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THE THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES OF THE
SERMONS OF HORACE BUSHNELL

By

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A Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Subject Stated.	2
B. Subject Delimited	2
C. Thesis Subject Justified.	3
D. Method of Procedure	5

CHAPTER II

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF EARLY LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT TO HORACE BUSHNELL

A. Introduction.	8
B. Youth and Early Training.	9
1. Birth.	9
2. Maternal Influence	9
3. Paternal Influence	13
4. Boyhood Environmental Influences	16
C. Educational Preparation	18
1. Early Schooling.	18
2. College and Professional Study	18
D. Contemporary Theological Situation.	24
E. Bushnell the Preacher	27
1. His Physical Endowment	27
2. His Mental Aptitude.	27
F. Summary	29

26986

May 20, 1949

CHAPTER III

THE SURVEY OF BUSHNELL'S SERMONS FOR THEIR THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES

A. Introduction.	32
B. The Type and Style of Bushnell's Sermons.	32
1. Type of Sermons.	32
2. Style.	34
C. General Theological Content of Bushnell's Sermons .	37
D. Specific Theological Emphases	40
1. Christology.	40
a. Pre-existence	41
b. Incarnation	42
c. Atonement	43
d. Conclusion.	45
2. Doctrine of Man.	46
a. Introduction.	46
b. Man's Fallen Condition.	46
c. Regeneration.	49
(1) Contemporary Emphases	49
(2) Bushnell's Position Explained	50
3. Regenerate State of Man.	53
a. Introduction.	53
b. Christian Duty In Relation to God	54
c. Christian Duty In Relation to Man	56
E. Summary and Conclusion.	59

CHAPTER IV

A CRITIQUE OF THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

A. Introduction.	62
B. His Attitude Toward Theology.	63
1. His Rebellion Against Argumentative Syllogism. . .	63
2. His Theory of Language	64
3. Bearing of Theory of Language On His Theology. .	65
4. Criticism Of His Conception of Theology.	66
5. Criticism of Overemphasis of Practical Theology.	67

C. His Christology	67
1. His Theory of Atonement	67
2. Criticism of His Theory Of Atonement.	68
D. The Doctrine of Man.	68
1. His Position On Depravity	68
2. His Position On Regeneration.	69
3. His Divergence From New England Theologians	69
4. Evaluation of His Position.	70
E. Summary and Conclusion	71

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. The Object Of This Study	74
B. Bushnell's Influence on Theology	76

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources.	79
B. Secondary Sources.	79
1. Books	79
2. Periodicals	80

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

A. Subject Stated

No student of American Christianity can claim to have made a thorough study of his subject unless he has more than a passing acquaintance with the work of Horace Bushnell. It can be said that new concepts in theology wait for men of adequate intellect and ability to portray them to mankind. In our day we look to men such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Emil Brunner, and others as the heralds of a changing emphasis in theology. Bushnell in his day was likewise the herald of a new theological emphasis, which was just as drastic and needful then as the change which we see taking place today. The purpose of this thesis is to make a study of the sermons of Bushnell to discover the theological emphases disclosed. He was a great preacher and pastor, and it was impossible for him to prepare and deliver his sermons without the infiltration of his own theological convictions.

B. Subject Delimited

Bushnell was a fluent writer, and we have many volumes containing his works. He wrote entire books about particular aspects of his theology, such as God In Christ,

which created as great a stir in the theological circles of New England as had been for some time. Two more volumes followed the one mentioned above which restated and clarified his doctrine of Christ. Perhaps his best known book today is Christian Nurture, which is essentially a statement of doctrine. It is not necessary to list the other important books of Bushnell; let it be sufficient to say that a study of his theology as portrayed in all his published works would be far beyond the bounds of this thesis. And it is true that a balanced view of Bushnell's theology would be more likely to come from his sermons than from any of his dissertations on a particular aspect of theology. Therefore, this thesis will consider only the published sermons of Bushnell, the major portion of which are found in four volumes: Sermons on Living Subjects, Christ and His Salvation, Sermons For the New Life, and The Spirit in Man.

C. Thesis Subject Justified

Austin Phelps said of Bushnell: "He was simply
one of God's seers."¹ George Adam Smith said that he was the preacher's preacher. Lyman Powell, in a summary statement concerning Bushnell's sermons, makes this significant observation:

"His sermons, like Channing's, were too substantial and compact to make the man who preached them popular with

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1. Phelps, Austin, My Portfolio, p. 227.

the unthinking. . . They were regarded as obscure by those who could not or who would not listen closely."¹

Such remarks as these, coming from men of reputation, might in themselves be sufficient justification for this study.

But the study of Bushnell's sermons is even more valid when we consider that he was cast into the breaking-up period of religious thought. Bushnell was fighting primarily the philosophic system current in his day, which he characterized as "a souless matter-born philosophy of mind."²

The real object of his assault was not theology as such, but the kind of theology that was prevalent with particular methods and results. Brastow gives us the true value of Bushnell's sermons in his remark:

"In the sense of the term that was accepted in his day, he was not a theologian. His method was that of the preacher, and no American preacher within the last century has succeeded in introducing more theology into the pulpit or in discussing theological problems in a more interesting and effective manner than he."³

Ernest Trice Thompson, in his book entitled Changing Emphases in American Preaching, places Bushnell at the beginning of American liberalism,⁴ and certainly he was a pioneer of liberal evangelical thought. He tried to make religion more natural and more easily understood, and he succeeded in making it easier for minds essentially evangelical to find their way through to the best thought of

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1. Powell, L. P., Heavenly Heretics, p. 82.
2. Brastow, L. O., Representative Modern Preachers, p. 148.
3. Ibid., p. 145.
4. Thompson, E. T., Changing Emphases in American Preaching, p. 7.

a later time. He did much to give warmth to theology as well as new light to the church. But he did not live to see the far-reaching effects of his theology, for he was born too late to be included in the time of "Edwardian" theology, and too soon to be in the incoming school of theologians. Thus, in the light of the opinion of other scholars, of the theological content of Bushnell's sermons, and of his unique place in American Christianity, the subject of this thesis is justified.

D. Method of Procedure

The theology of any person cannot but be influenced by his home life and early youth, and Bushnell is no exception. Likewise, the contemporary scene in theology must inevitably wield its influence. The procedure here then will be to view first the home life and early youth of Bushnell in its relation to his theology. From this point, his education and preparation will be surveyed. Then it will be necessary to get a picture of the theological situation of Bushnell's time in New England, for this environment played no small part in his thinking.

After this foundational material is covered, the sermons of Bushnell will be studied to find their general theological content, and then more specifically to find the particular theological emphases. This will be the main body of the thesis, which will be followed by a critique

of the underlying assumptions, summary, and conclusion.

CHAPTER II
THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF EARLY LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT
TO
HORACE BUSHNELL

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A. Introduction

"Connecticut may be called a mother of theologians."¹ Such is the opening remark of Theodore T. Munger in his most reliable biography of Horace Bushnell. The list of great early American theologians from Connecticut is too long to reproduce here. It is sufficient to say that after the time of Jonathan Edwards, Bushnell was the leading figure. A man of such capacity cannot but be influenced by his early life in the home. The parental care and nurture of a child play a more important role in life than can be easily calculated. Early religious impressions from a godly mother are not soon forgotten. Boyhood experiences on a farm where one is close to the sources of existence are lasting. Educational opportunities mold the thinking of an individual, and the environment into which a man is thrust cannot but wield its influence.

It is therefore well within the scope of this

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1. Munger, T.T., Horace Bushnell, Teacher and Theologian, p. 3.

thesis that the first chapter should be given to a careful study of Bushnell's early life, his education, and the contemporary theological situation in New England, all of which played so important parts in the formation of his theology. This will give acquaintance with Bushnell, the preacher and theologian.

B. Youth and Early Training

1. Birth.

The birth of Horace Bushnell occurred in the county and town of Litchfield, Connecticut. He came from a family of Huguenot descent, which is marked by the best qualities of that blood, mental alertness and religious sincerity. These traits can be seen to have been passed on to the new born son of April 14, 1802. His father was a Methodist and his mother an Episcopalian, but when they moved to New Preston they became active members of the Congregational Church since there was no other in the community. Young Horace did not grow up on the strict Calvinistic diet prevalent in New England at that time.

"He was born in a household where religion was no occasional and nominal thing, no irksome restraint nor unwelcome visitor, but a constant atmosphere, a commanding but genial presence."¹

2. The Maternal Influence.

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1. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 7.

The mother of Horace Bushnell deserves no small credit for the remarkable development of her son. Her name before marriage was Dotha Bishop, and she belonged to a family of very humble means. She was of a naturally retiring disposition, but was never disconcerted when in the presence of those who were considered superior to her in social standing. She had none but a common school education, but she was well-spoken and well-written in English, with competence in subjects discussed by intelligent people. But her chief interest was in her family, and there it was that she won her best honors and proved the superiority which everybody felt in her character.

It was her lot to bear severities of toil that others have said were enough to reduce any women to the level of a drudge. But no token of a drudge was ever seen in her person, manners or conversation. She provided for and trained her six children, clothing her whole family in homemade garments. She had a farm and dairy charge to administer, also the farm helpers and the workmen of a homespun cloth-dressing shop to board. All this work she kept up in exact order and time. Bushnell said in a later account of his mother:

"What mortal endurance could bear such a stress of burden! And yet she scarcely showed a look of damage under the wear of it, but kept the appearance of a woman of some condition."¹

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1. Cheney, Life and Letters of Bushnell, p. 27-28.

It might be expected of Mrs. Bushnell under these circumstances that she would neglect the religious duties of the home. But such is not the case, for upon reading of the religious life, one is impressed with just the opposite. She indeed had a most common sense attitude toward religious education which fostered a right spirit instead of antagonism among her children. She prayed earnestly for and with her children, but she was discreet enough never to make it unpleasant to them by too great frequency. She was a good speaker, and was considered the best Bible teacher in her church; but she never made the mistake of trying to talk her children into religion. Rather, she spoke to them at fit times, but not as frequently as many mothers who were far less qualified. Bushnell was never aware of any atmosphere of artificially pious consciousness in the house. Of this he says:

"And yet she was preaching all the time by her maternal sacrifices for us, scarcely to be noted without tears."¹

Mrs. Bushnell's stress with the children was on industry. There was always something for even the smallest to do; if not errands to run, there were weeds to pull, or berries to pick, or any of the numerous duties of a household to perform. The children were given the feeling that they were contributing to the earnings of the common property, and each was a stockholder. Bushnell himself says

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1. Cheney, Life and Letters of Bushnell, p. 29.

that there was nothing in his early days that he remembered with more zest than that he did the full work of a man for at least five years before the manly age. And further:

" . . . and how very close up to the gateway of God is every child brought who is trained to the consenting obedience of industry! . . . This habit-discipline, I scarcely need say, came very near being a gate of religion for us all. No child of us ever strayed so far as not to find himself early in a way of probable discipleship."¹

Among all the admirable qualities of Bushnell's mother not least was her particular interest in each of her children. Before going to school in the morning, they each passed inspection for cleanliness. She knew exactly what their studies were, what kind of progress they were making, and thus learned the capacity and promise of her children. When Bushnell was little more than a child at the district school, she told him that his father had consented to let him have a college education.

There are numerous other incidents written by Bushnell and his biographers that might well be included in this account of his mother to round out the picture of her great influence. He felt very keenly her desire for him to have a liberal education to prepare him for the ministry.

"Perhaps she was ambitious, though I never saw the faintest token of it; but I have seen a great many tokens that she loved the kingdom of Christ, and wanted nothing so much as to have her sons enlisted in its

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1. Cheney, Life and Letters of Bushnell, p. 29.

propagation."¹

With this indelibly impressed on his mind, it is not chance that Bushnell keenly felt his mother's disappointment when he decided to become a lawyer later in life. Later still he reversed his decision to become a minister. Such was the influence of a godly mother upon a son of great promise, who became a leader of theologians and a great pastor. Words from Bushnell's own lips might fitly conclude this section:

"And in all these points - my education; my exchange, without upbraiding, of the ministry for the law; my return to New Haven, which was to be my exchange from the law to the ministry, especially the two occasions last named - I acknowledge my sole indebtedness, not so much to my mother simply, as to the very remarkable something hidden in her character. Other women are motherly enough, tender, self-sacrificing, faithful; but what I owe to her, I owe to her wonderful insight and discretion."²

3. The Paternal Influence.

Not as much is written about Bushnell's father as is found about his mother. From all indications, he was a worthy family man, respected in the church and community. He is said to have been a sturdy and spirited man, full of New England grit, and resolute in work. But he was also pleasant in his ways to his family and neighbors, and always displayed a steady cheerfulness in all the ups and downs of life. When he found it necessary to

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1. Cheney, Life and Letters of Bushnell, p. 31.
2. Ibid., p. 33.

discipline his children, he did a thorough job; but it is noteworthy that he did not by constant chiding worry his children.

Mr. Bushnell did not find the rocky soil of Litchfield County to be very productive. Consequently the family was of necessity very economical in every way. When Horace was three, the family moved to New Preston, fourteen miles away, where the father, in addition to his farm, operated a small wool-carding and cloth-dressing establishment requiring the use of skilled handicraft and machinery. This industry not only provided the family with needed income, but it was the means of developing another talent in young Bushnell.

At the age of fourteen, and for five years afterwards, Horace was employed in the different departments of the mill in the summers. During his first year of mill work, he had full charge of the carding-machine in a separate building where he worked alone. Once when he found the machinery out of order, he took it entirely apart, repaired, improved, and reconstructed it. His taste for mechanics led him to study and invent improvements in the machinery. Cheney says:

"In such a busy, hard-working life, it would seem as if opportunities for mental culture must have been lacking; but to a mind like his there is education in everything. He put extortion upon common things, and extracted the wine of life by pressure."¹

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1. Cheney, Life and Letters of Bushnell, p. 17.

Thus we can see how an industrious father contributed to the industry of his son.

It should not be overlooked that Bushnell's father also was a spiritual and religious man, who was capable of thinking for himself in such matters. He was Arminian in his views, and he often became irritated at the sermons he heard at the Congregational Church in New Preston. Horace recalled that his father,

"... returning home after second service, to a rather late dinner, would sometimes let the irritation of his hunger loose, in harsher words than were complimentary, on the tough predestinationism or the rather overt total depravity of the sermon; . . ."1

Place this with the fact that Bushnell's mother was of Episcopal background, and a variety of religious training and atmosphere is seen.

"In such a family this variety of religious training and atmosphere stood for something, and its effect upon the son is beyond measurement, and can be traced through all his history, the two elements blending rather than antagonizing as time went on."2

From the side of Horace's father can be seen to come characteristics that helped to make Horace a great preacher and theologian. Certainly these parents were all that could be desired as an influence toward making their son the outstanding theological thinker of his day. The parental leadership and atmosphere created in that home are well summed up in Bushnell's own words:

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1. Thompson, E.T., Changing Emphases in American Preaching, p. 11.
2. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 7.

"No hamper was ever put on our liberty of thought and choice. We were allowed to have our own questions, and had no niggard scruples forced upon us. Only it was given us for a caution that truth is the best thing in the world, and that nobody can afford to part with it, even for an hour. Thus we talked freedom and meant conservatism, and talked conservatism and meant freedom; and, as we talked, we thought."¹

4. Boyhood Environmental Influences.

As yet, nothing has been said concerning Bushnell's early experiences when he was in contact with nature from day to day on the farm in Connecticut. The village of New Preston is located in the most picturesque part of a wide area, and the scenery abounds in many beautiful pictures, of which Lake Waramaug is the center. The Bushnell farm lay on a sunny slope which needed no ornamental rock work to set off the landscape. The roomy farmhouse stands behind a row of shady maples which Horace, when but a stripling, brought upon his back from the mountain and planted.

The religious impressions of childhood which he was able to recall later in life were of the simplest and natural kind which came to him when he was in the fields and quickened by his delight in nature. There was a huge boulder in the pasture back of the house where he went as a boy to pray and to watch the sun rise. In all the days of youthful labor on the farm or in the mill, nature was his chosen companion. It was fortunate that one so open

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1. Cheney, Life and Letters of Bushnell, pp. 30-31.

to nature and so receptive of its meaning should have been reared in such an atmosphere. E. T. Thompson says:

"His deepest impressions did not come from books nor from contact with men, but from nature, and nothing was quite real to him until it had been submitted to its tests."¹

This intimate contact with nature afforded Bushnell with many opportunities to develop his keen senses of observation, which were ever a source of inspiration and knowledge in his pastoral and preaching experiences.

This section covering the youth and early training of Bushnell might well be ended with two quotations of two prominent biographers. Cheney says:

"If ever there was a child of Christian nurture, he was one; nurtured, I will not say, in the formulas of theology as sternly as some; . . ., not nurtured in what might be called the emotional elements of religion as some, but nurtured in the facts and principles of the Christian faith in their bearing upon life and character; and if ever a man was true to the fundamental principles and customs which prevailed in his early home, even to his latest years, he was."²

And last, a quote by Munger:

"Powerful influences lay behind and around him. Ancestry, natural scenery, occupation, home, early training, a church life drawn from three sources, - well mingled by faith and good sense, - laid the foundations of his character and career."³

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1. Thompson, E.T., Changing Emphases in American Preaching, p. 11.
2. Cheney, Life and Letters of Bushnell, p. 8.
3. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 11.

C. Educational Preparation

1. Early Schooling.

Bushnell remained at home until he was twenty-one, attending the village schools which were typical of New England at that time. In his studies, he was always at the top of the class due to his mental alertness. But he did not create the idea among his schoolmates that he was superior to them, and he was thus a leader in recreational activities and sports though he never was ambitious to be a leader. This early education moved in a normal progression similar to his progression in years.

When Horace was first confronted with the opportunity of attending college, he declined the offer. This was probably due to the fact that he was busy helping on the farm and working in the mill. His hunger for knowledge was being satisfied by the creativity of planting and harvesting, repairing and engineering machinery for the mill. But when he was almost twenty years of age, he united with the Congregational Church of his parents, and a deep flow of religious feeling attended the act which started and deepened a desire for a liberal education. He set himself to the task of preparation for college with such zeal that a year later he passed the entrance examinations of Yale College.

2. College and Professional Study.

Bushnell entered Yale at the age of twenty-one,

already a full grown, robust man. He was developed and matured beyond most other college freshmen, and this may account for the fact that he lived more to himself than most students. Yet it cannot be said that he was unpopular with his classmates, for his earnestness and competency soon won their admiration. He led his class in athletics, worked hard, and his life was marked by a wonderful consciousness of power.

Bushnell's religious development is an important feature of his college days. When he had been at home, he had merely given consent to the doctrines taught him in the church without bothering to reason them through. Now that he was in the midst of formal education, these truths which he had always taken for granted as true were called into question by his inquisitive mind. As a result, he launched out into the great sea of doubts, which inevitably made him skeptical. He said of himself: "I loved a good deal the prudential, cold view of things; my religious character went down."¹ It should not be thought that he forgot his home training and indulged in a life of sinfulness, rather he could not bring his intellect to the place where it would accept truth by faith.

But this reaction can be understood when it is remembered that Bushnell's religious life had begun after

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1. Munger, Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 18.

the fashion of the day, under the fervors of the revival system, which he attempted to maintain by a forced defense of Calvinism. But in the cool and calm thought of college study, his fervor and logic of early days disappeared, and the Christian nurture in which he had been reared remained with him to keep his soul alive. He looked back later and said:

"I had run to no dissipations; I had been a church-going, thoughtful man. My very difficulty was that I was too thoughtful, substituting thought for everything else, and expecting so intently to dig out a religion by my head that I was pushing it all the while practically away."¹

In 1827 Bushnell graduated from Yale, but not without having left his mark both in the school and in the minds of his classmates. For a few months after graduation, he taught a school in Norwich, but he found it so uncongenial that he soon left the place. Because his graduation address had been of such high caliber, he then was offered a position on the editorial staff of the Journal of Commerce in New York City. But he found this a terrible life, and stayed there only ten months. From here he went for half a year to the Law School at New Haven, after which he decided to move to some Western city to set up a law practice and perhaps work his way into politics.

These occupations are here listed to show that Bushnell must have been going through a struggle with him-

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1. Cheney, Life and Letters of Bushnell, p. 32.

self to decide his life calling, and no small part of that struggle was his religious dissatisfaction in the light of his early training. But this was not an entirely futile period of his life, for even these experiences contributed to his development.

"In these varied experiences following a solid course of study in college, and preceded by a long youthhood that combined farm labor and a skilled handicraft, Bushnell laid broad foundations for a career which, though intensely speculative and spiritual, ran close to daily life and reality."¹

Just before following up his intention of going West, Bushnell was at home for a few days. While there, he received an appointment as tutor in Yale College. He was again torn in the battle of indecision, and this was heightened by the fact that he knew his mother's keen disappointment over his decision not to enter the ministry. Without much delay, Bushnell wrote to President Day of Yale and declined the offer. But before he had posted the letter, his mother asked him to give the matter more than a passing consideration. Upon this, after a few days of deliberation, he accepted the tutorship at Yale. This proved to be one of the most important turning points in his life.

"The result was that I was taken back to New Haven, where, partly by reason of a better atmosphere in religion, I was to think myself out of my over-thinking, and discover how far above reason is trust."²

In the autumn of 1829 he entered upon his tutor-

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1. Munger, Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 20.
2. Ibid., p. 22.

ship, and for a year and a half continued his studies in the law, still intent on entering that profession. During this time he might be described as sound in ethics and skeptical in religion; and as time went on, his doubts grew into positive unbelief.

The solution to this condition came from two main sources. Bushnell spent long hours of meditation on one of the most influential religious books of the day, Aids to Reflection, written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge broke the whole conception held by New England that religious truth is capable of intellectual demonstration with all the logical sharpness of a problem in mathematics. To him, Christianity was primarily grasped by the intuition, and its appeal was not so much to the intellect as to the ethical and spiritual feeling. Bushnell was deeply intrigued by this thought, and in his estimation, Aids to Reflection had greater influence on his life than any other book save the Bible. Gradually he came

" . . . not merely to personal religious certainty, but to the conviction that the whole system of dependence on intellectual demonstration characteristic of the explanation of religion in that day was mistaken. Religion appeals, he became convinced, primarily to the heart and to the feeling for its compelling demonstration."¹

The actual impetus needed to precipitate a solution for all his doubts came in one of the revivals which occasionally pervaded college life in those days. These

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1. Thompson, E.T., Changing Emphases in American Preaching, p. 14.

movements in Yale College did not run into the excesses of revivals in the churches which Bushnell later criticized. It was in the winter of 1831 that in one of the revival meetings he was called to act decisively in response to conscience. In the face of unescapable responsibility to his students who clung very close to him, he decided to give himself unreservedly to God. This also decided the question of his life calling, and in 1831 he entered Yale Divinity School to prepare for the ministry. Bushnell always regarded this experience as the most important crisis in his life.

Yale at this time was at the height of its influence under Nathaniel W. Taylor who was the outstanding representative of the New England school, which since the days of Jonathan Edwards had sought to improve and defend Calvinism against all foes. But though Bushnell was impressed and inwardly fortified by Taylor's sincerity, courage, and independence of thought, he found little satisfaction in the main tenets of the New Haven theology. He began gradually to part ways with Taylor, for Coleridge's work had convinced him that there was far more to religion than could be intellectually demonstrated. Munger sums up the value of Bushnell's theological study as follows:

" . . . his theological studies in New Haven chiefly served to furnish a background against which all his thought and work in after years stand out in vivid contrast. It was not a contrast between the two men; it was between two ways of reasoning and two methods of

discovering truth; a contrast between an old world drawing to a close and a new world coming on."1

D. Contemporary Theological Situation

The theological situation of Bushnell's day was such that his clear-thinking mind could not assent to it. The prevailing doctrines were Calvinistic, but their unusual emphases dated back to the time of Jonathan Edwards. The older or historical Calvinism included children in the household of faith who were pledged in baptism to God by believing parents. This gave the children the right of membership in the visible church.

With the "Great Awakening" in New England came a new emphasis on revivalism, which was opposed to the older Calvinistic views. Now there must be an ideal church made up of regenerated members only. This called for evidences of conversion on the part of children as well as adults. Emphasis was placed on the conception of a transforming, regenerative change after intense struggle which involved prolonged conviction of sin, and resulted eventually in the peace of forgiveness. That was considered the normal entrance into the Kingdom of God. All religious education in the home or Sunday school was directed to the end of securing a "cataclysmic upheaval" in the lives of

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1. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 29.

the children. For more than a century the evangelical churches made revivals their chief means for bringing children as well as adults into the Christian life.

"The approved method of becoming a Christian was to be converted in a protracted meeting. Periods between revivals were considered periods of spiritual dearth, during which the Church could only wait for the next outpouring of the divine power."¹

Not only did Bushnell rebel against this revival system, but he also found the theology of his day in a decrepit condition. "Edwardeanism" still ruled religious thinking with a rod of iron.

"Edwards's son, who bore the name his father made immortal, and other satellites revolving at one decade or another in the Edwards orbit through more than three-quarters of a century, differed among themselves about details but not about the central principle of their theology, not about the need of offering continuous and stout resistance to the Arminianism which had been the lifelong bane of their renowned protagonist."²

Some of the later men such as Bellamy, Channing, and Taylor ventured out into newer thoughts, but they were too loyal for the truths sake to the memory of Edwards. Their thinking ran too much along the line of dialectics as an agency in seeking truth, and they used it sometimes as a "dodge." Powell makes this observation:

"Whether of the 'ultra-Edwardeans' or of the more moderate 'New Haven School' which Dr. Taylor started early in the nineteenth century, the 'Edwardeans' multiplied so many inconsequential differences and filled up their minds with so many nice distinctions without difference

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1. Thompson, E.T., Changing Emphases in American Preaching, p. 21.
2. Powell, L.P., Heavenly Heretics, p. 79.

that their thinking one day reached the unhappy plight humorously and veraciously described by Horace Bushnell as 'the sedimentary subsidence of theology itself, precipitated in the confused mixture of its elements.'¹

In general terms, this period might be described as a critical period in American Christianity. Not that there was lack of activity, but the activity was antagonism, and New England theology had worn itself out by the friction of its own conflicting elements. Munger describes it thus:

"The whole matter was complicated by a doctrine of sovereign decrees, election and reprobation, ability or inability to repent, - often a territorial distinction, held here and denied there; the inefficacy, or as Hopkins and Emmons declared, the wickedness of prayer by the unregenerate; different kinds of grace and of love; the use or uselessness of means, and the order of the human and the divine activity in the process of conversion. Child and adult alike were involved in this network of doctrine."²

These conflicting elements were placed in the bounds of a strict definition and syllogism which enforced assent. We can easily see why Bushnell reacted against this, for it had been through his conversion and the reading of Aids to Reflection that he had been delivered from ties of syllogistic theology. It is also easy to understand his reaction against revivalism, for that had cast a type of religious individualism which made nothing of the family and the church as vehicles of grace. While Bushnell did not deny the necessity of regeneration and conversion, and did not discredit revivals entirely, he did

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1. Powell, L.P., Heavenly Heretics, p. 81-82.
2. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, pp. 73-74.

insist that the ordinary means of grace blessed of the Holy Spirit is the method of Christian nurture in the family and the church. His early training and education in college could not but have been contributors to this conviction.

Thus we see that the theological situation of Bushnell's time played an important part in the formulation of Bushnell's own theology, for which he leaned more heavily upon his heart than upon his head.

E. Bushnell the Preacher

1. His Physical Endowment.

The physical heritage of Bushnell was not the most advantageous for a preacher, yet it did not detract greatly from his influence. While he was not large of figure, he was large in fulness of nerve force and also rather delicate in organization. His voice was rather weak, but it had powers when he became stirred in his sermons. In later life both his body and voice lost much of their earlier beauty owing to his physical infirmity. The significant thing here is that in spite of much sickness, his will seemed to overrule the physical so that he was master of his body.

2. His Mental Aptitude.

Bushnell was a man of varied talents and aptitudes, and it is likely that he would have been successful in any

one of the many vocations of life which demand keen thought and analysis. Without doubt he had in him the making of a philosopher, using the term in the sense of one who had the intellectual curiosity and ability to grapple with what is fundamental in any subject. He had an exceedingly easy grasp of principles and an orderly method of expounding them. Everything that confronted him in nature, art, or even in the most ordinary events of life always took connection with fundamental ideas. Brastow says:

"This tendency to get at the inner relations and the inner significance of things; which was so marked a trait in him, is substantially the philosophic habit of mind, however remote it may be from any special, formal philosophic method."¹

Bushnell's interest in the world about him and in life was predominantly intellectual and philosophical. And it is significant that this habit of mind was taken into his investigation and discussion of theological questions. His aim was to penetrate to the core of the question to get at the fundamentals involved. This can be seen in its relation to the current theology of his day. Bushnell was not fighting philosophic thought or method as such, but he despised and scorned the philosophic system prevalent. Everything was viewed through four or five leading doctrines that prescribed the conclusion beforehand whatever the subject might be.

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1. Brastow, Representative Modern Preachers, p. 144.

"The Fall gave the keynote, and a constant warning rang in the ears of preacher and people: fear of unsoundness and the 'system' determined the conclusion. The themes were great, but the assumptions and the method determined in advance what was to be said."¹

The practical and intellectual Bushnell could not be chained to such limitations, and his revolt against this system led him the more determinately to the cultivation of the preacher's habit of mind. He refused to employ his dialectical abilities to bring the experiences of religion within the limits of scientific statement which Dr. Nathaniel Taylor, his teacher, so ably did.

"It was the necessity of his keen, sturdy New England mind, trained in intellectual gymnastics to grapple with religion as an intellectual problem. He stoutly maintains that Christianity is not a gift to the intellect, but to the imagination and the heart, and that language is wholly incompetent to formulate the content of religious experience into an intellectual system."²

F. Summary

There is little need to say more about the rest of Bushnell's life, as the factors and influences which went into the formulation of Bushnell's theology were well set at the beginning of his ministry at Hartford. What happened after that time was the result of his theology and not an influence on it. We have in this chapter, then, surveyed Bushnell's early life and training, his education,

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1. Munger, Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 285.
2. Brastow, Representative Modern Preachers, pp. 147-148.

and the contemporary theological situation to find the factors which contributed to Bushnell's theology. The chapter was then concluded by a brief sketch of Bushnell's physical and mental endowments. It will later be seen how these influenced the recurring emphases in his preaching, particularly his view of man and how he becomes a new creature in Christ.

CHAPTER III
THE SURVEY OF BUSHNELL'S SERMONS
FOR THEIR THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES

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A. Introduction

While it is an uncertain task to estimate the influence of youthful days upon the total character of any individual, the early life and environment of Bushnell are clearly reflected in his ministry. This is especially true concerning the theological emphases of his sermons. The content of the previous chapter will be referred to as his sermons from time to time reveal the influence of his early life. The chapter will proceed to depict the structure, type, and style of the sermons, the general theological content, the specific emphases, and the summary.

B. The Type and Style of Bushnell's Sermons

1. Type of Sermons.

In the three books of published sermons which are the direct source material for this thesis, every sermon has as its basis a Scripture text. The themes, containing a strong religious truth which is formally stated, always have something large and important to dis-

cuss. With this theme and a store of thoughts in mind, he then forms a proposition and proceeds to the work of very thorough discussion and interpretation. He is at the very outset committed to the work of declaring and supporting the truth submitted. The theme, no matter how simple or complex, pervades the whole sermon so that no one is ever at loss to know what is in discussion.

Bushnell's sermons are always orderly in their progress, and the entirety of each message discloses unity and symmetry. The introductions from the very outset suggest the thought of the body and generally the connection between the text and the theme. One of the obvious things about his sermons is the relation between the text and the title. The title is not a catching phrase to arouse the curiosity, but it is the subject itself. He starts with a full conception of his discourse and works it out. The main body of his sermons are largely Biblical in content. The conclusions are practical in their character, sometimes giving the subject from a new angle, but almost always in the form of inference from the subject discussed.

It is apparent that Bushnell's sermons are what is commonly called textual. He was not an expository preacher, though his messages always attach themselves to Biblical religion. If it were not for the Scriptural text, his sermons would be considered as topical. Bushnell, as stated, took a subject or a text and worked out his dis-

course on the basis of the truth of the text. His sermons are not loosely thrown together, they are concisely and logically constructed so that he does not wander aimlessly from his theme. Such sermons are valuable to anyone who would read them, but they are of special value to the person interested in homiletics. However, Munger says:

"It must not be inferred that Bushnell was what is usually called a popular preacher. Men of the first order of intellect seldom win that name; they are both unwilling and unable to bridge the chasm between themselves and the throng."¹

The so-called common people were not intensely interested in listening to Bushnell preach. His sermons were packed and weighted with truth so that a degree of concentration was necessary to follow the truth. While Bushnell did not use dialectic theology to formulate his sermons, yet in his explanations and interpretations, he was preaching theology. As Brastow says concerning this point:

"His method was that of the preacher, and no American preacher within the last century has succeeded in introducing more theology into the pulpit or in discussing theological problems in a more interesting and effective manner than he."²

2. Style.

Probably no preacher contemporary with Bushnell put the mark of his personality upon his sermon as much as did Bushnell. The results of his training and culture

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1. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 278.
2. Brastow, Representative Modern Preachers, p. 148.

are seen in the ease with which he handles his themes. Of his diction it may be said that it is soberly descriptive and not ornate or highly pictorial as one might expect. His vocabulary is distinctive to himself in its power of description. While he scrupulously avoids all technical theological terms he puts the term in some word descriptive of it. Instead of using the word "regeneration," he might substitute "naturalization." Philosophical terms are also treated the same way. His diction was largely the language of energetic movement which contributes to the force of his style.

In the habit of immediately grappling with his problem, Bushnell developed a self-reliant, positive tone that resulted in making him one of the most effective intellectual leaders of his day. This yielded one of the most distinguishing traits of his style, namely its declarative quality. It was his regular process to state the truth in a direct, positive manner rather than reason about it. He declared what he saw and not what he devised in accordance with dialectical processes. Hence he was never a doctrinal preacher in the sense of the term as understood in his day.

This made Bushnell's style eminently didactic. His sermons were loaded with more deep truth than those of any preacher of his day. He had a solid quality of important truth in every sermon. A survey of the topics of his ser-

mons shows them to be preeminently didactic, with the capacity to increase knowledge of the subject and leave a strong mental impression. He earnestly believed in perfect honesty in the formation of opinions and principles of action, and that he was never to swerve in conduct from honest conviction. These convictions permeated the style of his sermons.

Lest anyone should get the impression that Bushnell's sermons were unattractively intellectual, it should be noted that he made wise use of his imagination and figurative language. His figures were natural and his vocabulary imparted a warmth and semi-poetic glow. He used mainly the metaphor and simile, and these were not strained or artificial. There is very little exclamation or exaggeration, and no apocalyptic visions. His sermons are not the easiest to read, but with a moderate concentration present, the reader will find a style which flows with truth that is fascinatingly and yet logically presented.

The style of delivery was typically Bushnellian. He did not seek to imitate or mimic anyone of prominence to secure popularity. He spoke in free downright fashion like a man of intellectual habit. He rarely spoke out in impassioned utterances, rather he carried the conversational tone as a natural orator. During most of his ministry he read his sermons from a manuscript, and later when

he was forced to speak extemporaneously he had greater power because of eye contact with the audience. Because he read his sermons, he moved very little in the pulpit. But his gestures were energetic and sometimes intense. His whole frame would at times respond to his emotional intensity. Thus the style of delivery was forceful and carried conviction with those who gave him audience.

C. General Theological Content of Bushnell's Sermons

Bushnell's theology was primarily based on the conviction that religion is the basis of all theology and furnishes to reflection all of its materials, and that it is to be interpreted and understood in the light of spiritual experience and not according to speculation or theories. His theology never appears in technical form in his sermons, yet they are pervaded through and through by his theology. The sermons grasp the principles of practical working Christian truth in such a way as to make them applicable to daily life. Brastow says: "His preaching¹ discloses his purpose to get theology at work." Brastow says further about Bushnell's preaching:

"It has solid thought and strong feeling and conviction. It deals with living men and real needs, and not with things remote from common human life. It is full of insight, rationality, reality, and persuasiveness. It

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1. Brastow, Representative Modern Preachers, p. 190.

will live because it contains so much that men need to hear and want to hear when they know their real wants."¹

This kind of practical theological content in Bushnell's sermons can be seen as a conscious reaction against the common concept of theology in New England as described in the previous chapter. While most preachers were defining and re-defining terms to the distress of the Christian people, Bushnell was preaching about real life situations which people were experiencing every day.

It is difficult to give an over-all picture of Bushnell's theology in his sermons without becoming specific as is the attempt of the next part of this chapter. It is impossible to view one aspect of his theology without interpreting it in the light of other aspects. Bushnell refused to make categorical statements and label them as his theology, which necessitates the task of deducting his theology from the content of his sermons. Thus, to procure concrete data as the basis of this topic, a chart was made containing general aspects of theology. As each sermon was read, when a reference to any aspect of theology occurred, it was recorded on the chart. Such a chart covers three connected sheets of typewriter paper and cannot be incorporated here, but certain observations can be reported.

The first apparent observation is that no aspect

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1. Brastow, Representative Modern Preachers, p. 190.

of practical theology is neglected. This points to the fact that Bushnell must have been a conscientious and thoughtful pastor. His flock had a well-rounded diet of spiritual food, for the entire cycle of theology from God to man is referred to or intimated in various sermons.

Another observation is that some doctrines have far less than average references. It may be well to mention these as a balance to the emphases to be studied later. There is very little said about the church, local or spiritual. Other doctrines not prominent are the resurrection and eschatology. Very little is found about Angels. A reason for this may be that these subjects can be considered highly speculative in character, and Bushnell avoided as far as possible such subjects that might not be so practical in application.

Another aspect of theology which is only lightly touched is repentance. This is difficult to account for in the light of the practical Bushnell. Perhaps it was because of the over-emphasis repentance received in the revival movement which tended toward Arminianism. Perhaps it was because Bushnell emphasized Christ and what He could do for man rather than what was necessary for man to do.

This gives us a view of the general theological content of Bushnell's sermons, the most significant fact being the emphases on the practical and the lack of emphasis on the more speculative subjects. Before turning

to the specific theological emphases, a quotation from Munger will conclude this section. He says:

"If the question were raised as to the theological significance of his sermons as a whole, it would be difficult to give a clear answer; but this much may be said, - they reinforce the general purport of his four theological treatises,¹ and translate their main contentions into terms of every-day life."²

D. Specific Theological Emphases

1. Christology.

Of the three volumes of Bushnell's sermons, Sermons For The New Life is the most distinctly theologically centered. Among the most impressive sermons are "Every Man's Life A Plan of God," "The Spirit in Man," "The Reason of Faith," "The Hunger of the Soul," and "The Capacity of Religion Extirpated by Disuse." These relate largely to the sovereignty of God as seen in the light of Christ. Most of the sermons in Christ and His Salvation are principally Christological. Sermons On Living Subjects has a definite Christological emphasis also. Brastow says concerning this Christo-centric quality of Bushnell:

"God has not revealed himself in a body of doctrine but as a personal, living, historic presence. Consequently his (Bushnell's) supreme interest is in the historic Christ. To know Christ is of supreme importance, for to know Him aright is to know God right. It is no wonder, therefore, that his Christology was the first thing to be set right."³

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1. Viz. "Christian Nurture," "God in Christ," "Nature and the Supernatural," and "The Vicarious Sacrifice."
2. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 286.
3. Brastow, Representative Modern Preachers, p. 191.

a. Pre-existence.

Bushnell was not backward to pronounce his views about the eternal Christ. Some of his statements are sweeping in their content so as to give a complete view in one sentence. This is true in the sermon "The Insight of Love," which has the following statement:

"Consider who Christ is; the eternal word of God for whom, and by whom all the worlds were made; in whom as being in the form of God, all God's ends, creations, principles, counsels, providences, and future ongoing, are in a sense contained and totalized."¹

In a number of sermons Bushnell more incidently refers to the pre-existence of Christ, and this points to a conception which was part of his thinking rather than one which he especially had to concentrate upon. An instance of this is in the sermon "Christ As Separate From This World." The immediate context of the following quote describes the sense of withdrawal mankind feels when contemplating the holiness of Christ. Then Bushnell makes an exclamation:

"If before you thought of him with awe and even with a holy dread, how little confidence will be left you when you see him in the fullness of his glory, even that which he had with the Father before the world was!"²

Thus by citing an instance in which Bushnell had as his object to declare his conviction about the pre-existence of Christ, and by citing an instance where this

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1. Bushnell, Horace, Christ and His Salvation, p. 59.
2. Bushnell, Horace, Sermons For The New Life, p. 449.

conviction was incidentally expressed, one can without hesitancy aver Bushnell's belief in this fundamental phase of Christology.

b. Incarnation.

Bushnell is free in his expressions concerning the incarnation of Christ. In this area he comes very close to a theological statement of his views. It will be remembered that the contemporary system of theology was one of the things against which he rebelled, so Bushnell almost held hands with what he hated. In the sermon, "The Wrath of the Lamb," he makes this claim:

"He is God manifested truly, God as he is, God in all his attributes combined, else he is nothing, or at least no fair exhibition. If the purposes of God, the justice of God, the indignations of God, are not in him; if anything is shut away, or let down, or covered over, then he is not in God's proportions, and does not incarnate his character."¹

In other places Bushnell expresses Jesus as the Immanuel, the eternal Word incarnated, perfect in all ways, innocence and purity.² The distinguishing part of Bushnell's belief here is that which saved him from falling into the pit of syllogistic theology. In this matter he again let his heart direct his thinking, and he made Christ a real being rather than a theological concept. He says:

"Only we must have the right to believe in the real Christ, and not that theologic Christ which has so

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1. Bushnell, Christ and His Salvation, p. 357.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 93.

long been praised, as it were into weakness, by the showing that separates him from all God's decisive energies and fires of combustion, and puts him over against them, to be only a pacifier of them by his suffering goodness. Our Christ must be the real King-Messiah -- and no mere victim; he must govern, have his indignations, take the regal way in his salvation. His goodness must have fire and fibre enough to make it divine."¹

In describing the nature of Christ, Bushnell again reacted against the prevalent view of his day which almost forgot the humanity of Christ. This prevalent view was a defense mechanism against the growing Unitarian movement which denied the Deity of Christ. Bushnell held to the middle of the road in this problem, asserting both the human and divine nature of Christ, but always the divine dominating the human. In the sermon, "The Fasting and Temptation of Jesus," which according to Munger, "shows Bushnell at his best,"² appears this clear and simple statement about the nature of Christ:

"He has a nature, that, in part, is humanly derived, so far as infected, broken nature. He has never sinned, he has lived in purity, under this humanly impure investment; growing more and more distinctly conscious of those higher affinities by which he thus dominates over the human, unable to be soiled by its contact."³

c. Atonement.

Bushnell's convictions about the Atonement contain his reaction against the New England theology. The prevalent tendency was to put the effect of the suffering

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1. Bushnell, Christ and His Salvation, p. 357.
2. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 283.
3. Bushnell, Christ and His Salvation, p. 99.

and death of Christ entirely upon God. Thus New England theologians held to what is commonly called the Satisfaction or Penal View. Bushnell went to the other extreme, holding that the effect of the suffering and death of Christ was entirely upon man. The Cross was to bring God into the life of man and show him the awfulness of sin when contrasted to the holiness of God.¹ This concept is particularly emphasized in the sermon "The Coronation of the Lamb," which is involved and laborious at places.

"If he (Christ) prepares a new footing for forgiveness, it will not be by what he enters into the legal, or politically legal and dynamic factors of government. He will not square off the law and level up the dues of transgression under the law -- but he will simply turn a crisis in feeling."²

Bushnell continues in the same sermon to show that if Christ's death was in payment for man's sin; then there really is no forgiveness, for this would be only a release passed upon the squaring-up principle which leaves nothing to forgive. Thus such a scheme is not valid. Rather, God in Christ bears his enemy, and whatever is due to his polity does not hamper him, for he is able to forgive without pay.

"What we call grace, forgiveness, mercy, is not something elaborated after God is God, by transactional work before him, but it is what belongs to his inmost nature set forth and revealed to us by the Lamb, in joint supremacy."³

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1. Cf. Bushnell, Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 428-429.
2. Ibid., p. 429.
3. Ibid., p. 430.

d. Conclusion.

Within these three aspects of Christology, the pre-existence, incarnation, and atonement, lies one of the main emphases of Bushnell's sermons. In a very true sense, all of his theology was a product of his Christology. He was continually faced with the challenge of the current Christology which did not satisfy his intellect or his heart. Therefore he set out to find a Christ who could satisfy his higher needs, and he found saving faith in the living Christ who is the complete revealer of God, and in whom alone man can know God. This Christ becomes a real, living presence disclosed in immediate knowledge which brings a sense of kinship.

"Such now, my friends is faith. It gives you God, fills you with God in immediate experimental knowledge, puts you in possession of all there is in him, and allows you to be invested with his Character itself. . . . It is your only hope, your only possibility."¹

How different from the Christ of speculative thought which Bushnell could not accept.

Bushnell's sermons are pervaded through and through with his Christology. All of his ethics, all of his interpretation of life and nature, all of his appeals to action are based on his conception of Christ. This is the basic element of all his theology.

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1. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 102.

2. Doctrine of Man.

a. Introduction.

Bushnell's doctrine of man while it has aroused great antagonism, at the same time has made more disciples than any other truth he propounded. His well known book, Christian Nurture, is a protracted statement of most that he has to say about man. But he did not confine his convictions about man to this book; for in his sermons there is revealed an emphasis on this doctrine, which is his most important contribution to be preserved. This subject will be dealt with under three topics: (1) Man's Fallen Condition, (2) Man's Salvation, (3) Man's Sanctification.

b. Man's Fallen Condition.

There is no hesitancy on Bushnell's part to state his views on this subject. He felt the necessity of preaching at least three entire sermons on the fallen condition of man which are preserved for us. He entitled them "Sal-¹vation For The Lost Condition," "Dignity of Human Nature Shown From Its Ruins,"² and "Regeneration."³ This second title may sound like an antithesis, but it is a fairly good summary statement of his view.

In the sermon titled "Salvation For The Lost Con-¹dition," Bushnell clearly states the lost condition of

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1. Bushnell, Christ And His Salvation, pp. 71-92.
2. Bushnell, Sermons For New Life, pp. 50-70.
3. Ibid., pp. 106-126.

man. He makes the deduction that the work of salvation supposes the fact of a lost condition which makes salvation necessary.

"This work, therefore, is to be a salvation, not as being a remedy after the fact; a supernatural provision by which seeds of life are to be ingenerated in a lapsed condition where there are none. At this point then, Christianity begins, this is the grand substructural truth on which it rests, that man who is to be saved by it, is a lost being - already lost."¹

Later in the same sermon Bushnell interprets Paul's doctrine of the fallen man which is more close and formal argument. Paul's view is summed up by Bushnell in a very few words saying that man is in "the fallen state of disability and subjection to evil."²

"The doctrine is that man, as he (Christ) conceives him, is in such a condition that nothing short of a divine movement upon him, can bring him back, into that character and felicity for which he was made."³

It can be observed that Bushnell has said nothing in these sermons which would eliminate or contradict his conception of Christian nurture. He did not see eye to eye with the New England theologians who dogmatically proclaimed total depravity. Again the concept of Bushnell can be seen as a reaction against an overemphasis of his contemporary theologians. He says of them that they make out a doctrine of human depravity in which there is no proper humanity left.⁴ He likewise accuses them of

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1. Bushnell, Christ And His Salvation, p. 71.
2. Bushnell, Christ And His Salvation, p. 78.
3. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
4. Cf. Bushnell, H., Sermons For The New Life, p. 51.

". . . not observing the compatibility of great aspirations and majestic affinities with a state of deep spiritual thralldom; assuming also with as little right the want of all appropriate sensibilities and receptivities for the truth, as a necessary inference from the complete destitution of holiness."¹

This quotation is from the sermon "Dignity of Human Nature Shown From Its Ruin,"² in which Bushnell claims that the spiritual disorder of man derogates nothing from his dignity. Rather, it is in the tragic disorder of human nature that we discover the true majesty. "It is only as a lost being that man appears to be truly great. Judge him by the ruin he makes."³ This gives Bushnell a positive approach to this problem, and prompts him to speak sharply against total depravity. In one sermon he says:

"But this notion of total depravity (which eliminates the many graces and virtues that adorn life) is no declaration of Christ, and he is not responsible for it. It is only a speculated dogma of man, which can be so stated as to be true, and very often is so stated as to be false. You have nothing to do with it here."⁴

Bushnell did not believe that man in his fallen state had no capacity left for religious affection or attraction.

"All his capacities of love and truth are in him still, only buried and stifled by the smoldering ruin in which he lies. There is a capacity in him still to be moved and drawn, to be charmed and melted by the divine love and beauty."⁵

This conception will naturally color his doctrine of regen-

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1. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 51
2. Ibid., pp. 50-70.
3. Ibid., p. 64.
4. Bushnell, Christ And His Salvation, p. 74.
5. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 63.

eration accordingly.

c. Regeneration.

This is the main theological emphasis of Bushnell's sermons. No other subject occupies as much space as this, and no other subject so influences his thinking. Here the core of the contention is reached which resulted in many labeling him heretical. At first it is difficult to grasp his total picture of regeneration. Sometimes he seems to be contradicting himself by speaking in antitheses. This is pointed up by our own conceptions which color our thinking. But careful study reveals that Bushnell was consistent in his presentation.

(1) Contemporary Emphases.

There can be no true appreciation for Bushnell's position unless there is understanding of his immediate contemporaries. New England theologians beginning with Jonathan Edwards had placed an overemphasis on the cataclysmic conversion from sinner to saint. Thus revival meetings were looked upon as the only means of grace by which the church was to make new disciples. There was no place given to Christian nurture in the home. Total depravity demanded a work of God which first restored the virtues to be cultivated by Christian nurture. This could not be tolerated by Bushnell, for his early home life had taught him differently. He had experienced development of his own spiritual abilities which he felt were respon-

sible or led up to his conversion.

On the other end of the pendulum stroke were those who denied the necessity of regeneration. In between these two extremities, Bushnell found his lodging. He remarked concerning the situation:

"Two classes of people appear to concur in destroying some texts of Scripture by destroying their dignity; the class who deem it a matter of cant to make anything of conversion, and the class who make religion a matter of cant by seeing nothing in it but conversion."¹

(2) Bushnell's Position Explained.

Bushnell believed and preached the necessity of regeneration. He was outspoken in his denial of man's ability to develop into a Christian. He says:

"It is getting to be a great hope of our time that society is going to slide into something better by a course of natural progress, by the advance of education, by great public reforms, by courses of self-culture and philanthropic practice. . . . Alas that we are taken or can be taken with so great folly! . . . No it is not progress, not reforms that are wanted as any principal thing. Nothing meets our case but to come to God and be medicated in him, to be born of God, and so by his regenerative powers to be set in heaven's own order. God alone can rebuild the ruin, he alone can set up the glorious temple of the mind."²

In another sermon he makes it more emphatic by saying that no man can ever be accepted before God who is not cleansed³ by a spiritual transformation.

This may seem to point to an emphasis which would deny Christian nurture; but not so when this is qualified

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1. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 243.
2. Ibid., p. 65.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 107.

by Bushnell's definition of regeneration. He states:

"God has been shut off from the soul by sin. . . . Never do they (men) know him till he becomes centered in their soul again as its life, and the crowning good and blessing of its eternity. And this is fitly called being born of God, because it is entering of God again into his place - to be the beginning of a new movement and life derivative from him, and fed by the springs of his fulness in the heart."¹

At this point, how regeneration is accomplished would naturally come into question. This is where Bushnell again parted company with the dogma of New England theologians who insisted on a cataclysmic experience. He had been steeped in the tradition that there must be great conviction, distress and tumult previous to conversion. He told his people not to attempt to gain salvation by copying this pattern for such things were immaterial and irrelevant to a real change of heart. To explain this in a sermon he said:

"Thus a great deal of debate is had over the supposed instantaneousness of the change. But this is a matter of theory and not of necessary experience. The subject often cannot tell the hour or the day; he only knows, it may be, looking back over hours or days or even months, that he is a different man."²

The important thing to Bushnell was for the person to know that he is a Christian and to know that his life is different than before. He would judge a man by the fruits he was producing rather than by the experience he claimed to have had. It was unimportant whether or not

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1. Bushnell, Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 117-118.
2. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 113.

the person had been changed instantly or had been changed over a course of years. But Bushnell believed far more were regenerated as a result of sound Christian nurture than were converted otherwise. He would say that many who claimed cataclysmic experiences had such because of their early training, and had they been reared in pagan homes they would not have been converted until they were prepared for it. In an illuminative sermon he says:

"What we call conversion is not a change distinctly traceable in the experience of all disciples, though it is and must be realized fact in all. There are many that grew up out of their infancy or childhood in the grace of Christ, and remember no time when they began to love him. Even such however will commonly remember a time when their love to God and divine things became a fact so fresh, so newly conscious as to raise a doubt whether it was not then for the first time kindled. In other cases there is no doubt of a beginning - a real, conscious, definitely remembered beginning, a new turning to God, a fresh-born Christian love. The conversion to Christ is marked as distinctly as that of the Ephesian church when coming over to Christ from their previous idolatry."¹

Bushnell preached that Christ requires of all some great and import change except those who are already subjects of the change. He claimed that many from their early years grew up into Christ by the preventing or anticipating grace of their nurture in the Lord. Such may not recollect a time when they did not love Christ.² Once again we see the influence of Bushnell's early life, for the impressions made by Christian parents and his close

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1. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 244.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 108.

contact with God's people in the Church molded his thinking so that he could not be persuaded to the revivalistic tendencies. Thus he suffered at the hands of those with opposite views who tried to ostracize him as a heretic. But later when Lyman P. Powell analyzed and weighed the work of Bushnell, he placed him in his list of "Heavenly Heretics."

3. Regenerate State of Man.

a. Introduction.

Among the numerous theological terms, which have been used to describe the Christian life, it is difficult to select a title for this section which will comprehend the subject accurately. Such terms as sanctification, Christian perfection, or Christian growth might be employed, but these often carry connotations which are misleading. Thus the title "Regenerate State of Man" has been selected to denote that period of life of the Christian after his regeneration by faith in Christ.

No one can read the sermons of Bushnell without feeling the emphasis he gives to this part of Christian theology. How is the Christian to live and act? How could a Christian be truly a Christian and not be different from his unregenerated neighbor? What is the Christian's duty and responsibility to God and his neighbor? These considerations and others were problems which concerned Bushnell

as he observed the inconsistencies of many church members in contrast to his own holy consecration. This subject will be handled under two headings; Christian duty in relation to God, and Christian duty in relation to man.

b. Christian Duty In Relation to God.

In the sermon "The Spirit in Man," Bushnell says that to be a Christian is to be given up to the Spirit of God and carefully offered to His holy guidance.¹ As a parish minister he saw the condition prevalent where men were so completely occupied with "world-ward"² relations of life that the God-ward relations passed unheeded. He preached for his people to put first things first, which meant to seek God's will for life. This was man's duty to recognize the sovereignty of God who has a plan for every person. The theme of the famous sermon "Every Man's Life A Plan of God" brings this out clearly in these words:

"That God has a definite life-plan for every human person, girding him, visibly or invisibly, for some exact thing which it will be the true significance and glory of his life to have accomplished."³

As this sermon unfolds, Bushnell discloses the way of finding this plan which is outlined as follows: Negatively; (1) do not copy the life of another, (2) never complain of your birth, training, employments, and hardships, (3) renounce all thought of making up a plan or

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1. Cf. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 45.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 29.
3. Ibid., p. 10.

choosing out a plan for yourself, (4) don't expect a completely worked out plan to be revealed all at once. Then on the positive side he says: (1) consider the character of God, (2) consider your relation to him as a creature, (3) let your conscience be an interpreter, (4) consult the Bible, (5) observe the Providence of God, (6) consult friends, and (7) go to God himself and ask for the calling¹ of God, and he will somehow guide you.

In speaking of the Holy Spirit Bushnell again emphasized the matter of surrender of self so as to be directed by the Spirit.

"And yet how simple it is! Open your whole nature to God, offer yourselves in the spirit of contrition and of a real, unquestioning faith to the occupancy of God and the light will not more certainly break into the sky and fill the horizon with day, when the morning sun is risen. . . This now is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit."²

Bushnell's conception of this experience as coming in a crisis decision is expressed in an outstanding sermon about the Temptation of Jesus. As he applies this experience of Jesus to the lives of his listeners he says:

". . . I conceive in the life of almost every Christian disciple, a crisis, where everything most eventful as regards the Christian value of his life to himself, where, as we may figure, his grand temptation meets him. Other temptations have gone before, others will come after, here is the temptation of his personal call and opportunity."³

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1. Cf. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, pp.18-23.
2. Ibid., p. 48.
3. Bushnell, Christ And His Salvation, p. 113.

In another sermon Bushnell speaks of the Christian as being completed in Christ. The assumption underlying the sermon is that since completion is necessary, therefore we are incomplete. Three points are thus made which show how man can be made complete in Christ. (1) Inspirations, by which the Holy Spirit enters the soul to fill out every lack and fault, are adequate for every believer. (2) We have ideas and ideals in Christ as our example as we walk with Him daily. (3) Christ is with us¹ in all the manifold conditions of life. To experience this completion of soul is to make the good it was created for, so that it fulfills exactly the glorious ends and uses intended by God. This is accomplished by faith.

"Such now, my friends is faith. It gives you God, fills you with God in immediate experimental knowledge, puts you in possession of all there is in Him, and allows you to be invested with His character itself."²

c. Christian Duty In Relation to Man.

Bushnell is seen to be keenly aware of the Christian's relation to others. He believed that a real experience of regeneration changed a person so he was different from the unregenerate. He was disturbed when the lives of his parishioners did not manifest the fruits of the Spirit. He was concerned when people were religious on Sunday and acted like pagans the rest of the week. He dealt directly

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1. Cf. Bushnell, Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 106-108.
2. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 102.

with this problem in the sermon "Christ As Separate From The World." In this sermon he says:

"This is holiness - the condition of a man when he is separated visibly from the world and raised above it by a divine participation. It is in fact the greatest power ever exerted by man, being not the power of man, but of God himself manifested in him."¹

To Bushnell, the great desolating error of his times was general conformity of Christians to the manners and ways of the world which fostered conformity to the spirit of the world. As an antidote to such conformity he prescribes a complete participation in the fullness of God. This will bring such a change of attitude that man will not require to continually shut off the world by prescribed denials, but will draw off from it naturally because he is not of this world. A true Christian is one who is deep enough in the spiritual life to have his affinities with God, which will infallibly make him a separated being.² Bushnell frankly states:

"There is no greater mistake as regards the true manner of impression on the world than that we impress it as being homogenous with it. If in our dress we show the same extravagance, if our amusements are theirs without a distinction, if we follow after their shows, copy their manners, bury ourselves in their worldly objects, emulate their fashions, how are we different from them? . . . No it is not conformity that we want, it is not being able to beat the world in its own way, but it is to stand apart from it and produce the impression of a separated life; that it is and this only that yields any proper sense of the true Christian power."³

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1. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 450.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 452-453.
3. Ibid., p. 454.

This might create the idea that Bushnell was so strict as to take all the true joy out of life. But such is not the case, for the truly separated Christian was naturally separated and not so by enforced restrictions. Such is the tone of the sermon entitled "Free to Amusements, and Too Free To Want Them."¹ The Christian who with a single eye loved Christ had an indwelling of the Spirit which surpassed the joys of participation in the affairs of the world.

Bushnell carried his preaching into the realm of everyday life. A Christian must be always in all circumstances a true representative of Christ. In the sermon "How to Be A Christian In Trade," he denounces those who deal falsely and those who hope to make a living without working. He states that it is as possible to be a Christian in trade as in any other kind of engagement, and then later he encourages the hearer by saying that trade can make an even stronger Christian for his engagement. But a divine call was necessary before one enter this business² or any other.

One of Bushnell's most impressive sermons, "Unconscious Influence," carries this subject to its conclusion. The main emphasis here is responsibility to others

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1. Bushnell, Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 374-396.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 243-267.

by our lives. Since the unconscious influence is the most sincere and the truest expression of character, then this is what man will be held most responsible for. He says:

"Do not deceive yourselves that you are at least doing no injury and are therefore living without responsibility; first make it sure that you are not every hour infusing moral death insensibly into your children, wives, husbands, friends, and acquaintances. By a mere look or glance, it is not unlikely, you are conveying the influence that shall turn the scale of someone's immortality."¹

Here again the impression left by Bushnell is that it is the life hid in Christ, the one who knows by experience the living Christ, who can live worthily. Thus we see how his conception of a vital, real Christ determined his conception of man's duty to man. He says concisely:

"All our best determinations of duty are those which come upon us in the immediate light of our immediate union to Christ."²

E. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, the type and style of Bushnell's sermons were studied, and it was found that he was a textual preacher of a worthy style. Then the sermons were surveyed for their general theological content, which revealed that they have a well-rounded presentation of doctrine with speculative subjects receiving less attention. This brought the chapter to a consideration of the specific theological

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1. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 202.
2. Bushnell, Christ And His Salvation, p. 62.

emphases of the sermons, which revealed that Bushnell's emphases were particularly on Christology and doctrine of Man. His Christology emphasized the living, real presence of Christ in the life of the Christian. His doctrine of man emphasized the depravity of man which is not total, regeneration, and the regenerated life.

CHAPTER IV

A CRITIQUE OF THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

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A. Introduction

There can be little doubt that Bushnell made a great contribution to his generation by the propagation of his theological emphases through his sermons and his writings. However, those who had an appreciation for his tireless efforts were in the minority, as so often is the case when a religious thinker is ahead of his times. Ministers of his own denomination accused him of heresy, but his local church stood loyal by withdrawing from the Congregationalists to place him beyond the jurisdiction of his accusers.

Since Bushnell's time, he has been acknowledged by a great school of followers who have been able to look back upon his work and evaluate it more clearly than those who were too close to see without blurred vision. But even those who look back to Bushnell as the original proponent of their truth often fall under the temptation to over-emphasize or represent out of proportion the truths as declared by Bushnell. With this in mind, it will be the object of this chapter to present a critique of the underlying assumptions of Bushnell's theology. The procedure will be first to consider his attitude toward theology as

such. This will be followed by a consideration of each of his specific theological emphases, Christology and the doctrine of Man.

B. His Attitude Toward Theology

1. His Rebellion Against Argumentive Syllogism.

There were many contemporary New England clerics who sought to evaluate Bushnell's conception of theology. Most of them were so steeped in the Edwardsian influence that it was impossible for them to make an unprejudiced estimation. All they were able to see was heresy. Usually they were at odds among themselves over minutia, and they were never quite able to launch a solidified attack against him which could finally convince of his heresy. Bushnell bravely stood up to the accusations of his opponents, but this continual struggle finally brought a break in his health. Somehow this school of theologians, who were constantly splitting hairs, defining and redefining for various shades of meaning to fit their own preconceived ideas, could not let Bushnell rest. Of this constant argumentive attitude he said:

"To be curious, to speculate much, to be dinning in argument, battle-doring always in opinions and dogmas, whether on the free side of rationalistic audacity or the stiff side of catechetical orthodoxy makes little difference - all such activity is cancerous and destructive to the real talents of religion."¹

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1. Bushnell, Sermons For The New Life, p. 181.

Thus in his effort to be free of the dialectic habit which found strength in rigid definition and logic, Bushnell would do away with theology as a system of defined beliefs. This can be seen as a natural reaction against the tendency of his time, which contained many details deserving criticism. On the other hand, Bushnell's reactionary movement to the opposite pole of syllogism may likewise deserve criticism. It is at this point that Bushnell may well be taken to task.

2. His Theory of Language.

The underlying principle upon which Bushnell rested his convictions is contained in his theory of language. His philosophic mind battled with a basic problem which all thinkers must face; viz., what are words and what do words mean? Who has not been faced with the difficulty of expressing thoughts with words? In his mind, there could be no justification of definition without first analyzing language itself to find its function and scope as a medium between the mind and the world of sense. Two volumes contain Bushnell's convictions about this problem, Dissertation On Language and Our Gospel A Gift To The Imagination. In the first of these two he says:

"Since all words, but such as relate to necessary truths, are inexact representations of thought, mere types or analogies, or, where the types are lost beyond recovery, only proximate expressions of the thoughts named; it follows that language will be ever trying to mend its own deficiencies, by multiplying

its forms of representation."¹

Taking this view of language, it is seen that there is great difficulty, if not impossibility, of mental science and religious dogmatism. Bushnell says further:

"Can there be produced, in human language, a complete and proper Christian theology; can the Christian truth be offered in the moulds of any dogmatic statement?"²

The implied answer to this question is negative. This, according to his biographer, is "the key to Horace Bushnell."³ He believed that spiritual and moral realities lie behind language, and that words have their origin in these realities, though they do not define them but only suggest their scope and significance. Under such a conception of language he explains all his use of creeds and dogma.

3. Bearing of Theory of Language On His Theology.

T.T. Munger points up the significance of this conception as related to Bushnell's theology as follows:

"If a fundamental criticism were to be made of his entire work in theology, it would be made at this point of his theory, for it covers the whole of it. He may at times disagree with himself, and he often goes far afield, but he always comes back to this conception of language for explanation or defense. Whether true or false, it runs throughout his theology, and makes it substantially a unit. Stated briefly, it was an exchange of definition for expression. His entrance into the company of New England theologians was like Copernicus appearing among the Ptolemaists."⁴

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1. Bushnell, Dissertation On Language, p. 55.
2. Ibid., p. 78.
3. Munger, T.T., Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian, p. 107.
4. Ibid., p. 109.

4. Criticism Of His Conception of Theology.

The criticism here would challenge the validity of an exchange of definition for expression, for how can there be any expression unless some conception has been defined? What did Bushnell have as the authority for his expression? He would be forced into the position of saying his mental conception was the authority. To this a critic would answer that his conception may be in error and thus his expression erroneous.

This problem is seen to be prevalent today among "Neo-Orthodox" theologians such as Edwin Lewis. In his book A Philosophy of Christian Revelation his basic assumptions in regard to language are found in the first chapter. He says that it is impossible for mankind to carry on commerce without continual assumption of meaning in things; ¹
this means that. With this premise to build upon Dr. Lewis then proceeds to expound his theory of Revelation. Like Bushnell, he holds that the truth of Scripture is not in the words but in the truth behind the words. Words are the mechanisms to convey the truth which is like a treasure in an earthen vessel.

The criticism made concerning Bushnell's theory of language can be made of Dr. Lewis' book. But the point to be seen is that Bushnell was dealing with a conception

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1. Cf. Lewis, Edwin, A Philosophy of Christian Revelation, p. 6-7.

which was ahead of other New England theologians of his day. If he were alive today, he would likely be right at home in neo-orthodox circles.

5. Criticism of Overemphasis of Practical Theology.

Another place where Bushnell might be criticized is his overemphasis on practical theology or getting theology to work. This, of course, is an outgrowth of his entire attitude toward theology. While it is not denied that there is emphasis on the practical side of religion in the Scripture, and that there was in Bushnell's time as today a great need for this emphasis, yet the Scriptures also contain a like emphasis on what might be called theoretical. Christ taught His disciples at length concerning His second coming.¹ The Apostle Paul in his Epistles gives stress to eschatological subjects.² But in Bushnell's three volumes of sermons, this emphasis is almost entirely lacking.

C. His Christology

1. His Theory of Atonement.

The only aspect of Christology which might be called into question is the theory of Atonement. The New

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1. Cf. John 14.

2. Cf. I and II Thessalonians.

England theologians tended to put the effect of the suffering and death of Christ entirely upon God. Bushnell went to the other extreme, holding that the chief effect of Christ's death was upon man. The Cross was to bring God into man's life, to show him the terrible import of sin, to show him the value of his soul, to subdue the human will, and to sanctify God's law.

2. Criticism of His Theory Of Atonement.

This conception of the Cross raises a serious question. According to Scripture, sin demands punishment. If this be true, and if at the same time it be true that the effect of the Cross is upon man, then how can God wipe out past sins? It would be merely speculation to try to answer this question for Bushnell, and that is not necessary. Be it sufficient to say that here again is a theological emphasis of Bushnell's sermons which bears criticism.

D. The Doctrine Of Man

1. His Position On Depravity.

There need be but little said about Bushnell's belief concerning the fallen condition of man. There are those who believe in the total depravity of man; while at the other extreme some believe that man is not depraved at all, but contains within himself the divine spark which needs nothing but to be fanned into a glowing flame. Be-

tween these two extremes Bushnell stood, probably nearer the first view than the second. He did not deny the necessity of regeneration as some of his disciples have who now follow him. This places him apart from those who hold to the dignity of man. But neither did he believe the total depravity of man, which, according to Bushnell, would deprive man of the possibility of responding to God's love.

2. His Position On Regeneration.

The doctrine of regeneration which Bushnell held likewise falls between two extremes. The theologians who followed in the Edwards school, dogmatically proclaimed the necessity of a cataclysmic conversion usually accomplished during a protracted series of evangelistic meetings. On the other side were those who felt Christianity was made up of men and women who had developed their good characteristics so they could now live according to the moral and social code of Jesus. Bushnell has been accused by many critics as dwelling in this camp because of his theory of Christian nurture. But the study of his sermons has clearly revealed that Bushnell believed in the necessity of regeneration without exception.

3. His Divergence From New England Theologians.

Where Bushnell disagreed with the prevalent view was not in the necessity of regeneration but in the means by which this regeneration was accomplished. He had no

argument with those who had been born again instantaneously, for such had been his own experience in college. His contention was that the more ordinary means by which regeneration was accomplished was through Christian nurture rather than through revival meetings.

4. Evaluation of His Position.

Considering this in the contemporary and local situation, he was very likely correct. For in his day when there was a high degree of religious consciousness in most homes, there can be little doubt that Christian nurture was a very real means of grace in many lives, even in those who radically disbelieved it. This has been shown to be true in this seminary on various occasions. In two different class sessions, the students have been asked to express by a show of hands whether or not they had become a Christian through a cataclysmic experience. In both instances the majority were those who had not experienced a sudden change. These were students who for the most part had been reared in Christian homes. On the other hand, there are people who live a portion of their lives in great sinfulness. Very naturally when they become a Christian, their change will be much more pointed and radical than one who has been sheltered from the dregs of sin by a Christian home.

However a person came to be a Christian was only secondary in Bushnell's thinking. His vital concern was

the fact of regeneration not the method. It was of little consequence to him how a man became a Christian, but it was important to know he was one and that he was producing appropriate fruits. It is not difficult to see why Bushnell emphasized Christian nurture in his day, for the revival movement had been carried to its furthest end. He could not go along with those who demanded everyone to become a Christian by a set pattern, for all people are different and have different experiences. Especially did he rebel against those who demanded that children be forced into such a rigid pattern.

Judged from this point of view, it can be seen that Bushnell was not as heretical as his accusers would have us to believe. Rather he is seen as a true prophet of Christ who embodied to the best of his ability the love which constrained him to preach his convictions.

E. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter an attempt has been made to present a critique of the underlying assumptions of the theological emphases found in Bushnell's sermons. By examination of his general attitude toward theology, it was found that he should be taken to task on his theory of language which cuts away the possibility of any final statement of theology. Also his overemphasis on the practical to the neglect of the theoretical was observed. Then a weakness

in his theory of atonement was seen, as he placed the effect of the cross chiefly on man rather than on God and man. The chapter was concluded by showing that his doctrine of man was far nearer orthodoxy than was believed by those who labeled him a heretic. Alas, if he were a heretic, how many who have followed since his day must fall under the same condemnation!

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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A. The Object Of This Study

Henry Kalloch Rowe in his book, Modern Pathfinders Of Christianity, makes this cogent statement in the introduction of his chapter on Horace Bushnell:

"The calm conservatism that had lasted after the excitement of the Great Awakening kept the Edwardean theology intact until the nineteenth century. But then began the drift to a new theological position within Congregational ranks."¹

The one man who was most responsible for this swing of theological position while still in its embryonic stage was Horace Bushnell. The attempt of this study has been to survey his published sermons to discover the theological emphases which lay at the heart of Bushnell's convictions. While he wrote several books dealing with specific phases of his theology, yet one reading these books alone might easily come to an unfair judgment. For instance, if the only book read were Christian Nurture, the conclusion could be that Bushnell denied the necessity of conversion. But upon the study of his sermons, it was discovered that the necessity of conversion was one of his main emphases.

To help in the understanding of Bushnell's theo-

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1. Rowe, H.K., Modern Pathfinders of Christianity, p. 184.

logical position, this study was begun with a survey of his early life and training which pointed up those aspects contributing to his theological convictions. His father and mother were deeply spiritual people who stressed morality far more than creedal conformity. The fact that he learned at a young age to shoulder responsibility and make his own decisions played an important part in molding his mental processes. No less important was the period of his life when he struggled with skepticism and doubt which submerged him in spiritual depression. In this state he found himself longing for something to satisfy his spiritual hunger. He found the needed satisfaction in a revival meeting at Yale, and by a complete committal of himself to Christ, he experienced a conversion which stood him fast through all the years of his life.

The contemporary theological situation also strongly influenced Bushnell's thinking. The general insistence upon creedal definition and the deadening effects of casuistry led him to rebel. Likewise, the long dominion which revivalistic methods had held over the New England churches opened his eyes to the neglect of Christian education as a means of grace. Into such a situation Bushnell pioneered the way for Christian nurture.

After this survey of Bushnell's life and times, the following chapter of this study concerns the firsthand observation of Bushnell's sermons for their style and type,

their general theological content, and their specific theological emphases. The major part of this chapter deals with the specific emphases which were found to be two: Christology and Anthropology. Under Christology, Bushnell emphasized the personal, living reality of Christ in the heart of the individual, as opposed to those of his day who stressed the creedal statement of Christ. It was also noted that Bushnell emphasized the Deity of Christ and the effect of the Atonement as primarily upon man. The impressive doctrines of man are his depravity, but not total depravity, his necessity of regeneration by Christ, and his practical Christian life after regeneration.

The fourth chapter of this study is then given to a critique of the underlying assumptions of Bushnell's theology. Criticism was leveled at his concept of theology which denies the possibility of creedal statement. He was also seen largely to neglect vital areas of theology such as Eschatology. His overemphasis of the effect of the Atonement upon man was pointed out. Concerning Anthropology, his position on depravity and regeneration was seen in its divergence from New England theologians, and then an evaluation of Bushnell's position concluded the chapter.

B. Bushnell's Influence on Theology

Bushnell was preeminently a preacher not a theologian. He left behind him no complete system of theology

which could be called by his name. Yet it cannot be denied that he has played an important role in the formulation of American theological thought. While his various writings are not now so widely read, yet they have become the warp and woof of present religious education. E.T. Thompson quotes Joseph M. Gray's statement which says that Bushnell's writings have

" . . . wrought themselves into the minds and lives of strong men who, through alembic of their own thought and character, transmitted them to their contemporaries. Brooks, Gladden, Gordon, and a host of humbler and unnamed men whose works follow them, took their direction from his compass and found illumination at his insights. The body of reasoning into which he cast his discernments may lie moldering among the theological graves, but his spirit goes marching on."¹

Robert L. Tucker holds high in his regard the place of Bushnell in forming the basis of sound religious education. He says: "Bushnell has done more than any other man during the past century for the Sunday School and for education in the church."²

Thus are many of the statements of those who have studied the life work of Horace Bushnell. While we have no mathematical way to calculate precisely his influence, yet the number of lives which have been touched by his theology is comprehensive of many more than are aware of it; and his influence still lives on to mold the character of those yet to be born into this world.

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1. Thompson, E.T., Changing Emphases in American Preaching, p. 43.
2. Tucker, R.L., Builders Of The Church, p. 180.

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