and it works no absurdity to suppose that one may be ever prepared to such a state by causes prior to his own will, so that, when he sets off to act for himself, his struggle and duty may be rather to sustain and perfect the state begun than to produce a new one (97).'

Here was an explanation of depravity.

'The declarations of Scripture, and the laws of physiology, I have already intimated, compel the belief that a child's nature is somewhat depraved by descent from parents, who are under the corrupting effects of sin (98).'

But this great fact could also work and be used for good.

'It is a singular fact that many believe substantially the same thing in regard to evil character, but have no thought of any such possibility in regard to good (99).'

Finally Bushnell affirmed that his theory of nurture did not mean that parents could bring about the regeneration of their child. The Holy Spirit had to act on the child directly, as well as through the parents.

'Perhaps it may be necessary to add, that, in the strong language I have used concerning the organic connection or character between the parent and the child, it is not designed to assert a power in the parent to renew the child, or that the child can be renewed by any agency of the Spirit less immediate than that which renews the parent himself (100).'

This caveat is important in view of the criticisms made at the time and which we discuss later (101).

Bushnell also gave an expanded treatment of these doctrines in the later chapter he added to the original

Two Discourses⁽¹⁰²⁾ to clarify his key premiss. He began by asserting that modern individualism had lost sight of the fact that state, church and family are more than mere aggregates of individuals and are indeed forms of organic existence.

'A national life, a church life, a family life is no longer conceived, or perhaps conceivable, by many. Instead of being wrought together and penetrated, to some extent, by historic laws and forces common to all the members, we only seem to lie as seeds piled together, without any terms of connection, save the accident of proximity, or the fact that we all belong to the heap. And thus the three great forms of organic existence which God has appointed for the race are in fact lost out of mental recognition (103).'

The connection between parent and child was not only physiological, though obviously it was that. More than the conscious influence of teaching and discipline by parents was involved. There was an unconscious power of atmosphere and climate, of all the parents were.

'Perhaps I shall be understood with the greatest facility if I say that the family is such a body, that a power over character is exerted therein which can not properly be called influence. We commonly use the term influence to denote a persuasive power, or a governmental power, exerted purposely and with a conscious design to effect some result in the subject. In maintaining the organic unity of the family, I mean to assert that a power is exerted by parents over children, not only when they teach, encourage, persuade and govern, but without any purposed control whatever. The bond is so intimate that they do it unconsciously and undesignedly - they must do it. Their character, feelings, spirit, and principles must propagate themselves, whether they will or not. However, as influence, in the sense just given, can not be received (104).'

Because of this profound connection every family had its own spirit or flavour.

'Or, to use language more popular, we conceive the manners, personal views, prejudices, practical motives, and spirit of the house as an atmosphere which passes into all and pervades all, as naturally as the air they breathe (105).'

The individual was important but was shaped by his ancestors and was never what he was solely by his own efforts.

'Besides, we are never, at any age, so completely individual as to be clear of organic connections that affect our character. To a certain extent and for certain purposes, we are parts or members of a common body, as truly as the limbs of a tree (106).'

Nations had a corporate identity over time, whereby later generations 'inherited' the rights and claims of earlier. It made sense for men to seek to revenge the wrong done to their fathers.

'One nation, for instance, had injured or oppressed another - sought to crush, or actually crushed another by invasion. A century or more afterwards the wrong is remembered, and the injured nation takes the field, still burning for redress (107).'

Bushnell did not develop this point, nor discuss whether organic unity meant that parents and children were responsible for each others' sins.

The organic unity of the family was also to be seen in properties passed down the generations⁽¹⁰⁸⁾, whether by physical heredity or by social learning. Bushnell, as a pre-Mendelian never clearly distinguished the effects of physiological laws, as he calls them, from the effect of example and training, 'the law of family infection⁽¹⁰⁹⁾'. New and desirable qualities of every kind could be bred over the generations.

'Besides, it is well understood that qualities received by training, and not in themselves natural, do also pass by transmission. It is said, for example, that the dog used in hunting was originally trained by great care and effort, and that almost no training is necessary; for the artificial quality has become, to a great extent, natural in the stock. So there is little room to doubt that every sort of character and employment passes an effect and works some predisposition in those who come after (110).'

(Bushnell was in his day naturally unaware of the non-inheritance of acquired characteristics and so exaggerates the power of organic continuity.) Vicious and godly attributes thus in his view could be generated in children and become more marked over the centuries.

Bushnell also pointed out that, because of organic unity, nations, churches and families have a corporate spirit that moulds the character and personality of all their members. There was little hope for the child from a godless family.

'In like manner, a thievish house perpetuates a race of thieves. Consider also the ductility and the perfect passivity of childhood. Early childhood resists nothing. What is given it receives, making no selection. To expect therefore that a child will form to himself a spirit opposite to the spirit of the family, without once feeling the power of a counteractive spirit, would be credulous in the highest degree . . . (111).'

Beyond conscious influence, there was a common solidarity and working of wills.

'If the family subsist by plunder, then the infant is swaddled as a thief, the child wears a thief's garments, and feeds the growth of his body on stolen meat, and, in due time, he will have the trade upon him, without ever knowing that he has taken it up, or when he took it up (112).'

In terms of such factors Bushnell accounted for original sin and depravity.

'Now it is in the twofold manner set forth, under this and the previous head of my discourse, that our race have fallen, as a race, into moral corruption and apostasy. In these two methods also, they have been subjected, as an organic unity, to evil; so that when they come to the age of proper individuality, the damage received has prepared them to set forth, on a course of blamable and guilty transgression (113).'

Yet individual responsibility was not impugned.

'Nor is any thing more clear, on first principles, than that no man is responsible for any sin but his own. The sin of no person can be transmitted as a sin or charged to the account of another. But it does not therefore follow, that there are no moral connections between individuals, by which one becomes a corrupter of others. If we are units, so also are we a race, and the race is one - one family, one organic whole (114).'

The great redeeming fact Bushnell pointed to - and here was his original contribution - was that organic unity could be turned to good account and made the foundation of nurture.

'Taking this comprehensive view of the organic unity of successive generations of men, the truth we assert of human depravation is not a half-truth exaggerated (which many will not regard as any truth at all), but it is a broad, well-authenticated doctrine, which no intelligent observer of facts and principles can deny. It shows the past descending on the present, the present on the future, by an inevitable law, and yet gives every parent the hope of mitigating the sad legacy of mischief he entails upon his children, by whatever improvements of character and conduct he is able to make - a hope which Christian promise so far clears to his view, as even to allow him the presumption that his child may be set forth into responsible action, as a Christian person (115).'

In the providence of God the organic law of family unity was intended for redemption.

'The only supposition that honors God is, that the organic unity, of which I speak, was ordained originally for the nurture of holy virtue in the beginning of each soul's history, and that Christianity, or redemption, must of necessity take possession of the abused vehicle, and sanctify it for its own merciful uses (116).'

Such a position was supported in Scripture. The Abrahamic covenant was a family covenant and it was this that was appropriately sealed by faith.

'And thence it follows that the seal of faith, applied to households, is to be no absurdity, for it is the privilege and duty of every Christian parent that his children shall come forth into responsible action, as

a regenerated stock. The organic unity is to be a power of life. God engages, on his part, that it may be, and calls the Christian parent to promise, on his part, that it shall be. Thus the church has a constitutive element from the family in it still, as it had in the days of Abraham (117).'

(Later we shall see that Bushnell made this understanding of the family covenant the basis for infant baptism⁽¹¹⁸⁾.)

A similar stress on the organic connexion between individuals appeared in Bushnell's occasional writings. In his essay The Condition of Solidarity⁽¹¹⁹⁾ he asserted this fact to balance individual responsibility. Men were influenced for bad by their environment⁽¹²⁰⁾. Family reproduction involved moral solidarity⁽¹²¹⁾. If an individual had been created alone with adult powers, he would have been weak through inexperience and the situation would have been even worse than if he had been born in a family⁽¹²²⁾. Solidarity also worked for good as in a Christian home, a generation of good stock could be reared to counteract sin⁽¹²³⁾. Great souls, though, could overcome the power of a bad upbringing so men were still at fault if they sinned⁽¹²⁴⁾.

In his sermon Unconscious Influence⁽¹²⁵⁾, Bushnell stressed the effect on others of what we are, as well as of what we do⁽¹²⁶⁾. Beyond the content of men's words, there was the silent power of their tone, manner, mien and gesture⁽¹²⁷⁾. Unconscious influence welded men into a mass and produced an organic group-spirit⁽¹²⁸⁾. He instanced the power of imitation, fashion and the contagion of religion⁽¹²⁹⁾. We could not escape responsibility for what we made others to be through our example⁽¹³⁰⁾.

A brief assessment of this idea of organic unity or family solidarity is called for. That parents powerfully influence their children for good or ill is beyond question and is an undoubted observation of common sense. Equally it is clear that the child is not completely determined by his nurture, nor is all responsibility removed from men for their adult choices by the fact of a bad upbringing. Bushnell's contention is also supported by developmental psychology in broad terms.

Crucial to a child's emotional and social growth is what is called the attachment relationship with a mother-figure that Bowlby has made so familiar⁽¹³¹⁾. (Busnell indeed comes close to this.

'And, to make the work a sure one, the intrusted soul is allowed to have no will as yet of its own, that this motherhood may more certainly plant the angel in the man, uniting him to all heavenly goodness by predispositions from itself, before he is united, as he will be, by choices of his own. Nothing but this explains and measures the wonderful proportions of maternity (132).'

A warm loving relationship with parents is moreover essential to the growth of conscience⁽¹³³⁾. The power of models, especially of prestigious, admired figures like parents, of imitation and of identification, is attested by experimental psychology⁽¹³⁴⁾. That the young child is not an independent agent is a truism today in law, child-rearing and education. Nowadays, however, as we shall see later⁽¹³⁵⁾, the point is not that parents act through the child and are responsible for what he does (partly true though as this no doubt is), but that

children are not independent moral agents. (Once more Bushnell is remarkably perceptive.

'It might be imagined from the use of such terms, that the infant or very young child has no will at all. But that is not any true conception. It has no responsible will, because it is not acquainted, as yet, with those laws and limits and conditions of choice that make it responsible (136).'

It is better to claim the child cannot sin or believe than that his parents sin in him or that their faith encompasses him.

(iv) Parental Responsibility

Bushnell reinforced his case by discussing parental responsibility for Christian nurture. He took the negative approach of analysing what he called 'ostrich nurture' (137). His picture was the bird who was said to lay its egg and leave it alone, abandoning the fledgling to rear itself. This natural phenomenon he treated as a parable of parents who neglect spiritual nurture. He distinguished various ways in which they did so, under the influence of various false ideas and misconceptions. Our consideration of these arguments of Bushnell will throw light on the problems of Christian child-rearing in the twentieth century and we shall usefully anticipate criticisms of Bushnell and later developments in our discussion. It is illuminating to uncover Bushnell's assumptions and the premisses on which the nurture approach rests.

Bushnell began Chapter III of Christian Nurture by observing that few mothers neglected physical nurture but to ignore spiritual was sadly common and often

justified by apparently plausible arguments. One approach was to give no moral or religious training at all, simply to leave the child to develop in his own sweet way.

'It is nothing less, it is said, than an effort to fill them with prejudices, and put them under the sway of prejudices, all their lives long. Why not let the child have his own way, think his own thoughts, generate his own principles, and so be developed in the freedom and beauty of the flowers? Or, if he should sometimes fall into bad tempers and disgraceful or uncomely practices, as flowers do not, let him learn how to correct himself and be righted by his own discoveries (138).'

Bushnell replied that children need instruction if they are not to become vicious, owing to the contagion of sin.

'Whereas, it is the misery of human children, that, as free beings, answerable for their choices and their character, and already touched with evil, they require some training over and above the mere indulgence of their natural instincts (139).'

Animals, he added, did not train their young but left all to instinct. Man, however, had accumulated a culture and progressed by passing this on to each new generation, who thereby started life with the advantage of their elders' experience (140).

This is a thoroughly respectable argument for socialisation and education, as one of the distinguishing marks of civilised man who is a social being.

'We find, then, a most solid ground for the obligations of Christian nurture. It is one of the grand distinctions of humanity, that it has such a power to pass and is set in such a duty of passing, its gifts, principles and virtues, on to the ages that come after (141).'

Now what was of most value to parents, what they would most want to pass on, was their religion, the greatest treasure they had to teach the young.

'God has given it to them, as rational creatures, to transmit all possible benefits to their offspring. And what shall they more carefully transmit than what is valuable above everything else, their principles and their piety (142)?'

The trouble with this argument today is that, although of course Christians believe their faith is their greatest treasure, other good men disagree and the public standing of Christianity in our culture is problematic and its doctrines disputable. In Bushnell's day Christian belief was still largely unchallenged.

The second form of ostrich nurture, or rather a reason given for it, was to do nothing because to give Christian nurture would interfere with the children's freedom and freedom was crucial for religion. Parents, therefore, absolved themselves from their duty.

'Assuming the unquestionable first truth that religious virtue or piety, is a matter strictly personal, the free-will offering of obedience and duty to God, they subside into the impression that they are of course absolved from any close responsibility for that which lies so entirely in the choices of their children themselves (143).'

The fallacy here, Bushnell claimed, was to ignore the difference between children and adults in respect of freedom of choice. The child was certainly free but weak, inexperienced and prejudiced to evil, because of the parents' own sin. Thus the young should be in the charge of the old, until strong enough in character to choose for themselves.

'One generation is to be ripe in knowledge and character, and the next is to be put in charge of the former, in the tenderest, most flexible, most dependent state possible, to be by them inducted into the choices where their safety lies. Furthermore, they are bound to fidelity in their charge by the fact that, as they have given existence to the subjects of it, so they have also communicated the poison of their own fallen state to increase the perils of existence (144).'

This argument seems unexceptionable in the moral sphere. In Moral Education today it is generally agreed that a basic social morality should be inculcated in children, even before they are capable of seeing for themselves the reason why and motivation for good behaviour should be provided⁽¹⁴⁵⁾. Equally, in respect of religion, the child cannot exercise effective and informed choice if he grows up in ignorance and unable to think and act appropriately, should he want to⁽¹⁴⁶⁾.

The third justification parents give for opting out of spiritual nurture is because they adhere to the conversion approach. As we have seen in describing what Bushnell opposed in section (1), Christians in his day believed they could not and ought not to do anything spiritual for the child - except to teach him how sinful he was - before he was ripe for being converted. They used to wait for a revival to come along and thus avoided parental responsibility. The validity of this approach and of Bushnell's objection to it depends on whether children can be Christians prior to faith and decision - an issue we discuss later in Chapter IV.

A fourth and more interesting variety of ostiich nurture, which Bushnell castigated, was to give moral training without religious.

'Again, there is another form of the unchristian nurture, over opposite to those just named, which is quite as wide of the true character. I speak of that lower and merely ethical nurture, which undertakes, with great assiduity it may be, to form and whittle the age of childhood into character, by a merely pruning and humanly culturing process. It is a kind of nurture that stops short of religion and atones for the conscious defect by a drill more or less careful in the moralities (147).'

The grave failure here was to ignore the spiritual needs of the child and the claims of religion.

'The world-ward nature is cared for, but the religious, that which opens God-ward, that which aspires after God and, occupied by his inspiring impulse, mounts into all good character - as being even liberty itself - that which consummates and crowns the real greatness and future eternity of souls, is virtually ignored, left to the wild, dry motherhood of the sands (148).'

Moral training alone would not suffice because the help of divine grace and of prayer was thereby neglected. There was a danger of a morality of outward semblance and of justification by works.

'Children trained in this mere ethical nurture are inducted into no way of faith or dependence on God. They are taught to look for no spiritual transformation. The virtue they practise is to be prayerless virtue. They grow up thus on the roots of their natural pride and selfishness, bred into the habit of testing their goodness by their appearances, and their merit by their works (149).'

Parents, Bushnell accused, resorted to this niggardly unspiritual nurture through their lack of piety (150);

Here it is relevant to note the modern conviction, widely supported in philosophical and educational writing, that moral education can proceed apart from religious (151), because morality is logically distinct from religion. There is sufficient consensus on basic social morality to make ethical nurture possible. We believe today that by ordinary parental training and enlightened child-rearing at least a decent level of good citizenship can be achieved. Moreover, Christian parents, because of the problematic character of Christian doctrine in the contemporary world and out of respect for the child's freedom, may hold it proper to postpone religious nurture until after children have come to faith and have opted

for Christianity. (This sense of 'nurture' is the one that refers to building up Christians rather than to religious education.) In Bushnell's day to separate morality from religion was unheard of and their unity would have been an unquestioned assumption.

Bushnell also protested at another heresy that produced ostrich nurture and that was the idea that children have no place in the church. This will be considered later in Chapter IV.

Finally Bushnell appealed to parents to nurture their children spiritually out of love and a sense of responsibility⁽¹⁵²⁾. The only cause he could see for failure to do so was want of piety. He admitted the non-Christian parent did teach his child about Christianity but objected that without personal faith and example such teaching could not be effective⁽¹⁵³⁾ - an argument that is still common. It may be pertinent to ask would the same apply to teachers of other faiths and of Communism. Obviously if the aim is to induct into these 'stances for living', the committed advocate is likely to be more persuasive. But if the object is educational, to inform and to explore various controversial belief-systems, the exponent of them need only be informed, competent and sympathetic. What the issue turns on, in the context of this study, is whether the role of the parent as a model and as a teacher of religion differs from that of the school-teacher as a public educator. Ought parents to induct their offspring into their own faith? Bushnell would have had no doubt of his answer!

(v) Criticisms of Bushnell

In this section we discuss criticisms of Bushnell's theory. We begin with those of contemporaries and then move to those we may make today. In his own day the chief critic and opponent of Bushnell over Christian nurture, as expressed in the Two Discourses and the later Views on Christian Nurture etc. was Bennet Tyler, the veteran conservative Calvinist theologian, whom we have already referred to⁽¹⁵⁴⁾. There were also important reviews of the Discourses by Charles Hodge, the distinguished Presbyterian professor at Princeton⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ and by John W. Nevin of the German Reformed Church⁽¹⁵⁶⁾. Their assessments, while warm and sympathetic in many respects, contained important theological criticisms. We shall conduct a running debate, passing from issue to issue, bringing in our modern assessment where relevant, before finally appraising Bushnell from the point of view of twentieth century education.

Tyler, as a conservative Calvinist, asked what happened on Bushnell's view to the children of unbelievers? Were they damned for lack of organic connexion with Christian parents? That would seem hard on the offspring of non-Christians⁽¹⁵⁷⁾! Bushnell in fact admitted the children of unbelievers could come under the Christian influence of pious families, schools and church but on his view their chances of grace were not promising⁽¹⁵⁸⁾. Obviously on common sense grounds he was correct. Yet it does seem a weakness of the theory he advances that it does not provide for the upbringing

of all children and for the churches' mission to them. Was God dependent on Christian nurture, enquired Tyler⁽¹⁵⁹⁾, Perhaps Bushnell did not mean to treat of such children who properly fall outside the scope of his work.

Tyler made much of the fact that many children of Christians did not turn out to be Christians themselves. They were not always devout. And it was not the fault of the parents⁽¹⁶⁰⁾. It was false to assume, as Bushnell did, that if only parents would make a greater effort, their offspring would be holy. It was wrong to suppose all children of Christians had seeds of holiness in them⁽¹⁶¹⁾. The child might be converted when adult or indeed at any time when young. There was no proof to show the presence of holiness from the birth of moral agency, the child being born again without delay⁽¹⁶²⁾. Of course, parents wanted their offspring to be Christians but that depended on God⁽¹⁶³⁾. Because it was not absurd that such children should grow up Christians, it was certainly conceivable but it might not actually happen⁽¹⁶⁴⁾. The organic connection did not always work. The Abrahamic covenant functioned for some seed, though not for all⁽¹⁶⁵⁾. The Church had always been replenished by the children of Christian parents but only some of these were ever received into the fold⁽¹⁶⁶⁾. Conversions required grace as well as nurture. (Hodge agreed that the Abrahamic covenant was only a general promise of godly seed and there could be ~~no~~ exceptions⁽¹⁶⁷⁾.)

Bushnell's reply would presumably have been that, while as he conceded not every child of Christians did actually become a Christian, many or most did, if properly nurtured and that that must be the aim⁽¹⁶⁸⁾. It all depended on the piety of parents. Bushnell's main defence of this theory was simply that parents were not good enough⁽¹⁶⁹⁾. Tyler objected that no Christian parent was ever perfect or claimed to be⁽¹⁷⁰⁾. Even if 'educated by angels, amid the glories of heaven', the child would still remain a sinner, Tyler avowed⁽¹⁷¹⁾. Parents did not deliberately send their children into the wilderness or consign them to sin⁽¹⁷²⁾, but that did not mean that parents could overcome original sin or presume on God's grace working sooner than in fact it did⁽¹⁷³⁾. Bushnell, however, could always claim better nurture would probably keep more of the young in the household of faith, provided that a higher level of ordinary fidelity, not heroic sanctity, was practised. One might observe that since organic laws are supposed to transmit sin, as well as grace, children will always have a mixed inheritance so that Christian nurture can never be expected to be altogether successful. If children sin because of their parents' example, it is hardly likely that every child will be saved by the same example.

Tyler also detected presumption in Bushnell. The latter restricted God's sovereignty and freedom by claiming the children of believers could always be regenerated from infancy. This point seems fair.

When was it wise to remedy sin? The sooner the better, answered Bushnell. But was it for us to save sinners or for God to do as he pleased⁽¹⁷⁴⁾? There seemed to be here a conflict within Calvinism between God's freedom in bestowing elective grace to the children of Christians - whether at all or at any particular age - and the household covenant idea, the promise to believers and to their seed. The latter motif, as well as the former, was part of Reformed theology⁽¹⁷⁵⁾, even if the difficulty appears unreal to those of another persuasion.

The major accusation, however, against Bushnell was that his nurture was naturalistic, because it worked through organic laws. Tyler alleged he minimised total depravity and allowed only a natural pravity via the consequences of a child's upbringing⁽¹⁷⁶⁾. Similarly grace could be inherited through the infant's organic connection with his family and work by natural mechanisms, whereas in fact special regeneration by the Holy Spirit was needed by everybody⁽¹⁷⁷⁾. No wonder Bushnell was popular with the Unitarians⁽¹⁷⁸⁾! If the organic laws were operative, they should be true for all children, despite the want of Scriptural support for the idea⁽¹⁷⁹⁾.

Hodge in his review strongly approved the nurture of children of Christians in the covenant, a procedure he believed to be well-founded on divine promise and conditional for its efficacy on parental faithfulness⁽¹⁸⁰⁾. He admitted character and sin were not the result purely of individual choice⁽¹⁸¹⁾. His problem was the basis of the organic connection. It might be grounded on the

promise of God, which was his own view, or on the rites of the church in baptism - a view both he and Bushnell opposed. Bushnell unfortunately had fallen into naturalism⁽¹⁸²⁾. He had taught God was only a power in nature, not over it. 'There is nothing supernatural in this process, nothing out of analogy with nature, nothing which transcends the ordinary efficiency of natural causes as vehicles of divine power.' Bushnell 'assumes that men are not by nature the children of wrath, that they are not involved in spiritual death⁽¹⁸³⁾.' Bushnell had not taken natural depravity seriously, he had 'a naturalistic doctrine concerning conversion⁽¹⁸⁴⁾.' Therefore, just as sin was transmitted according to Bushnell by organic connection, so was grace and thus God works through nature. This was theism, not a real belief in the supernatural, quite apart from natural law, as displayed in Christ's healings and salvation⁽¹⁸⁵⁾. Redemption, Hodge alleged, in Bushnell was by a link to the parent after birth comparable to the vascular link before birth⁽¹⁸⁶⁾. The absence of the true supernatural was shown in Bushnell's scorn for ictic grace⁽¹⁸⁷⁾.

Nevin's attack was similar. He called Bushnell's position 'Educational Religion' or a 'theory of educational piety⁽¹⁸⁸⁾.' Bushnell had rightly protested against Protestant individualism and his stress on organic connection was correct. Grace must have an organic constitution⁽¹⁸⁹⁾. Yet Bushnell was rationalistic, basing redemption on the constitution of nature rather

than the supernatural. Could a natural organic connexion overcome original sin? Bushnell's conception of sin made it only an incidental fact of development and thereby a process parents might remedy. But original sin was a deeper force and parents were merely its occasion, not its ground. Bushnell came too close to redemption by parents and not by the church⁽¹⁹⁰⁾. Natural birth in a family was not enough to yield an objective foundation for redemption. The higher birth of baptismal regeneration in the church was required, according to Nevin with his catholic leanings, as well as Christian nurture. For Bushnell baptism was only a symbol, he had no real recognition of it as a divine sacrament. Such a reality supplemented and enhanced the constitution of organic laws and provided a mid-position between Bushnell's rationalism and Puritan individualism⁽¹⁹¹⁾.

Bushnell's reply in his *Argument* was that God did not work through istic grace in response to an outworn theory of depravity⁽¹⁹²⁾, but through natural laws such as those involved in the organic connection. The latter was his definition of the supernatural order⁽¹⁹³⁾. It is only fair to Bushnell to remark how he worked out this idea in his later Nature and the Supernatural (1858), his one major foray into systematic theology. There the supernatural was the realm of Powers - persons, spirits, wills, God - possessing freedom and operating without and on nature, the realm of Things, physical objects, governed by natural law⁽¹⁹⁴⁾. Just as man controlled his body by

willing, so God controlled the whole natural order and worked through its mechanisms, without overthrowing them⁽¹⁹⁵⁾.

The truth of the charge of naturalism depends on the meaning of regeneration. If regeneration just means empirical growth in holiness and morality, as we have seen Henderlite alleges it does in Christian Nurture⁽¹⁹⁶⁾, then the organic basis of nurture seems adequate to explain how the children of Christians came to behave in pious ways. But if regeneration refers to a new birth, a new heart, forgiveness, justification, then we require to think in terms of a qualitative, spiritual change, a non-empirical, metaphysical transformation. This perhaps is the force of the belief of most Christians that salvation needs supernatural grace and here Bushnell does seem defective. He himself, in his later sermon Regeneration, as we have seen⁽¹⁹⁷⁾, held such a conception. Thus Bushnell's account of nurture allows no scope for that element in regeneration usually termed conversion.

So we turn to another serious criticism of Tyler. Bushnell neglected conversion and unduly disparaged revival. He made much of growth.

'But you think the Church ought to increase by "growth" and not by "conquest". Growth! What is there to grow? Religion cannot grow before it begins to exist; and there is not an heart in which it has an existence, till that heart has been gained by conquest (198).'

Regeneration must have begun at a particular moment and have been a change at a specific time. Nurture could not provide this. (Doubtless Tyler would have thought ridiculous Bushnell's revealing remark in conversation "I don't see what right we have got to say that a child

can't be born again before he's born the first time⁽¹⁹⁹⁾")
 Once a child had sinned and repented, forgiveness would
 have to be a new thing and conceptually could not be
 gradual from birth. Conversion must therefore be sudden,
 there could be no moment when the child was neither reborn
 nor ^{not} yet reborn⁽²⁰⁰⁾.

Tyler asserted conversion required an 'angular
 experience' of conviction of sin⁽²⁰¹⁾. And this and
 the resulting Christian character required testing by
 religious affections and views of God, not just by
 outward devotion and the absence of immorality - as in
 the old Half Way Covenant⁽²⁰²⁾. Bushnell's position
 led godless children to think they were saved⁽²⁰³⁾.
 Mere Confirmation, on the Episcopal or Lutheran model, of
 a child's adherence to the church was no use⁽²⁰⁴⁾.

'Let baptised children be presumed to be pious
 unless by outward immorality, or open hostility, they
 give decisive evidence to the contrary, and let them
 be received to full communion in the church on this
 presumption, without any examination with respect to
 their religious feelings; and it is my full conviction
 that it would corrupt the church, and be the means of
 confirming multitudes in delusion to their everlasting
 ruin. That such is the effect of confirmation as
 practised in the Episcopal or German Reformed Church,
 cannot admit of a question (205).'

A more moderate criticism of Bushnell on these
 lines came in a Baptist review of his work⁽²⁰⁶⁾. This
 writer denied that an organic connexion of parent with
 child could automatically lead to a child of Christian
 parents becoming a Christian and that, however much
 Bushnell had tried to escape this implication of his
 words, that was the general impression he gave⁽²⁰⁷⁾.
 Christianity was not a natural or universal religion

but one of grace to sinners⁽²⁰⁸⁾. It could not be assumed that parents and the church would provide perfect nurture to the young, nor that God would invariably save them in infancy⁽²⁰⁹⁾. Bushnell was correct in objecting to 'explosive conversion' and ictic grace but this was not the only alternative to his nurture theory. Baptists would only baptise regenerate people who had an 'effectual calling'. This more moderate concept meant that redemption was manifest in sensible, present experiences. In the case of the children of Christians, such sensible experiences of sin, the joy of pardon, and of faith, could be gradual, of long standing since infancy and scarcely noticed because they seemed so natural⁽²¹⁰⁾. Parents waited and hoped for such signs of salvation in their children, who usually stood in need of salvation, but they did not presume upon it. To assume that all the children of Christians, who behaved with propriety and did not disbelieve, were thereby regenerate was a most dangerous form of complacency, of which Tyler had rightly warned⁽²¹¹⁾.

Further the churches of New England had, according to Tyler, expanded by revival and 'conquest'. Bushnell had failed to distinguish genuine from spurious revivalism, he had confused side-effects with the real thing, condemned use by abuse⁽²¹²⁾. He had also attempted to give naturalistic explanations of why waves of revival came like the seasons and ignored the need to account for conversions, at some times rather than at others, of the same man under the same preaching, by reference

to the Holy Spirit⁽²¹³⁾. Revival by sober ministers with discrimination was the church's true need to counter the frequent falling into coldness of believers⁽²¹⁴⁾. Tyler concluded:

'Permit me to express the opinion that the Kingdom of Christ never has made and never will make any progress in this world except by conquest (215).' 'It will be seen that our religion revolves, practically speaking, about two single points. First, every man is to be converted. Secondly, he is to concern himself about the conversion of others (216).'

These contemporary criticisms of Bushnell may be summed up by discussing how various theological traditions, in the case of Christians' children, can provide for the episodic spiritual change in status that regeneration in part signifies. The catholic's solution lies in baptism, the orthodox Calvinist relies on election to the household covenant based on divine promise; the evangelical thinks in terms of conversion at years of discretion by the ictic grace Bushnell spurns (though, today, even the latter and its manifestations might be explained by natural laws in psychological terms as a non-supernatural occurrence⁽²¹⁷⁾.) Bushnell could resort to none of these defences and, therefore, could not adequately provide for regeneration. Maybe his best line would be that, with proper nurture, the child would inevitably be converted when he grew up, but that seems a different theory⁽²¹⁸⁾!

If we look then at Bushnell simply theologically, his views are open to serious objections. He did not explain how redemption might be communicated to the children of non-Christians and how the church touches any

of them. He also did not sufficiently provide for the sin of parents which prevented them ever being good enough for an adequate nurture. With perfect parents, Bushnell's approach might work but then, on his own premisses of sin deriving from the organic connection, nurture would be unnecessary. The episodic character of God's grace converting the Christian child was not allowed for and, as Tyler observed, many could clearly remember their own conversion⁽²¹⁹⁾. Above all the theory of Bushnell was too naturalistic and could not accommodate supernatural regeneration as a datable event.

How does Bushnell fare when assessed educationally? The crucial issues have already arisen in discussing 'ostrich nurture'⁽²²⁰⁾. The chief problem is the problematic character of Christianity in the modern world in contrast to early nineteenth century New England. There is no consensus in our society on the truth or value of Christian belief, nor are there readily available clear and agreed proofs of orthodoxy and Christian theologians themselves dispute basic doctrines and their contemporary interpretation⁽²²¹⁾. This fact alone makes the aim which Bushnell took for granted, of bringing up any children, whether those of Christians or not, to be Christians quite inadmissible. Respect for truth, and for the child's own freedom and autonomy in reaching the truth by his own exploration, forbids induction into the faith from the cradle, before years of discretion are attained, a procedure which could only be justifiable if the creeds of Christendom were objectively true and if

Christian ethics did not emphasise maturity of mind in reaching faith. Moreover, in the pluralistic and liberal society we live in in the twentieth century, children face many options in terms of life stances. Other religions, Communism and Humanism are open possibilities and the form of nurture which alone is proper in such a setting is to prepare the young for informed and rational choice.

It is also important to recall, as we have already pointed out⁽²²²⁾, the general acceptance today of the autonomy of ethics and of the serious possibility of a non-religious moral education, which can be offered to every child. Sufficient agreement exists on a basic social morality to make the attempt to attach character-training to a particular and controversial world-view unnecessary. (The relation of this to original sin is reserved for later examination in Chapter III.) Should spiritual nurture in Bushnell's sense be abandoned, there is no reason why children should not grow up to be decent citizens, if not saints.

The situation of parents with their own children does not alter the position. The parent, qua nurturer - and not as witness or advocate or apologist - has as much responsibility and should have as great a reverence, for truth and reason, as has any other educator. Again one's own child deserves the same respect as the children of the community in school. The values of the classroom and college do not change at home, in the private sphere, upon the domestic hearth.

Of course, it is perfectly true that parental influence by organic connection is very powerful and, whatever the believing mother and father in fact do about nurture, they will actually sway and predispose their children towards their own faith. So however undoctrinaire and open the style of child-rearing adopted, it is more than likely that the children of Christians will become Christians in the end. Growth indeed, following Bushnell, remains for the church the chief means of propagating Christianity in a settled community. Later we shall discuss how this consideration is to be reconciled with Christian education in the home and family today.

Meantime we turn to the question of baptism, of sin in the young and whether there is anything to grow in the child. We examine whether nurture should be of those already Christian or should be directed to children who, as well as being morally innocent, are religiously neutral and only potentially Christians.

Footnotes Chapter II

- (1) Christian Nurture p.8
 (2) p.186
 (3) p.9
 (4) p.10
 (5) pp.13-14
 (6) p.26
 (7) p.37
 (8) p.38
 (9) p.41
 (10) p.42
 (11) p.50
 (12) p.142
 (13) p.66
 (14) p.144
 (15) v. pp.23-24
 (16) v. p.24
 (17) Letter to Rev. H.Bushnell which discusses his book
Discourses on Christian Nurture (East Windsor Hill 1847) p.18.
Letters to Horace Bushnell containing strictures on his book
'Views on Christian Nurture' (East Windsor Hill 1848) p.14
 (18) v. pp.23,28
 (19) Bushnell op.cit. p.27
 (20) p.62
 (21) pp.165-166
 (22) p.169
 (23) pp.180-181
 (24) p.185
 (25) The Spirit in Man (New York 1903) p.97
 (26) Christian Nurture p.186
 (27) p.188
 (28) p.158
 (29) Views on Christian Nurture etc (New York 1847, 1st ed.) p.130
 (30) ibid. p.135
 (31) ibid. p.139
 (32) ibid. p.140
 (33) ibid. p.141
 (34) ibid. p.142
 (35) ibid. pp.211-244
 (36) Cross op.cit. pp.54-57
 (37) ibid. p.57
 (38) p.4
 (39) p.4
 (40) p.5
 (41) pp.5-6
 (42) p.6
 (43) p.37
 (44) p.44
 (45) pp.39-40
 (46) p.40
 (47) p.9
 (48) pp.9-10
 (49) Pt.II, Ch.I,I
 (50) p 194
 (51) p.196
 (52) p.202
 (53) p.203
 (54) pp.209-210

- (55) p.211
 (56) The Theological Basis of Horace Bushnell's 'Christian Nurture'
 (Yale, Connecticut, Ph D., 1947)
 (57) found in The New Life (New York 1871) Ch.V
 (58) ibid. pp.63-69
 (59) Christian Nurture p.212
 (60) p.13
 (61) p.14
 (62) pp.16-17
 (63) p.15
 (64) p.15
 (65) p.15
 (66) p.18 and Views on Christian Nurture etc p.93
 (67) v. p.21
 (68) Christian Nurture p.26
 (69) p.46
 (70) p.49
 (71) p.162
 (72) p.48
 (73) title of Ch.VIII, p.xiii
 (74) p.165
 (75) p.168
 (76) p.172
 (77) p.173
 (78) p.175
 (79) p.177
 (80) p.177
 (81) Views on Christian Nurture etc p.147
 (82) ibid. p.173
 (83) ibid. pp.169-171
 (84) ibid. pp.171-172
 (85) ibid. p.175
 (86) p. ibid. p.177
 (87) ibid. pp.180-181
 (88) Christian Nurture Pt.I, Ch.I,I
 (89) p.18
 (90) p.18
 (91) p.19
 (92) pp.20-21
 (93) p.19
 (94) p.21
 (95) p.22
 (96) p.21
 (97) p.22
 (98) p.19
 (99) p.18
 (100) p.22
 (101) v. pp.68-71,97
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Chapter III

Baptism and Sin

It is next necessary to investigate another premiss of Bushnell's, viz that children (in Christian families) can be Christians from birth. One particular reason that may be used to back this premiss is that infants become Christians through baptism. Discussion of this rite is required not only for our assessment of Bushnell's theory but also to prepare a theological foundation for a positive approach to the educational religious nurture we shall finally advocate. So this chapter is concerned primarily with infant baptism.

First we describe and evaluate Bushnell's presentation of the paedobaptist case. Then we compare his interpretation with the catholic view of baptism. That raises the question of original sin and a position on this matter will be sketched. In the light of this discussion Bushnell's approach to original sin will be considered. Against this framework we shall examine the plausibility of attributing sin to children in the light of contemporary knowledge of child-development. Finally we return to see whether a defensible case for infant baptism can be argued today and may be used as part of any coherent theology of contemporary Christian child-rearing.

(1) Bushnell's View of Infant Baptism

Bushnell claimed that infant baptism had been neglected or undervalued in the Congregational (and

other) churches of his day⁽¹⁾. Generally, ever since the Great Awakening, the baptism of children in the family covenant, though part of New England's Calvinist heritage, had been obscured and overshadowed by the need for individual conversion and profession of faith⁽²⁾. Bushnell's form of the nurture approach gave paedobaptism a new lease of life and he sought to set it on a new (or freshly rediscovered, old) foundation. He needed to defend his position against Baptist critics⁽³⁾, against his fellow-Congregationalists who had no real use for this ceremony, and against Episcopalians and Catholics, whose views he found theologically objectionable⁽⁴⁾. So in his original second Discourse of 1847 he briefly stated his approach⁽⁵⁾, while in the 1861 volume Christian Nurture he added whole new chapters on 'Infant Baptism, How Developed' and the 'Apostolic Authority of Infant Baptism'⁽⁶⁾.

For the purposes of our exposition we divide Bushnell's arguments into those that were and have become customary and conventional in the baptismal debate from the Reformation to the contemporary theological scene and into that argument which is peculiar to Bushnell and which arises from his distinctive theory. We shall simply state the conventional considerations he adduces, in their barest outline, without discussing their merits. In the attached footnotes we give evidence of the ongoing controversy in theology about infant baptism and show severally that each of Bushnell's defences has received considerable support in our own day, as well as weighty criticism. It will then be sufficient for the ends of

this Study to assume that, on every single one or on at least most of these points, a prima facie case of some plausibility can be argued and support found among serious modern scholars.

The conventional arguments are these. Bushnell appealed in support of infant baptism to the baptism of whole households in the NT⁽⁷⁾. He quoted the baptism of the children of proselytes as a precedent, (yet in ignorance that the children of Gentiles, once they had become Jews, were not baptised⁽⁸⁾). He cited the famous saying of Paul in I Cor 7 14 about the believing sanctifying the unbelieving spouse, so their children were not unclean but holy, as Scriptural support for his doctrine of the organic unity of the family⁽⁹⁾. He made use of the Abrahamic covenant and the practice of infant circumcision as parallels and pre-figurations for the new covenant in Christ, an argument which played a part as much in the Calvinist tradition as in Reformed theology today⁽¹⁰⁾. Bushnell referred to Jesus' appeal to allow the children to come to him and to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, this was equivalent to the church, thus children should be admitted into it and to baptise them was legitimate⁽¹¹⁾. He pointed out that in Colossians and Ephesians the saints and faithful included children, the latter presumably having been baptised⁽¹²⁾. Finally he pointed to positive, if indirect evidence which, he claimed, showed that from the sub-apostolic period onwards paedobaptism had been practised. Apparent references in Justin⁽¹³⁾, Irenaeus⁽¹⁴⁾, Tertullian⁽¹⁵⁾,

Origen⁽¹⁶⁾, Cyprian⁽¹⁷⁾ and 'fideles etc' on inscriptions on children's graves⁽¹⁸⁾, were called in evidence.

In general Bushnell pursued the familiar line of argument⁽¹⁹⁾ that the early church at Pentecost was in a missionary situation but soon had to settle down to a permanent existence in the world, where provision was needed for the Christian rearing of children in the home⁽²⁰⁾. Then in that setting, it was legitimate for the church to revise or extend its baptismal practice, just as it did with Sabbath observance, yet upon no explicit Scriptural authority. Why should not similar adaptations be made in respect of the sacrament of Christian initiation⁽²¹⁾?

Granting some plausibility in these considerations, today as in Bushnell's day, we pass to his distinctive argument. He defended infant baptism by giving a fairly clear and not too ambitious interpretation of its meaning. Unlike the obscurity of Calvin, who mainly resorted to mystery for the effect on a baby of baptism⁽²²⁾, Bushnell's account was relatively perspicuous and plain. Baptismal regeneration was presumptive, not actual,

'The regeneration is not actual, but only presumptive. . . (23).'

'We must distinguish here between a fact and a presumption of fact. If you look upon a seed of wheat, it contains, in itself, presumptively, a thousand generations of wheat, though by reason of some fault in the cultivation, or some speck of diseased matter in itself, it may, in fact, never reproduce at all. So the Christian parent has, in his character, a germ which has power, presumptively, to produce its like in his children, though by reason of some bad fault in itself, or possibly some outward hindrance in the Church, or some providence of death, it may fail to do so. Thus

it is that infant baptism becomes an appropriate rite. It sees the child in the parent, counts him presumptively a believer and a Christian, and, with the parent, baptizes him also (24).'

Again

'(The child) is taken to be regenerate, not historically speaking, but presumptively, on the ground of his known connection with the parent character, and the divine or church life, which is the life of that character. Perhaps I shall be understood more easily if I say that the child is potentially regenerate, being regarded as existing in connection with powers and causes that contain the fact, before time and separate from time. For when the fact appears historically, under the law of time, it is not more truly real, in a certain sense, than it was before. And then the grace conferred, being conferred by no casual act, but resting in the established laws of character, in the church and the house, is not lost by unfaithfulness, but remains and lingers still, though abused and weakened, to encourage new struggles (25).'

Bushnell denied that priestly hands at the font conferred regeneration or that the faith of sponsors or the church did duty for that of the child.

'I hardly dare attempt to speak of the "sacramental grace", supposed to attend the rite of baptism, under the priestly forms of Christianity, for I have never been able to give any consistent and dignified meaning to the language in which it is set forth. That there is a grace attendant falling on all the parties concerned, is quite evident, if they are doing their duty; for no person, whether laic or priest, can do, or intend what is right, without some spiritual benefit. But the child is said to be "regenerate, spiritually united to Christ, a new creature in Christ Jesus", under the official grace of baptism. Then this language, so full of import, is defined, after all, to mean only that the child is in the church, where the grace of God surrounds him - translated (not internally, but externally) from the sphere of nature into a new sphere, where all the aids of grace available for his salvation are furnished. Sometimes it is added that his sins are remitted, though no man is likely to believe that he has any sins to remit, or, if the meaning be that the corrupted quality, physiologically inherent in his nature, is washed away, he will show in due time that it is not, and no one, in fact, believes that it is. Then, if it be asked whether the new sphere of grace will assuredly work a gracious character, "No," is the answer "If the child is not faithful, or hinders the

grace, he will lose it" - that is, he will not stay regenerate. And then as the child, in every case, is sure, in some bad sense, not to be faithful, he is equally sure to lose the grace and be landed in a second state that is worse than the first. And thus it turns out, after all, as far as I can see, that the grace magnified in the beginning, by words of so high an import, is a thing of no value - it is nothing. It is, in fact, one of our most decided objections to this scheme of sacramental grace (paradoxical as it may seem) that, really and truly, there is not enough of import in it to save the meaning of the rite. The grace is words only, and an air of imposture is all that remains after the words are explained. The rite is fertile only in maintaining a superstition. Practically speaking, it only exalts a prerogative. By a motion of his hand the priest breaks in, to interrupt and displace all the laws of character in life - communicating an abrupt, ictic grace, as much wider of all dignity and reason than any which the new-light theology has asserted as the regenerative power is more subject to a human dispensation. A superstitious homage collects about his person. The child looks on him as one who opens heaven by a ceremony! The ungodly parent hurries to him, to get the regenerative grace for his dying child. The bereaved parent mourns inconsolably, and even curses himself that he neglected to obtain the grace for his child now departed. The priest, in the eye, displaces the memory of duty and godliness in the heart. A thousand superstitions, degrading to religion, and painful to look upon, hang around this view of baptism (26).'

Current New England Congregationalism was little better.

'We have much to say of baptismal regeneration as a great error, which undoubtedly it is, in the form in which it is held, but it is only a less hurtful error than some of us hold in denying it. The distinction between our doctrine of baptismal regeneration and the ancient Scripture view is too broad and palpable to be mistaken. According to the modern church dogma, no faith in the parents is necessary to the effect of the rite. Sponsors, too, are brought in between all parents and their duty to assume the very office which belongs only to them. And, what is worse, the child is said to be actually regenerated by the act of the priest. According to the more ancient view, or that of the Scriptures, nothing depends upon the priest or minister save that he execute the rite in due form (27).'

Catholic sacramentalism and *ex opere operato* theories were thus firmly excluded.

Instead of such conceptions, Bushnell appeared to mean that baptism effected no present change in the baby

at the time of its administration but that, because it could be presumed that the child of a Christian home would grow up a Christian, baptism as a symbol of regeneration was appropriate. There were no sins to forgive and experience showed no corrupted quality, inherent in nature, was washed away⁽²⁸⁾. Infant baptism on this view is a declarative or cognitive rite, signifying what will be the case, it is a sacrament of the future and Bushnell's view may be compared with P. T. Forsyth's⁽²⁹⁾ or with O. Quick's, according to which the 'symbolic' aspect of a sacrament applies to the baptism of a babe, while its 'instrumental' significance only becomes effective later when the child reaches personal faith⁽³⁰⁾.

Bushnell, of course, justified his presumption that the children of Christians would grow up to be or to become regenerate by his crucial premiss of the organic unity of the family.

'This brings me to my last argument, which is drawn from infant or household baptism - a rite which supposes the fact of an organic connection of character between the parent and the child; a seal of faith in the parent, applied over to the child on the ground of a presumption that his faith is wrapped up in the parent's faith, so that he is accounted a believer from the beginning (31).' 'The regeneration is not actual, but only presumptive, and every thing depends upon the organic law of character pertaining between the parent and the child, the church and the child, thus upon duty and holy living and gracious example. The child is too young to choose the rite for himself, but the parent, having him as it were in his own life, is allowed the confidence that his own faith and character will be reproduced in the child, and grow up in his growth, and that thus the propriety of the rite as a seal of faith will not be violated (32).'

The organic law Bushnell believed in so strongly would ensure a high probability that the children of Christian parents, brought up in the nurture of the Lord, would become professing believers and thus paedobaptism found its warrant. Similar arguments are employed by modern theologians⁽³³⁾ and some empirical evidence can be cited that the children of worshipping parents, when eventually confirmed, remain faithful communicants⁽³⁴⁾.

(11) Baptism and Sin

To gain an adequate conception of baptism as it applies to children and to anticipate possible objections to the positive approach to an educational, religious nurture which we shall later adopt, Bushnell's views on the baptism of infants need comparing with the stronger doctrine of baptismal regeneration held in the catholic tradition of Christianity

It seems that in the NT baptism was believed to confer forgiveness of sins⁽³⁵⁾. Now since the earliest converts were adult, the sins remitted in baptism would be actual offences committed before conversion or the baptismal bath. Once, however, infant baptism spread and became the norm, the problem arose of what sin in a baby required washing away. The orthodox answer, following Augustine, was provided by the doctrine of original sin and guilt. Babies inherited both the vitium and the reatus of Adam's sin⁽³⁶⁾.

Baptism was therefore said, by the Council of Trent, really to work regeneration in the child and

to remove original guilt⁽³⁷⁾, for the sin of Adam, in which the infant shared. Original sin, an inherited flaw in the will or bias in it towards evil, was also to some extent countered, though the precise nature of this claim in the case of paedobaptism is not clear⁽³⁸⁾. This tendency to sin, which the child was deemed to have by generation, certainly to some extent remained, since experience has always testified that baptised Christians are still sinful, even after they have passed through the laver of regeneration. Indeed Quick asserts the view of common sense that the baptism of a baby makes no empirical difference⁽³⁹⁾. Bushnell, as we have seen⁽⁴⁰⁾, agreed that the child had no actual sins to be forgiven, while the inherited corruption of nature persisted.

Bushnell certainly believed that the organic unity of parent and child, on which he laid so much stress, transmitted a sinful tendency.

'The natural pravity of man is plainly asserted in the Scriptures, and, if it were not, the familiar laws of physiology would require us to believe what amounts to the same thing. And if neither Scripture nor physiology taught us the doctrine, if the child was born as clear of natural prejudice or damage as Adam before his sin, spiritual education, or, what is the same, probation, that which trains a being for a stable, intelligent virtue hereafter, would still involve an experiment of evil, therefore a fall and a bondage under the laws of evil (41).' 'Now, it is in the twofold manner set forth, under this and the previous head of my discourse, that our race have fallen, as a race, into moral corruption and apostasy. In these two methods also, they have been subjected, as an organic unity to evil, so that when they come to the age of proper individuality, the damage received as prepared them to set forth, on a course of blamable and guilty transgression. The question of original or imputed sin has been much debated in modern times, and the effort

has been to vindicate the personal responsibility of each individual, as a moral agent. Nor is any thing more clear, on first principles, than that no man is responsible for any sin but his own. The sin of no person can be transmitted as a sin, or charged to the account of another. But it does not therefore follow, that there are no moral connections between individuals, by which one becomes a corrupter of others. If we are units, so also are we a race, and the race is one - one family, one organic whole (42);'

Therefore there was in the child a real weakness of will that needed countering by divine grace and forgiveness was required for actual sins committed.

'The growth of Christian virtue is no vegetable process, no mere onward development. It involves a struggle with evil, a fall and a rescue. The soul becomes established in holy virtue, as a free exercise, only as it is passed round the corner of fall and redemption, ascending thus unto God through a double experience, in which it learns the bitterness of evil and the worth of good, fighting its way out of one, and achieving the other as a victory. The child, therefore, may as well begin life under a law of hereditary damage, as to plunge himself into evil by his own experiment, which he will as naturally do from the simple impulse of curiosity, or the instinct of knowledge, as from any noxious quality in his mold derived by descent. For it is not sin which he derives from his parents, at least, not sin in any sense which imports blame, but only some prejudice to the perfect harmony of this mold, some kind of pravity or obliquity which inclines him to evil (43).'

The claim Bushnell also made⁽⁴⁴⁾, which his critics strenuously denied, was that the natural organic connection of parent and child was the channel of God's grace to the infant and not some character or effect implanted in the baby's soul by baptism. Here Bushnell stood in a mid-position, apart from the catholic view that grace is in the child since baptism⁽⁴⁵⁾ and from the evangelical view of Tyler and his ilk that regeneration only occurs when God chooses to give faith and to convert a sinner - presumably not normally in infancy, but more commonly in maturity on the Baptist theory⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Now, it is further necessary to the argument of this study, that we take up a defensible position on these matters and not merely expound nineteenth century and other ancient controversies. The doctrine of original sin in its Augustinian or any other classic form, taken as a literal theory of human origins and not as a myth, has been subjected to devastating criticisms, such as those of Tennant⁽⁴⁷⁾ and Hick⁽⁴⁸⁾. Belief in original guilt in Augustine's sense has been abandoned by most modern Protestants because of the moral objection that it is unjust to impute Adam's sin to his successors who have no responsibility for it. In any case evolution and current knowledge of pre-history have made the presupposition of an historical Adam untenable. Hence the traditional account of the origin of sin can no longer be maintained and in this study that problem of sin's beginning in time need not concern us further and will not be discussed.

What, however, does need explanation is the universal tendency to actual sin in man. Why do men, who know what is right and are able to do it, do otherwise and succumb to temptation? In particular cases normal psychological accounts of why we act as we do can be given in common-sense and psychoanalytic terms of motive, reason, passion, impulse and character-trait. In general there seems, though, to be the existence at a deeper level of acrasia and weakness of will to explain. Whence arises also the proneness of men sometimes to be deliberately wicked and to choose to put their interests, desires or ideologies above the moral law?

It may be objected that there is nothing here to explain. One would expect men to be imperfect in their moral conduct, just as they are in every other sphere of life, where standards exist for appraising action. In education, for example, despite all the efforts of teachers, few children learn to spell perfectly and many fall far short of a bare competence in literacy. Why should morality be different and socialisation, moral education or character-building be any more successful in producing good men? It is sufficient to reply that to many morally serious men sin has seemed a mystery. The situation is unlike that of incompetence in other areas, such as those that involve knowledge or skill⁽⁴⁹⁾, since in the ethical sphere we do know what we ought to do and how to do it, we are capable of choosing the better and yet we do the worse. Temptation should be overcome but so often the agent succumbs. Saints and philosophers, from Aristotle⁽⁵⁰⁾ and Paul⁽⁵¹⁾ to Kant⁽⁵²⁾ and Reinhold Niebuhr⁽⁵³⁾ in our own day, have found iniquity a problem. Moreover it also appears surprising that despite all his scientific and technological progress, modern man is still so prone to evil: the moral monsters who perpetrated the holocaust were 'persons belonging to an "advanced society" in the heart of the European family of peoples, sharing a common cultural and historical heritage⁽⁵⁴⁾.'

A tentative answer to the question of why men are prone to sin is that moral weakness is contagious and spread culturally⁽⁵⁵⁾. Every child has morally imperfect

parents and teachers and grows up in a sinful environment. Poor models to imitate and identify with are provided and therefore moral learning is bound to be defective. Standards of right and wrong are only gradually grasped and often are only very poorly internalised, while the will is not adequately strengthened to withstand temptation. Virtues are only partially inculcated and a positive sensibility embracing altruism, love, compassion, conscience and social sensitivity is often lacking in the young person at the end of his upbringing. At a deeper level, the emotional bonding with the nurturing parent (in the psychological sense of 'nurture'⁽⁵⁶⁾) is often weak and distorted and not surprisingly children grow up morally stunted⁽⁵⁷⁾. All these factors explain why the child is a moral cripple and then each failure or sin enfeebles the will and makes further lapses easier. Character is infected by past weaknesses, bad habits are established. a whole sinful nature is developed in a person, which like a bad habit, explains but does not excuse his misdeeds.

A further factor, to which the doctrine of original sin points, is well brought out by Niebuhr⁽⁵⁸⁾ and Oman⁽⁵⁹⁾. Bad actions flow from dispositions such as habits, vices or a man's whole moral character, and for these factors themselves sinners are also responsible. The vitium of sin, a person's bias towards evil, is his own fault⁽⁶⁰⁾. Here may be the true meaning of

original guilt, once the literal associations of the Adamic story have been stripped away. Indeed our character, for good or ill, is created by our previous choices and therefore culpability for past sins makes the sinner blameworthy for the weakness of will and the tendency to disregard the moral law that those sins generate. Thus sin presupposes sin⁽⁶¹⁾, sinful acts sins as character-traits and those in turn earlier sinful acts. In this way the tragic progression in iniquity in each individual may be traced back to his first delinquencies and lapses from goodness and so to the sinful climate in which he grows up and the inadequacies of his childhood socialisation and moral education. But, of course, though it follows that all adults will have in them the vitium and possibly the reatus of original sin, it does not follow that children inherit this bias and are to blame for it. They are only beginning to sin and are free of the effects of previous failure.

Such an account of original sin in modern terms may have some plausibility in itself and be in accordance with common sense and psychological knowledge. It will be provisionally and tentatively adopted for our purposes. As an explanation of the vitium all men possess this view may perhaps do justice to the biblical myth of the Fall, to Paul's conception of universal sinfulness as we may receive it today and to general Christian experience. Bushnell's interpretation based on organic connection was essentially right. What,

however, might be questioned in Bushnell, in view of the way he thought sinful tendencies were passed down the generations (and setting aside his invocation of the 'physiological' laws of heredity that confuse the issue and obscure moral responsibility), is whether parents, even devout, conscientious, Christian parents, could ever be channels of grace sufficient to counter original sin⁽⁶²⁾. Fathers and mothers begin as sinners and in sin they rear their offspring, despite their faith and God's grace in them *quis custodiet custodes?* Some regeneration beyond parental nurture (and that of school and church as cultural environment), beyond all human and natural social agencies, is required if men are to be redeemed. In that sense Bushnell's critics were right⁽⁶³⁾, whatever the doubts we may have about 'ictic' grace. The forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit seem necessary if the children of Christians are to be redeemed despite organic connection and it appears to be the teaching of the NT that these graces are sacramentally conveyed by baptism⁽⁶⁴⁾. Nonetheless it is not obvious that this baptismal regeneration is needed in childhood and to that question we now turn.

(111) Sin in Children

Do children need baptism? The answer to this question depends on whether and when children may be said to sin. We have just seen how original sin may be understood today as moral weakness caused by an imperfect moral environment and defective socialisation

But does it follow from this conclusion that children, before adulthood, commit actual sins?

We need satisfactory criteria for a sinful act. We make use in this study of Tennant's account⁽⁶⁵⁾ and provisionally assume it is correct. He asserts that a theologically and ethically adequate concept of sin must conceive a sin as an act that firstly violates the moral law⁽⁶⁶⁾, secondly, he claims that the law concerned must be known to be binding on the agent at the time⁽⁶⁷⁾, thirdly that the act occurs in a situation of choice between two lines of conduct to which the agent is impelled by impulses of different intensity and moral value, i.e. is an act done in response to temptation⁽⁶⁸⁾, fourthly that the act is free and intentional⁽⁶⁹⁾.

In the case of children, as opposed to infants, the fourth criterion may be assumed to apply. Once a child can grasp, move about and talk, some minimal level of intentional acting is possible to it, even if much less self-control is expected than in the case of an adult. To a very limited extent, a toddler can help doing what he does and he becomes from that time onwards in his mother's eyes more and more responsible for his actions.

The crucial criterion is the second. A child must be able to know his act is wrong if it is to count as a sin. Otherwise it is unjust to blame him since in morality, invincible ignorance of the law is a real

excuse and exculpates, especially with children. What we next require is some account of the development of conscience in the young and of the understanding of moral principles. Much research in psychology and child-development has led to the conception that morality develops in stages⁽⁷⁰⁾. At first the toddler's control of his conduct is in accord with no rules and is completely impulsive and egocentric. Then behaviour becomes prudential and children act so as to gain reward and approval and to avoid punishment, taking these terms in the widest possible sense. At this stage wrong only means what authority, that is parents or teachers, forbid or punish, right what they enjoin or reward. Hence the child's morality is undifferentiated and all commands bind equally. Asked what were the greatest sins, the schoolboy answered, "Murder and shouting in corridors⁽⁷¹⁾!" Moral subjects who see nothing incongruous in this response are incapable of knowing which of their bad actions are contrary to conscience and which are only contrary to the convenience of authorities.

The moral law can only then be said to enter the child's conscience when he learns that some things are right and some are wrong in themselves, irrespective of the consequences to him, without regard to incentives or penalties. This is the minimum development of conscience that is required before we can properly speak of sin. It is not necessary to go further up the

scale of moral development and for children to become rational, autonomous and to know the reasons that justify moral rules. So few reach the stage of rational autonomy that, were that to be made a precondition for the ascription of sin, only a small minority of the human race would be sinners! We recoil from this counterintuitive conclusion, as from a *reductio ad absurdum*, by claiming that for a child to be a sinner he must at least appreciate the categorical nature of the moral imperative and be able to distinguish this from hypothetical imperatives and from the crude commands of authority.

When is this stage of moral development reached? The fullest recent British study is that of N. Bull⁽⁷²⁾. He claims children begin from a stage of 'anomy', when morality is what it pays to do or to avoid on particular occasions, through the stage of 'heteronomy', where morality is based on the external authority of the parent and justified or motivated by rewards and punishments. Thence the child passes into the stage of 'socio-nomy', where morals derive from peer-group pressure, the authority of society and the need for approval, and on to the stage of autonomy where interior guilt occurs and the belief that things are wrong *per se*⁽⁷³⁾. In terms of this scheme children must at least have passed beyond the stage of heteronomy before they can be said to sin. Since heteronomy on average at a rough estimate, ends no earlier than 11, according to Bull⁽⁷⁴⁾ and often in some cases persists to 13 or even to 15, it follows

that certainly young children, those in the primary school, those usually said to be in the stage of middle-childhood or pre-adolescence, cannot sin and thus do not need baptism on this account.

Similar findings occur in Kohlberg, the most famous contemporary worker in the psychology of moral development⁽⁷⁵⁾ For him there are three levels of growth in moral thinking with two stages in each. His earliest level is the 'pre-conventional', where morality is understood in terms of prudence and expediency, that is through punishment from those in authority or through rewards via the instrumentality of others. Such an interpretation of the ethical conflicts with Tennant's second criterion. Hence we may speak of sin only when the 'conventional' level of moral thought is attained. This comprises the stages of 'interpersonal concord' and of 'law and order' orientation, where the moral law is derived from peers, from the social roles of 'good boy/nice girl' stereotypes or later from some legal system backed by an ultimate authority such as the law of Moses stemming from God

Unfortunately Kohlberg is not very clear on age-norms for his levels and stages with children. But his general position is that most adults (in many diverse cultures) have only reached the conventional level (and not the 'post-conventional' level of rational or principled morality), while children and morally-backward young people are still at the pre-conventional level. This broadly concurs with our conclusion that sin, as a moral offence, is not possible before adolescence and that



baptism for this period seems unnecessary. The traditional Jewish age of 12 or 13 for moral and legal responsibility⁽⁷⁶⁾ appears about right, as does Tertullian's estimate of 14 as the time of puberty and the onset of sin, while the official Catholic view of innocence ending at 7⁽⁷⁷⁾ is far too early.

Suppose then children in early adolescence can do moral wrong, it does not follow that even then they can sin in the full sense. Sin is not only a moral concept but a religious one and Tennant's account is inadequate. Theologically speaking - and this is the universe of discourse to which 'sin' belongs - a sin is an act contrary to the moral law in the sight of God, an infraction of the divine law, rebellion against God's will and an injury or hurt to divine love. The existence of God is necessary for there to be sin; we may only speak of a moral offence as sin when we place it in relation to God, upon the assumption that God exists.

Now it is not necessary to believe in God in order to be able to sin. An atheist who murders someone, not only commits a crime against the municipal law and an offence against the moral law, but he also sins in the sight of God, granted God exists. He may be said to sin objectively. But an unbeliever cannot sin subjectively, that is he cannot see his moral lapse as a sin, he cannot think he offends God and he cannot logically or reasonably repent (though he can and indeed must feel moral guilt and regret at his deed, if he has a conscience). Subjective sin, therefore, presupposes faith. Men have to come to believe in God before they can be expected to repent.

As we shall argue in Chapters IV and V, children before the age of maturity cannot reasonably and properly be expected to believe in God or to have faith. Christian belief cannot be rightly assumed in the child because of the value that ought to be given to a young person's autonomy in the light of the controversial nature of religious truth. Thus, if the positions to be defended later are acceptable, the early adolescent, before he reaches years of discretion when commitment to Christianity is legitimate, cannot sin subjectively. God, we may then suppose, being just and respecting a child's integrity and his right to think for himself, will not demand repentance for objective sin or condemn a youth of this age dying unbaptised. A practical incapacity to sin still applies and baptism is as inappropriate as in the case of a conscientious agnostic or as in the case of someone ignorant or only partially informed of the Gospel.

It may be objected that the children of Christian homes do in fact sometimes believe in God before they can properly be expected to come to faith and choose to follow Christ. Faith may simply be induced quite uncritically by the mere fact of a pious upbringing. Such a child, once old enough to do moral wrong, may therefore be said to sin subjectively, to repent and to seek divine forgiveness. Surely baptism is appropriate in such a case. It does indeed follow, on the view of paedobaptism we are about to advance in (iv), that if children are baptised in infancy, then whenever they show glimmerings of moral awareness, faith and repentance, their baptism

comes into effect This result is quite compatible with not expecting or allowing final public commitment to Christianity until a later date but is inconsistent with an educationally sound practice of believers' baptism upon irrevocable profession of belief and dedication. Such a position now needs defending in the context of a full discussion of the justifiability of infant baptism.

(1v) A Defence of Infant Baptism

It remains to present our case for infant baptism to the extent it is necessary or compatible with the general theory of an educational religious nurture towards which we are working in this study. On paedobaptism four issues need distinguishing. First there is the propriety and justifiability of baptising babies, in view of the apparent absence of this practice in the church of the first two centuries⁽⁷⁸⁾. Second is the question of whom to baptise. Third is the problem of what happens spiritually in the baptism of an infant. Fourthly we have to ask whether there is any advantage in this hallowed custom.

We have already noticed the conventional consideration Bushnell adduces⁽⁷⁹⁾ and the fact that they constitute a prima facie case for the justification and propriety of infant baptism in the church today. There seems to be here a typical controversial issue where arguments of some weight can be found on both sides and there is no easy resolution of the matter with either the case for paedo- or exclusive believers-baptism appearing clearly the weightier.

Two additional arguments for infant baptism may be presented. There is first the appeal to tradition, Christian history and to the almost universal practice of the church since 200 A.D for more than a millenium and continued in the greater part of Christendom since the Reformation. If developing Christian praxis is a *prima facie* sign of the Spirit's leading, it is hard to believe such a development in sacramental administration as paedobaptism is mistaken. There seems a weighty case to answer and there is the question of the fate of countless millions of Christian souls baptised in infancy, if the baptism of babes is illegitimate and ineffectual, when baptism is held necessary for salvation and children are burdened with original sin. That a theological error of such magnitude has occurred is counter-intuitive and affronts commonsense.

Second is Bushnell's distinctive argument from the organic unity of the family⁽⁸⁰⁾. Interpreted as the empirical claim that the children of devout parents are likely to come to faith and repentance and thereafter to remain Christians throughout their adult life, Bushnell's defence is a powerful one. What fitter subjects for baptismal regeneration can there be, especially if the crucial consideration is, as Cullmann asserts⁽⁸¹⁾, to identify those who most probably will live a Christian life after baptism, with a subsequent faith in what God did for them in it, in applying the 'general baptism' of the Cross to their own case⁽⁸²⁾?

Our tentative conclusion is that paedobaptism is justified and those parents and churches, which practise it as their long-established custom, can continue so to do, if they wish, with a good conscience.

The second issue of who should be baptised in infancy, if anyone should be, is easily answered in the light of Bushnell's distinctive argument and its contemporary presentation by Cullmann. It is only fitting to baptise the children of Christian parents (or of some equivalent) where the effect of Christian models and environment is likely to be felt. That such children will probably in the end in fact opt for Christianity is quite compatible with the educational aims of the type of religious nurture that tries to promote informed choice, exploration and autonomous decision in the realm of spiritual or ideological commitment. It is a fact simply to be recognised that the offspring of the faithful are likely to become faithful, in the same way as those of Communists become Communists, Jews Jews and so on.

This approach may indeed require change in baptismal liturgies. It is clearly wrong, on the argument of this study, for sponsors to promise on behalf of babies that they will choose Christianity or believe in God when they are mature or even for parents to vow to bring up their children as Christians or with that as their objective. The proper promises for a Christian father or mother to make, as parents, who reverence truth and autonomy qua Christians as well as qua rational beings⁽⁸³⁾, are that they will ensure that the young people receive good

physical and psychological nurture⁽⁸⁴⁾ and a sound religious education⁽⁸⁵⁾. (Issues of baptismal reform or rigorism, however pastorally perplexing, are not discussed here.)

No defence of infant baptism is complete without discussion, in the third ~~phase~~, of what the sacrament effects. We begin from the teaching of the NT about the baptism of believers. There is a fair consensus among NT scholars that baptism confers forgiveness of sins⁽⁸⁶⁾, gives (normally) the Holy Spirit⁽⁸⁷⁾; admits to membership of the church⁽⁸⁸⁾; and identifies the candidate with the death and resurrection of Christ⁽⁸⁹⁾. This operation is conceived as a once-for-all, qualitative, metaphysical or spiritual change for convenience we shall now refer to it as a whole as 'regeneration', however the precise meaning of this term has varied in theological usage. The crucial question then becomes does it make sense to speak of the regeneration of babies and younger children, since it cannot be assumed that the NT intended what it said of baptism to fit infants.

It is hard to predicate of an infant any of the effects or changes of status that baptism in the NT brings about. We have seen, following Bushnell⁽⁹⁰⁾, that the child has no sins to forgive⁽⁹¹⁾, or any original guilt to wash away. We shall argue in Chapter IV that young children cannot be members of the church in the sense of being members of Christ. It is unclear what it would mean to say a young child has the Holy Spirit. What fruit, gifts, guidance or strengthening of the Spirit makes sense in childhood?

To consider first the fruit of the Spirit, as listed by St. Paul in Gal 5 22 (in the NEB translation). The love, joy and peace which manifest the Holy Spirit are not just any cases of these emotions but these feelings when they arise in reaction to the Gospel and in the context of the Christian life. We are concerned with love for the Lord or the brethren, joy in redemption, the peace of salvation and of sins forgiven. Such passions are beyond the scope of young children if they are, as we shall argue in Chapter IV, incapable of being Christians and members of Christ.

The remaining varieties of fruit are virtues that cannot be properly ascribed to children. We do not expect a child to be patient when he has little sense of time and capacity for delayed gratification. While a child waits for something, he may not show impatience because he is distracted but we would not call him patient. Kindness in the form of impulsive generosity does occur in children but is scarcely a virtue in the absence of the preoccupations and distractions adults have to contend with which give this quality moral value. Goodness is merely a general term for the possession of other virtues and does not merit separate discussion.

Fidelity presupposes obligations, commitments, promises and contracts that children cannot take on and gentleness is only possible to those who possess a fine and delicate control of movement and action uncharacteristic of and indeed beyond the capacity of the young child.

Self-control is scarcely intelligible in the case of or to be expected from children. The appearance of it might be thought precocious in infants or be only prudential or expedient, the restraining of impulses or passions to gain advantage or to avoid punishment. To be a virtue self-control must show itself in a person mature enough to have moral standards⁽⁹²⁾, in the light of which he controls his desires.

St. Paul also teaches in 1 Cor 12 4-11 the Spirit is manifest in certain gifts. (We use the NEB translations of these gifts.) Can these be ascribed to young children? The Holy Spirit gives 'wise speech', the ability to 'put deepest knowledge into words' and 'faith'. Such properties or attributes depend on understanding and believing in Christianity and if our argument in Chapter IV is sound, the child cannot understand or believe the Gospel. Also given are 'healing' and 'miraculous powers'. Suppose signs and wonders were performed by an infant. Unless they were done in faith or in the context of the child's prayers for say the sick, they might just be miracles, magic, bizarre phenomena, perhaps diabolic, and not necessarily or properly to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit. But faith, and prayer which demands faith, are beyond children, as we argue in Chapter IV.

'Prophecy' may be the gift of imaginative Christian thinking in response to some contemporary challenge, an essentially adult function. Or 'prophecy', along with 'the ability to distinguish true spirits from false',

'ecstatic utterance of different kinds' and the 'ability to interpret' (such utterance) belong to a context of glossalalia and other charismatic gifts. It is questionable in the light of 1 Cor 14 how far these capacities are genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit in adults. In any case, again, a context of mature faith and devotion on the part of older Christians is presupposed, a context beyond the range of childhood. Of course a child in the company of charismatic Christians might begin to speak in tongues but it would be hard to ascribe such a phenomenon to a God who respects integrity and autonomy in children the Spirit can scarcely be thought to bestow his gifts without a person's knowledge and consent.

Beyond fruit and gifts, the Holy Spirit is commonly thought to grant guidance and strength to Christians in leading their lives. Once more adult contexts are required to make sense of these functions of the Paraclete. Children do not require direct, inner guidance since they are controlled and directed by teachers and parents in all important matters. Strengthening for service or witness or in the face of temptation is a need of the adult Christian in a ministry young children do not undertake. Empowering is needed in situations beyond the grasp of children whose conscience has not developed so far as to make moral conflict possible, as we have seen⁽⁹³⁾.

Thus it is not obvious how the Holy Spirit could be manifest in babies and young children before older childhood. There is then no way of determining in principle whether a child has the Spirit but cannot show his

presence - unless the question is begged by assuming the Spirit dwells in the soul of the baptised baby - or whether the Spirit is only received at a later date. And in that case force or meaning is lacking in asserting the Paraclete to have descended on the infant at his baptism. Augustine wrote 'we say therefore that the Holy Spirit dwells in baptised infants, although they know it not⁽⁹⁴⁾.' Our problem is how anyone else, beside the child, could know the Spirit is in him, since this attribution seems unverifiable. It is indeed true that the Spirit might be in a particular adult without manifestation. The difficulty with the child is more radical. Where every overt expression of the Paraclete's indwelling fails to make sense in a whole class of person, possession of the Spirit by such subjects would make no discernible difference and have no literal significance. Yet J. D. C. Fisher in Confirmation Then and Now has recently claimed 'children of seven years are capable of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit' but he has given no reasons for this astonishing claim, which as we have seen is hard to support⁽⁹⁵⁾.

Baptism, further, identifies the candidate with Christ's death, burial and resurrection, as in Rom 6. This difficult notion may be ethical in which case it cannot make sense in respect of children, who are not yet capable of moral awareness and sin. Baptism may be the act by which God applies the atonement to the individual who then shares once for all in Christ's sacrifice.

Once again it is hard to see how one can ascribe this act except to a moral subject, such as an infant cannot be. Participation in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection may be a metaphor or symbol of giving up a sinful existence and assuming a new way of life or the metaphysical or logical foundation of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit or a poetic periphrasis for receiving these endowments. If this is so, there is no need to add to the criticisms above of babes as sinners needing salvation or of the vacuity of attributing the presence of the Spirit in them. The suggestion that all this can be true of a baby in some unconscious mode is problematic. The unconscious possession of any attribute or factor in the mind makes no sense unless its expression in conscious behaviour, emotion and belief can be sketched out and such a sketching would require the context of a minimum personal understanding and morality that infants lack.

It may therefore be concluded that the baptismal regeneration of infants does not make sense. Hence paedobaptism has no immediate effect, empirically (as is clear to commonsense), nor spiritually or metaphysically. Is this hallowed practice then vacuous and infant baptism an empty sacrament?

There is also the fundamental difficulty that a child cannot meaningfully be said to have faith, despite the necessity of this in the NT as a precondition and accompaniment of baptism⁽⁹⁶⁾. This argument is not, however,

conclusive as it might be thought possible for God to regenerate a sinner without faith - wherever regeneration is applicable - even though it may not be fitting for God to act in faith's absence. In catholic theology there is an ancient distinction between the validity and fruitfulness of a sacrament a man can receive valid baptism without faith but his baptism only later becomes fruitful when he repents and has true belief⁽⁹⁷⁾. The crucial consideration is the temporal dimension of sacramental efficacy.

So far in our discussion there has lain in the background a hidden assumption that has not been challenged. This is the proposition that the effect of baptism, the spiritual change it brings about, must coincide in time with the outward rite and also be synchronous with the appropriate attitude on behalf of the candidate. Suppose then this premiss is questioned and baptism treated as a 'delayed-action' sacrament, which only comes into operation later when faith and repentance are present in the baptizand⁽⁹⁸⁾. Consider the case of an adult who is baptised for the wrong reasons, when still inwardly an atheist and a notorious evil liver. Would we say after his baptism that he is a Christian or member of Christ in any real sense? Maybe there is some metaphysical stamp or character implanted in the soul of such a man but pro tempore it is inactive and inoperative⁽⁹⁹⁾. To use the metaphor of a seed sown, the seed can be dormant in the ground for long before it shoots up and flowers. After

some time our man repents and believes. At that point in universal catholic practice he is never rebaptised⁽¹⁰⁰⁾; his original baptism is held sufficient. Now it operates. Once the sinner seeks forgiveness and comes to faith, his past baptism comes into effect, regeneration occurs and from that date on, but not before, he becomes a Christian and member of Christ. The metaphysical issue of sacramental causality is not discussed here. It does not matter for our argument whether God acts in the baptised person in some mysterious way immediately before faith and repentance, or not until the candidate comes to believe and to repent.

Such a line of thought makes sense of infant baptism. When the baby is baptised, nothing happens at the time. It must therefore be said, clearly and emphatically, that the baptised child - however paradoxical it may sound - is not a Christian, not a member of Christ (as will be argued in Chapter IV), not empirically or spiritually different in status from an unbaptised child. Both are children and require, in addition to physical and psychological nurture, religious education because they are human beings. This complete spiritual equality of all children, whether baptised or no, is the reason why there must be no special nurture for the child in a Christian home. But when such children in years of maturity decide for themselves Christianity is true and choose to become Christians, their faith and repentance (for by now they are liable to actual sins) bring their baptism into operation, and regeneration happens.

(In sacramental terms, in traditions like the Anglican and Lutheran which practise Infant Baptism and adolescent Confirmation, ideally this mature coming to faith can neatly and conveniently coincide with the ratification of baptismal vows which the Confirmation candidate makes in the course of the post-Reformation forms of this service. Then the giving of the Spirit in Confirmation and in delayed baptismal regeneration are identical and coincident in time, as in the early church, and can be regarded as one reception of the Comforter. Fruitless, speculative questions of whether the Spirit is given only in Baptism or only in Confirmation or in both in two stages are avoided⁽¹⁰¹⁾.)

Though a possible defence of infant baptism can be argued in this way, it is still unclear whether the traditional procedure has any advantage. This is the fourth problem to consider. It might well be thought that believers' baptism coheres better with the general approach of this study to an educational nurture. The child is not to be brought up a Christian but to choose for himself whether or not to become one. Surely, it might be said, that is the obvious time for baptism and the sophisticated case put forward here - if not sophisticated - is unnecessary. Let the young person be baptised when he makes his act of faith, so that regeneration comes into effect immediately and at the same time as the outward immersion or affusion.

There is indeed much to be said for such a point of view and if it ever becomes the norm in the church, there

will be no great objection from the writer of this study. Different Christians on this matter may do what seems best to them and both the paedobaptist and believers'-baptist positions are reasonable and harmonize with the approach advocated here of educational religious nurture. Nevertheless there are possible slight advantages in infant baptism in the context of the treatment of the children of Christian families of the kind suggested in this and later chapters.

As we have seen⁽¹⁰²⁾, in fact faith and repentance may be found before the child comes to the time for a mature spiritual decision. Before that day of choice believers' baptism is premature, as irrevocable, public commitment is premature. Further there is evidence that in American Baptist churches, young children are converted, 'giving their hearts to Jesus', yet their baptism is postponed until their late teens when they are deemed to be fit for the responsibilities of churchmanship⁽¹⁰³⁾. Theologically it seems undesirable to split receiving Christ from entering the body of Christ! But it is true that significant churchmanship requires the maturity necessary for belonging to an adult organisation, whereas religious conversion is apparently within the capacity of a primary school child. This kind of difficulty could be avoided if baptism took place in infancy and regeneration came into effect whenever the appropriate attitude occurs. Conceivably not all elements even in regeneration happen at once. Maybe sins need forgiveness before the Spirit is required or before churchmanship can be a reality.

We should also beware of accepting too simple and clear-cut a conception of the spiritual evolution of children. They may come to faith gradually and spasmodically, now in this aspect of Christianity, later in that. Some kind of simple discipleship and pious practice is possible, even if it is not desirable, before a mature, intellectual appraisal of the Christian creed as a controversial belief-system, on a par with Marxism or Humanism can take place. Moreover in the Christian family a child's faith may come by a dialectic with his elders, at times following them, at others asserting his independence by adopting a sceptical viewpoint.

If believers' baptism is properly delayed until such childish fluctuations in belief are replaced by a firm faith, making appropriate a public profession thereof, then God's uncovenanted mercies must be left to care for earlier spiritual needs. Or it could be claimed that a 'baptism of desire' applies to child-catechumens prior to water-baptism. But then it must be recalled that catechumens were adults, already committed to faith and therefore differing in status from believers' children, as Baptist writers are apt to overlook, when they advocate a restoration of the catechumenate for Christian offspring⁽¹⁰⁴⁾. So we argue that if baptism has already been performed in infancy, God can respond sensitively to these children's needs and explorations through their sacramental endowment, as their minds grow in untidy ways.

Perhaps in the end one's preference in this matter is determined by the weight one gives to more general

considerations of the part sacraments should play in Christianity. In the light of differences in theology here, divergence in practice over the baptism of the children of Christians are understandable and justifiable. Those who stress baptismal regeneration, as God's mode of saving men, including the child as he moves, perhaps uncertainly, towards free and responsible commitment, will prefer to baptise first before exploration begins rather than after the goal of faith is finally attained.

Chapter III Footnotes

- (1) Christian Nurture pp.35,41-42,162.
- (2) Shenk op cit pp.153-158, Fleming op.cit., Ch.VII
- (3) Christian Nurture pp.130-131, Views on Christian Nurture p.82, cf. T.F.C. op.cit. passim.
- (4) Christian Nurture pp.35-36,94-97, Views on Christian Nurture p.83.
- (5) ibid pp.30-35
- (6) Chs. V and VI.
- (7) ibid pp.31,128-129 (Modern arguments in support we call 'pro', against 'con'.)
 Pro The Biblical Doctrine of Baptism (A Study Document issued by the Special Commission on Baptism of the Church of Scotland) (Edinburgh 1959) p.59, Special Commission on Baptism Reports May 1955-May 1962 (Edinburgh 1955-62) (1955) p.46, Flemington W F. The NT Doctrine of Baptism (London 1948) p.136, Jeremias J. Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries ET Cairns D. (London 1960) pp.19-22, The Origins of Infant Baptism ET Barton D. (London 1963) pp.12-32.
 Con Beasley-Murray G R. Baptism in the NT (London 1962) pp.312-320, ed. Gilmore A. Christian Baptism (London 1959) pp.123-124, White R.L.O. The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation (London 1960) pp.181-183, Aland K. Did the Early Church Baptise Infants? ET Beasley-Murray G R. (London 1963) pp.87-94.
- (8) Christian Nurture pp.32-33,126-127
 Pro Flemington op.cit. pp.4-11, Jeremias (1960) pp.24-60
 Con Beasley-Murray op.cit. pp.329-334, Gilmore op.cit. pp.65-75, White op.cit. pp.56-72,319-321.
- (9) Christian Nurture pp.34,129-130
 Pro Wainwright G. Christian Initiation (London 1969) pp.42-43, Jeremias (1960) pp.44-48, (1963) p.38, Cullmann O. Baptism in the NT ET Reid J.K.S. (London 1950) pp.43-45, Biblical Doctrine of Baptism (1958) pp.26-29.
 Con Beasley-Murray op cit. pp.192-199, Gilmore op.cit. pp. 141-147,322, White op.cit. pp.362-365, Aland op.cit. pp.80-82
- (10) Christian Nurture pp.122-124
 Pro Calvin Institutes IV 16,46, Shenk op.cit. pp.6-52, Wainwright op.cit. p.55, Biblical Doctrine of Baptism (1955) pp.26-29
 Con Gilmore op.cit. pp.55-65, Beasley-Murray op.cit. pp.334-344, Aland op cit pp.83-84, White op.cit. pp.13-37,285-291
- (11) Christian Nurture pp.127-128
 Pro, Wainwright op cit. p.48, Biblical Doctrine of Baptism (1958) pp.48-52, Jeremias (1960) pp.49-55
 Con Beasley-Murray op.cit. pp.320-329, Aland op.cit. pp.95-100, White op.cit. pp.116-124, 329-338, Gilmore op.cit. pp.99-109.
- (12) Christian Nurture p.130
 Pro Biblical Doctrine of Baptism (1958) p.52, Flemington op.cit. pp.131-132, Special Commission on Baptism Reports (1955) pp.25-26
 Con White op.cit. p.365.
- (13) Christian Nurture p.132
 Pro Jeremias (1960) p.72, (1963) pp.55-58.
 Con Gilmore op.cit. p.196 (1), Aland op.cit. p.73.
- (14) Christian Nurture p.133.
 Pro Flemington op.cit. p.132, Jeremias (1960) pp.72-73, (1963) pp.62-63.
 Con Gilmore op.cit. pp.197-198, Aland op.cit. pp.58-59.

- (15) Christian Nurture p 133.
Pro Wainwright op.cit. p.20, Jeremias (1960) pp.81-85,
(1963) pp.64-66
Con Gilmore op.cit. pp.198-202, Aland op.cit. pp.61-69
- (16) Christian Nurture p.133
Pro Jeremias (1960) pp.65-66, (1963) pp.69-75.
Con Gilmore op.cit. pp.203-205, Aland op.cit. pp.47-49.
- (17) Christian Nurture p.134
Pro Jeremias (1960) p.85
Con Aland op.cit. p.85.
- (18) Christian Nurture p.134
Pro Jeremias (1960) pp.76-80,41-42,55-56.
Con Gilmore op.cit.pp.205-217, Aland op.cit. p.46.
- (19) Christian Nurture pp.102-115
- (20) ibid pp.116-119
- (21) ibid p.131.
- (22) Institutes IV 16, 18-20
- (23) Christian Nurture p.35
- (24) ibid p.30.
- (25) ibid pp.96-97
- (26) ibid pp.94-96.
- (27) ibid p.35.
- (28) ibid p.95.
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- (60) Niebuhr op.cit. pp.264-280.
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- (79) v. (7) - (20).
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- (81) op.cit. p.51.
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- (104) Rusling, The Child and the Church (London 1966) pp.9-10; 22-24; The Status of Children, Baptist Quarterly (1959-60) pp.247-249; Beasley-Murray Church and Child in the NT, Baptist Quarterly (1965-66) p.215.

Chapter IV

The Child in the Church

In this chapter we move to a substantive discussion of the relation of the child to the church. First we examine the arguments Bushnell gave for the church membership of children in addition to those he advanced for infant baptism. Second we assess the discussion of this issue in the recent British Council of Churches' report The Child in the Church⁽¹⁾. Third we consider directly the question 'Can children be Christians and churchmen?' Fourth, in the light of this analysis, the view of nurture The Child in the Church presents is scrutinised and criticised. Thus the ground will be cleared for the positive approach to an educational, religious nurture that we shall present in Chapter V.

(1) Bushnell on the Church Membership of Children

Bushnell in the 1861 final form of his work, entitled Christian Nurture, added a chapter on The Church Membership of Children⁽²⁾ to complete the case he had based on infant baptism. He aimed to show why baptised children should be in church and how desirable this was. We examine his arguments one by one. It is necessary to bear in mind that in criticising him we mean by children, as we shall in the next subsection unless otherwise stated, young children and not older ones.

Bushnell once again used the argument from the occurrence of 'faithful' to include apparently children in Colossians and Ephesians⁽³⁾, he appealed to the

analogies of circumcision and of proselyte baptism as admitting babes to the membership of Israel or Judaism⁽⁴⁾; he cited 1 Cor 7 14 to prove the fittingness of the offspring of Christians to be in the church⁽⁵⁾. We have already seen the powerful criticisms which scholars opposed to infant baptism make of these considerations⁽⁶⁾. Yet we also admitted that a prima facie case for paedobaptism could also be based on these factors⁽⁷⁾. Suppose then this case is sound, it only shows the administration of baptism to babies may be legitimate. It does not necessarily follow that baptised infants are immediately members of the church. On the view of infant baptism defended above⁽⁸⁾, this sacrament only comes into effect when the child comes to faith and repentance, and the status of being forgiven, of having received the Spirit and of having been made one with Jesus' death and resurrection can only then become a reality. For not until that stage do descriptions of the status of being baptised make sense in relation to the young and it is these descriptions that imply or are equivalent to church membership. Incorporation into Christ's body, it will be argued in sub-section (111), is not predicable of babes and therefore arguments for the propriety of paedobaptism cannot be employed to support the contention that infants belong to the church.

The first new argument of Bushnell was the logical point that children were not in ordinary usage not counted as men because they were children, just as colts and lambs were still horses and sheep, though immature⁽⁹⁾. Children

were potential believers and gradually became adults. Not only adults should belong to the church but human beings at all stages of development. This argument begs the question of whether any others than actual believers can be churchmen or whether the relevant class of application for the predication of being-in-the-church can be composed of non-adults. (The matter will be fully discussed in (111).)

The second argument was from the law of the state. Children were citizens and given rights at birth. Why should they not similarly belong from childhood to the corporation ecclesiastical? If children could not themselves exercise their assigned rights, the elders could act on their behalf⁽¹⁰⁾. The question here is precisely what legal facts should be taken as analogies to church membership. Critics of a Calvinistic bent, Bushnell alleged⁽¹¹⁾, argued that children could not be in the church because they were not subject to ecclesiastical discipline and if they were not under this regime, how could they be proper members? His response was that membership should be graded and grow with the child's age like civil and criminal liability. Our reply to Bushnell is to point out that the distinctive privileges of the church, like participation in the eucharist, are denied to children in almost all communions (except the Orthodox) With this restriction may be compared the way the key privileges of citizenship like voting, buying and selling property and contracting debts and equally the main legal liabilities are denied to the immature and the

underage. The legal status of infants is clearly defined by the courts and statutes, whereas the status of an unconfirmed, uncommitted, non-communicant person in the church is obscure and problematic⁽¹²⁾.

Bushnell's third consideration was the rhetorical question of whether excluding children from the church did not mean God abandoned them⁽¹³⁾. The answer, of course, is that God loves the child and his status if he dies as a child is secure. But it does not follow that a non-adult is a suitable candidate for membership of an organisation requiring in its members years of discretion and responsibility, as we shall argue in (111). Moreover, since (as it has been maintained) children are sinless, their souls are in no danger, even if there is no salvation for sinners extra ecclesiam.

The fourth claim made was the interesting suggestion that the church could be thought of on the analogy of a school. It was the school of Christ and that parents properly could choose such a school for their child to enter and join⁽¹⁴⁾. Our response is that the church is a school in two senses. In one sense it is the place where Christians are trained in a faith they have adopted at some minimal level of understanding and belief but beyond the limits of what can properly be asked of the young. In another sense the church can provide religious education for children in the way a County school can. In this sense a child can be quite legitimately attached externally to the church, while as yet being personally uncommitted to it and not a Christian.

Bushnell's fifth contention was that, if not in the church, a child would be cut off from its church-affiliated parents⁽¹⁵⁾. But in the modern world, unlike ancient society, children are no more sundered from their family by not being on the church roll or by not receiving Holy Communion than are the offspring of parents who belong to a secular adult society, like a drama league or social club, by not being proper members of these and at best belonging to some crèche.

A sixth argument is more sympathetic and attractive. This was that the presence of children would improve and humanize the quality of worship and that the church could learn from her little ones⁽¹⁶⁾. This seems true but it is still possible for such learning to occur, even if children are not responsible and committed church members. The church can profit from the child through those adult members who are parents and who come across the viewpoint of the youngest at home. Even organisations that exist for the benefit and welfare of young children and to study them do not rejoice in their actual presence at meetings and conferences. It is true, perhaps, as Bushnell says,

'Even the church life itself, two, or three, or more, generations deep, will be qualified by the grandfather and grandmother spirit, the father and mother spirit, and the reverent manners of the little ones, and the whole volume of religious life will be unfolded thus, by taking into itself the whole volume of nature and family feeling (17).'

Now on the view of educational nurture to be presented in Chapter V it will be made clear that children may justifiably attend services of worship to watch and to observe, though they are not expected to participate as committed believers. Hence from their attendance a gracious spirit

of warmth and loving concern may be generated, as Bushnell saw, without that fact constituting a reason for the church membership of children. Indeed this effect may be created by the entry of any child, even if he is unbaptised, not from a Christian home and quite unconnected with the institutional ecclesia.

Finally, in the seventh place, Bushnell argued that Christ's blessing of the children and his welcoming of them to himself meant the church should welcome the child into its fellowship⁽¹⁸⁾. (The significance of this Gospel saying will be discussed further in the next subsection (11) in the setting of a contemporary report.) Here it suffices to point out that no one disputes that children should be welcomed by the church in the general way any community organisation should. The question at issue is in what mode are little ones to be welcomed and whether church membership is entailed. If the church does what is appropriate for the child, this is in effect to welcome him, even if the appropriate treatment is not to bestow what we shall suggest below⁽¹⁹⁾ is the meaningless accolade of belonging to the fellowship.

Bushnell concluded his chapter by listing and quoting various authorities, ranging from the Fathers to his New England predecessors, in support of his position, as opposed to the conversion approach which he deplored.

(11) The Christian Understanding of Childhood

The report The Child in the Church is the product, published in 1976, of a working-party set up by the Consultative Group on Ministry Among Children of the British

Council of Churches in 1973. The working party was charged 'to take note of current thinking in the Churches concerning the Christian education of children in the context of the local church and community, and to assess the means whereby children are nurtured in the Christian Faith (20).'

The first two chapters of the report sketch the religious and social background to nurture and to growing up in Britain today. Then in Chapter 3 there is a consideration of the Christian Understanding of Childhood and this we assess in this subsection, together with some later material from Chapter 6

The report claims that theology and adults of every church tradition have been concerned with adults believing things⁽²¹⁾. 'Childhood (therefore) requires a theology of its own⁽²²⁾.' So the report turns to Jesus' attitude to children as normative. Two famous passages are considered. In Mark 9 33-37 (and parallels) there is the dispute about greatness, when Christ places a child in the midst, embraces him and says, 'Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me (v. 37)'. Then in Mark 10 13-16 (and parallels) Jesus rebukes the disciples who were forbidding children to approach him and exclaims, 'for to such belongs the kingdom of God (v. 14). Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it (v. 15)', and lastly he blesses them. The report wisely refrains from delving into the critical and exegetical problems of these difficult sayings with their many possible interpretations⁽²³⁾ and so shall we. The sentimentality that so often surrounds these episodes in the Gospels is also deprecated⁽²⁴⁾

and with this attitude we agree, even if it is not clear that the report itself always avoids this snare in its discussion'

The logion 'whoever receives one such child in my name, receives me' is used by the report as an argument for the reception of children by the church. The report argues

'The acceptance of a child within the Church, and the service given to the child by the Church constitutes an acknowledgement by the church of the Lordship of Christ. This may be understood mystically, it must be implemented practically. Christ is as always with the most helpless (25).'

Presumably children are here taken as representing Christ in such a way that to accept them in the church, and so as members of it, is regarded as acknowledging Christ's Lordship. Hence we have an indirect argument from a saying of Jesus to the conclusion that the child can be a church-member. But in this saying children function as representing Christ not in the way a fellow Christian does, when other Christians receive him into the church, but in the way the poor and naked and hungry do in the parable of the Sheep and Goats (Mt 25:31 f.) This mode of embodying Jesus is not like to or comparable with the sense in which Christ is received by a person in baptism, in that person's becoming a Christian and in his entering the Church. The needy who are Christ's least brethren are not necessarily Christians and so children can symbolise Jesus without being disciples and members of his church.

The report also argues from Jesus' statement of children 'for to such belongs the Kingdom of God' (Mt. 10:14) that the kingdom therefore belongs to the child

in that he is weak and helpless and not on account of his being innocent, humble, baptised, pious or converted⁽²⁶⁾. The reign of God is alleged to be already among children whom adults should imitate in saying the 'Abba' of Gethsemane when they pray⁽²⁷⁾. The meaning of this saying of Christ is as obscure as the report's discussion of it. We heartily agree that all children whatever have the same status and rights, as we argued in the context of defending infant baptism⁽²⁸⁾. What then does it mean to say the kingdom of God belongs to children? Just that they matter in the sight of God and have a part in the providential order? Such an interpretation seems platitudinous and an unsafe base for any inference or implication for policy. The precise nuance of the meaning of this logion is best left to the NT experts and it is in any case a precarious premiss from which to argue. As for children being a model for prayer, the report overlooks the great problems in maintaining that children either can or ought to pray - as we shall see below⁽²⁹⁾. Of course Jewish children in the first century could say 'abba' to their own human father. And adults if they believe in God must, Christ teaches, adopt an analagous attitude to their heavenly father.

It is strange that the report ignores Mark 10 15 'I tell you, whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.' Jesus is here presumably drawing an analogy between some property natural children have and a property - be it innocence, receptivity, humility, freedom from sophistication or whatever - which,

when found in adults, is a spiritually relevant qualification for receiving the kingdom⁽³⁰⁾.

After discussing Jesus' attitude, the report then turns to more philosophical and doctrinal considerations about childhood. It claims a value and perfection for each stage of life, therefore for that children are living through and asserts that the child not only exists for the future but for his present⁽³¹⁾. This assertion for Christians is grounded in the doctrine of the Incarnation in words reminiscent of Irenaeus⁽³²⁾, it is maintained the Son of God was equally and as much incarnate in childhood as in adulthood.

'Thus, traditional theology affirms that Jesus was neither more nor less the Son of God at the age of twenty or thirty than he was at the age of six months. The Word was incarnated fully and perfectly in the child as child, just as in the man as man. And yet the child grew (33).'

Hence Jesus was in an appropriate relation to God in his infancy and youth⁽³⁴⁾.

'If the humanity of Jesus was as perfectly expressed by his childhood as by his manhood, then it must be affirmed that there is potentially for every child, at every age, an appropriate Christian maturity. Whether at ten years, ten months, or ten days there is the right relationship to God fitted to that age (35).'

Thus the Church must not think of childhood as merely preparatory to adulthood.

'This forbids our beginning exclusively with some definition of what a Christian should be in terms of what a Christian adult should be and then planning only what must be done to turn the child into the man. Our theology of childhood concentrates on the 'continuous now' of the child's life, just as we emphasize the 'now' of the adult's life, without neglecting what the child and the adult will some day become. A child at any age may be wholly human and wholly God's. Because Christ was a child, a child can be a Christian (My italics) (36)'

The last sentence quoted and underlined should be noted particularly. It stands as a conclusion to this section of the report's argument and is a glaring non sequitur. Indeed the whole discussion needs careful analysis.

We accept the claim that childhood is valuable and the moral imperative that children should be treated kindly and lovingly, their varying needs met and their personality and freedom respected. This can be seen by our opening stress on all children receiving appropriate physical and psychological nurture⁽³⁷⁾. Modern styles of child-rearing and of education embrace these values independently of Christian doctrine⁽³⁸⁾. The 'great educators' and the romantics have traditionally emphasised this approach of reverencing children's present and not only their future⁽³⁹⁾. Not merely, as Dewey maintains⁽⁴⁰⁾, is the best preparation for the future, paradoxically, to meet the needs of the present, but the present is worthwhile for its own sake, even if it did not bear fruit later. For example play is precious as the characteristic and distinctive activity of toddlers and nursery-school pupils, and not just for the useful by products that it has, for the things that are learnt incidentally through it⁽⁴¹⁾. Now secular humanists will find arguments to support this valuation of childhood. Christians, as rational men, will adopt this reasoning but will in addition welcome the backing the Incarnation gives to the sanctification of infancy.

Further we agree Jesus as a child had an appropriate relation to God.

'Throughout his childhood Jesus enjoys that completeness of life in relation to God proper to his age which is

the expression in childhood of his perfect humanity⁽⁴²⁾. However, what this 'completeness of life in relation to God' was in a Jewish culture in first century Palestine is one thing, what it is for a twentieth century person of the same age in a secular period may be another. Probably for Christ it was fitting to be taught about and take the God of Israel and his nearness for granted, to grow imperceptibly in faith and prayer and never to know himself as being otherwise than a pious Jew - to echo Bushnell's famous phrase. But we have seen⁽⁴³⁾ why, in a society where religious belief is disputed by educated people, such an approach to the nurture of a Christian child is unfitting and the awareness it will generate in the infant mind is inappropriate. If Christianity is true, the growing contemporary child is in fact related to God and is surrounded by his love mediated through parental love. But such a child is, as we shall argue⁽⁴⁴⁾, scarcely capable of knowing God when young and not properly to be expected to know God when older, though in fact this may happen.

The actual inference 'Because Christ was a child, a child can be a Christian⁽⁴⁵⁾, is invalid because it assumes that whatever Christ can be, can also be predicated of Christians. For example, it does not follow that since Jesus is divine, Christians can be divine. In this case there is also the suppressed premiss that Christ is the first Christian. When this premiss is questioned, it becomes clear that all other Christians stand in a derivative relation to Jesus and are Christians in that they are his disciples or followers. But that

role implies knowledge of and commitment to Christ (and also to God) which children either cannot have or be assumed to have before years of discretion. To be a Christian a person needs attributes other than those Jesus had and which cannot be taken for granted before maturity.

The discussion of the theological status of children contains no further distinctive arguments. The appeal to 'houses' in the NT, already considered⁽⁴⁶⁾, is added. The report asserts the church membership of children roundly without further justification.

'Within the New Testament period, the right of the child to belong to the Church was never called in question. The child belongs to his family and, if his family belongs to the Church, so does he (47).'

It is also maintained⁽⁴⁸⁾, as we certainly admit, that children can be examples to the church of important Christian qualities, as Jesus taught in Mark 10:15

'The Lord of the Church sets them in the midst of the Church, today as in Galilee, not as objects of benevolence, nor even as recipients of instruction, but in the last analysis as patterns of discipleship (49).'

(It should be noted though that in actual children these qualities are unintelligible - for can children be innocent or humble? - or not morally meritorious like receptiveness or lack of sophistication, as not requiring effort. The point is that such properties only become religiously significant when adults, who can be guilty and proud, only too easily unreceptive or sophisticated, manifest them.) What does, however, need to be emphasised, as against the report, is that for the church to learn from children, it is not necessary for it to 'accept children

unconditionally into its fellowship⁽⁵⁰⁾. Church membership is not 'rightfully theirs (the children's), nor are children 'deprived'⁽⁵¹⁾ by being associated with it in an external association of educational nurture, such as we outline in Chapter V⁽⁵²⁾.

Later in the report, in Chapter 6, Christian Initiation is considered⁽⁵³⁾. The treatment is largely descriptive of the various approaches of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Church of England and Reformed to inducting children into their life and worship⁽⁵⁴⁾. The report's attitude is one of comprehensive and uncritical sympathy, both with those who offer children worship specially adapted to their age in preparation for adult worship and also with those who encourage the child to be present and participate in worship as 'the very means of nurture⁽⁵⁵⁾.' The assumption made here in the report without question, that the induction of children into Christian worship is legitimate, is discussed in (111) in the context of the whole problem of the spiritual status of the child.

(111) Can Children be Christians?

It is first necessary to define a Christian. We hope that what we now offer is a brief but not wholly unsatisfactory account of the concept of a Christian, which would be supported by most mainstream confessions and denominations and by most theologians today. Also we would hold this explication of the word 'Christian' is not too wildly out of line with ordinary usage. At the outset we put aside the popular employment of the term to mean a decent citizen and moral man as being too wide

and inclusive to be useful, since such a use is compatible with a 'Christian' being a humanist, agnostic or Jew and runs counter to normal speech, which contrasts these latter groups with Christians.

A double definition is proposed A Christian is (a) a man (not necessarily adult - to avoid begging the question) in Christ, (b) a follower of Christ (or disciple or believer these terms are roughly equivalent and equally appropriate). Definition (a) is meant to indicate the objective aspect of being a Christian, as found in the NT, especially in St Paul and as more emphasised in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. (a) expresses the spiritual or metaphysical status of the redeemed in the sight of God. To be in Christ is what is effected by baptism, what we have called regeneration⁽⁵⁶⁾, and comprises receiving the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the ~~Spirit~~^{with}, identification with Christ in his death and resurrection and incorporation into his body, both in the sense of his heavenly humanity and in the sense of the empirical reality of the institutional church. Definition (b) covers the more subjective dimension, which has perhaps been more stressed in Protestant and Liberal Christianity. To follow Christ means to accept his teaching and values and to live by them, to share in building or manifesting his kingdom. Such discipleship could be merely ethical obedience but in almost all living forms of Christianity involves more, an existential commitment and personal relationship to Jesus who is treated as a unique and final authority and

source of inspiration and grace (through his close relation to God). This attitude may be summed up as one of faith.

Both these definitions, it should be noted, crucially involve faith. With regard to being in Christ, in our discussion of baptism, it was argued⁽⁵⁷⁾, that regeneration only comes into effect in response to faith. Following Jesus also involves faith in him. Now such faith is not only trust or belief in Christ 'Belief that', belief about Jesus is presupposed. Personal trust is unintelligible and an unreasonable stance for a man who does not believe that Christian doctrine is true.

What degree or extent of belief is therefore required by our definition of a Christian? Clearly orthodox Christianity, in which a general assent is given to the catholic creeds in the main outlines, is the historic norm and standard in articulating the theological foundations of commitment to Christ. A sufficient 'belief-that . . .' element is also to be found in Unitarian or Modernist variants on or departures from orthodoxy, since in experience those taking these positions seem able to practise Christian life and to worship and exhibit a deep devotion to Jesus

It is important to see what our definition excludes. Humanists and agnostics will not count as Christians because they do not say they believe in God, Jews and Muslims because they hold Jesus is only one prophet on a level with others. A humanist will also fail to be entitled to the name of Christian since he reverences Christ as merely one among the world's great teachers

and not more significant than the others. Radical Christians, like the 'death of God' theologian Van Buren⁽⁵⁸⁾, are allowed in by our definition, in that, although they find belief in God unintelligible and outmoded, they have personal faith in Jesus as a unique and final authority⁽⁵⁹⁾. It is worth noting that such positions cannot be described or made intelligible except by reference to the traditional concept of God which people like Van Buren deny or question⁽⁶⁰⁾. A person cannot reasonably hold this type of view, nor define it, if he is not cognisant with classic theism to a minimal degree. The same is true of the Process theologians⁽⁶¹⁾. Thus we may finally formulate our definition in the form: a Christian is (a) a man in Christ, (b) who follows Jesus, and (c) who has sufficient belief in Christian doctrine to make his position reasonable.

How then does this definition apply to children? We consider first young children (by 'young' we mean to include babies, toddlers, those in Infant and Junior schools, except, perhaps for the top-Junior year, and allowing for some exceptions of an early maturity, as one must do in all rough generalisations about human beings.) Second we shall look at older children and discuss their situation (by 'older' we mean roughly the age-bracket from the upper-Junior years to the school-leaving age or Sixth Form period or majority.)

So can younger children be Christian? We have already seen reason to doubt this in connexion with baptismal regeneration⁽⁶²⁾. The descriptions of the spiritual status

this term denotes do not make sense when predicated of infants. Not until a child is able to have faith can his baptism come into effect in a meaningful way. One element, however, in the meaning of regeneration has not so far been discussed in this study, namely that of incorporation into Christ's body. Is a child capable of being a member of Christ? The problem again is to see what such a description can mean in the case of children. To consider then the content of being in Christ, a member of his body.

In the NT and in later theology the body of Christ has become a key concept for understanding the nature of the church⁽⁶³⁾ In the thought of St. Paul⁽⁶⁴⁾ the body is an image or metaphor for the church as a community in the world. The reference of this notion covers the local community, the church in Corinth, the church in Ephesus etc., and the whole Christian ecclesia throughout the world. As time passed, the range of this concept was extended not only to embrace the church down the ages in history in this world but also the church in heaven, the aggregate of all the Christians there had ever been, added to Christ in their baptism and remaining his members thereafter. The idea of church membership is not, therefore, that of belonging to an organisation or institution that is empirical or observable or even of one that is partly transcendent, projecting into the next world. The background to being a member of Christ is that of being a member in the sense of a limb or organ in a body.

The meaning of being a member is in part empirical and functional. What the Christian does in the world is

thought of and described as Christ's work in the world. What different Christians do in their several roles or capacities in the church is compared to the different limbs and organs of the human body, so as to bring out how these diverse roles and capacities complement one another and how ideally they should co-operate in harmony together in serving Jesus. But the meaning of being a member is also metaphysical. The body image is so developed that Christ, reigning in heaven, is conceived as the head of the body, who operates through Christians on earth as his members. Some spiritual, non-observable identity or linkage is supposed between Christ and the Christian. Christians are held to be in Christ, included in his heavenly humanity or manhood, in such a way that Jesus really acts in and through Christians in this life, as well as in that of the life of the world to come, and also that he suffers in them⁽⁶⁵⁾. The ascended Lord becomes, in a baptised person, the ultimate subject of his action and of his experience, as when Christ's members act or are persecuted in the name of their Lord.

Can then Christ be said to suffer or to act in young children? The question becomes can the suffering and the action of the baptised infant be significantly described as suffering ~~from~~^{for} Christ's sake or as a person acting in his role as a Christian. It is not enough to say the child can potentially suffer and act on Jesus' behalf and so be one of his members, for every man has this potentiality. If the claim is advanced that baptised children have this potential in such wise that they do

not need further sacramental incorporation into Christ (apart perhaps from Confirmation) then this is precisely the position being argued for in this study. The proper issue for discussion at this juncture is whether being a member of Christ makes any difference in childhood in respect of suffering and action.

In the case of suffering it is not enough for anyone just to feel pain or to be in some way disadvantaged. The person, who it is claimed is a member of Christ, must suffer qua Christian, e.g. the child must be persecuted in Christ's name. But this presupposes baptised childrer can be correctly identified as Christians. We shall argue below by the second element (b) and the third (c) of our definition of a Christian, by the criteria of discipleship and belief, that the young child cannot be a Christian. The first element (a), the criterion which amounts empirically to having been baptised, is inadequate by itself. It is implausible to describe a baptised person, who does not follow Christ or practise or believe the faith to any significant degree, as a Christian simply on account of his baptism. Nor does it make any theologically important difference that a baptised infant has Christian parents and that he is associated externally with the institutional church. It is true the persecutor may class the babe in these circumstances as a Christian and persecute him for this reason but such an identification is a mistake and constitutes the injustice of condemning the young child for his parents' beliefs and cult-practices. The children in themselves are not then suffering really as Christians, in such a way as to make

the idea of suffering for Christ applicable, and it makes no sense in these cases to hold that Christ suffers in these infants as members of his body.

The same goes for Christian action. Christians act for Christ by serving and witnessing in the world. But their acts cannot count as doing this unless the agents act with the intention of serving and witnessing. This implies they know what they are doing and therefore have faith and the relevant concepts in terms of which faith is articulated and which discipleship requires. Below it will be argued that this belief and understanding cannot be attributed to small children. Christians also operate as Christ's limbs and organs in characteristic church activities. These marks of being a churchman will now be considered in relation to children.

A churchman is a person who can join in public worship and in private prayer as its extension and supplement. But prayer is speech addressed to God and presupposes belief in God. It is unreasonable to pray if you do not believe in God. Further, prayer is unintelligible unless the one who prays has a minimal conception of God. you cannot sensibly speak to you know not what. Now whether this minimum concept of deity can be ascribed to young children we discuss below. Unless, however, this ascription is possible, a child cannot have this mark of belonging to the church.

Another mark of being in the church is participation in the eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion. A first point is that until a person is regenerate in the

sense of being one with Christ's death and resurrection and has received the Spirit and forgiveness of sins, it seems inappropriate for him to take part in the liturgy. Hence young children are not appropriate recipients of Communion, because they are not yet regenerate, as their baptism is not yet operative, in as much as they have not and cannot have come to faith. A second requirement for a fitting reception of this sacrament is to have an intention to receive what it conveys⁽⁶⁶⁾ and this necessitates in the communicant some minimum comprehension that what is to be eaten and drunk is more than literal bread and wine. Children to communicate properly must therefore be able to think in terms of symbols - whatever theory of the eucharistic presence is held - and this^{is} one aspect of Piaget's stage of formal operations or of propositional thinking⁽⁶⁷⁾. Indeed in a much wider sense understanding Christianity requires a grasp of analogy and metaphor and children do not in general attain to this before their teens. A third difficulty is S. Paul's insistence that a man should examine himself and repent of his sins before approaching the Lord's Table⁽⁶⁸⁾ and we have seen that children in the Primary school or middle-age range are normally incapable of this degree of moral sophistication⁽⁶⁹⁾. Hence it seems that pre-adolescent children are not usually qualified for a spiritually proper receiving of Communion and can hardly thus act as members of Christ's body in a way that orthodoxy regards as essential. It is hardly accidental that, whatever happens in eastern Christianity, all forms of western Christianity bar young children from their altars.

One other mark of a churchman is that he should be able to take an intelligent part in the life of the ecclesia as an institution. The Christian is expected to share in church government, and to participate in committees and boards, Synods and Councils and in some cases to become an elder, deacon, lay-preacher, reader, church-warden etc. Now it seems clear to commonsense that young children lack the experience of affairs, the mature powers of rational decision and of abstract thought and language necessary to ecclesiastical administration. Democracy is out of place with the child of Primary age. Most churches do not allow children to vote until they reach years of discretion or to be on electoral rolls or to attend church meetings below 16 or 17. Doubtless the fundamental factor behind this commonsense judgement of all traditions is the slow growth of the capacity for formal operations such as Piaget has charted. Once again to describe children as churchmen is wanting in content.

However, it should finally be noted that children can be considered churchmen if this only means an external, psychological and social association with the community. A child can be in a crêche and can attend a service in the way in which he can be present at an adult performance in a concert hall or theatre. Young children can legitimately experience a sense of belonging to a friendly group of grown-ups. This fact is important, as we shall see in Chapter V, but does not justify the conclusion that children are part of the church in the sense of being through this baptism members of Christ.

We now turn to the second element (b) in our definition of a Christian and ask whether children can be followers of Christ. Ethical obedience to Jesus' command is precluded because before adolescence children are scarcely moral beings as we have seen⁽⁷⁰⁾. The Sermon on the Mount and the Parables appear to be well beyond the young child, quite apart from the difficulty which he will have with the symbolic or analogical language in which Jesus' teaching is couched. Again the disciple of Christ requires some knowledge of the Gospels and of the facts about Jesus. A very young child can hardly have this knowledge, though children in the upper Primary school might. We have seen that probably the childlike qualities which Christ exhorts his followers to have will not be appreciated or even be intelligible virtues much before maturity. Also in little children of the infant age there has been shown to be considerable confusion about Jesus' person, the sense in which he is Son of God, is related to his heavenly Father or to his mother⁽⁷¹⁾. Of course these theological issues are hard and perplexing for adults but the kind and level of crass misunderstandings displayed by the childish mind rule out serious discipleship.

Faith in Christ has, as we have seen, to be underpinned by some measure of Christian belief. It seems hard to accept that young children can have even a minimal understanding of these propositions and of the concepts that figure in them, for questions of belief (or of unbelief) to arise. Again there is the inability to comprehend symbols which debars having a grasp of the

language of Atonement , Ascension, Pentecost or the Last Things. More centrally there is the difficulty and slowness of children's coming to grips with the concept of God as creator, as just, as the object of prayer, in other than childishly literalistic and artificial ways, as common experience of children's questions and academic research indicates⁽⁷²⁾. Indeed recent work on adolescents suggests there is little greater comprehension at this stage⁽⁷³⁾, though this sad finding may be as much due to poor teaching as to the intrinsic inability to understand theological concepts that belongs to the immaturity of early years. Finally we should note the truism that Jesus' whole life turned on his devotion to God. Now a person can hardly commit himself, therefore, to such a Christ, even in the manner of 'death of God' or of secular theology, who cannot grasp something of what Jesus himself meant by God.

Hence our final conclusion to this long discussion is that young children cannot follow Jesus or be meaningfully described as being in Christ and so cannot be Christians. Now we go on to examine the question whether older children can be Christians by the definition given.

Even early adolescents or the top-Junior child or certainly normal teenagers seem capable of being Christians in precisely the ways young children cannot be. Such older children can have faith, so their baptism may come into operation. Their moral development enables them to be able to sin and to repent⁽⁷⁴⁾. They can have sufficient belief in God for prayer and worship to be intelligible activities. Thus they are qualified to receive Holy

Communion through being regenerate by baptism upon belief and repentance. They have some understanding of symbolic language, so some minimum idea of what it is to eat the bread and drink the cup at the Lord's Supper. They are beginning to be old enough to participate in democracy, as the trend to establish and promote school councils shows⁽⁷⁵⁾. Therefore, they can share in the government of the church, although the usual convention is for this responsibility and right not to be granted to young people before the school-leaving age or the age of majority. So older children can be churchmen. Moreover, teenagers' growing moral maturity makes possible an ethical obedience to Christ and their increased intellectual powers enable some elementary grasp of Christology and of the concept of God. The symbolic character of the Gospel language and of much Christian belief begins to make sense. Hence the older child can be a Christian, by being a man in Christ and by being able to be a simple follower of Jesus. Much pastoral experience supports this contention, and the case for early admission to Holy Communion, if not for early Confirmation, rests upon it⁽⁷⁶⁾.

It further appears to be true that some of the children of Christian homes, who have been brought up in a church atmosphere, are likely (as we have seen⁽⁷⁷⁾) in fact to believe in God and to want to practise the life of discipleship. So great is the power of Bushnell's 'organic connexion' - which we interpret empirically as the power of parental influence and example. It would be pastorally hard to refuse children in this category who

wish to worship and to communicate. Their case may be compared with the adult enquirer, partially informed about Christianity, exploring Christian belief and wanting to experiment with prayer and devotion. It is not unreasonable for such a person at this point to act in ways that ideally presuppose firm adherence to the creeds and clear commitment⁽⁷⁸⁾, since, as we observed earlier⁽⁷⁹⁾, men often become believers gradually, uncertainly and in stages, and since, though the Church's faith is a controversial option in the modern world, it is a tenable position for educated people to hold and for which a prima facie case can be argued.

Nonetheless it is necessary to stress that Christianity is a controversial option, in a liberal, open society, after free discussion and debate, there is no consensus on its truth among informed people, and that, therefore, it is a matter for mature and responsible decision. If rational autonomy and freedom be valued and a child's right to make up his own mind and to follow his conscience be accepted, as we shall argue in Chapter V that they must, it is clearly wrong to expect or assume faith before years of discretion. On commonsense and psychological grounds children, even older children, seem unable to evaluate properly disputable belief-systems like Marxism, Humanism or the great world religions. For one thing it is most unlikely that anyone before the Sixth Form stage will know enough to produce a sensible choice. For another, not until a person has been able to explore religious truth for some period of time at a mature level⁴ can he be reasonably regarded as capable of making the final and

life-long promises of the present Confirmation (and adult Baptism) rites.

In all other spheres, those who educate and counsel young people think it wise to encourage them to keep their options open and to avoid premature commitments⁽⁸⁰⁾, before the age of 16 or 18, children are generally held to be too young responsibly to marry, vote in a local or parliamentary election, choose a career or course in higher education, take on debts, buy a house, run a car or drink alcohol. Deciding to follow Christ seems no less important. Hence our conclusion is that older children can be Christians by the definition we propose and sometimes are better allowed to pursue their faith in a provisional, tentative and exploratory way. However, there is a crucial sense in which they ought not to be Christians or be assumed to be irrevocably committed as members of the Church. The positive implications of this position will be worked out in Chapter V.

(iv) Nurture in 'The Child in the Church'

In this subsection we examine the idea of Christian nurture as presented in Chapter 4 of The Child in the Church, a chapter headed An Understanding of Christian Nurture. It is assumed that nurture is a continuous process of teaching and training Christians in the faith. It is presupposed that, when this process is applied to children, they are already Christians. The report in Chapter 4 does not concern itself with what we have called physical or psychological nurture⁽⁸¹⁾ but with specifically religious nurture.

'We are mainly concerned with the Christian nurture of children. We are concerned not primarily with the kind of general nurture into loving community which all children need, whether they be from Christian families or not, but with that understanding of specifically Christian nurture which grows out of the New Testament and out of the nature of the Church (82).'

It is here taken for granted that the children of Christians are not only themselves Christians from birth but that it is perfectly proper to train them up in the faith. Further it is admitted that just as nurture so understood is legitimate for Christians, so fairness demands that those of other religions should bring up their offspring in a parallel way.

'Just as it is perfectly proper to speak of the nurture of the children of Muslim families into the full life of Islam, and similarly, the nurture of Humanist children into the values and ideals of Humanism, so we are concerned to describe a nurture which is distinctively Christian (83).'

The report suggests that in contemporary society parents should deliberately choose Christianity as the faith into which to induct their young.

'Indeed, one of the reasons why, for many Christian parents, the whole idea of nurture has become difficult is precisely because Christian nurture must become more self-conscious and more specific in a society in which different religious and non-religious traditions exist side by side in mutual respect. The parent committed to one of these traditions cannot leave the responsibility of nurture into the things most deeply cherished by his tradition to society as a whole. He, with his community, must take deliberate steps to promote the nurture of the young of his faith. This involves the conscious selection of Christian faith, as one amongst many possible faiths, as the context and goal of this specific nurture (84).'

It will be recalled that such a procedure conflicts with several of the premisses or conclusions of this study, developed in our criticisms of Bushnell and in later chapters. We have argued that it is mistaken to treat

young children as Christians, because they cannot be sensibly so described, and that whereas older young people can be Christians, it ought not to be assumed that they have faith and they should not be trained as though their Christianity can be taken for granted. A tentative adoption of the faith by a teenager may be permissible for some of the children of Christian homes but even here the way must be left clear for mature deliberation in years of discretion about whether to accept or to reject belief in God and Christ. The report's argument here deserves detailed scrutiny.

It is pointed out that parents are bound to influence their children one way or another⁽⁸⁵⁾. Those who bring up the young cannot escape responsibility. We agree: the question is therefore what kind of nurture is to be provided beyond that any concerned parent offers⁽⁸⁶⁾. Our case is that any responsible mother or father will secure for his child a good religious education of the open-ended variety and that there is a limit to what can properly be done so far as conscious teaching and other nurturing processes are concerned.

The report goes on to contrast Christian nurture as it conceives it with indoctrination, instruction and secular education⁽⁸⁷⁾. Secular education rightly claims there must be teaching about Christianity, Humanism, Islam and Communism, but the outcome in terms of the pupil's resulting commitment must be open. Otherwise there could not be schools for all children in a pluralistic community and there would have to be instead places for sectarian teaching⁽⁸⁸⁾.

'In so far as Christians, Humanists, Muslims and Communists can all be free, thoughtful and enquiring people, secular education can result in all these varieties of commitment, but it cannot, in our western world, seek only to make Christians, or only to make Humanists. If that were the case, then only children of the favoured community could attend the state schools; others would have to have schools for their own, or each community of faith would have to have its own schools (89).'

In response to our modern situation there has evolved in the last fifteen years what has come to be known as 'open-ended' religious education, where the aim is to get children to think for themselves and to explore the theological choices the world affords⁽⁹⁰⁾. Such an education is not neutral in value terms⁽⁹¹⁾ but is committed to the prima facie worthwhileness of the religions of the world as not being empty superstitions but as deserving a place in the curriculum. Moreover there is commitment to the procedural values of autonomy and respect for truth, relevance and cogency of argument and for evidence in religious as in every other subject of study⁽⁹²⁾.

Now if such values are also held, as we shall argue in Chapter V they must be by Christians as Christians, in church and home, then open-ended religious education, what we refer to as educational religious nurture, is the only form of religious teaching and training that can be legitimately given to children. Yet despite such considerations, and the weight we claim theology must give to them, the report proposes a 'closed-ended' kind of Christian nurture⁽⁹³⁾. The distinction is shown quite clearly in terms of the essentially different kind of outcome expected.

'Secular education and Christian nurture have this in common they both seek to give the child his past so as to enable him to create his own future. But whereas education conceives of this future broadly in terms of the values of our liberal democracy, Christian nurture conceives of it in terms of the Christian future. Secular education fails if a person becomes a bigot but not if he becomes an atheist. Christian nurture fails both if he becomes a bigot and if he becomes an atheist. Certain things about the future have been decided in Christian faith, since Christ is both Alpha and Omega, first and last. Christian nurture is thus less open towards the future than secular education, and it is more specific in its intentions, namely to create a Christian future. Christian nurture occupies a middle position between closed and authoritative instruction on the one hand, in which the past is simply reduplicated, and open, enquiring education on the other (94).'

Instruction is set aside by the report as the mere telling to the pupil of previously acquired knowledge and skills⁽⁹⁵⁾. Such instruction is by itself not adequate for a secular education aiming to produce reflective persons⁽⁹⁶⁾. What does not appear to be realised, though, is that nurture as the report conceives it probably involves instruction in telling children authoritatively facts as being the case about God or Christ, which education cannot allow with its respect for truth, because these alleged facts are disputable and may not be true. The only legitimate place for instruction in the educational nurture we advocate - though that is a large place - is as a means of conveying historical and sociological facts about Christianity, about what has been believed in the past and about what Christians believe today.

The report defines indoctrination

'Indoctrination, however, seeks to deprive a person of his personhood by securing mere conformity to a set of

doctrines, a conformity which will not be swayed by evidence or rational argument, a wearing down of the will and the imagination by constant repetition and by deliberately avoiding discussion of alternatives⁽⁹⁷⁾.'

This account seems roughly right and we condemn it, as much as the report implicitly does. We also accept indoctrination is not involved in its concept of Christian nurture and affirm that still less is it involved in our educational nurture. Yet the report is nonetheless worried as to how the nurture it prescribes is distinguished from indoctrination, because although a child is not deprived by Christian nurture of his independence altogether, it does seek to predetermine his future.

'But how then can nurture be distinguished from indoctrination, which deprives a child of his independence altogether? For Christian nurture seeks to create a Christian future. Is this not to determine the future of the child? Any nurturing group which seeks to work in the middle of a plural society in which an open, critical kind of education is functioning will be exposed to the charge that it is indoctrinatory, simply because it selects one possible future (in the case of Christian nurture, a Christian future) and ignores others (98).'

Thus to select one controversial option to aim at is open to the charge of indoctrination.

The reply of the report is that openness towards the future is not necessarily virtuous and that even secular education hopes to avoid outcomes of bigotry, anarchy and nihilism⁽⁹⁹⁾. What the report fails to see is that if the educator cares for rationality, while he will try to prevent children reaching irrational positions, he cannot adjudicate between Christianity, other faiths, humanism and Marxism, which to the educator - including

to the Christian in this role - appears equally reasonable and acceptable as out-comes for the pupil's search. To give preference to Christian belief, as the report does, while certainly not entailing the indoctrination of the child since he will remain free to think critically for himself, does not properly reflect the disputable nature of theological truth.

The report further argues that the child's Christian future is not fixed and need not simply reduplicate past expressions of Christian truth.

'What does it mean to seek to create the Christian future? A religion can only encourage the personal freedom of its young people towards their future if the religion is free with regard to its own future. If Christian faith sought merely to reduplicate itself, to form young Christians who were the exact repetition of the previous generation, to pass on Christian faith as if it were like a parcel handed down from generation to generation, then it would be very difficult to distinguish between the passing on of this sort of thing and closed, authoritative instruction or even indoctrination (100).'

Christianity is continually taking new forms.

'This means that when Christians seek to nurture their young into Christian faith, they literally do not fully know what they are nurturing them into. They only know what they are nurturing them out of, i.e. out of the Christian past. They know the resources but not the use which will be made of them. What we pass on to our children is not the painting but the paintbox. What is it, then to seek to create a Christian future for our children? It cannot be to deny them their own distinctive contribution to it, or to close the future for them, or to seek to make little copies of ourselves. This would no longer be Christian nurture, because it would not be true to the developing nature of Christian faith. It would instead be to offer religious instruction about Christianity, or, if it tried to produce an irrational commitment, it might even become indoctrination. It is because Christian faith is like this that it can offer a nurture which both puts the child into dialogue with his past, and also leaves him free to develop his own personhood, in continuity with that past, but in a manner which we, the nurturers, cannot predict. This

is also the reason why Christian faith is able to understand and even to produce a view of secular education which sets education free for constant scrutiny and further enquiry (101).'

Presumably at the level of belief (and that is all we are concerned with, not new devotional, liturgical or institutional forms), Christian nurture can contemplate a future in which the Christology of the Myth of God Incarnate might replace Chalcedon and in which a radical Remaking of Christian Doctrine⁽¹⁰²⁾ might be undertaken. But why should children be expected to remain Christian at all in any sense? If the child in the church becomes an unbeliever, has nurture really failed, any more than Marxist parents' nurture will have failed, should their offspring grow up liberals? The report also states that

' . . . nurture is offered to the normal and healthy of whatever age, who are still learning and growing. The nurturing task of the Church is thus one and indivisible. The children of Abraham learn to journey as they wander with faithful Abraham (103).'

Yet this is to ignore the vital difference of children from adults, who may be presumed to have committed themselves (in theory) in a mature way. These latter may, of course, continually reconstruct their fabric of belief as they proceed onwards in the Christian life.

Another important argument is that not to nurture children, in the report's distinctive sense, is to deny them their past and identity.

'Not to nurture a child in the tradition of his family is to deny him that part of his self-hood which should be given to him. It is to deny him the past, which is his own past, out of which his creation of his own unique selfhood should take place (104).'

Now while continuity with a person's past and with the tradition of his family is important and a key part of his 'core personality', does it legitimately extend to continuing in the controversial beliefs of his parents? Do the children of a socialist lose touch with their heritage and suffer a loss of self-identity if they do not grow up socialists themselves? A nurture that aims at walking forever in one's father's footsteps is lacking in respect for autonomy and for truth.

On this issue our contention is that sufficient regard is had to a person's past and to his family inheritance, when he learns about it and comes to sympathise with what it stands for, without himself necessarily being committed to it and to the truth of any controversial claims it contains. There may be special problems today in this country with minority religious communities, where continued adherence to the ancestral faith is essential to mental health, cultural identity and family integrity. Even here questions of the truth of a religion cannot for ever be avoided and the possibility of pluralism will sooner or later arise, when members of the same culture or partners in the same marriage may coexist quite harmoniously with diverse religious convictions. It is worth noticing that the approach to spiritual nurture advocated in this study solves one traditional vexed dilemma of mixed marriages, namely that of in which faith to rear the children. For if the assumption is dropped that children

should be brought up in the parent's religion and instead they are trained with no one faith in view but to learn about both and to have a sympathetic understanding of both, in an atmosphere and culture where truth and autonomy are respected, then family unity will not be impaired (105).

It is possible that the account given here of the report's conception of Christian nurture is unfair, because in the later Chapter 6 on Christian Nurture and Response Individual and Corporate there is a section on Nurture for Decision. The kind of criticism we have presented seems there to be anticipated.

'It is all too easy to think of Christian nurture in protective terms, shielding the child from certain experiences and influences and ensuring others, so that at the end of the tunnel a permanent place in the Christian community is assured (106).'

The aim, the report says, has to be that children must on growing up face a real choice of personal belief or unbelief.

'The aim of Christian nurture, however, is to enable the child in the end to face a radical challenge. The nurturer must have a real choice in mind belief or disbelief. This choice initially is presented as part of the child's own development when in early adolescence ability to handle abstract ideas enables him to refine his beliefs by critical examination However smooth the passage from birth to adult life, there can be no real personal belief in any depth until it can be called 'my belief', and this pre-supposes a proper questioning of what has been received. Christian nurture must prepare for this and not try to avoid it (107).'

There is, however, a mistake even here in implicitly assuming that positive Christian commitment is the only desirable outcome of nurture. Such an assumption may be legitimate on the part of the evangelist and in what in

Chapter V we shall call 'advocacy' or 'apologetics' and there is a place in youth for these enterprises as maturity is reached. But what is inappropriate is to aim at evangelistic success in Christian nurture during childhood in education, even if liberal procedures are consistently followed. For with a proselytising purpose there is always the danger of falling into illiberal approaches, albeit unconsciously and of giving the child the damaging and wounding impression that he is a failure and disloyal to his family or church, if at the end of the day he does not espouse Christianity. Respect for truth and valuing autonomy mean that any reasonable result of a person's religious quest is equally welcome to the Christian, as a rational man, if not to the Christian as a passionately committed apologist or advocate.

This paradox is intelligible because unbelief on conscientious grounds is to be treated as a case of invincible ignorance. A Christian may indeed be saddened by the ambiguity of human experience and the resultant cognitive freedom on the part of a rational person to believe or not to believe. The advocate or apologist must risk his case being rejected and cannot fail in his task without disappointment. Education indeed involves, beside the neutral teacher's role someone taking the controversialist's role and the Christian must espouse them both. In one capacity he will accept with equanimity the young person's unbelief and in the other he will feel

keen regret. Yet this failure to agree with one's point of view in a controversy is not a moral failure of the sort that arises when somebody believes the creeds to be true and still refuses to commit himself to Christ, despite the advocate's impassioned pleas. But this difficult matter cannot be pursued further until our full positive programme of educational religious nurture is set out in Chapter V.

- (1) (London 1976).
- (2) Ch. VII.
- (3) Christian Nurture pp.136-137.
- (4) ibid pp.148-149.
- (5) ibid p.148.
- (6) v. Ch. III (12), (8), (10), (9) references under 'Con'.
- (7) v. Ch. III (12), (8), (10), (9) references under 'Pro'.
- (8) v. pp. 113-115.
- (9) Christian Nurture pp.139-140.
- (10) ibid p.141. Cf White op.cit. p.368.
- (11) Christian Nurture p.142.
- (12) v. pp.
- (13) ibid pp.142-143.
- (14) ibid p.144.
- (15) ibid pp.145-146. Cf. Jeremias (1960) p.23.
- (16) Christian Nurture p.146.
- (17) ibid p.146.
- (18) ibid p.147.
- (19) v. pp. 140-145.
- (20) p.iv.
- (21) ibid p.13 & 29
- (22) ibid p.13 & 29
- (23) ibid p.14 & 31
- (24) ibid p.14 & 31
- (25) ibid p.14 & 32
- (26) ibid p.14 & 33
- (27) ibid p.15 & 33
- (28) v. p. 114.
- (29) v. pp. 146-147.
- (30) Cf. the difficulty we found in attributing to children the fruits of the Spirit understood as virtues. On Mk 10:15 v. Taylor V. The Gospel according to St. Mark 2nd ed. (London 1966) pp.423-424.
- (31) op.cit. p.15 & 34.
- (32) Contra Haereses Bk.II, Ch. 22,4.
- (33) op.cit. p.15 & 35.
- (34) ibid p.16 & 36.
- (35) ibid p.16 & 37.
- (36) ibid p.16 & 38
- (37) v. p. 10.
- (38) Mussen et al. op.cit. Chs. 7,8,9,10,12,14 and 15 and pp. 752-754; (Plowden Report) Children and their Primary Schools (London 1967) Chs. 2,15,16; Dearden op.cit. Chs. 2,3 and 4.
- (39) Entwistle H. Child-centred Education (London 1970) Ch.5; Oakeshott M. Education: The Engagement and its Frustration Ch. 2 in ed. Dearden et al op.cit. esp. pp.27-33.
- (40) Democracy and Education (New York 1916) pp.63-65.
- (41) Plowden op.cit. pp.193-194 & 523-528; Dearden op.cit. Ch. 5 esp. pp.98 ff.
- (42) op.cit. p.16 & 36.
- (43) v. pp. 61-64, 75-77.
- (44) v. pp. 146-147.
- (45) ibid p.16 & 38.
- (46) Ch. III (7).
- (47) ibid p.17 & 41.
- (48) ibid p.17 & 43 and above pp.
- (49) ibid p.17 & 43
- (50) ibid p.18 & 43
- (51) ibid p.18 & 43
- (52) v. pp. 191-193.
- (53) ibid pp.34-36 & 94-100.

- (54) ibid p.35~~6~~ 97
(55) ibid p.35~~6~~ 99
(56) v. r. 107~~ff~~
(57) v. pp.112-114.
(58) The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (London 1963).
(59) ibid Chs.IV,VI,VII and VIII.
(60) e.g. Owen H.P. Concepts of Deity (London 1971) Ch.1.
(61) e.g. Pittenger N.N. Process Thought and Christian Faith (London 1968) Ch.II and criticisms of Owen op.cit. Ch.2(d).
(62) v. pp.107-115.
(63) Mascall E.L. Christ, the Christian and the Church (London 1946) Chs. V,VI,VII,
(64) Rom 12:4; 1Cor 12:12-27; Eph 1:22-23,4:12,16,5:22-33; Col 1:18,24, 2:19, 3:15.
(65) Mt 25:35-46; Acts 9:4-5, 22:7-8, 26:14-15; Col 1:24.
(66) Leeming op.cit. pp.495-496.
(67) Flavell J.H. The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget (New York 1963) pp.202-225.
(68) 1 Cor 11:28.
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(77) v. pp.103-104.
(78) v. pp.132-137.
(79) v. pp.117-118.
(80) Ely Report op.cit. p.42 123.
(81) v. p 10.
(82) op.cit. p.19 47.
(83) ibid p.19 47.
(84) ibid pp.19-20 47
(85) ibid p.20 48
(86) ibid p.19 47
(87) ibid pp.20-22 49-57.
(88) ibid p.21 50
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(90) v. Ch.II (146).
(91) v. Ch. V(i).
(92) op.cit. p.21 50
(93) ibid p.20 47
(94) ibid p.22 57
(95) ibid p.21 52
(96) ed. Peters R.S. The Concept of Education (London 1967) pp.6-9,16ff.
(97) op.cit. p.21 53.
(98) ibid pp.22-23, 58
(99) ibid p.23 58
(100) ibid p.23 59
(101) ibid p.24 63 and 62.
(102) cf. ed. Hick (1977) op.cit. and Wiles H.S. The Remaking of Christian Doctrine (London 1974).
(103) op.cit. p.25 66.
(104) ibid p.22 55

- (105) v. Mixed Marriages A Report on the International Consultation on Mixed Marriage (Dublin 1974) in Theology, Feb. 1975, pp.75-82, esp. 32 31-37. But cf. the official position of both Anglican and Roman Catholic communions that children should be brought up Christian, in the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity Anglican-Roman Catholic Marriage (London 1975) p.6 2 9, p.27 2 64.
- (106) op.cit. p.36 2 101.
- (107) ibid p.36 2 102, 103.

Chapter V

Educational Religious Nurture

In this chapter we present our positive theory of educational religious nurture as the form of Christian upbringing of children appropriate in modern society (and in principle in other circumstances). This concept of nurture, one sub-variety of the religious nurture we distinguished in Chapter I⁽¹⁾, will be placed in the wider setting of Christian communication, of the transmission of Christian truth to the unbeliever, the uninformed, the uninterested and the uncommitted in the world today. The conclusion of our previous argument in Chapter IV⁽²⁾ is assured, viz that young children cannot be Christians and that older ones in general ought not to be expected to be believers and that irrevocable commitment is improper before the threshold of adulthood.

We first discuss three factors that should control Christian communication in contemporary culture (and in principle, elsewhere). Then we draw out four main implications for the character of the communication enterprise. A logical model of the form which the passing on of religious truth to adults ought to take is outlined and its four stages deduced. The model is next applied to the upbringing of children, both those of Christians and of others so far as it can be influenced by Christians and men of goodwill. The four stages are schematised over time into a developmental sequence. Special consideration will be given to the place of prayer and worship in

this series of stages in the educational nurture of the child in religion. Finally we examine how moral education in home or school is related to the kind of religious rearing prescribed in this study.

(1) Controls on Christian Communication

From our analysis of what it is to be a Christian⁽³⁾, we assume the church has a gospel, a message with a content regarded as true. Further we take for granted that the church properly has a mission to the world outside itself and in distinction from it. Part of this mission we also suppose is to communicate Christianity conceived as a body of belief and as the way of life this belief implies. So arises the enterprise we term Christian communication by which the church attempts to communicate Christian truth to the ignorant, the unbelieving and the uncommitted. We shall argue that this enterprise today has to be thought of in educational terms and has to be governed by educational values. In particular the Christian education of children in home and church, as well as school, is to be considered on our view as a special sector of this endeavour to communicate, since the child is outside the church, neither a member of Christ by baptism nor a churchman, and is not a church-member by Bushnell's organic connection with his parents like any other of the unconverted qua man or man-in-the-making, he is but a potential Christian.

Our contention in this sub-section is that Christian communication should be governed by three factors that will control the way this activity is conducted. Two of

the controlling factors are the moral values of respect for truth and autonomy and the third is the controversial status of religious truth. Both values will be briefly described. It will be assumed that they will be espoused by Christians, both as rational men prior to and apart from their religious faith - so that these values would remain if faith were abandoned - and also as Christians, the said values arising from their very Christian belief and theology. A full justification of the holding of these values cannot be attempted in this study. We shall only give a hint of the kind of argument an adequate defence would require.

The first controlling factor, the value of respect for truth, consists not only in the obligation to tell the truth and to be objective in always describing the situation (and acting on it) as it actually is and is seen to be in the public forum: respect for truth also comprehends the duty of Christians to pursue truth and to encourage others to search for truth in all its forms, wherever it is to be found, including obviously in the depositum fidei of Christianity and of other religions (3A).

Respect for truth may be defended philosophically on utilitarian⁽⁴⁾ or on transcendental grounds⁽⁵⁾. It is argued that truth should be revered either because it promotes human welfare and progress or because it is a precondition of communication and is presupposed by anyone who seriously discusses any matter or who asks a serious question, expecting a serious answer.

Respect for truth may also be defended theologically. The first argument is that a Christian is a man who believes certain doctrines⁽⁶⁾. Presumably he does so and only should do so because he thinks they are true. Believing p, where p is any proposition, implies thinking p true. It would then be paradoxical to think Christian truth is important, as the foundation of the Christian way of life, without having a general concern for truth and for finding it, wherever it may be found.

Secondly it is widely accepted that part of Christian discipleship for some people is the pursuit of theology and that the vigorous development of this enterprise by Christians down the ages has assisted the understanding and deepening of the faith and the church's message. Further it is held this activity should be energetically undertaken today. If this is the case, because theology is an academic discipline, committed to the discovery, clarification, systematisation and dissemination of truth, it may be argued that Christians in general, in every aspect of their mission, should seek truth and be governed by the restrictions reverence for it imposes on word and deed.

It may also be argued, thirdly, from the doctrine of creation (and from redemption as God's way of restoring creation to its true character) that part of man's purpose and destiny is to build civilisation in which the arts and sciences flourish. God is to be glorified by the discovery of truth about nature in science and about man in the humanities⁽⁷⁾. Therefore, Christians, as men being restored to their proper humanity, should pursue truth,

respect it wherever found and accept its demands and restrictions.

The second controlling factor in Christian communication ought to be the value given to autonomy, that men should be or become autonomous and that autonomy in persons is to be encouraged as a central goal of human development. Autonomy means the individual governs his thought and action by his own reason. He should only believe as true what he thinks to be true. John Oman rightly stated

'There is only one right way of asking men to believe, which is to put before them what they ought to believe because it is true, and there is only one right way of persuading, which is to present what is true in such a way that nothing will prevent it from being seen except the desire to abide in darkness (8),'

Similarly an autonomous man only regards as right what his conscience tells him is so (and, if a Christian, he must treat this as the will of God and the manifestation of the moral order). Oman again puts the point well, with force and clarity.

'Action, though otherwise not wrong, is less than right, unless we, of our own insight, judge it right and, when it conflicts with that insight, its innocuousness does not hinder it from being, for us, wrong. Whatsoever is not of our own faith is, for that sole reason, sin. What is called heteronomy, that is legislation for us by others, is, at best, a non-moral state, in constant danger of becoming immoral. As being towed is not steering, and, on damage to the tow-line, may be shipwreck, so is an externally directed morality (9).'

Again

'More exclusively than our relation to our neighbour, our whole relation to God is determined by the independence of our moral judgement. The ground of respect for all sincere judgement of right is not that it is infallible, for it is often mistaken and always inadequate, but because the only way of seeing more clearly the absolute righteousness is to judge of it with greater independence. Then,

if we find God's will as we see right, our moral independence is the condition of depending on Him and it must be so if the will of God and the moral order are one God cannot be served by setting conscience on one side and consecration on the other. To be independent moral persons, legislating for ourselves, so far from being hostile to true knowledge and right service of God, is the imperative condition without which God can neither be known nor served (10).'

In discovering truth then, in theory or practice, the autonomous person thinks for himself and relies on his own insight. Nonetheless the reason he employs will indeed be human reason in its various forms with public canons and standards and by its use he will claim to ascertain what is objectively true and right⁽¹¹⁾. Hence it is crucial that men learn not only to think for themselves but to think well and rationally and in so doing to draw on public debate and the great traditions of human thought. Without regard for objective truth or morality, autonomy is ineffective or disastrous self-deluded people and great criminals can be autonomous⁽¹²⁾; Clearly a truly autonomous person in every sphere has to rely on the expert and the scholar. In religion reference to expert authority is indispensable, in practice largely to be relied on in non-controversial matters and in the approach and background to controversial ones⁽¹³⁾. This kind of autonomy is an ideal, an aim for teachers and parents to have in guiding growth in children and a fact to be respected as adulthood is approached. So too we argue autonomy in everyman should be respected in Christian communication. Obviously the attainment of autonomy is a matter of degree, achieved it is to be hoped

in most people through a liberal education and upbringing to a significant extent, even if it makes little sense with the mentally handicapped.

Autonomy may be defended by various philosophical arguments⁽¹⁴⁾. A transcendental defence might try to show that autonomy is involved in asking for the justification of autonomy. There could be an utilitarian argument that autonomy is useful in workers in a modern, fast-changing economy, is essential in the professional man as he has to use his own judgement in applying the principles of his profession to concrete cases, and contributes to a person's happiness and dignity. Again in a world of uncertainty and controversy over values, where the old do not know or are divided on what to teach the young, autonomy can be agreed on as a goal of upbringing with responsibility for choice of ends and norms transferred to the young themselves. In a pluralistic culture the last consideration has a special appeal.

Christians, in addition, should support the autonomy of every man on grounds arising from their own faith. It is held men are made in the divine image and should attempt to grow in this. People then are to be like God as rational agents and free spirits, so that for persons to flourish in the way they are created, they need to have autonomy. According to Hodgson, the purpose of creation is to develop men in freedom⁽¹⁵⁾, and if also the task of understanding the world is a Christian goal⁽¹⁶⁾, the autonomy of the individual should be cultivated so that each may make his own sense of experience. Faith, moreover, may

be defined as responding to the reality a person apprehends and therefore as believing what he sees to be true, as opposed to what other people see or think or to the second-hand response of heteronomy⁽¹⁷⁾. If this freedom of the faith-response applies in the sphere of religion, it is hard to accept that personal insight and conviction ought not to be everywhere supreme in determining assent and that is autonomy.

In ethical matters catholic theology teaches that, after giving due weight to the teaching of the church, a man should follow his own conscience and regard as right what he thinks right, no matter what external authority says⁽¹⁸⁾. Assuming here that conscience means the mind thinking morally, this teaching amounts to prescribing moral autonomy and it seems arbitrary not to extend this independence of individual reason to theoretical questions of all kinds, especially disputable ones. Before it is right for a person to submit to God, to his will and his truth, as we have seen Oman also taught⁽¹⁹⁾, the person must apprehend for himself what is God's will and truth. The human dignity of God's children demands no less.

The third factor which must control Christian communication is the controversial nature of Christian truth. We have already pointed out that basic theological claims are debatable both at the popular and at the learned level in contemporary society⁽²⁰⁾. There are three important facts here relevant to the church's mission that should be distinguished. The first is social pluralism, the diversity of the views on religious matters actually

held and the consideration that Christian belief is perhaps a minority option in modern culture. Such a situation might counsel caution and humility in Christian proclamation or nurture but intrepidity in witness and boldness in teaching could also be defended as the proper approach, since majorities might be prejudiced, ill-informed or just plain mistaken.

The second fact bearing on controversiality is the absence of an informed consensus on Christian truth, the deep debate between Christian and sceptical philosophers of religion on issues of theological meaning and truth, and of theologians themselves on the fundamentals of doctrine. It is because of this situation, and not just on account of popular disagreement between faith and unbelief, that central Christian assertions are profoundly controversial and their logical status problematic. The third fact is that today informed discussion occurs in a free and open society, where the war of ideas is unimpeded by legal, social or institutional constraints and where truth has a fair chance to emerge in the market place or public forum. In other cultures Christians could well hold that their views never had a proper hearing or could not be tested by radical criticism in a context where all positions could be clarified and scrutinised in academic dialogue.

In the Middle Ages and ages of faith the popular and learned consensus was in favour of Christian truth, and even though society was not liberal, basic doctrine could be taken as uncontroversial. By contrast in the

nineteenth century, while there may have been a popular consensus on central religious claims, at the level of philosophical and theological debate in a social situation of free discussion, there was no informed agreement and Christianity was far more controversial.

Although it is hard to think of historical examples, one can point to circumstances, where in a liberal culture, there is learned unanimity or near-convergence on one policy or prescription and at the popular level much support for the opposite, as there may be in this country in respect of racism, sexism, capital or corporal punishment. Here minority opinions can be properly accepted as well-founded and academically non-controversial among the informed and even legislation to enforce or enact them may be appropriately instituted and claimed to have an educative effect. Prejudice logically arises in precisely these cases where large groups do not follow what can be objectively established about, e.g. racial or sexual equality. It follows that it was not or would not be unreasonable for church, home and school whether in some societies as dominating majorities or in others as minorities, to propagate their own doctrines to the children of Christian families (and to others), because they were not as aware as we must be of the problematic character of faith in the public forum. But in our culture, with every opportunity for making her case, the church's gospel is certainly disputable among the simple and the learned.

(11) Four Implications

When the three controlling factors of respect for truth, autonomy and controversiality are combined, they have four main implications for Christian communication.

The first implication is that Christian truth must be presented in the mode of possibility. By Christian truth is meant the distinctive religious assertions that concern God or that presuppose or imply God, like statements about heaven, sin, creation, grace, sacraments, etc., those propositions which involve such characteristic theological concepts. Other kinds of statement, empirical, scientific, common sense or historical can be asserted to be true, provided they are uncontroversial. The Christian can say Jesus existed, lived, taught, was crucified and so on but not simpliciter that he healed the sick and rose from the dead. For some of the historical or quasi-historical claims that the Christian message requires are controversial, such as those entailing miracle, as much as those which are symbolic, mythical or metaphysical or which logically connect to belief in God - like Christ ascended into heaven or is the Son of God.

The moral statements bound up with the Christian way of life also have to be presented according to their objective status. Thus those claims of Christian morality, e.g. the non-religious commands in the Decalogue that are uncontroversial parts of any rational, social morality common to mankind, can be asserted to be valid. The Christian communicator can say it is wrong to murder, steal, lie or commit adultery every whit as much as the

moralist can treat the same rules as binding in a merely ethical context.

How then should controversial religious (or any other) claims be handled? What cannot be honestly said categorically is that God exists, that Jesus rose, that Christ is Son of God or that there is life after death. To assert these propositions to be true in the context of communicating with non-Christians would be as inappropriate as to affirm the disputed moral contention that the foetus in early pregnancy is a human being or as to asseverate the debated empirical claim that money supply determines inflation. Such affirmations so put fail to represent the objective situation as it is and they deny the value of respect for truth.

What can be properly said in such cases amounts to the historical claim that Christians have believed these doctrines like the resurrection. There is also the true sociological assertion to be made that they are believed by the church today, or at least by traditional and orthodox believers. The Christian communicator should also add he himself believes and why he does so. As we shall see⁽²¹⁾, it is not wrong but entirely proper and indeed essential in communicating the gospel, to reveal one's own commitment. The 'I think that p' of faith has a central role. However the correct approach for the communicator who respects truth is in the end to assert that Christian doctrines may be true, are possibly true, because a prima facie rational case for them can be argued and is to be found in the academic literature

This context of Christian communication contrasts with the liturgical context. In church, in worship and liturgy and creed, in preaching to and teaching the committed, it is of course perfectly proper to assert categorically the controversial claims of the Christian religion. This is because, in services and in an ecclesiastical setting, it is assumed the congregation are believers who also accept Christian claims or are enquirers, old or young, who freely attend to observe praise and prayer, to see and hear for themselves the committed stance these acts express.

The second implication of our controlling factors is that Christian communication involves exploration. Because Christian truth is controversial and since autonomy ought to be valued by Christians, those we try to communicate to, our pupils, children or potential converts, must investigate faith for themselves. Communication, under the restraints Christianity itself imposes, implies discussion and debate between believers themselves and with non-Christians, in which each individual is forced to think for himself, to follow the argument where it leads and only to believe what he sees to be true

The situation is unlike that in much communication, and at the lower levels of education, where non-controversial material may be properly accepted by the pupil and believed on the authority of the teacher. External, heteronomous authority is appropriate for acquiescing in undisputed

historical facts, like those belonging to the chronology of the kings of Israel, though even here it is preferable and more in accord with the ideal of autonomy for the student to know the evidence and grounds for an uncontroversial claim or at least how such a claim is justified and the general methods by which scholars determine what happened in the past. In disputable matters, however, when ex hypothesis learned men disagree after informed debate, autonomy and respect for truth require each to enter the discussion, so far as he is willing and able, and to reach his own conclusions. And it is inappropriate, in presenting the gospel challenge and in appealing for commitment, to take for granted assent to the controversial assertions of Christian doctrine, until personal exploration has resulted in personal belief that these doctrines are true

The third implication of the controversial character of Christian belief, where the communicator respects truth and encourages autonomy, is that the non-Christian, old or young, must be helped to consider alternatives. To some extent this is implicit in exploration. Obviously faith in God can only be explored if the possibility of atheism, agnosticism and positivism is seriously taken into account. Similarly, investigating the resurrection or the person of Christ entails examining reductive and sceptical interpretations of these doctrines. But consideration of alternatives to orthodoxy needs to be wider and more constructive, as in contemporary Religious

Education⁽²²⁾ Our claim is that Christian communication must ensure its recipients are aware of other religious and secular outlooks like Marxism or humanism.

Partly other options should be examined because the positive and distinctive features of Christianity are better understood by comparing them with rival faiths. Partly, however, and more fundamental than this pedagogical reason, is the idea that reverence for truth and the desire to foster autonomy require that the alternatives to Christianity are not ignored. For the characteristic doctrines of these other 'life-stances' may be true and since they fall within the religious universe of discourse, in its positive or negative aspects, the Christian has to see that these possibilities are open to non-Christians, just as much as Christian possibilities. These alternative possibilities occur in the world in which Christianity has to be communicated today, a prima facie case can be found for them at the level of informed debate and hence the church must undertake that its assertions are explored as part of a wider dialogue. The uniqueness of Christ can only be accepted with integrity in the one universe of faiths⁽²³⁾ after some attention has been given to the claims of Moses and Muhammed, Confucius and the Buddha.

The fourth implication of respecting truth and fostering autonomy in the light of the controversial nature of Christian truth concerns the aim and intention of Christian communication. The aim and intention has to be, so far as the communicator can rationally control his aim and intention, not to convert men to Christian truth

but that they should find spiritual truth for themselves whatever it is. The Christian will think the truth to be that which ^{is} Jesus, or more accurately, in view of its disputed character, the truth which he thinks is in Jesus. But he cannot properly intend his hearer will believe as he does, since to intend means planning to secure this result, which will only be certainly achieved by lapsing into illiberal procedures like indoctrination.

It is true that in a debated topic the controversialist must think his own view better grounded and more rational than his opponent's - or else he would not hold the position he does. But he has to admit that other rational men, equally reasonable and learned by public criteria, reach different conclusions by emphasising and selecting other arguments and considerations than those he places weight on. The situation is like that with what have been called, in a famous discussion, 'essentially contested concepts'⁽²⁴⁾. The same description, such as 'good Christian' - on the exemplar of which, Christ, all agree as the norm - is contested by different people in its application in disputes which are not rationally resolvable. Equally appropriate criteria are accorded contrasting relative weights in deciding in ever-changing circumstances who counts as a good Christian and though each party to the debate thinks his own attitude is the more defensible, he cannot reject the others' viewpoint as altogether untenable or confidently require any other intelligent person to share in his use of the controverted term.

Now compare the Christian communicator to a judge. His intention is that justice should be done and that the jury should reach a verdict in accord with how best they think the law is applied to the evidence. The judge may indeed have a private opinion that the prisoner is guilty but it would be wrong for the said judge, before the trial, to intend the jury should bring in the verdict he may want and hope for. For the meaning of intending that the man in the dock should be convicted would be to take steps to see this outcome ensued and what could such steps consist in which would be compatible with the jurors being free to approach the case with open mind and to find in accordance with fact and law?

Because, however, the Christian communicator cannot rightly aim to convert non-Christian children or adults, it does not follow that he cannot desire, hope and even expect his hearers to come to faith. In the case of children in a Christian home, through the influence of parental example - Bushnell's organic connexion empirically interpreted - these young people most probably will become Christians when they reach the age of a proper commitment. Hence to expect conversion in these cases is quite rational and is fully consistent with promoting the child's autonomy. But because the turning to Christ of such a child cannot be properly intended as the goal of what we term an educational nurture, it is illicit and improper to speak of bringing up the young as Christian or of nurture in Bushnell's sense.

One qualification, which we shall later see is important⁽²⁵⁾, is that the Christian communicator sometimes takes on the roles of apologist or advocate, which is how we may roughly define the role of an evangelist, and that in these roles he passionately urges his case and pleads for commitment. This he cannot do rationally or psychologically without intending and aiming to convince or to convert, any more than counsel for the prosecution in court can fail to be determined the jury shall bring in a verdict of guilty. This role is legitimate but specialised within the total context of Christian communication and is only to be played at a certain stage in the enterprise. Even here though it could be argued that counsel's job, strictly interpreted, is to make the best case he can for his side and his intentions should be no more than that justice should be done and the jurors find according to conscience.

The two sub-roles that have just been subsumed into the role of the evangelist need distinguishing. Qua apologist he is in a similar position to the lawyer in putting the positive case for Christian truth. But in appealing for commitment, qua advocate, the evangelist's proper aim is to get the non-Christian to act on beliefs he already has, since rationality demands once a person believes he should commit himself existentially and personally to Christ. That he should do so is a legitimate intention for the advocate. As it appeared in an earlier

discussion⁽²⁶⁾, failure to believe after exploration that Jesus rose etc. is a case of invincible ignorance and not a matter for condemnation or intense regret⁽²⁷⁾, whereas the failure of one who does accept the resurrection to believe in Christ as Lord can be a moral failure to be deplored and lamented and such feelings on the evangelist's part are appropriate. Uncommitted believers are the scandal of the gospel, not unconvinced sceptics. Thus it is when, and only when, the evangelist is acting as apologist that he may not properly aim at persuasion, for it is incoherent to intend a man shall freely and rationally reach a controversial conclusion, to intend such a result would involve measures inconsistent with free assent to a belief over which rational men disagree. The apologist must intend to put the Christian case as best he may the advocate, however, in urging commitment can quite fittingly aim at and intend conversion.

(111) A Logical Model of Christian Communication

We now define a logical model of how the enterprise of Christian communication must proceed, so as to be consistent with our three controlling factors and the four implications just outlined in subsections (1) and (11). Four stages in Christian communication will be distinguished. First we argue backwards from the last to the earliest stage, in terms of how each presupposes its predecessor, numbering in reverse order from four to one. Then we indicate the temporal sequence of stages, their cumulative character and why the whole activity they comprise may be correctly termed educational.

A Christian is a man committed to Christ, who accepts the Christian way of life in its practical implications for conduct and cult and who practises as a churchman⁽²⁸⁾. His commitment is expressed normatively in the NT and in the theology of Christian initiation by baptism or, in confessions that have infant baptism, by some such ceremony as confirmation or the ratification of vows⁽²⁹⁾. Hence Christian communication must challenge man to such commitment, to acting on the basis of the belief they have in the gospel. So arises the fourth stage in communicating Christianity, what we shall call that of Challenge. This corresponds to the popular meaning of evangelism or mission, where people are invited to commit themselves, taking the kerygma for granted. Such is not quite the word-usage of this study. We think the term 'evangelism' can be profitably employed also to cover apologetics, when the evangelist attempts to persuade a person to believe that the content of the faith is true, a belief logically but not practically distinct, as will be seen⁽³⁰⁾, from exhortation to belief in or commitment to Christ.

The stage of Challenge presupposes a person believes the gospel is true. If he does not, it is wrong for him to commit himself, indeed faith in Jesus does not logically arise. The agnostic cannot properly put his trust in God, the man who thinks Christ merely a dead Jew can hardly accept the risen Lord. Hence before the challenge of Christianity must come belief and belief, it has been argued in sub-section (11), can only today appropriately

arise through personal exploration of Christian truth and consideration of alternatives. Thus arises the third stage in Christian communication, that we term the stage of Exploration. To this stage especially the controlling factors apply

Exploration in its turn is not logically possible, or is futile and ineffective, on the basis of ignorance. Unless a man knows what Christians believe, at least in outline and in its main variations, both orthodox and radical, he has nothing to investigate. Moreover, if he is not aware of a great deal of background and supporting material about the Bible and if he has not received much explanation and exposition of Christian doctrine, of its vocabulary, concepts and history, the content of the gospel will be unintelligible to him and effective thinking about it impossible. Hence arises our second stage, that of Information. Here the main weight will be on teaching about Christianity (and alternatives to it). Now in order that the controversial nature of its main claims are not obscured, and that crucial questions are not begged in the minds of non-Christians, both child and adult, it is important that what is taught is presented in what we termed above the mode of possibility and that alternative faiths are described.

Conceivably a person may simply want to learn about religion and Christian communication could start at this point. But this happy state of affairs is not very likely. In a secular age, with adults and children, it would be

surprising to find non-Christians already interested and ready to be taught in the stage of Information. It is a truism in education that the pupil will not learn unless he is well motivated to do so and until he is, it is futile to begin teaching. Hence there is needed, though it may not be invariably necessary, the first stage in Christian communication, what we shall call the stage of Motivation. The deduction of our stages may however be saved by insisting that though this stage of Motivation may not involve the Christian communicator doing anything positive, it must always occur even if it is sometimes just a pre-existing psychological condition of natural, unaroused interest. Yet usually the church must start her mission of communicating the faith to outsiders, young and old, by arousing interest, by evoking the will to learn and to explore and by generating a positive attitude not only toward the message to be passed on but toward the institution, the church, that is its source for the hearer. Interest in Christianity but hostility towards or prejudice towards the church may be common, but is fatal to or gravely impairs Christian communication.

From this deduction or derivation of our four stages in Christian communication, it might appear to follow that these stages must follow one another in time, each succeeding its predecessor so that we begin first with the stage of Motivation, then second comes that of Information, next succeeds the third, Exploration, and lastly the fourth, the stage of Challenge crowns the

process. Things are not however so simple as this crude schematisation suggests and three important qualifications have to be made. First, it is logically necessary for an earlier stage at least to have commenced before a later is initiated, though not to have been completed. Dearden's fallacy of 'perfected steps' must be avoided⁽³¹⁾. It is indeed true that you cannot learn very much if you are not in the least interested (and in the case of Christian communication other motivations like fear or expediency will not arise today), similarly exploration is impossible for the totally ignorant, nor can one commit oneself with integrity if wholly sceptical and lacking in belief that. But, nonetheless, once an earlier stage is under way, the next can at once supervene. Granted a glimmering of interest, learning may begin, personal investigation can have as its starting-point the thinnest foundation of knowledge and may indeed beget the desire for more information to be imparted, and commitment can arise as a possibility for an enquirer who only half believes some parts of the faith, while still being perplexed about others.

In any case, and this is the second qualification to Christian communication being conceived of as a simple time sequence, the four stages are cumulative. The earlier must be sustained when the later are added and must support and undergird the latter. If motivation declines, learning and exploration will be jeopardized and may come to a halt, while commitment is unlikely. Exploration can be paralysed by gaps in knowledge that only emerge late in

the day. And commitment will be weakened or undermined by hidden intellectual difficulty, ignorance or returning apathy. Indeed - though the point transcends the bounds of this study - Christian communication in its four stages or aspects *must* continue throughout a person's Christian life, after his initial coming to faith, and constitutes proper spiritual nurture in the sense of edification.

The third qualification to understanding our sequence of stages as a temporal progression is that, though they are logically distinct, they may not be distinguishable in experience and may occupy only a very short passage of time, particularly with an adult already mature and well-educated. In the space of reading one popular work of apologetics or perhaps a Gospel or other part of the Bible, such a person may pass in a few hours or days through all four stages from indifference and ignorance to faith and commitment and immediately present himself to be prepared for baptism or confirmation or discipleship!

It should also be noted of our four stage model that the whole enterprise of Christian communication can be considered educational. The first three stages can be compared to modern Religious Education in a Maintained school. Now education in a famous definition is initiation into worthwhile states of knowledge and understanding by morally acceptable methods⁽³²⁾. Permissible teaching procedures presuppose or elicit motivation and build on favourable attitudes, thus requiring the stage of

Motivation In controversial areas education involves 'teaching about' and consideration of alternative 'stances for living', being governed by values like truth and respect for persons⁽³³⁾. Our stage of Information answers well enough to this. It has further been argued that the pupil's personal investigation of religion is proper in education so defined and this occurs in our stage of Exploration⁽³⁴⁾. Stage four, that of Challenge, popularly known as evangelism, is usually regarded today as inappropriate in schools⁽³⁵⁾, which are not supposed to try to convert their pupils to any controversial 'stance for living' like Communism or Christianity. It is, however, unclear why the wider enterprise of church, home and similar institutions, like Sunday Schools, should not embrace the stage of Challenge, if not (as we have argued) the aim of conversion. Further, as we shall argue below in sub-section (iv), hearing a debatable point of view, passionately maintained and polemically expressed, from a committed advocate of it is part of education and is indeed appropriately arranged within the stage of Exploration. Thus Christian communication can be properly regarded as an educative enterprise, controlled by the values of education, in the specific, value-laden sense of that term⁽³⁶⁾.

(iv) Educational Nurture

Our positive conception of educational religious nurture, advocated in this study in contrast to the traditional conversion and nurture approaches, including

Bushnell's, can now be outlined. We apply our four stage model of Christian communication to the rearing of children. Our main claim is that these four stages of Motivation, Information, Exploration and Challenge have to be schematised and spread over childhood in such a way as to take account of child-development and the various limitations on the spiritual capacity of children discussed earlier⁽³⁷⁾. In particular we give due weight to the contention that the younger child is psychologically and theologically incapable of being a Christian⁽³⁸⁾ and that it is not desirable for the older child to be finally committed until the approach of adulthood.

This theory of an educational religious nurture is intended to apply to all children. It does indeed apply especially to the children of Christians, in the homes of the faithful and reared in the ambit of the church, but this type of nurture also pertains to other children associated with churches through Sunday Schools, Youth Clubs and suchlike institutions, so far as Christians can influence their upbringing. Indeed the approach advocated is the birthright of every child whatsoever and can be conceived simply as an important area of education, of the liberal education all human beings should receive at the threshold of their lives to equip them for mature living in the face of the human condition.

It follows that securing this kind of application of Christian communication to the upbringing of one's own child, in the form of educational religious nurture,

is a primary responsibility of the parent, as part of a wider responsibility to secure a good general education for one's own offspring. Beyond this parental role, that of an educator in the broadest sense, or more accurately as the sponsor or organiser of his or her child's education, the Christian father or mother need not go in terms of specifically religious nurture. The more specialised roles in the nurturing process that are discussed below, the believing parent does not have to undertake (except in stage one and in respect of prayer, as in subsection (v) below).

In educational religious nurture the first stage of Motivation is specially secured for the children of Christians in the home by what we have earlier called 'psychological nurture' ⁽³⁹⁾ and by what Bushnell calls 'organic connexion' ⁽⁴⁰⁾. The impact of the Christian parent as a model to imitate and the strong ties of love with him produce attitudes in the children favourable to whatever parents favour and therefore a positive attitude to Christianity and the church. Thus the necessary interest for later learning is begotten and maintained by psychological nurture, which is on this account of profound spiritual significance and forms the mode in which God's love is communicated in early childhood.

This attitude-formation in the bosom of the family has to be further reinforced by the welcome of the church, conceived as a social entity, which Bushnell misdescribes as the 'church-membership of children' ⁽⁴¹⁾. To young children the worshipping community has to appear

as a warm, accepting group of friendly adults and as a natural extension of the home. The appropriate practical expression of this approach to the child in the church has to take such forms as crèches during adult services, playgroups, etc. but not such forms as teaching institutions of any kind, since children when very young, in the pre-school or Infant period, are too immature for the learning of Christian concepts and beliefs to begin in any formal way. It is generally agreed that the enrichment of ordinary experience and the acquisition of language and of social behaviour should come earlier⁽⁴²⁾.

The first stage, whereby motivation towards Christianity is generated, should continue throughout childhood as the background to an educational nurture. Assuming good relationships with parents are maintained as the child grows up, the complementary social aspect of his connexion with the church has to be sustained through clubs, uniformed organisations, youth fellowships and the like, by which the friendly face of Christ's body is turned towards the young. Since our theory also applies to children without a Christian background, motivating them must also be briefly examined. Clearly with those who do not hail from a pious family, interest is much harder to generate. As with teachers in schools, churches and Christians generally have to do the best they can to make the local Christian community and its faith attractive and interesting to the child through youth-work and in other ways. (In this academic study of an educational religious nurture, we can only hint in this

bare fashion at practicalities and leave them to experienced practitioners to elaborate, once they are clear on the aims and principles of the enterprise.)

The next stages, those of Information and Exploration, coincide with modern Religious Education in schools and it is there that the enterprise of Christian communication with children must be largely carried on. As a principal part of educational nurture, parents and church will undertake to see this activity is properly effected in schools. They may not teach themselves, because not professionally qualified or expert, but will hire professional teachers to do the job. Church organisations may also play a subsidiary role in the task so far as they are competent to do so and the home may contribute incidentally, as it does with a child's general schooling. (In societies where a liberal form of Religious Education is not feasible in state schools, other institutional expressions of educational nurture will have to be devised by church and parent.)

The Information stage can probably begin early in the Primary age-range, as soon as children can begin to grasp the concepts required⁽⁴³⁾, and will continue through childhood and adolescence in the measure that greater understanding, maturity and ability to use religious language, symbols and metaphors emerges. As well as teaching children about Christianity, there will need to be concurrent or later teaching about alternative faiths. A sensible division of labour might

be in rough terms for schools with (ideally) professional teachers of Religious Studies to present world religions, while churches and church-based institutions like Sunday Schools teach about the Christian faith they are most familiar with.

From middle-childhood onwards, as children become more capable of abstract thinking and reach comprehension of religious matters and attain the ability actually to participate in faith and worship etc., the stage of Exploration overtakes that of Information without ever totally displacing it of course, and continues up to the point of adult commitment, if any, to Christianity. This is not the place to discuss the methods by which exploration is to be promoted consonant with the controlling values of respect for truth and the need for autonomous thinking on the part of the child in controversial areas. What is profitable is to analyse further the variety of roles Christians as educators of the young must play - whether in school or in an ecclesiastical setting - in a truly educational religious nurture. All the roles that will now be distinguished are necessary for the success of the total enterprise of Christian communication with youth (and in principle with their elders too).

One role is that of a witness, of displaying by what a person is, by his character, personality and attitude, by what he says and does, what it is to be a Christian (or a follower of any other faith). This role particularly is one which ordinary Christian parents and members of a congregation can play. Children will thus

see more clearly in their own homes or in a local church what being a disciple means today. The more practical and existential elements of Christianity, beyond the cerebral and credal, can be demonstrated. Moreover, theologically informed believers, e.g. clergy can also be witnesses in answering the child's questions about their commitment and how it shapes their lives. A school geography course on the continents of the world might be enriched if a parent at home could speak from first-hand experience of when he had worked in Africa. Music in the classroom is enhanced when music is also made in the family. Just so the nature of a faith is more vividly portrayed in an educational nurture if children may behold its working exhibited by father and mother.

Another role is the apologist. He presents the case for Christian belief from a deeply committed standpoint. A controversial point of view is only likely to be powerfully argued and its full force felt, if the arguments and considerations in its favour are given the one-sided emphasis of the man who passionately thinks his total interpretation of experience to be better founded than any rival. A closely associated role to the apologetic (only logically and not practically distinct), is that of the advocate. He is like counsel for the prosecution in court. He appeals for action and commitment, in the legal case for conviction of the prisoner, in the spiritual case, after debate, he exhorts the person who now believes that Christianity is true to put his faith in Christ. In religious terminology, a Christian playing either the apologist's or the advocate's

role is defined as an evangelist. Of him on the one hand we have argued⁽⁴⁴⁾, that when an apologist for Christianity his aim is that the child reaches truth, however it is seen, and is not too disappointed if the latter finishes an unbeliever. Whenever, on the other hand, the evangelist is advocating Christ his goal is commitment and not to achieve this grieves him on account of what he regards as a serious moral failure on the part of his hearer.

It is important to realise why this role of evangelist has a part to play within an educational enterprise, which cannot as such have an evangelistic intent. Mary Warnock has argued cogently that in moral or other discussions children need to see what it is for a person to be committed, to hold strongly to a controversial point of view, to reason to a disputed conclusion and to abide and live by it⁽⁴⁵⁾. There seems therefore to be no objection to a school, church or other institution, as an element in religious nurture or Christian communication, inviting in a popular evangelist like Billy Graham to put his case, provided the other aspects of the stages of Information and Exploration are adequately catered for. In this way the stage of Challenge can be accommodated within provision for the stage of Exploration. Though logically subsequent to belief-that, in practice the appeal for belief-in can take place concurrently with personal investigation. It must also be noted that this exposure to the apologist and advocate is inappropriate much before adulthood and should only be arranged for older children - at the Sixth Form level or thereabouts - who are able to

assess a debatable world-view with maturity and properly to come, if they wish, to an irrevocable commitment to Christianity.

The final role we shall discuss is also needed in the stage of Exploration and in that of Challenge as a subordinate part of the former stage. The evangelist has to be balanced by the so-called neutral teacher or chairman in a debate, just as in a trial the judge presides and sums up after counsel has put his case for the prosecution (and other counsel for alternative cases). The judge's summing-up is to bring out the main questions and issues, to place the evidence again before the jury in summary form and in dispassionate style and thus to assist the jurymen to make up their own minds. So one crucial role in education, when it is governed like Christian communication by the values of respect for truth and autonomy in matters of controversy, is to act as what has become known as the part of a neutral teacher⁽⁴⁶⁾.

The neutral teacher is present to ensure the procedural values of fair play are observed in debate, to draw the pupil's attention to academic standards of rational argument, objectivity and impartiality in the assessment of evidence, and to further the young person's search for truth by highlighting the main pros and cons and by sustaining the student's confidence and poise as he wrestles with perplexing and disturbing personal issues. For reaching a religious position is part of growing up and of the difficult process in which the adolescent is searching for identity⁽⁴⁷⁾. Such a pastoral and tutorial

role as the neutral teacher's is admirably suited to the Christian minister, teacher, parent or don and is one in which love takes the form of passionate commitment to another's autonomy but without the dangerous and dubious intent of the proselytiser or propagandist.

(v) Prayer and Worship

Special attention must now be given to the place of vocal prayer and worship in an educational religious nurture (kinds of mental, non-vocal prayer will not be considered). It has already been argued that young children cannot meaningfully participate in prayer and worship because these activities presuppose belief and this can only be significant to those who have key theological concepts like that of a personal God⁽⁴⁸⁾. The small child lacks such concepts, as his confused talk about God etc. shows⁽⁴⁹⁾. Older children also are not to be expected to pray, because they should not be expected to believe in God and to be finally committed to Christianity. However they can be allowed to commit themselves in a provisional way if, due to the influence of Christian parents etc., they do in fact believe⁽⁵⁰⁾ and then they may want to pray.

On these assumptions prayer and worship are communicated to children by educational nurture on the same principles and in the same stages as any other element in a faith, always remembering the fact that these practices logically depend on beliefs that can only be properly accepted as a result of autonomous

exploration because of their disputed character. In the stage of Information then the young child learns about prayer, what it is and how to do it. The underlying concepts of God, of intercession, petition, thanksgiving and confession and the verbal forms which express these notions are acquired so that either an intelligent use or an intelligent rejection of them becomes possible.

Teaching prayer and worship is partly effected through observing others praying in the home, school or church. It is, of course, necessary that genuine prayer and worship be seen, being practised by committed believers. Obviously this is much easier in a Christian family where the parents pray or in a church where the congregation devoutly worship than in a state-school, where pupils cannot be expected to be committed believers and few or none of the staff may be (of course, if many of the staff are Christians real prayer is that much easier for the child to behold). Indeed it is hard to conceive how eucharistic worship can be understood at all - though films and TV etc may help - except by visits to churches which are specially arranged and are perfectly justifiable on educational grounds, like trips to theatres or concerts. (Doubtless similar arguments justify going to synagogues, temples and mosques.)

Some verbal participation in prayer and worship is also required so that children become familiar with the language of prayer and become capable of praying and worshipping later if they so desire. The young child will want to join in and active, practical methods are

prominent in modern education at the Primary stage. The essential point is that often little children are not really praying or worshipping God because they lack the intention that gives their acts of utterance validity and reality as a liturgical action. What is done in general is just an educational exercise of going through the motions, like a choir practising hymns or anthems, which is not at that moment worship. Again the adult unbeliever might sing a psalm or join in a prayer in a church-service out of courtesy but doing this would not be his act of praise or thanksgiving, because his scepticism and want of worshipful intent would preclude his mouthing the words having this significance.

It should be further noticed that if the child is to learn adequately about worship he needs to encounter both the normative adult forms of the various liturgies of Christendom but also more child-centred prayers with topics for praise, thanksgiving and supplication which he can understand, enjoy and appreciate. Thus in family prayers in a Christian home, parents may pray for things suggested by their children. The little ones watch the performance with interest and when very small may join in verbally, even if they cannot as yet have the minimal intention that makes their utterance count as a real word addressed to God.

In the stage of Exploration children may wish to explore prayer just as they may wish to explore Christian belief. One aspect of this is clearly discussion of the nature, efficacy and problems of prayer. Why men do or

should pray, if and how God answers and many other related issues need investigation before a person can reasonably accept this department of Christian doctrine. Children may also want to experiment with actual praying. This is a reasonable thing for them to do because the beliefs about God that underlie prayer can be defended, despite their controversial character, and a prima facie case can be argued for them. The child himself can further have a real intention to pray, even though he lacks a firm, positive faith in God. True it is irrational or absurd for an atheist to pray, although men do sometimes lapse into the irrational and absurd. But the young, especially a questing teenager, is closer to the wistful agnostic and may pray on an 'as-if' basis, on the hypothesis that there may be a God who hears. This seems a perfectly reasonable procedure, even if it is not to be recommended to the extent H. H. Price does⁽⁵¹⁾, as a way to verify theism, since one person's putative awareness of God even after a protracted period of devotion can hardly constitute much of a proof from religious experience.

Some older children, as we admitted earlier⁽⁵²⁾, in fact come to faith before full adult commitment is desirable. Their baptism becomes operative and the Holy Spirit will no doubt fashion their prayers as with any other Christian, interceding in them with unutterable groanings⁽⁵³⁾. Such adolescents may also begin to receive Holy Communion. The crucial issue for an educational nurture is that they are not to be regarded

as finally committed, this degree of pious practice being still experimental and one that can be abandoned with good conscience, even when the teenager is not driven to give up his worship by overwhelming doubt and scepticism. The situation is to be contrasted with the spiritually parlous condition of the normal lapsed communicant or committed believer (as distinct from the man who has dropped devotion because of loss of faith).

Finally it must be pointed out that the stage of Challenge includes the appeal to commit oneself to a life of prayer and worship. This is part of the behavioural content of belief in God or Christ. Suppose the young person knows about prayer and liturgy. The witness, perhaps a parent, shows what it is to be a man of prayer. The evangelist qua apologist makes out his case for the power of prayer. As advocate, the evangelist then challenges the adolescent, who thinks God may perhaps hear, to go down on his knees. The Christian communicator qua pastor or neutral teacher bids him count the cost in reaching an authentic commitment.

(vi) Moral Nurture

Bushnell, as we saw in Chapter II, criticised one form of ostrich nurture in which children were given moral training without religious and we replied pointing out that today morality is widely thought logically distinct from religion, that it is held that ethical beliefs can be given a non-theological, rational backing, and that in our secular society there has emerged in the last fifteen years considerable interest in the possibility

of a non-religious Moral Education, which every child in our pluralistic culture should receive in school⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Further it is clear that most children are socialised at home and at school today into a basic social morality of rules and virtues on which most citizens agree and also that sometimes adolescents take part in the classroom or youth club or under church auspices in discussion of controversial moral questions. It is against such a background that our educational nurture would have to function and it behoves us finally in this chapter to examine the relation of what is advocated in this study to Moral Education and to the moral development of children.

In the stage of Information, in our scheme for an educational religious nurture, children learn about the moral teaching of Christianity and of other faiths. They have described to them, according to their degree of maturity, the ethics of the Bible and of Jesus, of Christian tradition, of the various churches and they become informed about current discussion of moral issues from a Christian point of view. The child will also be taught about those aspects of doctrine that put secular morality in a wider context. He will come to appreciate how the rational ethics of the good man may be possibly undergirded by the metaphysical framework of belief in God and in his will to support righteousness. The adolescent will hear of the Christian conviction that God's love evokes men's love of their neighbour, of Christ's example, grace, the power of the Holy Spirit, the relevance of the next world as factors in moral living and motivation. The

Christian approach to moral failure conceived as sin and its remedy in terms of atonement, justification and forgiveness will be known about and the child will become acquainted with how it is held possible in the spiritual life to advance in holiness, including secular virtue.

In the stage of Exploration children will be encouraged to investigate for themselves Christianity as it bears upon the morality they will already have through early socialisation and which ideally will have begun to develop rationally through Moral Education. In the Moral Education of home and school the presumption is that the adolescent will acquire, practice and believe in basic social morality and its justification, because of its uncontroversial and well-grounded nature. What remains more open to the child's own thinking and discovery is which ultimate foundation for ethics or approach to moral reasoning seems to him more plausible and of course what are to be his views on disputed ethical issues like sex, abortion, euthanasia, war, ecology and so on. Further in contrast with social morality there is also what Strawson terms the realm of individual ideal⁽⁵⁵⁾. Among ideals there is much more variety and scope for personal exploration and choice, including taking account of the way such ideals are associated with general world-views like religions.

Thus there seems to be an area of moral exploration which overlaps and interpenetrates with the religious exploration an educational nurture prescribes. In choosing ideals to aspire to and by which to live

theological considerations possibly need to be given due weight by young people, supposing they find the basic underlying theology acceptable. Indeed as in academic discussion of religion and morality some kind of interaction is called for in the thinking of the student. Partly his assessment of Christianity will be moral and he will submit it to an ethical critique. Partly also the moral teaching of Christianity and its theological context may reflect upon his existent secular morality and he will perceive in what ways a commitment to Christ would, if he made it, influence and inform his conscience.

Needless to say such moral dialectic is only possible in advanced adolescence and young adulthood when moral thinking reaches the higher stages of development⁽⁵⁶⁾. The various roles distinguished above which Christians may play in an educational nurture are also very important here in its ethical dimension. The witness of parents and congregation in their actual moral living should show any power or attraction there may be in conducting a person's whole existence in the light of dedication to Christ's ethical ideals. The evangelist may urge with passion the case for this style of moral thinking and action as an aspect of being a Christian. And the neutral teacher, from the standpoint of his deep commitment to liberal, procedural values and out of his pastoral concern for the student, may exemplify his educative neutrality, whatever his personal opinions, by clarifying impartially the issues in moral controversy and so help the young person to make up his mind autonomously

Lastly it should be noticed - and this is crucial - that in the stage of Challenge the appeal has to be to the morality which already exists in the child through early socialisation and Moral Education. Indeed the Challenge reaches right back to the stage of Motivation where the foundations of conscience and of being a moral being are laid down through parents' love in the psychological sense of nurture⁽⁵⁷⁾. The existential question for the young person and for any enquirer into Christianity is whether he can see his way to accepting a Christian moral commitment which will harmonise with his existing ethical convictions or with his criteria for a well-founded moral position. Unlike the area of religious commitment, children will approach the stage of Challenge not just as potential Christians, neutral and innocent - apart from in some cases that psychological predisposition to the faith of their parents Bushnell calls organic connection - but as persons already with a conscience, even if a rudimentary one on the scale of moral development.

The real situation resembles more the case of converting a man from another faith. Either he has to perceive Christianity as congruous with what he already believes and as a further addition to his creed, extending belief in a direction he now sees his pre-existing convictions pointing - in the way a Jew might find Christ fulfils the law and the prophets. Or in the light of some deeper criterion he realises the defects of his old religion and the adequacy of the new he embraces - in

the way a Marxist might turn from materialism to the vision of the created universe. In the moral sphere the challenge of the gospel is to the natural morality and the natural reason of the child and to his perception of natural law and it does not involve the surrender of conscience, a return to the amorality of infancy or regression to the theoretical equivalent of being a psychopath. The appeal of Christ, as in the moral dimension of all Christian communication and not just in the nurture of the young, is to the law written in the heart⁽⁵⁸⁾. By this canon either the second mile of Jesus' ethics is recognised as being continuous with the first mile of commonsense, or the dominical words are seen as a radical criticism of the conventional limits secular morality imposes for the sake of comfort and convenience. Moderate benevolence expands to love or the prudential bounds of altruism are shattered by self-sacrifice.

After the Challenge the Christian parent welcomes the child who agrees with him in trying to live by Christ's law of love but equally respects the child who remains an unbeliever in the moral sphere, differing invincibly in his conscience, yet without descending to crime or vice.

Chapter V Footnotes

- (1) v. pp.10-11
- (2) v. pp.139-150
- (3) v. pp.136-139
- (3A) Abbott and Gallagher op.cit. Declaration on Religious Freedom pp.677,680-681 3
- (4) Mill J.S. On Liberty Ch.II (Everyman ed. London 1910) pp.78-113
- (5) Peters Ethics and Education (London 1965) pp.164-166, 172,176,181-182
- (6) v. pp.138-139.
- (7) Coulson C.A. Christianity in an Age of Science (Oxford 1953) pp.29-30,41,43,51; Science and Christian Belief (Oxford 1955) pp.30-31,62-63,65,102,107-110,113-118
- (8) Grace and Personality (London 3rd ed. 1925) p.143
- (9) ibid. p.51
- (10) ibid. pp.52-53
- (11) Dearden R.F. Autonomy and Education Ch.25 in Dearden et al. op.cit. pp.456-459,462-464
- (12) ibid. pp.455-456,461
- (13) Benson J, Who is an Autonomous Man? in Papers of the Annual Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain 1980 pp.68-87 esp. pp.69-73
- (14) Dearden Autonomy and Education op.cit. p.459-461
- (15) For Faith and Freedom (London ed. 1968) Vol.I pp.180-191, 203-207,222,224-228; Vol.II pp.162-170,178,188-189,221-223
- (16) ibid. pp.32-39,46-68
- (17) Oman op.cit. pp.61,136-137,140-143; v. also Abbott and Gallagher op.cit. Declaration on Religious Freedom pp.689-690 3 10
- (18) Aquinas S.A. I ii Q. 19 Art.5; De Veritate Q 17 Art. 3,4. Cf. for today Kung H. On being a Christian ET Quinn E. (London 1978) pp.533-541
- (19) op.cit. pp.51-63
- (20) v. pp.75-77
- (21) v. pp.194-195
- (22) Durham Report op.cit. pp.61-63 3 118-123, p.117 3 251, p.121 3 263-264; Smart N. op.cit. Ch.V; ed. Hinnells J.R. Comparative Religion in Education (Newcastle 1970) pp.55-57, 65-71,92-95; for a notorious example in practice e.g. City of Birmingham District Council Education Committee Agreed Syllabus of Religious Instruction (Birmingham 1974 and 1975) v. p.5 for the famous phrase 'stance for living'.
 (23) Cf. e.g. Hick J. God and the Universe of Faiths (London 1973) Chs. 9-12; ed. Hick The Truth and Dialogue (London 1974) pp.45-58,77-92,96-110,126-139,140-155; Kung H. op.cit. pp.89-116
- (24) Gallie W.B. Ch.IX pp.167-198 in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society NS vol.LVI (1955-1956)
- (25) v. pp.195-196
- (26) v. pp.160-161
- (27) Hodgson op.cit. p.216
- (28) v. pp.136-139
- (29) Fisher op.cit. p.138; cf. Bushnell Christian Nurture p.162
- (30) v. pp.195-197
- (31) op.cit. pp.121-122
- (32) Peters R.S. Education as Initiation pp.87-112 in ed. Archambault R.D. Philosophical Analysis and Education (London 1965); Ethics and Education Chs.I and II esp. pp.25-45

- (33) ibid. pp.41-45,208-215; Education as Initiation pp.96-97; Welfer E. and Downie R.S. Respect for Persons (London 1969) Chs. I,V; for truth v. pp.167-169.
- (34) v. pp.177-178,184-185
- (35) Durham Report op.cit. pp.58-59 ~~33~~ 113-116, p.103 ~~3~~ 217; Smart N. op.cit. pp.91,95-98,105; Birmingham Agreed Syllabus op.cit. p.5; Holley R. Religious Education and Religious Understanding (London 1978) pp.161-166; E. Hulmes Commitment and Neutrality in Religious Education (London 1979) pp.11,28,43,90
- (36) Hirst P.H. and Peters R.S. The Logic of Education (London 1970) pp.24-25,40-41
- (37) v. pp.139-150
- (38) v. pp.139-147
- (39) v. p.10
- (40) v. pp.49-59
- (41) Christian Nurture Ch.VII esp. pp.146-147
- (42) Durham Report op.cit. pp.106-109 ~~33~~ 223-231; Goldman op.cit. pp.232-234; Readiness for Religion (London 1965) Chs. 3, 4,6; Madge op.cit. pp.91-102; Introducing Young Children to Jesus (London 1971) Pt.II
- (43) Durham Report op.cit. pp.109-113 ~~33~~ 232-242; Goldman (1964) op.cit. pp.234-239; (1965) op.cit. Chs.7,8; Madge (1965) op.cit. pp.103-116; (1971) op.cit. Pt.III
- (44) v. pp.182-183.
- (45) in ed. Taylor M. Progress and problems in moral education (N.F.E.R.) (Windsor 1975) pp.107-112; Schools of Thought (London 1977) pp.140-143; v. also Hulmes E. op.cit. passim esp. pp.9-10,20-25,32,94-100
- (46) Bailey C. Teaching by Discussion and the Neutral Teacher and Elliott J. Neutrality and the Role of the Teacher pp.26-65 (and references given therein) in Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, vol.VII No.6 Jan.1973
- (47) Erikson E.H. Identity and the Life Cycle (New York 1959) pp.88-95,101-166; Mussen et al. op.cit. pp.688-703; Goldman (1965) op.cit. Ch.9; Durham Report op.cit. pp.114-127 ~~33~~ 243-278
- (48) v. pp.146-147
- (49) v. p.147
- (50) v. pp.103-104,147-149
- (51) in Faith and Belief pp.3-25 in ed. Hick J. Faith and the Philosophers (London 1964)
- (52) v. pp.103-104,147-149
- (53) Rom 8:26
- (54) v. Ch.II (145)
- (55) Social Morality and Individual Ideal Ch.15 in ed. Ramsey I.P. Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (London 1966)
- (56) v. pp.99-102
- (57) v. p.10 and Ch.III (56)
- (58) Rom 2:15

Appendix

The Evolution of Bushnell's Christian Nurture

It is convenient to add to our work on Bushnell a description of how his work on Christian nurture came to be written, how it developed in the face of controversy and how it much later assumed its final form. The detail to be given has not been easy to assemble, nor is it readily available for the modern reader in standard works like Mrs. Cheney's Life and Letters of H. Busnneil (New York 1880). The clearest account, which is our principal source, is F. Shelton Smith's Changing Conceptions of Original Sin (New York 1955), Chapter V. Also useful are W. R. Adamson's Bushnell Rediscovered (Philadelphia 1966) pp. 61-62, Fleming, S. Children and Puritanism (New Haven and Oxford 1933) pp. 197-204, the original Discourses etc. and Views etc. of Bushnell himself, Bennett Tyler's Letter of 1847 and his Seven Letters of 1848, and contemporary reviews by Hodge, Nevir and the anonymous Baptist writer T.F.C.

In our Chapter I Bushnell's New England background was sketched and we outlined the conditions in Hartford, Connecticut, immediately precedent to his composing the Discourses, that provoked him to write them. He had already criticised the revivalism of the period in his essay Spiritual Economy of Revivals of Religion in the Christian Spectator of 1838, Vol. X (reproduced in his collection Pulpit Talent (London 1882) Chapter V, pp. 138-59). Ideas on Church growth rather than conquest, including the germ of his concept of Christian family

nurture, were adumbrated first in his New Englander essay of 1844 The Kingdom of Heaven as a Grain of Mustard Seed Vol. II, Oct. pp. 600-619

The Hartford Central Association (of the Congregational Church) asked Bushnell to expand these ideas. He preached Two Discourses on Christian Nurture and prepared them for publication. This was offered by the Publication Committee of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society. Bushnell agreed and six months later the discourses were published as a book of 72 pages, Discourses on Christian Nurture (Boston 1847). Considerable controversy was aroused and the opposition of "paric mongers", as Bushnell cited his critics, grew. The veteran, conservative Calvinist theologian, Bennett Tyler, attacked the Discourses etc. in his Letter to the Rev. Dr. Bushnell on Christian Nurture from his seminary at East Windsor Hill, 7th June 1847 (22 pages). This was read at the annual meeting of the North Association of Hartford County and the "brethren expressed their unanimous approbation and requested that it might be published." The Massachusetts Sabbath School Society then panicked and suspended publication.

Bushnell next replied, attacking his critics and defending his views fiercely and caustically, in a polemical pamphlet, An Argument for Discourses on Christian Nurture, Addressed to the Publication Committee of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society (Hartford 1847). Later he combined the Discourses etc., the Argument etc. his two earlier articles of 1838 and 1844 and two hitherto

unpublished sermons into a book, which Bushnell published himself as Views of Christian Nurture and of Subjects Adjacent Thereto (Hartford, Edwin Hunt, No. 6 Asylum Street, 1847). The Contents page read -

Preface	pp. 1-22
Christian Nurture Discourse 1	
Discourse 2	pp. 23-47
Argument for 'Discourses on Christian Nurture'	pp. 49-121
Spiritual Economy of Revivals of Religion (from the Christian Spectator of 1838, Vol. X)	pp. 123-146
Growth, not Conquest, the True Method of Christian Progress (the same article under a new title from the New Englander of 1844, Vol. II)	pp. 147-181
The Organic Unity of the Family (new sermon)	pp. 183-209
The Scene of the Pentecost and a Christian Parish (new sermon)	pp. 211-244

B. Tyler responded with a passionate broadside Seven Letters to the Rev. Horace Bushnell D.D. Containing strictures on his book entitled Views of Christian Nurture and of Subjects Adjacent thereto by B. Tyler, President and Professor of Christian Theology in the Theological Institute of Connecticut, Hartford, 1848, dated East Windsor Hill, March 20th, 1848. (Tyler's 1847 Letter etc. was largely incorporated into the latter 1848 Seven Letters etc.)

Controversy persisted for some little time and then died away or was absorbed into that over Bushnell's later, more famous work, God in Christ of 1849. Important reviews of the Discourses, the Argument, Views etc. and of Tyler's criticism in his Letter and Seven Letters were those of -

Hodge, C. (Professor of Theology at Princetown) Bushnell on Christian Nurture in the Biblical Repertory and Princetown Review XIX, October 1847, pp. 502-539;

Nevins, John W. (German Reformed theologian) Educational Religion in the Weekly Messenger of the German Reformed Church (Chambersbury 1847), June 23rd, June 30th, July 7th and July 14th,

T.F.C. The Baptist and Pedobaptist Theories of Church Membership (review of Discourses 1847, Dr. Tyler's Letter 1847, An Argument for the Discourses 1847 (The Christian Review 1847, Vol. XII, pp. 529-551.

(These assessments are discussed in our Chapter II pp. ~~68-73~~)

Some years later, when Bushnell was a respected figure and his ideas were no longer controversial, he issued his definitive work on the subject, the revised and enlarged Christian Nurture (New York 1861). 'Part I The Doctrine' comprised 'I and II What Christian Nurture Is', reproducing the original Discourses etc., 'III The Ostrich Nurture' (new material), 'IV The Organic Unity of the Family' reproduced from Views etc., 'V Infant Baptism, How Developed' and 'VI Apostolic Authority of Infant Baptism' (new material), 'VII Church Membership of Children' incorporating material from the Argument, otherwise dropped (wisely in view of its tone and the regrets of Bushnell's friends v. T.F.C. op. cit. pp. 550-551), 'VIII The Out-Populating Power of The Christian Stock' (new material but ideas from 'Growth, not Conquest' etc. from Views etc. Material in Views etc. omitted in Christian Nurture (1861) was Argument, Growth, not Conquest etc., and The Scene of Pentecost etc. Christian Nurture (1861) also contains an entirely new Pt. II - The Mode, of eight chapters, presenting Bushnell's advice on the practical aspects of Christian child-rearing.

Finally, it should be noted that in 1916, a revised edition was produced by Luther A. Weigle, the first Horace Bushnell Professor of Christian Nurture at Yale University.

A few minor excisions were made in this edition to remove echoes of past controversy and an analytical table of contents was added. This is the version of Bushnell's work that has been used in this study.

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