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A STUDY OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE GROWTH THEORY IN PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Christian Education
Asbury Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Religious Education

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by
Oscar Cuthbert Poole
May 1954
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Since the turn of the twentieth century the American religious education scene has largely been dominated by what may be known as the "growth" theory. Those who have written in regard to the "growth theory" have, by and large, presented detailed analyses of its origin in current philosophies of education. The majority of those who write concerning this theory are prejudiced in its favor. One rarely finds a concise treatment of its devastating influence upon the minds of the people who constitute the rank and file in the religious education movement.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to give an historical review of the origin of the growth theory dealing with the philosophical environment which lead to its appearance, and the physical factors that determined its philosophy; (2) to distinguish between the different types of "growth" theories within Protestantism, noting their outstanding proponents; and (3) to present an account of the insidious threats of the theory in its various aspects to evangelical Protestant orthodoxy.
Importance of the study. Religious education has for centuries been a basic method of promoting the Christian religion. Until the rise of the growth theory during the past and present centuries the aims and methods of Protestant religious education have for the most part employed means and methods consonant with belief of the Bible. The proponents of the growth theory have sought to do away almost entirely with the doctrines expressed by the Biblical writers. In place of these doctrines have been projected philosophies and principles based on man's speculations. Some have even done this while contending that they did not do violence to the Scriptures at any point. Others have built their growth philosophies purely on assumptions of a naturalistic psychology and their distrust in the Bible as a final source for a philosophy of education. This study has sought to point out the weaknesses in these various representations of the growth theory.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The growth theory. Throughout the report of this study the term "growth theory" is interpreted as meaning any philosophy of religious education that is built entirely upon naturalistic principles of "growth" whether it be modern progressive education, post-Hegelian modernism, or Horace Bushnell's "growth" theory.
Certain aspects. The term "certain aspects" is interpreted as including those areas of the growth theory that seemed to be most worthy of study in view of the comprehensiveness of the current philosophies of the theory under investigation.

Protestant religious education. This study was made within the area of Protestantism with its many different denominations. The term "Protestant religious education" is interpreted as meaning all religious education within the realm of Protestantism to the exclusion of the Roman Catholic Church, the religion of Judaism, and all of the other living religions of the world.

Modern "progressive education". The term "modern progressive education" was used during the course of this investigation to convey the outstanding growth philosophy of pragmatic naturalism with its influence upon the program of secular public education in the United States.

Post-Hegelian Modernism. Throughout this study the term "post-Hegelian modernism" is interpreted largely as represented by the thought of one man, Albrecht Ritschl, whose career paralleled chronologically that of Horace Bushnell of the mid-nineteenth century. This philosophy has been referred to by such terms as the "philosophy of denial" and "traditional modernism."
Horace Bushnell's Growth Theory. The term "Horace Bushnell's growth theory" shall be interpreted as meaning simply the philosophy of religious education of Horace Bushnell. It is distinguished from the other theories in that it is distinctively religious with emphasis upon the Bible and specific reference to the Christian religion.
CHAPTER II

THE ORTHODOX VIEW OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE

The Christian Church has always believed in Christian nurture. It has also held a theory of "growth" in the religious rearing of the child. In this respect Horace Bushnell did not introduce a new idea. The point of divergence between Bushnell's view of Christian nurture and the orthodox position of the Christian Church lay in the nature of the individual. The belief of the Christian Church is that before the child may grow up as a Christian he must first become a Christian. This is brought about through regeneration. The child before regeneration does not have the seeds of Christian growth within him but rather principles which are contrary to Christian living and hinder his becoming a Christian. It is the purpose of this chapter to present a view of Christian nurture from the position of orthodox Christianity.

The child in Christian perspective. Before a philosophy of Christian nurture can be presented there must first be determined what the nature of the child is by natural birth. In the Scriptures is taught that the very presence of death in the world, with all its attendant evils, is due to man's sin and weakness.

wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for
that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come ....... For as by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ). Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.¹

Wiley², in his Christian Theology, declares that on the basis of the above Scriptures it is clearly taught "that before the fall of Adam, there was neither sin nor death; after his fall there were both, and these are regarded as the direct consequences of sin." St. Paul makes it clear that death is passed upon all men as a result of sin. This is done through racial propagation. "Hence," says Wiley, "original sin and inherited depravity seem to be separated in thought only, but identified in fact."³

By the apostle's own admission death reigned over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, that is, by overt act of disobedience. Hence if the penalty of death was imputed to all men, because all had sinned, then this sin must have been a state of the heart, that is, a depraved nature. This is

¹ Romans 5: 12-14, 17, 18.
³ Ibid.
confirmed by such Scriptures as "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29); and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (I John 1:7)."

The religious liberalists of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries have advanced the idea that man is not essentially sinful but inherently good. This philosophy has resulted from Channing's doctrine of the "goodness of man." Sin, to the liberals, was not to be thought of in terms of man's rebellion against God but in terms of the "absence of the good" or the mere "ignorance" of man. J. Gresham Machen has reference to this idea when he states:

Modern liberalism has lost all sense of the gulf that separates the creature from the creator; its doctrine of man follows naturally from its doctrine of God. But it is not only the creature limitations of mankind which are denied. Even more important is another difference. According to the Bible, man is a sinner under the just condemnation of God; according to modern liberalism, there is really no such thing as sin. At the very root of the modern liberal movement is the loss of the consciousness of sin.5

Clark6 in *A Christian Philosophy of Education* defends the doctrine of inherited depravity or original sin against the charge of liberalism that the doctrine of original sin

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consists of a "morbid destruction of human value," by asserting that "it is this theistic principle that lends dignity and worth to human life." Clark states further:

The doctrine of original sin has been thought to degrade man, and autonony has seemed necessary to self-respect. And yet the degradation of the human and orthodoxy of Calvinism through modernism to humanism, though the way is punctuated by loud protestations of the value of the individual, results at last in pessimism and suicide. Experimental psychology, instead of throwing any ultimate light on the nature of man, has succeeded only in hiding God like a needle in a haystack of empirical data. Naturalistic sociology has engulfed the individual in the state; society alone has value; and life is not worth living because it is not lived to God. Such is the ironic fate of the claim that man is not a sinner, as man attempted to put himself in the place of God, the war discovered him. Original sin is the only adequate explanation of man's inhumanity to man.

Although there are numerous references to the morally depraved character of the human race throughout both the Old and New Testaments, only a few are brought to light for consideration at this point. Wiley calls attention to the first scripture which indicates the inherent depravity of man's nature as found in Genesis 5:3, where it is stated that "Adam .......begat a son in his own likeness." "Here a distinction is made," says Wiley, "between the likeness of God, and Adam's own likeness in which his son was begotten." 

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., pp. 164-165.
9 Wiley, op. cit.
Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."¹⁰

In the New Testament are also found numerous references to the idea of original sin. From the lips of the Master himself:

That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."¹¹

"Here our Lord clearly affirms that these evil traits come from within, that is, they have their original source in the natural heart of men."¹² The scriptures here presented are sufficient evidence of the morally depraved state of the natural man. To the Christian there can be no higher authority.

Thus is laid the foundation upon which a philosophy of Christian nurture can be based. The child in Christian perspective possesses a depraved nature. This he gets, not by any choice on his part, but simply by virtue of the propagation of the human race. His nature is basically sinful. If such is the case then one might well ask, when or how does the

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¹⁰ Jeremiah 13:23.
¹¹ Mark 7:20-23.
child enter the kingdom? The sinful nature of the child necessitates the act of regeneration which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Henry in his *The Protestant Dilemma* describes what sin has done for man and how man may escape its devastation. He says:

> History, apart from the regenerating grace of God, is the story of man's moral revolt, the story of the pursuit of secondary ends rather than the End, the story of having other gods before Jehovah. If therefore God is a holy God, and sin is an abomination to Him, there is no antecedent outside ground on which forgiveness may be "expected" from Him; if there is divine grace, it comes not by necessity but as a gift. And if there is forgiveness, it comes on God's terms alone. That God is merciful as well as holy is one of the foci of the Biblical ellipse; that in Jesus Christ He provides the sufficient atonement for the sins of men, is the other. An adequate view of sin has implications also for the whole of Christian theology; man is a sinner indeed--so much modern thought has learned; man is the heir of the grace of God--this it needs to learn, yet cannot until first it unlearns the non-Biblical understanding of his sinfulness.¹³

**Regeneration as the condition for growth.** The orthodox Christian view of religious nurture has always allowed room for the principle of religious growth. It has been pointed out in this chapter that the child is, by birth, depraved. Orthodox Christianity, therefore, believes in a "dis-continuous" view of the universe. Before there can be growth in the

Christian religion the child must first be lead to a personal experience of conversion. This is a crisis experience in which the power of volition on the part of the child must be exercised. Then the child may grow up as a Christian. But first the child must become a Christian. He is, by the fact of his depraved nature, not a Christian. To become a Christian, therefore, means that the child must will to become a Christian. The parent does not speak for the offspring but it is his duty to lead the child up to where the child must in the final analysis speak for himself. It is intended at this juncture to point out the reasons which make conversion a necessity.

The very nature of man's inherent sinfulness necessitates the stoning work of Divine grace and the experience of conversion or regeneration. Since the heart is sinful by heredity it must be radically changed before God can account a man holy in His sight.Ralston holds to this position in his book Elements of Divinity. He states:

What is sin, both in its essence and consequences? It is direct rebellion against God. It is a renunciation of allegiance to our Maker. It is a surrender of our powers to the service of the grand enemy of God. and man; and it brings upon the soul that derangement and contamination of all its powers, which utterly disqualify for the service and enjoyment of God.14

Another proof of the necessity of conversion is the express declaration of the word of God. "God, that cannot lie," has declared, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." These are the words from Jesus and constitute the central theme of His message as He preached it and taught it while He was on the earth.

Conversion rightly conceived, implies a change of heart within the person who stands in need of the experience. This, of course, is everyone because by one person "sin entered the race." The conditions for conversion are a contrite heart and a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour.

The doctrine of the Atonement makes the conversion experience a reality for the believer. Wiley asserts that the atoning work of grace is grounded in the nature and claims of God Himself. "By His very nature, He could have no fellowship with sinful beings; and yet His love yearned for the creatures which He had made." Sin, on the part of the human race, grieved the heart of God. However, this did not prevent God from continuing to love sinful man. The holiness of God could not allow man to approach Him, although God's love for the sinner drew man to Him. "Propitiation became necessary in order to furnish a common ground of meeting, if holy fellowship

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15 Wiley, op. cit., p. 274.
was again to be established between God and Man."16 "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."17

Thus is laid the primary condition for Christian growth. Before one can grow in the Christian religion he must be brought into the Christian religion. This is done by the means of conversion—a consent of the human will to the will of the Divine. The parent leads the child to the critical moment of decision. Once the child experiences the change of heart through personal conversion it then becomes the duty of the parent to nurture him in the faith.

The curriculum of orthodox Christian nurture. The nature of the child has been defined as defiled or depraved and in need of Divine operation called conversion or regeneration. This is the condition for the child's growth in the Christian life. Now, the child having been brought into the kingdom of God by the means of conversion, it becomes the parents' duty to encourage and foster his religious growth. Therefore the question arises: what must the child be taught that will foster such religious growth? This question is here

16 Ibid.
17 I John 4:10.
with the assertion that the Bible is to be used, by and large, as the primary textbook in the curriculum of the religious rearing of the child.

This view is not in accord with the opinion of everyone. Many do not hold to the authority or authenticity of the Bible. "As a matter of fact the modern liberal does not hold fast even to the authority of Jesus. Certainly he does not accept the words of Jesus as they are recorded in the Gospels."18

The reason for use of the Bible as the textbook of Christian education lies in its supernatural authority as the revealed written word of God. The crucial point of divergence between orthodox Christianity and liberalism is the question of authority.

J. Gresham Machen points out this difference between the conservative and liberal views of the Bible:

The Christian man finds in the Bible the very Word of God. Let it not be said that dependence upon a book is a dead or artificial thing. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was founded upon the authority of the Bible, yet it set the world aflame. Dependence upon a word of man would be slavish, but dependence upon God's word is life. Dark and gloomy would be the world, if we were left to our own devices, and had no blessed word of God. The Bible, to the Christian is not a burdensome law, but the very Magna Charta of Christian liberty.

18 Machen, op. cit., p. 77.
It is no wonder, then, that liberalism is totally different from Christianity, for the foundation is different. Christianity is founded upon the Bible. It bases upon the Bible both its thinking and its life. Liberalism on the other hand is founded upon the shifting emotions of sinful men.19

Clark accepts the conservative position of Nashan. In A Christian Philosophy of Education he maintains the validity of the Biblical record. He recommends to Christian educators a Christian theism above any other sort of a worldview. "That is needed is a God who has revealed himself in intelligible language. In other words, theism to be of educational value must be Biblical theism."20 He rightly concludes:

Of course many people and most educators reject the Bible as divinely authoritative. They note its errors and list its contradictions. They say Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing had not been invented in his age. They were wrong. They said that the Hittites never existed. They were wrong. They said Luke invented the word politercho (Acts 17:16) to disguise his ignorance. They were wrong. Archaeology has been a continuous process of showing that the defenders of the Bible were wrong. And when they reject its theism and theology, why may they not again be wrong as usual?21

The idea of a child-centered education has of late been given emphasis in which content is entirely secondary. A correct view of religious nurture is centered in both the

19 Ibid., p. 79.
20 Clark, op. cit., p. 159.
21 Ibid., pp. 159-160.
child and the content of the material to be learned. This concept has been defined as meaning both "Bible-centered and pupil-centered," and distinguished as "bipolar." It is the concept of subject matter and the child receiving consideration in the teaching situation.

According to the liberal consensus of opinion the Bible has some values in the teaching of religion but as a source it is full of untrustworthy material since science has uncovered its errors in the past few decades. Some even go as far as to reject the use of the Bible altogether. This is the position taken by Earnest Chave who excludes the use of the Bible on the grounds that it is "archaic." 22

The position taken in this study, that of orthodoxy, is, of course, not in accord with the liberal view. In it the Bible is a trustworthy revelation of God to man. It tells about God, the nature of His kingdom, and the conditions for admission into the kingdom. According with the view herein expressed Clark says:

The modernists in their efforts to keep up to date, in their efforts to show that the old truths are all false and the new lies are all true, cannot afford the luxury of consistency. They must change with the temper

of the times. This has become particularly noticeable in political matters. The liberal churchmen of 1918 wanted to hang the Kaiser for alleged atrocities in Belgium; but later they were thorough-going pacifists, urging college students to take an oath not to defend our country even if attacked. From 1942-1945 they had to show a little patriotism again; and what position they may take in the next decade cannot be predicted. And all the time they despise straightlaced conservatives who do not change their views. It is like the sophist who objected that Socrates replied pointedly that the same objection could not be leveled at the sophist, for he never said the same thing.23

The view as expressed in this chapter concerning the authenticity of the Biblical record and the logical reasons for its use as the chief source-book in the religious rearing of the child is in accord with historic Christianity. The early Christians accepted the words of Jesus as having meaning and authority. They set the world aflame with their message of the gospel even under the pressure of severe persecution. The Christian Church of today can do no less than accept the Bible as God's Word if it is to succeed in the task that God has given her.... "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."24

The functions of the Church rightly conceived. The problem here dealt with seeks to answer the question: where does the Church fit in in the matter of religious nurture?

23 Clark, op. cit., p. 160.
This, of course, necessitates a definition of the Church, the reasons for its existence, and its functions in the world.

The Church is the mystical body of Christ. This was the message of the apostles. St. Paul referred to the Church as "the body of Christ." Even Jesus himself said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." This indicates that whoever are His followers are also members of His mystical body. When Jesus had finished His mission He designed and arranged that there be a continuation of the incarnation in the world even after His departure. Those who are members of Christ's mystical body are those who have God dwelling in them in the person of Jesus Christ.

The purpose for which Jesus came to the world was to establish the Kingdom of God. Jesus lived and taught the Kingdom as His theme. He did not teach that the Kingdom of His Father is dependent upon an outward manifestation of a political reign on the earth but that it is the spiritual reign of God within the hearts of men. It is from this point that the outward conduct of men is to be influenced. Since it was the purpose of Jesus to establish the heavenly Kingdom it can be no less than the overall aim or purpose of the Church that He left behind to carry on the work of the Kingdom.

G. Campbell Morgan describes the work of the church in the world in his book The Teaching of Christ.
The failure or success of the Church in her divinely-appointed task depends upon either her adherence to or failure to comply with the conditions under which she was created. The Church will only succeed in her task as she yields herself to the will of God and His plan of salvation. Morgan expresses this fact clearly:

Finally we learn that the Church will fulfill her responsibility for the manifestation of the Kingdom of God by the crowning of the King; by yielding herself to His rule; by realizing within her own borders His ideals; by manifesting these things to the world without; by waging unsparing war against all the forces in opposition; by proclamation of His great evangel, whereby men individually may be brought into His Kingdom; by testimony to His moral standards; and by persistent, perpetual prayer in the secret place.26

The overall objective of the church has been presented as the continuation of the ministry of Jesus in establishing the Kingdom of God on the earth. But the question as to where

26 Ibid.
the church fits in in the matter of Christian nurture needs consideration. Some have said that the total function of the church is in the realm of education. Such is the position of Walter Athearn in his work *The Church School*. The other outstanding proponent of this view is George Albert Coe who projected the evolutionary theory of education. In *Education in Religion and Morals* he makes the Church merely an educational institution and the only concern of religious nurture is "growth" in an adapted environment. Coe reorganizes the whole Church so that every activity becomes a part of the school. Thus everything is related to education.

This view of Athearn and Coe is not the orthodox view of the Church. The Church is not merely an educational institution. This is only one of its function. The church does educate but this does not mean that it is only an educational institution. The functions of the church are divided into four areas: worship, evangelism, education, and fellowship.27 One can worship apart from a distinctively educative experience. Also one can take part in an educational procedure without participating in the act of worship. The purpose of evangelism is to win persons to Christ. The educational activities of the Church serve to inform the people

within its ranks of the principles of true Christian living, to point out the way of salvation, and to nurture believers and prepare for Christian service.

**Summary.** The church stands for Christian nurture and allows room for a theory of "growth" in religious knowledge and the Christian graces. But its conception of "growth" in Christian education is far different from radical theories so contrary to the orthodox position. The child possesses a depraved nature which prevents him from "growing" into the Christian faith. Before the child may grow in the faith he must be brought into the faith. This is accomplished by the act of conversion which is the condition for growth in the Christian life. This conversion is a crisis experience in which the child's power of volition must be exercised. Once there is the conversion experience the child may then grow up as a Christian. It is then the duty of the parent, working with the agencies of the church, to nurture him "in the fear and admonition of the Lord."

The question may be raised as to the salvation of those who die in early infancy.

In order that they be fitted for heaven they too must be regenerated, but since they are not guilty of wilful sin this act of saving mercy is wrought in them without volitional responsibility on their part.
CHAPTER III

ORIGIN OF THE THEORY

Much has been written in regard to the so-called "growth theory" in Protestant religious education, the history of its development, and its impact on current philosophies of education in general; but perhaps too little has been attributed to the early theological assumption which led to its appearance.

Statement of the basic premise. The statement by Horace Bushnell in 1847, "that the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise"¹ is an expression of a growth theory. Coe,² who, by common consent, is considered to have been America's most distinguished philosopher of religious education,³ in establishing a date for the beginning of the modern conception of religious nurture, names the year 1847 because it marks the appearance of Bushnell's Christian Nurture.

Coe maintains that,

For though Bushnell did not approach his problem from the standpoint of general pedagogy, he had, nevertheless, the insight and the practical wisdom to put himself, perhaps unconsciously, into the central current of the great educational reform of the nineteenth century.⁴

Vieth maintains that Bushnell's thesis was developed almost exclusively in reference to Christian nurture in the family.⁵

Brief review of Bushnell's life. Horace Bushnell was born on April 14, 1802, in Litchfield, Connecticut, the eldest son of Ensign and Dotha Bushnell. His father was a farmer. In religious matters the father was a Methodist and the mother was an Episcopalian. Both became members of the Congregational Church of New Preston, Connecticut, after having moved to New Preston when Horace was three years of age. It was here that he grew to manhood and made his profession of faith in 1821.

In the year 1823 he entered Yale College. Upon graduation in 1827 he tried teaching in Norwich, Connecticut, and later journalism in New York City. He soon gave both up and returned to Yale to begin the study of law. It was while engaged in this endeavor that he determined on a life of Christian service. He enrolled in the Yale Divinity School

⁴ Coe, loc. cit.
in 1831 and graduated in 1833. Immediately following his graduation he was called to serve his only pastorate, that of the North Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut.

The larger portion of his life was spent in Hartford where Bushnell Park is kept in memory of his public service. Hastings, in his biography of Bushnell, says that the important events of his life were the publication of his books challding the dogmas held by the churches of the 'standing order'. He concludes that,

He was a keen but sweet-tempered controversialist, and without bitterness accepted what came... He lived 'till all men were at peace with him,' and died at the age of 74, on 17th of February, 1876.

The Influencing factor during and following his college years. Walker, in describing the predominant influence on Bushnell during the latter's stay at Yale college, maintains,

The most important influence of his college years, in view of his later development, was a painstaking acquaintance with the "Aids to Reflection" published by the English poet-philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in 1825.

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7 Loc. cit.

8 Williston Walker, "Horace Bushnell" in Christian Nurture, Bushnell, op. cit., p. XXIII.

9 Walker, loc. cit.
New England had looked upon religious truth as capable of intellectual demonstration with all the logical sharpness of a problem in geometry.\(^{10}\) It appealed to the rational understanding. Walker concludes that, "and with the ascent of the intellect it stood or fell."\(^{11}\)

Coleridge,\(^{12}\) in his Aids to Reflection, broke away from this whole conception. To him the Christian religion was a matter of intuition. The appeal of Christianity is not primarily to the intellect but to the ethical and spiritual feelings. Throughout his college experience Bushnell was troubled with intellectual doubts and this was what he had been seeking. Coleridge maintained that, "Christianity is not a theory, or a speculation; but a life. Not a philosophy of life, but a life and a living process."\(^{13}\) Coleridge added, it is not, therefore, so properly a species of knowledge, as a form of being. And although the theoretical views of the understanding, and motives of prudence which it presents, may be, to a certain extent, connected with the development of the spiritual principle of religious life in the Christian, yet a true and living faith is not incompatible with at least some degree of speculative error.\(^{14}\)

\(^{10}\) Ibid.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.


\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 26.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.
Coleridge’s view of instinct and understanding is unique in that he makes them to be the same.\textsuperscript{15} Intelligence is instinctive, it co-exists with reason, free will and self-consciousness, and becomes understanding.\textsuperscript{16}

In other words, that understanding differs indeed from the noblest form of instinct, but not in itself or in its own essential properties, but in consequence of its co-existence with far higher powers of a diverse kind in one and the same subject. Instinct in a rational, responsible, and self-conscious animal, is understanding.\textsuperscript{17}

To this idea Coleridge adds,

Not only is this view of the understanding as differing in degree from instinct, and in kind from reason, innocent in its possible influences on the religious character, but it is an indispensable preliminary to the removal of the most formidable obstacles to an intelligent belief of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, of the characteristic articles of the Christian Faith, with which the advocates of the truth in Christ have to contend—the evil heart of unbelief alone excepted.\textsuperscript{18}

The thoughts that were instilled by the \textit{Aids to Reflection} during Bushnell’s college days became germinal in his mind leading him ultimately to believe that dependence on intellectual demonstration of religion to the extent required for conversion was a mistaken idea. Bushnell became finally convinced that religion was an appeal to the heart and to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 233.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 235.
\end{itemize}
feeling, being influenced by the position of Coleridge.

Occasion for Bushnell's thesis. Bushnell was the product of a spiritual awakening. It was during a revival of religion that swept through Yale in 1831 that he was inspired to accept the ministry as his life's task. Though Bushnell distrusted the emotionalism and enthusiasm of revivals it nevertheless was a revival which led him to make his life decision.

Revivalism was not a matter of mere subjectivism but involved the proclamation of basic Christian beliefs such as the fallen nature of man, the plan of redemption, and future rewards and punishments.

This meant acquaintance with Biblical truths, or a modicum of religious intelligence.

The revival movement manifested itself throughout the first half of the nineteenth century with great intensity. It broke out in New England in 1792 and did not spend its force until after 1858. This movement in religion turned men's thoughts from the temporal things of the world toward God. Revivalism emphasized conversion and the new-birth. Consensus conversion was considered as the normal method of entrance into the Kingdom of God. Those considered as candidates for the new-birth were persons who had reached the age of maturity. Conversion was placed strictly on a
voluntary basis with the idea that God would not force Himself on anyone. However, many professed that revivalism was inadequate for its task. Bushnell's book, Christian Nurture, was the result of a conflict of ideas between the new and the old methods of getting persons into the Kingdom.

Describing the impact of the revival movement, Walker says, "That great revival impulse was an immense benefit to the religious life of America."19 Even Bushnell himself did not rob the revival of all its glory.20 It was, he maintained, one-sided, nevertheless.21 The child was supposedly overlooked by the revivalists. The blessings of membership in a Christian household, of parental covenant relations to God, were minimized.22 Describing the revival attitude toward the family relationship further, Walker comments,

Too often the child, even of Christian parentage, was viewed as an alien from the divine promises—a "Child of wrath" until in years of approaching or actual maturity the Divine Spirit should work the transformation which should transmute him into a child of God.23

Bushnell strove to correct what he viewed as this one-sidedness and to vindicate for Christian childhood its normal

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19 Walker, op. cit., p. XXIX.
20 Bushnell, op. cit., p. 5.
21 Walker, loc. cit.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
place in the Kingdom of God. "In so doing," Walker continues, "he adopted positions consonant with the great historic experience of the church." Bushnell himself argued that his doctrine was as old as the Christian church.

That the work was met with denunciation was to be expected under the circumstances; but no treatise of Doctor Bushnell's has so commendable itself to the American Christian public, or, has been more influential in modifying American religious thought.

Other contributors to the Growth Theory. Smith, in describing twentieth-century liberalism attributes its existence to the type of liberal theology in the thought of three New England clergymen—William C. Channing, Theodore Parker, and Horace Bushnell. The growth theory springs from philosophical and theological ideas current in European thought. It is difficult to pin-point the particular origin of any system of thought since all the contributing factors must be considered. Channing and Parker became influential leaders in the Unitarian fellowship. Of the three, only Bushnell became directly identified with the modern theory of Christian nurture. Yet Smith asserts that "the views of

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24 Ibid., p. XXX.
25 Ibid.
26 Bushnell, op. cit., p. 4.
27 Walker, loc. cit.
28 Smith, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
29 Ibid.
both Channing and Parker must be regarded as an integral part of it."30

Although Channing and Parker were in many respects more radical than Bushnell,31 their views must have influenced the latter in the development of his thought. The chief doctrine of each appears throughout the system propounded by Bushnell. Bushnell makes use of both Channing's goodness of men and Parker's divine immanence, the latter, of course, according with Coleridge's views.

Channing separates Christianity from the Scripture, asserting them to be in conflict.32 In Christianity, he says, are met perpetual testimonies to the divinity of human nature.33 His entire premise is based on the Scripture's obvious concern for man. The Christian religion expresses an infinite concern of God for the human soul.34 In establishing the doctrine further, Channing adds,

Christianity, with one voice, calls me to turn my regards and care to the spirit within me, as of more

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
worth than the whole outward world. It calls us to "be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect;" and it implies and recognizes the sublime capacities of the being to whom they are addressed.  

Chadwick, in acknowledging that Parker had some definite pantheistic tendencies, at the same time declares that he was careful to distinguish his theism from either materialistic-pantheism, which resolves God into the material universe, or spiritualistic-pantheism, which resolves the material universe into God. This, of course, is a quite impossible distinction.

Cook, in describing the theological positions of Theodore Parker, declares that they are those which have seen battle and defeat in Germany. Parker's most essential position was that man has an instinctive intuition of the fact of Divine existence.

Bushnell made extensive use of both these positions as will be discussed in later chapters.

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35 Ibid.


38 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

TYPES OF "GROWTH" THEORIES WITHIN PROTESTANTISM

Horace Bushnell’s "Growth" Theory. The Horace Bushnell growth theory, which has been hitherto alluded to, is distinguished from the other theories in that it is distinctively religious. It has specific reference to the Christian religion—that the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself to be otherwise. These are its distinguishable characteristics. Explaining his thesis Bushnell declares,

In other words, the aim, effort and expectation should be, not, as is commonly assumed, that the child is to grow up in sin, to be converted after he comes to a mature age; but that he is to open on the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remembering the time when he went through a technical experience, but seeming rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years.¹

This very act, according to Bushnell, of loving anything because it is good and right is the very dawn of a new life.² The child does not stand in need of a new heart and for this reason he must not be told that he should have a new heart and exercise faith in Christ’s atonement. Bushnell bases this conclusion on his belief that "we are to understand

¹ Bushnell, op. cit., p. 4.
² Ibid., p. 16.
that a right spirit may be virtually exercised in children, when, as yet, it is not intellectually received."3 Here we see the influence of Coleridge that "religion is graspable by intuition."4 The whole revolutionary idea that the child may grow up and never remember the time when he was not a Christian is based on the doctrine of the organic unity of the family. Bushnell believed that the truth necessary to a new life may be communicated through and from the parent before the child is old enough to understand even the teaching of words.5 This doctrine of the organic unity of the family was developed as an attack upon the revivalists of Bushnell's day who declared that the route of conversion was the only way to the Kingdom. Bushnell disagreed with this and felt that the spirit of revivalism had overlooked what was, to him, a basic Christian truth. Bushnell believed there were two modes of entrance into the kingdom of God: "by conversion, or conquest from without, and by family propagation, or increase from within."6 This idea is a revolt against what Bushnell called "the extreme individualism" of his day. "The Christian church," said Bushnell, "has been expecting to thrive too much

3 Ibid., p. 14.
4 Coleridge, op. cit., p. 233.
5 Bushnell, loc. cit.
6 Ibid., p. 165.
by conquest, and too little by growth."7 He believed that if mankind are born sinners, they may just as truly and properly by born saints.8 In referring to this doctrine of Bushnell's Coe says,

It is a declaration of freedom from all those mechanical conceptions which looked upon the child as clay waiting to be molded rather than as a life demanding to grow. Bushnell really grasped the idea that the central fact and aim of education is development of a living organism.9

The doctrine of the organic relation of the family is synonymous with the doctrine of the covenant relationship. It springs from the thought of the Old Testament that the father of the family speaks for all the members of the family. With Bushnell, this covenant relationship idea is basic and leads him to believe that his entire philosophy is scriptural. Bushnell believed that even after birth the child is still within the matrix of the parental life. This is true for several years of the child's life. Bushnell specifically relates this philosophy to Christian nurture.

This is the very idea of Christian education, that it begins with nurture or cultivation. And the intention is that the Christian life and spirit of the parents, which are in and by the Spirit of God, shall flow into the mind of the child, to blend with his incipient and

7 Ibid., p. 46.
8 Ibid., p. 167.
9 Coe, op. cit., p. 306.
half-formed exercises; that they shall thus beget their own good within him—their thoughts, opinions, faith, and love, which are to become a little more, his own separate exercise, but still the same in character. The contrary assumption that virtue must be the product of separate and absolutely independent choice, is pure assumption.10

This doctrine seeks to create a special Christian environment and atmosphere so that the child may be a product of it. Coe, in his The Religion of a Mature Mind, adds to this idea in asserting that "children should breathe in religion as the atmosphere of the home. From the beginning of thought they should think of themselves as belonging to Christ, not as waiting for such a privilege."11

It is in the light of this doctrine that Bushnell believed in infant baptism. "The rite of infant baptism presupposes the fact of an organic connection of character between the parent and the child, and can be understood and defended only in the light of that connection."12

In final tribute to the institution of the family Bushnell declares,

This training, in short, of a genuine, practically all-embracing, all-influing family religion, makes the families so many little churches, only they are as

10 Bushnell, op. cit., p. 21.
11 Coe, op. cit., p. 311.
much better, in many points, as they are more private, closer to the life of infancy, and more completely blended with the common affairs of life. Here it is that chastity, modesty, temperance, industry, truth—all the virtues that give beauty, and worth, and majesty, to character, get their root.\(^\text{13}\)

Although the view of religious education as expressed by Bushnell was far different from traditional religion Bushnell maintained always that his philosophy was Christian. He declared that "the only true idea of Christian Education is that the child is to grow up in the life of the parent and be a Christian in principle from his earliest years."\(^\text{14}\) "It is the very character," Bushnell said, "and mark of all un-Christian education, that it brings unto the child for future conversion."\(^\text{15}\) He declared that his theory of Christian nurture is the "Lord's way of education, having aims appropriate to Him, and, if realized in its full intent, terminating in results impossible to be reached by any merely human method."\(^\text{16}\)

In respect to what to teach the child Bushnell says only to teach him that which makes him love the truth afterwards for the teacher's sake. "The parent's teaching should center about Jesus Christ, as Himself the truth incarnate, and

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 350.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 23.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 10.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 3.
the parent should so live as to make his own life the inter-
preter of that of Jesus."17

What is the controlling aim in Bushnell's philosophy of religious education? "It is not conversion, but Christian
nurture, presuming on a grace already and always given."18
Considering the aim further Bushnell adds,

According to the scheme here presented, they are not
heathens, or aliens, but they are in and of the house-
hold of faith, and their growing up is to be in the same.
Parents, therefore, in the religious teaching of their
children, are not to have it as a point of fidelity to
press them into some crisis of high experience, called
conversion. Their teaching is to be that which feeds a
growth, not that which stirs a revolution. It is to be
nurture, presuming on a grace already and always given,
and for just that reason, jealously careful to raise no
thought of some high climax to be passed.19

Post-Hegelian modernism. The theory of traditional
modernism with its doctrines and concepts of God, man,
childhood and sin have influenced subsequent educational
endeavor. It differs from secularism in that it is pantheistic,
post-Hegelian romanticism.

Albrecht Ritschl is representative of the so-called
"modernist" movement. His career paralleled chronologically
that of Horace Bushnell of the mid-nineteenth century. The

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17 Ibid., p. 326.
18 Ibid., p. 328.
19 Loc. cit.
thought of Ritschl goes back to Kant, the German philosopher of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This fact makes necessary a brief reference to the thought of Immanuel Kant.

Kant held that we can have no certain knowledge of God, the world, the soul, immorality, but only practical or regulative knowledge. In the field of theory of knowledge the emphasis is on the limitation of knowledge to data empirically observed. "This empirical knowledge depends on two heterogeneous faculties—intuition and understanding—and these two faculties cannot in separation give us knowledge." We can know only by experience and experiment, and this gives us sensations, not the reality of the thing behind the sensations, not the thing in itself.

In this philosophy the empirical material has no moral worth. "What is significant is a universal rational principle of rightness, of whose validity we can be absolutely


21 Ibid.


24 Faulkner, op. cit.
certain, although that certainty is practical, not theoretical." Kant builds upon this moral principle the kingdom of God, which is also a purely moral one. "He denies the operation of the supernatural such as a Saviour, prayer, and the means of grace. These things are simply superstition, and a religion of reason is to take their place."26

Hitchcock took up where Kant left off by adopting this philosophy to the Christian religion. This Kantian philosophy affected Christian theology and has had its damaging effects upon subsequent religious education. Theology and religious educational theory cannot be separated.

Hitchcock's philosophy is a "philosophy of denial." He believed there is no wrath of God, no salvation nor repentance. The doctrine of the Trinity and pre-existence is unknown and cannot be proved. He minimised faith, the Scriptures, Christian experience, and the Holy Spirit along with most of the other basic truths of the Christian religion. He, like Kant, made religion only a moralism.

History is viewed as God's educational tool in preparing people for the kingdom of God. "This purely moral kingdom

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25 Durtt, op. cit.
26 Faulkner, op. cit., p. 209.
is the final end or purpose of Christianity.  

Ritschl maintains that the dispensation of the Mosaic law was simply an educative experience preparing the way for subsequent Christianity. "For were this not so," says Ritschl, "then even the historical continuity of development which has been proved could only in a very problematical way be ascribed to the Providence of God." 28

Ritschl does not view man as standing in need of repentance or regeneration on the basis that there is no need for them. According to him sin is estimated by God, not as the final purpose of opposition to the known will of God, but as ignorance. 29 Hence the path to the kingdom of God is not marked by a sudden experience of conversion but rather by the gradual elimination of ignorance and growth on the principle of a moral righteousness that is common to men everywhere. Concerning this moral principle Ritschl concludes,

The universal moral law, when it really deserves the name, represents the thought that the moral fellowship of the human race is the final end of the phenomenal world, the end supreme over all nature. 30

28 Ibid., p. 313.
29 Ibid., p. 384.
30 Ibid., p. 615.
Modern Progressive Education. Modern "progressive education" is based upon the theory commonly referred to as "pragmatism", or, "experimentalism". The outstanding proponent of this theory is the late John Dewey. N. Shelton Smith, in Faith and Nurture, calls attention to the fact that not only would it be hard to overestimate the extent of Dewey's influence in educational theory in general, but also in that of religious education. Commenting further, he says of Dr. Dewey:

It seems not too much to say that his Democracy and Education has been the primary source of many of the most far-reaching ideas in the progressive educational theory of Protestantism.31

This theory of education is to be distinguished from the Horace Bushnell-type and the modernism of Ritschl. Both of the latter were professedly religious whereas this philosophy is not necessarily religious. It is a secularistic approach to education.

Dewey,32 in his Democracy and Education, makes education to be to social life what nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life. Since life is a continuing process education is a necessity. "This education," says Dewey,

31 Smith, op. cit., p. 72.
"consists primarily in transmission through communication."\(^{33}\)

"The criterion of the value of school education is the extent in which it creates a desire for continued growth and supplies means for making the desire effective."\(^{34}\)

In order for there to be growth there must be some sort of direction. This is exactly the function of education. In this respect Dewey says,

The natural or native impulses of the young do not agree with the life-customs of the group into which they are born. Consequently they have to be directed or guided.\(^{35}\)

Maintaining a continuance of being must be secured by constant renewals. At each stage of development of life education must furnish the aim for which the next period of development will be secured. This aim at each stage is an "added capacity of growth."\(^{36}\) Defining an aim in the process of education Dewey holds that it "denotes the result of any natural process brought to consciousness and made a factor in determining present observation and choice of ways of acting."\(^{37}\)

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 11.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 62.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 47.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 63.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 129.
"Aim is all in one with acting intelligently." It means "to act with meaning." 38

Dewey objects to any type of traditional religion. He wants to "emancipate" people from religion—but not from being religious. All values are rooted in the natural experiences of life and are only important as they refer to present experience. 39 The moral life is the interest of the individual in learning from all the contacts of life. "This develops the power to share effectively which is the truly moral." 40 This does away entirely with any concept of creeds since they are actually a hindrance to the effective sharing of the common goods of society. In his A Common Faith, Dewey says,

A body of beliefs and practices that are apart from the common and natural relations of mankind must, in the degree in which it is influential, weaken and sap the force of the possibilities inherent in such relations. 41

This does away entirely with all creedsal religions or any belief in the supernatural. Religion, to Dewey, is tied up entirely within the framework of human relations and experience. Although he does not believe in a personal God

38 Ibid., p. 121.
39 Ibid., p. 292.
40 Ibid., p. 418.
he declares that the term "God" should be retained in the religious vocabulary of man. Use of the words "God" or "divine" to convey the union of the actual with the ideal may protect man from a sense of isolation and from consequent despair.\(^4\)\(^2\)

In maintaining that it is possible to be religious apart from accepting any creedal beliefs Dewey argues,

> Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value is religious in quality.\(^4\)\(^3\)

In addition to parting with traditional beliefs of religion all conceptions derived from a mystical faculty of intuition of "anything that is so occult as not to be open to public inspection and verification are excluded."\(^4\)\(^4\)

In spite of Dewey's wholesale denials he declares that "the ideal ends to which we attach our faith are not shadowy and wavering."\(^4\)\(^5\) The basis for such a faith is our relationships with others. In parting with traditional religion Dewey seeks salvation by education. "We make a religion out of education," he says, "and we profess unbounded faith in its

\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 53.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 27.
\(^{45}\) Dewey, op. cit., p. 87.
possibilities." This philosophy turns away from religion and places its task upon the forces of education. Describing his faith in education further Dewey concludes,

Faith in education signifies nothing less than belief in the possibility of deliberate direction of the formation of human disposition and intelligence. It signifies a belief that it is possible to know definitely just what specific conditions and forces operate to bring about just such and such specific results in character, intellectual attitude and capacity.

Closely related to the religious thought of Dewey is that of Edward Scribner Ames, who also has had extensive influence in the formation of liberal theories of religious education. As we have already observed, "growth," "adjustment," "gradual," are key-words in the entire philosophy of modern progressive education. Ames, in *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, contrasts what he calls the "normal process of gradual growth" with the "spontaneous awakenings of conversion." He argues that in religion "it becomes increasingly apparent that the great need is prevention through normal activity and development, and, therefore, salvation

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47 Ibid., p. 145.
48 Smith, op. cit., p. 73.
by education rather than by conversion." The presence of sin is only due to individual habits and environment. With Dewey, he contends for a specially created environment for the immature. In reference to this he claims,

Perhaps the growth of the spirit of democracy is best represented by those who realize that most of the crime and misfortune of society are not due to conscious, malicious intent, but to habits and environment which can be corrected only by modifying the conditions which lie beneath them.

Like his contemporary, Dewey, Ames rejects the supernatural and relates everything to natural experience. Speaking of the growth of the scientific temper he says, "superstition, belief in miracles, subjection to the authority of custom and tradition are disappearing."

The thought of Henry Nelson Wieman is included among that of the religious naturalists. His view of "God is closely akin to that of Dewey in that he starts with the experience of value in the environing world of events." God is clearly an object of immediate experience, perceived as well as

50 Ibid., p. 274.
51 Ibid., p. 401.
52 Loc. cit.
53 Ibid., p. 414.
However, with Dewey, God is the "activity relating the ideal and the actual."

William Clayton Bower, in his *Religion and the Good Life*, ties up religion with science. The function of religion is to make possible "a sense of at-home-ness in a friendly universe." The end of education is to adjust the individual to the universe to the extent that he feels at home and at ease in the world. Describing his position Bower adds,

"When to the setting of oneself in relation to the universe one is able to add the conviction that it is a friendly universe and that he has some personal and responsible participation in its processes, the character furthering influence of such a relationship is greatly enhanced. He then perceives that the processes that are operative in him are also operative in the universe. He is one with its nature and its destiny. His personal life is invested with a significance and dignity it could not otherwise possess."

This theory of education refers all religion to the environment of nature. It forbids and rejects everything of the supernatural. Hence, Wieman calls himself a "Naturalistic Theist."

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55 Ibid., p. 295.
57 Ibid., p. 120.
58 Ibid., pp. 120-121.
59 Ibid., p. 295.
Summary. This chapter has dealt in detail with three types of "growth" theories. They were presented as: (1) Modern progressive education; (2) Post-Hegelian modernism; and (3) Horace Bushnell's "growth" theory. Although the latter two have specific reference to the Christian religion the first has also penetrated the American religious education scene. All have had their devastating effect upon orthodox Christianity.
CHAPTER V

WHY GROWTH THEORIES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
ARE THREATS TO ORTHODOXY

The philosophies of growth in Protestant religious education have done much to hinder the progress of the evangelical faith. In some instances they involve downright denials of basic Christian truths. Liberal thought has so permeated American religious education that hardly anyone has escaped its devastating influence. Some of the reasons for the destructive influence of the growth theory upon the evangelical faith are given herewith.

It is a denial of sin. The more radical proponents of the growth theory are those who say there is no sin. Hence, there is no need for conversion. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, sin is explained by them not as a wilful violation of the known will of God, but as ignorance. The Biblical idea of sin is that it is an act on the part of man that separates him from God. Nowhere in the teachings of Christ did He ever refer to sin as ignorance.

Henry,1 in describing the situation of mid-century theological thought, presents two of the contemporary views

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of sin as the "symbolical seriousness" of the Neo-Supernaturalists and "optimistic Liberalism". "Man", says Henry, "is inevitably and always a sinner. Hence, for Neo-Supernaturalism, the doctrine of original sin so comes into clearer focus."

For as classic Liberalism framed its anthropology, the principle of sin was not lodged in the human will, contrary to the Hebrew-Christian tradition. The concept of sin had dimensions very much reduced from the Biblical outlines. For sin now was viewed in terms of an inertia of nature, which explained man's indisposition to his potential role as an immanent channel of divine love.

Aubrey, in Present Theological Tendencies, says that the love of God acts upon us to bring us through desperate recognition of our total failure to seek him. "Only because he has touched us, can we see our failure; only in him can we look for a fulfillment of our needs. Thus our sin is met by his grace."

If the absence of sin is maintained then the experience of conversion need not be taught to children. The prerequisite of conversion is the reality of sin. Once the view of sin as a present reality is established the need for conversion becomes evident. Such a view as this is the very

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2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., pp. 129-130.

opposite to the position that sin is merely ignorance.

Niebuhr, in defining sin, explains it as the wilful assertion of the self against the divine. He maintains further,

The Bible defines sin in both religious and moral terms. The religious dimension of sin is man’s rebellion against God, his effort to usurp the place of God. The moral and social dimension of sin is injustice. The ego which falsely makes itself the centre of existence in its pride and will-to-power inevitably subordinates other life to its will and thus does injustice to other life.

The Biblical view of the nature of sin is that it is a wilful violation of the known will of God on the one hand, and involves a fallen nature on the other. People sin because their hearts are sinful. The doctrine of human depravity is the basis for the teaching of the doctrine of regeneration. In order for there to be a new life there must exist an old life.

It is an abolition of authority. For proponents of the naturalistic growth theory there is no rule of authority. It is true, there is some vague conception of authority, but not in the traditional sense of the term.

George A. Coe, in his Education in Religion and Morals, says that education “has authority simply to make effective

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in child-development the laws and ideals of life that the
adult finds binding upon himself."\(^6\) In reference to
standard rules of authority affecting society he declares:
"Religion says that they are ordained of God, and ethics
cannot say less than that they are ordained by the moral ideal."\(^7\)

**It represents a breakdown of loyalties.** The growth
theory is a breakdown of loyalties. Since there is no abso-
lute standard of authority except some vague moral principle
which is known only by instinct and intuition there cannot
be developed within the minds of children definite concepts
of loyalty. It is true, of course, that some theories are
more radical than others. Bushnell's philosophy was simply
a springboard for the whole framework of subsequent growth
theories. Many of his fundamental principles have been dis-
carded as outdated. The disregard for authority in contem-
porary educational philosophy has tended to weaken the
principle of loyalty as loyalty involves obligation.

Case, in *Liberal Christianity and Religious Education*,
calls attention to the fact that nowhere is the change of

\(^6\) Coe, op. cit., p. 76.

\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 76-77
emphasis characteristic of Protestant liberals in America more obvious than in their attitude toward other races and nations. "They believe that the religion of Jesus calls for a commitment to a world-wide loyalty at the expense of patriotism."\(^8\) The setting up of a world-wide loyalty having precedence over loyalty to one's country has tended to break down primary loyalties. This influence has exerted itself in national government where men in high places have conducted themselves with godless disrespect. Nowhere do the Scriptures teach disregard for loyalty to one's nation. On the contrary, they teach that the individual should take pride in his country. Those who seek world-wide loyalty are those who maintain little of the spirit of a wholesome, Christian nationalism—a nationalism which roots in loyalty to one's home.

Word represents this concept of the priority of world-wide loyalty.\(^9\) In his work, *The New Social Order*, he reveals the thought of Protestant liberals in this country following the close of World War One:

But to make the economic organization a means for the increase of fraternity requires that it be shaped around certain concepts and ideals. It requires the general

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recognition of the equality of need and right of all mankind, and the universal acceptance of the obligation of service. It demands adherence to the truth, "above all nations is humanity," and the development of supreme loyalty to the worldwide human family above all loyalties to class or nation or race.¹⁰

McConnell,¹¹ in describing what he terms "mutual respect among nations," says, "The Christian statesman, who moves for the humanization of international relationships may be advancing into new territory, but he may well remember that his religion has from the beginning called for just such statesmanship."¹²

Not only does the liberal educator's loyalty weaken in respect to love of country but to the Christian tradition, likewise. The philosophy of Albrecht Ritschl is in the main a theory of denial. According to Ritschl one cannot place his complete trust in such things as the Trinity, the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and other basic Christian truths. He must rely on some irrational moral principle that is "supreme over all nature."

It is child-centered. The advocates of the growth theory in Protestant religious education have laid undue

¹⁰ Loc. cit.
¹² Loc. cit.
stress on the child as the supreme factor in the learning situation to the disparagement of the curriculum to be taught him. Such factors as the shadowy view of the Scriptures and the disregard for arbitrary authority have yielded this result. Bushnell makes the child of supreme worth in his plan for propagating the Christian religion which is the basis for his idea of Christian nurture. To the more radical theorists sin becomes unreal to the extent that it is only due to individual habits resulting from environment and can be corrected only by creating a specialized environment for the immature. The child himself is the determining factor in the setting up of the educational environment. Everything must center about his needs and condition of growth. The materials of the curriculum become of secondary importance.

Thus, the Bible as curriculum material may be supplemented by non-Biblical materials. The argument given for the use of non-Biblical materials is that in most respects they are more true to a given life situation.

Eavey, in discussing this subject, says:

A reason for the prevalent use of non-Biblical materials is found in the lessening of the authority of the Bible and the weakening of its influence on the thought and lives of men, which has been the inevitable result of modern historical study and interpretation.13

What the liberal educator fails to recognize is that when a severe testing life experience comes to the child he will not respond to the use of something he has been taught has no absolute authority. The child needs something that he can place his faith in and rely upon in the tests of life.

Ernest Chave is an outstanding exponent of the child-centered philosophy in religious education. "Teaching has changed," he says, "from being book-centered to organizing its plans and goals about the needs of the pupils."14 "In religious education the end-point is primarily a well-organized life conditioned by the highest social values of religion."15 The material and method used in teaching are secondary and have significance only in so far as they contribute toward the development of religious personality.16 Chave refers to this philosophy as the "newer ways of teaching." He says of the older ways of teaching:

Many teachers accustomed to older ways of conducting classes and lessons will not readily accept the newer points of view. They expect to use the Bible or some

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15 Ibid., p. 166.

16 Ibid., c. t.
text with biblical materials as their primary source and to treat such factually or allegorically as the occasion seems to require. It is immensely difficult for such teachers to start with a life-situation of their group and find authority for their principles in life itself, using the Bible only in so far as it may lend illustration of the desired experience.17

The orthodox Christian must face these issues squarely. He must recognize the worth of the individual child as a unique person but he must also have a profound regard and respect for the authority of the Word of God. He must entertain the thought that some things are taught for their inescapable truth. When this is done the needs of the pupil will be met. The Bible is the supreme sourcebook in the entire educational endeavor. This means that the religious educator must be "bi-polar" in his outlook, viewing both the child and the materials which he is to teach as important.

It is disrespectful toward the Bible. Though Bushnell apparently esteemed the Scriptures as having profound worth it must be said of him that the basis upon which his entire philosophy rested was not Biblical. His premise "that the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise" is a contradiction of the text of the Bible. Others who are advocates of the growth theory have even less respect for it. Dewey would seek to destroy all creedal

17 Ibid., p. 167.
beliefs as being a hindrance to the operation of a democratic society. Ritschl sets up a pattern of authority apart from the Scriptures as some vague moral principle existing somewhere in the universe that is intuitively and instinctively known.

Liberalism encourages what it terms the historical method in Biblical criticism and accepts without equivocation what it chooses to call the results of scientific inquiry. This has led liberals to discard the "authority of the Bible" in the usually accepted sense.

Kent, in his *The Origin and Permanent Value of the Old Testament*, describes the liberal attitude toward the Bible. "In these latter days," he says, "God has taken the Bible from the throne of infallibility on which Protestantism sought to place it." The mistake of Kent is that he has confused God with human beings of liberal bent. He adds:

Students of the rediscovered Old Testament also recognize, in the light of a broader and more careful study, the fact, so often and so fatally overlooked in

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21 Loc. cit.
the past, that its authority lies not in the field of natural science, not even of history in the limited sense.⁵²

Having presented this view, the question arises: what then is the great value of the Biblical records? Kent would say that they are a description of growth in religious experience. Kent adds that the inconsistencies and imperfect teachings which are revealed by a critical study of the Old Testament are also but a few of the many indices that it is the record of a gradually unfolding revelation.⁵³ An exponent of the Bible as a record of progress of religious experience is George Hodges, who states:

The fallacy at the heart of the situation was the failure to recognize the fact that the Old Testament is a record of progress. The accounts which it contains of the making of the world are true in the sense of being true records of what the Hebrews thought about these matters, several thousand years ago. But mankind would be dull indeed if after all these centuries of residence upon this planet we know no more about it than was known a thousand years before Christ in the Mediterranean provinces of Asia.⁵⁴

The Christian educator who faces his classes with a view that the Bible is God's Word stands in academic jeopardy under such liberal attacks unless he has a firm foundation for his faith. If he views it as simply a record of man's

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⁵³ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁴ George Hodges, How to Know the Bible (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1918), p. 12.
quest for God he will be a miserable failure. It must be looked upon as God revealing Himself to man and presenting man with a guidebook that will enable him to enter into and to live a Christian life.

It is a denial of the supernatural. The denial of the supernatural is inherent among all the religious naturalists. With Dewey, all values are rooted in the natural experiences of life and are only important as they refer to present experience for him. All religion is tied up entirely within the framework of human relations and experience. The use of the term "God" or "divine" is used only to connect the actual with the ideal. God is simply an object of immediate natural experience.

This denial of the supernatural leaves the individual without a ground or foundation upon which to build the framework of his faith. Again the Christian must "stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ has made him free."
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

In this discussion of the growth theory in Protestant religious education it was shown that the theory as now known began with the statement by Horace Bushnell in 1847 "that the child is to grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise." Four types of growth theories have been described: (1) the orthodox view of Christian nurture; (2) modern progressive education; (3) post-Hegelian modernism; and (4) Horace Bushnell's theory. These educational philosophies have opposed true Protestant religious education in advocating: (1) a denial of sin; (2) an abolition of authority; (3) a breakdown of loyalties; (4) a child-centered curriculum; (5) a disrespectful attitude toward the Bible; and (6) a denial of the supernatural.

There should be a return to the orthodox view of Christian nurture for certain definite reasons. The inadequacy of certain so-called "growth" theories has been indicated.

They are contrary to the Holy Scriptures. This investigation has been an attempt to show that the entire framework of the "growth" theories apart from the orthodox Christian view are based upon assumptions which are not Biblical.
It was noted in Chapter V that the more radical proponents of the growth theory claim that there is no such thing as sin. The Bible points out that sin is a wilful violation of the known will of God involving the fallen nature of man. Some growth theorists regard sin as only "ignorance". Others say it is merely the absence of the good. It has been shown that once the fact of sin is denied there is no occasion for an experience of regeneration since the doctrine of human depravity and the doctrine of sin are the basis for the teaching of the doctrine of regeneration. The proponents of the naturalistic growth theory have departed from the doctrine of authority. Clearly, this is not in accord with the teachings of the Scriptures. Such Scriptures as II Timothy 3:16 clearly show this. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

It was shown in Chapter V that the radical growth theorists disregard the Bible as authoritative. Those who have no respect for the Biblical records can certainly not be in accord with their content. The denial of the supernatural constitutes in itself a basic denial of the Holy Scriptures since the Bible throughout assumes to be of supernatural origin.

These are built upon the unsound thinking of fallible men. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the growth philosophies are essentially contrary to the Holy Scriptures.
The Bible presents the only valid view of Christian growth as conditioned upon the value of men and the plan of salvation.

Since Christ taught that the task would be difficult even when the proper means and methods are employed the philosophies that are contrary to His teachings must be rejected as insufficient for the task, and as obstacles and hindrances to true Christian education.
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