CHAPTER SIX

Learning Christ

Formation comes only by being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ. It comes only as formation in his likeness, as *conformation* with the unique form of him who was made man, was crucified and rose again.

This is not achieved by dint of efforts to "become like Jesus", which is the way in which we usually interpret it. It is achieved only when the form of Jesus Christ itself works upon us in such a manner that it moulds our form in its own likeness (Gal 4:19). Christ remains the only giver of forms. It is not Christian men who shape the world with their ideas, but it is Christ who shapes men in conformity with Himself. But just as we misunderstand the form of Christ if we take him to be essentially the teacher of a pious and good life, so, too, we should misunderstand the formation of man if we were to regard it as instruction in the way in which a pious and good life is to be attained. Christ is the Incarnate, Crucified and Risen One whom the Christian faith confesses. To be transformed in His image (2 Cor 3:18, Phil 3:10, Rom 8:29 and 12:2) - this is what is meant by the formation of which the Bible speaks.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer[1]

The function of Mister God is to make you like him. *Anna*[2]

1. The Approach to the Study of Revelation

The purpose of this thesis is twofold - first, to demonstrate the close connection between Christian learning and the modes of learning commonly employed as a feature of the ordinary processes of growth and development; second, to examine the relationship between Christian learning and the "subjective dimension" or mode of reception of revelation. It is part of the nature of the task that these two elements of the thesis are closely interrelated, involving the investigation of "Christian learning" from both the theological and scientific points of view. The conclusion reached at the end of the previous chapter was that learning is the outcome of a search for identity. Revelation, similarly, is the outcome of the gift of a new identity, made available by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus, while the source of revelation is supernatural, the manner in which it is appropriated is entirely natural. It is necessary now to examine the implications of this position as regards the doctrine of revelation which it entails.

In the early chapters, a detailed model of human learning based on a thorough investigation of the social and psychological processes involved has been presented. In order to achieve coherence, the interpretation of these processes takes place within a single unifying framework. This framework consists of a theological evaluation of human being. In this way, it is claimed, the theology of human life is enabled to draw on the results of scientific investigation and the doctrine of revelation to be set in both anthropological and epistomological context. This model has been used in the definition of "Christian learning" in relation to the ordinary processes of human learning. What remains is to bring the model to the study of revelation, where it is to be used as the key to the interpretation of the processes involved there.

The major theological assumption on which this method of bringing together the investigation of revelation and human learning is based is that there exists a particular type of connection between the natural and the supernatural, or between nature and grace. This assumption rests on the claim that the features of humanity which are the outcome of divine creation are to be understood as being affirmed rather than disregarded or superseded in the course of the divine address to men and women. The action of divine grace, it is to be maintained, involves accommodation to the conditions of created human nature. The method of the thesis, by which the connection between nature and grace is to be established, accordingly gives central place to humanity. Anthropology, it is pointed out, is a feature of both theology and secular philosophy. The role of anthropology, moreover, is to supply that unifying framework which is required for the coherence of the scientific investigation of human life. The role of theological anthropology, therefore, involves precisely the establishment of that connection between nature and grace which is a necessary part of a theological evaluation of human being. But the thesis advances beyond the use of a theoretical connection between nature and grace as a rule of method to the investigation of the nature of that connection. It is the relation between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit which, it is claimed, constitutes the meeting point of grace and nature. The human spirit is precisely that aspect of human personality which is "by nature" open to the influence of divine grace, and the Holy Spirit is the means by which such grace is made available.[3] To say that revelation takes place in the meeting of Holy Spirit and human spirit is to say that revelation constitutes an element in the relation between grace and nature which takes place in the course of the divine plan of salvation.[4]

The problems to be faced in writing about the knowledge of God are of two kinds and may be termed problems of "text" and "context".[5] The "text" for the investigation of the knowledge of God is the Church's attempt to describe and justify the process of revelation. Yet here, at the heart of theology, no definitive unifying approach is to be discerned. What is found is "a buzzing multiplicity of individual Christian opinion".[6] The same lack of unity is a feature of Christian education. Traditional transmissive approaches are to be found drawing for their justification on traditional propositional views of revelation while more subject-centred "experiential" methods generally rely on a contrasting experiential model of revelation.[7] Even the definition of revelation is in question between these two approaches. For one, "revelation" means a certain, definitive content, for the other an experience of a particular kind.

Such uncertainty over the manner in which the knowledge of God is available can lead only to a profound malaise in theology as a whole. It has always been the case that theology offered several different "paradigms", each with a different framework for the interpretation of the relation between God and mankind and each one continually modified by the work of successive generations of scholars. But a "multiplicity of individual opinion" on the central subject of the knowledge of God itself would seem to indicate the breakdown even of such unity as the various paradigms and the relatively well-charted relations between them may once have offered. As a consequence, any approach to the problem of revelation from the standpoint of theological "text" is subject to serious limitations. The knowledge of God and the terms in which it is available constitute a foundational aspect of any given theological paradigm and any particular selection from theological tradition which might be used as a starting point for the study

of revelation depends for its own authority and validity on the account of the knowledge of God which underlies the particular paradigm from which it is drawn. In order to avoid a vicious circle of this kind, the theological "text" and the problems associated with it must be examined in their broader "context".

The "context" for talk about God is the contemporary intellectual scene, in which a "battle for explanatory control" rages between those approaches which centre on the web of causal connections subject to scientific investigation on the one hand and, on the other, those which take as their point of departure the human experience of subjectivity.[8] These different approaches were examined thoroughly earlier in the thesis. Reasons have been given for preferring an approach to the study of mankind and human knowledge in particular based on a view of human beings as agents with goals and purposes, of which the construction of individual and corporate world-models by means of which knowledge is expressed is an outcome. This approach provides a coherent and theologically justified framework for the investigation of the relation between learning and revelation which engages with the secular "context" of the study of the knowledge of God by relating the theological discussion of revelation to the problems involved in the study of human knowledge. It also provides a solid theoretical foundation from which the theological tradition may be examined and the various competing assertions to be found there evaluated.[9]

2. A Universal Knowledge of God?

One of the dominant influences on the treatment of revelation in Christian theology is the distinction between natural and revealed theology, a distinction brought into prominence by Thomas Aquinas.[10] The idea of natural theology as preliminary and preparatory to revelation is still an important element particularly in Roman Catholic theology, but for many, especially Protestant, theologians the earlier distinction has been abandoned in favour of a distinction between *general* and *special* revelation. The idea of general revelation emphasises the revelatory character of any knowledge of God while maintaining a distinction between the knowledge shared by all men and women as an outcome of divine creation and that given as a result of God's saving activity. Upholders of both natural knowledge and general revelation subscribe to the idea of a universal knowledge of God. The difference lies in the fact that "natural knowledge" is taken to be reliable as far as it goes whereas the outcome of "general revelation" is usually taken to be a knowledge which is distorted because of human sinfulness. Whereas revealed knowledge is taken to supplement and complete natural knowledge, special revelation *corrects* those ideas of God which arise from general revelation. In both cases, however, the act of God in revelation or special revelation is a means of grace, an integral part of the offer of salvation, something which cannot be achieved by either natural knowledge or general revelation. The question for the present section is whether such a universal knowledge can be said to exist and, if so, what is its character.

In Christian theology, the foundations for a belief in a universally available knowledge of God by whatever means are threefold:

1. Arguments from experience: the universal experience of moral constraint and the virtually universal phenomenon of religious belief.

2. Arguments from Scripture: certain passages appear to lend biblical authority to a range of propositions associated with universal knowledge of God, in particular: the availability of a knowledge of God in creation and providence which may provide the basis for a human "search" for God, and a recognition of the universal awareness of moral demand as the equivalent of divine legislation.[11]

3. An argument from revelation itself: without a generally held concept of God prior to revelation, revelation would be unintelligible. Before the more particular ideas to be conveyed in revelation, such as God acting in various ways for particular purposes, could be understood, there must exist a generally held concept of "God" to which such ideas could be referred, and this concept, it is argued, could only arise as the result of a prior revelation.[12]

Great difficulties arise, however, in specifying what this universal knowledge of God could possibly amount to. Three possible ways of understanding the concept of general revelation may be suggested:[13]

1. A revelation of God in nature. The problem here is on the subjective side. What is mankind supposed to understand from nature and how? As Hume pointed out, the argument by analogy from human creativity does not get us very far - it is as easy to ascribe the creation of the world we experience to a committee of bunglers as to a single

omnipotent God.[14] Without some divine illumination on the subjective side any revelation conveyed by creation remains vague and ambiguous.

2. A propositional revelation, given to all. But the diversity of belief and expression displayed by the world's religions makes it difficult to uncover the exact content of such a revelation.

3. The knowledge of God as a feature of human psychological make-up. John Baillie was among those who argued for a kind of innate knowledge of God or "mediated immediacy".[15] The knowledge of God, he argued, is analogous to our knowledge of other selves. The existence of another rational person is incapable of proof - some portion at least of our belief in the existence of others with minds like ourselves rests on intuitions which are incapable of logical explanation. In the knowledge of others, intuitive and discursive elements combine. In the knowledge of God there is, he believed, an intuitive and a discursive element. God is known "in, with and under" other objects of experience. There is an immediate, intuitive knowledge of God, corresponding to the intuition which tells us of the presence of another person, but that knowledge becomes effective only as it is mediated by our knowing of the world. In every act of knowing, he believed, four subjects of knowledge are present together, the self, others, the world and God. Thus, consciousness of God arises *through* experience.

The difficulties with all three of these attempts to give content to general revelation arise from the fact that they depend on an ideal of *explicit* knowledge. However, Baillie's analysis of the knowledge of others, which has been more extensively discussed by philosophers since he first wrote, moves in the direction of the concept of a

different type of knowledge.[16] What is proposed here is that the idea of a general revelation becomes intellible when such a revelation is seen as an element of *tacit* rather than explicit knowledge. General revelation is something rooted in the necessities of the human cognitive make-up, an awareness of God not derived simply from experience but from the need to set experience within a comprehensible frame of reference. It is here that our analysis of human cognition makes its contribution.

One of the roles of the schema in the process of learning is the provision of a range of expectations.[17] The schema represents "set" or orientation - the predisposition to respond to those situations to which that particular schema is applicable in a certain manner or within a certain range of possible reactions. The schema provides an "outline" of the situation, a readiness to respond to information or experience of a particular type. If revelation is to be received by means of the ordinary mechanisms of human cognition, what is required is that there should exist for every individual a schema representing a readiness for or expectation of God. This is the schema which will come into play when revelation takes place.

The individual's total psychological world, within which all his individual schemata operate, is expressed by a model of what psychologist of religion James Fowler calls the "ultimate environment". Fowler uses a dramatic metaphor to describe the "ultimate environment". It is, he says,

> The largest theatre of action in which we act out our lives. Our images of the ultimate environment determine the way we arrange the scenery and grasp the plot in our life's plays. Furthermore, our images of the

> ultimate environment change as we move through life. They expand and grow, and the plots get blown open or have to be linked in with other plots.[18]

To the individual's ultimate environment there corresponds, for the culture or perhaps for particular cognitive communities within a given culture, the "symbolic universe".[19] Symbolic universes are shared schemata, which play the role of the perspective of the given reference group, a shared "ultimate environment".

Such schemata provide a perspective on the unknown transcendent. Apart from the positivist tradition, most philosophers have recognised limits to the human ability to interpret experience. In the quest for self-understanding, concludes Stephen Toulmin, the philosopher may have to become a myth-maker, since it is in the form of myths that insights beyond the range of theorising have generally been preserved.[20] Such myths represent attempts to describe the nature of what lies beyond the possibility of direct experience. Individuals and societies must construct an image of the transcendent for themselves on the basis of inference from what appear to be the salient features of experience.[21] Fowler describes the forms such constructions take in a variety of ways. He draws attention to "centres of value", "images of power" and, in particular, "master stories". He describes a conversation in a taxi-cab with a man who told him, "The way I see it, if we have any purpose on this earth, it is just to keep things going. We can stir the pot while we are here and try to keep things interesting. Beyond that, everything runs down: your marriage runs down, your body runs down, your faith runs down. We can only try to make it interesting."[22] This man's "master story" could be summed up, Fowler

suggests, in the word *entropy.* Such fundamental beliefs form the backdrop against which the significance of life and of the various commitments it entails are measured. They may be tacit and unexamined or explicit in story, symbol, myth, ritual, philosophical theory or full-blown religious commitment.

One of the most important features of such master stories is that they are self-involving. The need for over-arching explanation is more than simply cognitive, but also emotional and spiritual. They are the means by which men and women attempt to cope with the unanswered questions of human existence such as the problem of evil and apparently purposeless suffering, and the questions of human significance and destiny. The "ultimate environment" or "symbolic universe" expresses a particular set of beliefs about the place of the individual or of mankind as a whole in the scheme of things. It represents an orientation to the world as a whole along the lines of Erikson's "basic trust".[23] Since they are self-involving, master stories form an element of the identity schema. The way individuals and societies picture the transcendent dimension, and in particular the nature of God, is an element in corporate and individual identity. It follows that every individual and society can be said to have a schema for God, not in the explicit sense of articulated religious belief, but as a feature of tacit knowledge. It consists of a readiness to respond to questions about the origin, significance and destiny of the world and of a certain range of expectations generated by the need for an orientation towards existence and experience taken as a whole.

The presentation of a model of this kind helps to ground the various theological assertions relating to general revelation by requiring their translation into the terms of a theoretical framework for human cognition. Some of these assertions are thus seen to be

confirmed by the model and some rejected, in the sense that to continue to maintain such a position would require a different model of cognition from the one presented. Several theological propositions can be thus affirmed and explained:

1. The existence of a universal sense of deity "indelibly engraven on the human heart".[24] This is to be explained in terms of the universal recognition of problems requiring solutions which lie beyond the terms of human experience.

2. The distortion of such a sense of deity as a result of human sinfulness.[25] The effects of sin on human cognition were described in terms of the model of cognition presented here in the previous chapter.[26] Its result is the confinement of each individual and society within a relative point of view, such that final and definitive knowledge is impossible. It could be achieved only as the result of the realisation by an individual or group of their true identity, such that the quest for meaning in the universe was brought to a definitive end.

3. The physical and human creation may be affirmed as a *witness* to the existence of God, in the sense that the superhuman power and evidence of design involved require some kind of explanation, while conceding, with Hume, that such evidence does nothing to *compel* belief in a personal divine creator. The idea of a "natural theology" consisting of the inference of reliable propositions about God from the evidence available in creation is to be rejected.

4. The idea that all experience is to be seen as potentially revelatory is affirmed in a particular sense. The identity schema, which includes the awareness of the transcendent and the range of problems associated with it, forms the ultimate context for

all experience, so that all experience may potentially be related to one's "images of power" or "master story".

5. General revelation is to be understood as an outcome of human creation in the divine image.[27] The image of God, in this model, consists of the possession by men and women of an underlying "true self", the creator of the identity schema. It is in the search of the "true self" for its real nature that the requirement for the knowledge of a transcendent ground and goal arises.

6. Every person may be said to exist *before God* in the sense that their life is governed by a search for identity which is, at one and the same time, a search for God. Men and women are thus conditioned by their relationship to God even though the terms of this relationship consist, on the human side, of ignorance. Brunner termed this aspect of human existence "responsibility".[28]

There are also a number of assertions from the theological tradition to be rejected on the basis of this model:

1. The possibility of a "natural theology".

2. The idea of a universal belief in God or awareness of God. This is expressed in assertions such as that of Paul Tillich: "God is the presupposition of the question of God."[29] The idea is to be rejected, at least in the sense which Tillich appeared to intend. There is a sense in which the discovery of God is "the discovery of someone we knew all along"[30] - it lies in the fact that we are created in his image. But the awareness which prompts the question of God is not of God himself, but of the unknown transcendent.

3. The idea of the "categorical supremacy" of God.[31] The mistake here is to identify God with the terms of a particular description of the "ultimate environment". For Charles Hartshorne, for example, "God is a name for the uniquely good, admirable, great, worship-eliciting being,"[32] while for Tillich, Truth is the presupposition of philosophy and God is Truth.[33] Paul Sponheim investigates the themes of the Real, the Beautiful and the Good, moral and religious experience with a view to ascertaining whether God's "incognito" is to be discovered in any of these. In so doing, he is following the tradition Tillich calls the "ontological" type of philosophy of religion, the search for signals of the divine in human experience. This approach is an attempt to set aside one of the fundamental insights of the Reformation. A distinction has been made between the possibilities of natural knowledge of God and general revelation. The difference lies in the fact that while natural knowledge may be assumed to be a reliable guide to the divine nature, such knowledge of God as remains as a result of general revelation will be in error. Human ideas of Truth, Beauty and so on do not serve as incognitos for the divine. They are, rather the focus of what Richard Niebuhr called those polytheisms and henotheisms which men and women admit as substitutes for the knowledge of the true God.[34]

A distinction is thus to be maintained between the sense of a question involved in human existence, with its corollary of a widely shared search for deity, and the actual knowledge of God. The awareness of a transcendent dimension in human existence and of the need for an explanation for that dimension is a feature of *tacit* rather than *explicit* knowledge. In cognitive terms, it consists of an *expectation* of a certain aspect of identity,

that which places the person or society in an overarching scheme of things and which accounts for personal and corporate origin and destiny. Human explanations of all kinds - including the philosophical systems with which the early Christian apologists were faced, and the great world religions which form an increasingly important element in the experience of modern western men and women - may contain a significant degree of truth, arising out of profound insight into the human condition. But such truth does not, in itself, constitute revelation. The natural world becomes a witness to divine creation only in the light of a definitive revelation of divine truth. In the same way, such truth as exists in the world's great religious and philosophical systems is recognised as truth only in the light of revelation itself. The awareness of a question of God or, in Calvin's terms, that sense of deity engraven on the human heart, constitutes an expectation of further revelation to come and a possibility of receiving such a revelation. But it does not of itself constitute such a revelation. Nor does anything in this state of things "require" a revelation in the sense of compelling God to act. But "general revelation", in whose interpretation all men and women err, requires a "special" or definitive revelation for its completion. Such a revelation can be expected both to complete and to correct ideas of God based on general revelation. To the nature of that definitive revelation we now turn.

3. Jesus Christ as the Content of Revelation

The term "revelation" may be defined as an action of God, an authoritative content or as a human experience. The existence of competing models in which the definition of revelation fails to embrace all three aspects is a problem for theology. The construction of a model of revelation involves the harmonious integration of these elements within a coherent understanding of revelation as divine communication. This requires that the content of revelation be understood in such a way as to be capable of and fitted to communication by means of the processes proposed as being those of both divine action and human reception. The detailed examination of human learning and human constitution in the foregoing chapters forms the background, therefore, for an examination of the content of revelation. Of the points made there, the first to note is that revelation is to be understood as a definitive "image of man".[35] It is a tacit image of man which is expressed in any particular culture or set of social institutions, which provides the unexpressed foundation of every significant paradigm in the natural or social sciences and lies behind the hermeneutical principles of historical or literary interpretation. Behind the great questions of science, literature, history or philosophy lies a pre-reflective understanding of the nature of mankind finally irreducible to explicit expression. The most sophisticated philosophical system fails to give adequate expression to that elusive quality, "humanity", with the result that the philosopher is obliged to look to the creation of myths for the expression of the deepest levels of meaning in human life. The content of revelation may be understood precisely as the information required to set human speculation in a single unified framework.

The anthropological question at the heart of culture is paralleled by the role of the elusive personal subject as the source of cognitive and affective coherence. The attempt to elucidate the pre-reflective image of man within a given culture is paralleled by the quest for secure personal identity. This quest involves an openness to the transcendent, expressed in the construction by an individual of an "ultimate environment". It is at this level, the deepest level of human personality, that revelation is appropriated. This is the level of the personal subject or unknown "I", where the quest for secure identity takes place. As the definitive answer to that quest, revelation consists of the gift of personal identity. But since it is given at the level of the personal subject, the creator rather than the object of the identity schema, revelation is given not as explicit but as tacit knowledge.[36] Although never known directly, personal identity forms the governing principle for the interpretation of experience. In the same way, the content of revelation, given at the level of personal identity, is not known directly, but must be gradually appropriated in the course of subsequent learning as the "ultimate environment" changes in such a way as to express the new self-understanding.

Before the content of revelation can be expressed, a process of interpretation is required, in which the fallible schemata based on previously incomplete or erroneous images of man, those of contemporary philosophy and culture, provide the categories necessary for its comprehension. The appropriation and interpretation of revelation thus involves the twin processes characteristic of the learning process, assimilation and accommodation. The content of revelation, first received at the level of the personal subject as tacit knowledge, is initially understood with the aid of and in the terms of a prior understanding of the human condition. But the assimilation of revelation to the

categories of contemporary philosophy and culture leads to the complementary process of accommodation, in which those categories are themselves transformed by the implications of revelation. The appropriation of revelation is thus a progressive process, not immune from the possibility of error, in which the individual, the community and, conceivably, the culture is gradually formed in its image of man.[37] The term "revelation" may be used in a special sense to refer to the divine action by which a new identity is made available at the tacit level. In this sense, the "content" of revelation is the content of that new identity. In a broader sense, "revelation" may be used to describe the whole process, both individual and corporate, by which that identity, once given, is appropriated and understood. When used in this sense, "revelation" is the equivalent of Christian learning and the "content" of revelation consists of both responses and witness to that gift of identity which lies at the heart of the wider process. Wherever possible, the term will be used in the narrower sense to distinguish it from Christian learning.

Like the normal processes of human learning, the appropriation of revelation expresses the autonomy proper to human beings in their relationship with God. Human autonomy is not abolished or eclipsed in the reception of revelation, but upheld and established. The power of agency characteristic of human beings is expressed by the possession of spirit. It is spirit which sums up the essence of humanity, both in its distinction from nature and in the unique relationship of man with his Creator. The spirit is the centre of both agency and self-knowledge, the locus of that elusive "I" which is the seat of true identity. The spirit is also that element of human personality uniquely open to the influence of God by the Holy Spirit. It is through the agency of the Holy Spirit that revelation is made available. Revelation takes place at the deep level of the personality

where the Holy Spirit meets, touches or, in Moule's words, "impinges" on the human spirit.[38]

The relationship between Holy Spirit and human spirit is, therefore, the hinge upon which the whole thesis turns.[39] It is on this relationship, it is maintained, that the possibility of revelation rests. A distinction is to be maintained between the created spirit as the principle of human life and the uncreated Spirit as the principle of divine life.[40] It is this distinction which, in theological terms, rules out the identification of the human quest for meaning and the awareness of the transcendent resulting from it with the knowledge of God. Knowledge of God does not belong to men and women by virtue of their relationship with God as dependent creatures. It is given only as a result of divine grace. A special revelation, the outcome of a particular movement of divine communication is required.[41] The Holy Spirit is the agent of this special revelation; what, then, is the content which the Holy Spirit reveals?

Of the answer to this question, the New Testament leaves us in no doubt. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ. The Holy Spirit is a new form for the present age of the outreach of God to men recorded in the pages of the Old Testament and brought to fulfilment in Jesus Christ, a "perpetual extension of the Incarnation."[42] The Spirit's work is to enable men and women to know Christ. The Spirit is given as a result of the completion of Christ's earthly ministry. Jesus is first the unique bearer of the Spirit, the one upon whom the Spirit descends and remains. His ministry is empowered and led by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Having completed the ministry for which he received the Spirit, Christ pours him out upon his disciples for the continuation of that ministry in and

through them. Since he is the fulfilment and completion of God's purpose, the Spirit has nothing to communicate except what is revealed in Christ. Christ is the incarnate truth, the Spirit's role is to make him known.[43]

It is for this reason that there is so much apparent overlap between the work of Christ and of the Spirit in the believer's life. To be "in Christ" is to have the Spirit, not to have the Spirit is not to belong to Christ.[44] Congar provides a list of Pauline texts in which this overlap or duplication is apparent.[45] We are justified in Christ and in the Spirit, we are in Christ and Christ is in us, we are in the Spirit and the Spirit is in us, we have fullness of life in Christ and we are filled with the Spirit, and so on. Despite the similarities, however, there remains a clear distinction. We are, for example, never called a Temple of Christ or members of the Holy Spirit.[46] It is Christ in whom God was incarnate, he who reigns over God's kingdom. The Spirit's work is to apply the benefits of the objective work of Christ in the believer's life, to make his current heavenly reign an earthly reality through the ministry of his disciples.

The content of revelation is, therefore, to be taken as the Person of Jesus Christ. It is to be noted that his role, as it has frequently been understood, answers precisely to the requirement that the content of revelation be an "image of man". Christ may be described as the "proper man" who reveals the nature of humanity as God intends it, the definitive image of man whose humanity and in particular whose relationship with God serves as a pattern for human self-understanding.[47] This important aspect of God's action in Christ is expressed in the New Testament in the use of the phrase "the image of God" to refer to Christ. In the Old Testament, the phrase is used to describe the essential

created nature of humanity. In the New Testament, although it occurs in its old sense in one or two places, it is Christ who is, primarily and properly, the image of God. The phrase is used to describe his singular dignity, the relation to God the Father which is his alone, his divine Sonship. But secondly and derivatively, the image of God is also that into which the believer enters by virtue of faith in Christ.[48]

Whereas in the Old Testament the image of God is unknown, in the New Testament, it is definitively known in Jesus Christ. On the one hand, Christ represents the embodiment of human possibility. But on the other hand, he represents a decisive break, a new possibility previously unknown to men and women. This new possibility arises as a result of Christ's victory over sin. In terms of human psychological make-up, the sinful nature of mankind is expressed by the loss of identity, the result of which is that human knowledge is constructed around and human action springs from a centre in the individual as an expression of the search for authentic identity.[49] Christ, with his personal centre in the love and the will of God the Father, breaks the confinement brought about by the sinful condition of mankind. The relationship with God made possible by this victory is spoken of in the New Testament as a "new creation".[50] In the new creation, the terms of the human relationship with God are no longer based on the image of God in its Old Testament sense, but on the New Testament sense, in which the image is definitively revealed in Christ.

One of the most important passages to describe Jesus in this way is Colossians 1:15f. Commenting on it, G.B.Caird writes,

> He is man as God from the beginning designed man to be. God created man to be in his own image, reflecting his own character and responding to his love, and intended that he should hold pre-eminence over the rest of creation (v.15). All that God has made...belongs to man's world and must be understood in relation to man and his destiny. Christ...is the embodiment of that purpose of God which underlies the whole creation, and so he applies the principle of coherence and meaning in the universe (vv.16-17). These staggering assertions can be made about the place of the man Jesus in creation because in the experience of the Church he holds precisely this place of supremacy in the new creation. He is head over those who through his death and resurrection are incorporated into unity with him, and he is the source of their new life.[51]

Three points in particular should be noticed in this exposition. First, Caird supplies, as part of the theological background for the exegesis of this text, the important assertion that the image of God in mankind includes the supremacy of men and women in creation. That supremacy is a vital element in the purpose of God in creation and provides a key to the understanding of the action of God in salvation. Its effect is to allow the intervention of God for the restoration of the relationship between creation and himself without the disruption of the lawfulness inherent in creation.[52] Secondly, the place of Christ as the image of God is an element of the *new* creation, whose relationship to the old creation is that it both fulfils and supersedes it. As Caird again comments,

> In the life, death and resurrection of Christ, God the Creator had again been active, not merely repairing the ravages of the Fall, but bringing into existence, and that for the first time, that manhood in his own image which it had always been his purpose to create.[53]

Finally, the incarnation is of central importance. It is the "life, death and resurrection of Christ" which are the instruments of the new creation. It is the *incarnate* Christ who is the image of God, and the incarnate Christ, therefore, who is the content of revelation.

This is a point which it is necessary to discuss at some length because of the strong tradition of interpretation, particularly associated with Lightfoot, in which the title "image of God" when applied to Christ refers to his place in the *old* creation as the eternal pattern of which mankind is a copy, rather than as the pattern of the *new* creation by virtue of his incarnation, death and resurrection.[54] Lightfoot had argued that this passage, like the similar ones in Hebrews 1:1-4 and John 1:1-4, is an example of "Wisdom or Logos Christology", in which Christ is portrayed as the personification of divine Wisdom. In that case, the position of Jesus as image of God would be his *by nature*. But Caird points out that the New Testament understands Jesus' relationship to mankind as his *by appointment*. In particular, this applies to the title "the first-born", used in Colossians 1 and derived from Psalm 89. In the psalm, this is a title bestowed on the king as a result of divine appointment and this is its meaning when used in the New Testament. Christ is "designated" Son of God by his resurrection and elsewhere, including verse 18 of the present passage, he is the first-born "from the dead". Most important, in Ephesians 1:20-23, which may be taken as a parallel passage to that in

Colossians, written if not by Paul himself by a disciple who was close to him and knew his mind, the cosmic supremacy of Christ is clearly based on his *manhood*. Christ achieves by his earthly life, death and resurrection, the proper lordship of mankind.

The Wisdom tradition, which lies in the background of the passage in Colossians is not to be simply ignored, but it must be placed in its context in the thought of Paul particularly and the New Testament generally. The pre-existence of Christ lies always in the background of Paul's thought. But it is always interpreted in close relation to his redemptive work. Christ is the one who, at the right time was sent by God for the salvation of mankind.[55] The Church, indeed, is chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.[56] It is the redemptive significance of Christ which controls the understanding of his eternal status rather than *vice versa*. Christ from all eternity is God-for-us, the one destined both to bear and to share the divine image. There is no need, then, to seek for a background in the speculations of Hellenistic Judaism.[57] Wisdom is to be understood, despite the tendency to personification in some passages, as a divine *attribute*. It is an attribute, moreover, which God *intends to communicate with men*. It is not surprising, therefore, that the pattern of humanity in the new creation should be a man in whom wisdom makes her home.[58] And this is expressed in the fact that Christ is uniquely endowed for his ministry with the Holy Spirit.

It is the incarnate Christ, endowed with the fulness of the Holy Spirit, who provides that pattern of humanity required by human beings as the key to human identity. It is in his relation to the Father, displayed in his life, death and resurrection, that the questions of human nature and destiny pursued in the course of learning and identity

formation find their definitive resolution. It is Jesus Christ, therefore, who is to be understood as the content of revelation, the exemplar for human identity.

4. The Historical Christ

The conclusion of the previous section has been that it is the incarnate Jesus Christ who is the content of divine revelation and the exemplar for the formation of Christian identity. This position involves a claim about the role of history in revelation and in human and particularly Christian formation. The problem is not a new one. Throughout the New Testament the assumption is to be found that Christ, who even for the first Gentile converts was already an historical figure from a semi-alien culture, was nevertheless available as a focus of faith. The sense in which Christian revelation may be said to be historical depends, however, on the status to be accorded to historical knowledge. An account of historical knowledge can only be given on the basis of a more comprehensive account of human knowledge in general. For a justification of the place of the historical Jesus in revelation, we turn, therefore, to the insights to be gained from the preceding examination of cognition.[59]

One of the conclusions of such an examination is that history is particularly appropriate as a medium for revelation. Of all the sciences dealing with human life, history deals with men and women at their most concrete.[60] It is the whole person rather than an abstracted aspect of personal life which is the subject of examination. The material of history consists of a web of causal connections of particular kind. These connections are not those of natural causation familiar to the natural scientist. They consist of a complex interplay of psychological motivation, a "constant interaction of conscious efforts."[61] The web of historical causality is thus the outcome of that elusive quality of human life, the power of agency, the concept earlier shown to be central to the

problem of human nature. History is a mirror or extension of the form of human self-understanding. One of the most powerful justifications of the historical enterprise is its contribution to the study of human identity, through the infinite variety of motivation and outcome which forms its subject matter. History is the hermeneutical science *par excellence*. Its goal is the discovery, by means of the structure of cause and effect in human affairs, of the key to the nature of human action and human being. If the definitive image of man is to be revealed, then not only is human history the appropriate medium for its revelation, but the methods of the historian best suited to its reception.[62]

As a further step, this relation of historical connection to human agency provides the key to the understanding of the historical nature of revelation. The involvement of God in human life takes place at the level of agency. It comes about by means of the infusion of a divine principle of action. The Holy Spirit is said to "come upon" particular men and women to enable them to carry out God's will.[63] Such interventions take place, however, without limiting the freedom of human decision and thus without violating the laws of historical connection.[64] In the person of Jesus Christ, the man upon whom the Spirit descends and remains, this process is brought to fulfilment. The character and purpose of God, displayed within the compass of a particular human life, thus become available to the methods of historical enquiry.

Philosophy of history takes the form of comparison and criticism of historical method. For this reason, its study is closely bound up with both the writing of history itself and the examination of the work of particular historians.[65] Two distinct orientations are to be discerned. These form the subject respectively of substantive and

analytical philosophy of history.[66] In the case of the substantive philosophy of history, the "meaning" of the historical process is sought for in an overall interpretation of historical movement on a broad scale. Such attempts to fit history into a general pattern fall into two types, the cyclical, represented by writers such as Arnold Toynbee, and the linear, represented by various versions of the theory of historical progress.[67] Alternatively, any such generalisations may be eschewed in favour of allowing the events of history to speak for themselves and their meaning sought in the pattern of internal connections and the light thrown by such connections on human character and motivation. The difference between the two approaches is a question of balance or emphasis. Neither orientation can escape the dialectical relation between evidence and presupposition. While he brings to his task a particular world-view, the historian must be prepared for that world-view to be corrected and refined in the course of engagement with the evidence itself. One orientation represents a relative confidence on the part of the historian in his particular view of human nature and destiny; the other a confidence in the ability of the study of historical events to mould and correct that world-view.

In terms of this typology of philosophical orientation, the biblical writers belong to the first. Theirs is a substantive rather than analytical philosophy of history, characterised by confidence in a particular tradition of interpretation. The main characteristic of this tradition, or set of traditions as they developed within the history of Israel and were taken over by the Christian Church, is the claim to interpret history from the point of view of the purposes of God. The concern of the biblical writers was not to allow the past to "speak for itself" in the manner of the ideal of the "analytic" historian. Their purpose was to use an account of historical events as a means to express the nature

and purposes of God. At the same time, they believed that certain events, in particular the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and later the Babylonian exile, were themselves the means by which God's character was revealed. The knowledge of God becomes available in history as the outcome of a process of both event and interpretation.[68] The involvement of God in events is a product of the intervention of a divine principle of action in the cycle of human purpose and outcome. But revelation is incomplete without a similar divine involvement on the side of interpretation. Biblical history is "prophecy", the result of the interpretation of past and present events by men (and possibly women) who claimed to have "stood in the council of God"[69] and whose work was further refined and developed within the several traditions to which they gave rise.[70]

While biblical history is comparable to history as it is understood in the modern age, in that consists of a pattern of event, interpretation and reinterpretation, there is also a decisive difference. The historian deals with his material with the aim of discovering and/or commending a particular understanding of the human condition. The biblical writers present their material in the confidence that the events with which they deal and the interpretation offered spring from and are themselves a part of the revelation of the nature and purpose of God and his relation to men and women. In relation to the modern historian, the Bible claims to offer a definitive perspective on human nature. From the perspective of revelation, Biblical history may be said to be the centre of world history in that it furnishes the key to the understanding of all other history.[71]

With the ground thus prepared, an evaluation is possible of the role of the historical Jesus in revelation. The New Testament was written from the standpoint of the

Easter faith. The experience of the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit provide a framework for the interpretation of the life of Jesus not available at the time the events of his life actually took place. But this fact does not make such a framework inauthentic. It is, in fact, a continuation of the prophetic framework within which biblical history is written. The work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian believer enables him to interpret Jesus as "the Messiah, the Son of God" and fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures.[72] The pattern of event and interpretation is continued. The incarnation of Christ is the event in and by which all previous revelatory events are fulfilled. But the interpretation of this event is not now available only to a select group of inspired individuals but to all who, as a result of their response to Christ, receive the indwelling Holy Spirit.[73]

The incarnate Christ who is the content of revelation is thus to be understood as a figure in history. Access to him is by means of history. It comes through the written record of his life, his words and his impact on those around him. Moreover, a process of historical interpretation is required in order to understand him better. His actions and teaching can only be correctly understood in the context of his own culture. The process of historical study continues to yield valuable results in this direction. But no amount of confidence in the significance of Jesus' life can render the judgements on which that significance depends invulnerable to the possibility of reinterpretation in the light of further evidence.

At the same time, Jesus is a super-historical figure. His life is the culmination of a process of divine revelation, in the light of which the meaning of history is disclosed.

This means that any interpretation of Jesus is, like the "master stories" in which fundamental beliefs are expressed, potentially self-involving. The gospel narratives have what Edward Farley calls "intrinsic facticity": they present facts which involve the reader personally and require a decision.[74] "These things are written," concludes the Fourth Evangelist, "that you might believe..."[75]. Mark's gospel, it has been remarked, revolves around the question, "Who do you say that I am?" The question concerns not simply the identity of Jesus but of oneself as well. The answer the reader gives will express not a disinterested evaluation of Jesus, but willingness or otherwise to become a follower, to re-evaluate one's own life in the light of Jesus' claims.[76] For the reader who is personally involved, the question, "What is man?" which lies at the heart of historical interpretation has become, "Who am I?" The history is no longer impersonal and disinterested. It is, in Richard Niebuhr's phrase, "internal history".[77] The definitive self-understanding offered by Christian revelation forms the framework within which all history, including the history of Christ, is interpreted. Within this framework, the particular historical facts of Christ are capable of revealing, to the person whose own identity is in the course of formation by means of them, a set of truths of ultimate significance.[78]

5. Conformation

While the Jesus of history is available to the historian in the same way as any other historical figure, his availability to the Christian includes an additional dimension, as a result of the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. According to the writer of the Fourth Gospel, the Spirit's work is to "glorify" Jesus, to "take" the things of Jesus and "show them" to the disciples.[79] It is he who enables the Christian believer to understand the significance of the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. He does this by making available to the believer a pattern or exemplar of human identity which is none other than the "image of God" in the shape of the incarnate Jesus Christ. The believer may draw upon this exemplar in the interpretation not only of the life of the historical Jesus but of his own life. This exemplar of human life offers the believer a new perspective on his own life and experience, enabling him to relate them to the nature and purposes of God. However, such a perspective takes form only gradually in the course of a Christian's ongoing experience. What is given in revelation is not a whole new cognitive make-up, a whole new set of schemata in exchage for the old and fallible beliefs and values based on the believer's previous faulty identity. What is given is simply the new identity, and that at the deepest level of cognitive make-up, at which it is not itself open to direct introspection. It is only in the course of Christian learning, both informal and formally structured, that this new identity begins to influence the believer's world-view, his attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour.

The consequence of this position is that revelation is to be understood as an aspect of salvation. In Protestant theology, "salvation", which can also be understood as

"healing" or "making whole", traditionally involves two aspects, "justification" and "sanctification". "Justification" may be seen as "objective", involving the restoration of a relationship between God and mankind and conferring upon the believer a new status before God. "Sanctification" is "subjective", involving an actual change in the life of the believer. Without sanctification, justification is incomplete and inauthentic. A merely forensic theory of the atonement fails to relate either the need for or the means of amendment to the action of God in Christ. On the other hand, without justification, sanctification is impossible. The problem is to relate the two so as to show that they imply one another as parts of the one process of salvation or making whole. It is this which, it is claimed, the model advanced here achieves.

Insofar as it consists of an ongoing present process, the implication of the model advanced here is that the "subjective" dimension of revelation, involving the gradual conformation of the believer to the image of Christ, is an aspect of sanctification. The non-believer is trapped within an inauthentic self-understanding. But with the gift of the Holy Spirit a new and liberating self-understanding becomes available. This new identity must be progressively worked out in the life of the believer making possible a gradual change in both inward self-image and outward behaviour in the direction of the character of Christ himself.[81] The pattern of such change is that what the believer is before God by virtue of incorporation into Christ he should gradually become before men and women by means of inner transformation. The public self is to reflect increasingly the nature of the new life which springs up from the hidden depths of the personality, the inner person, where the Holy Spirit dwells. Further, while the new status of the Christian and the ongoing process of conformation to Christ may be said to represent both a past and a

present dimension, there is also a future aspect to salvation and, with it, revelation. The new identity "in Christ" is never known for itself, but only as it is reflected in the believer's altered self-image. There remains, however, the expectation that at some future time, in the words of St.Paul, "I shall know, even as I am known."[80]

The dynamic of this process of transformation may be illustrated most appropriately by the experience of penitence. Repentance constitutes the gateway to the Kingdom of God. It was repentance which lay at the heart of the preaching of John the Baptist, of Christ himself and of the apostles. But genuine penitence for sin is difficult to attain. Indeed, without the Incarnation and its extension in the work of the Spirit, it may be claimed to be impossible. Christ, however, shoulders the burden of a life of perfect penitence. Then this attitude of penitence before God is made available to humanity by means of the gift of the Spirit.[81] Penitence is that attitude toward God which places a person in right relationship toward him. In terms of the description of human psychology advanced above, it is to be characterised not as one attitude among others but as a vital aspect of self-understanding in relationship to God.

The experience of penitence suggests a dual role for the Holy Spirit in the process of conformation. First, the Spirit enlightens. An example has already been given of the result of the Holy Spirit's work of conviction of the unbeliever and its result, the complete reappraisal of life and values.[82] What the Spirit does is to make available that view of the self in relation to God which is the source of true knowledge. He thus enables a reorientation of the individual's world-model such that the attitudes and values come increasingly to represent those of Christ. Second, the Holy Spirit enables. The Spirit

makes available to the individual a divine centre of agency or principle of action by means of which he is enabled to do things he would otherwise find impossible.[83] Repentance is a continuing necessity in the life of the believer as attitudes displeasing to God are continually discovered, requiring continual dependence on the Holy Spirit. While it is possible for the Christian to agree with God at the level of the understanding, to change his mind about his actions or motives, the underlying change in attitude which will make the difference to his behaviour is beyond his power to accomplish, lying deeper than voluntary control is possible. In these cases reliance on the Spirit's power is a necessity. The believer can change his mind, but this *metanoia* must lead to the prayer that God, by his Spirit, would accomplish the necessary change of "heart". In making such a prayer, the believer acknowledges the lordship or authority of Christ over the particular area of life in which the sinful attitude or action was discovered, resolving to take the model and requirement of Christ as his own.[84]

What the Holy Spirit does not do is to take away human autonomy. The divine principle of action which he makes available never becomes a compulsion.[85] The preservation of human freedom over against the Spirit allows the possibility of misunderstanding and rejection, of differences of interpretation and degrees of obedience. The enlightening work of the Spirit may enable a person to see with a clarity otherwise impossible the need for change. But it is up to the Christian at each juncture to choose whether to follow the demands of Christian character or his own natural inclination. The experience of forgiveness, for example, is to lead to the willingness to forgive others, and faith in the generosity of a heavenly Father to the ability to live without material

anxiety and to give generously to others. The extent of actual transformation reveals the genuineness of his Christian commitment. Subsequent experience and subsequent learning, whether formal or informal, will reflect the new identity only to the extent that the individual and his teachers and mentors are faithful to their profession. Even though its roots lie at the tacit level, the initiative in Christian formation never passes from the believer himself. It cannot be otherwise, since the preservation of human autonomy is essential to God's ultimate purpose. Freedom is essential to love; the creation of a race of beings capable of love demands their autonomy.

There may be considerable barriers to personal change in the direction of conformation to Christ. It has often been remarked that lack of experience of a stable family during childhood prevents the adult from relating satisfactorily to God as a heavenly Father. Between intellectual comprehension of the biblical assurances of God's paternal (and maternal) love and the testimony of the Holy Spirit at the deepest levels of personality may lie a lifetime's accumulation of attitudes to oneself and others which flatly contradict this revelation. Thus, while Christian conversion and nurture is comparable in many respects to secondary socialisation, in others it is more comparable to resocialisation. While some aspects of Christian growth involve the relatively painless process of the addition of further skills and insights, a process of gradual internalisation of Christian norms, at other times, the complete reworking of previous areas of personality and understanding is required.[86] The pattern of this type of change is one of death and rebirth, as former ways of thinking, feeling and behaving are renounced in favour of a set of new responses based on Christ as exemplar.[87] Like any process of resocialisation, this kind of painful transformation requires a degree of affectivity and

corporate support. As the family is the matrix of primary socialisation, resocialisation, involving change in deeply held beliefs and attitudes, requires the support of a family-like community for its success.[88]

The process described here is, it is argued, the one about which Paul writes extensively in his epistles. It is that which he describes as being "Changed into his (Christ's) likeness, from one degree of glory to another."[89] The concept of "glory" is closely related to that of the image as the outward and visible expression of an inner reality. In the Old Testament, it is the property of God in revelation. In the New Testament, Christ reveals the glory of God in his death, resurrection and ascension. This glory, the character of God in revelation, is to be shared by Christian believers. Mankind, as God's image, is to reflect his glory, not simply by a process of continual transformation, but eschatologically, in the inheritance of a spiritual body and in the sharing of Christ's heavenly reign.[90] This identification with Christ, to describe which Paul frequently uses the shorthand phrase, "in Christ", is sometimes unhelpfully called "Christ-mysticism", using a term originated by Albert Schweitzer and taken up by C.H.Dodd to describe the "realisation" of the new age inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ in the life of believers.[91] The reality of this realisation, however, is not present only occasionally in certain sublime moments of experience but is determinative for the whole of Christian life. The Church's "objective" state of salvation consists in the imputation to her members of the death, burial, resurrection, ascension and reign of Christ.[92] As "Head" of the Church, Christ is both a corporate figure and the source of the Church's life.[93] These two aspects of reality are to be explained

psychologically by the gift to the Christian believer of a new identity consisting of Christ himself. This new identity is both determinative of the reality of the Church and provides the underlying dynamic for a process of change described as renewal on the pattern of the creator of the new nature.[94]

The final and crucial question to be addressed as the outcome of this association of revelation with conformation to Christ is: What is the nature of the knowledge of God which results from revelation? To answer this, it is necessary first to review the definition of knowledge given in the earlier chapters. To know something does *not* mean to receive an image or impression caused by the object of knowledge. This rather simplistic definition has formed the basis for the rejection by some philosophers and theologians of the possibility of genuine knowledge of God.[95] To know something is to form an interpretation of the object of knowledge in relation to other relevant existing knowledge. To know a person has an additional dimension. It involves not only the incorporation of that person into the world-model by means of interpretation but also the acceptance of that person as an actual or potential reference figure.[96] This requires an evaluative judgement on the attitudes and beliefs shared with that particular person and a decision on the relative importance of the person in comparison to other reference figures and groups. The acceptance of a relationship of whatever kind with another person requires the acceptance of their influence to some degree over one's own judgements, beliefs and values.

The sense of the biblical term "to know" when applied to the knowledge of God has been described as "to have a formative relationship".[97] To know God includes this

sense of accepting God as reference figure in the same way as any personal relationship. This acceptance takes the form of the continual requirement of decision over whether or not to accept the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. But the knowledge of God also includes the opportunity to form an interpretation of his character. This opportunity is provided by the historical Jesus and the record of his life in the New Testament.[98] The knowledge of God thus includes both those aspects seen to be involved in the knowledge of another person, the factual and the formative, one represented by the incarnate Christ, the other by the indwelling Spirit. The source of this knowledge, revelation, is thus to be seen as bound up with the process of conformation to Christ, a process whose twin aspects may be defined as revelation and Christian learning.[99]

6. Ideology and Inspiration

Revelation takes place in the context of concrete human situations with both social and psychological dimensions. It is given to persons already in the process of formation through participation in a given society and culture. That society provides the cognitive framework by means of which experience is interpreted and reinterpreted. When a person begins to receive Christian revelation, the process of formation continues, but several new factors are introduced, including the Church as both historically based institution and concrete local community. In sociological terms, the Church may be described as a reference group whose defining characteristics include not only the other members of that group but the perspective which they share, a perspective whose elements include both Scripture and Tradition. To describe the Church's tradition and teaching as the shared perspective of a particular reference group is to say that it constitutes an ideology which provides the interpretative framework through which the member of that particular group understands both his own experience and that of others. The framework is both cognitive and affective, and many of its details are the subject of such profound commitment as to be almost impossible to express.[100]

The introduction of the subject of ideology at this stage provides an example of the overlap of possible theoretical approaches to the same phenomenon. It is a basic tenet of the sociology of knowledge that all knowledge is held in ways which relate to the historical, political and social structures of the society within which the particular belief system develops. The same feature of belief systems is expressed by the analysis of reference groups in social interactionism and by the way in which schemata have been

shown to be both culturally transmitted and formative of the outlook of the subject. The description of the social context of learning and identity formation presented in an earlier chapter involved the synthesis of up to ten separate theoretical frameworks.[101] Each one is to be seen as an expression of the hermeneutical nature of cognition and of its outcome, those shared beliefs which constitute the "knowledge" of a given social group.

In terms of the stages outlined by de Mey,[102] the theory of ideologies as originally advanced and the practice of ideological suspicion belong to the third stage, the contextual. The recognition that all systems of value, and not just those of the ruling classes, are ideological in character lifts the study of ideology to the fourth and cognitive stage, at which the hermeneutical circle governing human thought is recognised. The attempt to trace the connection between revelation and the mechanisms of human learning raises the question of the existence of possible constants behind the variety of value systems which have succeeded one another throughout the history of human thought. The answer to this question is indicated by the recognition that any given ideology is built on some image of human life which seems both feasible and satisfying.[103] Revelation may be seen as a "fifth stage", at which a definitive image of human life, the source of absolute values, makes its appearance within the ideological flux of human philosophical systems. In the context of the sociology of knowledge, revelation is something which breaks in to the historical and social structures through which knowledge is available with a definitive apprehension of something universally true and profoundly significant - the nature of men and women and their relation to God.

If this claim is to be upheld, it will follow that, while incorporating all the features of formation by ideology, formation by revelation involves an extra dimension. The same position is expressed by the claim that the appropriation of revelation involves all the natural mechanisms of the learning process. The whole process is one of Christian formation, in which the new identity given in revelation is appropriated step by step in the course of Christian learning. This process is not simply individual but corporate; it is not simply the individual whose character is formed as the outcome of revelation and response but the community and, occasionally, the culture of which that community forms a part. Revelation is one aspect of the formation of Christian tradition. Any particular revelatory insight must be interpreted, using the resources available within the tradition at the given stage of its development. The process is one of assimilation and accommodation, in which fallible and incomplete images of human life and the character of God are corrected, adjusted and re-expressed.[104] The formation of Christian tradition consists of a hermeneutical process in which both revelation and ideological criticism and reconstruction are present in varying degrees. The fragmentation of the Christian community is to be recognised as an additional factor in this process. There is no single recognisable "Christian ideology" but rather a number of competing ideologies claiming to represent authentic Christian understanding.

Discussion of the relation between revelation and ideology turns in particular around the issue of the authority of Scripture. In the perspective of the Christian community as reference group, the Bible occupies a central position. Yet the authority of the Bible and the correct method of its interpretation are themselves the subject of dispute. These differences over the authority and interpretation of Scripture both reflect

uncertainty about the place of the Bible in the overall process of revelation and express the ideological character of Christian belief. The idea of "Christian Scripture", claims David Kelsey, is logically related to the idea of "Christian Church". The authority of Scripture is part of the Church's self-identity. A book like the Bible is only "Scripture" in the context of a Church which accepts it as authoritative and, conversely, part of what it means to be the Church is to use certain books in certain ways. Thus, the authority of Scripture is not something inherently present in the books themselves. It is something conferred upon it by the Church as an outcome of the role of these particular books in its formation.[105] The strengths and weaknesses of Kelsey's analysis are those of the philosophy of Wittgenstein on which it is based, a philosophy centred on the relation between meaning and use. For Wittgenstein, the meaning of the word "God" is whatever is distinctive about religious language. The question of whether God exists or not lies outside the scope of his analysis.[106] The accuracy of the Wittgensteinian analysis in its own terms and thus the relation between the authority of Scripture and its use within the Church may be conceded, but without abandoning the possibility of the Bible possessing some inherent authority as a result of divine revelation. The relationship between meaning and use is a feature of ideological enclosure: terms acquire their meaning only within a governing ideology. Thus, the ideological aspect of the acceptance of Scriptural authority may be accepted but without ruling out the possibility of an independent source of authority in divine revelation.

If the claim that Scripture possesses an inherent authority of its own is to be upheld, however, the precise relation between revelation and the Bible must be specified. A definitive resolution of this issue lies beyond the scope of the present thesis, but some

suggestions are possible on the basis of the arguments developed here. Revelation is to be understood as something which breaks into the hermeneutical circle of human self-interpretation, offering a set of truths which serve as the basis for the interpretation of all others. This is precisely what is claimed, in the Calvinist tradition, for the Bible. In Calvin's view, Scripture is God's providential remedy for the lack of true knowledge of him within human experience. Because of human sinfulness, the knowledge of God potentially available in creation is distorted. Before men and women can truly know God, they must be "enlightened through faith by an *internal* revelation from God." It is the Bible which provides that necessary internal revelation. The Bible acts as a "pair of spectacles" through which we are enabled to interpret aright the signs of God in creation as well as the history of God in redemption.[107] Thus, "revelation" is to be understood as the process which led to the composition of the Old and New Testaments and ceased with the formation of the closed canon.[108] The problem with this position is that it fails to take account of the task of biblical interpretation. The truth of Scripture itself is held to be "as obvious as black and white".[109] The Bible is presented as an "internal" revelation, a key to the interpretation of experience, rather than as an element in a wider hermeneutical process. The consequence has been the fragmentation of this tradition into a multiplicity of sects each claiming absolute authority for its own tradition of biblical interpretation.

The fundamentalist position is buttressed by an appeal to the "inward testimony of the Holy Spirit". There are, however, broadly two alternative ways in which this doctrine may be understood, and the difference between them is crucial to the outcome of the present theory of revelation in relation to Scripture. For Calvin, the testimony of the Holy Spirit takes the form of an internal witness to the *authority* of Scripture. Conviction

of the truth of Scripture, he believes, rests not on human testimony, especially not on that of the Catholic Church, but on that of God himself. While unaided human reason may provide *evidences* of divine authorship, "the certainty which faith requires" comes only from the Spirit.[110] The alternative is to allow the Holy Spirit a role in the *interpretation* of Scripture. In this understanding, it is the Holy Spirit who supplies the "inward revelation" necessary not only for true self-knowledge and the knowledge of God but for the interpretation of Scripture itself. The testimony of the Spirit is not to the authority of Scripture directly, but to Christ. Acceptance of the authority of Scripture is an indirect result of the recognition in the pages of the Bible of the same Christ to whom the Spirit bears witness as the source of the believer's new identity and relationship with God. As Emil Brunner maintains, it is by a single act of revelation that there is created in the believer both faith in Christ and confidence in Scripture.[111] The principle of interpretation needed for the correct understanding of the Bible is the incarnate Jesus Christ; it is to Christ that the Spirit bears witness. The "inward testimony of the Holy Spirit" may, therefore, be identified with the Spirit's role in revelation previously described.

The main question to arise from the acceptance of the second of these alternatives concerns the relationship between Christ and the Bible. Why is it that the act of revelation which creates faith in Jesus Christ creates at the same time a confidence in Scripture? Is the Church, in accepting the canonicity of a certain set of books and rejecting others, simply *conferring* authority on those particular books or is it *recognising* in them an inherent authority which they possess by virtue of a certain relationship to Christ? If the latter, what is the nature of that relationship? The kind of answer offered by

the analysis of learning and revelation given here centres on the process of assimilation and accommodation in Christian learning. The Bible is to seen as the outcome of a religious tradition whose formation represents a *learning process* in which the dynamic is provided by successive experiences of revelation. Any given event in which the character of God is revealed may be largely assimilated to the existing thought-patterns of the community. Thus, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and the succeeding series of victories over their enemies allows of interpretation in terms of an aggressively partisan and militaristic deity. However, it also introduces into the tradition of the community a sense of solidarity based on a consciousness of election and a sense of the power of God over other nations and their gods. These beliefs, having taken their place as elements of the communal tradition, form the basis for the appreciation, at a later stage and as a result of further experiences of revelation, of the love of God revealed in election and the universality of his power. These elements may then come together to suggest the universality of God's love. The result of any given experience of revelation is usually that the character of God is only partially understood, but the cumulative effect is the formation of a tradition in which sufficient resources exist for the understanding of Jesus Christ by his followers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as both Messiah and Son of God.[112]

Such an explanation of the relationship between Christ and Scripture demands a theory of inspiration by which the formation of Israel's tradition in the correct direction may be explained. It is possible to construct such a theory as a result of careful attention to the meaning of the word "inspiration".[113] Terms such as this may be applied to God by analogy from their everyday meaning, making such changes as the nature and

character of God require. The example which may be given to illustrate the everyday meaning of "inspiration" is the inspiration of a student by a particularly influential teacher. To say that a particular piece of the student's work was "inspired" by that teacher does not mean that it was written by the teacher. It means that it was a response by the student to that teacher. The fact of inspiration by no means rules out the possibility of error. Not only will the student's work reflect his own particular style of thought and expression, it will reflect his cultural background and the limits of his understanding. The influence of the teacher will be limited by the capacity of the student both to understand what the teacher intended to convey and to respond to it. It may not be that the teacher deliberately sets out to inspire, but even if he is conscious of the effort to influence the students, this is only done by means of other actions, in particular explanation and demonstration. The result may well be a considerable degree of divergence between the work of different students, who may be more or less inspired and who may comprehend the teacher to a greater or lesser degree. Despite their differences, however, a degree of unity between the students can be expected reflecting the intention of the teacher.

In the application of this analysis of the term "inspiration" analogously to the action of the Holy Spirit in relation to Scripture, a number of close parallels can be accepted. While the possibility of unconscious influence can be ruled out in view of the omniscience of God, the idea of inspiration in and through other actions is to be accepted as an important element in any doctrine of inspiration. Such a doctrine, moreover, preserves that understanding of the Spirit's operation previously seen to be vital, namely the preservation of human autonomy. The differences in style and emphasis between biblical writers can be seen to be due to the latitude allowed to human autonomy in their

response to the experience of inspiration. It allows for the progressive formation of a tradition based on successive experiences of revelation. As the written record of that developing tradition, the Bible preserves descriptions of events taken to be the result of divine intervention, of primary religious experience, such as that of the prophets, and successive layers of interpretation within the community. It is the record of a process of formation by means of successive experiences of revelation and subsequent interpretation and reinterpretation, such that the tradition is progressively moulded, deepened and enriched in the resources it contains for understanding the nature of God and his relationship to mankind.[114]

Christian learning, it has been argued, is that learning which takes place within the sphere of revelation. There are two senses in which this may be true of a given situation. Such learning may be taking place within the sphere of revelation because it represents a handing on of the tradition received and interpreted by the Church as a result of past revelation. The learner may be said to be receiving the ideology of the Church, although this will be an ideology in the formation of which revelation has played an important part. The result of such a process is likely to be what John Westerhoff calls "affiliative faith", a faith dependent upon the authority of the community.[115] Athough such faith is not necessarily to be despised, its end result may well be a "dead" and defensive orthodoxy. The second sense involves the present activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Such learning takes place as a result of the outworking of the "identity" given to the believer in Christ by means of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to form the self-image and through the self-image, attitudes, values and behaviour. This process of formation in response to revelation by no means excludes straightforward

ideological transmission and its accompanying patterns of response but such ideological formation becomes part of a deeper process in which the Holy Spirit is directly at work.[116]

Notes

1. *Ethics*. New York: Macmillan, 1965, p.80-81.

2. Fynn, *Mister God, This is Anna,* London: Fontana, 1974, p.97

3. G.Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison*. Oxford University Press, 1976, p.44-45.

4. See further, p.262-264 below.

5. P.Sponheim, "The Knowledge of God", *Christian Dogmatics*, ed.C.E.Braaten and R.W.Jenson, vol I. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p.197-198.

6. Sponheim, *loc.cit*.

7. J.Astley, "On Learning Religion: Some Theological Issues in Christian Education", *Modern Churchman 29,2,* 1987, p.32-33.

8. Sponheim, *loc.cit*.

9. Paul Sponheim's method is to start instead with the theological tradition. He begins with three assertions, unsupported except as selections from the theological tradition he has already admitted to possess no unity. The relation of these three assertions to the text of the problem is problematical, their relation to the context non-existent. To begin with the assertion of the reality of God and the reliability of revelation is to abandon any attempt to engage with the secular context. Reasons will be given in the next section for regarding the second assertion, the "categorical supremacy of God", as unsatisfactory. Finally, the third assertion, the initiative of God in revelation, involves the concept of God *acting*, a concept which is itself problematical for theology, and which requires a coherent theory of agency, such as the one given in this thesis, to justify. Secondly,

Sponheim's treatment of the epistemological problems in their own terms is profoundly unsatisfactory. The discussion is sketchy, and the verificationism of 50 years ago occupies a disproportionate amount of space and attention. Despite his earlier reference to the "battle for explanatory control" between the "stubborn sense of subjectivity" and the "web of objective causality", the attempt to understand and resolve the issues involved is brief and unsatisfactory. His treatment of writers like Kuhn, Hanson and Toulmin relies on early and superficial critiques and shows an ignorance of the latest material in which the subtleties of their respective positions are more fully appreciated. The tendency of theologians to take refuge in their own tradition from the problems set for them by philsophers is likely to perpetuate and exacerbate the problems to which Sponheim draws attention in his introduction. (Sponheim, *op.cit*., p.199f.,219f.)

10. David Pailin, "Revelation", *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed.A.Richardson and J.Bowden. London: S.C.M., 1983, p.504.

11. Psalms 8 and 19; Acts 14:15-17, 17:22-29; Romans 1:18f., 2:12-16.

12. William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*, p.306-307; quoted in *Revelation*., ed.J.Baillie and H.Martin, London: Faber and Faber, 1937, p.96-97.

13. P.Helm, *The Divine Revelation*, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1982, p.2-6.

14. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. New York: Hafner, 1948, p.39.

15. J.Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, Oxford University Press, 1939, p.178-218.

16. See J.L.Austin, "Other Minds", *Procedings of the Aristotelian Society* 1946, p.76-116; J.Wisdom, *Other Minds*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2nd.ed. 1965; L.Wittgenstein,

Philosophical Investigations, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2nd.ed.1958; O.R.Jones (ed.) *The Private Language Argument*. London: Macmillan, 1971; M.Hollis, "The Limits of Irrationality", *Archives Europeenes de Sociologie 7*, 1967, p.265-271, also in *Rationality*, ed.B.Wilson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970. See further below, p.246f.

17. See above, p.58-61, 77-78.

18. J.Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, San Francisco: Harper and row, 1981, p.29.

19. P.Berger and T.Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, p.110-146.

20. S. Toulmin, *Knowing and Acting*, London: Macmillan, 1976, p.308-310

21. What is being proposed here is that there exists, in the structure of human cognition, a schema for the transcendent. This position leaves open the question of whether anything beyond human experience actually exists. The denial of such a possibility is, in itself, a response to the question posed by the existence of the schema. The result is the restriction of the "ultimate environment" to experience, and is as much a statement of faith as is the belief in a God of whatever kind. It is impossible finally to eradicate the suspicion thus raised that "God" is a projection of the human need for ultimate explanation and personal security. The choice must be made on the basis of faith.

22. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, p.30; Fowler and S.Keen, *Life Maps*, Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1978, p.36.

23. See above, p.119-122.

24. J.Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.iii.3.

25. *ibid.*, I.iv.1-4.

26. Above, page 152-153.

27. E.Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, London: Lutterworth, 1947,p.51-57.

28. Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, London: Lutterworth, 1939, p.53, 60-63, 70-74; *Revelation and Reason*, p.50-57.

29. P.Tillich, "Two Types of Philosophy of Religion", *Theology of Culture*. Oxford University Press, 1959, p.12-13.

30. Tillich, *op.cit*., p.12.

31. Sponheim, *op.cit*., p.199-200, 213f.

32. Charles Hartshorne and William J.Reese (eds.), *Philosophers Speak of God*. University of Chicago Press, 1953, p.7. Quoted by Sponheim, p.199.

33. Tillich, *op.cit*.

34. H.R.Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960, p.20f.

35. See above, p.30f.

36. See above, p.33-34.

37. Above, p.33-34. The distinction between revelation and theology is a parallel to that between tacit and explicit knowledge. Theology may be understood as an interpretation of revelation based on the categories of contemporary philosophy and theological tradition. See Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, p.63f.

38. See above, p.155-158; C.F.D.Moule, *The Holy Spirit*. Oxford: Mowbrays, 1978, p.7f.

39. See above, p.171-172, for the link between the natural and supernatural.

40. Above, p.155f.

41. See below, p.263-264.

42. R.C.Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*. London: John Murray, 1901, p.281. See G.W.H.Lampe, *God as Spirit*. Oxford University Press, 1977, p.22-24.

43. G.S.Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology,* London: S.C.M. 1957, p.17-24

44. Romans 8:9

45. Y.Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, vol.I.* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983, p.37-38.

46. *ibid. vol.II,* p.101.

47. See Moberly, *Atonement*, p.97-108,280.

48. D.S.Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*. London: S.C.M. 1953, p.32.

49. See above, p.152-153.

50. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

51. G.B.Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison*. Oxford University Press, 1976, p.172.

52. See below, p.263-264.

53. *op.cit*., p.175.

54. *ibid*. p.176-178. J.B.Lightfoot, *St.Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*. London: Macmillan, 1890, p.142f. See also C.F.D.Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Cambridge University Press, 1965, p.4, 58f.

55. Galatians 4:4.

56. Ephesians 1:4.

57. H.Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. London: S.P.C.K. 1977, p.68-86.

58. Caird, *op.cit.*, p.177-178.

The "Spirit Christology" of this section, in which Christ is seen as a man filled with the Holy Spirit and, as such, the exemplar of the humanity of the new creation, is filled out in the later sections, in which he is seen as the one who gives the Spirit to his disciples, with the result that they receive his identity as Son of God as their own. It is this aspect of Christology which is particularly relevant for the argument of the thesis. But "Spirit Christology" needs to be balanced by and held in tension with a "Word Christology", in which the emphasis is on the ongoing relationship of Father and Son within the Godhead. That eternal relationship, in which the Father gives himself to the Son by means of the Spirit, may be seen as the basis for the gift of the Spirit beyond measure to the incarnate Christ; while his becoming man is itself the basis for the gift of the Spirit to believing men and women through the exalted Christ. I owe this insight to Tom Smail, *The Giving Gift*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988, p.56-115.

59. The present author was surprised, on coming to the study of theology from a background in history, at the neglect by theologians of the work of historians. One consequence appeared to be an exaggerated respect for the work of Troeltsch, with whose conclusions few modern historians would be likely to agree. As in the case of epistemology, the task of the theologian involves an examination of the philosophical problems involved at first hand. It is in the light of such an examination that the theological tradition is to be evaluated, rather than *vice versa*. The example of

Schleiermacher , who recognised the need to make use of the insights of what he called "Ethics" and we might call "human studies", is one to follow in this respect.

60. W.Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*. Edinburgh: T&T.Clark, 1985, 485; *What is Man?* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970, p.137-138.

61. E.Troeltsch, "Historiography", *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed.J.Hastings, vol 6. Edinburgh: T.&.T.Clark, 1913, p.719.

62. O.Cullmann, *Christ and Time*. London: SCM, 1951. Denials of the appropriateness of history as a vehicle for the knowledge of God are usually based on inadequate theories of knowledge. One of the most important examples is Lessing, whose "ugly ditch" has recently been examined in detail by Gordon E.Michalson Jr. (*Lessing's "Ugly Ditch": A Study of Theology and History*. London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985, esp. p.23-47). Michalson shows that Lessing identifies but confuses three separate types of "ditches"; the temporal ditch between the events of the past and the standpoint of the present; the disjunction between types of truths, the contingent or "accidental" truths of historical reporting and the "necessary" truths of reason; the disjunction between the type of truth conveyed in Christological statements and the events which are supposed to prove or add weight to such statements. The first two types of ditch are mutually exclusive in terms of their significance. The first is based on a strict empiricist view of the possibilities of historical testimony, the second on a strict rationalist interpretation of truth. The raising of problems of the second kind makes problems of the first kind irrelevant.

It is the third type of ditch which has perhaps the greatest significance for modern approaches to historical revelation. This is the supposed disjunction between "events" and

"truth" which appears to sever the connection between the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith". It is this idea that, in the words of Michalson's summary, "'Events' simply do not produce 'truths'," which emerges from inadequate epistemology. This thesis has demonstrated at length that events are always grasped by means of a framework of expectations. Their significance and interpretation is a function of the schema brought to their comprehension. Thus events *always* produce truths of some kind; no event involving human beings has ever gone uninterpreted. In this context the importance of Jesus' claim to fulfil the Scripture can readily be appreciated. The gospels are full of evidence of precisely this type of question asked about him by contemporaries. "Are you he who is to come or should we look for another?", a question Jesus answered with a reference to the Old Testament Scripture. Jesus' life and claims throw a new light on the Scripture, in which light his teaching and actions stand out as of immense significance. It is precisely the fulfilment of Scripture in this unexpected way which, it might be claimed, is the principal theme of the Gospel accounts, particularly that of the Fourth Gospel.

63. See above, p.157.

64. See above, p.151.

65. See, for example, A.Marwick, *The Nature of History*. London: Macmillan, 1970.

66. R.F.Atkinson, *Knowledge and Explanation in History*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1978, p.4-13.

67. G.R.Elton, *The Practice of History*. London: Collins, 1969, p.58f.

68. W.Temple, "Revelation", *Revelation*, ed.J.Baillie and H.Martin. London: Faber and Faber, 1937, p.107: "The essential condition of effectual revelation is the coincidence of divinely controlled event and minds divinely illumined to read it aright."

69. Jeremiah 23:18, see 1 Kings 22:19-23 and the comments of John Gray on that passage: Gray, *I and II Kings*, London: SCM, 1964.

70. Cullmann, *op.cit*., p.94-106. See further p.208-209 below on the concept of inspiration.

71. *op.cit*., p.19-23, 177-214.

72. John 20:31. Dietrich Bonhoeffer points out that many of the things which Christ did are not recognisable in themselves as actions of the Son of God. He did things which from the outside look like sin. It is only because we believe him to be the Son of God that we accept these actions as non-sinful. Bonhoeffer, *Christology*. Glasgow: Fontana, 1978, p.108.

73. 2 Corinthians 5:16f. is a very important text in this connection. See the comments of C.K.Barrett on this passage: Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. London: A.&C.Black, 1973.

74. E.Farley, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Christian Education", *Religious Education 60*, 1965, p.433.

75. John 20:31.

76. G.W.Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology*. London: SCM, 1984, p.14f.

77. H.R.Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*. New York: Macmillan, 1960, p.59f. Niebuhr argues, first, that every person is in a given historical situation and that

revelation must, therefore, come to each individual in his or her given context. But it comes in the context not simply of an "objective" historical situation but of a personal history. What revelation does is to supply the meaning for a person's given historical experience. Revelation is directed, therefore, to the area in a person's cognitive make-up which Pascal called the "reasons of the heart". The manner in which revelation comes, in the context of this personal history whose significance is sought, is through the intuitive power of a given moment.

78. Bonheoffer, *op.cit.*, p.69f.

79. John 16:14

80. I Corinthians 13:12, see also 1 John 3:1-2.

81. Moberly, *op.cit.*, p.26-47, 280.

82. Above, p.169.

83. See above, p.159f.

84. See Romans 8:1-11; J.and P.Sandford, *The Transformation of the Inner Man*. Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1982, esp.p.3-139.

The question of voluntary control in an area in which the Holy Spirit is at work raises the related question of the respective roles in Christian education of the Holy Spirit and the human teacher. One of the most important theoretical arguments against the relevance of secular educational theory to the field of Christian education has been that its dependence on revelation, in which God is sovereign, makes Christian education essentially different. The real teacher, it is maintained, is the Holy Spirit, whose methods are outside the scope of educational theory and whose action it is beyond the Christian educator to predict. All

the Christian educator can do is to prepare the ground and, having done so, hope and pray for the Holy Spirit to work. The various versions of this argument are referred to by James Michael Lee as the "blow" theory, based on the expectation that "the Spirit blows where he wills." (Lee, *The Flow of Christian Education*. Mishawa, Indiana: Religious Education Press, 1973, p.174-180 gives examples as well as trenchant criticism of this position.) As a representative, Randolph Crump Miller speaks for a large body of opinion when he writes,

The process (of Christian growth) cannot be guaranteed by the processes of either education or evangelism or by the relevance of theological concepts. The response...is in the last analysis a personal decision that rests in the mystery of God. (*The Theory of Christian Education Practice*. Mishawa, Indiana: Religious Education Press, 1980, p.162)

And from a different viewpoint, James Fowler, having outlined his comprehensive theory of human learning and development by means of a diagram labelled with the letters A to F, concludes,

> Finally, there should be a letter X on our chart. This would be to represent the initiatives of the divine toward us in our lives of faith. The questions of revelation, providence, and the work of God's spirit are matters of theological concern and discussion. (J.W.Fowler, "Stages of Faith and Adults' Life Cycles", *Faith in the Adult Life Cycle*, ed.K.Stokes. Minnesota: Saddlier Press, 1982, p.204.)

In the context of his theory of learning, these questions are reduced to the letter X on a chart. They play no role in the formulation of the theory.

John Westerhoff approaches a more satisfactory position when he describes Christian learning and spiritual growth as a process of "conversion and nurture". By "nurture", he refers to the activity of a Christian community in passing on its traditions and practices by means of its worship and the other elements of its corporate life, including teaching activities. "Nurture" includes also the response of the individual in terms of growth in the knowledge of Christian doctrine, in learning to pray, to participate in worship and in acts of Christian service. Nurture is characterised by gradual growth. "Conversion", however, is characterised by inward transformation. There are two related senses in which the word conversion is used. The first refers to the initial response to evangelism or Christian witness by which a person becomes a Christian, and the radical reorientation of belief and practice which goes with it. The second refers to the process by which the faith of the community is "owned" by the individual. In this sense, growth in faith may include a series of mini-conversions on the road towards maturity. Westerhoff writes,

These conversions are experienced as illuminations resulting in new ways of "seeing and hearing." Sometimes initially dramatic, they typically involve a gradual process; sometimes emotional, but also always intellectual; rarely a single experience, typically multiple...(G.K.Neville and J.H.Westerhoff III, *Learning through Liturgy*. New York: Seabury, 1978, p.164. For Westerhoff's discussion of nurture and conversion, see *Learning through Liturgy*, p.135f., *Inner Growth/Outer Change: An Educational Guide to Church Renewal*. New York: Seabury, 1979, p.7f., and in particular, "Christian Education: *Kerygma v. Didache*", *Christianity, Society and Education*, ed.J.Ferguson. London: S.P.C.K., 1981. For further comment, see my article, "Christian Education as Enculturation", *British Journal of Religious Education* 10, 1988, p.65-71.)

"Nurture" refers to the ongoing process of transmission of the elements of the life of the community, its "understandings and ways", its symbols and shared values. Conversion means the personal inward appropriation of these elements. Conversion, however, cannot be nurtured. The process by which the individual internalises or "owns" the faith expressed in the church's corporate life is one which cannot be controlled or planned for in the educational framework. There is a discontinuity at this point between what Westerhoff sees as the inward and the outward aspects of Christian experience. It is a discontinuity which is undoubtably present in the process of Christian education, but one which it is important to interpret correctly. The difference between "nurture" and "conversion" is not the difference between what human effort can achieve and what the Holy Spirit alone can accomplish. It is a characteristic of the human power of decision, which is at the heart of the learning process. "Conversion" is more "inward" than nurture because it represents a change in the person's identity schema. In the course of exposure to Christian worship, teaching and corporate life, the combined efforts of men and women and the work of the Holy Spirit will result in gradually increasing pressure for change, for accommodation of the identity schema to acknowledge a particular aspect of what it means to be a Christian. However, it is in the power of the individual to accept or to reject the consequences for his or her identity of all that has been learned. A personal response is required to enable the Holy Spirit to apply the experience of both formal and informal situations at the level of personal identity.

85. See above, p.150-151, 159.

86. See above, p.120, and O.G.Brim and S.Wheeler, *Socialisation after Childhood*. New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1966, p.20f. for the distinction between resocialisation and secondary socialisation.

87. Sandford, *op.cit*., p.3-22.

88. The family-like character of the Christian community is an important element of faith-community theory in Christian education. See especially the work of John H.Westerhoff III, in particular "The Church and the Family", *Religious Education 78*, 1983, p.249-274.

89. 2 Corinthians 3:18.

90. D.Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*. London: SCM, 1953, p.24-26, 37-41.

91. Ridderbos, *op.cit*., p.29-31, 39-41.

92. *ibid*., p.58-60.

93. *ibid*., p.61-64. See also Caird, *op.cit*., p.77-78, 180.

94. Colossians 3:10.

95. For example R.B.Braithwaite, *An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief*. Cambridge University Press, 1955; F.G.Downing, *Has Christianity a Revelation?* London: SCM, 1964, much of whose argument is dependent on Braithwaite.

96. See above, p.127-128.

97. Downing, *op.cit*., p.42.

98. In §4 of *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher argues that God cannot be known in the same way as another person because to know a thing or person implies a degree of

freedom in relation to the object or person, whereas we have no degree of freedom in relation to God. As a result, God can only be "known" in a derived way as a result of the consciousness of absolute dependence. The insight that a degree of freedom is required in relation to something or someone before knowledge is possible can be accepted, since knowledge requires the freedom to make an interpretation. But Schleiermacher fails to make the distinction referred to earlier (p.151f.) between the ontological relation between God and mankind, in which men and women are wholly dependent upon God as his creatures, and the relationship which arises as a result of the unique constitution of men and women as responsible and autonomous. The degree of freedom towards God which is part of the conditions of the creation of mankind thus allows the possibility of the knowledge of God, and the accommodation of God to the conditions of human knowledge in the incarnation of Jesus Christ makes this possibility an actuality.

99. See above, p.183-185 on the definitions of revelation and Christian education used here.

100. This description of the ideological character of religious faith is based on that of John Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* London: SCM, 1985, p.51-58. J.L.Segundo makes a distinction between faith and ideology. In his early work, Segundo describes ideology as a set of beliefs and values held on the basis of *argument*. Faith, by contrast, includes those deep-seated beliefs held in a manner analogous to personal trust. (J.L.Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977, p.106.) More recently, this distinction is further elaborated (Segundo, *Faith and Ideologies*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1984, esp.p.3-28). Segundo distinguishes two anthropological dimensions: the dimension of value and meaning, the sphere of faith; and

the dimension of action and efficacy, the sphere of ideology. Segundo defines ideology as a rationally worked out means to the achievement of the highest value in each person's faith or value system. In view of the analysis of cognition given in this thesis, especially with regard to the relationship between attitudes and beliefs, it is doubtful whether this distinction is sustainable. In the process of learning and identity formation, the attainment either of clearly and freely chosen values or of rational procedures for their realisation is the exception rather than rule. Segundo's position implies an artificial separation between reason and value in human development. Richard Niebuhr, whose analysis of value and faith Segundo appears to overlook, makes it clear that the espousal of one highest value is by no means a universal tendency (See *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* and *The Responsible Self*).

101. The theoretical approaches used in the preparation of chapter 4 include those of Erik Erikson (psycho-social development), G.H.Mead (social behaviourism), symbolic interactionism and reference group theory, social learning theory (eg.Albert Bandura and Walter Mischel), Wittgenstein (forms of life and language games), Lev Vygotsky (zone of proximal development and the growth of word meaning), James Wertsch (internalisation of mental processes), and Paul Tournier's synthesis of psychiatric approaches. Also referred to are Jean Piaget (genetic epistemology) and experiments designed to refute his theory, as well as Barry Schlenker (impression management) and Gordon Allport (concept of the self).

102. Above, p.52.

103. Segundo, *op.cit.*, p.104.

104. See above, p.184-185 and page 33f.

105. D.Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*. London: SCM, 1975, p.89-119.

106. See W.D.Hudson, *Wittgenstein and Religious Belief*. London: Macmillan, 1975.

107. J.Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 2 vols., 1960, volI, I.i.6.

108. L.Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976, p.42f.

109. Calvin, *op.cit.*, I.i.6-7.

110. *ibid*., I.i.7.

111. Brunner, *Revelation*, p.164-176. See also G.Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, London: SCM, 1957, p.72-90.

112. See T.F.Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*. Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1983, p.15-33.

113. The theory of inspiration advanced here is that of W.J.Abraham. See *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, Oxford University Press, 1981, especially p.58-69.

114. Several questions remain to be answered as a result of the suggestions advanced here. In particular, the field of biblical hermeneutics, while obviously relevant, lies outside the scope of the thesis. More directly, it may be asked whether a connection exists between the two contexts advanced here in which revelation plays a part in corporate formation, the growth of the tradition of which the biblical material is a record and the formation of Christian tradition, in which the interpretation of the Bible itself forms an important element - whether any continuity is to be discerned between inspiration and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, each of which is claimed in its own context to be the central element in revelation. In answer to this question, it may be suggested that the movement towards increasing interiority and universality discerned in

the Old Testament (see p.158), a movement brought to fulfilment in the New Testament experience of the Spirit, provides an important element. So, too, does the incarnation of Jesus, the result of which is that the Spirit of God is henceforth identified much more closely with Christ. Another question concerns the part played in the discussion by the place of Tradition in relation to Scripture and its interpretation. Without pretending to deal adequately with this question, it may be noted that both Yves Congar and Vladimir Lossky, to take two influential writers from separate Christian traditions, appeal to the Holy Spirit as the ultimate guarantor of the truth of Christian tradition. (Y.M-J.Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*. London: Burns and Oates, 1966; V.Lossky, "Tradition and Traditions", *In the Image and Likeness of God*. New York: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, p.141-168.)

115. G.K.Neville and J.H.Westerhoff III, *Learning through Liturgy*. New York: Seabury, 1978, p.162f.

116. These points made briefly in conclusion to the argument given here lead on to a detailed discussion of the scope, aims and methods of Christian education. Such a discussion is extensive and complex and lies beyond the scope of the present thesis.