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Christ, "the form of the soul":  
The concept of symbol in  
the theology of Horace Bushnell

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By  
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CHRIST, "THE FORM OF THE SOUL":  
THE CONCEPT OF SYMBOL IN  
THE THEOLOGY OF HORACE BUSHNELL

BY

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the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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THESIS   Dawne McCance

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## INTRODUCTION

We may assume it without rashness to be the supreme object of God as the creator and governor of men to bestow himself upon them or be inwardly communicated to them. For this men are constitutently made, even as an eye is made for the light. In a certain first view of things, observing chiefly the bounties of the world, one might guess that God's prime object here is the preparing of growths and fruitages that will grow men, growing animals for their sake; but in deeper second thought it will be seen that he is building for mind, to make himself the light of intelligence, the friend of guidance, the supreme joy of love. Physical production plainly enough is no main purpose with him. He glasses himself on every side in objects and forms related to mind. By music and fragrance and color he wakens the sense of his beauty. By unnumbered and persistent ways of discipline he trains experimentally to the knowledge of himself.

- The Spirit in Man, p. 13

Apart from the attention it has received in the context of his language theory, no attempt has been made to come to terms with the meaning and role of symbol in the theology of Horace Bushnell. This is surprising, considering the centrality of the concept in Bushnell's thought, its obvious relation to his own religious experiences, and the apparent tension between symbol and truth which underlies all of his major theological statements.<sup>1</sup> And in a sense, one can almost say that Theodore Munger, initiator of a great legacy of misinterpretation, hinted at a dimension of Bushnell's thought which has not been explored since.<sup>2</sup> For it is not so much that the natural and the supernatural are divorced from one another, but that all reality is an embodiment of



the divine, that the whole universe is one vast symbol of God.

Bushnell nowhere defined the crucial term "symbol", and he used the word synonymously with several other terms, such as "metaphor", "figure", "form", "image" and "type". Perhaps the best place to begin looking for his meaning of symbol is with the difference between the literal and the fanciful. For if the symbolic consciousness that was part of Bushnell's Puritan heritage had been lost to the New England mind after Edwards, Bushnell did not see its recovery in the "contrived" imagery of the New England left. If there were no mystics among the orthodox, neither could Emerson or Parker be called by that name. According to Bushnell, symbols could not be understood on the level of nature: "the roots of the known are always in the unknown". Every genuine symbol stands out from a background of mystery as a face through which the infinite and unknown looks out upon us, tempting us to struggle into that holy and dark profound which it is opening.

This does not mean, as we will see in Chapter One, that man is not a symbol-maker. Indeed, man is distinguished from all other forms of life on the basis of his symbolic imagination--his capacity to both generate and interpret symbols. Bushnell's definitions of "nature" and "supernatural" are part of an organic theory, according to which all supernatural powers live by embodiment, that is, by bodying forth symbols through the medium or means of nature. But it does mean that all symbol systems operate in terms of one grand and overarching whole, and that ultimately, the meaning of any symbol can be known only in terms of the whole.

In other words, the symbol is grounded in the Reality which it represents.<sup>3</sup> This leads us to two fundamental dimensions of Bushnell's

symbolic theory: analogy and relationality. The correspondence between symbol and truth is not arbitrary, but "prepared". This principle of analogy applies not only to human language, but to all objective reality, to all "things and worlds". It gives Bushnell's symbolism its unlimited scope, and what he called its "moral" meaning.

One aspect of analogy is mystery--that the correspondence between symbol and truth is beyond investigation. We can never know what belongs to the symbol and what to the significance, but we can, through the universal presence of the form-element together with the discerning powers of insight, achieve a gradual spiritualizing of the symbolic world. This is our experimental training to the knowledge of God, the life-long drill in forms and images, prepared for the future benefits and uses of the practice.

The deepest meaning of symbol is as vehicle of God himself. God insphered us in a symbolic reality for the purpose of restoring a lost relationship, and ultimately, the role of the symbol is to conduct souls under sin back to God. Symbols are vehicles of God's own feeling, of the divine beauty and goodness and love. And as the truth which the symbol opens to us is a personal Being, our response to the symbol is one of commitment and trust. It is our embracing of the supernatural through the symbol that brings the inward communication of God.

It is the thesis of this paper that Bushnell's theology can not be interpreted apart from his symbolic theory. Any revelation, he said, whether it be a proposition of language, a vision or "a divine life in the flesh", takes place under conditions of symbol or form. Chapters Two, Three and Four of the thesis are concerned to examine Bushnell's understanding of God in Christ in terms of this basic theory;

in particular, in the light of an apparent tension which surfaces from within this theory and which is evidenced in Bushnell's theology in terms of a shift, or a gradual movement, which comes to a rather abrupt climax in the 1870's. It is the purpose of this paper not to "explain" that shift, but to put it in the context of Bushnell's symbolic theory, and further, to illustrate how central that symbolism is in Bushnell's doctrines of the person and work of Christ.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Man and Nature: "God's Moral Economy"

#### (i) Recovering the supernatural and the symbolic

Notwithstanding the interpretation of Theodore Munger, Horace Bushnell did not come down to Yale breathing some sort of nature-mysticism bred in the fresh, free air of Litchfield.<sup>1</sup> About four years before entering college, while tending a carding machine, Bushnell penned, a half-sentence at a time, an exposition of the ninth chapter of Romans. Says Mary Bushnell Cheney of this essay: "The method throughout is strictly logical, and has no trace of the spiritual insight which later characterized his thought on these and kindred subjects."<sup>2</sup>

Cheney sees this youthful essay as one of the many evidences that Bushnell was, prior to his college days, striving and straining to adapt himself to the arid religious orthodoxy of the day. But as time passed, and despite his exertions, "my religious character went down".<sup>3</sup> He would later see his own experience in terms of the struggle faced by "every ingenuous young person" who, in his search after truth, had to grapple with the speculative logic of New England theology. Such a person, said Bushnell

. . . has either to clear his way out into the truth by himself, through years of sorest conflict and groans of private mental war that God only does not frown upon; or else, in fault of any such persistency, to settle back into the more facile embrace of a confirmed and scornful infidelity.<sup>4</sup>

Bushnell's first glimpse after truth came in 1831 while he was tutoring at Yale. It was, says Cheney, "the most important crisis in his life".<sup>5</sup> Through the reading of Coleridge's Aids To Reflection, Bushnell was able to see beyond the confines of speculative logic to the possibility of intuitive knowledge.

My habit was only landscape before; but now I saw enough to convince me of a whole other world somewhere overhead, a range of realities in higher tier, that I must climb after, and, if possible, apprehend.<sup>6</sup>

Through Bushnell's own account of 1831, given in the autobiographical sermon, "The Dissolving of Doubts", we can recognize the nature and significance of this spiritual awakening. The sermon opens with a description of the questions which were confronting him and a large class of young thinkers in that "specially doubting age":

Science puts every thing in question, and literature distils the questions, making an atmosphere of them. We doubt both creation and Creator; whether there be second causes or only primal causes running ab aeterno in aeternum; whether God is any thing more than the sum of such causes; whether he works by will back of such causes; whether he is spirit working supernaturally through them; whether we have any personal relation to him, or he to us. And then, when we come to the matter of revelation, we question the fact of miracles and of the incarnation. We doubt free agency and responsibility, immortality and salvation, the utility of prayer and worship, and even of repentance for sin.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to 1831, Bushnell had, like a true son of the homespun mode, harnessed all his mental energies into the settling of these great questions, reasoning with restless urgency, "thinking of this and thinking of that". But such attempts "to find" the truth had brought him to a dead end, to what he called a "painful vacuity".<sup>8</sup>

My very difficulty was that I was too thoughtful, substituting thought for every thing else, and expecting so intently to dig

out a religion by my head that I was pushing it all the while practically away. Unbelief, in fact, had come to be my element.<sup>9</sup>

In 1831, Bushnell resolved to "begin at the beginning", to stake his life on the universal law of right.<sup>10</sup> In judging the meaning of this experience, commentators have been less inclined to note the touch of Coleridge than the influence of Scottish common sense realism or Calvinistic moralism. And in all, the estimates given of 1831 as a "conversion" to duty rather than to faith, miss the full meaning of this experience for Bushnell's future life and thought.<sup>11</sup>

For in 1831, with a deliberate dedication to moral rectitude, Bushnell first became experientially aware of a "higher sense", what he would later call "imagination". With his conscious commitment to a right God, he first "dimly felt" the reality of God; with his resolution to settle himself practically in the great first law of right, came his first apprehension of Christianity as a "practical truth".<sup>12</sup> In terms of his later theology, Bushnell's surrender of will had concomitantly revitalized his intuitive sense:

And this is the power of the will, as regards our moral recovery. It may so offer itself and the subordinate capacities to God, that God shall have the whole man open to his dominion, and be able to ingenerate in him a new, divine state, or principle of action; while taken as a governing, cultivating, and perfecting power in itself, it has no such capacity whatsoever.<sup>13</sup>

It is then in "that subtle gleam of sympathy", or in the assurance that "A Being so profoundly felt, must inevitably be", that Bushnell intimates the nature of his revelation of 1831.<sup>14</sup> "The Dissolving of Doubts" provides several of Bushnell's own "aphorisms", and these show some results of his mind's "new conditions". The great questions were

not gone, but he had a new way of approaching them. Hereafter, Bushnell's life is marked by a growing sense of inner peace, which would carry him through years of illness and accusation. He would wrestle with the doctrines of trinity, incarnation and atonement to the end of his life, but never again would he be afraid to "hang up questions and let them hang".<sup>15</sup>

A soul thus dissolved of doubts, wrote Bushnell, "will undertake shortly some point that is not cleared at once by the daylight of his new experience, and will, by and by, master it".<sup>16</sup> It is significant, then, that as early as the year following this experience, Bushnell first addressed himself to what he called "the great question of the age"--the concept of nature.<sup>17</sup> The meaning of nature, the relation of nature to God and of man to God and nature, were issues challenging every enlightened American in the mid-nineteenth century, and specifically threatening inherited Christianity.<sup>18</sup>

In an article written in May, 1832, Bushnell distinguished the realm of nature ("inert and powerless, never truly acting, but only acted with or upon") from the realm of mind ("agency itself, power acting of itself and revealing its motions through physical symbols"). At a later time, Bushnell pencilled in the margin of this manuscript: "This article shows the ferment out of which my Nature and Supernaturalism grew into shape thirty years after."<sup>19</sup>

These early definitions are consistent with Bushnell's later elaboration of the themes of nature and supernatural, given in the 1858 treatise, Nature and the Supernatural as Together Constituting the One System of God, the 1868 collection of essays, Moral Uses of Dark Things, and in several shorter selections, such as "Progress", and "Science and

Religion".<sup>20</sup> They indicate a fresh expression, a new approach to the questions, and one which is basic to Bushnell's entire theological reformulation. But the significance of this new approach can be measured only against the overall naturalism of the day.

It was for Bushnell that "death-damp" which like an atmosphere permeated the mind of the age, that "insidious form of unbelief" which threatened to undermine the foundations of all knowledge and community. And he focused his attack against it in the two fundamental presuppositions underlying naturalistic philosophy: first, the belief that nature, as a physical order, is itself the single and whole sphere of reality; second, belief in the essential goodness and perfectability of man.

"From the first moment or birth-time of modern science", wrote Bushnell, "it has been clear that Christianity must ultimately come into a grand issue of life and death with it, or with the tendencies embodied in its progress".<sup>21</sup> With the successful demonstration of the workings of cause-effect, the mechanical model was becoming normative for all reality, such that nothing could be true unless proved by the scientific method. It was a scheme alien to any concept of freedom or personality or relationship.<sup>22</sup>

There had developed, said Bushnell, "a skeptical tendency by modern science, which has set the laws of nature, for the time, in such prominence, as to operate a real suppression of thought in the spiritual direction".<sup>23</sup> The abuse lay not so much in the apprehension of nature as in "the assumed universal extent of nature, by which it becomes a fate, an all-devouring abyss of necessity, in which God, and man, and all free beings are virtually swallowed up."<sup>24</sup> This is the "new infidelity" which can allow no supernatural or spiritual dimension,



nothing distinct or apart from "a world as being a world".<sup>25</sup>

Busied in nature, and profoundly engrossed with her phenomena, confident of the uniformity of her laws, charmed with the opening wonders revealed in her processes, armed with manifold powers contributed to the advancement of commerce and the arts by the discovery of her secrets, and pressing onward still in the inquest, with an eagerness stimulated by rivalry and the expectation of greater wonders yet to be revealed,--occupied in this manner, not only does the mind of scientific men but of the age itself become fastened to, and glued down upon, nature; conceiving that nature, as a frame of physical order, is itself the system of God; unable to imagine any thing higher and more general to which it is subordinate.<sup>26</sup>

While the new geology evidenced this secularity of nature, biology's "development theory" posed an even greater threat to the Christian view of man and history. Since progress ruled all life, man's story was also one of ascent. His progress hinged not on the action of God in history, but on the forward thrust of natural causes. His imperfections would soon be abolished through an inherent process of linear development. There are, said Bushnell, no sins, for there is nothing to sin against. Evil is good in the making, and man is on his way to all that is virtuous and true. Bushnell cited New England Unitarianism as a case in point:

Denying human depravity, the need of a supernatural grace also vanishes, and they set forth a religion of ethics, instead of a gospel to faith. Their word is practically, not regeneration, but self-culture. There is a good seed in us, and we ought to make it grow ourselves. The gospel proposes salvation; a better name is development. Christ is a good teacher or interpreter of nature, and only so a redeemer. God, they say, has arranged the very scheme of the world so as to punish sin and reward virtue; therefore, any such hope of forgiveness as expects to be delivered of the natural effects of sin by a supernatural and regenerative experience, is vain; because it implies the failure of God's justice and the overturning of a natural law. Whoever is delivered of sin, must be delivered by such a life as finally brings the great law of justice on his side. To be justified freely by grace is impossible.<sup>27</sup>

With such ominous perceptions all around him, Bushnell embarked on Nature and the Supernatural, where he upheld and elaborated his 1832 distinction between matter and mind in terms of "nature" and "supernatural". To lift man out from nature, and recover a view of man as a creature of freedom, he followed Coleridge's distinction between "powers" and "things". And again, like Coleridge, he located the seat of personal freedom in the human will.<sup>28</sup>

Nature, Bushnell defined as "that created realm of being or substance which has an acting, a going on or process from within itself, under and by its own laws . . . a chain of causes and effects, or a scheme of orderly succession, determined from within the scheme itself."<sup>29</sup> The supernatural, on the other hand, he did not confine to the divine. All beings, persons, or "powers" are supernatural, the basis for this designation being the will.

Man is thus distinguished from all other forms of organic life in that he is a being supernatural, a creature of freedom who is both in nature and partially sovereign over it.

He is under no law of cause and effect in his choices. He stands out clear and sovereign as a being supernatural, and his definition is that he is an original power, acting, not in the line of causality, but from himself.<sup>30</sup>

Man is part of nature in the sense that all functions of his soul but the will are a nature, and as nature, operate under their own fixed laws of causality, partially subordinated to the uses of the will and its sovereignty over their changes and processes.

In certain parts or departments of the soul itself, such as memory, appetite, passion, attention, imagination, association, disposition, the will-power in him is held in contact, so to speak, with conditions and qualities that are dominated partly

by laws of cause and effect; for these faculties are partly governed by their own laws, and partly submitted to his governing will by their own laws; so that when he will exercise any control over them, or turn them about to serve his purpose, he can do it, in a qualified sense and degree, by operating through their laws. As far as they are concerned, he is pure nature, and he is only a power superior to cause and effect at the particular point of volition where his liberty culminates, and where the administration he is to maintain over his whole nature centers.<sup>31</sup>

It is not necessary, then, "to go hunting after marvels, apparitions, suspensions of the laws of nature, to find the supernatural; it meets us in what is least transcendent and most familiar, even in ourselves."<sup>32</sup> Bushnell calls self-determination "the central attribute of all personality", imparting to man "what is personal in character". It is by virtue of his will that man is what Bushnell calls a "moral" being, and life is what he calls a "moral" affair.<sup>33</sup> At the basis of this term is not some scheme of morality, but the understanding of man as a personality, a self who is unable to live in isolation from other selves. It is a concept which comprehends man's freedom, his individuality, his capacity to respond to the other. And it is a concept which abhors any view of man conceived in mechanistic terms.

Hence, for example, it is that we look on the nobler demonstrations of character in man, with a feeling so different from any that can be connected with mere cause and effect. In every friend we distinguish something more than a distillation of natural causes; a free, faithful soul, that, having a power to betray, stays fast in the integrity of love and sacrifice. We rejoice in heroic souls, and in every hero we discover a majestic spirit, how far transcending the merely instinctive and necessary actings of animal and vegetable life . . . . It is no mere wheel, no link in a chain, that stirs our blood in this manner; but it is a man, the sense we have of a man, rising out of the level of things, great above all things, great as being himself.<sup>34</sup>

But man is also part of nature in the sense that he is "in it, environed by it, acting through it". And that he is set in such close connection with it, Bushnell sees as no fortuity but predetermined in a reality where all supernatural expression is "embodied". "All vital or vitalizing powers are organific, and live by their embodiment".<sup>35</sup> This means that from his own point of liberty, man acts upon the laws of cause and effect in nature, thus bodying forth forms or symbols which the mere laws of cause and effect could not themselves produce. That is supernatural, according to Bushnell, which is capable of affecting nature in such a way as to produce results, which by mere nature, could not come to pass. And nature, in this view, is the medium through which such supernatural activity occurs.

And what is the supernatural? It is that which comes down upon nature out of will . . . . For nature, we shall see, is put down as a constant quantity, to be the medium or means, the coin or currency system, for exchanges going on between supernatural agents acting themselves into it and through it.<sup>36</sup>

In rejecting naturalistic monism, Bushnell thus makes a radical distinction between matter and mind, nature and supernatural. Yet inherent in this duality is an underlying unity of structure: things and powers are always related, the one as "organ", "field", "instrument", "vehicle", "medium"; the other as "agent, or force, which acts from itself, uncaused, initiating trains of effect that flow from itself".<sup>37</sup> It is this structure that makes all of life a "supernatural transaction" or a "grand conversation of wills".

And thus it is that we find ourselves embodied in matter to act as powers upon, for, with, and, if we will, against each other, in all the endless complications of look, word, act, art, force, and persuasion; in the family and in the

state, or two and two upon each other; in marriage, fraternity, neighborhood, friendship, trade, association, protection, hospitality, instruction, sympathy; or, if we will, in frauds, enmities, oppressions, cruelties, and mutual temptations . . . . The powers act on each other, by acting on the lines of cause and effect in nature; starting thus new trains of events and consequences, by which they affect each other, in ways of injury or blessing. They speak and set the air in motion, as it otherwise would not move; and so the obedient air, played on by their sovereignty, becomes the vehicle of words that communicate innumerable stings, insults, flatteries, seductions, threats; or tones of comfort, love and blessing. So of all the other elements, solid, fluid, or aerial--they are medial as between the powers. The whole play of commerce in society is through nature, and is in fact a playing on the causes and objects of nature by supernatural agents.<sup>38</sup>

In Nature and the Supernatural, Bushnell made his starting point man, not God. He defined man as a supernatural being through illustrations of his relation in freedom to nature. And having provided this familiar model, he saw no difficulty in the transposition to God's supernatural activity. "Is it then a thing incredible", he asked, "that God should do what we are doing ourselves? If we act our supernatural liberty into causes, without infringement of system, cannot God do the same?"<sup>39</sup>

And if we say that man is a moral being at the point of his will, how are we to conceive of the supreme liberty of God? God will not be the Deist watchmaker sleeping away his "deaf and idle eternity", but an Agent, the Living God, who has made the world open to his access and permeable by his will, so that through his relation in freedom to nature, he may be ever going out to and for man. In this view, wrote Bushnell, "the supernatural is present always to nature, an imminent fomentation, working always in strict system with it, and doing, *pari passu*, just what nature at her given stage of progress may be ready for, and asking for the fulfillment of her true idea."<sup>40</sup>

And this transposition to the conception of God's relation to nature in turn elevates nature to the status of a "universal medium" open to the commerce of all powers; in fact, an instrument of God's personality or a vehicle of divine intelligence.

And so also science itself, having learned to look after mind in things and above them, thus to inspect the goings on of nature, not as a mill operated by fate, but as a chariot wheeled by God's supreme liberty, will itself grow warm and free, as it gets more conversant, through nature, with the Supernatural Mind, and will make its highest reaches of discovery in the poetic and religious impulses, by which it will then finally be lifted.<sup>41</sup>

(ii) "Unnature" as symbol of sin

Basic to the theological crisis in New England in the nineteenth century was the debate over the question of human depravity. And while it is important to recognize the wide diversity of theories put forward through long years of controversy, it is perhaps equally significant to point to some common denominators. For whether one's source be Bennet Tyler's pamphlets, or Nathaniel Taylor's "Concio ad Clerum", or William Channing's "Unitarian Christianity", certain basic presuppositions prevail.<sup>42</sup> Each is inclined to view human nature in essentially substantialist terms, from the extreme of a nature that is entirely depraved to one that is basically good.<sup>43</sup> It was this conception which Bushnell challenged in his first major publication, Discourses On Christian Nurture.<sup>44</sup> Two attendant conceptions he continued to challenge throughout his life: this view of human nature is essentially individualistic, and its correlate is a moralistic view of sin.<sup>45</sup>

As Bushnell put it, sin was understood in terms of "misdeeds",

"this or that particular act of wrong".<sup>46</sup> And while all wrong acts presuppose sin, we must, he said, probe "back of the acts" to a state which they represent and express, in order to understand sin as "a lost condition". "There are", wrote Bushnell, "different kinds of vice, but only one kind of sin; viz., the state of being without God, or out of allegiance to God".<sup>47</sup>

In the original scheme of things, man was created to be a complete being by reason of his continual inspiration or participation of God. This is the "true normal state" of man, continually inspired by God, "conscious always of God as of himself, actuated by the divine character, exalted by the divine beatitude."<sup>48</sup> Bushnell did not frame his understanding of sin in terms of inherited depravity; each man has to experience his own fall. The choice of wrong, for Adam and for every man, is a willful and free forsaking of God, a turning away, a change in the soul's love. This is the meaning of the fall:

It is not that man fell away from certain moral notions, or laws, but it is that he fell away from the personal inhabitation of God, lost inspiration, and so became a dark, enslaved creature,--alienated, as the apostle says, from the life of God.<sup>49</sup>

The very seriousness of sin, the "very sin of the sin" is that it is against God and all that comes from God. There is no disguising the fact that sin comes out of man's will as a power transcending nature; it consists in a determination to have our own way, a casting off of the will of God and setting up of our own will; it is, in a word, "self-direction".<sup>50</sup>

We cannot be righteous out of all right relation, for it is our only right relation to live as in God, conscious of God, penetrated and filled by the divine life, even as the stars

are filled with his orderly will and turned about by his counsel. But our sin has taken us away from God. In it we pass into ourselves, take ourselves into our own hands and undertake to shape our own way, as we do to accomplish our own ends.<sup>51</sup>

Now while Bushnell set forth a view of man at creation as "constituently perfect" by virtue of the fact that he is inspired by God, this man is, nonetheless, in a state more negative than positive in regard to character. Bushnell stood against a substantialist view in saying that man's character is not given at creation, but only "formed historically"; man begins life without "character begun by action"; "ready", but "weak". His faculties are perfect and he is spontaneous to the good, but his will is yet untrained or unschooled.<sup>52</sup> Herein lies the weakness which Bushnell labelled man's "condition privative", by virtue of which his sin is "certain", while not necessary. This condition he described as "a moral state that is only inchoate, or incomplete, lacking something not yet reached, which is necessary to the probable rejection of evil".<sup>53</sup> Or, considering the first man, Bushnell gave a fuller description:

Considered as being simply made, he is a perfect structure, having all his parts in a balance of harmony, opening to goodness and God as a flower to the morning light. He is yet, with all his happy and pure inclinations, unestablished in anything happy and pure. Nothing good is confirmed in him or set on a footing above temptation. He has no experience and, so far, no character grounded in experience. He is curious and wants to know the unknown. He wants even to know disobedience, and has no sufficient countercheck of bitter experience to keep him from the trial of it. He knows it is wrong in principle, but the pains, the necessary hell of wrong that will be its effects, the knowing good and evil, is a mystery to him. Therefore with all his high native instincts, as created in the image of God, he is practically weak, a beautiful and glorious creature, but still weak as a character. He looks on the captivating tree, wonders what is there, craves the forbidden evil and finally says, I must know what it is. Thus he falls.<sup>54</sup>



Innocent, holy, aware of obligation, yet weak because they are free, and left to act originatively--such is the condition of all men and of each individual man standing on the verge of sin. Deliberation, when it comes, will mean inevitably the fall of man's "weak" holiness. And yet we cannot say that anything positive accounts for sin, and we are left wondering at the "profound mystery that overhangs the question of wrong itself".<sup>55</sup>

But only after a man has experimented in evil, only after he has known "the discord, bitterness, remorse, and inward hell of wrong" will the fascinations of mystery no longer tempt".<sup>56</sup> It is for this reason that Bushnell called life a "drill-practice", a "trial" or a "discipline"; it is a "training of consent" which is appointed by God not to punish or to tantalize man, but to form and consolidate character in him.

Hence apart from what is called probation or previous to it, man is to be looked upon as an incomplete or not completely finished creature, iron not yet converted into steel, or steel not hardened and tempered to its uses. And this is the object of his probation; it is not to break him if he will break, but it is to strengthen him finally that he may never break. It is to make him what as yet he is not, to carry him on beyond the state of raw being and perfect him in a character.<sup>57</sup>

The consequences of sin are not trivial--in its depth and all pervasiveness, sin disorders all of man's existence. His soul, his body, his social life, and the physical world around him, are all alike shattered into a condition of "unnature". In one word, we may best describe the consequences of sin as "de-formation".

In its normal state, Bushnell described the soul as an harmonious instrument which includes the will or supernatural power, together with

all the faculties that are subordinated to the will by their laws. He likened the soul to a fluid whose "form" is the conscience. Or he used the analogy of a crystal whose order is determined by the immutable law of right or of love.

And then it follows that, if the will breaks into revolt, the instrument is mistuned in every string, the fluid shaken becomes a shapeless, opaque mass, without unity or crystalline order.<sup>58</sup>

Exactly this fatal breach in the normal state or order of the soul is what Bushnell described as the "motions of sins". By turning away from God, man disjoins his very nature, dissolves "the primal order and harmony" of the soul, so that it ceases to be "a complete integer".<sup>59</sup>

Every sin reacts upon the agent as a breach of his internal harmony. Being an act against God, it is an act against the organization of the soul as it comes from God. Accordingly it breaks the original harmony, shatters the order, defiles the purity of the soul.<sup>60</sup>

No capacity of the soul can escape the disorder provoked by the misdoings of an evil will. Bushnell used the metaphor of disease, or of poison coursing swiftly through the body, to illustrate how sin leads to the death of the self. In the state of separation from God, man "dwindles painfully . . . and becomes a mere dry point, position without magnitude".<sup>61</sup> His perceptions are discolored, his judgments overrun by passion, his reason at war with appetites, his faith the slave of sense. All the powers that should be strung in harmony are loosed from each other and flung into hopeless confusion. Meanwhile, the conscience disturbs, gnaws and damns man relentlessly. There are, said Bushnell, "abysses of the tragic sentiment" in the human drama, foreign to existence on the

level of things. A tacit sense of blame haunts the world and drives it from its rest. We are "plagued by the foul demon of guilt" such that "humanity is itself the sign of a bad conscience".<sup>62</sup>

Despite this overall denaturing of man's soul, he is still a creature made for religion. No consequence of sin, Bushnell insisted, can be understood in terms of the traditional view of "total depravity". No law of the soul's nature is discontinued by sin, nor is any capacity proper to man fully taken away.<sup>63</sup> Man has been given a spiritual nature with a capacity to be permeated, illuminated, guided and exalted by God. And he has also been given a spiritual sense, the power of divine apprehension, "the power of distinguishing God and receiving the manifestation or immediate witness of God".<sup>64</sup> Bushnell said that man under sin has still this intuitive capacity; he is an "inspirable" creature whose religious capacities have been stunted and partially disabled.

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. The old affinity lives though smothered in selfishness and lust . . . .<sup>65</sup>

And here, said Bushnell, is the most profound reality of the soul's disorder, in the fact that despite its being an organ of sight, it can see only through tears. The will, by which the disorder was wrought, cannot, unassisted, repair it.

Considered as lost inspiration, then, sin is followed by a real deforming process with the soul. This "subjective" disorder has an objective antithesis; for sin has also what Bushnell called "dynamic" consequences without. As the revolted will throws all of man's faculties into disarray, so also does it disorder everything in the realm of nature

or matter. When the power called man begins to act as he was not made to act, against God, breaking out of all unity and harmony, then new forms are produced. The revolted will continually plays itself into the laws, combinations, chemistries, and conjunctions of nature, and the results are new shapes, signs, quantities, positions--the "furniture" of sin--"a face put on the world which God never gave it".<sup>66</sup> "What", asked Bushnell, "can his human disorder be, but a propagating cause of disorder? what his deformity within, but a soul of deformity without, in the surroundings of the field he occupies?"<sup>67</sup>

And so it is that man is putting out symbols, "casting forms and figures" for every sort of sin. "There is no concealment; everything is out in visible shape, and is going to be".<sup>68</sup> The whole creation is visibly groaning under sin. Every department of life is somehow changed and put into disorder.

Who, for example, looking upon the form of a gormandizer or a drunkard, fails to see how surely retribution represents sin with a fit figure of expression? The abuses of the soul are abuses also of the body; as the body is the soul's organ, damage in the soul is propagated as disease in the body. "The fortunes of the body must, in this way, follow the fortunes of the soul, whose organ it is."<sup>69</sup> And we have visible tokens of sin all around us in the fevers, diseases, plagues and pestilences of the world.

Then, as society is made up of souls and bodies, that also becomes an element of discord, a pitiless and dreadful power, infested with lies, fears, frauds, enmities, jealousies, deeds of oppression, injustice and persecution. Because humanity is, in a very important sense, an organic whole, and because the power of sin is so all-pervasive, no man stands

alone in the state of sin. And while it is true to say that each man, like Adam, must face for himself the mystery of iniquity and temptation, it is also true that the sin of one man means the social lapse of the race.

If we are units, so also are we a race, and the race is one--one family, one organic whole; such that the fall of the head involves the fall of all the members.<sup>70</sup>

Society thus falls or goes down as a unit, and we find humanity broken, disordered and plunged into unnature by sin, a brotherhood of corruption, a solidarity of bad wills witnessing to its woes through apposite tokens of destruction.

Nor can the state of sin exist apart from its objective embodiment in the physical or material world. In this sense, the consequence of sin is a vast unnaturing of man's environment. The world is "groaning and travailing in pain together with man, in the disorder consequent on his sin".<sup>71</sup> Therefore, while naturalism grounded its denial of sin in nature's beauty and perfection, Bushnell could not define nature apart from sin.

In what is called nature, we find a large admixture of signs or objects, which certainly do not belong to an ideal state of beauty, and do not, therefore, represent the mind of God, whence they are supposed to come. The fact is patent every where, and yet the superficial and hasty multitudes appear to take it for granted, that all the creations of God are beautiful of course.<sup>72</sup>

What can these signs and objects be, but a mirror of man's sin, forms through which nature represents man to himself? What is nature as unnature, but "an image under which he may conceive himself and fitly represent himself in language"?<sup>73</sup> "Given the fact of sin", Bushnell wrote, "what we call nature can be no mere embodiment of God's beauty

and the eternal order of His mind, but must be, to some wide extent, a realm of deformity and abortion; groaning with the discords of sin and keeping company with it in the guilty pains of its apostasy".<sup>74</sup>

Tokens of deformity in nature are not only visible objects, but all disgusts of sense: "dis-gusts" of taste and smell; "dis-easement" of the sensibility; "dis-cords" of sound; "dis-temper"; "dis-proportions"; "dis-tortions"; "dis-locations"; "de-rangements".<sup>75</sup>

And thus it is that the world itself is a kind of conscience without in the things of sense, "a bad conscience physically represented".<sup>76</sup>

"If we descend into sin, we set the causes of nature in courses of retributive action, and this reveals what is in our sin".<sup>77</sup> Symbols of sin fill all tiers and orders of substance up to the stars. And in this sense, nature is indeed a "fit field of exercise" for man's training of will, and finally, even an organ of salvation for us. For we could not carry on our moral training if we were not insphered in conditions that reflect, express and continually raise in us the idea of what we are.

We could never have any just opinion of moral retribution as inexorably connected with moral conduct, unless these galleries, down which we go, were hung with just so many unsightly figures and objects of disgust. Sin will get fit discipline here only as it occupies the house it builds, looking on the forms it paints, and catching in the air the scent of its own low practice.<sup>78</sup>

### (iii) Nature as symbol of providence

Looking out, as he did, upon such a spectacle of groaning, writhing members as the world exhibits, Bushnell could yet reconcile the disorder with the perfect fatherhood of God. Despite the state of "unnature" which he saw within and without, he affirmed order, unity,

system, plan, the ideal, the whole. "Truth is one", he wrote, "a complete, universal system based in God's all-comprehensive intelligence".<sup>79</sup>

If we call our present state "unnature", as truly we should, then we have yet stopped short of a higher and more significant truth. For man's de-formations are only part of a far wider picture, and one that has a "moral frame". To know any form, said Bushnell, be it object, or experience, or event, we must see it in terms of eternal providence, in terms of "the reality and ground of all realities and the highest possibility of knowledge".<sup>80</sup> The reality and the value of all forms and objects consists not in what the things are in themselves, but in what they signify, prepare, represent.<sup>81</sup> This means that the symbolism of our world must ultimately be placed in a religious context, where alone we can find its true meaning. We must look at things temporal as "signs" or "shadows" of the eternal; or in other words, we must see the affairs of time as "preparations of eternity".<sup>82</sup>

What is "unnature", then, but ideal and pure nature working according to a higher plan? Disorder and unnature are really order and nature chastising the false fact, sin.<sup>83</sup> Though man, through his sin, has stamped his mark on creation, God's typology overarches and includes this activity, such that all forms of unnature are in a higher sense part of system, and working to unity. It is the law of God's end, the moral perfection or holiness of God's being, round which all crystallizes into harmony.<sup>84</sup> This means that redemption is not some "patchwork" added on to the fabric of history, but the frame of order and counsel by which all things "con-sist", or come together into system. It means that the whole creation is made for Christianity, and that we do not understand the world until we "distinguish the interweaving of grace".<sup>85</sup>

For Bushnell, then, all that is bears some spiritual significance, some meaning in terms of God's redemptive plan. There is no such thing as empirical reality apart from moral meaningfulness or divine purpose. It is the same perspective by which the Puritans saw all of life as simultaneously spiritual through God's special overruling providence. It involves Bushnell in the basic metaphysical postulate that all form providentially represents spiritual reality or truth. "On the one hand is form; on the other, is the formless. The first represents, and is somehow fellow to, the other; how, we cannot discover."<sup>86</sup> The universe is not a mere jumble of fortuities, but a great circle of uses with man at the center; it proceeds not only by cause and effect, but for a final cause that has been from all eternity, and that is "to form" man in character by restoring him to his "true normal relation".

Bushnell said, then, that God "plans" from before the foundation of the world to recover man from his certain lapse into sin. He would even say that God "allows" the fall that man might be schooled in his liberty and so realize "the perilous capacity of character".<sup>87</sup> God has created the world for man, as he has created man for a great eternity, so that when man falls under sin, "everything bends to his fortunes and becomes an operative grace for his recovery".<sup>88</sup> Sin in this view is no mere casualty, but "that central fact about which the whole creation of God and the ordering of his providential and moral government, revolves".<sup>89</sup> And redemption is no afterthought of probation, but the essence of it.

Into this scheme of reality, Bushnell resolved the apparent discrepancy between the findings of geologic science and the biblical account of paradisaic history. How can the disorders of nature be



explained as symbols of sin when the rocks open their tombs and display myriad deformities which were in the world long before the arrival of man? Bushnell answered with what he called the "anticipative consequences" of sin--tokens, forms or symbols put out by God into creation as both marks of divine intelligence and prophetic types.

Because mind works under conditions of intelligence, every plan ordered by intelligence will disclose from the beginning marks that relate to future events. And so we see the unity and harmony of God's system in the fact that prior to the appearance of man, God has set nature with types of man's sin. Long ages before the arrival of man, the whole creation, animate and inanimate, "was groaning, in all orders and degrees, from the rocks upward . . . prefiguring and symbolizing the great, sad history to come . . .".<sup>90</sup>

And what can we look for, in this view, but that God's premeditations about sin, the images it raises, the counsel it requires, the deaths and abortions it works, and the new-creations it necessitates, will be coming into view, in all the immense, ante-dated eras and mighty revolutions of the geologic process? By the mere unity of God's intellectual system, they ought to appear, and, when they do, they will as truly be consequences of sin as if they were mere physical effects, subsequent in time to the facts.<sup>91</sup>

In part, the anticipative consequences of sin faithfully prefigure to man the fact of his lost condition. In part, they are evidence of the intelligence underlying all reality. Beyond this, Bushnell found in them a deeper dimension of meaning and grace. "It is the whole endeavor of his management to be known".<sup>92</sup> It is for this reason that things temporal are related as signs and images to the truth of God. "Thus if God is to be himself revealed, he has already thrown out symbols for it, filling the creation full of them, and these will be played into

metaphor".<sup>93</sup> This affirmation lays open the view that the anticipative symbols of sin are given to man by God for the purpose of mediating knowledge about God.

To say that man is potentially redeemable means that he is capable of knowing God again by an immediate knowledge--but also that his redemption will be possible only as he is first affected with knowledge about God and about his need for God. This is the function of all knowledge which God mediates to man through nature, history and all the forms of life. "The inherent use of all medial knowledges . . . is that they bring us in, to know God by an immediate knowledge".<sup>94</sup>

Holding this view of truth, "as presenting itself always by images metaphorically significant, never by any other possible means or media",<sup>95</sup> Bushnell could recognize in the findings of geology a grand reference to "last ends" and the conditions of trial and experience through which these ends are to be reached. For if the world has been disordered by sin, so has God "anticipatively disordered for the sake of order".<sup>96</sup> So has God prepared the creation with moral types that man might sense the hand of God at work, that he might perceive the nature of intelligence as active love.

For, in being set with types all through and from times most ancient, of suffering and deformity, prefiguring, in that manner, the being whose sublime struggles are to have it for their field, and showing him, when he arrives, how Eternal Forethought has been always shaping it to the mold of his fortunes--thus and thus only could he be fitly assured, in the wild chaos of sin, of any such Counsel, or Power, as can bring him safely through.<sup>97</sup>

The overmastering idea is the training and restoring of souls. God's original plan comprehends a supernatural economy that will work through disorder to bring souls out into the established liberty of

holiness. Seen in this light, history, like nature, must be a field of exercise, trial or discipline. God must be working in history through retribution and correction, so that history becomes for each individual soul a "minister of salvation". Apart from this, the human story can be seen only as a current that runs nowhere, having neither dignity nor law, a mere rolling on of eras, the account of which is, for the greater part, lost to oblivion.

All history is the training of God, who by love and judgment is working salvation . . . . The world and its affairs are not otherwise intelligible. Life is a riddle forever inexplicable, if it be not solved in this way . . . . It has no meaning till we can say that God is in it with a great design ulterior.<sup>98</sup>

But even more than this is history an organ of salvation for us, seen as the training of time. Not only is Christianity typed in the rocks of the world, in the whole frame of creation from the heavens downward, but it is prefigured or prepared in pre-Christian history through the story of a single people and the objective forms of their ritual. "History itself", said Bushnell, "is but a kind of figure, having its greatest value, not in what it is, but in what it signifies."<sup>99</sup> History preceding the gospel is pervaded by analogy, a "visible preparation" of time for the fullness to come, a "providential procession" of symbols moving toward the ascendancy of the "interpreter of all".<sup>100</sup> And history after Christ can be seen only in terms of the "new formation" of man according to the plan of God.<sup>101</sup> The will of God, in short, is at work in history, governing in the interest of Christianity.

And just here we can glimpse Bushnell's understanding of progress in history. The world, or what we call creation, is not so much a

completed fact as a process, what Bushnell called a "conatus", "struggling up concomitantly with the powers that are doing battle in it for character; falling with them in their fall, rising with them or to rise, to a condition, finally of complete order and beauty".<sup>102</sup> Progress in history is not development, and the deformities of the world are not incomplete or partially developed fruits. There is no such thing in history, Bushnell wrote, "as a progress without a God". Any outward transition in the events and objects of the world is but evidence or form for the work of God in shaping character within, "shaping and writing out a soul-history correspondent".<sup>103</sup>

In the final analysis, Bushnell's moral-economy scheme provides the metastructure according to which he defines everything. The true meaning of nature, for example, is not its objective reality, but its symbolic use. The true meaning of system comprehends a moral dimension: the real wonder of system, said Bushnell, is not stability but counsel, constancy and order made flexible to use and expression.

And the true meaning of science, in this view, is religious quest. Herein lies the distinction between what Bushnell called "atheistic science" and true science. The former is "imposed upon by nature, not instructed by it; as if there could be nothing greater than distance, measure, quantity, and show, nothing higher than the formal platitude of things".<sup>104</sup>

For to know matter simply as matter, laws simply as laws, or even to know the mechanical and physical uses of things and nothing more and higher, is indeed to miss of all that is most significant and loftiest in them. After all, the great thing is . . . to behold the face of the Creator in his works. Thus it is and only thus that they are truly comprehended. True science ends where the holy poet begins, climbing up through experiment and labor of reason into that

which faith seizes by a divine insight. The philosopher proves what the seer sees,--God, the inworking spirit of all work, the dominating force of all law, the underlying system of all system.<sup>105</sup>

All the facts of science and all the objects of scientific study, are given as vehicles of grace, that God might disclose himself to man, that he might conduct man to himself. Only as the scientist is religious thinker, only as he has caught "the unity and composite wholeness of truth", only as he can see the world's solid structure as subservient to Christianity, will he be true to his high calling.

#### (iv) Nature as language

Leonard Bacon recalled being "sufficiently startled" by the preacher of the Concio at the 1848 Yale Commencement. His thought, said Bacon, was "so far removed" from the "mental habits" of his hearers, that "they could only misunderstand it".<sup>106</sup> Amos Chesebrough was present on the occasion at Yale, and though his closest attention was given to the discourse, his reaction to it was no less equivocal: ". . . I confess that I was more mystified than edified".<sup>107</sup> Within two months, Bushnell had proclaimed his views in three major addresses at Harvard, Yale and Andover, and on each occasion the reaction had been the same. Said Bacon:

If the first and second discourses were startling to many a good man whose mind could move only in well-worn grooves of thought, much more was the third. The hearers, and those to whom the report came of what was heard, had expected something new and strange--perhaps something of ecclesiastical disturbance; and some of them were not disappointed.<sup>108</sup>

With considerable apprehension, then, and with more than ordinary

interest, readers turned to the Preliminary Dissertation introducing the published version of the three discourses, and identified by Bushnell as just such an explanation as would assist his readers in understanding his thought more fully. No simple introduction, these one hundred seventeen pages set forth a theory of language which would indeed prove to be received by the public as "the key" to Horace Bushnell. According to Mary Bushnell Cheney, these views of language form the "foundation" or the "key-stone" for the whole structure of Bushnell's thought. "Here", she emphasized, "is the key to Horace Bushnell, to the whole scheme of his thought, to that peculiar manner of expression which marked his individuality,--in a word, to the man."<sup>109</sup>

What he intended in his Preface, said Bushnell, was not a fully developed philosophy of language. The crux of his study was semantics: the "significancy" of language, or "the power and capacity of its words, taken as vehicles of thought and of spiritual truth."<sup>110</sup> If his hearers had been accustomed to the abstract language of an Emmons or the precise definitions of a Taylor, Bushnell here offered them a view of words as symbols only, of language as an instrument insufficient for the purposes of dogma. In short, Bushnell guided his readers into these three major statements of Christian theology by first denying the possibility of literal representation in them. "There is no such thing", he wrote, "as getting clear of form in human language."<sup>111</sup>

One might anticipate, then, the importance of Bushnell's views of language for the overall interpretation and appreciation of his thought. Mr. Chesebrough, for example, who was wholly puzzled by the obscurity of the Yale discourse, found the same full of meaning and consistency after he had probed the Dissertation On Language.<sup>112</sup> But

it is well to remember in this regard, that Bushnell's theory of language, rather than being the foundation of his thought, is itself grounded in his principle of correspondence or analogy. The concepts, symbolism and language, overlap in Bushnell's thought, but they are not identical.<sup>113</sup> Out of Bushnell's view of reality as symbolic or medial between supernatural powers, comes his view of language as the poetic embodiment of thought. As Feidelson acutely observed, Bushnell's semantic argument "is an oblique way of stating an organic theory."<sup>114</sup>

It is the great infirmity of man, Bushnell said, that he is so easily imposed on by his senses. "It cannot be denied that sensible things and objects do somehow exert a dreadful tyranny over his judgments and his character."<sup>115</sup> For having lost the immediate consciousness of God, man's sensibility is low; he is coarse and undiscerning. And just here we apprehend the significance of moral ends in our existence, in that all the objects of our outward and visible state are yet given to us as media of knowledge, vehicles of grace, instruments of our recovery.

This is Bushnell's principle of spiritual correspondence. It means that all form has been prepared to represent somehow the formless, and this in order that we may be recovered to the perfect knowledge of God. It means that "there is an inner light of divine thought, which informs, not only objects, but laws, and which, if we can find it, is expressed in all things".<sup>116</sup> Only because of this analogy is any revelation of God possible to a man bound down under sense. It means, for example, that we can see in all the forms and objects of creation some representation of the mind of God. And it is the same analogy which pervades the outward Providential history of past times.

We find but another example of God's revelation to man under conditions of form, in human language, which is "possible only on the ground of this vast, original and truly Sacred Analogy between things visible and invisible".<sup>117</sup> To say, in other words, that the whole outer world is an organ of divine intelligence, opens the possibility for human language; because nature is the language of God, the human mind can find in it vehicles of its own thought.

When I affirm that moral and spiritual truths are communicated and communicable, only under conditions of form or analogy, the declaration supposes a certain correspondence between objects and terms of the outward state, and whatever subjects of thought, feeling, and spiritual being, we may speak of; that the world of space and time is a medium to the world of mind; that what exists, in form, is prepared, by a certain mysterious and perfectly uninvestigable relationship, to represent what is out of form.<sup>118</sup>

It was to validate this principle of analogy that Bushnell discussed the origin of human language. Thinking, he said, can take place independently of language, but the moment man would think discursively or represent his thoughts to another, language is required.<sup>119</sup> This must first have originated as a human development--Bushnell accepted the theory of language as a divine gift only in so far as man was created with the instinct of language.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, any two human beings shut up wholly to each other from birth, would develop a language, and so affirm this God-given capacity for self-representation.

But how, Bushnell asked, would any two such un-languaged persons so thrown together, proceed to develop a language? Without difficulty they could generate a noun-language, or terms of physical import, merely by associating names or sounds with outward things and actions.<sup>121</sup> It would not be so easy, however, to speak of a spiritual being, a thought



or emotion, i.e. to develop an intellectual language.<sup>122</sup> Obviously, said Bushnell, our two language-makers would advance through the medium of sense, through the use of things, objects or acts in the outer world as signs of thought or interpreters between them. One language-maker would strike at some image or figure in the sensible world to represent his thought or emotion to the other, so that by sounding the name, the idea would somehow be represented to the other. And so an intellectual word would be generated.

But it was not enough for Bushnell to say that all terms of language are originally names of things or sensible appearances.<sup>123</sup> That the same form should represent a like idea between minds led him to reason that there is an inherent or pre-existing fitness at work whenever a spiritual thought enters a sensible form, that the association between image and idea is more than arbitrary. Here, then, is the principle of spiritual correspondence. There is, said Bushnell, a Logos in creation which finds a corresponding logos in mind. Even in the formation of grammar, this same logos is at work, so that the external grammar of creation answers to the internal grammar of the mind and becomes its vehicle. In short:

There is a logos in the forms of things, by which they are prepared to serve as types or images of what is inmost in our souls; and then there is a logos also of construction in the relations of space, the position, qualities, connections, and predicates of things, by which they are framed into grammar. In one word, the outer world, which envelops our being, is itself language, the power of all language.<sup>124</sup>

Several hermeneutical implications follow from this view of language as grounded in analogy. If the correspondence between thought and sense is itself the very possibility of intellectual language, it

is at the same time the limitation of such language. For words of thought can be only names of forms, and as such mediators of the formless, "incarnations" or "insensings" of thought. We cannot suppose a thought or idea to have in itself any sensible quality whatever, so that when we clothe or embody such an idea in a form, the intellectual word we thus create can be used only as a symbol, to represent or express the idea. Hence, Bushnell's first hermeneutical emphasis is the inexactitude of all intellectual or spiritual language. The mathematical model of precision is not applicable here. Language is more an instrument of suggestion than of absolute conveyance for thought.

What, then, it may be asked, is the real and legitimate use of words, when applied to moral subjects? for we cannot dispense with them, and it is uncomfortable to hold them in universal skepticism, as being only instruments of error. Words, then, I answer, are legitimately used as the signs of thoughts to be expressed. They do not literally convey, or pass over a thought out of one mind into another, as we commonly speak of doing. They are only hints, or images, held up before the mind of another, to put him on generating or reproducing the same thought; which he can do only as he has the same personal contents, or the generative power out of which to bring the thought required.<sup>125</sup>

Beyond inexactitude, there is an element of falseness in every language. Words of thought or spirit are not only imprecise in their significance, but they always affirm something which is false or contrary to the truth intended. They impute form to what is out of form.

Being really images, therefore, of that which has no sensible quality, they do always impute or associate something which does not belong to the truth or thought expressed; viz., form. On which account, the greatest caution is needed, that, while we use them, confidingly, as vehicles, we never allow them to impose upon us anything of their own.<sup>126</sup>

And because language cannot convey any truth whole, or by a literal embodiment, there will be some necessary conflict between the statements in which a truth is expressed. Contrary forms are needed as complementary representations of truth, and the element of paradox is essential to any full expression of truth.<sup>127</sup> We are, accordingly, to approach language with a comprehensive spirit, to take up all symbols and be guided by their many shades of meaning to a broad view of truth. Allow repugnances to stand, said Bushnell, and offer your mind to the wholeness of truth.<sup>128</sup>

From the above emphases, we can anticipate the place of definitions and the role of the logical method within the sphere of intellectual language. Definitions, are only "changes of symbol"; they do not carry meaning by simple notation, and we misuse them if we take them to be more than "shadows of truth".<sup>129</sup> And just this kind of misuse is the result of our application of the logical argument in religious and moral reasonings. Bushnell did not assault logic itself as a science, but "that deductive, proving, spinning method" imposed upon "the plastic realm of life", where only insight or intuition can properly discover truth.

From the fact that the correspondence between thought and form is not arbitrary, but that there is a vital connection between the two, we can speak of the fitness of particular forms to represent certain ideas or feelings. We cannot say why this fitness exists in any particular case, for the analogy between mind and matter is "perfectly inscrutable". We can only feel instinctively why some form or image should be made use of to represent some feeling or idea. Language, then, is not merely the embodiment, but the creation of the thought.

Words are not merely units of construction, but living powers of thought.

"Poets", said Bushnell, "are the true metaphysicians, and if there be any complete science of man to come, they must bring it."<sup>130</sup>

And in thinking thus of language not as mechanical product, but as living creation, we can appreciate another dimension of Bushnell's hermeneutics. No one should interpret another's language without a sense both of its personal character and its organic unity:

In every writer, distinguished by mental life, words have a significance and power breathed into them, which is wholly peculiar . . . his language is his own, and there is some chemistry of life in it that belongs wholly to him, as does the vital chemistry of his body . . . Life is organic; and if there be life in his work, it will be found not in some noun or verb that he uses, but in the organic whole of his creations. Hence, it is clear that he must be apprehended in some sense, as a whole, before his full import can be received in paragraphs and sentences.<sup>131</sup>

Bushnell spoke, then, of the personal life and character of language, and, correspondingly, of the interpreting power of sympathy. It requires some spiritually discerning sympathy extended over a length of time, to allow one to come into the whole sphere of another, to feel out the real meaning of his words, to come to some true understanding of his thought. In this regard, he referred to the moral dimension of interpretation, its requiring "conditions of character in the receivers"; and we may thus be reminded that for him, interpretation is essentially a religious act. Because of the relation of matter to mind, the act of making or perceiving symbols, is in its most profound sense, an encounter with God.<sup>132</sup>

It follows that for Bushnell, the imagination was the most essential and active faculty in human language. He defined imagination as both a creative and perceptive capacity, "that power in human bosoms

which reads the types of creation, beholding the stamps of God's meanings in their faces; the power that distinguishes truth in their images, and seizes hold of images for the expression of truths".<sup>133</sup> It is not to be confounded with fancy, or understood as having to do with the ornamental or the superficial, for it is indeed the most critical and perceptive faculty which a man has. What distinguishes man as a being of intelligence, Bushnell asked, but that capacity to both employ and receive the types which the Logos offers?

All words that are names of mere physical acts and objects are literal, and even animals can, so far, learn their own names and the meaning of many acts done or commanded. But no animal ever understood a metaphor: that belongs to intelligence, and to man as a creature of intelligence; being a power to see, in all images, the faces of truth, and take their sense, or read (*intus lego*) their meaning, when thrown up in language before the imagination.<sup>134</sup>

Such views of language as these preserved Bushnell from any lack of enthusiasm for the promises and achievements of modern science. Imagination, he said, is no less essential to the scientist than to the poet, for both are seeking truth in the outward forms of the universe, the spirit in the letter. But in particular, Bushnell was convinced that advance in the physical sciences could only mean advance in religious truth. We may expect, he said, that:

physical science, leading the way, setting outward things in their true proportions, opening up their true contents, revealing their genesis and final causes and laws, and weaving all into the unity of a real universe, will so perfect our knowledges and conceptions of them, that we can use them, in the second department of language, with more exactness.<sup>135</sup>

But the question must be raised, what, according to these views of language, is the meaning and place of Christian theology? Bushnell

defined theology as "abstractive and systematic doctrine"; "what results, when the subject, God, is logically expounded or reasoned".<sup>136</sup> As it is an exposition of consciousness, therefore, a "bringing into form, what is out of form, and can be only figuratively represented in it",<sup>137</sup> pure dogmatism is, of course, ruled out. Even as dealing with real truths of consciousness, theology can handle these truths by analogies only. And as no doctrine can ever be immovably fixed, so no theology can ever be a law for anything, can never carry the weight of authority or infallibility. But in order to a right estimate of the meaning and place of theology, Bushnell proposed a distinction between "mere theology" and "Christian theology", the latter being grounded in "divinity".

Mere theology, said Bushnell, is a science built without experience. It is a theoretic account of the subject, God, made from the standpoint "of a simply natural consciousness". It is what Bushnell called "crustaceous" theology, being an encrusted or closed system; being "about" truth, but not "of" it.<sup>138</sup>

If, however, the theologian begins at the point of a living consciousness of God, which Bushnell called a state of real divinity, and essays to expound that consciousness in speculative order, then the resulting system may be called "Christian theology" or evangelical theology. According to this distinction, faith precedes theology, and theology has its basis in experience. And this "experience" is the immediate experience of God, what is made conscious within a man through all the forms or media of divinity . . .

God as in the creation, God in history . . . in all the outward objects; and again in the Scripture, in the form

of political and religious annals, the biographies of distinguished saints, the teachings of prophets, the incarnate life and death of the Word made flesh . . . a vast realm of diving fact, radiant in every part with the light of God.<sup>139</sup>

Christian theology is that interpretation of God which is made by experience, which grows out of a knowledge had of God by immediate consciousness; it is the fruit of a "Living State, the Life of God in the soul of man".<sup>140</sup> It is "the speculative or logical exposition of the Christian consciousness, considered as containing the divine".<sup>141</sup> It is not based on values or ideas independent of origins, but rests on a personal relation to God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it "rests on the Scripture body of fact, because, in that, the divine is bodied and expressed, and offered to experience".<sup>142</sup>

However, one must not omit here a consideration of great importance, and that is that even as theology is grounded in divinity, even as it is built upon Christ, the foundation, it will never, said Bushnell, "be pure gold, or any thing like it". Remember, he said:

That the Christian, or divine consciousness, of which speculative theology is to be the expounder, differs from the natural consciousness in the fact that it is no constant quantity; that it fluctuates with the fidelity of the man and the spiritual temperament of his life; that it is always a mixed and never a pure state, mixed with lies, sensualities, and all manner of undivinites, and these so cunningly inserted as not to reveal their presence; that sometimes the investigator comes under the power of the world, stolen away from himself, and then, as the divine can not be held in the memory a moment after it is gone from the heart, he swings to a new center of motion, according to the balance of matter left in his consciousness. This being the true state, out of which a science or theory is to come, and which it is to represent, what is that science like to be? Is not every theologian, though it may cost him some mortification to confess it, moved to a very different way of speculation, at one time, from that which

seems truest at another. Such is our infirmity! Will the infirmity of our theology be less?<sup>143</sup>

At the same time, we must not undervalue the worth of Christian theologies. In his discussions on language, and also in the Andover address, Bushnell directed himself to this question of finding a place or showing a true ground for speculative theology. In the first place, he said, man must theologize in order to satisfy the instinct in his nature. "We must define, distinguish, arrange and frame into order the matter of our knowledge".<sup>144</sup> In this way, man "comforts" his own intelligence; Bushnell would even say that the exercise itself is more important than the results.<sup>145</sup> As well, the exercise of system is both a discipline and a learning process. It draws a man's thought toward greater coherence and compactness; it gives the method by which to teach what he knows and what he does not. Christianity is thereby better able to meet the assaults of false belief and skepticism, and to form a valid connection with the truths of philosophy and science. Christian theology provides checks and balances, guarding against the illusory and the fantastic. "No person will ever become, therefore, a good and sufficient teacher or preacher of the gospel, without a strong theologic discipline."<sup>146</sup>

But probably the greatest value of man's theologizing instinct is its redemptive role in God's moral economy. "The world", said Bushnell, "is not yet in the spirit, but in the life of nature. There it must be met, and somewhat on its own level. If it were addressed only out of the inner light, and in terms of the highest and purest Christian experience, it would be no better than if it were called in an unknown tongue".<sup>147</sup> Christian theology is a form, an objective structure of thought, and as such, a vehicle or place of contact, by which



Christianity "gets into the mental system of the world, and, through that, into the heart".<sup>148</sup> Christian symbols are, then, vehicles of insight and interpretation, forms of truth that can work in the mind as powers of thought and so as preparatives and grounds of faith.

Through his views of language, Bushnell sought a new approach to the whole question of interpretation, and so, he hoped, a decided mitigation of the endless divisions, schisms and denunciations within New England. "Without being at all aware of the fact", he said, "our theologic method in New England has been essentially rationalistic."<sup>149</sup> Denying the Unitarian method of reasoning "over" the scriptures, the orthodox were yet as active and confident rationalists "under" them. The supposition was that learning and debate could settle Christian truths, and consequently, he said, New England piety was "marvelously unspiritual", having "no real intimacy with God; but an air of lightness and outsideness rather, as if it were wholly of ourselves, not a life of God in the soul".<sup>150</sup>

Bushnell's own views led to a different method. The scriptures would be approached not as a book of propositions and "mere dialectic entities", but as a poetic whole, full of contrarious aspects of one and the same truth, offered not to the scalpel of truth-by-analysis, but to the seeing eye of the mystic.<sup>151</sup> And Bushnell hoped his views would lead his readers to discover that they had over-valued the organizing power of dogmatism. The constructive energy of formulas is not caused by their definite hold of the literal truth. And while there is no limit to the possible systems that may be framed or composed, theologies hold their power only as they are vehicles of one Life.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Trinity: "language for God"

"Revelation", said William Ellery Channing, "is addressed to us as rational beings."<sup>1</sup> We ought not to expect from God propositions which we cannot reconcile with one another, or which in their literal sense appear repugnant to one another. If the Bible contains occasional obscurities, what in that book is necessary truth is revealed "too plainly to be mistaken, and too consistently to be questioned".<sup>2</sup>

According to these principles, Channing could in no way reconcile the scriptural revelation of God's unity with orthodox trinitarianism. By the proposition of God's unity, Channing understood literally

that there is one being, one mind, one person, one intelligent agent, and one only, to whom underived and infinite perfection and dominion belong.<sup>3</sup>

But according to orthodox trinitarianism, he said, there are three Gods, "three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost".<sup>4</sup> Using the same literal method by which Nathanael Emmons could define the Godhead in terms of three distinct persons, Channing thus affirmed divine unity in terms of one person. This divine unity, he said, is not to be interpreted as anything different from the oneness of other intelligent beings; this is literal language and should be taken in no unusual sense.<sup>5</sup>

It seemed to Bushnell that such was the confusion into which New England orthodoxy had fallen over the trinity, that almost any reaction

against that standard had to be excused. Undoubtedly, he said, a very large portion of orthodoxy held to the view of three real living persons in the interior nature of God,

that is, three consciousnesses, wills, hearts, understandings. Certain passages of scripture supposed to represent the three persons as covenanting, co-operating, and co-presiding, are taken, accordingly, so to affirm, in the most literal and dogmatic sense. And some very distinguished living teachers are frank enough to acknowledge, that any intermediate doctrine, between the absolute unity of God and a social unity, is impossible and incredible; therefore, that they take the latter. Accordingly, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are, in their view, socially united only, and preside in that way, as a kind of celestial tritheocracy over the world. They are one God simply in the sense that the three will always act together, with a perfect consent, or coincidence . . . . But our properly orthodox teachers and churches, while professing three persons, also retain the verbal profession of one person. They suppose themselves really to hold that God is one person. And yet they most certainly do not; they only confuse their understanding, and call their confusion faith.<sup>6</sup>

And commenting on this orthodox-Unitarian debate, Bushnell remarked that a "metaphysical trinity" had been assaulted by a "metaphysical unity". One, he said, "mocks our reason"; the other "freezes our hearts".<sup>7</sup>

Channing's charge of tritheism had occasioned the publication by Moses Stuart, the most able orthodox spokesman in New England, of the Letters To the Rev. Wm. E. Channing, Containing Remarks On His Sermon Recently Preached and Published at Baltimore. The word "person", said Stuart, is not used by trinitarians "in its ordinary acceptation as applied to men".<sup>8</sup> By "person" is meant not a literal "person", but a "distinction". What that distinction is in the Godhead which the word "person" is meant to designate, Stuart admitted that he did not know. The essence of his argument is that orthodoxy must abjure all

attempts to define that distinction which the trinitarian term "person" implies; the distinction is admitted, simply because the scriptures reveal it as a fact.<sup>9</sup>

Bushnell could not accept Stuart's view. Just as orthodox attempts to assert three persons who are yet one person, inevitably lost the unity in the threeness, so Bushnell thought that in Stuart's attempt, the threeness was obscured by the unity. Indeed, Bushnell said that

the class of teachers who protest over the word person, declaring that they mean only a threefold distinction, cannot show that there is really a hair's breadth of difference between their doctrine and the doctrine asserted by many of the later Unitarians. They may teach or preach in a very different manner,--they probably do, but the theoretic contents of their opinion cannot be distinguished.<sup>10</sup>

Bushnell did not set forth his view of trinity, he said, as any new doctrine.<sup>11</sup> Nor did he propose to settle the opposing theories of trinity which were agitating so deeply the peace of the New England church. He regarded the New England trinitarian debate as an endless controversy because it arose from an attempt to settle a conception of trinity as pertaining immanently to the interior nature of God. This question, he said, is impossible, and he refused to take it up. Just here, he said in Christ In Theology, was the peculiarity of the exposition he ventured to offer, and its advantage over modalism, orthodoxy, and "all ontological and transcendental theories".<sup>12</sup>

But if Bushnell could not settle a conception of the trinity, he could offer a new view of the meaning of the subject as symbol. The Christian trinity, he said, is not offered to the abstract reason; its meaning cannot be apprehended under the definitions and rules of logic.

But this is not to say that the doctrine is meaningless or some hyperbolic ornament. It is to say that the truth of the trinity is to be found in its forms. The trinity, said Bushnell, "may be regarded as language for God";<sup>13</sup> the figure or instrument through which God accomodates his infinite love to finite forms of thought and feeling. As such, the trinity is both "instrumental" and "practical", and it is under these aspects that we must first consider Bushnell's view of the doctrine.

First of all, Bushnell said, we must hold fast the strict unity of God. We must take it by assumption that God is "as truly one being as if he were a finite person like ourselves, and let nothing ever be suffered to qualify the assumption".<sup>14</sup> Bushnell then addressed himself to the question why there is a trinity by attempting to account for what he called "the external fact of trinity", or to show that when the Absolute One is revealed to man, the process must involve a trinity. Holding the assumption of God's unity and infinity, he asked, "How shall we conceive God?". The starting point is not from the side of man, who will construct a metaphysical conception of Godhead, but the starting point is from God, revealing himself in history to man. Bushnell sought a trinity "that results of necessity from the revelation of God to man".<sup>15</sup> Consequently, his argument begins at a point quite different from the orthodoxy of his day:

. . . instead of beginning transcendently at a point within the active life of God, it takes a humbler method, beginning at the consideration of our media and powers of knowledge, and of the conditions under which Infinite Being and Spirit may be revealed and expressed to us.<sup>16</sup>

What is necessary to a revelation of God, or how can God appear

before us? In answering, Bushnell set himself against both orthodox and Unitarian. Any revelation of God, he said, necessitates terms of both plurality and contrast. When God is revealed, it cannot be as Channing's "bald, philosophic unity, perfectly comprehended and measured by us".<sup>17</sup> No, said Bushnell, the Infinite can reveal himself only through the finite, through signs, media, objects, "forms, colors, motions, words, persons, or personalities".<sup>18</sup> And as no one of these forms can contain the Infinite, God will reveal himself through infinite finites, repugnant and contrary one to the other. The revealing process "will envelop itself in clouds of formal contradiction--that is, of diction which is contrary, in some way, to the truth and which, taken simply as diction, is continually setting forms against each other".<sup>19</sup>

Plurality, then, according to Bushnell's view, is no detracting from the unity of God. But the plurality of which he speaks is not of three finite terms, literally taken, but of media of divine representation which are necessary to an adequate revelation of the one God. "Holding firm the unity", he said, "use the plurality with the utmost unconcern, as a form of thought or instrumental verity, by which we are to be assisted in receiving the most unrestricted, fullest, most real and sufficient impression of the One."<sup>20</sup> To the Unitarian's question how one can be three, Bushnell answered that One must appear as three, or at least, considering only this aspect of trinity as instrumental in respect to the revelation of God, that any revelation of the Absolute One must involve a plurality of symbols, in the case of an incarnation, a plurality of personal figures. Rather than being shocked or offended by the notion of plurality, then, we should expect that "... assuming the strict unity of God, He will be revealed under

conditions of form and number; the Absolute by relatives, or in the case of an incarnation, by relative persons".<sup>21</sup>

Contrast will be the mode of the plurality.<sup>22</sup> This principle of contrast is of course inherent in Bushnell's view of all objective reality as symbolic of truth. As nothing definite can be infinite, so formal contradiction is the condition under which knowledge is communicated to man; the nisus of "action and reaction" draws man up through higher levels of knowledge to a more perfect apprehension of God:

Now it is in this manner only, through relations, contrasts, actions and reactions, that we come into the knowledge of God. As Absolute Being, we know Him not. But our mind, acted under the law of action and reaction, is carried up to Him, or thrown back upon Him, to apprehend Him more and more perfectly. Nothing that we see, or can see, represents Him fully, or can represent Him truly; for the finite cannot show us the Infinite. But between various finites, acting so as to correct each other, and be supplements to each other, we get a true knowledge. Our method may be compared to that of resultant motions in philosophy. No one finite thing represents the Absolute Being; but between two or more finite forces acting obliquely on our mind, it is driven out, in a resultant motion, towards the Infinite. Meantime, a part of the two finite forces, being oblique or false, is destroyed by the mutual counteraction of forces.<sup>23</sup>

And as God can bring himself into knowledge only through symbols, mystery is a necessary dynamic of expression for the infinite. Dogma, says Bushnell, is lifeless, "an end of question"; it is "having God by rote".<sup>24</sup> Doctrinal propositions restrain the freedom and mobility of the mind. As against what is definite and defined, symbolic knowledge is characterized by dynamism and openness; it "provokes to the highest activity of thought concerning God"; it involves "a lifting" of thought, and is no resting in easy conceptions.<sup>25</sup>

Could some science of the trinity, or of God's immanent distribution, be perfected and established in a fixed form of dogma, so that nothing more would be left to us but to run over the logical terms and hear what they say, then manifestly, the labor of the world's mind would rest and the process of fertility be ended.<sup>26</sup>

The Christian trinity, said Bushnell, is a "holy paradox", an "amazing riddle thrown out to the mind of the world".<sup>27</sup> As such, it represents both the limit of human understanding, "the last limit of possible investigation",<sup>28</sup> and the source of limitless senses of the possibilities included in the meaning of God and the mystery of infinite being. Because the precise relation between form and truth is ultimately uninvestigable, man can ever fathom the trinity at greater depth, but he can never reduce it to a doctrine.<sup>29</sup> "Nothing", said Bushnell, "strains the human mind to such tensity as a riddle or mystery, when that riddle or mystery is not a fiction, but is based in the depth of some stupendous reality".<sup>30</sup> The symbol is not the reality, but neither is it a blind, for underlying the Christian trinity is the same principle of correspondence which renders intelligible all that is.

We are not simply overtaken by darkness, or driven to a corner whence we can not escape, save by calling on Mystery to help us; but we meet her in the place of intelligence, and greet her as an acquaintance. For we have seen beforehand that the relation of form to truth in every term of language is a mystery quite insoluble, and now we only meet a particular example of the same fact.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, it must be the "incurious method" that is adopted as the law of interpretation of this doctrine, the "practical" rather than the speculative. To say that the trinitarian formula is addressed to the imagination means that it has the power to flood the soul with the sense of God, and so "release thee from the power of thy will", and be the spring of a man's faith. And so we are to receive it, poetically,



aesthetically, by faith to be experimented or known experimentally, "that feeling and imagination are sometimes good interpreters and proper inlets of knowledge".<sup>32</sup> God "approaches us" in the trinity; it is "the algebraic formula of experience".<sup>33</sup>

But why is the Christian trinity developed as the threefold denomination of Father, Son and Holy Spirit? To ask, Why these names?, or Why this language for God?, is to ask the question of the Christian trinity as a "practical" truth; and this is the trinitarian question for Bushnell--not whether God is comprehensible, but whether God is personal.<sup>34</sup> And the answer to the question, Why this trinity?, concerns why this threefold denomination is necessary to a full apprehension of God, or in other words, the answer concerns the power that these particular personal figures have in the work of ingenerating "the Life of God in the soul of man".<sup>35</sup> To his Unitarian friend, Cyrus Bartol, Bushnell wrote:

You seem to assume that Trinity, such as you qualifiedly acknowledge, is a human invention, to be finally overreached and antiquated. This I very much doubt. Much more likely is it to me that our human limitation, as finite, requires it, and always will,--that the infinite Unity becomes relational, and eternally will, through it.<sup>36</sup>

To unfold the power of this threefold denomination, Bushnell began with the incarnation; the appearance of Christ, who represents that God is Father.<sup>37</sup> God cannot be represented and worshipped only in the type of a person, which is nothing but a metaphysically finite conception. Consequently, when the Logos appears in the human form as Son, he must have set over against him a relative, finite form:

A solitary finite thing, or person, that is, one that has no relative in the finite, is even absurd,--much more if

the design be that we shall ascend, through it, to the Absolute; for we can do this only under the great mental law of action and reaction, which requires relative terms and forces, between which it may be maintained.<sup>38</sup>

So it is that the development of the term, "Father", begins with the appearance of the Son. True, God is called "a Father" before Christ, but there is no development of "the Father" which is older than Christianity. God is called "the Father" ordinarily by Christ, and thus the Son calls into our thought the Father, who is in fact God, brought into symbol. We are given a finite form of conception, "Father", in cross-representation with the form, "Son": by means of these two symbols and the relative history which is unfolded through them, man is borne up into a certain lively realization of God.

God communicates himself in the form of incarnation. That is, the Son appears to communicate God to the world as Goodness and Life; ". . . he signifies, or reveals the light and love of God, in and through the human or subject life".<sup>39</sup> But the Son does not stand before us as the single term, God, saying, "Look unto me, and behold your God"; but he comes as sent into the world by the Father, and his incarnation, then, involves a "double impersonation", that of the Father and that of the Son. Thus the Son exalts and deifies what he reveals by referring his mission to one who is greater than himself.

Moreover, the Son does not say that he came forth from the Absolute or from It, but he gives us a conception of God as person, as Father, "active, choosing, feeling Spirit".<sup>40</sup> And as in the human form expressing and representing the Absolute Being, the Son offers us a comprehensive view of God's kingdom which includes and harmonizes both nature and the supernatural. "He has even brought down the mercies

of His Heart to meet us on our human level."<sup>41</sup> We now know God as Infinite, yet as Friend and Redeemer. There is, said Bushnell,

no intellectual machinery in a close theoretic monotheism for any such thing as a work of grace or supernatural redemption . . . . Accordingly, it will be observed that where this Unitarian conception is held, there is also discovered an almost irresistible tendency to naturalism, and so to a loss or dying out of all that distinctively constitutes the gospel.<sup>42</sup>

By the Father and the Son, then, as relative conceptions, God's character, feeling and truth are expressed. But there is yet needed, to complete our sense of God, another kind of expression

which will require the introduction or appearance of yet another and distinct kind of impersonation. We not only want a conception of God in His character and feeling towards us, but we want, also, to conceive Him as in act within us, working in us, under the conditions of time and progression, spiritual results of quickening, deliverance, and purification from evil. Now, action of any kind is representable to us only under the conditions of movement in time and space, which, as we have seen, is not predicable of the Absolute Being abstractly contemplated. God, in act, therefore, will be given us by another finite, relative impersonation.<sup>43</sup>

Accordingly, the word "spirit", signifying "breath" or "air in motion", is taken up as symbol or type of power, clothed with a divine personality, and offered to us as the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, the Divine Power in souls, related personally to the Father and the Son. And as the Son appears in the human type, so the Holy Spirit is evidenced to us through physical images, a rushing wind, lambent flames, unloosed tongues.

We are thus given in the Christian trinity three finite terms, which when we use them freely in their cross relations, work in us as instruments of feeling and faith. These impersonations are relatives,

not infinites, yet taken representatively, they are infinites, because they express God. They are given to us to show us God, and by this Bushnell means, not to mirror before our minds a metaphysical formula, but to express the Infinite in all that he offers to us and in all that he plans for us. God reveals himself to us as trinity in order to produce mutuality between us and Him, that is, "to pour something of the divine into our nature".<sup>44</sup> The Christian trinity has its reality, in other words, as it is a vitalizing element within human souls. "They may each declare, 'I am He;' for what they impart to us of Him, is their true reality."<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, Bushnell said, that the more we could conceive a "trinity of act", rather than a "trinity of essence", the more we could learn to use the plurality in the freest way possible, the more lively would be our apprehension of God, the more full and blessed our converse with him. This is why Bushnell's descriptive passages are always marked by action verbs:

The Father plans, presides, and purposes for us; the Son expresses his intended mercy, proves it, brings it down even to the level of a fellow feeling; the Spirit works within us the beauty he reveals, and the glory beheld in his Life. The Father sends the Son, the Son delivers the grace of the Father; the Father dispenses, and the Son procures the Spirit; the Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son, to fulfill the purpose of one, and the expressed feeling of the other; each and all together dramatize and bring forth into life about us that Infinite One, who, to our mere thought, were no better than Brama sleeping on eternity and the stars.<sup>46</sup>

And it was to demonstrate that our conception of trinity must be as practical and instrumental rather than as literal or logical, that Bushnell drew up a list of eight classes of "antinomies".<sup>47</sup> Each view of trinity held in New England he saw as representing but one or two

of these classes. The Unitarians, for example, fixing on the class of inequality as the central truth, then required all other classes to accept a construction logically consistent with the ontological or essential superiority of the Father. In other words, Bushnell said, these antinomies only show that we cannot reason out a logically consistent metaphysical trinity. Only an instrumental view could settle the import of such an eight-fold complication of cross-meanings, because it showed that given the fact of a true incarnation, such antinomies as these would result of necessity, and because it could receive such contrarieties as symbolic of the highest truth.<sup>48</sup>

How Bushnell had lamented before his college friends in 1831, the doubts he had nursed for years! "When the preacher touches the Trinity and when logic shatters it all to pieces, I am all at the four winds . . . . My heart wants the Father; my heart wants the Son; my heart wants the Holy Ghost . . .".<sup>49</sup> The God whom he could then but "dimly feel", Bushnell knew in 1848 as "worded forth" through three living persons; the Infinite One brought down even to his own level of humanity, without any loss of divinity.<sup>50</sup>

Now, the sky, so to speak, is beginning to be full of Divine Activities, heaven is married to earth, and earth to heaven, and the Absolute Jehovah, whose nature we before could nowise comprehend, but dimly know, and yet more dimly feel, has, by these outgoings, waked up in us, all living images of His love and power and presence, and set the whole world in a glow.<sup>51</sup>

The Christian trinity had become for Bushnell an "instrumental" and a "practical" truth. The view he offered in God In Christ and again in Christ In Theology was of trinity as a form of language which is accommodated to our finite wants and uses. It is "instrumental" in so

far as it is a way for the finite mind to conceive God; it is "practical" in so far as its forms work man's piety toward God in the matters of grace and redemption.

And according to this view, further discussion of the trinity as essential or immanent, is neither wise nor necessary. Bushnell prefaced his view of trinity in God In Christ with this assertion:

"I do not undertake to fathom the interior being of God, and tell how it is composed."<sup>52</sup> We know, he said, that the relation between the trinitarian symbols and the being of God is beyond investigation; that as symbolic, the trinitarian formula is given "for use and not for theory".<sup>53</sup> The persons of the trinity

are given to me for the sake of their external expression, not for the internal investigation of their contents. If I use them rationally or wisely, then, I shall use them according to their object. I must not intrude upon their interior nature, either by assertion or denial. They must have their reality to me in what they express when taken as the wording forth of God.<sup>54</sup>

This is not modalism, he was careful to say. And while Bushnell had in God In Christ likened Friedrich Schleiermacher's general view of trinity to his own, he had also noted that their reasonings were not "in all points, the same".<sup>55</sup> "That there is some threefold ground in the divine nature, back of the Christian trinity, I was most careful not to deny."<sup>56</sup> What he did protest against were all inferences and judgments that undertook to leap the gulf between symbol and truth. It is clear enough, he said, that the terms, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are finite conceptions, and that there certainly are not in the divine nature, three finite persons, answering as equivalents to these names. "But exactly what, in all respects, belongs to the vehicle and what to the

truth, we do not undertake to affirm."<sup>57</sup> Let it be enough to say that God is a being out of our finite range of personal consciousness, and yet personal; that it is not the object of his revelation to set forth number, but by means of number to set forth personality and character.

But Bushnell was offering a symbolic view to an abstract and unmoved audience. The publication of God In Christ was met with an overwhelming onslaught of criticism and accusation. The book was condemned by the accredited organs of doctrinal opinion in nearly every evangelical denomination in the country.<sup>58</sup> The pulpits of Hartford and its vicinity were barred to Bushnell and within his Hartford Central Association of ministers, a committee was raised to report on the book, with a view to bringing him to trial. This move initiated an ecclesiastical controversy which was to continue for nearly five years. While Bushnell was acquitted by his own Hartford Central Association in October, 1849, the sister association of the Fairfield West, not satisfied with this verdict, continued to press for trial, until finally, in June, 1852, Bushnell's North Church, in order to end the controversy, withdrew from the Hartford North Consociation.<sup>59</sup>

Amos Chesebrough remarked that there are but ". . . few heresies on the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement, named in ecclesiastical history, of which he was not accused . . . a Socinian, a Sabellian, an Apollinarian, a Docetist--as if calling a man opprobrious names answered for evidence of heresy."<sup>60</sup> It seemed to Bushnell that most of these charges originated in a want of attention to the restrictions and the qualifications he gave, and that in general, there had been no effort made to reproduce his view as a whole.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps the most impartial judgment came from the Hartford Central Association, uncertain

about the self-limitation of the view Bushnell offered. The question, they said, was not as to what doctrines are fundamental to the Christian religion, for on that point they saw no controversy, but the question was "as to what are the essential elements of the doctrines conceded to be fundamental, and how far they are retained in Dr. Bushnell's book."<sup>62</sup> The ministers of Fairfield West, however, were less guarded in their judgement. In God In Christ, they said, Bushnell taught unequivocally "that there is no Trinity in the Godhead".<sup>63</sup> And the publication of Christ In Theology did not induce them to mitigate the charge. Bushnell's heresies, they said, aggravated by the groundless accusation that New England Congregationalists are Tritheists, were only more fully elaborated in Christ In Theology. The book might satisfy Pantheists. "To all others, it looks worse than the Sabellianism it is offered to screen."<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, said Cyrus Bartol, ". . . he logically abolished the Trinity . . .";<sup>65</sup> and the charge has held. Williston Walker said that the doctrine of God In Christ is a "modified Sabellianism".<sup>66</sup> George Park Fisher wrote in 1881 that God In Christ adopted Schleiermacher's Sabellian hypothesis; and in 1899 he said that Bushnell had combined a Sabellian view of trinity with a Patripassian theory of the person of Christ.<sup>67</sup> For all practical purposes, said George B. Stevens, in a 1902 article comparing Bushnell and Ritschl, Bushnell held a "modal trinity".<sup>68</sup>

It seemed to Bushnell that all the heresies of which he was accused were gendered by just that effort to comprehend the interior mystery of God's nature, the necessary futility of which he had made it a point of so great consequence to admit.<sup>69</sup> But the charges were



unsettling for Bushnell, and he began to doubt the adequacy of his trinitarian statement in God In Christ.<sup>70</sup> In the interim between its publication and the appearance of Christ In Theology, therefore, he applied himself to "the hardest and most difficult of all sorts of work", to a careful study of the history of the doctrine of the trinity, or as he said, he put himself "to the investigation of others".<sup>71</sup> And in the introduction to Christ In Theology, he announced the results of his labour:

I have been examining my relations to proper orthodoxy more carefully of late than I had done before, and the result is a double surprise; in the discovery, first, that I am so much nearer to real orthodoxy than I supposed, and secondly, that the New England theology, so called, is so much farther off. Indeed, I am ready, for once, to venture a prophecy, . . . that when the smoke of this present commotion is blown away . . . I shall be found in the book you are examining, to stand in much better keeping with the orthodoxy of the Reformation, connected with the previous times reaching back to the Nicene era, than do the teachers generally and the current opinions of New England.<sup>72</sup>

He had never intended, he said, to be orthodox in the New England sense. His design had been, in fact, to take issue with this, "and even to arraign it as a virtual heresy".<sup>73</sup> New England trinitarianism, said Bushnell, "is wholly unhistorical--a provincialism, a kind of theological patois".<sup>74</sup> Under the Edwardians, the doctrine of the trinity lost its true historic balance; the original church doctrine of a trinity in act was rejected in favor of a trinity in God as essence. The doctrine of eternal generation had been completely forgotten, with the result, said Bushnell, that many were charging him with heresy for no other reason "than because of the startling novelty of a doctrine which, in fact, is only a renovated form of lost orthodoxy itself".<sup>75</sup>

But if Bushnell could align himself with the Nicene confession of a trinity of act rather than essence, his was yet a statement of eternal generation "more modestly conceived".<sup>76</sup> The problem, he said, was one of "form", of the relation between symbol and truth. And he could not resolve it any more in Christ In Theology than he could in God In Christ. In the latter book, he had offered the principle of eternal generation as the ground for a theory of immanence. In the "Word", he said, that property, or "power of self-representation in God" which is eternal, we have a permanent ground of possibility for the threefold impersonation called trinity.<sup>77</sup> But whether the Word is eternally Son, he could not say, "for I do not care to open God's secrets before the time".<sup>78</sup> "Son" is the finite form in which the Word is given to us, and how much of the distinct personality of the Word, when regarded as the Son, is referrible to the incarnation, is a question quite inscrutable. Accordingly, when we undertake to separate the form-element in the trinity, "we can not know how far we separate, or sink, or qualify, the personalities represented by the terms".<sup>79</sup>

We only do not know exactly how much of the personal form of the Son or Sonship, as distinguished from the Word, is tropical and referrible to the incarnation or the revelation in time, and how much to the essential nature of the Word, as viewed in relation to the interior substance of the Godhead.<sup>80</sup>

Therefore, Bushnell saw himself as deviating from the Nicene tradition, both in regard to its use of the term "Father", and in its affirmation of eternal Sonship. In both cases, he said, he found it necessary to refrain from Nicea's "supposed knowledge of God". He could not, for example, say "whether the name and personal figure of fatherhood, as conceived on earth, is past, or prior in use to the

incarnation"; nor could he "settle the question of the eternity of the Son, as related to the eternity of the Word".<sup>81</sup> And even if we say that it is the nature of God to reveal himself, and assume, on that ground, that he will eternally be self-revealing as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that is, by a trinity of eternal generation, yet, we still must qualify this by saying again that it is not within our power to penetrate the interior mystery of God, "as to be sure whether his being most fitly revealed to finite beings in this way is required by truth to himself, or by a necessary accommodation of himself to them and to the symbolic and finite media by which their apprehension is conditioned."<sup>82</sup> Bushnell said in Christ In Theology that he wished he could give a more categorical answer to the question of immanent trinity. "I can only say that God unrevealed must be as different from God revealed as truth from symbol . . .".<sup>83</sup>

Perhaps it was the pastor in Bushnell, more than the theologian, who could not rest in this conclusion. He came to think of it as insufficient, even "an evasion of responsibility".<sup>84</sup> There is a "fatal want of depth", he said, in any conception of trinity as occasional or expedient, and he feared lest his own view of trinity as language for God might leave the impression that he regarded the doctrine as a "matter only of words, and not in any proper sense an eternal fact".<sup>85</sup> Bushnell included himself among those for whom that supposition was too painful and too remote. We must have, he would say, a personal God; God is either personal, or else he is naught. That his personality is merely an occasional matter, "an act of voluntary accommodation to our finite apprehensions, and not any part of his eternal property or idea", we cannot believe.<sup>86</sup>

In the 1854 essay, "The Christian Trinity, A Practical Truth", Bushnell again took up the question whether there is anything in God answering to the personalities of revelation. We know, he said, that God is not a person, or a personal being, save in some qualified, figurative sense. And yet what is affirmed to us in the trinity is that God is practically related to us as person, that in revealing himself to us, God "assumes all the attitudes and acts all the forms of personality".<sup>87</sup> The trinitarian three are persons only in some undefinable way that puts them in practical relationship with us. We call them persons without knowing exactly what we affirm, but confident nonetheless, that we are affirming somehow the deepest truth: "that God is a being practically related to his creatures".<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, it may be and very probably is true, that what we mean by asserting the personality of God is simply to predicate of him that sociality, conversability, or, to coin a word yet more general, that relationality which is verified to us, and practically realized in us by the Trinity.<sup>89</sup>

In other words, to speak of essential trinitarianism, is to speak of the way God acts. When we affirm that God is person or a trinity of persons, we are saying that his incomprehensible nature is such as to permit us a practically social relation. The profound reality of the triune formula is "a reality of fact in the world of action".<sup>90</sup> And as we cannot possibly think that God acts the trinity as a mere dramatization to serve the occasional uses of redemption, it can only be by some "interior necessity" that he approaches us as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And precisely here is the meaning of eternal generation: trinity as a "necessary act of God". Based on the "intensely inherent character of all necessary action", we can conceive God as "inherently

related in act to the finite . . . therefore a being who is everlastingly threeing himself in his action, to be known as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost from eternity to eternity".<sup>91</sup>

It was an affirmation which Bushnell could not make in God In Christ. What most discouraged him, he said then, from asserting the eternity of the three persons, was the declaration of Paul--"When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that did put all things under him, that God may be all in all." And we can not know, he had said in Christ In Theology, how much is vehicle and how much is truth, exactly where form ends, or how much to refer to form in the trinity of revelation. In one of the last sermons he would ever preach, Bushnell returned to the text of Paul, "partly for my own sake, hoping to be drawn by the deliberate treatment of it, towards conceptions more satisfactory and determinate".<sup>92</sup> That "interior necessity" which he had allowed in 1854, he now saw as one that "answers exactly" to the necessity of finite man, so as to eternally "fix the number three to be the exact number of persons . . . . If God is to be all in all, it must be as trinity and not otherwise."<sup>93</sup>

However one might judge the apparent shift in Bushnell's doctrine of trinity toward a more immanent view, he himself undoubtedly saw it as an elaboration rather than a compromise of his basic symbolism. For he was able to give full meaning to his principle of analogy, with its concomitant element of paradox, only by asserting the personality of God. It was his earlier emphasis on instrumentality, which while it emphasized the transcendental element in the trinitarian symbol, yet threatened the truth of the revelation that God is somehow Person. And

it was Bushnell's own experiential need which in the end opened to him the practical impotence of a trinity which is merely subjective to us, without sustaining the necessary truth of relationality.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### The Person of Christ: "God's last metaphor"

Speaking to his congregation on the twentieth anniversary of his settlement as their pastor, Bushnell remarked that for some time he had not heard any complaint of his preaching but two: "one that I preach too long sermons, which is sometimes true; and the other that I preach Christ too much, which I cannot think is a fault to be repented of, for Christ is all and beside him there is no gospel to be preached or received."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a review of the titles of Bushnell's work is evidence enough that he shared the nineteenth century absorption in problems of the christological tradition. "[A]t this very time", he wrote, "Christ has . . . the attention, so to speak, of the world as never before . . . . He is not only the chief problem of theology and theologic learning, but the literature of the day recognizes him, and society has a kind of hope in him . . .".<sup>2</sup> What was needed, he thought, therefore, what was silently called for, was a new understanding of the "fact-form Christ".

It has been said, that to a significant degree, any account of New England theology must be rendered in terms of movements first appearing in the generation following the Great Awakening.<sup>3</sup> And whether or not one would agree with Perry Miller that Horace Bushnell "transcendentalized" Calvinism, there is no gainsaying the significance for Bushnell's christological thought of the split in the Puritan

heritage which Miller detects in the theological movement from Edwards to Emerson, nor is there any denying the reintegration which is implicit in Bushnell's reappraisal.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the christological problems which Bushnell faced were shaped for him by those movements which, by the time of his entrance into the Christian ministry, had issued in the Orthodox-Unitarian-Transcendentalist controversy. Consequently, any account of Bushnell's understanding of the person of Christ, in such distinctive terms as the "fact-form Christ", or the "metaphor" of God, should begin by recalling the context from which he wrote.

The doctrine of the person of Christ was itself the cardinal question underlying the Calvinist-Unitarian debates. In his letters to Channing, Moses Stuart remarked that ". . . all difficulties in respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, are essentially connected with proving or disproving the Divinity of Christ."<sup>5</sup> New England theologians following Jonathan Edwards had developed, in conjunction with their trinitarianism, a christology based on the orthodox formula, "two natures and one person", a formula which, Bushnell said, is correctly worded only if it is taken in a symbolic, and not in an analytical or speculative sense. Revelation for the Edwardsians, however, was propositional truth, communicated to the believer as dogma or doctrine. In their apprehension of the doctrine of two natures as a theory or scientific formula, Bushnell said, New England Calvinists had come really and practically to hold a "bi-personal Savior".<sup>6</sup> Instead of a person whose nature is the real unity of the divine and the human, orthodox trinitarians held a theory of two distinct or distinctly active subsistences in the person of Christ, between which their thoughts continually alternated, referring this to the human side, and that to



the divine. "Having lost out of mind the distinction between a twofold nature and two distinct personal activities", said Bushnell, "their Savior is two, and not one any longer".<sup>7</sup>

It was this view of Christ's person as a "partnership transaction" which the Unitarians exposed as artificial and absurd. For Andrews Norton, the doctrine of two natures was of greater incredibility than that of the trinity, and Channing deemed the theory "an enormous tax on human credulity":

According to this doctrine, Jesus Christ, instead of being one mind, one conscious intelligent principle, whom we can understand, consists of two souls, two minds; the one divine, the other human; the one weak, the other almighty; the one ignorant, the other omniscient. Now we maintain, that this is to make Christ two beings.<sup>8</sup>

With Jesus, Channing said, Unitarians worshipped the Father as the one and only true God. In Christ's obedience, his worshipping, and his suffering, Channing found plain evidence of a nature under limitation, therefore of a creature who could not be God. In George Park Fisher's words, Channing conceived of Christ "as a pre-existent rational creature, an angel or spirit of some sort, who had entered into a human body".<sup>9</sup> According to Bushnell, neither the Unitarian nor the trinitarian had apprehended the reality of Christ, for both were thinking of his person in terms of measures or boundaries under the laws of space and time.

Christ, says the Unitarian, obeys, worships, suffers, and in that manner shows most plainly that his internal nature is under a limitation; therefore he is human only. Then the common Trinitarian replies, your argument is good; therefore we assert a human soul in the person of Jesus, which comes under these limitations, while the divine soul escapes; and so we save the divinity unharmed and unabridged.<sup>10</sup>

The christology which Bushnell offered was not based on the standard methods of his day. He was, he said, talking about another and more absolute kind of knowledge than that which is offered to man's constructive logic. Yet he persistently denied that intuition is itself the ground of all knowledge. There is nothing more true, he said, than that the soul is constituted for religion, as Theodore Parker maintained. And Bushnell found in Emerson's "Over-Soul" a remarkably rich sense of the presence of a divine spirit supernaturally permeative in mind. But in his critique of transcendentalism, Bushnell raised the distinction between that knowledge which comes out of report, or statement, or any bare intellectuality called truth, and that knowledge which comes only through relationship, "person trusted to person". The immediate knowledge of which he spoke itself presupposed a regenerative power not indigenous to man's personality; it is not an impersonal "intuitive principle" but a personal Being who becomes the "form of the soul". "There is a divine Word in the soul's own nature", he said, "but it shineth in darkness and is not comprehended till the Word becomes flesh and is represented historically without."<sup>11</sup>

In dwelling on man's relation to substance and form, in inquiring after transcendentalism's hypotheses, Bushnell was actually working toward a definition of existence which is given in Christ. He offered what he called a "christology of manifestation", in which he tied man's intuitive faculties to the "world-astounding mystery of the incarnation" as completed in the life and death of Jesus Christ. He offered a christology which is by definition soteriological. Who is Christ? Bushnell answered not in terms of the anatomy of Christ's person, but in terms of what is communicated to man through Christ's person. The Lord

Jesus Christ, he said, came into the world simply to express God. The meaning of the incarnation is God making the closest possible approach to human feeling that he might thus draw man into union with Himself. The immediate experience of truth in a man's heart presupposes that Christ lived and was what he declared himself to be, the express image of God, thus the pillar and ground of all truth and the power of man's reinspiration.

Christ is in his person, "the form of a divine character";<sup>12</sup> "God's own formulization of himself".<sup>13</sup> This means that spiritual discernment is the only qualified interpreter of what God wishes to communicate to us in Christ. The basic methodological question for Bushnell's christology of manifestation is "how to stay by the symbols or in them . . . to show how the forms in which God is offered to our faith may be used so as to get their true meaning and be themselves the truth to us".<sup>14</sup>

His symbolic approach allowed Bushnell to dismiss as impossible and irrelevant all "metaphysical or speculative" difficulties involved in the claim of Christ's divinity. The truth of the manifestation of God in Christ, he said, is a "revelation-form", not a "formula in words". Christ is in his person and life a "medium" of reconciliation with God; we can know nothing concerning him save precisely what externally appears, or is expressed. "As regards the interior nature of Christ, or the composition of his person", Bushnell said, "we perhaps know nothing".<sup>15</sup> Here, as in the trinity, he advocated the "incurious method", based on the fundamental principle that no investigation can ever penetrate the interior relation of form to truth.

And precisely so, the reality of Christ is what he expresses of God, not what he is in his physical conditions, or under his human limitations. He is here to express the Absolute Being, especially His feeling, His love to man, His placableness, conversableness, and His real union to the race; in a word, to communicate His own Life to the race, and graft Himself historically into it . . . . Therefore, to insist on going beyond expression, investigating the mystery of the person of Jesus, when it is given us only to communicate God and His love, is in fact to puzzle ourselves with the vehicle, and rob ourselves of the grace it brings.<sup>16</sup>

The claim that Christ is God incarnate, of a double nature, at once divine and human, Bushnell affirmed according to his external view. The truth of Christ's twofold nature is conveyed through forms: we are to regard him as a person representable to thought only by means of two poles or denominations, the divine and the human; which, however we cannot investigate as regards the manner of their interior relation. If now one should ask about the interior contents of Christ's person, Bushnell answered that the question is "unpracticable, unphilosophic, dictated only by a false curiosity, and of course, not answered by scripture".<sup>17</sup> It was Bushnell's great contention that the incarnation is not given to riddle man's curiosity, and that by probing the interior nature of the person of Christ, his contemporaries had lost not only the personal unity of the Savior, but his divinity as well, for "in maintaining the essential divinity of Christ, there is no difficulty whatever, till we begin to speculate or dogmatize about the humanity."<sup>18</sup>

The question whether Jesus had a human soul, Bushnell dismissed as likewise beyond human investigation. He did not intend, he said in God In Christ to deny that Christ had a human soul, or anything human but a human body. He only denied that this human soul or nature could be spoken of, or looked upon, as having a "distinct subsistence", so as to

live, think, learn, suffer, worship, by itself.

Disclaiming all thought of denying, or affirming anything as regards the interior composition or construction of his person, I insist that he stands before us in simple unity, one person, the divine-human, representing the qualities of his double parentage as the Son of God, and the son of Mary. I do not say that he is composed of three elements, a divine person, a human soul and a human body; nor of these that they are distinctly three, or absolutely one. I look upon him only in the external way; for he comes to be viewed externally in what may be expressed through him, and not in any other way.<sup>19</sup>

The christological question for Bushnell, the whole question he said, is "whether it is possible for the divine nature to be manifested in humanity".<sup>20</sup> We know, he said, that there is in God a capacity of self-expression, a generative power of form, by which he produces Himself outwardly in the finite; that in all the material creation God embodies himself to be mirrored before us.

A finite outward person, too, may as well be an organ or type of the Infinite as a finite thing or object; and God may act a human personality, without being measured by it, as well as to shine through a finite thing or world, without being measured by that.<sup>21</sup>

On the one hand, Bushnell feared lest his view of Christ was "too exclusively divine";<sup>22</sup> on the other hand, the whole thrust of his exposition was against the naturalistic christologies of his day. He wondered if it were not better "to add more faith" and "subtract less of the divine" from Christ, than to preach a "sub-carnation" or to throw a tint over Christ's deity by some confusion practiced on his person.<sup>23</sup>

In the end, the divinity of Christ is all for Bushnell, and he constantly presents his view of Christ in ways which contrast full divinity with any mere humanity. "By the divinity of Christ", he said, "I do not understand that Christ differs from other men, in the sense

that he is better, more inspired, and so a more complete vehicle of God to the world than others have been. He differs from us, not in degree, but in kind".<sup>24</sup> This way of putting the question bears on some of Bushnell's less guarded statements concerning the humanity of Christ, such as that Christ "is in such a sense God, or God manifested, that the unknown term of his nature, that which we are most in doubt of, or about which we are least capable of any positive affirmation, is the human".<sup>25</sup> If the man Jesus never made the experiment of sin, said Bushnell

. . . it must be because the divine is so far uppermost in him as to suspend the proper manhood of his person. He does not any longer act the man; practically speaking, the man sleeps in him. It is as if the man were not there . . . He acts the divine, not the human, and the only true reality in him, as far as moral conduct is concerned, is the divine.<sup>26</sup>

The mark of Jesus' divinity is "the really astonishing self-evidence of his character".<sup>27</sup> Jesus proves himself, Bushnell said, "by his own self-evidence", and the simple inspection of his life suffices to show that "the character of Jesus forbids his possible classification with men".<sup>28</sup>

He was born of a woman, grew up in the trade of a mechanic, was known as a Nazarene, stood a man before the eye, and yet he early began to raise impressions that separated him, and set him asunder inexplicably from the world he was in.<sup>29</sup>

Christological thinking, then, takes its beginning with Jesus of Nazareth. All that Christ is and does as form or symbol is summed up in the person and life of the historical Jesus, "in the dramatic forms of his personal history". It is interesting, then, to note that while Bushnell's awareness of biblical criticism and historical reconstruction

is slight, his christology holds together history and proclamation. He rejects that theological method which takes its beginning with the mysteries of the divine nature instead of with a historical person. Jesus of Nazareth is the basis of the kerygma for Bushnell.

The revelation of God in Christ is made by the Savior's whole person. The profound separation of Christ from the sinners of mankind, and the impression he awakened in them of that separation, was made not by miracles, nor by words of assertion, nor by anything designed for that purpose; but it grew out of his life and character--"his unworldliness, holiness, purity, truth, love; the dignity of his feeling, the transcendent wisdom and grace of his conduct . . . his profound singularity as a being superior to sin."<sup>30</sup> Christ's whole ministry was a kind of discovery, and so a process of separation. Accordingly, Bushnell said, we need not look to the resurrection and ascension as some ultimate proof of Christ's divinity; these are "only a kind of final consummation, or complete rendering" of what was unfolded by Jesus' whole life and ministry.<sup>31</sup>

It accords with this that we will more closely approach God's object in the wonder of the incarnation, if we adhere as closely as possible, "to the simple historic matter of the gospel".<sup>32</sup> What God is and will be to men is accurately shown by the incarnate life and ministry of Jesus. One must, then, Bushnell said, have the closest possible intimacy and be, as it were, one spirit with Christ. "You will need to make his character and life a perpetual study, and dwell on them till your intellectual life is filled with Christ-like thoughts and images of divine beauty drawn from his person".<sup>33</sup>

The gospel is "all person", Bushnell said, "what a person is

and feels and does and suffers";<sup>34</sup> it has "nothing to do with any propositional truth whatever".<sup>35</sup> Bushnell's meaning in preaching Christ, then, is "to make Christ himself everything"; to present the gospel not as abstractive theories about Christ, but to make the person himself everything. The truth of Christ, he said, is "worded in his person and receivable only from his person".<sup>36</sup> It is a fact then to be carefully noted, "that all the best saints and most impressive teachers of Christ are those who have found how to present him best in the dramatic forms of his personal history".<sup>37</sup>

This "living person", this "concrete personation", Bushnell said, we can speak of only in terms of purpose: the person and work of Christ cannot be divided. Christ enters the world as person rather than as theory, because only as person can he enter the world as power. "If Christ were a philosopher, a human teacher, a human example, we might doubtless reason him and set him in our present scales of proportion, but he would as certainly do nothing for us equal to our want."<sup>38</sup> The true gospel, Bushnell said, is that which brings a regenerative power and creates the soul anew in the image of God; it is the "life of God in the soul of man"; it is Christ dwelling in man's soul and giving it a form out of his own; it is Christ, "manifested in such love and divinity that, taken for salvation as a being, he can be trusted".<sup>39</sup> And so it is that Bushnell's answer to the question, Who is Christ?, is always given in terms of God's object in the incarnation:

The true answer is, that he is, externally viewed, a union of God and man, whose object is to humanize the conception of God, and so to express or communicate God.<sup>40</sup>



To say that Bushnell offered a christology of manifestation, then, is to say that he proclaimed the gospel as a person, who is given as "a gift to the imagination". "The very purpose of the incarnation", he said, "is to get by or away from abstractions, and give the world a concrete personation".<sup>41</sup> It was to get away from the abstractions himself that Bushnell framed his christology in forms and figures which he intended as images only. Correlatively, one may say that the strength or weakness of Bushnell's exposition depends not only on his own powers of insight and expression, but also on the capacity of his reader for intellectual or spiritual discernment.<sup>42</sup>

It follows from this that the depth and fertility of Bushnell's exposition of the person of Christ can be opened more and more fully to the reader through the meanings of a single word or phrase. As the "form" of God, for example, Christ is both image and life. In Christ, the sinner beholds all the graces of God's internal character; "the beauty and truth of God" are visible in his person and life. Jesus Christ is the "face of God": in the life of the man is the feeling of God expressed, "God's full beauty and love in the human type or face".<sup>43</sup> And thus is the gospel relational to man's deepest needs. As the form of God, Christ is the form of the soul: he embodies or envisages the divine love and friendship powerfully enough to enter them into our life.<sup>44</sup>

It seems to me that when a sinner of mankind beholds the gracious look of God in the life and passion of Jesus, when the graces of God's internal character and the depths of his feeling are opened there to his view, and when he is called to look into this glass with a face unveiled and be changed into this same image from glory to glory, it need not mortify him. What should he sooner do, were it only for ambition's sake, than to let what is loveliest and highest in God communicate with him and enter as a quickening and regenerating power into his nature. For this is the only aim and import of what we call salvation by grace.<sup>45</sup>

Thus it is that Bushnell said we must "look into language itself" and see how the revelation of God is coming and to come. The spiritual comes out of the physical, meanings coming out of meanings; in other words, things visible have their highest meaning and reality when taken as being what they really are, images and signs of what is invisible. God is teaching us here to look for the solid, not in the visible, but in what is revealed through it. This is the secret leaven hidden in the life of Christ and by him incarnated in the world. And this is the sense in which Christ is the "embodied token" of all past history, the interpreter of our otherwise unmeaning world. All past history is language for Christ, a preparation of physical bases for the supernatural truth to come:

Adam is the figure of him that was to come, the second Adam, because he, Christ, was to be the head, correspondently, of a spiritual generation. Christ is David, Melchizedek, high priest, the spiritual Rock, a prophet like unto Moses . . . . All the past is taken up as metaphor for all the future . . . that is, types for the expression of our higher truth.<sup>46</sup>

It is this view of Christian truth which guides Bushnell's interpretation of the incidents of the life of Jesus. We have nothing to do, he said, but to look upon the life and passion of Christ "as belonging to the one divine person and, through these incidents, taken all as media of divine expression, come, as directly as possible, into the import and power of what is expressed."<sup>47</sup> Did Jesus suffer the limitations of a human person? Did he grow in wisdom and knowledge? Did he reason, obey, worship, suffer? The answer to any such question, Bushnell said, is one and the same:

If sometimes acts are attributed to him that seem to be divine, sometimes others that seem to be human, we can not say, 'this infers deity', 'this a human soul', we

can only refer them all alike to the one abnormal person, and the secret mystery of his consciousness . . . that God may thus express his own feeling and draw himself into union with us, by an act of accommodation to our human sympathies and capacities.<sup>48</sup>

In the matter of Christ's obedience, then, we are not so much to consider the obedience as what the obedience expresses. "Man obeys for what obedience is, but the subject obedient state of Christ is accepted for what it conveys, or expresses."<sup>49</sup> Or, if we speak of the worship paid by Christ, we are to see here that Christ is expressing what is perfect in God, by using the human type according to its nature, and the conditions to which it is subject. And of the passion and death of Jesus, we can say nothing more adequate and complete than that herein is revealed to us the suffering holiness of God:

Therefore, when we come to the agony of the garden, and the passion of the cross, we are not, with the speculative Unitarian, to set up as a dogma, beforehand, and as something that we perfectly know, that God can set Himself in no possible terms of connection with suffering; nor believing with the common Trinitarian, that there are two distinct natures in Christ, are we to conclude that no sort of pang can touch the divine nature, and that only his human part can suffer. We cannot thus intrude into the interior of God's mysteries. We are only to see the eternal Life approach our race--Divine Love manifested and sealed . . . .<sup>50</sup>

The human personality, the obedient, subject, suffering state of Jesus, they are all "colors of the divine", vehicles of God to man. We are human, and incapable of apprehending the sensibility of God unless it is mediated to us in an objective form. And here is the precise relation of the agony to the cross: "One is the reality, the other is the outward sign or symbol".<sup>51</sup> The value of the cross is not Christ's physical suffering taken simply as human suffering. Its real value is as form which mediates to us the suffering sensibility of God, a

revelation of such depth and intensity, that the "human vehicle breaks under the shock".<sup>52</sup>

According to the Fairfield West Association, Bushnell had, in such statements as these, denied the distinct humanity of Jesus.<sup>53</sup>

"Jesus, to his thinking, was God indeed," said Cyrus Bartol, "the man-part only appearance and costume".<sup>54</sup> George Park Fisher put it this way:

The existence of a human spiritual nature, if not expressly denied, was held to be of practically no account. It was substantially the Apollinarian idea . . . God surrenders himself to the restrictions of a human organization, and subjects himself to the conditions of an earthly life on our level, as a medium through which to manifest himself to us. It is all, literally speaking, divine thought, divine emotion, divine action, even divine suffering. This was the fundamental thought in Dr. Bushnell's Christology, - the thought which, whatever were his mutations of opinion, was always uppermost.<sup>55</sup>

Bushnell said himself that he was aware of the importance of upholding Christ's real humanity, "For if Christ be taken as a mere show or theophany, having no real and historic place in humanity, then the gospel has no longer any solid import. It becomes a phantasm and nothing more."<sup>56</sup> But the charges brought against his view of Christ's person can nevertheless be substantiated. As Bushnell said, "The human element is nothing to me, save as it brings me to God, or discovers to me, a sinner, the patience and brotherhood of God as a Redeemer from sin . . .".<sup>57</sup> One does not find in Bushnell's christology a view of Christ's distinct personal manhood. The meaning of the incarnation is the movement of God to man, the historic fact that God has come nigh to us, or fully expressed himself to us, through the human type or form.

To raise the question of Christ's real humanity is to question

the reality of all form. Orestes Brownson called it "the grand heresy of the nineteenth century", relating the problem specifically to a pantheistic doctrine of creation. According to Brownson, Bushnell had mistaken entirely the character of God's immanence in his works:

The fundamental error asserted by Dr. Bushnell assumes . . . that the Incarnation is simply God producing himself outwardly in a finite form, or in a human person. This he connects with the more general doctrine, that creation is nothing but God's production or expression of himself in finite forms. These forms, that is, what we call external things, being nothing but God outwardly produced, must be God, and the author cannot deny it, for God's supposed production of himself in the finite form of the human person he expressly calls God, and maintains, as such, to be a proper object of divine worship. Here, then, is the entire universe, taken collectively and distributively, deified, and represented as worthy to be worshipped as God.<sup>58</sup>

If, at the time of his Discourses, Bushnell was aware of the tension between a real and a symbolic humanity, he saw neither the necessity nor the possibility of reconciling the paradox. As late as 1869, he wrote that "God thus manifest in the flesh, is everything; what he is in his merely human personality, and how that personality is related to and unified with the divine nature, is nothing."<sup>59</sup> We know, however, that this conclusion failed to sustain him, and that in 1872, in a remarkable sermon, "Our Relations To Christ in the Future Life", Bushnell made one last attempt to clarify his symbolic view.

He returned to the question of Christ's humanity by way of a complaint brought against him by the Minority Committee of the Hartford Central Association, to whom was assigned the duty of preparing a suitable reply to the communication of the Fairfield West Association. A charge was therein made, as distinct from that of denying the trinity, that Bushnell's view in God In Christ involved a denial of the doctrine of the

glorified humanity of Jesus. Bushnell supposed the charge to have been provoked by the unsatisfactory reference he had made in God In Christ to that text of Paul, 1 Cor. 15:28, and while he admitted in Christ In Theology to an unsatisfactory conception of the doctrine, he did not perceive then that the difficulty he experienced connected in any way with his symbolic view, any more than with the views of others:

That theologian must be gifted with a remarkable facility of faith who has never yet found a difficulty in supposing, either that the one God, or that an eternal person of the Divine Three, the Son of God, underwent a permanent change of state before all worlds, in the year 1 of our Christian era; that in this particular speck of the system of the universe, at a certain date in the parish register, if I may so speak, of the town of Bethlehem, he entered into union with humanity, and is hereafter and forever to reign over the known universe of angels and all the populations of the sky, in the humanity then assumed and shortly after glorified.<sup>60</sup>

Surely, Bushnell said in 1872, we must base our piety, not on a relationship with the man, Jesus, but with Jesus the Christ. "The gospel hangs, for all its operative value and spiritual consequence to the world, on the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the man-form used as vehicle for the eternal Word and Lord."<sup>61</sup> But what could he say to himself and to others who were drawn to the humanity of Jesus, finding there the fullness of God brought low? Could one dare to imagine that the joy of such faith is conditioned forever by the human person at whose ministry or from whose love it began? Is the Lamb on the Throne the Son of Mary still? Can we hope, in our expectation for the future life, to possess Christ still as forever what he was historically, "that as being in the form of God he took the form of a servant, so now he is a servant in the form of God" . . .?<sup>62</sup>

Bushnell replied unequivocally with an answer that surely marks

the limit of his understanding of form. Taking his doctrine of incarnation back into the very being of God himself, Bushnell rejected the idea that it was necessary in the incarnation for God to take up a man-soul not before existing, and without character of its own, for "humanity was in the type of his own everlasting person before". Before creation and before incarnation, God was somehow, or in some sense, Man: "He had, that is, an anthropoidal nature, which anthropoidal nature is a kind of Divine Man-Form or Word, by which he thinks himself, incarnates himself, and types himself in his creations."<sup>63</sup> What faith discerns in the incarnation, then, is no casual breaking in on history, no apparition or epiphany, but the beginning and the end of system, "the Man, even the God-Man everlastingly present, integrally present, in trinity before either we or the world began to be".<sup>64</sup>

It was his symbolic method, Bushnell said, which by "simply cutting short speculation", had caused all his supposed heresies in reference to the trinity and the person of Christ. We are then led to question whether, in his final version of these doctrines, Bushnell did not become himself as "speculative" as his critics, whether in his own penetration of the mystery of God, he did not, in fact, take "the great truths in question, out of their symbols".<sup>65</sup>

Bushnell would have said that he did not fall prey to "idle speculations", that his own views still marked the difference "between constructing and receiving a gospel".<sup>66</sup> He spoke, he said, "to persons of intelligence and thoughtfulness";<sup>67</sup> that is, to those to whom it is given, through the "interpretative imaginings and discernings of faith", to understand a metaphor. God, the unknowable, "will sometimes utter himself in the knowledge thus of a believing consciousness, more

indubitably than a rock or a mountain seen by the eyes. Faith beholds more piercingly than they, looks farther in, sweeps a larger horizon."<sup>68</sup>

It was this close relationship which Bushnell perceived between God's revelations and the inlet function of man's imagination to which they are given, that enabled him to "look farther in" to the mysteries of trinity and incarnation. He assumed it as a "fundamental principle", he said in Christ In Theology, "that the value of the word rests in the impressions it is to produce in us";<sup>69</sup> or in other words a few pages later, he said that the "object" of God's revelations is "the law and limit of our inquiries".<sup>70</sup> In Nature and the Supernatural, he stated as "the inevitable, first fact of natural conviction with us", that "what we earnestly want, we know that we shall assuredly find".<sup>71</sup> In other words, what Bushnell called "faith-talent", or what we might call the symbolic imagination, that perceiving by trust which opens a soul to God, functions in Bushnell's theology as the limiting factor of inquiry into truth. If there is no salvation without human commitment, then Bushnell could put it down as the fundamental principle of symbolic knowledge, that God will open as much truth to us in his revelations as is needed to engage our trust.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Work of Christ: Atonement as the "art of God"

In 1851, Bushnell wrote that his doctrine of atonement had cost him twenty years of patient search and labour.<sup>1</sup> The remark is suggestive of both continuity and pause: it is a harkening back to the Yale conversion, and so a connection of his doctrine of atonement with that decisive experience; at the same time, it is an allusion to the long interlude between 1831 and Bushnell's "inward personal discovery of Christ".<sup>2</sup> For further insight into the remark, we might turn to Bushnell himself, whose frequent observations on the stages of his own religious development afford implicit meaning of both the progress and form of his thought.

It is significant that Bushnell's description of his spiritual awakening of 1831 calls up that favorite romantic musical instrument, the Aeolian harp, as an analogue for the mind's response to the divine informing "breeze of inspiration".<sup>3</sup> For, as he said on another occasion, just as the wind harp is made to be the vehicle of sound, "our created minds are made to be orchestras within, vibrating in great feeling, silent feeling if you will, to God . . .".<sup>4</sup> This equation between inspiration and music points not only to Bushnell's discovery in 1831 of the poetry and fluidity of language, the "second, third, and thirtieth senses of words"; but also to his new-found consciousness of the harmony of things, the divine givenness of the world's analogies, that words can

be used symbolically only as they are used "in their nature, and not contrary to it".<sup>5</sup>

During the 1830's and the 1840's, Bushnell sought to root this discovery of symbolic language in a wider sphere of reference, one that would involve a total metaphysic of the universe. The veil was lifted, he said, in 1848 in a vision which opened his "spiritual understanding" of the gospel.<sup>6</sup> In 1848, Bushnell saw for the first time that the gospel itself is symbol, contrived by God and offered to human feeling. And this time, the breeze of inspiration was all-informing. From 1848 to the end of his life, Bushnell was led to ever enlarged conceptions of the order and completeness of the one system of God as interpreted through Christ, "the form of the soul", God manifested to feeling and so organically united with the human race and become a new-creating power in history.

The resources of this vision are nowhere more evident than in Bushnell's doctrine of atonement, "a view of Christ and his work that has its reality and value in forms that carry effect through the imagination and the heart".<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, Bushnell offered his view as a wholly new conception and was therefore not surprised at the many censures it encountered. On the other hand, his was a comprehensive view which both revealed and comprehended the "objective" and "subjective" poles. He approached his doctrine, then, through the extreme or conflicting views then prevailing in New England, and spoke only in terms of "reclaiming" and "restoring".<sup>8</sup>

At the one extreme, Bushnell pointed to two varieties of orthodox or "objective" theory of atonement, the penal substitution theory, and the Edwardean or governmental view. The former theory, according to the

Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly, comprised a view of Christ's work as appeasing divine wrath and satisfying divine justice through a direct and literal substitution of the suffering that was due to man. This was a theory, Bushnell said, which generated moral objections "with such marvellous fecundity, that we can hardly state them as fast as they occur to us".<sup>9</sup>

But Bushnell's New England brethren, he said, had largely renounced such ideas of penal suffering, and had, in fact, cast the whole subject of atonement in molds of their own. According to the more mitigated "Edwardean" theory, Christ was said to have suffered only so much pain as would constitute a compensative expression of God's indignation against sin.<sup>10</sup> The assumption was that as punishment expresses God's abhorrence to sin, or his justice, God could sustain his moral government and lay a ground of forgiveness without punishment, only by some equivalent expression of abhorrence. As stated by Jonathan Edwards, Jr.:

The atonement is the substitute for the punishment threatened in the law; and was designed to answer the same ends of supporting the authority of the law, the dignity of the divine moral government, and the consistency of the divine conduct in legislation and execution. By the atonement it appears that God is determined that his law shall be supported; that it shall not be despised or transgressed with impunity; and that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God.<sup>11</sup>

According to both the Edwardean theory and that of the Shorter Catechism, what Bushnell called the "ritualistic" or the "objective" side of the gospel had been asserted as literal theologic or theoretic truth. Bushnell pointed for example to the sacrifice of Christ, saying that each form of orthodoxy held "the literal sacrifice of Christ", the

one as paying the full debt which sinners owed to God; the other as expressing the abhorrence of God to sin. In both cases, the immediate or first effect of Christ's work was seen to operate on God.<sup>12</sup>

In opposition to these objective conceptions of atonement, New England Unitarians preached a view of "at-one-ment", that is, a view of Christ's work as being designed to operate wholly on man, subjectively, as a curative to human character. No view was more disdained by the Unitarians than that the work of Christ was to produce some change in the mind of God towards man. As Channing put it, Christ came rather to change man's mind, and the highest object of his mission was "the recovery of men to virtue or holiness".<sup>13</sup> Christ accomplished this sublime purpose in the main through his moral example, and herein would seem to lie the real connection between Christ's death and human forgiveness.<sup>14</sup>

In accordance with their anti-trinitarianism and the view of Christ following therefrom, New England Unitarians had completely cast aside what Bushnell called the objective character of Christianity. It is of the utmost importance, Channing said, for Christians to hold fast the doctrine of a purely spiritual Divinity, for God has not presented himself to man in any form which admits of representation.<sup>15</sup> Christianity represents a refinement of the spiritual principle, and so an abolition of "the ceremonial and outward worship of former times . . . those grosser modes of describing God, through which the ancient prophets had sought to impress an unrefined people".<sup>16</sup> And pre-eminently, Christianity must free itself from the trinitarian error of "materializing and embodying the Supreme Being", the leading feature of which was the doctrine of a corporeal God dying on a cross.<sup>17</sup> It was this error,

Channing said, which accounted for orthodoxy's crass notions of intercession and substitution; of "justification" as distinct from the pure paternity of God.<sup>18</sup>

Bushnell described his method in discourse as being first to lay out the negative part of his argument and then to let his subject begin. He came to Harvard in 1848 with a "subjective-objective" view of atonement; with the new-found message that the extremes are not opposites, but fellow truths, and false only when they are separated.<sup>19</sup> First, he separated them, in terms of the New England context, and this only in order to attain a distinct conception of the view he was to offer. And as an interpretive tool, Bushnell said, he adopted the conventional "subjective-objective" dichotomies, warning however of a meaning in them "derived from my own uses".<sup>20</sup>

In separation, Bushnell said, neither view is the true or sufficient gospel. Unitarian Christianity he saw not as a refinement of the spiritual principle but as a sort of regression. "Christianity, set forth as a mere subjective, philosophic doctrine, would fail, just where all philosophies have failed." In one view, he said, it is the great work of the Christian preacher to bring men to reflection. But still, there is nothing in reflection of true religion:

No man is in the Christian state till he gets by, and, in one sense, beyond reflective action. And precisely here is the fundamental necessity of an objective form or forms of art in the Christian scheme. While a man is addressing his own nature with means, motives, and remedies, acting reflectively on, and, of course, for himself, he is very certainly held to that which he needs most of all to escape, viz., the hinging of his life on himself, and the interests of his own person. This, in fact, is the sin of his sin, that his life revolves about himself, and does not center in God . . . . What he needs just here, while struggling vainly to lift himself by his own shoulders, is the

presentation of a religion objectively made out for him . . . .  
Precisely here it is that Christian liberty begins, and  
here is the joy of a true Christian experience. It is  
going clear of self to live in the objective.<sup>21</sup>

There is a profound philosophic necessity that a religion which is to effect the reconciliation of man to God, should have an objective character. "The Christ must become a religion for the soul and before it, therefore a Rite or Liturgy for the world's feeling--otherwise Christianity were incomplete, or imperfect".<sup>22</sup> But we cannot hold the objective in a literal sense. This is why orthodoxy in New England had come to represent such a dry and sterile entanglement. And it was the logical difficulties incumbent upon such literalism that had driven Bushnell himself almost to desperation with respect to the doctrines of the person and work of Christ. In 1848, Bushnell discovered that it is the symbol which reconciles opposites--and that the whole objective side of Christianity must be seen in this light. Neither let it be imagined, he said, that he was speaking of symbols which are man-made, only seized upon as images because they are at hand. "They are prepared, as God's form of art, for the representation of Christ and his work; and if we refuse to let him pass into this form, we have no mold of thought that can fitly represent him".<sup>23</sup> As a preliminary to Bushnell's view of atonement, the following passage from Christ In Theology is both indicative of his over-all approach, and suggestive of the real meaning of that "spiritual understanding" which was opened to him in 1848:

It is objected, for example, that I deny the sacrifice of Christ. Yes, I deny any thing and every thing of the outward form of sacrifice in the death of Christ, and so does the objector. Or, if not, he sees at a glance that he must. Perhaps he has thought and been accustomed to say that he holds the literal sacrifice of Christ. But the moment his attention is held to the subject a little

more closely, he sees that he can not hold the literal, in the sense of an outward, formal sacrifice. Then, admitting this, the question rises, what does he hold? A spiritual sacrifice certainly, one that is analogical to the outward sacrifice of the altar, and of which that is a type or figure . . . . I will venture, in short, to affirm that whoever of you will undertake to settle precisely what he himself means by the sacrifice of Christ, after rejecting the idea of a formal or outward sacrifice, will come to a result so nearly identical with my supposed heresy, that he can not show the difference. Nothing will prevent his doing it, unless it be that he relapses, unconsciously and without knowing it, into a construction of the word that really identifies the spiritual sense with the outward form; instead of holding the latter as a type and figure only of the former, separated from it, of course, as the sign from the signified.<sup>24</sup>

We do not understand Christ, Bushnell said, until we see that God is "a being who holds his ends in contact, ever, with His beginnings, and His beginnings with His ends".<sup>25</sup> This is to say that God has been planning from the first for an objective religion, just so that the grace of Christ might be an operative power within men. Or it is to say that the supernatural remedy which Christ brings to the world could not be effective without the "Divine Form" of Christianity. The view of atonement which Bushnell developed from these conceptions he called a "subjective-objective" one, or a view of "representational objectivity".<sup>26</sup> Stated briefly, it is a view which regards the work of Christ as a matter of subjective impressions which are realized under and represented by objective forms of truth. The most distinguishing features of this view might be stated at the outset:

1. Symbolism is the key to Bushnell's understanding of atonement. This means that all aspects of Christianity which Bushnell considers as part of its "objective" character, he interprets in terms of symbol or analogy; that it is God's way, in casting the molds of things, "to show us first what is natural, and afterwards what is spiritual,

as it may be signified thereby . . . making always the lower to be interpreters of the higher" . . . .<sup>27</sup>

2. Bushnell regards these symbols to be in all cases "divine forms", "contrived by God" and offered to faith, for man's redemption. This means that Bushnell's doctrine of atonement develops as the full expression of his moral economy scheme.
3. Bushnell's doctrine of atonement unfolds his meaning of "moral economy" not in terms of punishment, but of deliverance. Essential to his view is his understanding of "the curse": a condition of penally coercive discipline ordained for spiritual profit and recovery.
4. There is no judicial penalty involved in atonement.
5. The curse works not only to show man his sin, but also to the progressive evolution of human sensibility.
6. To say that Bushnell interprets atonement in terms of symbol, is to say that his whole doctrine rests on an intuitive epistemology, on the vital connection between impression and response; form and feeling.

When Bushnell spoke in terms of "reclaiming" and "restoring", he was referring specifically to his objective view of atonement, or to that aspect of his subjective-objective view. For if he found the Edwardean theory to be unsatisfactory, and if the older and more venerable view was to him repugnant, nevertheless he hoped in what he did to virtually reclaim all that was real and essential to the power of the orthodox doctrine of atonement.<sup>28</sup> The objective character or the objective side of Christianity Bushnell defined in terms of forms, symbols, or images which are the objective equivalents of man's subjective



impressions; their role in the moral scheme of God is to render effective the real end and aim of Christ's work in souls; or stated differently, they act as vehicles or molds of grace, "palpable forms", which are held forth to man's perceptive capacity or to the repose of faith; to draw, to attract, to embrace, "to connect" us with the grace of God. As part of Christianity's outward objectivity, Bushnell elaborated "a largely scriptural and verbal discussion", including all forms of language, ceremonies, rituals, events, which signify, as in form, God's deliverance of man from penal discipline, such as altar forms, terms of substitution, and legal terms of justification. In addition, as part of his objective view, he discussed the law as letter or form; and the moral power of Christ as the power of form or the power of impression.

In reference to the sacrificial terminologies of Christianity, Bushnell used such expressions as "mystic symbols", "divine art" and "mystic terminology"; not designed by man but "contrived by God"; not ornamental but the "molds of grace", the "operative vehicles" of the power of Christ. And it was in terms of this objective character that Bushnell saw Christianity as fulfilling rather than displacing Judaism; that while it dismisses the outward rites and objectivities of the old religion, it does in fact erect these into so many inward objectivities; that Christianity consecrates the ritual terms and figures of Judaism as the "Divine Form" of Christian grace for all future time:

Some persons appear to suppose that Christianity is distinguished by the fact that it has finally cleared us of all ritualities or objectivities, introducing a purely subjective and philosophic or ideal piety. This they fancy is the real distinction between Judaism and Christianity . . . . The scheme of God is one, not many. The positive institutions, rites, historic processes of the ante-Christian ages are all so many preparations made

by the transcendent wisdom of God, with a secret design to bring forth, when it is wanted, a divine form for the Christian truth--which, if we do not perceive, the historic grandeur of Christianity is well nigh lost.<sup>29</sup>

It was according to this typology that Bushnell interpreted all the sacrificial terminologies and substitutional forms of Christianity. In the term "sacrifice", for example, Bushnell denied everything of the outward form of sacrifice in the death of Christ. The term is a "spiritual word-figure", he said, "one that is analogical to the outward sacrifice of the altar, and of which that is a type or figure".<sup>30</sup> This means that ancient sacrifices were given by God to be types of the higher sacrifice of Christ, and that the term, "sacrifice" has thus been made a type or physical root of a spiritual language to be figured by it and built upon it. To get our understanding of this term, then, we must return to an "etymological" study of ancient sacrifices as figures or bases of the language for Christ.

Hebrew sacrifices, Bushnell said, were both human and divine in their origin. Just as human language originated by a divine instigation acting through man's instincts and voices, so God acted providentially and through secret helps of instigation, causing men to feel the need of sacrifice. Because there were no types in nature out of which, as roots, such words could grow as would signify a matter so entirely supernatural as the gracious work of Christ, God prepared artificially a language for Christ, through such forms as the ancient ritual of sacrifice. This means that sacrifices throughout history have not been the mere spontaneous contrivances of men, but "just as truly appointed by God, as if they were ordered by some vocal utterance from heaven. They relate, in fact, to all God's future in the kingdom of His Son, and are

as truly necessary, it may be, to that future as the incarnation itself. Nay, they are themselves a kind of incarnation before the time".<sup>31</sup>

Implicit in this method of interpretation is Bushnell's entire moral economy scheme. The type, he said, is a natural analogon or figure of some mental or spiritual idea; and the whole outward world itself has been designed by God as a grand natural furniture or typology, corresponding to the final uses of things as forms of thought and spirit in the moral recovery of lost men. We cannot construe meanings backward, then, but we must follow them out in that progressive way in which they have been prepared, even as we know that the whole economy of God is a process of unsheathing, the higher spiritual meanings coming after and out of, the physical roots on which they grow. If we are to understand the sacrifices, then,

we must take them in their outward forms, and in the meaning they had to the people that used them, just as we take all the physical roots of language; and then, having found what they were in that first stage of use, we must go on to conceive what Christ will have them signify, in the higher uses of His spiritual sacrifice.<sup>32</sup>

Even to go back to its simple first stage, Bushnell could not find the power and significance of the institution of sacrifice either in the fact that the animal was slain or that the victim suffered pain in dying. And having sketched an outline of the sacrificial history in its stages of progress, he concluded that the value and power of sacrifice inheres in its being instituted by God as a transactional liturgy-- "not a verbal liturgy, but a transactional, having its power and value, not in anything said, taught, reasoned, but in what is done by the worshipper, and before and for him, in the transaction of the rite".<sup>33</sup>

The religion of the Jewish people had developed as a carefully

exact ritual of outward exercises. In the first stage of its history, the people had so little reflective capacity that it was impossible for them to make anything of a religion that was not all ceremony before the eyes. But the deeper truth of that history is that God was managing those people and training them towards Himself. Their religion before the eyes had in fact "a mystic power wholly transcendent, as regards their own understanding, and one that involved an insight so profound, of the relation of form to sentiment, that God only could have prepared it".<sup>34</sup>

Through their transactional liturgy, the careful choice of the animal, the offering of the flesh in smoke, the sprinkling of the blood, God generated in the Jewish people an implicit faith, a sentiment, a piety, which they did not understand themselves, and which they could not have stated in words that suppose a reflective capacity.<sup>35</sup> And in the progress of their history, with the unfolding of the reflective habit, their souls began to move beyond the ritual effect to an awareness of a deeper sentiment. Religion was becoming more openly reflective and spiritual with the movement of history toward Christ, who is in his being at once form and pure subjectivity; who is the immediate knowledge of God.

The real significance of the institution of sacrifice, then, lay in its effect on the feeling of the worshipper. The effect, Bushnell said, was "lustral simply". The expense, the pains-taking, the rituals of the ancient sacrifices, all had their power in making clean. The worshipper may never have associated the outward liturgy with his inward state, yet there was a correspondence thereto, by which a man's faith was exercised and his purification effected:

This, at least, was the plan, though it was possible for them to fail of the true result, as it is for us, under a more reflective and self-regulative form of piety. They were to deposit their soul in the outward rite, and there to let it rest; and then the outward rite was relied upon to be a power in the heart. The plan was, to frame a religion that would produce its results artistically; that is, immediately, without reflection, by the mere liturgic force of forms.<sup>36</sup>

And so it is for us to deposit our souls in the sacrifice of Christ, to receive Christ as fulfilling the analogy of the ancient sacrifice, "serving like uses, only in a higher key, and in a more perfect manner, with a more complete lustral effect".<sup>37</sup> Christ is our sacrifice, not in a literal, but in a figurative sense. And in this view, Christ does not begin to be the real and true sacrifice "till He goes above all the literalities of sacrifice, and becomes the fulfilment of their meaning as figures".<sup>38</sup> It took many centuries to get the figures ready, to prepare a language at all competent to set forth "the everlasting Lamb element in God's nature".<sup>39</sup> And the central figure of the new language is "sacrifice": "a word as much more significant when applied to Christ, than when applied to the altar ceremony, as the Lamb of God signifies more than a lamb".<sup>40</sup>

. . . for the Lamb is not other than God, outside of God, suffering before God, but he is with God most internally . . . . 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.<sup>41</sup>

In a similar manner, Bushnell interpreted words pertaining secondarily to sacrifice, or to the effects of sacrifice. For example, to speak of propitiating God is to speak in the same sense as a Hebrew, accustomed to offer his propitiatory sacrifice for sin, would use the term. If the Hebrew were a man of the earlier stage under the ritual,

he would likely not understand his feeling or thought in coming to offer a propitiation upon the altar.

But if he be a worshipper of the later times, the time, for example, of David and the prophets, when the reflective habit is a little more unfolded, and piety is growing more subjective, he will begin to revolve the question internally, and will finally reply that he finds the need of a sacrifice in himself, and the wants of his own character as a sinner, and not in God . . . . And the moment such a thought occurs to him, or dawns upon his understanding, and he begins to see the objective form of the rite as related to his subjective exercise, it will be as if he were just coming to a distant apprehension of its nature and value.<sup>42</sup>

If then it is said that God sent his Son to be a propitiation for the sins of the world, there is no such thought as that God is placated or satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ. The true conception is that God has instituted an economy of prayer to work on Christian souls so that when the sinner comes to hang himself in faith upon Christ, he is brought into a real and true peace with God. The reality of the propitiation is the subjective renovation which is wrought through the objective figure:

And so, when we speak of propitiating God, the subjective impressions and dispositions wrought in the sacrificer, or the disciple, are themselves the ground or condition of peace and divine manifestations in the soul, otherwise not yielded. God is really become propitious, only not by effects wrought in himself, but in his worshipper.<sup>43</sup>

If we take the word, "atonement", and put it through the same process, we bring it to the same result. The Hebrew worshipper came to atone, and while his thought may have been objectively occupied with expiating or making amends for his sins, the real effect of his ritual was subjective, "that he has come under a higher impression of the sanctity of the law he has violated and a new purpose of obedience to

it".<sup>44</sup> Atonement, as applied to Christ, is just what is figured by it in the ancient sacrifice:

. . . that while, in form of thought, he expiates our sin before God by his sufferings and death, the real force of the transaction, thus objectively stated, is that he produces in us and the world of mankind an impression that God is right, and sin is wrong, and the law holy, and obedience just . . .".<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, "remission", objective in its form of thought, has its reality "in an internal absolution from the law of sin; a regeneration of the spirit in duty, love and purity".<sup>46</sup> Substitutional forms such as "being made a curse for us"; "bruised for our iniquities"; "with his stripes we are healed", must be taken as objective representations of the suffering mercy by which we are cleared of our sins and restored to peace with God. And an investigation of the actual uses in the New Testament of any words of the altar like, "ransom" or "redemption", will show that they are used not as commercial, but as objective sacrificial figures. In short, it was Bushnell's conclusion that all such forms of the scripture find their natural significance as figures, or "mystic symbols", such as both transcend our speculative understanding and effect our union with God. And it is the latter point which is most vital, for without these forms offered to imagination or impression, man's re-inspiration would not be possible. The language of the altar signifies more than a human invention, and more than a casual or accidental application of figures. "It is only part of the same view", he said, "that Christ is an accident, and that redemption is no real plan of God in the earth; prepared by no shadows in the past, that connect with good things to come, in the future".<sup>47</sup> On the contrary, God represents history under the altar forms in order to make an impression that is both

impossible and inconceivable in any other way; and this is to say that, taken as objective to faith, the altar forms set us in just that attitude in which the reconciling power of Christ can operate efficaciously.

It was as part of the same objective form of Christianity that Bushnell discussed the moral institute of law, or what he called the "law by government". This is a part of his doctrine of atonement which Bushnell was still developing when he wrote Forgiveness and Law; aspects of it are obvious in God In Christ, Christ In Theology, and Nature and the Supernatural, and his struggling with it accounts for a good part of The Vicarious Sacrifice.

It was in the latter book that Bushnell developed the distinction between what he called the "law before government" and the "law by government", a hypothetical distinction which he proposed in an effort to arrive at a view of justification independent of any penal or substitutionary ideas. Although his writing on the subject in 1866 appears to be somewhat rigid and artificial, the mental exercise which this distinction afforded Bushnell seems to have been a valuable one. By the time he wrote Forgiveness and Law, Bushnell could present his ideas on law, justice, and discipline, with a much freer vocabulary and in terms of his over-arching moral theory. It is by way of this distinction that Bushnell's meaning of the law as form will be approached.

The real meaning of the law for Bushnell is the "law absolute", that innate and necessary idea of right which is common to all moral natures, also called the "law of conscience", and according to his hypothetical distinction, the "law before government".<sup>48</sup> It is this simple idea of right, very nearly answered by the relational law of love, which commands all moral natures from eternity; it is the same to



created souls in all orders, and the same to God as to them. It is "the grand, all-regulative, Moral Idea of Right . . . the Monarch Principle of the soul. It puts all moral natures under an immediate, indefeasible bond of sovereignty".<sup>49</sup> In other words, there was a self-existent law before God's will, and before His act in instituting government and law.

It is this conception of a law before government, Bushnell said, which we must relate specifically to the Fall. And as certainly, the profound reality of disorder and unnature signifies the rejection of this ideal law. No particular act is sinful, save as the absolute law of right is implicitly violated in it. "Any fall must be transacted really before this law; for the guilt of breaking any law creates a fall, only as this grand, all-inclusive law is cast off, and the regulative principle of the life is changed."<sup>50</sup> And here, Bushnell said, is the want and place of true redemption:

Everything God does in His legislations, and punishments, and Providential governings of the world, is done to fortify and glorify the Law before Government. All that He will do, in redemptive suffering and sacrifice, revolves about this prior Everlasting Law, in the same manner. In this law His supreme last ends are gathered; out of this law all His beatitudes and perfections have their spring. No so great thing as redemption can have principal respect to anything else.<sup>51</sup>

What Bushnell wanted to illustrate was that the law, the death and the curse which followed its rejection, and God's grand work of redemptive sacrifice, have no direct reference to instituted statutes or judicial penalties existing therefrom. It is a great mistake, he said, to form our conception of law in terms of specific codes, such as the decalogue or the Ten Commandments. We must distinguish between the

institution of law and the absolute law of right, for this is a basic distinction between form and spirit, objective and subjective.

The problem was, Bushnell said, to set up a moral regimen in souls, to produce some practical configuration of the ideal law which would enforce it empirically through motives of reward and punishment, profit and loss. And to this end God "takes the law absolute down into the world of prudence, re-enacting it there and preparing to train us into it, by a drill-practice under sanctions".<sup>52</sup> God's instituted government includes "a large creative outfit and providential management, where contrivance, and counsel, and statute, and judgment, and all that belongs to an administrative polity may get ample range of opportunity" in both explicating and vindicating the law before government.<sup>53</sup>

The instituted law, including both the moral legislations of the Scripture and the common laws of society, inaugurates the order of justice and penal sanctions. The order of justice is, in other words, the natural order, and the working of justice is the vindictory function it discharges in the matter of government. It works through definitely enforced applications and definite penalties maintained with impartial exactness. The justice of God is his vindictory firmness in maintaining his own instituted law; it is grounded in the natural or objective order of law, and in God's uses of that polity for His own moral ends.

The instituted law is given by God in a way of positive enactment, appointing what we are to do, or not to do, for the due fulfilment of the absolute law. As such, the instituted law is a necessary co-factor in redemption. It gives adhesiveness to the law, which otherwise, as being ideal, man might lightly dismiss. Through the pressures of its sanctions, even the coarsest mind is fastened practically in an awareness

of that subjective disorder which might otherwise be lost to dull susceptibilities. More exactly, the instituted law has for its office the unfolding of the moral sense:

By it the law before government is reenacted, or applied specifically, and the definitely enforced applications are so many points of obligation impressed. The soul therefore, living under sin, cannot drum itself to sleep in mere generalities of wrong; for it hears condemning thunders breaking in from almost every point of duty in the scheme of life. The moral sense too is mightily quickened by the arrival of justice, and the tremendous energy in which it comes. For it is a great mistake to imagine that the sanctions of justice are valuable only as intimidations. They are God's strange work, and the fearful earnestness they show raises our moral impressions, or convictions, to the highest pitch of tensi<sup>54</sup>.

Instituted law, then, while it is "the letter that killeth" in that the knowledge of sin is by it, is no mere ministry of death. There is a benefit preparing in it which is indispensable to redemption. By the instituted law a whole body of moral judgments and convictions is sharpened and enforced; its drill practice under a religion organized by statutes is divinely ordered and preparatory to the revelation to come. This is to say that we can understand the divine movement called redemption only in terms of the strict unity of God; for however distinct in idea are the two systems, the natural and the supernatural, the objective and the subjective, they are yet in some higher sense one system to God. And it is to say that we can have no true understanding of the workings of justice apart from the joint office of justice and mercy, without which the instituted law has no benign efficacy at all. This joint office, Bushnell said, is the training and exercise of character; and it is in terms of this office that he described the law as an element in coercive discipline, a conception which is fundamental to his under-

standing of the work of Christ.

Bushnell called the present life a state of "penally coercive discipline", in the understanding that man's training toward God is carried on under a motivity thus named. This is his meaning of the "curse": "not a state of doom or punishment, but simply a condition of discipline ordained for spiritual profit and recovery".<sup>55</sup> Life is ordered according to the moral uses of all things, to be a period of probation or schooling, a trial in liberty, an economy where all things work not in terms of penalty, but of discipline.

The coercive side of the law is working too to benefit, and the moral end of the law is the schooling of character. This means that we must see the order of justice in terms of the divine beneficent whole--as part only of the system, and as part that is penal only in so far as it is disciplinary. We do not live in a scheme of justice or of awards, but in a scheme of probatory discipline. What we know in this world of justice, in terms of the retaliatory or retributive side of law, is only a certain kind of pre-judicial distribution, a form of "quasi-justice" or "quasi-retribution", type of the justice to come. The time future, Bushnell said, will be the time of justice. In the present life there is no justice work done.

Persons are not treated alike, nor wrongs alike, neither is any thing kept in the scale of desert. God reserves the liberty in his own hands, to turn our experiences here in what way of stress or modified comfort will best advance his good purpose in us. At the same time, while nothing is being done with us here in the terms of justice, we are duly notified and certified of a time future, when our present mixed way of discipline will be over, and we shall be carried on with our bad ways uncorrected, if so it must be, to be settled on the hard-pan basis of justice pure and simple, receiving every man according to his work.<sup>56</sup>

Christ could not have come, Bushnell said, if the law had not been "casting patterns" for him through the centuries, "and getting ready all the great external matters of the world's empire". By the instituted law, "the religious mind has been cast in the mould of Christian ideas, and a language has been provided, otherwise impossible, on artificial roots, for the reception and perpetual publication of the new Gospel".<sup>57</sup> In the interpretation of this language, we must take special care to discriminate between the objective and the subjective. This corresponds with the universal analogy of the sacrificial terms, as with all the language applied to Christ and his work. We have no literal language for religious ideas, and the exactest things that can be said must somehow be taken in figure. Considering this, we are to expect that all the most subjective truths will be revealed, or set before us, in objective forms; and that in providing a fit array of patterns for the heavenly things, and their objective representations, the divine art of revelation will be most of all displayed.

It was according to this same method of symbol or type and his understanding of instituted law, that Bushnell endeavored to exhibit the true import of the work of Christ, "as viewed under the political symbol of justification". There will be no thought in Bushnell's doctrine of justification of any paymaster scheme adapted from a literal interpretation of the language of instituted polity. His view will rather be that the work of Christ terminates in impressions; that among these impressions, certain are rendered operative and more quickening according to the analogy of the penal-sanction discipline. When we say, for example, that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us", we are to understand that the curse of the law is not the

justice of God, but the penal-sanction discipline we are under. Into this curse Christ was incarnated, and here was to be the field of his redeeming work.

So when the Lord lays the iniquity of us all on the divine sufferer, depuration, deliverance, not punishment, is the gist of the meaning. Another phase of the picture is brought forward, when the prophet says--'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief.' The Jewish habit was to refer every thing good and bad to God's will--'Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?'--and precisely how far the prophet would go in ascribing the 'bruising' and the 'grief' to God's will, in distinction from the wrong doing of wicked men, we may not be able to say, but if, in some sense, he would charge it all to God's infliction, it does not follow that the infliction is judicial penalty; for it can as well be penal-sanction suffering, as we certainly know that all other suffering in this world is.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, all the Latin-born terms containing the syllable "jus", are to be interpreted as having a moral, and never a forensic or judicial significance. We know, Bushnell said, that the Greek words translated by "justice", "just" and "justify", have never any but some far-off reference to law and justice--even when applied to man; how much less can be expected of these terms when they are used as types of the moral excellence of God set forth to be a quickened sensibility for righteousness itself.<sup>59</sup> It was according to the analogy of the curse that Bushnell interpreted the law as form, and it is this analogy that underlies his doctrine of justification by faith. While the discussion of that doctrine is reserved for the "subjective" work of Christ, we may allude here to the general tenor of his view:

By the law, as there conceived, we are only held in terms of penal discipline and not of desert or vindicatory justice, and the discipline is satisfied never, save when it is fulfilled, or consummated in a character deifically righteous. As the trial goes on we suffer scorches of law, and twinges of condemnatory pain, but our lacerations are

measured by no principle of desert. They are not meant for justice, but to work conjunctively always with revelations of goodness and love concerned to win our obedience . . . . All thoughts of a legal justification are, in this view, out of place, we can make no account of it. The wrath to come is by supposition yet future, and the dispensation of justice is not yet arrived. Nothing penal mixes with our discipline, only so far as it will help our recovery.<sup>60</sup>

It was Christianity's outward objectivity, Bushnell said, which set Christ forth to faith instead of to philosophy, as a Form for the soul, apart from which he could not be a power in the soul. Somehow everything we know and experience in our earthly state has been divinely ordered as an objective religion centered in one and the same end of setting Christ forth to faith. "Embodied thus, in a form of divine art, Christ is set before mankind, to be a religion for them, and become, in that manner, a religion in them."<sup>60</sup> As a last aspect of what Bushnell called his "objective" view of atonement, we might thus consider a dimension of his meaning of Christ himself as "Form", "the form of the soul", as the manifestation of Life before the soul and so the moral power of inspiration. Christ is the form of the soul as the one "who lives God in the human figure and relation", and so is the power of inspiration before it. Bushnell called it the power of "in-showing". And it is at this point in his understanding of Christ, where his "two distinct views", the objective and the subjective, become "yet radically one and the same".

The work of Christ is to be regarded not as a theorem or a form of thought, but as a process, a process of obtaining what Bushnell called "moral power". He called the life of Christ a "historic chapter of vicarious sacrifice", meaning that in the "fact-form sacrifice" or the ministry of Christ, God was revealing in time and for our recovery, that

vicariousness which belongs to the essential nature of his love from all eternity. The work of Christ as a saving power is the process of interpreting this vicarious love to man; the work of Christ is the interpretation of God to human sympathies, which necessitates the meeting of man in his finite form, and not in the impossible measures of infinity. Through his personal life-history, a kind of cumulative power is gained by Christ among men. In other words, divinity manifests itself in the finite as moral power.

Bushnell conceived of moral power as issuing from "greatness of character"<sup>61</sup> and as working only by inducements, "that is, by impressions".<sup>62</sup> Any perfect character, he said, has of necessity an organic power, that is, a power to enter human thought and feeling as a vital force that cannot die or cease to work.<sup>63</sup> Such power is not limited to the divine: Socrates, George Washington, and pre-eminently Abraham Lincoln, are names which carry a moral power on mankind, and it is from the sway of their characters that the power exists.<sup>64</sup>

Human analogies, however, can but feebly represent the moral power of Christ and his sacrifice, a power issuing from a new movement on the world. It is not an example, Bushnell said, and not a model to be copied, but "some vehicle of God to the soul, that is able to copy God into it".<sup>65</sup> It is Bushnell's basic thrust as against all naturalistic gospels, that Christianity is a power from out of the plane of nature, a supernatural power:

But there are different orders or degrees, it must be observed, of supernatural power; the human, the angelic, the divine; which all are alike in the fact that the will acts from itself, uncaused in its action, but very unlike as regards potency, or the extent of their efficacy.<sup>66</sup>



Christianity, Bushnell said, is based on the necessity of salvation--a power moving on fallen humanity from above. Say what we may of the human will as a supernatural power, man has no ability at all to regenerate his own state. Salvation is by faith, or it is not at all. "It moves from him and not from you".<sup>67</sup> But man does have the power, he said in Nature and the Supernatural, "to set himself before power", to offer his will and all his capacities openly and receptively to God. If man can but go up into trust, if he can but let God love him in the life and cross of his Son, then the transformation is begun.

To say that Christ is the moral power of God, then, is to speak of his efficacy as regards the human understanding and will. This is the power of symbol or form: it is addressed to and perceived by the feeling or sensibility. Moving through these as a revelation of sympathy, love and life, it proposes "to connect" man with the Life of God:

Suppose, now, to advance another stage, that a man under sin becomes reflective, conscious of himself and of evil, sighing with discontent and bitterness, because of his own spiritual disorders. Conceive him then as undertaking a restoration of his own nature to goodness, and the pure ideal of his conscience. What can he do without some objective power to engage his affections, and be a higher nature, present, by which to elevate and assimilate his own? Sin has removed him from God; withdrawing into himself, his soul has become objectless, and good affections cannot live, or be made to live, where there is no living object left to warm and support them. He can rise, therefore, by no help from his affections, or through them. Accordingly, if he attempts to restore himself to that ideal purity he has lost, he is obliged to do it wholly by his will; possibly against the depressing bondage of his affections, now sunk in torpor and deadness, or soured by a protracted, malign activity. Having all this to do by his will, he finds, alas! that if to will is present, how to perform is not. He seems, to himself, like a man who is endeavoring to lift himself by pulling at his feet. Hence, or to remove this disability, God needs to be manifested as Love. The Divine Object rejected by sin and practically annihilated as a spiritual conception, needs to be imported

into sense. Then, when God appears in His beauty, loving and lovely, the good, the glory, the sunlight of soul, the affections, previously dead, wake into life and joyful play, and what before was only a self-lifting and slavish effort becomes an exulting spirit of liberty. The body of sin and death that lay upon the soul is heaved off, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus--the Eternal Life manifested in him, and received by faith into a vital union--quickens it in good, and makes it free.<sup>68</sup>

If Christ came then to be the moral power of God on men, he came "to draw" them, as by new-born affinities, and so to break the power of baffling self-devotion; the truth-power of Christ is the power "to sway" men's hearts by the argument of the cross; it is some kind of loving and subduing energy obtained by the life and death of Christ, which affects human feeling and engages fallen sensibilities. In short, Bushnell's meaning here of the moral power of Christ is the power of Christ as the "express image" of God to engage man's religious longings--call it his symbolic imagination or his intuitive capacity or his feeling after God--so that man may offer himself in trust to God, and so the union God seeks be consummated. What is the use, Bushnell asked, of the incarnation, if man may have the immediate knowledge of God? "We want", he said, "the whole Scripture, and not least the incarnation and the cross, and the story of the pentecost . . . for the purpose of showing us how to find God. The inherent use of all medial knowledges, all truths, cognitions, books, appearings, and teachings, is that they bring us in, to know God by an immediate knowledge".<sup>69</sup>

This was the sense in which Bushnell endeavored to set forth a view of Christ which has its reality and value in forms that carry effect through the imagination and the heart; a subjective view which is realized under and represented by outward objectivity. And as he had

traced the growth in man's reflective capacity through Jewish history, Bushnell presented his meaning of Christ as the moral power of manifestation, in terms of a long-drawn scheme of economy needed to generate in the world a receptivity for the "in-showing" power of Christ. If Christ had come before the Flood, Bushnell said, all the significance of his suffering and sacrifice would have been lost, and probably would not even have been preserved in the remembrance of history. There was no receptivity for Christ as yet in the world; he came "in the fulness of time", when there was "a culture of mind, or of moral perception produced, that is sufficiently advanced, to receive the meaning of Christ in His sacrifice, and allow Him to get an accepted place in the moral impressions of mankind".<sup>70</sup>

Even in this first dimension of the meaning of Christ as the moral power of God, one can detect the latent progressivism of Bushnell's view. The world he saw as a "visible sacrament", a grand supernatural economy, evolving not according to the boasted gospel of progress, but progressing nonetheless--organifically--according to the moral power of God in history. Even the nineteenth century, he said, was "still too coarse, too deep in sense and the force-principle, to feel, in any but a very small degree, the moral power of God in Christian history".<sup>71</sup> But slowly and sluggishly, the higher sense was unfolding, and men might anticipate the day when this receptivity would be opened wide enough for the power of Christ to enter all souls that live:

It penetrates more and more visibly our sentiments, opinions, laws, sciences, inventions, modes of commerce, modes of society, advancing, as it were, by the slow measured step of centuries, to a complete dominion over the race. So the power is working and so it will till it reigns. Not that Christ grows better, but that He is more and more competently

apprehended, as He becomes more widely incarnated among men, and obtains a fitter representation to thought, in the thoughts, and works of His people.<sup>72</sup>

It was to the yet over-coarse mind of the world that Bushnell attributed man's greatest blindness in respect to the moral efficacy of Christ. The culminating manifestation of divinity as moral power, he said, is the suffering of God on account of evil, or with and for created beings under evil. Christian theology he saw as failing in its common disallowance and rejection of this fact as rationally irreconcilable with the greatness and sufficiency of God. Yet, Bushnell said, "it is this moral suffering of God, the very fact which our human thinking is so slow to receive, that Christ unfolds and works into a character and a power, in His human life".<sup>73</sup>

When men ascribe to God as one of His perfections, that He is impassible, what is meant, Bushnell said, is the physical and not the moral impassibility of God. And this is why to contemplate the cross, and the physical pains and sufferings of Christ, is to contemplate a mystery as great as that of the incarnation itself. It is enough for us, Bushnell said in The Vicarious Sacrifice, to regard the physical sufferings as mediating the divine feeling. "Their importance to us lies probably, not in what they are, but in what they express, or morally signify. They are the symbol of God's moral suffering".<sup>74</sup>

And what is called the agony, Bushnell said, is thus the keynote of Christ's whole ministry, "because it is pure moral suffering".<sup>75</sup> The power of this agony will begin to open to us, only as we apprehend here the suffering sensibility of God and are impressed with the vicarious nature of God as one who bears the burdens of love upon Him. Nothing is more certain, Bushnell said, than that God's perfection

requires Him to be a suffering God, and that it is this suffering sensibility of God that most needs to be revealed and brought nigh to human feeling in the incarnate mission of Jesus, not being sufficiently revealed through nature and the providential history of men. We can not assume, then, that Christ in His vicarious sacrifice, was under obligation to do and suffer just what He did.<sup>76</sup> It is the essence of Bushnell's meaning of "the vicarious sacrifice", that God is one, a strict unity, always in the same perfect character and bearing ever the same great principle of love and sacrifice. Back of the cross and the agony, back of the incarnation and all the preparations of eternity, is the deep love of God struggling out for expression. And it is through the revelation of this truth that Christ brings God to man, "takes hold of", "stirs", "impresses", "softens", and "melts" man's sensibility, and in a word, "draws" that sensibility "to win a choice, raise that choice into a love, in that love become a new revelation, so a salvation".

Here then I think we may rest in the full and carefully tested discovery, that whatever we may say, or hold, or believe, concerning the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, we are to affirm in the same manner of God. The whole Deity is in it, in it from eternity, and will to eternity be. We are not to conceive that our blessed Saviour is some other and better side of Deity, a God composing and satisfying God; but that all there is in Him expresses God, even as He is, and has been of old--such a Being in His love that He must needs take our evils on His feeling, and bear the burden of our sin. Nay, there is a cross in God before the wood is seen upon Calvary; hid in God's own virtue itself, struggling on heavily in burdened feeling through all the previous ages, and struggling as heavily now even in the throne of the world. This too, exactly, is the cross that our Christ crucified reveals and sets before us.<sup>77</sup>

Bushnell's understanding of "the vicarious sacrifice" comes however to fullest expression only in his doctrine of justification by

faith. For it is through the moral power of Christ as justifying, that we come to understand the whole retributive principle running through all natural and providential experience as actually the self-sacrificing vicarious love-principle working to bring us through. And to turn to the doctrine of justification by faith is to turn to what Bushnell regarded as the real matter of his "subjective-objective" view.

The direct aim of Christ's work, Bushnell said, is to reconcile men to God; or what is the same, to communicate God to souls separated from God, and to regenerate in them a new divine principle of spiritual life. In one sense, then, everything in the doctrine of Christ is brought down to this one point of subjective impression--Christ came to reconcile men to God. On the other hand, however, this is not the whole account of Christ's mission; and just here, Bushnell said, lay the real advantage of his symbolic view of atonement. For in addition to showing the true import of Christianity's objective side, his doctrine also upheld the sanctity of the law without and aside from all conceptions of legal justification. In Bushnell's view, it was no sufficient gospel to preach the sanctification of men alone, unless that sanctification could be had in a way that saved the integrity of government and the ends of public justice. Accordingly, he set forth his "subjective" view of Christ's moral power as both justifying and sanctifying: two modes of deliverance which he said are distinguishable in idea, though inseparable in fact.<sup>78</sup>

At the foundation of Bushnell's understanding of justification is the conception of Christ's work as terminating in expression, or what is the same, impression: justification is to be understood as a matter of subjective impressions, an inward and actual deliverance that is wrought

through faith. We are to look for the meaning of justification, then, according to the laws of expression, that is, according to impressions made in us by the life and death of Christ. These impressions will be conveyed through objective forms--symbols derived from the law and governmental order. Justification is the doctrine of Christ set in forms generated by human thought and inquiry under human law.

Justification is nothing, Bushnell said, save as there is executed in the soul and its character, "an inward and actual deliverance from the retributive causes by which it is corrupted and held in penal subjection. The objective, forensic justification is nothing, in fact, but a mode of conceiving the inward subjective deliverance".<sup>79</sup> This means that justification is more than a letting go, or a release from wrath; it is the "forgiveness" of sins, in that justification brings the believing soul out of sin and disorder. In justification God masters the retributive causes of man's nature, and man receives what is more than a ground of remission, that is, the executed fact of remission itself. Notwithstanding the ambiguity ensuing from the judicial nature of the term, justification is to be understood as having a purely moral significance--"that God is just, as being righteousness, and justifies, simply as communicating His own character and becoming a righteousness upon us".<sup>79</sup> In justification, Christ delivers the soul internally from the consequences of sin, that is, takes away condemnation. Therefore, Bushnell also described it as "the restoration of confidence": man is set in confidence with God by being set in righteousness with God.<sup>80</sup> And beyond this, justification is a vindication of the law; it is salvation which can open a passage through government without any breach upon its integrity and order.

Based on this understanding of the nature of justification, Bushnell's exposition of the doctrine endeavors to show how such a deliverance has been effected in the life and death of Christ. And as Bushnell said, this is where his view of Christ classes more as "Art" than as science. It regards the suffering life and death of Christ as "visibly" expressing God's vicarious love such that the impression in man is that God will justify us and give us still his peace. Christ "lives confidence into the world", so that man is inspired to trust. And then when we embrace Christ as our life, "then we are practically justified".<sup>81</sup> Being justified by faith, God's righteousness is set in upon us.

What is involved in Christ's incarnation, then, as respects the matter of his suffering, is above all the revelation of the vicarious love of God. "It is not that suffering appeases God, but that it expresses God--displays, in open history, the unconquerable love of God's Heart".<sup>82</sup> This means that we will fall out of key as regards any proper estimate of Christ's life, if we see him as suffering nothing through it except in a sharp theologic crisis at the close. By the incarnation rather is meant that Christ is put into common condition with us under the curse; his incarnation puts him in the compass of all that belongs to the solidarity of the curse, except that he is touched by none of its contaminations. And if we look to those of our race who seem to suffer the most, these lower "sub-Saviour sufferers" can by analogy suggest to us what must be the depth of the suffering of Christ.<sup>83</sup> "See God in the flowers if you will"; Bushnell said, "but ask no gospel made up of flowers. Look after a sinner's gospel, one that brings you God himself . . . Understand the tragic perils of your sin, and think nothing strong



enough for you but a tragic salvation".<sup>84</sup> Christ suffers all the suffering of mankind--it is in our objective terms, as if the condemnations of God were upon him, or that he bare our sins, or that by his stripes we are healed. This is not to give us a theory of justification by faith, but to give us the feeling that God has chosen in this manner to express his love.

If we now ponder further what is meant by the incarnation, we will see that God is expressing himself here in a way which effectually impresses our mind with a sense of fear and ill-desert in transgression, as the execution of penalty would do under a system of pure justice. Christ reveals the divine love and feeling before us in ways that effectually honor the system of retributive order in our conscience, verify it to our fears, and sanctify it in the reverence of mankind, as if the penalties of justice were literally and rigidly executed. We feel the sacred authority of the law and the consequent evil and ill-desert of our sin.

This means of course that there is no law of penalty or justice involved in the justifying work of Christ; he is here for no such purpose, but only to bring himself personally near to us for our benefit. What is wanted, rather, is that our deliverance should be wrought in a way that complements the law and is a virtual justification before it.

But in order to this, it is not necessary, of course, that the penalty we are under should be exacted of Christ, or executed on Christ, because it is not executed on us. All that is needed is that the future action of law and reciprocal justice be made certain, in case the transgression is continued; and, if it is forsaken, that the pardon should be yielded, under a provision so tempered as to save the sanctity of law and the rectoral honor and authority of God in its administration.<sup>85</sup>

Bushnell specified four methods by which Christ fortifies the sanctity of law and the judicial righteousness of God in the impressions of mankind.<sup>86</sup> A very small matter it would be, he said, if Christ managed to just save the law by some judicial compensation--Christ does infinitely more in intensifying and deepening the impression of law. Christ restores men to the law, because the subject forgiven is restored to all precept, not to the absolute law only, but impliedly to all statutes of God's instituted government for the application and enforcement of that. Christ fortifies and sanctifies the law by his own transcendent obedience to its precepts, and the exhibition of sacred beauty in his character. Christ satisfies the law because he fulfils the law, and consummates it as being in his own person the incarnation of it. By his rigorous and impressive announcements of the penal retributions of the law in the future life, Christ identifies Christianity as a judgement-day gospel and himself as the judge of the world. And finally, Christ sanctifies the law by the offering of his death, considered as counterpart to the uses of blood in the ritual service, "where blood, as containing the life, is regarded as a sacred element which, by its application, consecrates, again, the Just Name and Law of the Being whose altar it sprinkles--removing, thus, the dishonors of transgression and clothing in authority, before the evil conscience of sin, the throne it has violated."<sup>87</sup>

Bushnell's doctrine of justification by faith represents in part his attempt to get away from theories of judicial satisfaction, and from the whole idea that God first began to rule by law, was unsuccessful, and so was forced to introduce the dispensation of grace. "God, we say, never made any so great misfit in a plan as to organize a great first

half of it, that he must somehow, any how, at any cost, get rid of, before he could bring it on to success."<sup>88</sup> Love is always the reigning spirit of God's plan; and in this view, our state of probation under sin is not a state of penalty or of justice, but a mixed state in which the ordinances of justice are held in counsel by the powers of mercy in ways which will work best to benefit. Both justice and mercy therefore, are forms of love. And we begin to see in this view of justification, God's moral economy carried full circle--that the beginning and the ending of God's system are one. When we are justified by faith, Bushnell, said, "we are carried directly back into the recesses, so to speak, of God's eternity--

back of all instituted government, back of the creation, back of all the statutes, and penalties, and the coming wrath of guiltiness, and all the contrived machineries and means of grace, including in a sense even the Bible itself, and rested with God, on the base of His antecedent, spontaneous, immutable righteousness."<sup>89</sup>

It is a deliverance that is wrought by faith. The justification is not conceived to be an accomplished fact, and can never be, prior to faith in the subject. This faith is not the belief that Christ has come to even our account with justice; neither is it the belief that Christ has obtained a surplus merit. Faith is not belief in a fact of any kind, "even though it be an atonement made, or a legal justification provided". Real faith, he said, is "the trusting of one's self over, sinner to Saviour, to be in him, and of him, and new characterized by him; because it is only in that way that the power of Christ gets opportunity to work".<sup>90</sup> It is by faith that men are connected again with the life of God, and filled and overspread with his righteousness. Quite apart from all theologic fiction, Bushnell said, there is a grand, experimental Scripture truth of imputed righteousness involved in this view. The man

justified is never thought of as being just in himself, "in the sense of being set in a state of self-centered righteousness",<sup>91</sup> but only derivatively, and according to the degree of faith.

In one view, it is not true; there is no such quantity, or substance, separate from him, and laid up in store for us; but there is a power in him everlastingly able to beget in us, or keep flowing over upon us, every gift our sin most needs; and this we represent to our hearts, by conceiving, in a figure, that we have a stock, just what we call 'our righteousness', laid up for us, beforehand, in the richly funded stores of his eternity.<sup>92</sup>

Bushnell granted that according to his view, it was possible to conceive of justification and regeneration as only different conceptions of the same thing. Spiritual freedom on the one side is justification on the other. But he insisted nonetheless that the distinction between justification and sanctification is sufficiently defined. In the term 'sanctification', he said, "the mind is looking simply toward the deliverance and restoration of character"; while in the term 'justification', "it looks toward the deliverance of retributive evils and pains".<sup>93</sup> The distinction is based on Bushnell's understanding of "imputation", that is, on his conception that in justification the soul is only so joined, by its faith, to the righteousness of God, "as to be rather invested by it, or enveloped in it, than to be transformed all through in its own inherent quality".<sup>94</sup> And in this manner, he said, "one who is justified at once, can be sanctified only in time; and one who is completely justified is only incipiently sanctified . . .".<sup>95</sup>

Both justification and sanctification are by faith, that is, both are effected through the "inspiring" moral power of Christ. In fact, when he discussed the moral power of Christ as sanctifying power, Bushnell used the terms "faith" and "sanctification" interchangeably.

Christian regeneration he said, is the work of Christ as the moral power of God within man. "This we may call repentance, faith, conversion, regeneration, or by whatever name".<sup>96</sup> And it is this understanding of regeneration which marks the full development of Bushnell's meaning of Christ as "the form of the soul". Christ is "the form of the soul" as the moral power of inspiration before it. But this revelation is given in order that Christ may become a healing power within the soul. The sermon in which Bushnell gave account of his personal religious experience of 1848, begins with this sentence: "What form is to body, character is to spirit".<sup>97</sup> Christ is the form of the soul as dwelling within the soul and giving it a form out of his own. "The life of God in the soul of man,--that is religious character, and beside that there is none."<sup>98</sup>

Regeneration is inspiration. It is God moving into the soul and living in it; communicating himself; inbreathing; shedding himself abroad in the soul; configuring it inwardly to all that is most perfect in himself. And as the soul is made permeable by the divine nature, prepared in that manner to receive and entemple the Infinite Spirit, and so be formed in divinity, so the soul is made, as it were, "to be the vehicle of God's thought and action; so of his character and joy".<sup>99</sup>

Christ came, Bushnell said, "to impart the divine". And this Christo-mystic understanding of regeneration is intimately bound up with a doctrine of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. The converted man is more than a human person: "he is a spirit; exalted, empowered, and finally to be glorified by the life and Spirit of God developed freely in him. This emphatically is regeneration."<sup>100</sup> As Christ then is the form or image that glasses God's image before us, the Spirit is the plastic force within, "that transfers and photographs that image; and so,

beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord".<sup>101</sup>

Mere revelation, Bushnell said, or a word of truth that has gotten form as in language, has by itself no moral power to new-character the soul:

It stands before the mind, glassing truth in a way to act upon it, but it can accomplish nothing save as another kind of power acting in the mind makes it impressible under and by the truth. Hence the necessity of the Paraclete and the new dispensation, promised to complete the full organization of the saving plan. The gospel ended off in Christ or his personal story and set before the world would do little, save as another kind of power invisible is prepared in the world to raise a new sensibility for it and toward it.<sup>102</sup>

On the other hand, however, the matter of regeneration is not to be referred to the Holy Spirit in any exclusive sense. Christ is the power to the soul before its thought and by that which is given to thought in His person; the Spirit is that power back of thought which opens its receptivity to Christ, and in that manner sets the subject under the impression of Christ's life and death and character. In other words, the work of regeneration requires both the Lord Jesus and the Spirit:

Then, the Holy Spirit working as a subjective grace within, to open inlets there for Christ lifted up as an objective grace and power without, Christ is formed in the soul, and it speaks out the new consciousness it has of life, saying,-- Christ liveth in me. And so we are washed, sanctified, justified in the name (or power) of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.<sup>103</sup>

Christ then is, or is to be, an operative power on men, as the moral image and love of God, set forth to engage their love and renew them in character. And regeneration requires all there is of God in the incarnate life of Jesus, in the objective forms of his suffering

ministry and death.<sup>104</sup> This renewal is such a radical transformation, that it can be described only in terms of new birth, or "new creation". Christian faith, Bushnell said, is no mere playing out of nature on its own level; it is the lifting up of the man above himself in a transformation that makes him new to himself. As no longer mere flesh, but "spirit", the Christian ranges above the world in a new sphere, with faculties opened for the first time into worlds above the world. The conception is, Bushnell said, "that souls new-born 'from above', as Christ speaks, are in this manner lifted above, and go clear of the foot-levels of the world and the mere natural understanding. The smother of flesh and sense is taken off, and they rise."<sup>105</sup>

All this takes place by faith "because when we rest ourselves, our life and life-character on God, we prove him and have the sense of him revealed to our immediate knowledge".<sup>106</sup> The entering in of God supposes a new discovery of God, a new cognitive relation. Now the soul is no longer blank to truth: it knows not only itself but it has the knowledge of God and is raised out of the level of finite forms into conscious and immediate participation of divinity.<sup>107</sup>

Faith, then, is in a higher plane of perception than natural understanding; all that one knows, debates, and thinks about God are "things round about", only introductory to the knowledge of God himself. "After all you have reasoned, faith is still to come".<sup>108</sup> It is the man's new, self-committing, trusting act, by which he puts himself out on trust, that effects his sublime migration upward into the range of spirit, where he lives inspirationally, and has all things new.

This migration upward carries body and soul together. As Bushnell had spelled out in Nature and the Supernatural, souls and

bodies are not far apart in their fall; the fall of sin carries down both together. Similarly, "the quickening of the Spirit quickens, not the soul only, but the mortal body with it". Health is a divine thing, said Bushnell, be it in the soul or in the body, "and as the fibres of both are intertwined, with such marvellous cunning, all through, how shall either fall out of God's order alone, or come back into it alone?"<sup>109</sup> The point to be made is, that Bushnell's social philosophy, while a large and complex topic, should not be interpreted in isolation from his understanding of Christ.<sup>110</sup> More specifically, it is Bushnell's understanding of regeneration as "organific", both on the individual and the social level, which bears particular relevance to certain aspects of his social philosophy, perhaps the prototypical example being his theme of "Christian civilization".

In one sense, Bushnell's concept of "Christian civilization" is the inevitable corollary of his view of the consequences of sin, as the overall denaturing or de-formation of man's physical and social life. Because of the organic unity of life, Bushnell said, Christ's vicarious ministry is as much a healing of the physical and social orders of existence, as it is a healing of souls. This meant for Bushnell that regenerated souls--Christian people--would be invested with a certain physical rigour and social capacity. Bushnell noted for example that the virus of no desolating plague had ever originated among a Christian people:

. . . because no Christian people can ever sink to a type of moral and physical dejection low enough to breed them. They will have too much of character, condition, good keeping, courage superior to panic--too much antidote, in a word, to allow the distilling of any such poison. Is it idle to suggest, or foolish to believe that Christianity,



as a grace of remedy in the world, has a supernatural touch, that sends a qualifying counter-shock through the bad causes of nature, and prevents the plague-mischief being fully concocted?<sup>111</sup>

Bushnell could point to no greater testimony to this remarkably sanative power of Christianity, than the New England people. "They have such habits of industry, a condition of life so plentiful and healthful, so much of physical tone . . . that the infections of pestilence meet a barrier, when they arrive, that is very nearly impassable."<sup>112</sup> And it is this view of Christ's vicarious office as a general healing of the subject, a restoration to complete life of both body and soul, that we should bear in mind in terms of Bushnell's devotion to the ideals and sentiments of the more settled and cultivated forms of society.

It is of course through the social dimension of this organic renewal that Bushnell's idea of "Christian civilization" comes to full expression. For this view of regeneration as transforming both the soul and the body, is tied together in Bushnell's understanding with what he called the "law of population", that is, the hereditary mechanism which he believed gave Christianity its "out-populating power". As he had maintained in Nature and the Supernatural, mankind is an organic whole, and necessarily propagates from generation to generation, the disordering effects of sin. But on the other hand, he wrote in 1861, we may just as surely be born saints as sinners, for "good principles and habits, intellectual culture, domestic virtue, industry, order, law, faith", can be transferred under the laws of heredity, from one generation to the next.<sup>113</sup> He could even say that two parents could be so thoroughly formed in Christ as to communicate the seeds of regeneration, so that in fact, "regeneration may, in some initial and profoundly real sense,

be the twin element of propagation itself".<sup>114</sup> And such we might expect to be the case, he said, in an economy where the supernatural always works in and through the laws and conditions of nature.

It is the expectation of Christianity, in this view, that by the moral power of Christ, entered "seminally" into the process of propagated life, "salvation will become an inbred life and populating force, mighty enough to overlive, and finally to completely people the world."<sup>115</sup> And this is only another example of the moral uses of all things in the one system of God--that while we may sometimes complain of our involvement in the solidarity of the curse, the strict solidarity of our condition is in a higher sense working for the triumph of God's moral power in history.

Bushnell conceived, then, of the dark side of western emigration in terms of its "downward pressure" from the ascendant order of Christian refinement. And the danger of barbarism was particularly great, he said, in view of the fact that the people rushing west were not of Christian stock--"the rude-minded and ignorant masses of western Pennsylvania; the luckless and impoverished families flying from slavery in Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee; and such hordes of foreigners as the overpopulated countries of Europe are obliged to spare--men of all habits, characters and religions--".<sup>116</sup> Still, Bushnell said, the prospect of barbarism was no cause for despair, and the wave of retrocession would be only a gathering of power for another advance of the gospel. It was the inherited capacity for Christian civilization which would eventually work in America to overpopulate and live down its inferior and barbarous groups.

But suppose this same law of physiological connection to be finally rectified and purified in the progress of time, all Christian parentages becoming the spring thus of a graciously rectified and purified germinal life in their children--and it must as certainly be so as that there is any transmission of quality at all--and then these two results will follow: First, that the new solidarity in good, thus consummated, will be at once more prosperous and more healthy, being clear of the poisons of vice and of all habits of excess, and will thus overpopulate and virtually live down the more corrupted families; secondly, that every such family will become a rectified stock, transmitting seeds of uprightness that will propagate, much as they themselves are propagated, even to the end of the world.<sup>117</sup>

To say that Bushnell was an organic thinker, then, is to say that he conceived of the universe in terms of spiritual growth. It is, of course, his concept of form, which gives this synthetic dimension to all of his thinking, and which is expressed finally in his view of atonement, in terms of progressive participation and ultimate solidarity in good. As it is, none of Bushnell's work occasioned more dissent than his doctrine of atonement, and at the center of the criticism brought against it, is his theory of form or symbol. According to George Park Fisher, for example, Bushnell's view made the subjective atonement the naked truth, while it rendered the objective atonement only "a figure of speech". "There is a living, spiritual, reciprocal fellowship between the believer and Christ; but propitiation and all kindred terms were declared to be the language of appearance; they are figures, as when we say that the sun rises. A change which takes place in ourselves we metaphorically impute to God."<sup>118</sup> Or, we may look for another example, to the Remonstrance and Complaint of the Fairfield West Association:

The objective form, if regarded as the truth, is not true, the representation bearing no true correspondency to any thing real. It is only a form, or representation, or liturgy, by which impressions are produced in us.

Thus, there being no real sacrifice, nor any real remission of sin as the effect of sacrifice, and the atonement being no propitiation to the divine justice, but a simple at-one-ment--having all its effect upon us . . . not by any real altar ceremony, but only by an artistic display--a liturgic form for an effect in the direct manner of art,--to turn these representations into dogma, and represent them as realities, is to represent as truth that which is not true; and the Protestant world, who have taught that these representations of atonement and remission by the blood of Christ have a true correspondence with any thing real, and so are the truth, have done what they could to set themselves between God's wisdom and man's want. 119

Bushnell had anticipated that his contemporaries would interpret his doctrine as having dissipated or explained away the objective side of Christianity, and from 1848 on, he addressed himself to the question, "Wherein lay the reality of his representatively objective view?". A proximate general answer to the question, he said in Christ in Theology, would be that no truth is perfectly represented until it has found some objective form.<sup>120</sup> "It is not perceived that, when a word rises out of fact in the physical range, to be the fixed name, by figure, of something in the range of thought and spirit, it obtains a meaning as much fuller and more solid as it is closer akin to mind."<sup>121</sup>

As he had in his doctrines of trinity and the person of Christ, however, Bushnell again turned to the principle of efficaciousness, in an attempt to verify the reality of form. That which is most powerfully true, he said, is that which is closest to the wants of inspirable but lost souls. Because the objectivities of Christianity are essential vehicles of truth, without which there is no redemption, they are grounded in the eternal. The mystic symbols of the altar, for example, taken as outward images, that is, as "bases of words; correspondences, the Swedenborgians would say; types, our fathers have said; or, better still than either, patterns, shadows of good things to come", have their

transcendental ground in the nature of God. Their moral use means that they have somehow been connected with God in Christ from before all worlds. Christ has been our high priest, as he has been our propitiation and our Lamb, in some eternal sense.

My own conviction is that the institution of the altar, useful of course to them that worship in its ritual, was principally designed to prepare impressions and terms of language for 'the good things to come', the 'heavenly things themselves', sometime to be manifested, in the transcendent mystery of Christ . . . . They are copies of a transcendent something in the heavens, or the Word of the heavens; to be as letter to spirit, and to be fulfilled in due time by the heavenly things themselves, brought down to earth, in the incarnation of the Word . . . the beginning connects with the end, and the end with the beginning, and that, back of all, the sublime superstructure rests on a foundation wholly transcendent in the divine nature itself,--the essential, eternal, universal, priesthood of the Word.<sup>122</sup>

Obviously, the question of "reality" still perplexed Bushnell after The Vicarious Sacrifice, and by 1874, he thought he had a better answer. Bushnell announced in the Introduction of Forgiveness and Law that "the unexpected arrival of fresh light" had obliged him to make a large revision of The Vicarious Sacrifice. It had occurred to him, he said, in his observation of human behavior, that the answer lay in the principle of analogy. "Is it not time now", he asked, "after so many centuries gone by, to have it discovered, that there is no truth concerning God which is not somehow explicated by truths of our own moral consciousness?"<sup>123</sup> There is no forgiveness attained on the human level without some work involving cost in behalf of the one wronged; and this cost or suffering is the propitiation of the one wronged. Can we not conclude, then, that the same is in some sense true of God, "more humano", and made intelligible to us through the human analogy? And now, Bushnell said, instead of asserting only a representative mitigation or propitiation

of God in the sacrifice of Christ, he wanted to assert "a real propitiation of God, finding it in evidence from the propitiation we instinctively make ourselves when we heartily forgive".<sup>124</sup>

The move was hailed by Bushnell's critics as a return to orthodox ranks. And in view of Bushnell's symbolism, it is at first glance a perplexing final statement on the meaning of analogy and form. Bushnell had always based his symbolic method on the principle that the analogy which exists between form and spirit, between finite and infinite "persons" involves the element of paradox, a tension between affirmation and negation, similarity and difference, revelation and mystery. In Forgiveness and Law, Bushnell stated his "grand analogy" in terms of an "almost identity that subsists between our moral nature and that of God; so that our moral pathologies and those of God make faithful answer to each other, and he is brought so close to us that almost anything that occurs in the workings or exigencies of our moral instincts may even be expected in his."<sup>125</sup>

There is a sense, however, in which the "new light" which Bushnell announced in Forgiveness and Law, constitutes no shift at all, but only a deepening of his meaning of "vicarious sacrifice". He had been saying since 1848, that the reality of any symbol ultimately rests in impression, or what is the same, expression; that the symbol, as God's own poetry, is evocative of human feeling simply because it is expressive of the divine feeling. Symbols call forth commitment, participation, trust, and in this response, or in this meeting, is man's understanding found, the light given which renders intelligible the objects of knowledge and experience. It is not that the divine is simply the human type writ large, but rather that according to the principle of analogy, symbols are

judged by their faithfulness to human experience.

Perhaps Bushnell saw his "new light" in terms of his own "over-coarse mind", that had failed to competently apprehend the suffering of God with and for created beings under evil. He said in Forgiveness and Law that God has done more through the symbols of atonement than simply to work impressions in us by the suffering life and death of Christ; propitiation is not just an objective form of thought which renders a subjective change in man apart from the tragic element in God's own moral virtue. Christianity, he said, is more than "representatively" objective, because its types express on the level of a transaction in time, that suffering love which has been engaged from all eternity to bring us out of our sins. We do not properly conceive the meaning of vicarious sacrifice as "grounded in principles of universal obligation", until we understand the objective forms of propitiation as analagous to, or as exhibiting in time, "the interior, ante-mundane, eternally-proceeding sacrifice of the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world".<sup>126</sup> If Christianity's objective forms are not literal explanations, representations or theories, they do nonetheless speak out incontestably about the ever-present feeling and character of God.

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>For studies which have placed Bushnell's theory of language in the context of symbolism, see Donald A. Crosby, Horace Bushnell's Theory of Language (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1975) and Charles Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

<sup>2</sup>See Theodore Munger, "The Secret of Horace Bushnell" in Bushnell Centenary (Hartford Press: The Case Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1902), pp. 35-46.

<sup>3</sup>See Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), Chapter Three.



## CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>Theodore Munger, "The Secret of Horace Bushnell", Bushnell Centenary, pp. 35-36; Munger, Horace Bushnell: Preacher and Theologian (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), pp. 40-43. Munger's misinterpretation of Bushnell has held over the years, and has been adopted by other scholars such as Frank Foster and John Wright Buckham. This misinterpretation is that for Bushnell, nature comprises all of reality, "even God who is included in its category". See Frederick Kirschenmann, "Horace Bushnell: Cells or Crustacea?", in Reinterpretation in American Church History, ed. Jerald C. Brauer, Univ. of Chicago series Essays in Divinity, No. 5 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Mary Bushnell Cheney, Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Cheney, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup>Bushnell, Christ In Theology (Hartford: Brown and Parsons, 1851), p. 174. On the basis of this experience, Bushnell said that he always felt sympathy and respect for the Unitarians. See God In Christ (Hartford: Brown and Parsons, 1849), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup>Cheney, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup>Cheney, p. 209. The point being made here, is that Coleridge was the decisive factor in Bushnell's experience of 1831, and this contradicts the interpretation given for example by Barbara Cross, Horace Bushnell: Minister To A Changing America (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 27, and William A. Johnson, Nature and the Supernatural in the Theology of Horace Bushnell (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963), p. 19. My interpretation on this point follows that of John E. Howell, "A Study of the Theological Method of Horace Bushnell and its Application to His Cardinal Doctrines", Diss. Duke University, 1963.

<sup>7</sup>Bushnell, Sermons On Living Subjects (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), p. 166.

<sup>8</sup>Bushnell's own account of the homespun manner is given in "The Age of Homespun", in Work and Play (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), pp. 374-408, and is revealing both of the family life in which he

grew and the model of education and piety which he inherited from his youth. See especially pp. 374-387.

<sup>9</sup>Cheney, p. 32. Note also Cheney, p. 56, the experience Bushnell had before 1831 of being divided between his intellect and his feeling, a split which goes back in his American heritage to the Great Awakening in 1740. I am indebted to Charles Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature, p. 96, for the idea that this split can also be viewed in terms of the loss of the capacity for symbolic thinking. And in this respect, one could say that it was Bushnell's great achievement to rise above this cleavage through a recovery of the symbolic imagination.

<sup>10</sup>See Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 172-175. For the influence of Common Sense Realism on American theology, see Sydney Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," Church History, 24(1955). Bushnell never doubted that every man has innate knowledge of the distinction between right and wrong: "We may call it an idea in him, or a law, or a category of his being. He would not be a man without it; for it is only in connection with this, and other necessary ideas, that he ranges above the animals". (Nature and the Supernatural (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), p. 111.) Nevertheless, this is not the whole story of 1831, which must not be seen merely as some affirmation of moralistic duty. See Cheney, p. 209, for evidence that Bushnell's discovery of a higher sense in Coleridge just preceded his religious experience of 1831. Together, these two facets of his conversion changed his whole approach to truth.

<sup>11</sup>See for example Cross, p. 11; William A. Johnson, "Horace Bushnell Revisited: A Study of the Development of His Theology", The Drew Gateway, Autumn, 1964, p. 11; Munger, Horace Bushnell: Preacher and Theologian, p. 27. These are representative of the way Bushnell's conversion of 1831 is either glossed over or misconceived. Note in Johnson's article, p. 13, an example of the widely held misconception that Bushnell read Coleridge through the eyes of the American Romantic movement.

<sup>12</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 176-177.

<sup>13</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 240.

<sup>14</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 175-177.

<sup>15</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 182.

<sup>16</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 179.

<sup>17</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, Preface to the First Edition,  
p. ii.

<sup>18</sup>See for example, Cross, pp. 115-133; Roland Bainton, Yale and the Ministry (New York: Harper and Bros., 1957), pp. 96-126.

<sup>19</sup>Cheney, pp. 63-64. Bushnell is apparently indebted to Coleridge for these definitions. See Aids To Reflection, introd. James Marsh, Kennikat Press Series on Literary America in the Nineteenth Century (Port Washington, N.Y., London: Kennikat Press, 1971), p. 236: "I have attempted, then, to fix the proper meaning of the words, nature and spirit, the one being the antithesis to the other: so that the most general and negative definition of nature is, whatever is not spirit; and vice versa of spirit, that which is not comprehended in nature; or in the language of our elder divines, that which transcends nature. But nature is the term in which we comprehend all things that are representable in the forms of time and space, and subjected to the relations of cause and effect: and the cause of the existence of which, therefore, is to be sought for perpetually in something antecedent. The word itself expresses this in the strongest manner possible: Natura, that which is about to be born, that which is always becoming--It follows, therefore, that whatever originates its own acts, or in any sense contains in itself the cause of its own state, must be spiritual, and consequently supernatural: yet not on that account necessarily miraculous. And such must the responsible will in us be, if it be at all."

<sup>20</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things (London: Richard D. Dickinson, 1902); "Progress", Hours At Home, 8, No. 3 (January, 1869); "Science and Religion", Putnam's Magazine, 1, No. 3 (March, 1868).

<sup>21</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup>Indeed, the mechanical model of cause-effect had become so entrenched in the New England mind, that neither the naturalist nor the supernaturalist could conceive of the spiritual dimension in any other terms. For example, the avowed naturalist like Theodore Parker would allow no view of religion which could not be explained in and through the fixed laws of nature. See Nature and the Supernatural, p. 500ff.. The supernaturalist, on the other hand, was retreating into an opposite, and for Bushnell, an equally untenable extreme. See Nature and the Supernatural, p. 19 and p. 41.

<sup>23</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 334.

<sup>24</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 16 and p. 258. In the first chapter of this treatise, Bushnell discusses "a few of the thousand and one forms" in which this naturalizing tendency appears. See pp. 22-29. What made this propensity to naturalism so momentous a crisis for Bushnell was the fact that he saw it gathering to itself all thought and life--social, political and religious. He saw evidence of naturalism all

around him in New England Unitarianism, transcendentalism and evangelism, as well as in the "aberrations from the Christian truth" which were infiltrating America in the works of Strauss, Hennel and Renan.

<sup>26</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 24.

<sup>28</sup>See Aids To Reflection, p. 158, for "the sacred distinction between things and powers"; p. 106, for an example of Coleridge's view of the will as "pre-eminently the spiritual constituent in our being"; and p. 108, for further evidence of Bushnell's apparent indebtedness to Coleridge: "Whatever is comprised in the chain and mechanism of cause and effect, of course, necessitated, and having its necessity in some other thing, antecedent or concurrent--this is said to be natural; and the aggregate and system of all such things is Nature. It is, therefore, a contradiction in terms to include in this the free-will, of which the verbal definition is--that which originates an act or state of being." For the relation between Bushnell and Coleridge, see John E. Howell, "A Study of the Theological Method of Horace Bushnell and its Application to His Cardinal Doctrines"; Mildred K. Billings, "The Theology of Horace Bushnell Considered in Relation to That of Samuel Taylor Coleridge", Diss. University of Chicago, 1960.

<sup>29</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 36-37.

<sup>30</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 51. Here, Bushnell takes issue with Jonathan Edwards, whose treatise on the will he understood as basically mechanistic in its approach. For to say that man's will is determined by the strongest motive, is, for Bushnell, to conceive of the supernatural in terms of cause and effect. See for example, p. 108: "If we could show a positive ground for sin; that man, for example, is a being whose nature it is to choose the strongest motive, as of a scale-beam to be turned by the heaviest weight, and that the strongest motive, arranged to operate on man, is the motive to do evil, that in fact would be the denial of sin, or even of its possibility; indeed it is so urged by the disciples of naturalism on every side." It is interesting to note that Coleridge also takes a strong stand against Edwards' doctrine of the will. See Aids, p. 169, where it is said that Edwards represents the will as "absolutely passive, clay in the hands of a potter."

<sup>31</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 51. While man's subordinate faculties can never be causes on the will, or can exercise no restrictive power on the will, they do have the power of influence; they can "solicit" and "draw". Man's subordinate faculties, while they can not diminish the freedom of the will, can nevertheless restrict man's executive capacity.

<sup>32</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 43.

<sup>33</sup>There is a subtle and sublime theology of covenant underlying Bushnell's thought. Instructive in this regard is H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Idea of Covenant and American Democracy", Church History (June, 1954).

<sup>34</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 56-57. It is interesting to notice that in the context of this discussion on the meaning of character, Bushnell calls up the names of Washington and Lincoln. For his estimate of Cromwell, see pp. 472-474.

<sup>35</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 510.

<sup>36</sup>"Progress", p. 206. Bushnell is careful to stress that supernatural action upon nature does not imply a suspension of the laws of nature--a variation, but never an abatement. See Bushnell's example of supernatural action upon nature in the case of a man firing a pistol, in Nature and the Supernatural, p. 44.

<sup>37</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 85.

<sup>38</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 101-102.

<sup>39</sup>"Progress", p. 207.

<sup>40</sup>"Progress", p. 207.

<sup>41</sup>"Science and Religion", p. 267. Having thus adjusted our conceptions of nature and the supernatural to include their systematized and co-ordinate activity, Bushnell moves to a re-definition of the miraculous, one that does not involve suspension of the laws of cause and effect. "So God's supernatural fiat acting into, or interacting with, the laws and causes of nature, may produce all miracle without disruption of order". (S & R, p. 272) In Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 335ff., he gives an expanded definition, whereby a miracle must be "superhuman" and must include the element of wonder.

<sup>42</sup>For the New England debate over the question of human depravity, see for example: Joseph Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1932); Sidney Mead, Nathaniel Taylor: A Connecticut Liberal (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1942); H. Shelton Smith, Changing Conceptions of Original Sin (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955). Or, for a brief synopsis, see the Introduction of H. Shelton Smith, Horace Bushnell (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965).

<sup>43</sup>See E. Clinton Gardner, "Horace Bushnell's Doctrine of Depravity," Theology Today, 12 (1955-1956).

<sup>44</sup>Christian Nurture (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916). The original Discourses On Christian Nurture was published in 1847 by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society. After a few months its publication was suppressed. In reply to certain misrepresentations of his views of Christian nurture, Bushnell immediately published a pamphlet, An Argument For "Discourses On Christian Nurture", which he addressed to the Publishing Committee of the MSSS. In 1848, he published a much enlarged second edition of the original book, titled Views of Christian Nurture, and containing the original Discourse, a second Discourse, the Argument, and further additions. This second edition was almost wholly re-written and published in its third form in 1861 as Christian Nurture.

<sup>45</sup>See Smith, Horace Bushnell, pp. 12-17; Smith, Changing Conceptions, pp. 137-163.

<sup>46</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 214.

<sup>47</sup>Sermons For the New Life (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858), p. 332.

<sup>48</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 36.

<sup>49</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 36. Or we may note another of Bushnell's Augustinian definitions of sin, from SNL, p. 118: "I know not how to describe it better than to call it a false love, a wrong love, a downward, selfish love."

<sup>50</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 419.

<sup>51</sup>The Spirit in Man: Sermons and Selections (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. 250.

<sup>52</sup>We may note again Bushnell's conviction that every man knows and acknowledges the good. See Note 10.

<sup>53</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 109.

<sup>54</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 290. See R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), for a good discussion of the theme of "fortunate fall" in Bushnell. Bushnell anticipated this sort of label, and his answer to it is given in Nature and the Supernatural, p. 133.

<sup>55</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 117. Note that an important dimension of the meaning of "condition privative" is that there is no cause for sin. Sin is rooted in the will, and any consideration of determination here, Bushnell abhors. See p. 114.

<sup>56</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 113-117.

<sup>57</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 289.

<sup>58</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 172.

<sup>59</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 196.

<sup>60</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 248.

<sup>61</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 43.

<sup>62</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 154-155.

<sup>63</sup>Bushnell is speaking here of the New England orthodox view of "total depravity" which denies any intuitive capacity in man. See his essay on "Christian Comprehensiveness" in Building Eras in Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881), where Bushnell warns the orthodox that Parker is not to be answered by denying the religious nature of the soul. See also, for example, God In Christ, p. 93: "It has not been held, as a practical, positive, and earnest Christian truth, that there is a PERCEPTIVE POWER in spiritual life, an unction of the Holy One, which is itself a kind of inspiration--an immediate, experimental knowledge of God . . .". It is Bushnell's symbolic imagination which works here as a comprehensive principle to reconcile or bring together the realm of "sense" and the realm of "mind", represented by the New England right and the New England left. See also, "Religious Nature and Religious Character", in Sermons On Living Subjects.

<sup>64</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 168.

<sup>65</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 63.

<sup>66</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 186.

<sup>67</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 190.

<sup>68</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things, p. 256.

<sup>69</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 174. While Bushnell believed in inherited depravity, i.e. the physical propagation of the effects of sin from one generation to another under the laws of heredity, he did not hold to a doctrine of imputed sin. See Smith, Changing Conceptions, pp. 155-158.

<sup>70</sup>Christian Nurture, p. 83. Regarding the organic solidarity of sin, see also Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 178-181, and Lewis, The American Adam, pp. 66-73.

<sup>71</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 171.

<sup>72</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 186-187.

<sup>73</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 188. Note here Bushnell's references to typology in Edwards and Swedenborg.

<sup>74</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 190.

<sup>75</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 192-193.

<sup>76</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things, p. 149.

<sup>77</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 344.

<sup>78</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things, pp. 256-257.

<sup>79</sup>"Science and Religion", p. 272.

<sup>80</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 365.

<sup>81</sup>See for example, Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 272. I am reminded here of a sentence from Ursula Brumm, American Thought and Religious Typology (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1970), p. 101: "The transformation of the entire world accessible to human experience into an indicator of a higher religious meaning does of course diminish its reality. Yet this lends it at the same time a superior reality through its harmony with the spiritual world." In the following chapters, this will surface as a real tension in Bushnell's Christology.

<sup>82</sup>See "In and By Things Temporal Are Given Things Eternal" in Sermons On Living Subjects; "Spiritual Things The Only Solid" and "The Preparations Of Eternity" in The Spirit in Man.

<sup>83</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 215-218.

<sup>84</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 261-268.

<sup>85</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 337.



<sup>86</sup>God In Christ, p. 43.

<sup>87</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 96-97.

<sup>88</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 332.

<sup>89</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 214.

<sup>90</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things, pp. 110-111.

<sup>91</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 204.

<sup>92</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 125.

<sup>93</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 266.

<sup>94</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 123.

<sup>95</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 266.

<sup>96</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 205.

<sup>97</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 205-206.

<sup>98</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 332.

<sup>99</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 264.

<sup>100</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 339; Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 415-418.

<sup>101</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 418. These ideas will be more fully explored in subsequent chapters of this thesis. See also, Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 421-445.

<sup>102</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 211.

<sup>103</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things, p. 375.

<sup>104</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 64.

<sup>105</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 365.

<sup>106</sup> Leonard Bacon, "Concerning A Recent Chapter of Ecclesiastical History", New Englander, 38 (September, 1879), pp. 704-706.

<sup>107</sup> Amos Chesebrough, "Reminiscences of the Bushnell Controversy", Bushnell Centenary (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard Company, 1902), p. 49.

<sup>108</sup> Leonard Bacon, "Concerning a Recent Chapter of Ecclesiastical History", p. 705.

<sup>109</sup> Cheney, p. 203. Bushnell's language theory is also the topic of the first chapter of Christ In Theology: "Language and Doctrine"; and of the essay, "Our Gospel A Gift To The Imagination", first published in 1869 in Hours At Home, and later included in the 1881 volume, Building Eras In Religion.

<sup>110</sup> God In Christ, p. 12.

<sup>111</sup> Christ In Theology, pp. 51-52.

<sup>112</sup> Amos Chesebrough, "Reminiscences of the Bushnell Controversy", p. 49. It was Rev. Chesebrough who came to Bushnell's defence after the publication of God In Christ, with a series of articles written under the signature C. C., or "Criticus Criticorum". According to Bushnell, these articles "saved his head". See Cheney, pp. 223-224.

<sup>113</sup> The distinction between these two concepts in Bushnell's thought is itself based on his principle of analogy. For Bushnell, all reality is "language", the language of God. Human linguistic symbolism is only part of this moral scheme; it is possible only because man has been created with a symbolic imagination, and in turn, insphered in a symbolic reality.

<sup>114</sup> Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature, p. 153. It should become obvious in the following chapters of this thesis, how Bushnell views reality as thoroughly "organic", and how he views the power of God in Christ, as thoroughly "organific".

<sup>115</sup> The Spirit in Man, p. 324.

<sup>116</sup> Christ In Theology, p. 38.

<sup>117</sup> Christ In Theology, p. 39. For the influence of Josiah Willard Gibbs on Bushnell, see John Edmund Howell, "A Study of the Theological Method of Horace Bushnell and its Application to his Cardinal Doctrines"; Jerry Wayne Brown, The Rise of Biblical Criticism

in America, 1800-1870 (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1969); Roland Bainton, Yale and the Ministry. In Chapter III of his thesis, Howell shows the similarity between Bushnell's principle of analogy and that developed by Gibbs's Philological Studies. After drawing several almost identical parallels between Gibbs and Bushnell, Howell concludes that Bushnell is nonetheless original in the way he interpreted the meaning of Gibbs's theory for theological endeavor.

<sup>118</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 35-36.

<sup>119</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 15.

<sup>120</sup>Bushnell rejects the theory of origin as divine gift on two grounds. He finds the scriptural base unsound, he says, and here he uses the Bible against the biblicists, pointing to the history of Babel as confounding any original language that might have existed. But more important to Bushnell is the rejection of this theory on the basis of its wrongly conceiving the nature of language, and on this score he is quite confident in predicting the eventual failure of all attempts by learned ethnologists to trace all human languages to a common source. In support of his view of the original diversities of language, Bushnell cites the names of Johann Adelung and William von Humboldt. See God In Christ, pp. 12-16; on page 19, he uses Humboldt to support his opinion that language must be considered as inherent in man.

<sup>121</sup>Bushnell sees the correspondence between sound and object as arbitrary, or at least, so remote as to be arbitrary. God In Christ, pp. 19-20. On pages 34-36, he rejects Frederic Schlegel's attempts to trace the forms or bases of words to the names or vocal sounds themselves. According to Bushnell, Schlegel's theory inverts the truth, i.e. "what he supposes to be from the name, is plainly communicated to the name".

<sup>122</sup>Bushnell said that he entered Yale with "no language", which was a problem not only of the transition from country homespun to the cultivated society of Boston, but even more, of the deficiency of his own understanding of the literal nature of language. His model at the time was Paley, and, as Bushnell said, "if I chanced to have an idea, nothing came to give it expression". (Cheney, p. 208) The idea of the two-departmental character of human language first came to Bushnell through Coleridge, as part of the experience of 1831. See Cheney, p. 209, where Bushnell says that through the Aids he discovered "how language built on physical images is itself two stories high . . . figure, figure on figure". It was to Bushnell's surprise and dismay that philologists and theologians had not apprehended the significance of the two-departmental character of every language. See God In Christ, pp. 39-40.

<sup>123</sup>See God In Christ, pp. 36-37, where Bushnell discusses John Locke's view of language. Locke's theory seems to be identical with Bushnell's--i.e. Locke presents a view of the two-departmental nature of language, whereby words of thought or spirit have their origin in

physical objects or appearances. However, the two men differ in the consequences of this theory. For Locke's theory holds that there is no natural connection between words and ideas, and that the significance of words is given by an arbitrary imposition.

<sup>124</sup>God In Christ, p. 30.

<sup>125</sup>God In Christ, pp. 45-46. Bushnell says that even in the first or literal department of language, where sounds are provided as names for physical objects and appearances, there are no words which are exact representations of physical things. "For whether we take the theory of the Nominalists or the Realists, the words are, in fact, and practically, names only of genera, not of individuals or species. To be even still more exact, they represent only certain sensations of sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing--one or all. Hence the opportunity in language, for endless mistakes and false reasonings, in reference to matters purely physical." (God In Christ, p. 43)

<sup>126</sup>God In Christ, p. 53. If we are thus liable to be misled by the forms in words, we are also to pursue the original type or etymology of words with great industry. See God In Christ, pp. 53-54.

<sup>127</sup>See God In Christ, p. 55: "Accordingly we never come so near to a truly well rounded view of any truth, as when it is offered paradoxically; that is, under contradictions; that is, under two or more dictions, which, taken as dictions, are contrary one to the other."

<sup>128</sup>It was on this basis that Bushnell said he could accept as many creeds as came his way. "I had no such thought as that I was making light of truth, and reflecting distrust and discouragement on reasonable and proper efforts to find the truth. I supposed, rather, that I was showing how we may open a wider haven of truth than our own or all mere formulas and abstractions could possibly contain." (Christ In Theology, p. 32) Note in this regard, Bushnell's essay "Christian Comprehensiveness" in Building Eras in Religion, pp. 386-459. The principle of comprehensiveness is often stated as a "method" in Bushnell's theology. See for example, H. Shelton Smith (ed.), Horace Bushnell, pp. 38-39, and John E. Howell, "A Study of the Theological Method of Horace Bushnell and Its Application to His Cardinal Doctrines", Chapter II.

<sup>129</sup>Bushnell does say that definitions can be useful, as all symbols are; they are productive of error only when they are supposed to have absolute meanings clear of form and figure. See Christ In Theology, p. 51.

<sup>130</sup>God In Christ, p. 73. Two sources should be mentioned here. Henry M. Goodwin, "Thoughts, Words, and Things", Bibliotheca Sacra 6 (1849), an article written in defense of Bushnell's views of language,

is an excellent presentation of Bushnell's basic theory, and one to which I am indebted in these pages; Donald A. Crosby, Horace Bushnell's Theory of Language, while limited as a study of Bushnell, and concerned more broadly with the nineteenth century context, is nonetheless, a valuable work. Note here in particular that the idea of "eloquence", so prominent in Bushnell's time, is inherent in his view of language as living creation, and see in this regard, Crosby, pp. 135-145.

<sup>131</sup> God In Christ, pp. 84-85. See Christ In Theology, pp. 46-48, where Bushnell puts the same principle in other words, saying that there is a "form-element" in every system of thought which is peculiar to it. In some way, every individual mind generates to itself a "certain general form". Thus it is sometimes difficult to judge a writer, and Bushnell admits that it took him years of study and reflection before he could understand Coleridge, ". . . and, indeed, whom I never since have read, at all, save in a chapter or two, which I glanced over, just to see how obvious and clear, what before was impossible, had now become." (God In Christ, p. 87)

<sup>132</sup> See J. Robert Barth, The Symbolic Imagination: Coleridge and the Romantic Tradition (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977). Note Christ In Theology, pp. 65-66, where Bushnell says that when we are trying to achieve any true interpretation of a doctrine of God, this condition of sympathy requires an infusion of the Divine Spirit, or a state of divine consciousness.

<sup>133</sup> Building Eras in Religion, p. 265.

<sup>134</sup> Building Eras in Religion, p. 252.

<sup>135</sup> God In Christ, p. 78.

<sup>136</sup> Christ In Theology, p. 64 and p. 83.

<sup>137</sup> Christ In Theology, p. 85. In the 1869 essay, "Our Gospel A Gift To The Imagination", discussing Edwards A. Park's discourse on "The Theology of The Intellect and That of the Feeling", Bushnell asked whether there be any hope left for theologic science: "None at all, I answer most unequivocally. Human language is a gift to the imagination so essentially metaphoric, warp and woof, that it has no exact blocks of meaning to build a science of". (Building Eras in Religion, pp. 271-272.)

<sup>138</sup> See Christ In Theology, p. 82.

<sup>139</sup> Christ In Theology, p. 82.

<sup>140</sup> Christ In Theology, p. 83.

<sup>141</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 84.

<sup>142</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 84.

<sup>143</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 86.

<sup>144</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 64.

<sup>145</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 80-81.

<sup>146</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 81.

<sup>147</sup>God In Christ, pp. 310-311.

<sup>148</sup>God In Christ, p. 311.

<sup>149</sup>God In Christ, p. 92.

<sup>150</sup>God In Christ, p. 252. Bushnell saw this subjection to dogma as subjection also of the Spirit in man; this was evidenced in New England by the "distinct varieties of life" which animated the various Christian bodies, and could lead only to the suspicion that Christianity in New England was a product of the organizing force of human dogmatism. See God In Christ, p. 293.

<sup>151</sup>For Bushnell's understanding of the mystic as interpreter, see God In Christ, pp. 94-96. See Brown, The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, Chapter XI, for an interpretation of Bushnell's contribution to the critical study of the Bible. Brown says that Bushnell's connection with American critical studies is slight, that his writings show no awareness of biblical studies in Germany or of the critical opinions of American scholars. Says Brown, "Bushnell hoped that the reform of New England theology and the reconciliation of its warring factions could be effected by a proper understanding of language. An adequate theory of language would overcome the use of biblical proof texts, rigid literalism, and the constricting creeds of dogmaticians . . . . But in developing the linguistic ideas of Gibbs in this manner he tended to make Gibbs' biblical studies seem unnecessary: a strong dependence upon intuition, inspiration, and sympathy to interpret a biblical text made study of original languages, investigations of authorship, and historical reconstructions unimportant." I think this an unfair charge. Certainly, Bushnell shows little awareness of critical biblical studies. However, Bushnell's dependence upon intuition did not have the consequences which Brown lists. Interpretation, for Bushnell, is not only an art, but also a science. He makes it very clear that intuition does not come to man as an unaided inspiration, but is itself dependent upon an "organic" approach, i.e. before the interpreter

can penetrate through the outward text by an act of imagination and empathy, he must understand the author and his work in their wholeness. This, Bushnell said, requires years of study, both of the inner and outer forms of a text, and of the creative individuality of the author. See God In Christ, p. 92, for example, where he advocates more scholarship in the "historical, literary, and practical departments of Christian study" in order to "the more cultivated and nicer apprehension of symbol".

## CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup>William Ellery Channing, "Unitarian Christianity: Discourse At The Ordination of the Rev. Jared Sparks, Baltimore, 1819", A Selection From The Works of William E. Channing (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1855), p. 187. American thought in the century between the Great Awakening and God In Christ has often been traced in terms of the evolution of liberal religion within the congregational churches of New England. The Arminianism which alarmed Jonathan Edwards was one element in this doctrinal development: from Charles Chauncy to Channing, the liberals were also distinguished by their principles of rationalism and anti-trinitarianism. For a history of this development, see Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955).

<sup>2</sup>Channing, "Unitarian Christianity", p. 189.

<sup>3</sup>Channing, "Unitarian Christianity", p. 189.

<sup>4</sup>Channing, "Unitarian Christianity", p. 190.

<sup>5</sup>Channing, "Unitarian Christianity", p. 190.

<sup>6</sup>God In Christ, pp. 130-131. "We are earnest for nothing but the Three; we have no apprehension of error save in denying the Three. We practically hold the Three without the "One Substance"". (Christ In Theology, p. 174)

<sup>7</sup>God In Christ, p. 129.

<sup>8</sup>Moses Stuart, Letters To The Rev. Wm. E. Channing, Containing Remarks On His Sermon Recently Preached and Published at Baltimore (Andover, 1819), p. 22. Three years later, Stuart restated and elaborated his position in his Letters On The Eternal Generation of the Son of God, Addressed to the Rev. Samuel Miller, D. D. (Andover, 1822). For a good sketch of this theological background, see H. Shelton Smith, ed., Horace Bushnell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 4-9.

<sup>9</sup>While Channing did not reply to Stuart, Andrews Norton of Harvard responded on behalf of the liberals in his A Statement of Reasons



For Not Believing The Doctrines of Trinitarians Concerning the Nature of God, and the Person of Christ (London: J. Barker, 1866). Norton's Statement unequivocally rejects the whole system denominated "orthodoxy", and in particular, the modern orthodox doctrine of the trinity. He sees Stuart's statement of a three-fold distinction as at best an evasive attempt to rescue the orthodox doctrine from the charge of absurdity. The whole trinitarian issue, says Norton, stems from a problem of language. The object of the art of interpretation is to distinguish from possible meanings the actual meaning of a text. This is done by considering which meaning was "intended by the author". The problem is solved solely by a process of reasoning. And no man of reason will suppose that while some texts can bear a trinitarian sense, that this was the sense actually intended by the author. See pages 84-95. "Nothing is easier than the method of 'Norton's Reasons';" said Bushnell, "and when implicitly followed, nothing will more certainly show the problem resolved, how it may be possible, with only a moderate force, drudged in the ploddings of unilluminated scholarship, to empty a Gospel most effectually of all that is necessary to its life". (Building Eras in Religion, p. 124) For a discussion of Norton's views of language and trinity, see Donald Crosby, Horace Bushnell's Theory of Language, pp. 180-189.

<sup>10</sup>God In Christ, p. 135. In 1835, Stuart published an English translation of Schleiermacher's historical essay on the trinity, "On The Discrepancy Between the Sabellian and the Athanasian Method of Representing the Doctrine of the Trinity", The Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer, 5, No. 18 (April, 1835), pp. 265-353; 6, No. 19 (July, 1835), pp. 1-116. Stuart's lengthy introduction to the essay attempted both a criticism of New England trinitarianism and an orthodox modification of Schleiermacher's doctrine of a modal trinity.

<sup>11</sup>Bushnell was preoccupied with the doctrine of the trinity throughout his life. During the 1831 revival at Yale, he expressed his particular difficulty with the logical absurdity of the doctrine. In his 1832 address on "Revelation", he "said some things very cautiously in regard to the Trinity which, perhaps, will make a little breeze". (Cheney, p. 90) His first formal statement of the doctrine was given in the 1848 discourse on "The Divinity of Christ". This discourse, along with the third chapter of Christ In Theology, "The Trinity", comprise what may be called Bushnell's "early statement" of the doctrine. In November, 1854, he published in the New Englander the article, "The Christian Trinity, A Practical Truth", which was republished in the 1881 volume, Building Eras in Religion. This essay represents Bushnell's attempt to come to what he called "a deeper view" of trinity. One other source is of particular relevance: "Our Relations To Christ in the Future Life", Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 442-468.

<sup>12</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 118 and p. 124. On this basis, Bushnell distinguished his doctrine from both Schleiermacher's modalism and Stuart's orthodoxy: "Schleiermacher and his translator both assume the possibility of entering into the interior nature of God, and forming an

authorized judgment concerning the trinity as predicable of it. This I deny, and am thus left behind by them both". (page 119) Bushnell felt that in his denial lay both the strength and the vulnerability of his exposition, "the merit, if there is any, the heresy if there is none". He was judged in terms of the latter, and eventually, as much out of his own dissatisfaction as out of any desire to placate his accusers, he went a long way toward lifting the veil of divine mystery.

<sup>13</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 146. Bushnell is often accused at this point of violating his own method. But his radical assumption of the unity of God is not an assumption to know exactly what may or may not be contained in God's interior being. He takes this as his first principle because it is impossible for us, as finite minds, to admit such a thing as threeness of persons, and still retain any real belief in the divine unity at all. At the same time, he sees this unity as a "great deep", itself the ground of all diversity. Bushnell thought the word "unity" had become nearly ambiguous in meaning through looseness of application. For him, the concept of "unity" is essential to his symbolic theory. See in relation to this, J. R. Barth, The Symbolic Imagination, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>God In Christ, p. 137.

<sup>16</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 176.

<sup>17</sup>God In Christ, p. 144.

<sup>18</sup>God In Christ, p. 145.

<sup>19</sup>God In Christ, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 146.

<sup>21</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 121.

<sup>22</sup>It is perhaps in his doctrine of trinity that Bushnell's principle of contrast serves him best--and stands out in sharpest relief against the trinitarian context in New England.

<sup>23</sup>God In Christ, pp. 143-144.

<sup>24</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 122.

<sup>26</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 123.

<sup>27</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 147 and Christ In Theology, p. 123.

<sup>28</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 117.

<sup>29</sup>Bushnell's basic presupposition of the analogic correspondence between form and truth is the limiting factor in his effort to seek a "deeper view" of trinity. "So there is doubtless a like relation between the divine nature, as thought or to be thought by us, and the terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; only the relation is more absolutely inscrutable, because the nature of God is itself inscrutable". (Christ In Theology, p. 149)

<sup>30</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 122.

<sup>31</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 126.

<sup>32</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 120.

<sup>33</sup>Cheney, p. 218.

<sup>34</sup>I am reminded of Donald Baillie's reference to Karl Barth in God Was In Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 136: "Thus the doctrine of the Trinity really reminds us that God is 'personal in an incomprehensible way'; and indeed it is but a hint of 'inconceivable distinctions in God Himself', and especially of the paradox of the revelation to man of a God who according to His essence cannot be revealed to man."

<sup>35</sup>Bushnell rejects the idea that there is some triad in man which is analagous to the trinity in God. Attempts to discover such a correspondence he thinks are over-curious and even fraudulent. "I even spoke of it with a degree of disrespect, as being a way to lose one's 'discretion'; for I can not resist the impression that it is one of those excesses of over-speculation, which indicates a beginning of mental disease, and which are the frequent infirmity of great scholars." Christ In Theology, p. 133. See also, God In Christ, pp. 178-179. See Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 446-447, where Bushnell discusses why God reveals himself as "three" rather than as "six or sixty".

<sup>36</sup>Cheney, p. 418. One can see here that Bushnell's apprehension of the trinity is essentially as a "practical" or experiential truth; and apparently he was led to seek a more immanent grounding for his doctrine out of what was an experiential need. What is important to Bushnell is that the trinity be lived in as a power rather than analysed

as a theory. See God In Christ, p. 174, for example: "Every human soul that will adequately work itself in religion, needs this trinity as the instrument of its working; for, without this, it is neither possible to preserve the warmth, nor to ascend into the true greatness of God."

<sup>37</sup>One element of Bushnell's early view of trinity is given in God In Christ, p. 147: that prior to the incarnation, there is no appearance of trinity; consequently, that we do not know whether or not trinity results from the incarnation, whether or not it is only a vehicle of revelation.

<sup>38</sup>God In Christ, p. 168. On this page, Bushnell's epistemological principle of analogy is evident. That the "Son" necessitates the "Father", Bushnell "knows" only in terms of finite powers of apprehension. Whether the same is required by "some subjective, or internal necessity" in Christ, he can not say.

<sup>39</sup>God In Christ, p. 169.

<sup>40</sup>God In Christ, p. 170.

<sup>41</sup>God In Christ, p. 171. See also, Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 392-3.

<sup>42</sup>Building Eras in Religion, pp. 128-129.

<sup>43</sup>God In Christ, p. 171.

<sup>44</sup>God In Christ, p. 145.

<sup>45</sup>God In Christ, p. 173.

<sup>46</sup>God In Christ, p. 173.

<sup>47</sup>For a discussion of the Kantian elements in Bushnell's thought, see John Edmund Howell, "A Study of the Theological Method of Horace Bushnell and its Application to his Cardinal Doctrines", Chapter Four; Donald Crosby, Horace Bushnell's Theory of Language, pp. 96-107 and pp. 225-227.

<sup>48</sup>Note that Bushnell gives particular attention to antinomy number VIII--the class wherein each person of the trinity is represented, by cross affirmations, to be each of the others. It is evident to Bushnell that both sameness and otherness should be asserted of the persons of the trinity. "Indeed, this horror of Sabellianism, that has kept the church, for so many ages, asserting and re-asserting it as a test of orthodoxy that the Father is not the Son nor the Son the Spirit,

appears in this view to have been a kind of theological distemper of which it is difficult to speak with respect. And it is precisely here that the doctrine of trinity has lost a feature necessary to its proper balance and soundness of proportion. As there was needed an assertion of otherness to exclude the shallow modalism of Sabellius; so there was needed an assertion of sameness to qualify and make safe the otherness." (Christ In Theology, pp. 162-163.)

<sup>49</sup>Cheney, p. 56.

<sup>50</sup>In several places, Bushnell refers to what he calls the real value and power of the Christian trinity, in that it is both effectually personal and effectually divine. And he holds up this combination of infinity plus personality against Unitarianism on the one hand, and pantheism on the other. See God In Christ, p. 175; Christ In Theology, p. 141; Building Eras in Religion, p. 136: "So glorious and high, and yet so nigh is God; related in all that is inmost, most inherent in his nature and eternity, to our finite want, and the double kingdom of nature and grace, by which we are to be raised up and perfected for the skies: a being who is at once absolute and relational; an all-containing, all-supporting Unity, and a manifolding humanly personal love; the All in all itself, and yet above all, through all, and in all; of whom also, and through whom, and to whom be glory forever." See also, Building Eras, pp. 117-125.

<sup>51</sup>God In Christ, p. 173-174.

<sup>52</sup>God In Christ, p. 137.

<sup>53</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 120.

<sup>54</sup>God In Christ, p. 175.

<sup>55</sup>God In Christ, pp. 111-112. Christ In Theology, pp. 118-119. For Bushnell's understanding of "modalism" as applied to Schleiermacher, see Christ In Theology, pp. 118-119.

<sup>56</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 145.

<sup>57</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 126.

<sup>58</sup>Amos Chesebrough's description is worth quoting in full: "It seemed as if the systematic onset upon the book was the result of a concerted plan to crush out the errors in it by one strong combined effort, and that for this end each theological center was to furnish a champion. The first of these criticisms came from the Divinity School at New Haven. Under the caption 'What does Dr. Bushnell mean?' three articles signed 'Omicron', appeared in The New York Evangelist, which

were gathered into a pamphlet of twenty-eight pages and extensively distributed. In the course of a week or two Princeton Seminary gave its weighty verdict in an article of forty pages in The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review. The next assault was made by The Christian Observatory, a religious monthly edited by seven leading Congregational ministers of Boston, in an article of sixty pages, bitter in the extreme. About the same time there emanated from Bangor Theological Seminary a volume of one hundred and eighteen pages, entitled, 'A Review of Dr. Bushnell's God In Christ.' The Theological Seminary at East Windsor furnished no formal review, but kept up a running fire on the book in the columns of The Religious Herald, a Hartford weekly. There were other reviews and critical notices, but these were the leading ones, and enough of them to have demolished a full score of heretics. Few persons outside of Dr. Bushnell's own congregation ventured to speak approvingly or even in tolerance of his views, though many charitably suspended their judgment as to his orthodoxy, hoping that the case was not as bad as represented. But prominent theologians condemned the book as heterodox, and expressed the apprehension that it was the entering wedge to the cleaving asunder of our churches, like that which had befallen the Massachusetts Congregationalists in the Unitarian defection. The stress was tremendous." "Reminiscences of the Bushnell Controversy", Bushnell Centenary, p. 50.

<sup>59</sup>The story of this controversy is long and involved. The chapters of Mary Bushnell Cheney's book include an on-going account. In addition, articles by Williston Walker and Amos Chesebrough in the Bushnell Centenary give a summary of the events. Also relevant is the article by Charles Hodge, "Recent Doctrinal and Ecclesiastical Conflicts in Connecticut", The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 25 (October, 1853). In addition to the Bushnell Centenary, other primary sources for the controversy are: Remonstrance and Complaint of the Association of Fairfield West to the Hartford Central Association Together With the Reply of the Hartford Central Association (New York: S. W. Benedict, 1850); Appeal of the Association of Fairfield West to the Associated Ministers Connected With The General Association of Connecticut (Boston, New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport, 1852); Memorial of the Association of Fairfield West to the General Association of Connecticut, June, 1852.

<sup>60</sup>Bushnell Centenary, p. 52. Chesebrough's defence in the "C. C." articles, "Do They Understand Him?" and "What Is Orthodoxy?", attempted to show the inconsistency of Bushnell's critics, that they could agree neither in their interpretation of Bushnell, nor in their conception of the doctrines in question. See Cheney, pp. 223-224.

<sup>61</sup>See Christ In Theology, p. 130 and p. 133.

<sup>62</sup>Appeal of the Association of Fairfield West to the Associated Ministers Connected With the General Association of Connecticut, p. 13. See also Orestes Brownson's lengthy review of Bushnell's Discourses, pp. 22-49, where Bushnell is again criticized for not taking up the

question of immanence. To deny the question, says Brownson, is to deny the doctrine. "Bushnell's Discourses", The Works of Orestes A. Brownson (Detroit: Thorndike Norse, 1884).

<sup>63</sup>Remonstrance and Complaint of the Association of Fairfield West to the Hartford Central Association Together With the Reply of the Hartford Central Association, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup>Appeal of the Association of Fairfield West to the Associated Ministers Connected With The General Association of Connecticut, p. 30.

<sup>65</sup>C. A. Bartol, "Dr. Horace Bushnell and the Quandries of our Theology", The Unitarian Review, 14 (September, 1880), p. 237.

<sup>66</sup>Williston Walker, "Dr. Bushnell As A Religious Leader", Bushnell Centenary, p. 27.

<sup>67</sup>George Park Fisher, "Horace Bushnell", The International Review, 10 (January, 1881), p. 18; History of Christian Doctrine (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), pp. 438-439.

<sup>68</sup>George B. Stevens, "Horace Bushnell and Albrecht Ritschl, A Comparison", The American Journal of Theology, 1902, p. 41.

<sup>69</sup>See for example, Building Eras in Religion, p. 274: "This endeavor, always going on, to get the truths of religion away from the imagination, into propositions of the speculative understanding, makes a most dreary and sad history . . . to uncharitableness."

<sup>70</sup>See for example, Christ In Theology, p. 12, where Bushnell says that a doctrine not supported by history is no more than "personal caprice or eccentricity". In a letter to Bartol, he said that Christ In Theology was "far more adequate" and "more satisfactory" than God In Christ (Cheney, pp. 246-7).

<sup>71</sup>Cheney, p. 247. Bushnell has been charged with insufficient attention to research prior to his publications. See for example, George Park Fisher, "Horace Bushnell", p. 13: "He wrote with an insufficient stock of learning. He published and studied afterward . . .".

<sup>72</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 12. It is on the basis that his doctrine is one of eternal generation that Bushnell is able to see himself in line with Nicene orthodoxy. See Cheney, p. 335, where his assenting to trinity as a doctrine of eternal generation is offered to Dr. Hawes as ground for Bushnell's being in line with the Westminster Confession. See Christ In Theology, pp. 177-187, where Bushnell outlines how he sees his doctrine in terms of Nicea, and especially p. 180,

where he interprets Athanasius' use of the term "form" to be the same as his own.

<sup>73</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 169.

<sup>74</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 170.

<sup>75</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 172. See George Park Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 420: "Since Hopkins, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son had been given up for the most part in this region." In 1821, Samuel Miller of Princeton Theological Seminary, published the Letters On Unitarianism (Trenton: George Sherman, 1821), in response to Moses Stuart's disregard for the doctrine of eternal generation. Said Miller: "... the doctrine of eternal generation of the Son is so closely connected with the doctrine of the Trinity and the divine character of the Savior, that where the former is generally abandoned, neither of the two latter will long be retained." (p. 90) Stuart replied with his Letters On The Eternal Generation of the Son of God Addressed To The Rev. Samuel Miller, D. D. (Andover, 1832). Said Stuart: "The Logos is eternal . . . but that the Logos was eternally the Son of God, I doubt." (p. 18)

<sup>76</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 172. See also Christ In Theology, p. 184: "As to their particular way of conceiving a trinity of act, that is by eternal generation, I do not affirm it, because I do not know it to be true; but I begin with a trinity generated in time, ascending from it, with a certain measured confidence, to the conviction that the conditions and grounds out of which it is generated in time are eternal, and that so it is itself eternal. Considered as denying a trinity of essence and saving the strict unity of God, by conceiving a trinity predicable only of God as in act, the two schemes or doctrines coalesce in their matter; they only handle the matter which is common, by different methods, and work out their results under different forms of language.

<sup>77</sup>God In Christ, p. 177.

<sup>78</sup>God In Christ, p. 177.

<sup>79</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 149.

<sup>80</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 146. Bushnell applies the same principle to the question of the eternity of the Father and Spirit. See for example, Christ In Theology, p. 167: "So also of the Spirit, as regards the distinct personality of the conception; though there can be no doubt of the essential immanence and eternity, in God, of all which belongs to the idea of Spirit, viz., the eternal, necessary proceeding of act and power." See also, regarding the personality of the Spirit, The Spirit in Man, pp. 9-13.



<sup>81</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 184-185.

<sup>82</sup>Bushnell gives this as a "second ground" for the view of immanent trinity. See for example, Christ In Theology, p. 146 and p. 167.

<sup>83</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 150.

<sup>84</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 132.

<sup>85</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 132. See also Christ In Theology, p. 168. It is our "expectations of the future life" which must be met, if the trinity is truly a "practical" truth.

<sup>86</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 134.

<sup>87</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 133.

<sup>88</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 136.

<sup>89</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 133.

<sup>90</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 134.

<sup>91</sup>Building Eras in Religion, pp. 134-137.

<sup>92</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 443.

<sup>93</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 447-449.

### CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup>Horace Bushnell, "A Commemorative Discourse Delivered in the North Church of Hartford, May 22, 1853" (Hartford: Elihu Geer, 1853), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>E. S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 126.

<sup>4</sup>Perry Miller, "From Edwards to Emerson", Errand Into The Wilderness (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), pp. 184-203. Framed in the context of the Great Awakening's extreme rationalism and enthusiasm, Jonathan Edwards' image of man in terms of holistic properties bridged the traditional dichotomy between reasoning powers and subjective values. We know that Edwards' followers failed to develop this philosophy, and that the 'New Divinity' theologians who succeeded him were themselves as persistent rationalists as the Arminians against whom he directed his apology. Bushnell's symbolic method can be seen as his attempt at re-unifying mind in the face of that split between what Edwards Amasa Park called "The Theology of the Intellect and that of the Feeling".

<sup>5</sup>Moses Stuart, Letters to the Rev. Wm. E. Channing, Containing Remarks On His Sermon Recently Preached and Published at Baltimore, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 107.

<sup>7</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 107.

<sup>8</sup>Wm. E. Channing, "Unitarian Christianity", p. 196.

<sup>9</sup>George Park Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 430.

<sup>10</sup>God In Christ, p. 153.

<sup>11</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 414.

<sup>12</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 75.

<sup>14</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 91.

<sup>15</sup>God In Christ, p. 152.

<sup>16</sup>God In Christ, pp. 156-157.

<sup>17</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 94.

<sup>18</sup>God In Christ, p. 129.

<sup>19</sup>God In Christ, p. 163.

<sup>20</sup>God In Christ, p. 152.

<sup>21</sup>God In Christ, p. 152. The charge brought against Bushnell's representation of the doctrine of the Logos in God In Christ, was that it taught that the Word is no person, but only a power or capacity, having been embodied before in the material creation, and exhibited in Christ only in greater degree. See for example, Fairfield West's Remonstrance and Complaint, pp. 7-9.

<sup>22</sup>God In Christ, p. 165.

<sup>23</sup>God In Christ, pp. 165-166.

<sup>24</sup>God In Christ, pp. 122-123.

<sup>25</sup>God In Christ, p. 123.

<sup>26</sup>God In Christ, p. 126. It is Bushnell's treatment of the sinlessness of Christ which has been cited as the most serious threat to a view of the real humanity, and this particularly in view of Bushnell's understanding of the human as tied inextricably to the concept of existence as trial, a process of character-formation. "But what is it to be human, but to have a tentative nature--one that learns the import of things, and especially of good and evil by experiment?" (God In Christ, p. 126).

<sup>27</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, Preface, p. v.

<sup>28</sup>This is the title of the tenth chapter of Nature and the Supernatural; it was reprinted in slightly altered form as a small volume in 1861.

<sup>29</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 435.

<sup>30</sup>Sermons For the New Life, pp. 446-452.

<sup>31</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 447. Bushnell says that the resurrection is not a more true rendering of Christ's divinity, but only a more visible one. Now, Christ is "not more truly but only more visibly separate than before". See also, this text, p. 319: "Therefore now to make the triumph evident, he ascends, a visible conqueror, to the Father, there to stand as priest forever . . .".

<sup>32</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 78.

<sup>33</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 46.

<sup>34</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 85.

<sup>36</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 78.

<sup>37</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 86. In accordance with his distinction between theology and divinity, Bushnell says here that "it requires a very deep and grandly vitalized experience to know Christ well enough to preach him . . . . It wants a Christed man to know who Christ really is, and show him forth with a meaning." (p. 91)

<sup>38</sup>Sermons For the New Life, p. 320. See also The Spirit in Man, p. 271: "We think of God thus revealed, not as an abstraction or some cold, far-off, theoretic immensity of absolute power, but as a living person in the sweetest, dearest terms of charity and friendship, faithful, attentive, tender and nigh."

<sup>39</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 85.

<sup>40</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 93.

<sup>41</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 81.

<sup>42</sup>This may account in part for the fact that Bushnell has been called at one and the same time both a poetic genius and an elusive thinker.

<sup>43</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 79.

<sup>44</sup>See The Spirit in Man, p. 262ff., where the objective-subjective meanings of Christ as "form" are given in terms of the word, "grace".

<sup>45</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 269.

<sup>46</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 255.

<sup>47</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 100.

<sup>48</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 93.

<sup>49</sup>God In Christ, p. 161.

<sup>50</sup>God In Christ, p. 162.

<sup>51</sup>Christ and His Salvation, p. 232.

<sup>52</sup>Christ and His Salvation, p. 210.

<sup>53</sup>See for example, Remonstrance and Complaint, pp. 7-9.

<sup>54</sup>Cyrus Bartol, "Dr. Horace Bushnell and the Quandries of our Theology", p. 237.

<sup>55</sup>George Park Fisher, "Horace Bushnell", pp. 18-19.

<sup>56</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 110.

<sup>57</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 94.

<sup>58</sup>Henry F. Brownson (ed.), The Works of Orestes A. Brownson (Detroit: Thorndike Norse, 1884), 7, pp. 52-53. See also Remonstrance and Complaint, pp. 7-9.

<sup>59</sup>Building Eras in Religion, p. 277.

<sup>60</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 112.

<sup>61</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 452.

<sup>62</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 455.

<sup>63</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 461.

<sup>64</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 463.

<sup>65</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 90-91.

<sup>66</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 90-92.

<sup>67</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 468.

<sup>68</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 465.

<sup>69</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 91.

<sup>70</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 95-96.

<sup>71</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 62-63.

## CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup>See Cheney, p. 445.

<sup>3</sup>Cheney, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>The Spirit In Man, p. 351.

<sup>5</sup>Cheney, p. 209.

<sup>6</sup>See "A Commemorative Discourse", p. 22. My intention here is to emphasize that 1831 and 1848 must be seen together. Moreover, my interpretation is that the "new light" of 1848 was precisely this "spiritual" or "symbolic" understanding of Christ. This is the sense in which Bushnell "saw the gospel" for the first time in 1848. And this indicates how I see interpretations of 1848 to be significantly wide of the mark.

<sup>7</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 214.

<sup>8</sup>These troublesome terms, "objective" and "subjective", permeate Bushnell's work. See also Note 20 below. He uses the terms in his doctrine of atonement, not only to identify wherein Christ's work has effect, that is, "objective" atonement having its effect in or on God, and "subjective" atonement having its effect solely in man; but also according to his symbolic theory, that is, that "objective" identifies the outward form, and "subjective", the inward or invisible or spirit.

<sup>9</sup>God In Christ, p. 195. It was precisely because this view revolted the moral sensibility, Bushnell said, that it had no regenerative power. See for example, the Introduction to The Vicarious Sacrifice, pp. xxxii-xxxiii: "If Christ has simply died to even up a score of penalty, if the total import of His Cross is that God's wrath is satisfied, and the books made square, there is certainly no beauty in that to charm a new feeling into life . . .". Notice Bushnell's review in this Introduction of Anselm's Cur Deus Homo.

<sup>10</sup>The "Edwardean" theory was so-called, partly from the fact that certain seeds of it are found in the writings of Jonathan Edwards; more particularly because it was the characteristic theory of the successors of Edwards. It is also called the "governmental" theory because of its development of the theme of God as "moral Governor" or "Rector" of the universe. For the development of the Edwardean theory, see for example, Joseph Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism. The main principles of the Edwardean theory of atonement are summarized by Edwards A. Park (ed.), The Atonement: Discourses and Treatises by Edwards, Smalley, Maxcy, Emmons, Griffin, Burge, and Weeks (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1860), pp. x-xi. Bushnell refers to this Introductory Essay by Park in The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 241. Bushnell regarded the Edwardean theory as the most mitigated and acceptable form of an "objective" view. The truth of the theory, he said, lay in its recognition that the value of Christ's life and death is measured by what is therein expressed. His main objections to the theory concerned its interpretation of what Christ expresses, how or under what esthetic conditions the expression is made, and the object for which it is made.

<sup>11</sup>Jonathan Edwards, Jr., "The Necessity of Atonement", in Edwards A. Park (ed.), The Atonement: Discourses and Treatises, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>See God In Christ, pp. 194-203; Christ In Theology, pp. 226-230.

<sup>13</sup>Channing, "Unitarian Christianity", in A Selection From The Works of William E. Channing, p. 213. Note also that Bushnell identifies other versions of the "subjective" theory, for example, the radical Unitarians and the transcendentalists, and Coleridge and his disciples. See Christ In Theology, pp. 231-238 and pp. 289-290.

<sup>14</sup>"We have no desire to conceal the fact, that a difference of opinion exists among us, in regard to an interesting part of Christ's mediation; I mean, in regard to the precise influence of his death on our forgiveness. Many suppose, that this event contributes to our pardon, as it was a principal means of confirming his religion, and of giving it a power over the mind; in other words, that it procures forgiveness by leading to that repentance and virtue, which is the great and only condition on which forgiveness is bestowed. Many of us are dissatisfied with this explanation, and think that the Scriptures ascribe the remission of sins to Christ's death, with an emphasis so peculiar, that we ought to consider this event as having a special influence in removing punishment, though the Scriptures may not reveal the way in which it contributes to this end." Channing, "Unitarian Christianity", pp. 208-209.

<sup>15</sup>Channing, "Unitarian Christianity Most Favorable To Piety", in A Selection From the Works of William E. Channing, pp. 237-238.



<sup>16</sup>Channing, p. 235.

<sup>17</sup>Channing, pp. 235-237.

<sup>18</sup>Channing, pp. 235-237. See also for example, Christ In Theology, pp. 231-238.

<sup>19</sup>God In Christ, p. 268.

<sup>20</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 226.

<sup>21</sup>God In Christ, pp. 262-264. See also, God In Christ, p. 269.

<sup>22</sup>God In Christ, p. 258.

<sup>23</sup>God In Christ, p. 254. Or, from Christ In Theology, p. 235: Christianity is "an outward religion of sense, prepared to be the mold of an inward religion of spirit." See also, Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 510-511, where Bushnell defines the church and the sacraments in terms of form, and as part of Christianity's outward objectivity.

<sup>24</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 223-224.

<sup>25</sup>God In Christ, p. 260.

<sup>26</sup>Bushnell developed this view of atonement in God In Christ, Christ In Theology, The Vicarious Sacrifice, and Forgiveness and Law. The latter he intended as a revision of Parts III and IV of The Vicarious Sacrifice. The extent to which Forgiveness and Law represents a shift in Bushnell's earlier view will be discussed at the end of this chapter. In addition to the above sources, numerous sermons are valuable for Bushnell's understanding of the work of Christ.

<sup>27</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 120. See Barbara Cross, Horace Bushnell, p. 138. Cross incorrectly says that Bushnell had abandoned his symbolism by the time he wrote The Vicarious Sacrifice.

<sup>28</sup>Bushnell had to explain to his orthodox critics that he began his Harvard Discourse with his subjective view, not because he intended to abandon or slight the orthodox side, but because he hoped first to capture the sympathy of his Unitarian audience and then to show them wherein lay the truth of Christianity's objective side.

<sup>29</sup>God In Christ, p. 249.

<sup>30</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 224.

<sup>31</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 388.

<sup>32</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 390.

<sup>33</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 396.

<sup>34</sup>God In Christ, p. 248.

<sup>35</sup>See God In Christ, p. 252: "There is no doubt that the Hebrew people, whose religion was so intensely objective, held it in a manner of literality that involved real misconception. They saw nothing in it but the altars, priests, confessions, sprinklings and smoking fires, and these they called their atonement, or the covering of their sin, as if there were some outward moment in the things themselves--taken outwardly these were the religion. But, meantime, there was a power in these, by which subjective effects were continually transpiring within them, and the outward moment of the rite, which was a fiction, had yet an inward moment correspondent thereto, which made the fiction truthful."

<sup>36</sup>God In Christ, pp. 252-253.

<sup>37</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 402.

<sup>38</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 404.

<sup>39</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 429.

<sup>40</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 404.

<sup>41</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 430.

<sup>42</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 243-244.

<sup>43</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 251. This is the sense in which Bushnell termed his view one of "representational objectivity", that is, that the work of Christ is operative wholly on man, but in order to this, and with greater effect, as representatively operative on God.

<sup>44</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 258.

<sup>45</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 258.

<sup>46</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 259.

<sup>47</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 266.

<sup>48</sup>Bushnell's distinction between law before government and law by government is drawn out at great length, and covers a good quarter of The Vicarious Sacrifice.

<sup>49</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 188.

<sup>50</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 201.

<sup>51</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 202.

<sup>52</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 118-119.

<sup>53</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, pp. 203-205.

<sup>54</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 207.

<sup>55</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 150. According to Noah Porter, Bushnell's conception of penalty was fatally defective: "There is no room for punishment within the first condition of existence supposed by him, which is the sphere of impersonal and necessary right. He is logical enough to require none but to make the evil consequences of sin to be only 'moral disorder'. Under the second--that is, within the sphere of 'instituted government'--there is evil in abundance. But as this evil is appointed for the ends of redemption from sin already incurred it cannot be penalty . . . . Penalty or punishment in the ethical sense of the word, as we understand it, is not physical evil alone, whether endured in the mind or the body of the sufferer. It is that peculiar pain which the soul suffers from the displeasure of a person for disobedience to his will . . . . That God should employ what is the essential element of punishment, viz., the expression of His personal displeasure, ought to be an axiom in theology . . . . That Dr. Bushnell has never recognized this truth except in the most incidental way, and has left out of his theories the commanding and distinctive element of punishment, is to us a matter of surprise." See "Review of Dr. Bushnell On 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'" in The New Englander 25 (April, 1866), pp. 251-253.

<sup>56</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 139. See also Forgiveness and Law, p. 146: "--no justice at all in this world; exact, inevitable justice for all incorrigible subjects in the world to come".

<sup>57</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 209.

<sup>58</sup>Forgiveness and Law, pp. 171-172.

<sup>59</sup>See Forgiveness and Law, pp. 181-182; also p. 190.

<sup>60</sup>God In Christ, p. 261.

<sup>61</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 128.

<sup>62</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 340.

<sup>63</sup>Note the interesting reference to Schleiermacher in this regard, God In Christ, p. 206: "The entering of one such perfect life into the world's history changes, in fact, the consciousness of the race, just as the most accomplished, perhaps, of all modern theologians assumes, when he undertakes to verify the truths of the gospel out of the contents of the religious consciousness of the Christian nations, as compared with the ancient consciousness, or that of heathen nations."

<sup>64</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 129 and p. 161.

<sup>65</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 127.

<sup>66</sup>Nature and the Supernatural, p. 234.

<sup>67</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 43.

<sup>68</sup>God In Christ, pp. 212-213.

<sup>69</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 123.

<sup>70</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 139.

<sup>71</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 139. See also Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 222-223: "Now that there is, or should be such a thing as development, we certainly admit . . . . But this, if we must have the word, is christian development; a development accomplished, by carrying us across and up out of the gulf of unnature, where the hope of all progress and character was ended." See also Bushnell's essay on "Progress" in Hours At Home, 1869.

<sup>72</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 164. We are reminded here of the criticism made by Orestes Brownson, which was mentioned in the last chapter. Bushnell's doctrine of "form", Brownson said, "is the dominant heresy of Protestant Germany, especially of the school founded in opposition to Paulus and Bretschneider by Schleiermacher and De Wette;

we find it distinctly avowed in the publications of the Mercersburg School in Pennsylvania, and we are greatly mistaken if we do not detect some obscure traces of it in Moehler's Symbolik and Mr. Newman's Essay On Development. In its principle that God produces himself outwardly in finite forms, it underlies the modern doctrines of progress and socialism . . .". The Works of Orestes A. Brownson, Vol. 7, p. 52.

<sup>73</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 177.

<sup>74</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 179.

<sup>75</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 178. Note that Christ's whole life and death is seen by Bushnell as a manifestation of suffering love. In gathering up to man's moral perception "the whole personal life-history" as suffering, the name "Jesus", Bushnell said, is a "fund of universal soul-help". See pp. 143-149.

<sup>76</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, pp. 20-21. Here Bushnell discusses the question of "superlative merit" in respect to the idea that Christ was in his sacrifice out of obligation.

<sup>77</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, pp. 35-36.

<sup>78</sup>Much of Bushnell's writing on justification is given to the context, and in particular to ideas of legal justification. See for example, Christ In Theology, pp. 270-271, where he discusses the two extreme views represented by "speculative orthodoxy" on the one hand, and Unitarianism, on the other.

<sup>79</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 344. See also for example, Forgiveness and Law, pp. 177-180.

<sup>80</sup>See for example, God In Christ, p. 214 and Forgiveness and Law, p. 178.

<sup>81</sup>God In Christ, pp. 214-215.

<sup>82</sup>God In Christ, p. 216.

<sup>83</sup>Note Forgiveness and Law, pp. 155-156, where Bushnell, in trying to elaborate a conception of the suffering involved in Christ's becoming a habitant with us under the curse, uses the interesting analogy of a Wordsworth of a Goethe or a Cavour being compelled to look upon the preparations for his sacrifice. "... it would not be so much the dread of death that would cost him suffering, but it would be the horrible conception of being himself incorporate in these ferocious and disgusting monsters".

<sup>84</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 143.

<sup>85</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 280.

<sup>86</sup>See God In Christ, pp. 218-238; Christ In Theology, pp. 281-282; The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 245ff.

<sup>87</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 281-282.

<sup>88</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 176.

<sup>89</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 363, "In so far as we are still incomplete, statutes, penal enforcements, and all kinds of instituted means and machineries, are necessary to the mixed quality we are in; but in so far as we are in the righteousness of God, we are raised above them, into that primal law which God undertook, as the total object of His administration, to establish in created minds."

<sup>90</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 205.

<sup>91</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 377.

<sup>92</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 217. Note Bushnell's discussion of the "theologic fiction" in Forgiveness and Law, pp. 213-214 and The Vicarious Sacrifice, pp. 376-377. See also Bushnell's discussion of Luther's doctrine of justification, "a plunge into bathos and general unreason", in The Vicarious Sacrifice, pp. 370-373.

<sup>93</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 291. Note Forgiveness and Law, pp. 210-211: "According to the Catholic doctrine they are virtually identical; because the 'making just', or 'making righteous', which is conceived to be the sense of justification, is understood to be a complete subjective change, one that goes below consciousness and makes the soul inherently right--which is the very significance also of sanctification."

<sup>94</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 211. From Christ In Theology, p. 292: "One is the restoration of confidence; the other of purity".

<sup>95</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 211.

<sup>96</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 41.

<sup>97</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 39.

<sup>98</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 142.

<sup>99</sup>Sermons For The New Life, p. 31.

<sup>100</sup>Sermons For The New Life, p. 120. Bushnell did at various times acknowledge his indebtedness to such mystic writers as Upham, Fenelon, Fox, Tersteegen, Gurnall and Thomas à Kempis.

<sup>101</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 108.

<sup>102</sup>The Spirit in Man, p. 22. Bushnell was criticized for not giving sufficient attention in The Vicarious Sacrifice to the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption. Notice his extended treatment of the "Comforter" in Forgiveness and Law, and also his unfinished tract on the Holy Spirit in The Spirit in Man.

<sup>103</sup>Christ In Theology, p. 221.

<sup>104</sup>Note The Vicarious Sacrifice, Part II, Chapter I, for Bushnell's discussion of the Healing Ministry as type of the healing of souls.

<sup>105</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, pp. 56-57.

<sup>106</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 57. Note again the relation in Bushnell's thought between regeneration and human will. All of God's economy is planned for man's recovery, and in one sense, then, there is nothing for man to do but to let this love form him. "Loving God is But Letting God Love Us". "Still, there is something for you to do . . . you are to present yourselves to Christ". (The Spirit in Man, p. 44.) And, "the whole endeavour, on your part, must be God-ward".

<sup>107</sup>For Bushnell it is always Christ who saves man from sin; and man is always raised out of unnature by faith. His understanding of holiness is not based on merit in man. His emphasis is on grace, and on the reality of redemption in history. However, his basic conception of Christ as "new-forming" the soul or character, in conjunction with such ideas as the hereditary power of grace, suggests at least the possibility of a perfection which is still human--and this even though Bushnell can be quoted as having said otherwise.

<sup>108</sup>Sermons On Living Subjects, p. 127.

<sup>109</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 97.

<sup>110</sup>For a recent study which utilizes Bushnell's theology as a

means of explicating his social and political thought, see David Alan Jones, "The Social and Political Thought of Horace Bushnell: An Interpretation of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Mind", Diss. Northwestern University 1973.

<sup>111</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things, p. 286. See Nature and the Supernatural, pp. 182-183, for the physiological view of depravity and regeneration.

<sup>112</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things, pp. 285-286.

<sup>113</sup>Christian Nurture, p. 175.

<sup>114</sup>Christian Nurture, p. 167.

<sup>115</sup>Christian Nurture, p. 184.

<sup>116</sup>Work and Play (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 248.

<sup>117</sup>Moral Uses of Dark Things, pp. 175-176. It was this same "law of population" which Bushnell had in mind when he said that the black race in America would not survive emancipation. See his Discourse On The Slavery Question (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Co., 1839), where Bushnell said that while he was "far from thinking that the African is incapable of elevation", it was his judgement that "five hundred or a thousand years" were needed to Christianize the race, or to elevate it into such cultivation as to save it from extinction. "At present they are kept from a decline in population, only by the interest their masters have in them. Their law of population, now, is the same as that of neat cattle, and as the herd will dwindle when the herdsman withdraws his care, so will they. It would not be strange, if vices, which taint the blood and cut down life, should, within fifty years, penetrate the whole stock, and begin to hurry them off, in a process of premature extinction; as we know to be the case with other barbarous people, now fast yielding to the infection of death." (p. 12)

<sup>118</sup>George Park Fisher, "Horace Bushnell", pp. 21-22.

<sup>119</sup>Remonstrance and Complaint, pp. 23-24.

<sup>120</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 248-249.

<sup>121</sup>The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 403.

<sup>122</sup>Christ In Theology, pp. 264-266.



<sup>123</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 14.

<sup>124</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 12.

<sup>125</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 35. The move brought upon Bushnell the inevitable charge of anthropomorphism. See for example, Barbara Cross, Horace Bushnell, p. 153: "If Bushnell's transition from human to divine was facile, he had at last discovered an explanation of the atonement which started from God's necessities rather than man's. That in the process he had reduced God to the measure of man did not trouble him and would not trouble the generation that followed him." John E. Howell, in his thesis, "A Study of the Theological Method of Horace Bushnell and Its Application To His Cardinal Doctrines", Chapter 9, likewise accuses Bushnell in Forgiveness and Law, of making God "the exact type of the human person". It is not surprising, according to Howell, that Marcius H. Hutton should label Forgiveness and Law as "anthropomorphism run mad", in "Theologians of the Day", The Catholic Presbyterian, II (August, 1879), p. 130. In regard to this, see Forgiveness and Law, p. 52: "Let it not be suspected that we fall into a case of inversion here, that implies mistake in the argument; viz., that we conceive Christ in his forgiveness, or his propitiation, to be following the type of ours . . .". Another interesting interpretation of the "shift" in Forgiveness and Law is given by George Park Fisher, "Horace Bushnell", p. 23, who sees the proposition at the base of the book as only an expansion of that fundamental idea which runs through all Bushnell's thinking on Christ, that is: "It is God himself who is active and passive in all the experiences of Christ. They are an expression of God. It is the divine, not the human, which acts and suffers. The human is at best but a transparent glass, through which we look directly into the heart of God."

<sup>126</sup>Forgiveness and Law, p. 74.

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