THE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN:

A THEOLOGICAL - ETHICAL EVALUATION

by

NORMAN CLIVE RONNE
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NORMAN CLIVE RONNE

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DECLARATION

I declare that "The Corporal Punishment of Children: A Theological-Ethical Evaluation" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.
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by Norman Clive Ronne

Master of Theology, UNISA
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Supervisor: Louise Kretzschmar

SUMMARY

The corporal punishment of children is being widely challenged today. Christians have traditionally followed the "spare the rod and spoil the child" approach and must respond to the new situation. Corporal punishment is part of the wider disciplinary process. It can lead to corporal abuse, but this is not a reason per se to reject it.

Parents have a right to discipline their children, including the use of reasonable corporal punishment. Teachers can also use corporal punishment to enforce discipline, although its use will soon be banned in all South African schools, following world trends.

Corporal punishment in the home and at school satisfies the criteria of both the deontological and teleological approach to theological ethics. It should be retained as part of a multi-faceted approach to discipline.
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THE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN

A THEOLOGICAL ETHICAL EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

The Perspective of Theological Ethics

As this dissertation deals with a theological-ethical evaluation of the corporal punishment of children, the perspective of theological ethics needs to be briefly addressed at the outset. The term theological ethics derives from the two words "theology" and "ethics", and the latter will be addressed first. It is not easy to precisely define "ethics", which originates from the Greek word ethos which means a habit or something to which one is accustomed. However, Kretzschmar (1993:2) points out that: "The word 'ethics' has since come to mean not simply normal or customary conduct, but good conduct". It is similar to morals or morality which is derived from a Latin word. People's ethics thus reflect what they perceive to be good and bad, or right and wrong. Ethics comes out of real-life situations which are often new to the individual concerned and even unprecedented to mankind.

Theological ethics (also called Christian ethics) places all the normal ethical concerns within a Christian theological framework of understanding. In other words, the ethics of Christians must be related to their Christian faith, based on the Bible and the Church's interpretations of its teachings down through the ages. Birch & Rasmussen (1976:11) explain this as follows:

The Bible has always been regarded as central for Christian morality and ethics. It has, in fact, been regarded as the charter document for the Christian moral life. Biblical materials have been enlisted again and again for the fashioning of character and conduct. They have been consulted repeatedly for guidance and authority. Every generation has drawn lines between its own moral wrestlings and those of biblical communities. The scriptures have been a seminal source and resource for the moral life.
Later in the dissertation we consider the fact that although the Bible is normative and unique in Christian ethics, it is not the only source that Christians use in matters of morals and ethics. The same authors also postulate the task of Christian ethics as being character formation as much as decision making and action in specific situations. Furthermore, the training of Christians in their moral lives must always be done in the context of the Church as community and not in isolation.

Thus it is from a theological-ethical viewpoint, that the corporal punishment of children is evaluated. It also needs to be said at this stage, that ethicists use different methodological approaches that all basically fall within two camps, i.e. deontological and teleological arguments. Deontology is based on norms which declare things to be inherently right or wrong, without further debate. Teleology, on the other hand, looks at goals and motives, or consequences of attitudes or actions. Something is therefore good if it has a good result.

The issue of ethical method will be discussed in more detail later in the dissertation, where deontological and teleological aspects of the corporal punishment of children will be considered.

**The Issues Involved**

This dissertation has been written at a time when the whole concept of physically punishing children is under examination by parents, educators, sociologists, anthropologists and religious leaders throughout the world. Of course, to spank (give a hiding, in South African terminology) or not to spank, is an issue that has been debated down through the centuries. The world in which this issue is debated has changed significantly, particularly within the last twenty to thirty years. The quest for liberation in many different spheres of life and the democratic sentiment that is sweeping across the world, have reached to individual rights, and thereby, the rights of children. From the strict disciplinarian approach to the raising and discipline of children, the wheel has come full circle and in many cases now amounts to permissiveness. Many parents are afraid to physically punish their children, others do not know what to do, yet others grimly cling to the now old-fashioned idea that a good hiding works wonders. Many in
the latter category are too severe and their physical punishment leads to child abuse, which is on the increase in the world today.

Parents are not the only ones facing this dilemma, for teachers also face it although in many countries in the world today, the decision has been made for them - they are simply prohibited by law from physically punishing their pupils. The same forces that prevailed in achieving this ban on corporal punishment in schools, seem to be turning their attention to the home situation, in an attempt to prevent parents from physically punishing their children. This is a radical step, which, even if it is achieved, would seem to be almost impossible to enforce.

So where does all this leave the Christian? In the context of the physical punishment of children, there are several theological-ethical problems that become apparent:

- Is it right for parents to physically punish their children?
- Is right for school teachers to physically punish the children of others?
- Is it right for the State to prevent parents from physically punishing their own children?
- What are the short and long term results of corporal punishment on the child and on society?

The dissertation examines these questions from a number of viewpoints before coming to a conclusion.

The Value of this Dissertation

This dissertation attempts to give a comprehensive theological-ethical evaluation of the physical punishment of children. Herein lies the value of the dissertation and its contribution to the academic debate. Most research projects undertaken on the subject have been from a rather limited viewpoint of one of the interest groups mentioned above, and have dealt with only certain of the issues that are being debated. Many also deal only with one or other of the contexts where the corporal punishment of children takes place, i.e. the home or school, with the latter being dealt with to a much greater extent than the former. This is not surprising, given the greater transparency of the
school situation, compared with the relative secrecy of the home situation. Dealing with
the issue from a theological-ethical viewpoint, demands a consideration of the views of
all the role-players, an evaluation of the deontological and teleological ethical arguments
and then a gathering together of all the strands to come to a conclusion and a statement
of my own considered stance on this complex and emotive issue.

Although my own conclusions may differ from others, I trust that the research
undertaken in this dissertation will be of benefit to various of the stakeholders in this
debate.

A Personal Profile

A personal profile of myself will give some insights into my own presuppositions, context
and approach. I am a middle-aged English-speaking white male who is a qualified and
practising professional, at present in the upper income bracket. I come from a low
income family which was never really a happy one and which formally broke up in the
equivalent of my matric year in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Our Christianity was a
formality which had little relevance in our lives. Shortly before my twenty-first birthday,
through the ministry of the Christian Brethren, I had a Christian religious conversion in
which I came to know Jesus Christ as my personal saviour. This experience brought
a sense of joy, relief and forgiveness, and transformed my life giving me new hope and
purpose. I soon moved to a town where there was no Christian Brethren Assembly, and
I naturally gravitated to worship with the Baptists, where I have been ever since. I
obtained a Licentiate in Theology from the Baptist Theological College in Johannesburg
after one year's external and three year's internal study. I had intended going into the
ministry full-time, but for various reasons, this did not materialise. I upgraded this
Licentiate at UNISA to give me entrance to BTh (Hons) in Theological Ethics, which I
obtained in 1993. I then enrolled for the Master's degree. My theological studies are
for my own interest and benefit, and are not related to my profession. It should be
evident from the above that I am an evangelical Christian by persuasion. However, my
wide exposure to other Christian groups makes me ecumenical in approach to all who
share my own basic presuppositions. These are that there is a God who has revealed
himself to sinful humanity in the person of His son, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins
and rose again. The record of God's dealings with and revelation to humanity, is found
in both the Old and New Testaments, commonly called the Bible, which is the Christian's
guide for faith and conduct. (As stated earlier, I believe that in the area of theological ethics, the Bible is normative and unique but not exclusive). God desires people to come to know Him personally and then to live holy lives while bearing witness to Him in the world. One day Jesus Christ will return again to judge the world.

I now answer the question as to why I wrote this dissertation. As a child I was physically punished by a very strict and inflexible father, to a point of being physically abused. By this I mean that the physical punishment was definitely far too severe for both the real and perceived misdemeanours that I was guilty of as a child. (In Chapter Two of this dissertation, I deal further with the issue of punishment versus abuse). I, in turn, physically punished my own children, because I believed that the principle of physical punishment of children by parents was both biblical and right. However, mindful of my own experiences as a child, and being an evangelical Christian, my physical punishment of my own children was moderate and I believe, fair for the most part. I had friends and family members who shared by convictions regarding corporal punishment, but also those who didn't. At one stage I began to question the successfulness of a fairly strict disciplinarian approach to bringing up children, as it appeared as if the children of some friends and family members who had been brought up more liberally, without corporal punishment, might have turned out very well after all. Later, though, I began to see some serious flaws in their lives. I also realised, however, that no approach guarantees success. Looking back to my schooldays, I can remember times when I received a caning which I accepted as deserved. On other occasions I felt very unfairly treated. So the subject of the corporal punishment of children has for a long time both interested and puzzled me to the point where the desire was born to undertake this dissertation.

**Methodology**

I commenced my research by listing all the references to corporal punishment of children in both the Old and New Testaments. All biblical references quoted are from the New International version of the Bible. As an evangelical Christian, I approach the Bible as the inspired word of God, but also believe that the Bible needs to be contextualised for today's changed world.

I then tried to ascertain what the Christian Church has believed and practised down through the ages, as well as what the various interest groups have written on the
subject. For this I conducted a subject search at the UNISA library. I subsequently obtained books and dissertations from other libraries as well. In the dissertation I use both primary and secondary sources. These sources have been critically evaluated and questioned by me in my reading and quoting of them.

The biblical commentators consulted by me have largely been older evangelical scholars such as Bruce, Craigie, Faulkes, Hendriksen, Kidner and Simpson. However, I have also consulted more modern and liberal scholars such as Westermann and Whybray. My main objective was to obtain a clear exegesis on the relevant verses, most of which are fairly clear and devoid of controversy. The sources consulted contained details of the views of several Christian leaders of the past such as Calvin, John Wesley and John Abbott, and such views have been incorporated in the dissertation. One of the best known and most popular Christian psychologists, teachers and authors in the United States of America, is Dr James Dobson. He has always advocated controlled physical punishment of children. An indication of his stature is given by the fact that his views are invariably criticised by leading opponents of corporal punishment such as Thomas Gordon and Philip Greven. Their views are also included.

It has been my aim to include the leading views both for and against corporal punishment of children before drawing my own conclusions. When I commenced this dissertation, corporal punishment was still permitted in South African Schools, subject to strict regulations, which I had summarised. Although the law has now changed, I have included details of the previous legislation because they are relevant to and in some cases central to my own case.

In addition to the primary and secondary sources, I have also drawn on my own personal life-experiences at times, as well as general knowledge and logic. Finally, I conducted a series of interviews with selected white English-speaking Christian parents. I limited myself to white parents, as other dissertations consulted by me have surveyed black parents fairly extensively. I randomly drew up a list of people from within my own denomination who were from different walks of life, and also included Christians from other denominations. The interviews were approached in a semi-structured way, i.e. there was a framework of questions but they were designed to allow the respondents to talk freely. Basically, I wanted to ascertain whether they were physically punished as children both at home and school, and if so the details thereof and how they felt about it then and now. I also wanted to ascertain whether they in turn were physically
punishing their own children and what their thoughts were on the changed situation in South Africa, with corporal punishment now being banned in all schools. The interviews were conducted in a relaxed informal atmosphere, without prompting, and written notes taken of the responses. These responses were then collated and summarised.

Outline of Chapters

My starting point is to define what is meant by corporal punishment, as the term means different things to different people. Thereafter traditional Christian teaching and practice on the subject will be dealt with, followed by a discussion of recent resistance to the physical punishment of children, and the response of Christians to this challenge.

In chapter two we will look at the relationship between discipline, punishment and abuse. A strong distinction will be made between external and internal discipline. Punishment as a whole, including corporal punishment, will be considered as a form of discipline. No treatment or punishment would be complete without giving some attention to abuse, which is so prevalent today, and this topic is thus also included here.

Chapter three will deal with corporal punishment in the home situation, including the ethical issue as to whether corporal punishment should be administered and if so, how? The psychological and social effects of corporal punishment will also be considered.

The final chapter will deal similarly with corporal punishment in schools. The situation in both South Africa and other countries will be considered and the previous regulations relating to corporal punishment in South African schools will be described. We will also consider the circumstances which led to the new situation in which corporal punishment has now been banned in South African schools.

Finally, the strands are drawn together and a conclusion is drawn.

We commence, then, with a definition of what is meant by corporal punishment in this dissertation.
CHAPTER 1

SHOULD CHRISTIANS STILL SUPPORT THE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN

As indicated in the introduction, many parents are today questioning the rightness of physically punishing their children. This is true of Christian as well as non-Christian parents. Christian parents have for many years used corporal punishment in disciplining their children, and indeed, this practice stems from their religious beliefs and traditions. Should they continue with such beliefs and practices? In order to answer this question, we need to look at biblical teaching as well as the Christian Church’s teachings and practice down through the years. We must also consider recent resistance to corporal punishment, before we finally consider the theological ethical issues and how Christians should respond. But first we need to define corporal punishment so that it is clear what we mean by the term.

What is Corporal Punishment?

Corporal punishment may be described as the intentional affliction of physical hurt on the body of the child, with a view to punishment and or discipline. Corporal or physical punishment is one form of punishment, which in turn is itself only one aspect of the whole disciplinary process. The relationship between discipline and punishment, including corporal punishment, are dealt with in chapter two, where these concepts are explored in greater detail, together with the issue of abuse. Child abuse has become a horrifying phenomenon in our times, and is closely associated with physical punishment. However, in this dissertation, I draw a clear distinction between child abuse and corporal punishment. Admittedly, many people may find it difficult to differentiate the concept of abuse from that of the corporal punishment of children. But it must be so differentiated, and the reasons for this will become clearer in the discussion in chapter two when child abuse will be placed in its proper perspective. At this point, it is sufficient for me to state that the fact that corporal punishment has and still does become abuse, is no reason per se, why it should be rejected.
To be specific, then, corporal punishment in most cases would include smacking the child on the body either with the hand or any object such as a stick or cane. As this dissertation is a theological-ethical evaluation of the corporal punishment of children, we shall first describe traditional Christian teaching on the subject, as well as historical practice.

**Traditional Christian Teaching**

Traditional Christian teaching includes biblical teaching as well as the Church's teaching and practice over the years. This is the starting point of a theological-ethical evaluation which by its very nature, considers various points of view as well as various ethical approaches as was stated in the introduction.

We commence with a review of biblical teaching. An in-depth exegesis of all the biblical passages relating to the corporal punishment of children is not possible within the scope of this discourse. However, the main texts in both the Old and New Testaments will be reviewed and some principles identified. We should note first of all that mankind was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), with the chief purpose to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 4:5, 6). Israel was also commanded to “... love your neighbour as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). The inherent sinfulness of mankind is acknowledged by King David “Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5) and clearly demonstrated in his own life and that of the nation as a whole. This failure of God's people to fulfil his requirements for them, led to God punishing them repeatedly.

Before looking at the texts referring specifically to parental discipline and the physical punishment of children, we should be aware of the general context of the Old Testament relating to physical punishment of adults. The moral law given to Israel following the announcement of the ten commandments in Exodus Chapter 20, chronicles a harsh list of punishments for various offenses. An underlying principle is the "eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth" approach mentioned in Exodus 21:23. Furthermore, people were to be put to death for offenses such as kidnapping (21:16) cursing parents (21:17), sorcery (22:18) and sexual relations with animals (22:19). The history of Israel that follows is
full of examples of God's violent punishment of his people, as well as violent confrontation between Israel and her heathen neighbours.

We should also be aware of the general lot of women and children in the Bible. A selection of quotations from Mary Evans' book *Women in the Bible* (1983: 24 - 33) describes their situation in the Old Testament.

Even a cursory reading of almost any section of the Old Testament immediately makes obvious the intensely androcentric nature of the society in which it was produced and with which it deals. It was a male oriented and male dominated society. The story revolves round the patriarchs, sons not daughters are important, religious ceremonies and even the law are largely geared to the male..... The general Rabbinic view of women has been described as "half kindly, half oriental" and is accurately assessed by the fact that women are repeatedly linked with children and slaves.... "The woman .... is in all things inferior to a man".

We are not directly interested in the lot of women in the Old Testament. However, the relative disregard with which women were treated and their association with children and slaves, gives an idea of the harsh society in which children found themselves. Undoubtedly, male children had brighter long term prospects than their female counterparts, but they were all subject to the most stringent discipline, including physical punishment.

The first indication of the Old Testament's strong view in favour of parental discipline appears to be in Deuteronomy 21:18 - 21. Here the instruction is that a stubborn and rebellious son who refuses his parents' discipline is to be taken to the city elders who are to stone him to death. The passage seems to indicate that this drastic action is a last resort in the case of a delinquent who refuses to mend his ways. It must also be seen in the context of Jahveh's oft stated insistence on family and national purity. As previously intimated, we should remember that the Old Testament is not "Christian" and should be interpreted within its own context (see the sub-section on Christian response, later in this chapter). Interestingly, Craigie (1976: 284), commenting on the execution by the elders, states: "Here, the allocation of responsibility within the community is made clear ... The parents ... could not take the law into their own hands."
We move next to the Book of Proverbs, which, as Kidner (1964:50) says, "... is well known for its praise of the rod." There has been much speculation concerning the authority, origin and compilation of Proverbs. The book itself ascribes authorship to Solomon, Agur and Lemuel, as well as "Wise Men", while the last section is anonymous. The similarities between chapters 22:17 to 23:14 and the Egyptian "Teaching of Amenemope" cannot be a coincidence, and scholars have debated who borrowed from whom. After an initial belief that it was Amenemope who borrowed from Proverbs, scholars now generally accept that it was the other way around. This, however, should not pose a problem, because as Kidner puts it: "But if Proverbs is the borrower here, the borrowing is not slavish but free and creative. Egyptian jewels, as at the Exodus, have been re-set to their advantage by Israelite workmen and put to finer use" (1964:24). This is true of Babylonian and Phoenician literature which may also form the raw materials for other parts of Proverbs. The final editor and the date of editing are unknown. The book has been accepted by Christians as part of the Canon of Scripture.

Relating to our study, Proverbs commences in chapter 3, verses 11, 12 with this advice "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in". This portrayal of God as a disciplining heavenly father sets the tone for the subsequent advice given to earthly fathers to steadfastly discipline their children with the "rod of correction." Proverbs 13:24 ("He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him"), is at the very centre of the debate on the corporal punishment of children, as is also Proverbs 23:13, 14 which advises parents: "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death". Other Proverbs verses can be summarised as follows: Proverbs 10:13 (the rod is for the back of a person who lacks judgement); Proverbs 19:18 (discipline brings hope to your son); Proverbs 19:29 (beatings are for the backs of fools); Proverbs 20:30 (beatings purge the inmost being); Proverbs 22:15 (the rod of discipline will drive out the folly that is inherent in the heart of a child); Proverbs 29:15 (the rod of correction imparts wisdom), and Proverbs 29:17 (if you discipline your son he will give you peace). Parents who have taken this advice over the years usually cling to the promise in Proverbs 22:6, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." We should bear in mind that teachings in Proverbs on parental discipline fall within the general admonition to get
wisdom at all costs, and that cost is often high. It is no wonder then that both Christian and secular parents have used the rod liberally believing that a spiritual and emotional return would far outweigh the investment, albeit unpleasant, in corporal discipline. The question is, are modern Christian parents to slavishly follow only this advice on rearing and disciplining their children? Some commentators have tried to interpret these verses in Proverbs differently. Westermann, for example, after dealing with the verses related to wisdom and folly, and the role of teachers who instruct young people, writes:

In this light, punishment using the rod is justified several times: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him" (22:15) "Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; correct a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge" (19:25). "The one who spares the rod hates his son, but the one who loves him is diligent to discipline him" (13:24). "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother" (29:15). "Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will bring delight to your soul" (29:17).

The normal explanation of these many proverbs, namely, that parents are being exhorted to a strict upbringing of their children and consequent use of the rod, does not quite convince me. It is scarcely imaginable that parents are in need of being motivated to use the rod. They need no motivation to do this! Rather, I am assuming that these statements are to be understood in light of the preceding group of sayings. The teachers are justifying themselves over against the parents in their occasional use of corporal punishment. The "fathers" in this case are in fact the teachers...... In 17:10 "A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than one hundred blows into a fool", a certain critical opposition to the rod surfaces. To be sure, it is not excluded or condemned; rather, the implication is clear that correction with words is capable of achieving more than the rod. The rod is not to be used indiscriminately (Westermann 1995:27).

This seems to me to be an unnecessarily forced interpretation. Similarly, referring to Proverbs 20:30, Whybray (1994:116) comments: "Verse 30 is obscure and probably corrupt; it may refer to the possibility that punishment sometimes has a salutary effect". Other commentators merely pass over many of the verses which indicate corporal punishment. However, they cannot be wished away, ignored or given fanciful interpretations. They belong in their historical context and, as already stated, the question is whether they are to be slavishly followed today. This will be considered later in this chapter.
When we turn to the New Testament, we see that there is still the same emphasis on mankind’s sinfulness: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). However, there is a greater emphasis on the duty of not only loving God with our whole being, but also loving our neighbour as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:37 - 39). This duty is specifically extended to those who are outside of our own circle (the story of the Good Samaritan as recorded in Luke 10), to wives (Ephesians 5:25) and, by implication, to children (Ephesians 6:4).

The world of the New Testament shows a different picture regarding women:

First century Judaism .... presents women as being subordinate and inferior to men in every sphere, with no real place outside the home .... The Graeco-Roman world, in practice, had an even lower view of women, though there were exceptions.

The attitude of Jesus, seen in all four gospels, contrasts sharply with this background. While he in no way negates the distinction between the sexes, there is very little difference in his approach to males and females. Women, like men, are seen as responsible for their own decisions, and capable of spiritual understanding. They are equally free to talk to, follow, be friends with and serve Jesus ...... In the church, women were accepted as full members of the community (Evans : 1983:131, 2).

Women and children have traditionally been linked together as being weak and insignificant. It is equally clear that New Testament times ushered in a new dispensation for children as well, from the Christian point of view. We turn now to the relevant New Testament passages. We will consider these together with appropriate commentary, before comparing them as a whole with the Old Testament teaching.

The New Testament gives no advice regarding the rod, although it does refer pointedly to discipline. The writer to the Hebrews (5 : 8) quotes from Proverbs 3 : 11, 12 to tell his readers (persecuted, struggling Jewish Christians) that God the heavenly father disciplines and punishes his beloved sons. (This principle is repeated in Revelation 3 : 19 "Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline"). In an attempt to explain this truth in a human context for his readers, he goes on in Hebrews 5 : 9, 10 to remind them that our human fathers disciplined us as they saw fit and we accepted such discipline and respected their right to do so. Since the writer quotes from Proverbs, with its emphasis...
on the rod, it is hard to believe that he did not include the physical punishment of children as a very natural part of parental discipline. However, the writer's words in 12:10, "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best" (NIV), prompts Bruce (1964:359) to comment: "Our earthly fathers may sometimes have been mistaken in their estimate of the discipline that we needed ...". The other New Testament verses dealing with the treatment of children by their parents and adults in general give a more tender approach than we saw in the Old Testament. In the well-known "children and parents" passages in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, children are exhorted to obey their parents in the Lord, and fathers are also exhorted as follows:

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4 (NIV).
"Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21 NIV).

Commenting on Ephesians, Faulks (1956:165) says "It is right for parents to demand obedience, but there must not be 'capricious exercise of authority' (Robinson)". Hendriksen (1973:261,2) suggests several ways that parents may exasperate their children, and includes: "By bitter words and outright physical cruelty". Paul's phrase in this passage, "bring them up .....", has the idea of rearing children tenderly and nourishing them, but his reference to "training and instruction" indicates that firmness is not excluded. Referring to Colossians 3:21, Martin (1991:128) makes the interesting comment: "We may note how strikingly modern is the Pauline word to acknowledge that they (children) do have "rights". Moule rightly regards this as opening a new chapter in social history". Thus it seems clear that the New Testament is in these passages balancing tender rearing of children with firm discipline where necessary.

Finally, there are several passages in Matthew's gospel which indicate Jesus Christ's tender concern and affection for children. In Matthew 18:1-3 his disciples are referred to the humility and simplicity of little children who are held up as "the greatest in the kingdom of heaven". Welcoming them means welcoming him. They are clearly warned not to cause "these little ones who believe in me to sin" (or stumble) for fear of severe punishment (18:6, also Mark 9:42 and Luke 17:2). In Matthew 18:10 the disciples are further admonished not to look down on children while a few verses later (v 14) it is
stated that God is concerned that no child be lost (to the kingdom of heaven). Of 18:10, Patte (1987: 250) says:

A first saying expresses that despising the little ones, and consequently not receiving them, is actually missing a blessing, because the little ones are blessed (cf 5:3-6). They are in a special and intimate relationship with the Father, a relationship that is described by the phrase "in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" (18:10b). By receiving the little ones who are in a special relationship with the Father, one shares in their blessedness.

Then in Matthew 19:14 we have the famous words of Jesus: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these". While all these verses in Matthew do not address the issue of the physical punishment of children or even the question of disciplining them in other ways, they do make quite clear that children cannot be treated at the parents' whim with impunity. Parents who violate these principles do so at their own risk - specifically, they face the wrath of our Saviour who has a special place in His heart for the children.

The differences between the Old and New Testaments regarding the disciplining of children are very marked. In the Old Testament the emphasis is on the absolute desirability of discipline, discipline, and discipline. The child appears to be the incidental object of discipline. No mention is made of the personality or feelings of the child, let alone of the child's rights. The rod of correction is to be used liberally in achieving the desired discipline of children who will inevitably destroy themselves and bring shame to their parents if left to their own devices. The physical discomfort to the child and any emotional unease on the part of the parents, must be sacrificed for the good of making children conform. By contrast, we have seen from the New Testament verses and commentaries thereon, that there are references to the intrinsic worth of children, to the importance of their welfare and well-being, to their dignity and feelings and to their rights. Children are now seen as individual people, whose feelings and rights are to be taken into account. Furthermore, Jesus Christ has a special love for them and warns adults of the dire consequences of mistreating them. We will return to the differences between the Old and New Testaments later in this chapter when we consider the response of Christians to the changed situation regarding corporal punishment. The issue of children's rights will also be examined in detail under the section dealing with
recent resistance to corporal punishment. Following the strong emphasis on beating children recorded in the Old Testament could easily lead parents and others to the corporal abuse of children, thus the difference between punishment and abuse is dealt with in the next chapter.

This concludes our brief review of biblical passages related to the treatment of children. Various opinions as to how biblical teaching should be applied to parenting today, will be reviewed in later chapters. Let us first look at a history of the Christian Church’s practice relating to the disciplining of children.

A Review of the Christian Church's Practice

Down through the ages, physical chastisement has been administered to the young, both at home and in places of learning, as an aid to discipline. Corporal punishment has long been seen as necessary to achieve obedience and instil discipline in the heart of the child. It was an easy solution and believed to be natural and right to physically punish the erring child.

During the Dark Ages (the six centuries ended about 1100) with its systems of fear and superstition, children were treated harshly, and this continued into Medieval times (from 1100 until the beginning of the Reformation c1500). Children were exploited both at home and at the workplace where many minors were forced to work long and arduous hours. Infringements of rules brought swift physical retribution, and there was usually no higher court of appeal. Those who were fortunate enough to attend schools found little respite from corporal punishment there. Severe beatings were common and were given with the express or tacit approval of their fathers.

The spirit of Puritanism (which commenced during the reign of Elizabeth and came into full bloom during the middle of the seventeenth century), and the Reformation in the sixteenth century brought a spiritual re-awakening and a new clarity and order to things. Many superstitions of the past were exposed and replaced by evangelical faith and fervour. Together with this there arose a new emphasis on human sinfulness and the depravity of human nature. Children were automatically included in this way of thinking, and with the new emphasis on the scriptures, attention was given to biblical verses such
as Psalm 51:5 "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me". The apparently clear meaning of the verses in Proverbs relating to the rod, (as discussed in the previous chapter) was readily embraced by parents of that day. Rice (1987:1) neatly sums up the spirit of the age regarding the Christian Church's attitude toward children:

Throughout the Middle ages the spirit of Puritanism provided sanction for corporal punishment. Human nature was regarded as innately evil, deceitful and foolish; and it was considered necessary to rescue children from their own depravity and beat the devil out of them in an effort to expel the demon and reform their characters. Corporal punishment was associated with God's will, and education, like baptism and burial, was considered to fall within the Church's domain.

These sentiments were clearly expressed by the great reformers of the time. Gordon (1989:207) quotes John Calvin's teachings about infants. "Their whole nature is a sort of seed of sin and therefore it cannot but be hateful to God". He also records John Wesley in 1742 quoting with approval in one of his sermons, a letter from his mother:

In order to form the minds of children the first thing to be done is to conquer their will ... Heaven or hell depends on this alone. ... Whatever pains it costs, conquer their stubbornness, break the will, if you would not damn the child ... Break his will now, and his soul will live, and he will probably bless you to all eternity (1989:206-7).

One must see these pronouncements in the context of their times. In her book "The Weaker Vessel", Antonia Fraser describes woman's lot in seventeenth-century England. Women were generally regarded as appendages to their husbands and were often patronised. Their legal standing was very low and they were often denied justice. Although the book does not deal with the position of children directly, it is clear that children simply did not feature in that society. They were often married off very young (in one case the combined ages of bride and groom was twenty-eight years!) in arranged marriages in which they seldom had any say. It is thus no surprise that children were treated harshly and physically punished in those times. A similar situation existed in both Europe and America during the sixteenth century, with changes favouring women only taking place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
respectively. This was partly as a result of the Enlightenment with its emphasis on human achievement and in turn, individual human rights. It was also as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Rich (1982: 113 - 4) explains the whole process very clearly:

The status of the wife changed in nineteenth century America. A rapidly expanding industrial nation offered many opportunities and considered risks in a world of Darwinian struggle for survival of the heartiest. The breadwinner faced toil and economic dangers and increasingly saw the family as a refuge in a heartless world. The erstwhile reciprocity between family and community during colonial times changed to an adversarial relation in the nineteenth century. Despite the sense of openness and egalitarianism of the outside world and the opportunity to become a "self-made man", the threat to traditional values was real. Thus the society at large and the home became two different spheres with divergent values. Home and wife were highly sentimentalized: home as a sanctuary for protection and renewal; the wife as a preserver of the cherished home and family, a higher moral being than her husband who had to make many compromises in the marketplace. She was expected to nurture the children and prepare them for the world, to create a cheerful and tranquil home, and engage in selfless service.

Attitudes toward children changed as infant mortality was reduced.

High infant-mortality rates were only part of the story, however. The parents' conception of the child and their symbolic relation to him, both in law and theology, would change slowly. Infanticide was practised in antiquity and in the early Middle Ages. Theologians in the later period held that children were things belonging to parents and God could punish parents through their children. Even in the seventeenth century it was believed that children owed everything to their father because he gave them life. And obedience was demanded by the "stubborn-child" laws of early New England, which required the death penalty for persistently disobedient children. Although not actually invoked, it remained a statute as an example of the state's interest in maintaining domestic order.

But by the nineteenth century, many of these laws and attitudes were vestiges of the past. An unprecedented amount of time was given to child rearing. The new style of child rearing contributed to a more self-reliant individual who could take his place in the competitive marketplace. It was now expected that the child would be given love and affection, opportunities for play and an environment in which her nature could unfold slowly and naturally.
On the American scene, both Michael C Wigglesworth and Jonathan Edwards strongly emphasised sin, punishment and the terrors of hell. This came out vividly in their writings and preaching. Again, regarding children, their thinking was that it was better for them to suffer physical punishment from their parents than eternal damnation. Later, some writers adopted a softer approach to the treatment of children, but the bottom line was still punishment, severe if necessary, as a last resort. Such a writer was John Abbott. Greven (1990:63 - 4) writes about John Abbott as follows:

The Reverend John Abbott, whose 1833 book "The Mother at Home" was one of the early nineteenth century's most popular treatises on evangelical child-rearing, advised mothers to be 'affectionate and mild' with their children and to 'punish them in sorrow, but not in anger'. He acknowledges however that 'fear is a useful and a necessary principle in family government' and noted, that 'God makes use of it in governing his creatures' ... 'children should be governed by kindness. But when kindness fails, and disobedience ensues, let not the mother hesitate for a moment to fall back on her last resort, and punish as severely as is necessary. ...Let, therefore, children understand that sin cannot pass unpunished'.

This view of punishment has continued virtually unchanged up to modern times. The well-known American evangelist John R Rice believed that children are naturally wicked and, ".... advocated that good old-fashioned thrashing should begin at birth and continue until wedding vows are recited" (Gordon 1989 : 208). Later, during the 1970's, writers and teachers such as Jack Hyles, Roy Lessin and Larry Christenson still demanded total obedience from children, and both advocated and defended the parents' right and Christian duty to spank the child and let him/her know who is boss. Perhaps the most well-known modern evangelical Christian writer and teacher in this mould is Dr James Dobson with his "Focus on the Family" ministry which was finally officially launched in South Africa in 1994. James Dobson openly calls his approach a "Judeo-Christian" one which is thoroughly biblical. He has written books and produced videos which have for many years been freely used and circulated amongst various evangelical churches in South Africa. In the United States he is a much sought-after speaker, and has an extensive television and radio network. Dobson has consistently advocated breaking the child's will, if necessary by corporal punishment. In his first major book "Dare to Discipline" he wrote these words:
The child may be more strong-willed than the parent, and they both know it. If he can outlast a temporary onslaught, he has won a major battle, eliminating punishment as a tool in the parent(s) repertoire. Even though Mom spanks him, he wins the battle by defying her again. The solution to this situation is obvious: outlast him, win, even if it takes a repeated measure (1970: 45).

In his major follow-up book eight years later "The Strong-Willed Child", he again wrote as follows:

When a youngster tries this kind of stiff-necked rebellion, you had better take it out of him, and pain is a marvellous purifier .... You have drawn a line in the dirt, and the child has deliberately flopped his big hairy toe across it. Who is going to win? Who has the most courage? Who is in charge here? (1978: 13)

However, the August 1993 edition of "Focus on the Family" magazine which launched Dobson's official ministry in South Africa, gave a softer description of his views on children as follows:

Discipline of children is an essential component of Dr Dobson's child-rearing philosophy, but it is not the centrepiece. The crucial element of all healthy parent-child relationships is the principle of balance. Each side of the scale of love and control must be maintained in a delicately poised, mutually corrective and complementary relationship. Unchecked by its counterpart, the scale can tip dangerously toward unhealthy extremes. Without affection, harsh discipline can crush a child's sensitive spirit. Conversely, love that is not balanced by reasonable limits leads to overprotection, permissiveness and chaos. Though Dr Dobson does advocate corporal punishment under appropriate circumstances - specifically in cases of conscious, wilful, disobedience on the part of a young child - he is too well acquainted with the horrors of child abuse. He has consistently recommended extreme caution in the application of this technique or any other approach to punishment. A successful parenting formula must include warm, accepting love and clearly defined boundaries and controls (1993: 12).

In conclusion, it can be seen that the Christian Church's practice regarding the corporal punishment of children has been for the most part a harsh one. Again, it should be seen in the light of a world where the harsh treatment and punishment of adults was commonplace. It has been harsh, however, because of an unshakeable conviction that
the principles laid down in the book of Proverbs have universal and timeless application. Many Christians have over the years softened their approach but most probably still see corporal punishment of children as being, at least, a valid last option in the disciplining process. The modern move away from corporal punishment has been led rather by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and educators, although Christians in various denominations are beginning to re-think the whole issue and question whether traditional interpretations of the Bible and past Christian practice have to be slavishly followed. In the light of modern day child abuse, the debate is likely to become even more prevalent in the Christian Church. Let us now look more closely at this fairly recent resistance to corporal punishment.

**Recent Resistance to Corporal Punishment**

I use the word "recent" because the ground-swell of concerted feeling against corporal punishment has been a fairly recent one. However, it is clear that strong feelings against corporal punishment have existed for a long time, albeit rather isolated from the then contemporary way of thinking. Take, for example, the words of Allen written as far back as 1936:

> What is the strongest force in the minds of those who desire to inflict physical punishment upon others? The force is the force of fear, and fear will perpetrate innumerable atrocities, for it is a form of madness. The school teacher who rules by fear, who rules by the administration of corporal punishment, is frightened of the consequence if he does not. He lacks confidence in his own power as a leader. He feels that he cannot inspire obedience in this or that child for the sake of the finished product. He does not respect himself as an adult, as a teacher, and because of this he fails to make others respect himself.... For the present, we deem it necessary only to re-assert that the use of corporal punishment is based upon fear, and that fear is the expression of a weak character in authority (Allen 1936 : 53 - 55).

As stated in my introduction, we live in a different world from that of twenty to thirty years ago. Previously, authority was exercised from the top down and was seldom questioned, often being accepted as being just the way things are! So people in power, or with wealth and influence, largely dictated what happened in societies throughout the world. Individual rights were hardly recognised and difficult, if not impossible, to enforce.
Oppression and injustice were easy to perpetrate. All that has changed, although not in all countries. There has been political and social liberation in many parts of the world such as Africa, Asia, South and Central America and, more recently, the USSR. Totalitarian regimes have been toppled by defiant populist movements. The seeds of this can be traced back to the French (1789) and Russian (1917) revolutions and the general liberalism of the 1800's. Even before this, the yoke of British Colonialism had been thrown off during the American War of Independence (1775). Its influence was also felt in France. All this has had a profound effect on people's thinking. Almost suddenly, individual rights have become a possibility, within reach, and are being eagerly grasped at, often with great success. This has extended to all walks of life. And so minority groups now demand recognition and the right to be consulted on matters that affect them. Labourers demand a say in the running of business and in their own working conditions, whereas previously, although members of labour unions, their effectiveness was often limited. Prisoners go on hunger strikes and force prison authorities to consider and accede to their requirements. Civil servants work to rule and disrupt government services in order to force changes to regulations and working conditions. It is a radically changed situation that cannot be ignored or wished away. In short, there is a democratic movement afoot, supported by powerful individuals, interest groups and academics, that insists on the rights of virtually every individual being considered and catered for as far as possible. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights drawn up in 1948 has changed from being a nice idea in concept, to having become a reality and a text book and bargaining chip for countless millions. The countries that are still holding out against these democratic forces, are coming under increased world pressure to change.

South Africa has also been very much affected by the democratic movement described above. The demise of apartheid has brought sweeping and radical changes, particularly to the rights of underprivileged people in this country. There are, however, very real dangers that go along with any emphasis on human rights. This danger is succinctly summed up by Jan Lancaster (1996:3) in a business magazine:

The introduction of a Bill of Rights into our new constitution, and the laying down of new guidelines for a stable and law abiding society, will surely be welcomed by all right minded South Africans.
The protection of the rights of the individual through greater tolerance, freedom of speech and expression and equality of opportunity are all aims to be applauded, as is the government's commitment to the upholding of these rights.

But I have one major concern. And that is the real possibility that, because of the conspicuous lack of basic human rights in the old South Africa, the pendulum will now swing the other way. That the threat to human rights may no longer be the excessive use of power by the state, but that the state might be powerless to protect the basic rights of individuals against violation by other individuals.

Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, and the man responsible for the "Singapore miracle", maintains that a country which emphasises individual rights at the expense of society will quickly lose its bearings. "An ethical society," he says, "is one that matches human rights with responsibilities".

For there is no such thing as a free lunch, and the right to protection by the law goes hand in hand with the duty of the citizen to uphold that law. If that citizen prostitutes that responsibility the power of the state must be such that he be punished and outlawed from society.

So I would plead with the constitutional assembly to make very sure that our new Bill of Rights will give all South Africans the protection they have a right to expect.

So very sure that, if the law cannot protect them from those who violate that law, they will not have to take matters into their own hands and resort to jungle justice to protect themselves.

From a theological-ethical point of view, the emphasis on human rights should be welcomed, subject to the danger mentioned above. The Bible places great emphasis on the value of individual people, especially the poor, widows and the fatherless. Some Christians have objected to the concept of human rights on the grounds that sinful human beings have no rights. However, we are not talking about people's rights before God, but rather before their fellow man. The Christian Bible is uncompromising on the right of people to justice and for them not to be exploited.

Along with the rights of adults has come an emphasis on the rights of children. It has long been recognised that children have been exploited and unfairly treated in the past, and that because of their physical and mental limitations, they are mostly unable to fend
for themselves and protect their own interests. The world's history is tragically marred by the physical, mental and sexual abuse of children in all countries. (Child abuse will be dealt with in Chapter 2). This situation has weighed heavily on the universal conscience, and interested and sympathetic parties in various countries began lobbying for an international convention relating to the treatment of children. This finally led to the drawing up of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, which sets out the rights of children as accepted by member countries. The articles relevant to this dissertation are Articles 9, 14, 19, 28, 37 and 39, the main aims of which are to protect children from abuse. Many countries such as South Africa and even the United States of America have not formally subscribed to the Convention. However, the American Bar Association feels that USA law largely complies with its provisions. With the review of human rights in South Africa, it seems quite feasible that the Convention may be adopted in this country. Here is an extract of the more important points of the Convention.

**Article 9**

1. States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by parents ......

**Article 14**

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. States Parties shall respect the right and duties of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

**Article 19**

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental
violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

**Article 28**

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

**Article 37**

States Parties shall ensure that:

a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment......

**Article 39**

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social re-integration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and re-integration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

At first glance it may seem difficult to imagine any person or government taking exception to most of the above, yet there are major difficulties. Myers (1990:91) sums these up as follows:

Although everyone agrees that children have rights, there is little consensus on the scope of children's rights. Professor Wald observes that "to date, neither legislatures nor courts have developed a coherent philosophy or approach when addressing questions relating to children's rights".

Decisions from the United States Supreme Court recognize "three reasons justifying the conclusion that the constitutional rights of children cannot be equated with those of adults". First, children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and maltreatment. To afford children the special protection that is their due, children's rights must be limited in some, although not all, respects. Second, children are unable to make certain decisions in a rational and mature manner. Finally, the role of parents in child
rearing dictates that children's desires must sometimes be subordinated to parental judgement and control. Although children's rights are not coterminous with the rights of adults, American law protects the rights mentioned in the Convention.

The fact that no coherent philosophy or approach has been developed when addressing questions relating to children's rights, should not really come as a surprise. The UN Convention on children's rights was drafted by adults and is now being interpreted by adults from different social, cultural and religious backgrounds. Words such as "best interests of the child", "abuse," "neglect", "physical or mental violence", "maltreatment", "exploitation" and "discipline" are all used in the Convention, but what exactly do they mean? Individuals would interpret them differently according to their background, culture and agenda. However, all international conventions face the same problem i.e. that generic terms have to be used, and while some issues are clear, others are not. Furthermore, because of the inability of children to do so themselves, legislation or conventions concerning them have of necessity to be drafted by adults who are in any event the rulers of society and the ones who make the laws. They also determine the attitudes and structures of society.

Patte (1987: 268) put all this into a Christian perspective in his commentary on Matthew 19:13 - 15;

For Jesus, involvement with others, and indeed dependence upon others - a situation in which one values one's relationship with others - is what characterizes participation in the kingdom. Consequently, children, who totally depend upon others for their livelihood, are the very model of people who belong to the kingdom. This is especially true in the case of these children who we brought to him "that he might lay his hands on them and pray" (19:13); they need a blessing from God through Jesus. These children are presented as dependent not merely upon human beings but also upon God. They belong to the kingdom. They receive from Jesus, who himself belongs to the kingdom, the blessing they need (19:15).

All that one can say, then, about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is that it is a step in the right direction but much work has still to be done to define it and obtain not only universal acceptance, but also compliance. As Christians we can give the Convention qualified support as we remember the high regard Jesus Christ had
for children as recorded in the gospels. At the same time, we have to recognize the practical problems mentioned above, as well as the fact that children need to be disciplined and taught until they are independent of their parents and teachers.

Returning to the American scene, Bitensky (1990: 175) specifically refers to the fact that, "..... most states do permit corporal punishment of students in the public schools. What this means in relation to the Convention is that insofar as state and federal laws allow corporal punishment of children in the schools, the United States will be unable to fulfil the standards of article 28.2". It is interesting to note that corporal punishment is interpreted as being not "consistent with the child's human dignity". Many would oppose this view and state that the child had already lost its dignity when an offence was committed. One could also argue that correct punishment of children no more detracts from their dignity than God's punishment of humans detracts from their dignity. The theme of punishment runs through the entire Bible. This is because it is based on a coherent moral principle, which recognizes the differences between right and wrong. Right or correct behaviour is advocated and encouraged, and wrong or bad behaviour is punished in the interests of both the child and the wider human society. We shall return to the spirit of the United Nations Convention later in the dissertation.

Let us now consider how Christians should respond to the new situation and what the theological-ethical issues are.

**How Ought Christians to Respond? What are the Theological - Ethical Issues?**

The foregoing section on traditional Christian teaching and practice has indicated that Christians have in general interpreted the Bible as supporting the corporal punishment of children and they have practised it vigorously. The Christian response to the recent resistance against corporal punishment has been varied. Initially, of course, there can be only one of two responses, i.e. to reject it or to reconsider their former stance. And even after reconsidering, some Christians may still decide to support and practise corporal punishment. If one assumes that Christians physically punished their children because they believed that this was taught in the Bible and always practised by Christians in the church, it can also be assumed that they will continue to do so unless the foundation of their belief changes. The first question, therefore, is whether the
teaching of the Old Testament, particularly the Book of Proverbs, is still valid and binding on Christians today. Let us then consider this question.

At the heart of this question, of course, is another one - how do we interpret and use the Bible in theological ethics today? This is the subject of a research study on its own, but we need to summarise the key issues here in order to come to some understanding of the relevance of corporal punishment teaching in the Old Testament for us today. The first point to note, is that there is obviously a difference between the Old and New Testaments. Nürnberger (1984: 119 - 124) summarises the relationship between the two by stating that the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New. There is both a continuity and a discontinuity between them. The Old Testament must not be abandoned, yet it is not of equal status to the New Testament. Therefore the Old Testament is not a criterion for the New but the New is a criterion for the Old. The Old Testament is indispensable, yet its faith is transformed and the New Testament has relativised it. Longenecker (1984: 21 - 2) makes the further point:

The history of Christian theology is a story of development. In the Bible we have the record of God's progressive revelation and unfolding redemption in Israel's history, in (pre-eminently) Jesus' ministry, and in the apostolic Church's witness; and accounts of his people's developing endeavours to work out the theological ramifications and ethical implications of that revelation and redemption.

What does all this mean in relation to the subject of this dissertation? Simply that the Old Testament with its apparent emphasis on corporal punishment, is not the final word on the discipline of children. We have already seen a change in the New Testament emphasis relating to this subject, i.e. a more tender approach, with an emphasis on the worth of a child and Jesus' love for children. But even the New Testament is not necessarily the last word. Longenecker (1984: 1 - 9) explains four ways of using the New Testament. These are:

First ..... as a book of laws or a summation of codes for human conduct ..

A second way .... is that which places all of the emphasis on the universal principles which can be found to underlie the New Testament accounts ....
A third way is that which places all the stress on God's free and sovereign encounter through his spirit with a person as he or she reads Scripture, and the ethical direction given for the particular moment in such an encounter ...

The fourth way of using the New Testament in ethical decision making and practice arises largely out of the third approach, and shares with it in an opposition to prescriptive laws and principles. It differs, however, from the third in laying primary emphasis on the individual's response to whatever situations are confronted. Several variations of this approach have been proposed, but all of them can be described by the term "contextualism" or "situation ethics" ... What is the loving thing to do in this case?

There are weaknesses in each approach, from legality and tradition, to mere philosophising and to subjectivity. Longenecker (1984 : 9) goes on to say:

It may be that each of these approaches is more wrong in what it denies than in what it proposes, and that each in its own way is setting forth a necessary aspect of truth for a Christian ethic — some, admittedly, more than others, but each to some degree highlighting an aspect of truth that is minimized or neglected by others.

After considering some basic biblical perspectives, he concludes.

... we should probably define New Testament ethics as follows: prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel (usually embodied in the example and teachings of Jesus), which are meant to be applied to specific situations by the direction and enablement of the Holy Spirit, being always motivated and conditioned by love (1984 :15).

Kretzschmar (1993 : 63) concludes a section on "The Bible and Ethics" as follows:

In other words, the literary, historical, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts reflected within the Bible must be taken into account when discussing biblical ethics. Finally, if the contexts of the modern interpreters become part of the discussion, much more coherence and agreement will result. ... The Bible needs to be carefully and conscientiously interpreted, not distorted and abused.

This raises another issue which was alluded to in the introduction i.e. what should the attitude of Christians be to non-biblical sources in the area of ethics generally and specifically to the corporal punishment of children? Or, as Birch and Rasmussen
(1976:145) put it: "The real question to be dealt with here is the relationship of biblical authority to the authority of non-biblical sources for Christian ethics". These authors (1976:148-153) go on to describe biblical authority as: "... derived from God who is truly absolute...", and unique in that "... the Bible has a special significance not shared by other sources of ethical insight". However, they deny that the Bible is absolute in moral matters. They state: "We would like to suggest that biblical authority in ethical matters be viewed in terms of primacy rather than self-sufficiency", and, "The Bible is a necessary source, but it must also be in constant dialogue with the many other sources of knowledge and insight through which God might be disclosing himself". The whole issue is summarised as follows:

The church cannot do ethics on the basis of the Bible alone. Within the church itself we are dependent on a long history of biblical interpretation and its related moral and theological tradition. Outside the church we must take account of the socio-political context in which ethical issues arise; we must heed the voices helping us to understand the cultural context in which the church seeks to shape moral character and discharge its mission to the world; we must avail ourselves of secular categories which aid the church in more effectively communicating its moral concerns. There are far more non-biblical sources available to the church in its exercise of ethical judgement than we could list here.

The task of the church then is to bring its unique resources based in the scripture into dialogue with the many non-biblical sources of ethical insight. The Bible remains primary in its authority for this process because it is the key to distinguishing Christian ethics from ethics done in some secular mode.

(Birch & Rasmussen 1976:151)

Let me summarise the foregoing. The Old Testament appears to clearly sanction the corporal punishment of children. The New Testament, however, does not refer directly to physical punishment, although it does emphasize the need for the discipline and training of children in the right way. It also emphasizes the need for love and tenderness in our approach to children, who are loved by God and held up as an example of humility and trust. In our context today, new approaches to disciplining children are being discussed and advocated, and in particular corporal punishment is being challenged and even condemned. Christians must seriously consider all these non-biblical sources in the matter of corporal punishment. In the light of all this, it must surely be permissible, indeed advisable, for Christians today to reconsider the use of
corporal punishment. In so doing, they are not compromising their faith in any way. There are two further questions that Christians need to ask about corporal punishment as they consider it from a theological-ethical point of view - is corporal punishment right, and what effect does it have on individuals and society? Here we enter the realm of ethical methodology and in particular, the distinction between deontological ethics and teleological ethics. We will discuss these briefly, although a fuller consideration of the effects of corporal punishment will be undertaken in chapters three and four.

Deontological ethics judges actions in the light of whether they are essentially right or wrong in themselves, without any thought of goals or consequences. Kretzschmar (1993: 89) summarises it as follows:

Deontological ethics, then, is based on norms, rules, commandments and duties. The deontologist emphasises the norms of right and wrong and these norms are to be adhered to irrespective of the situation. This is an ethic of obedience to norms, commandments and rules.

Examples of deontological ethics would be the natural law ethics of Thomas Aquinas (the promotion of good and the avoidance of evil) and the ethics of Immanuel Kant with his categorical imperative. The Bible can be regarded as containing a deontological ethic in that it lays down many laws and commandments, as well as moral norms and values. The relative certainty and objectivity of rules within deontological ethics is obviously both valid and valuable, although its main weakness is its inflexibility, particularly in a changing world and the introduction of new information and criteria. If one adopts a deontological ethical approach to corporal punishment, one would ask whether it is in itself right. A reference to the Old Testament would seem to indicate that it is. However, as one looks at the changed situation in the New Testament which has already been mentioned, it would appear that a new approach to discipline may be called for, but one which does not necessarily rule out corporal punishment completely. We see here how closely one's ethical methodology links with one's interpretation of the Bible.

Teleological ethics, on the other hand, is concerned with the goals, motives or consequences of actions, and questions whether these are good or bad. The issue is not whether these actions are in themselves right or wrong. Teleological ethics would
include utilitarianism, existentialism and situation ethics. The Bible also contains a
teleological ethic in part because as Kretzschmar (1993 : 96) points out: "Passages
such as Mark 7 : 1 - 13 and Matthew 23 : 23 - 24 indicate that God expects more than
superficial or legalistic obedience to the letter of the law". Furthermore, certain laws and
commandments are not always rigidly applied in the Bible, and visions, goals and the
ushering in of a new society and world order are emphasised. Referring then again to
corporal punishment, a teleological ethic would ask: "what are the goals and
consequences of this form of discipline?" Here a number of approaches are possible.
One could say that the goal is for the parent to enforce obedience. If corporal
punishment succeeds in this aim it is good but if it fails it is bad. Or one could say that
the goal of corporal punishment is to teach the child principles of right and wrong and
the consequences of actions, and it would be good if the child learned these principles.
John Johnson is a good example of this kind of reasoning. He is an Afro-American, who
became a successful businessman, and founder of "Ebony" magazine due in large part
to his tenacious mother's encouragement and drive. He writes:

She was a disciplinarian who used a switch to emphasise her
teaching. People have asked me why I don't smoke. I don't
because my mother caught me smoking behind the house when
I was ten and gave me a beating that I remember to this day

If one accepts that smoking is bad (as the majority of people do today), then the beating
certainly produced a good result! We can also distinguish between short and long-term
goals and consequences when we evaluate success. Obviously it is not always easy
to evaluate the final consequences of any action, and this is certainly true of corporal
punishment. The short term results may appear to be good but the long term
consequences may be an entirely different matter. We will now leave the issue of
ethical methodology. As stated earlier, we will return to the theme of the effects of
corporal punishment in later chapters.

Having considered the theological-ethical issues and how Christians should respond to
the recent resistance to corporal punishment, this is an appropriate time to consider how
corporal punishment fits into the wider issues of discipline and punishment in general.
We will also be considering child abuse, which has become the scourge of the nineties.
CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISCIPLINE, PUNISHMENT AND ABUSE

The purpose of this chapter is to generally discuss the above concepts, and show how they inter-relate with each other. I refer specifically to the child, in both the home and the school situation. The application of discipline and punishment as they relate specifically to the home and the school situation, will be dealt with in Chapters 3 and 4. The burning issue of child abuse will be dealt with a little later in this chapter. I prefer to deal with discipline and various forms of punishment in logical succession, before showing how one form of punishment, i.e. corporal punishment, can become abuse. We begin, then, with the concept of discipline.

Various Forms of Discipline, including Punishment

- In his "Family Encyclopaedia of Child Psychology and Development", Bruno (1992 : 90) has the following to say about discipline:

  Discipline: A loosely organized set of methods used by parents, teachers, and other caretakers to manage the behaviour of children, particularly their social behaviour. Frequently, discipline is overly equated with the concepts of punishment and restriction. It is worth pointing out that discipline is related to the word disciple. Fitzhugh Dobson, a child psychologist, has pointed out that to discipline a child is to make the child one's disciple (i.e. one's "follower"). Taking this viewpoint, the responsible adult looks for ways to discipline in an effective and constructive manner. The principles associated with operant conditioning and behaviour modification generate a number of practical methods of discipline, particularly with toddlers and preschoolers.

  Effective discipline is, of course, an art, not a science. It involves bringing to bear upon the socialization of the child all that one knows about child development. Communication skills, for example, are of great importance.

  Disciplinary measures that discount a child's feelings, that are harsh and arbitrary, and that reflect hostility on the part of a parent are, on the whole, ineffective. They do not foster self-esteem and may create substantial amounts of resentment. And children who
are overly resentful may act out their aggressions in various antisocial ways.

There are several issues which come out of this elucidation about discipline, which will be taken up at various stages in this dissertation. Discipline has do with the management of the child's social behaviour and teaching them principles by which to live. The parents, teachers and other caretakers are authority figures with the natural or legal oversight of and responsibility for the particular child. Rich (1982 : 10) explains that "Authority types serve the following functions : expert, counsellor, role model, legislator, disciplinarian and office holder." These terms are fairly self-explanatory, although Rich (1982 :14) does point out that while in a social context the legislative and law-enforcement functions are separate, "... parents and teachers as authority figures not only serve in a legislative but also in a disciplinary capacity". It hardly needs to be said that both parents and teachers wield great power over children although, as we shall see later, there are restrictions on that power, and the restrictions are growing. Rich (1982 : 19) makes the further important point that, "... each person is usually expected to move from a state of dependence to one of independence. What constitutes "independence" varies from one culture to another ... The human infant has a longer period of dependency than most animals .... " We could say, then, that the objective or goal of authority figures is to train the child during its dependent years, to display correct and desirable behaviour and negatively to prevent the child from repeating bad and unacceptable behaviour. This will be what is socially and culturally acceptable in the context of the rules of the household or school, and the laws of the country. Various means can be used to achieve this goal. Rich distinguishes between moral persuasion, coercion and power and believes that although these three approaches can be used by an authority figure, they are not necessarily only related to authority. He explains moral persuasion as follows:

A great deal of moral persuasion takes place between parent and child; it can also be found, but on a more limited scale, in teacher-student and administrator-student relations. Moral persuasion is concerned with right and wrong behaviour and is based on a code of conduct or on an ethical system. [Author's note - see the previous chapter which deals with deontological ethics]. To persuade someone morally is to try to get the person to do something or adopt a course of action by using arguments, promises, entreaties, or expostulations. Moral persuasion may
appeal as much to feelings and emotions as it does to reason (Rich 1982: 38).

Of coercion he writes:

Lasswell and Kaplan view coercion in relation to constraint and inducement. They hold that constraint is employed by threats of deprivation and inducement by the promise or prospect of indulgence. Thus coercion is found whenever constraint and/or inducement is high and choice is low.

But some have viewed coercion differently. McCloskey claims that inducements are separate from coercion ... whenever someone is coerced, they still have a choice to act otherwise and inducements sometimes evoke irresistible desire, then the person in the latter case is not coerced (Rich 1982: 39).

Regarding inducement, I agree with Rich that McCloskey's case is not convincing and that inducements are really a part of coercion. Finally, power is defined:

Power is the ability to get someone to carry out one's will despite resistance on their part.... The use of coercion would be a form of power (if the coercion were successful), but power is the more encompassing of the two terms and therefore has forms other than coercion. Power may be exercised by the use of force..... Power may also be used in conditioning, behaviour modification, hypnosis, personal charisma, propaganda and other devices - at least in those instances where these devices render the subject incapable of resisting. Power is also closely related to influence (Rich 1982: 40 - 1).

To summarise, parents and teachers attempt to develop and where necessary modify child behaviour along certain acceptable lines. In order to achieve this, as authority figures, they may use moral persuasion, coercion (threatening punishment or offering rewards) or force. Punishment may be further divided into corporal punishment or other methods such as withdrawal of privileges (this will be further dealt with in later chapters). This whole process, in one form or another, as outlined above, will continue, successfully or unsuccessfully, as long as the child is subject to them. It can be depicted diagrammatically as follows:
In the previous chapter we considered recent resistance to corporal punishment. However, there is a strong body of support which resists any form of punishment. If we refer back to Bruno's definition of discipline at the beginning of this chapter, we will see that he comments that, "... frequently, discipline is overly equated with the concepts of punishment and restriction. Hicks (1988 : 2) categorically states that, "... discipline is about how people can learn to control themselves so that they can live in harmony with themselves and their neighbours. It is NOT about punishment". This statement leads us into a discussion on a fundamental difference in approach to discipline, i.e. should children in fact "be disciplined" or should they learn to discipline themselves? We will now consider these two approaches.

**External Authority Discipline**

Proponents of the traditional, external authority approach to discipline believe that children have to be taught discipline and, if necessary, it must be enforced in various ways, including corporal punishment. They have observed that children, from their earliest years, naturally act selfishly, defiantly, dangerously etc., and that simple talking, even pleading or threatening does not change behaviour. Those familiar with the Old Testament would quote Proverbs 22:15 : "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a
child" and would point to the various biblical passages dealing with the importance of discipline. They believe that correct behaviour must be taught even if negatively through punishment, so that the child is protected from itself and others are protected from the results of the wrong behaviour of the child. Many realise that punishment is not ideal, but can see no alternative to adopting this approach. They may not quite put it in terms of "the end justifies the means", but would come close to advocating this by claiming that if corporal punishment, especially as a last resort, achieves correct behaviour, then the positive good outweighs any negative side that there may be. This is of course a teleological approach to ethics, where the action of punishment is good because of the good goal that is being aimed at. More specifically, this is act-utilitarianism, which Wellman (1975: 39) explains:

It is called utilitarianism because it asserts that what makes an act right or wrong is utility or disutility; it is called act utilitarianism because it asserts that it is the utility of the act that is morally relevant. On this view, an act is right or wrong depending on the degree to which it is useful or harmful.

It is difficult, however, to determine what it is to be useful, and how utility is to be measured. Also, as stated in the previous chapter, actions can have short term results which appear to be good and long term results which are obviously bad. But such people sincerely believe that a "good hiding or other punishment when necessary, never did anyone any real harm". Many would point to the fact that they themselves were disciplined in this way as children and they turned out acceptably. People who fall into this category would vary greatly in their approach to the severity, extent and timing of punishment. Usually the use of corporal punishment would decrease as the child gets older, out of the very nature of things such as the physical size of the child. However, I am still amazed to hear of older teenagers who still get a thrashing from strict fathers. Wherever they may fall within the punishment spectrum, they all believe that it is their duty to enforce discipline upon the child, certainly at least until the child is independent and outside of their custody and control. After that, they realise that they are no longer responsible, and feel that the enforced discipline was worthwhile, even if the child abandons some of the principles later. There is in any case always the hope that the child may eventually return to them. Again this is a teleological ethic and we will return to this in chapters 3 and 4. Here are some examples of this type of thinking.
Fisher & Fisher (1986: 50) after warning against too harsh discipline, state:

We do not want to leave the impression that parents should not at times be tough and punitive. There are misbehaviours that may well merit a tough response. Parents need to know how to use power-oriented discipline when it is appropriate. We have warned only against excessive use of power. Actually, if parents are afraid to use power-oriented discipline, their kids will detect the fact and share in their anxiety.

James Dobson (1987:67), describing a young mother's lost battle with a strong willed child who refused to be strapped into her seat on an aircraft, and ran uncontrolled up and down the isle, writes:

Why didn't I help her? Because my advice would have offended the mother. The child desperately needed the security of strong parental leadership at that moment, but the woman had no idea how to provide it. A few sharp slaps on the legs would probably have taken some of the fire out of her. The affair could have ended with a sleeping child curled in her mother's loving arms. Instead, it set the stage for even more violent and costly confrontations in the years ahead.

He later adds: "The tougher the temperament of the child, the more critical it is to 'shape his will' early in life" (1987:92).

And even Dr Benjamin Spock (1968: 302 - 3) regarded by many as the father of the permissive approach to child-rearing, in answer to the question "Is punishment necessary?" writes:

The only sensible answer is that a great majority of good parents feel that they have to punish once in a while ..... Before we go further with the subject of punishment, we ought to realize that it is never the main element in discipline - it is only a vigorous additional reminder that the parent feels strongly about what he says ..... The best test of a punishment is whether it accomplishes what you are after, without having other serious effects.

In summary, then, external authority discipline seeks to instil discipline by an authority outside of the child. It is prepared to punish, even physically punish, any infractions of the laid-down rules and procedures, in order to achieve desired behaviour. As stated,
this is a teleological argument, although many people adopting this position, would also use a deontological argument and say that external discipline is right. The evaluation of external authority discipline follows after the next section, when I compare it with internal or self-discipline.

Internal or Self-Discipline

In contrast to external authority discipline there is a growing body of opinion which adopts a radically different approach to discipline. This is again summed up by Rice (1987 : 5) as follows:

Self discipline, embodying an ideal of growth toward independence and self-control rather than dominant external authority and punitive measures (Dewey, 1987), should be the ultimate goal of disciplinary strategies. The researcher regards self discipline and corporal punishment as opposing ends of a continuum.

The last sentence of the quotation is rather strongly put and indicates the vast difference between the two approaches. Internal or self-discipline advocates are basically saying that only disciplinary principles that are internalised by the child through its own cooperation and an act of its will, will have any real meaning in its life. Hicks (1988 : 2) states categorically that: "... discipline is about how people can learn to control themselves so that they can learn to live in harmony with themselves and their neighbours. It is NOT about punishment". Swart (1988 : 45) gives a good description of "invitational discipline" when he states that:

Children feel invited when they feel accepted, valued and capable. Invitational discipline requires a particular stance defined as the theoretical position from which the parent, teacher etc. operates. This stance largely determines their level of personal and professional functioning. In invitational discipline the stance consists of five elements: Trust, Acceptance, Respect, Intentionality and Optimism shortened to TARIO.

He goes on to explain these terms. The first three, i.e. trust in, acceptance of and respect for the child are fairly obvious. Intentionality refers to a persistent positive
attitude in the parent or teacher and the optimism refers to the ability to see the potential in the child and the success in self-discipline that could be achieved.

One of the most comprehensive treatments of internal or self-discipline is found in Thomas Gordon's provocative book, "Teaching Children Self Discipline". Gordon begins by defining his terms and concludes this section by saying:

Most people would agree that we want our kids to be ardently cooperative, and considerate both at home and in school but there are intense differences about whether disciplining (the verb) is the best means to bring about discipline (the noun), a generally agreed upon end (1989:5).

Gordon goes on to distinguish two types of disciplining. That which is designed to teach or influence he finds acceptable and that which is designed to control he finds unacceptable. He then deals with the crucial difference between "other imposed discipline versus self-discipline". He explains the difference as follows:

Everyone is familiar with the term self-discipline, but what does it actually mean? Psychologists use the term locus of control, which I think is helpful here. Their investigations show that some people tend to have the locus of control inside themselves. With self-discipline the locus of control is inside the person, but with discipline enforced by others, the locus of control is outside the person - actually inside the controller (1989:7).

Gordon goes on to state that it is generally agreed that self control or discipline is desirable, but the debate is how the person is to get there.

Most parents and teachers take the position that children eventually will develop inner control automatically, as a direct result of adults applying outer control (discipline). This belief is rooted in a well known Freudian theory that claims that as children get older they will gradually internalize the early coercive controls of parents and other adults, until eventually those outer controls are transformed into inner controls and self-discipline.

Considerable evidence now exists that refutes this Freudian theory. Every day observation also tells us that self-discipline isn't formed that way. Remember this adage "When the cat's away the mice will play?" Well when adult controllers turn their backs, youngsters usually show little self-control. Sometimes they rebelliously do exactly what the adult authority has previously
prohibited them from doing .... Self disciplined youngsters, however are those who have always been given considerable personal freedom. Why? Because they have been allowed the chance to make many of their own choices and decisions ......

Throughout this book I hope to convince you that disciplining kids does not produce disciplined kids (1989 : 7, 8).

Gordon further advocates that children should be involved in setting limits and that the answer to the disciplining problem is neither in strictness or leniency but simply in teaching children to be self-disciplined. So-called "benevolent authority" is a myth. We cannot count on the reward system working, and punishment has many inherent deficiencies and dangers. Children have coping mechanisms which they use against control, all of which produce unacceptable behaviour.

It can be seen then, that advocates of self-discipline believe that only as children learn to discipline themselves, will there be any permanent display of good behaviour. They reject mere compliance with external rules in order to avoid punishment.

**Evaluation of External and Internal Discipline**

The concept of true self-discipline as opposed to external discipline ought to be clear from this summary of the first section of Gordon's book as well as the other authors quoted. But does it work, and what are the flaws and dangers in the approach? It seems to me from my observations and discussions with parents and teachers that while the concept is sound, it does not always work in practice. This in itself is of course not a reason per se to reject it. But are children really able to discipline themselves?

James Dobson (1978 : 65 - 6) in a question and answer section says:

There are many authorities who suggest that parents do not discipline their children for the reason implied by your question: they want their kids to discipline themselves. But since young people lack the maturity to generate that self-control, they stumble through childhood without experiencing either internal or external discipline. Thus, they enter adult life having never completed an unpleasant assignment, or accepted an order that they disliked, or yielded to the leadership of their elders. Can we expect such
a person to exercise self-discipline in young adulthood? I think not. He doesn't even know the meaning of the word.

I agree with Dobson for the most part. Many children would not see the need for self-discipline as they often do not take seriously the responsibility for or consequences of their own actions. It is all very well to try to achieve this, but the simple fact is that while children are dependent on their parents, they can never be made to be fully responsible for the consequences of their actions. Invariably, the parents have to pay for or suffer or bear the brunt of their dependent (and often even independent!) children's behaviour. So the child who refuses to study may end up with a poor schooling and remain a financial burden to its parents. The child who gets addicted to drugs or alcohol will bring untold agony and probably financial loss to its parents. The parents will often end up caring for the baby of a teenage girl who refused to discipline herself as to the places she went to and the company she kept. And so one could go on. Parents could thus strongly claim that because they are going to be affected by their dependent children's wrong behaviour, they have a right to enforce external discipline.

I am personally of the opinion that external authority discipline is worth the trouble if it achieves the right goal. This is of course, a teleological argument. Let us take the concrete example of forcing a child to study for examinations. If the child is successful in those examinations, a good goal is achieved, even if the child is not able to discipline him/herself to study in the future. The alternative is to leave the child to discipline him/herself and watch a failure if he/she cannot. That would be completely untenable to me. The way in which external authority discipline is carried out must surely also have some bearing on its successfulness or otherwise. M Scott Peck in his book *The Road Less Travelled* certainly suggests this. He sees discipline as the basic set of tools to solve life's problems and his development of this idea makes it clear that such discipline has to be learnt and internalised. However, he does not appear to reject external authority per se, but rather the way in which such discipline is exercised. He writes:

> It is not that the homes of these unself-disciplined children are lacking in parental discipline of a sort. More often than not these children are punished frequently and severely throughout their childhood - slapped, punched, kicked, beaten, and whipped by their parents for even minor infractions. But this discipline is
meaningless. Because it is undisciplined discipline one reason that it is meaningless is that the parents themselves are unself-disciplined, and therefore serve as undisciplined role models for their children. They are the "Do as I say, not as I do" parents... Yet even more important than role modelling is love... ultimately love is everything... So it is that the quality of discipline afforded by loving parents is superior to the discipline of unloving parents. (1978:21).

I would certainly agree that external discipline from parents who are themselves a good example and who discipline their children in love can only be more effective than the scenario sketched above.

In the past, most parents have been unaware of the merits of instilling self-discipline in their children and thus have not tried it or, if they did, did not do so in an effective way. A minority of parents have successfully enabled their children to self-regulate their own lives and learn to take responsibility for their own actions and it has been to the great advantage of both parent and child. But there are no guarantees that this will be achieved. The only evident conclusion is that while self-discipline is in theory superior to external discipline, it only works in relation to some children. It would also seem that self-discipline could better be taught to children as they grow older. One would then have a both/and rather than an either/or approach with children being disciplined externally when they are young and self discipline being given a bigger role as they mature. From the point of view of Christian ethics, there does not appear to be any reason to favour one method to the exclusion of the other. Children are individuals who are changing and developing all the time. We are touching here on the developmental approach to discipline, to which this discussion now turns.

The Developmental Approach to Discipline

The developmental approach to discipline is based on developmental theories relating to human beings. Tuckey (1994:39) summarises them as follows:

These developmental theories have all identified certain stages of development. Some people never reach the higher stages, but all must start at the lowest stage. These developmental theories can be divided roughly into cognitive and emotive theories of morality and faith. The cognitive approach features perceptual processes.
Adherents of this approach include, amongst others, Piaget, Goldman, Kohlberg and Fowler. The emotive approach features feelings and motivation and is advocated by Freud, Erikson and, to a certain extent, Fowler.

She goes on (1994:39-44) to discuss the theories of the above psychologists and writers. Whereas Jean Piaget had three stages in a child's mental and moral development, Lawrence Kohlberg (who was influenced by Piaget) extended this to six stages for moral judgement, which were basically paralleled by James Fowler. Piaget's first stage (prior to this he feels children have no concept of morality) is the egocentric stage from about three to six years, when moral rules are absolute and the difference between inward experience and outward reality is blurred. The second stage is the concrete operational stage from approximately seven to eleven years. Fair procedures are very important during this stage, when the child thinks specifically and literally about the immediate problem. Thirdly, there is the formal operational stage from about twelve years up, during which time the child can think hypothetically and abstractly. Here the child gains an understanding of people having to agree on moral rules, which have exceptions, and of motives on moral judgements. Piaget made a valuable contribution to developmental theory:

Piaget's research is valuable in that it shows that children are not little adults and do not understand things in the same way adults do. It is only from the age of twelve up (the third stage) that children develop the ability to conceptualise. Only then can they construct or understand theory or theology. (Tuckey 1994:39)

Kohlberg's levels take a person from the sole pursuit of self-interest to adherence to external standards and then to the affirmation of internal autonomous principles. In his first stage also from three to six years, there is a concern with obedience to avoid punishment. Stage two, six to ten years, is characterised by a highly developed sense of fairness which demands equality of treatment for all. Next comes the conventional level which covers the teenage years. Moral value consists of performing right roles, being good, and maintaining the conventional order and expectations of others. Justice means avoiding the disapproval of others or hurting them. The support of and approval by the peer group is of the utmost importance. Later, there is a concern with law and order. Finally, there are the post-conventional levels over twenty years. Justice is
defined in terms of the protection of individual rights. Only a few people reach the last stage of universal moral principles, where justice demands an equal consideration of all claims with all people being considered as ends and not means. The theories of both Piaget and Kohlberg have been built on by Mary Wilcox, who added a social perspective about how people perceive one another. For our purposes we note only her points that during the ages three to seven, adults are seen as being good and as having authority, and that during ages eight to ten although there is a useful exchange between people, there is little understanding of the others' point of view. James Fowler has six sequential, hierarchical and invariant patterns of faith that correspond to Kohlberg's stages of moral development. During stage one, three to seven years, authority is primarily family oriented, which continues into the next stage to age twelve. For Fowler, the important thing is one's attitude towards the ultimate, i.e. the end goal, in the various stages. If this attitude is positive, it is a step towards the next stage. This concludes our review of the cognitive theories. We look now at the emotive theories.

Eric Erikson's approach to development is based on the concept of a healthy personality. This comes through developing a sense of trust which can withstand future threats, and lead from total dependency to being a person in his/her own right. Erikson assumes a relationship between individuals and society as being primarily co-operative and mutually supportive, but this is certainly not always the case. Tuckey (1994 : 43) summarises the difference between the emotive and cognitive stories as follows:

One of the differences between the emotive stages of Erikson and the cognitive stages of Piaget and his successors is that the emotive stages are based on emotional responses to biological changes and so everyone moves through each stage. There can be emotional gains or losses at each succeeding stage. By contrast the cognitive stages represent changes in the structure of what people perceive and understand. Stages follow on one from another and no stage can be skipped and one may not move through all the stages. The cognitive approach assumes that both faith and morality are grounded in the perceptual process. The aim is a universalised morality and faith. The emotive approach is grounded in certain emotional responses to social relationships. The aim is a healthy personality and a contribution to society.

Developmental theories are interesting and useful to explain recurring behaviour at various stages of growth in individuals. However, they should not be regarded as set
in concrete and there are always exceptions to every rule. From a Christian point of view, their greatest weakness is that they do not allow for radical transformation through God's Holy Spirit working in peoples lives. Nevertheless, in the context of discipline, the development theories give an indication as to what forms of discipline are best suited to the various stages of a child's life. (Sprinthall, Sprinthall & Oja 1994 : 556 - 558) have the following to say about classroom discipline:

Although the problems of classroom discipline have been with us from the beginning of formal instruction, solutions have been elusive. Generally, most approaches to classroom discipline have been too singular. Each school of thought, so to speak, recommends a single procedure almost regardless of the age of the pupil or the situation. It's like writing a single prescription to be used in any emergency situation. For example, it is common to find a particular dictum or discipline law promoted as the answer.

In order to avoid the trap of single prescriptions, the developmental method of discipline requires that we view the problem from a complex perspective. We have made the point that the way in which a pupil understands intellectual or academic material (Piaget), value questions (Kohlberg), and personal issues (Erikson) depends on the child's stage. The same is true for discipline. Therefore, if we apply Kohlberg's framework of general value judgement to the question of how pupils understand rules and order, we'll have a more appropriate scheme for discipline. Essentially, the question becomes: Which sanctions should I use as a teacher? What procedures may be more effective with which children? What is the repertoire of methods I should use as opposed to an exclusive reliance on any single type?

What they say about the classroom situation can to a certain extent also be applied to the home situation. The developmental model of discipline will be pursued in the following two chapters, as we consider punishment appropriate to the child's stage of development, both in the home and school situation.

Now that we have considered the subject of discipline, including punishment, it is time to turn to the situation that arises when punishment becomes abuse.

The Differences between Punishment and Abuse

In the previous chapter describing recent resistance to corporal punishment and the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, we touched on the subject of child
abuse. We look at this issue now in greater detail. Let me define what I mean by child abuse. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Eighth Edition), includes the following under "abuse".

Use to bad effect or for a bad purpose; misuse, incorrect or improper use, maltreatment of a person.

Under "child abuse" appears the following definition:

Maltreatment of a child, especially by physical violence or sexual interference.

The concept, then, is clear, although the definition could also have included mental and psychological abuse. Abuse of children is not new but in the past few years it has reached alarming proportions. We need to bear in mind that it is only in recent years that the incidence of child abuse is being more regularly reported. It is thus difficult to know whether child abuse is on the increase, or whether the identification of child abuse is on the increase. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, it should be noted that we are only dealing with physical violence or abuse. Mental and psychological abuse, where the child is punished or attacked mentally and where the child is belittled and rejected, are not considered in this dissertation. We are also not considering sexual abuse, where under one pretext or another, the parent or another person molests the child sexually. Furthermore, it should also be clearly understood that we are only dealing with physical abuse which is related to corporal punishment and discipline. In other words, this dissertation only deals with corporal abuse of children, being abuse which flows out of punishment within the disciplining process. Physical abuse which arises from purely sadistic reasons, jealousy of the child or mental imbalance, are therefore also outside of the scope of this dissertation. Let us look then specifically at punishment which somehow becomes abuse, firstly in the home situation.

Punishment can easily become abuse. Greven (1990 : 186 - 193) in a chapter on "Domestic Violence" gives a good summary of what is going on in private homes, dealing first with Britain:

Physical violence and verbal violence have been and still are present in many families. Not only poor and marginal families experience these violent and painful impulses and act them out,
middle and upper-class families have their own versions of such violence. Only within the past two decades has the full extent of family aggression and pain begun to be recognized. In their powerful and disturbing analysis *Behind closed doors: Violence in the American Family* (1980), Murray Straus, Richard Gelles, and Suzanne Steinmetz document in detail the fact that domestic violence is normal throughout the land. The American family is often a most dangerous place to be, something police have long known from bitter experience with domestic conflicts and battles. Domestic violence is thus epidemic in our culture and society, as it is in Great Britain and other countries.

Domestic violence includes violence between husband and wife, which, although related to child abuse, does not directly concern us here, although it does influence the child's perception of physical punishment. A child who witnesses its father beating its mother (or vice-versa which is becoming more common these days!) may come to accept its beatings more readily, although the psychological scars are likely to be deeper. Corporal punishment for the purpose of discipline can become abuse when the parent is unable to control his or her anger or when he or she does not realize the limitations of the child's endurance. Many parents have a mistaken belief in the necessity for severe corporal punishment to teach their children "not to do it again." This is often a result of severe treatment received by them when they were children i.e. a perpetuation of the cycle of violence. Or, it can simply be ignorance as to what punishment is appropriate for children. I personally have been horrified at the variety of physical punishments that people known to me socially, and business associates, devised to discipline their children. These range from severe beatings, biting, choking, holding the head under cold water and rinsing the mouth out with soap. Their rationale would often be: "It's my child, I'll punish it as I see fit." Behind this could again be ignorance of parenting, fear, an unhealthy feeling of power, or a lack of accountability to society. Christian parents have also been guilty of abuse for the same reasons, i.e. lack of control or the mistaken belief that severe punishment is a necessity. Again this could be due to ignorance or a wrong interpretation of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament passages with which we have already dealt.

A question arises - should corporal punishment be completely avoided or forbidden because there are many cases of abuse? I do not believe so. There may be other good reasons not to use corporal punishment against children, but the existence of child
abuse on its own is not sufficient reason to do so. Abuse is a misuse of the disciplining process but to forbid it accordingly is to say that nothing should be done ever that could lead to abuse or excess. That it clearly untenable. Should we then not have a police force or judges because some police and judges are corrupt? For this reason, in the context of the debate about the corporal punishment of children, the true horror stories that abound are not totally relevant to our discussion. In her book, "For Your Own Good", Alice Miller (1980) deals with the horrifying childhood abuse suffered by Adolf Hitler and Jürgen Bartsen. This appears to have been due to mixture of sadism and a warped idea of the need for severe physical punishment. I do not lightly pass over these grim facts. However, I really question what this has to do with well-intentioned corporal punishment which is regulated and controlled and is part of a multi-faceted disciplining process. In later chapters we will consider controlled corporal punishment and alternative methods of discipline, both in the home and at school. At this stage I am simply refuting the emotive arguments of people who point to the abuse situations and then want to ban corporal punishment completely, however moderately it is carried out. In my opinion, this is a fallacious argument.

We turn our attention now to physical child abuse at schools. As was the case in the section dealing with parents, we are only considering physical abuse associated with corporal punishment. This is a well-documented area of school life, with plenty of empirical evidence. Much publicity has been given to abusive corporal punishment of children in United States schools. Greven (1990 : 98 - 108) refers to a well known case, i.e. Drew Junior High School in Dade County, Florida (1974). At Drew Junior High, students were "paddled" up to ten, twenty or even fifty times, sometimes being held down by school administrators. Dissent or protestations of innocence were not tolerated at all. One student who claimed to be innocent of any wrongdoing, refused to "hook up" i.e. bend for a caning.

The school administrator "then hit him five or ten times on his head and back with a paddle, and then hit him with a belt. The side of his head swelled, and an operation proved necessary to remove a lump of some sort which had developed" after being "struck". On another occasion, the same student had been given "ten licks", after which his "chest hurt and he threw up 'blood and everything'"...... the student "also reacted to this paddling by 'shaking all over' and 'trembling and required treatment at a local hospital" (Greven 1990 : 11 - 100).
From the same school came the 1976 United States Supreme Court case of Ingraham vs Wright. Fourteen year old James Ingraham was one of a number of students accused of being slow to leave the stage of the school auditorium when asked to do so by a teacher. James protested, claiming he was innocent and refused to be paddled. He was held down struggling by two school administrators and hit at least twenty times. The result was:

Young Ingraham then left school and went home, where he found "his backside was 'black and purple and it was tight and hot". Later, "The examining doctor diagnosed the cause of James's pain to be a 'haematoma',' and told him to remain home for one week. During the trial, "James testified that it was painful even to lie on his back in the days following the paddling, and that he could not sit comfortably for about three weeks" (Greven 1990: 99).

The above cases serve to illustrate physical abuse which has occurred at schools. The noteworthy feature of the Ingraham vs Wright case, is that Ingraham lost the case because the Supreme Court, though a five votes to four split vote, refused to invoke the protection of the Eighth Amendment relating to "cruel and unusual punishment". While acknowledging the harshness of the school's punishments, the Court justified corporal punishment by referring to tradition, English and American common-law precedents reaching back to the eighteenth century, and the continuing use of corporal punishment by twenty one states in America at that time. Also interesting from our point of view is that the dissenting judge did not oppose corporal punishment per se but only its severity in the particular case. The tradition and common-law precedents in Britain and America referred to by the judge would certainly have arisen out of the traditional Christian teaching referred to in chapter one, when the widespread use and advocacy of corporal punishment in both countries was highlighted. It is easy to see how such a tradition could be a powerful factor in swaying the court in favour of the school, rather than the pupil who was caned. Physical abuse has taken place at schools in many other countries, including Britain and South Africa and is one of the chief reasons why it has now been banned in many schools in Britain and will soon be totally banned in South Africa. In view of the strong tradition in favour of corporal punishment, it seems
that banning it by statute is in fact the only way of ensuring eradication of the practice. We will return to this point in chapter four.

Physical child abuse at schools may take place for one of two reasons. Firstly, there is a lack of guidelines or rules for teachers regarding corporal punishment. Secondly, there is a lack of control by individual teachers in a given situation and thus non-adherence to laid-down rules. (The latter reason was probably the most prevalent in the old South Africa, given the explicit and comprehensive rules and guidelines that were laid down). There may in some cases be a deliberate flouting of laid-down rules. Today, where corporal punishment is permitted in schools, it is invariably strictly controlled. This is both as a result of a change in thinking as well as a practical precaution in a changed world. School Boards are very conscious of their vulnerability to lawsuits from pupils and their parents, and they have been forced to strictly regulate physical punishment of children attending their schools. How corporal punishment can be regulated will be discussed shortly.

The problem remaining, therefore, is that of teachers who cannot control themselves or who wilfully choose to ignore the rules. Many would argue that as long as corporal punishment is permitted, there will continue to be abuse. This for them is a strong motive to advocate the complete abolition of corporal punishment in schools. However, as I pointed out in the previous section dealing with child abuse in the home, the occurrence of physical child abuse per se is not necessarily a valid reason to ban corporal punishment. Lack of teacher control can be countered by the regulations themselves (see chapter three) and teachers can easily be made aware of the inevitable consequences of illegal or excessive physical punishment. Also, in today's world pupils who are physically abused at school are no longer keeping quiet and just accepting it, and neither are their parents. Teachers are aware of the very real danger of lawsuits against them personally by parents, and this makes them think twice before resorting to unacceptable physical punishment which could be classified as abuse.

To summarise, corporal abuse, in the form of excessive corporal punishment, is wrong and can never be justified. There is certainly no place for it in Christian ethics, as it violates the concept of the sanctity of the child and the requirements of justice and love. It needs to be guarded against both in the home and school situation through education.
and regulation. The fact that corporal abuse occurs is not of itself a reason to ban corporal punishment outright.

This concludes our discussion on punishment and abuse and we turn now specifically to corporal punishment in the home.
CHAPTER 3

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE HOME

Few people would disagree with Rich's (1982:100) comment that parents have the right to have children and raise them. Yet how many parents are prepared and equipped to undertake the responsibilities of parenting, which is surely one of life's greatest challenges? Van Kraayenburg (1988:3) makes the wry comment:

Many young couples planning to start a family are living in the illusion that a marriage certificate or the model they experienced from their parents equips them for parenthood, and never feel a need to acquire "parenting skills".

The child that is born into a home did not and could not choose its parents. It comes unsuspectingly into that home for better or for worse. Kretzschmar (1993 : 19,20) makes this sobering assessment of the situation:

The experiences of childhood have a major impact upon the human personality. Although the debate still rages as to whether genetic factors (the way we are born) or environmental factors (the way that we are brought up) are the most significant influencing factors, there can be no doubt that family influences are deep and long-lasting. At times, the moral perceptions of adults can be traced back to childhood or teenage experiences. Furthermore, it must be remembered that people are influenced not only by their conscious thoughts, but also by their unconscious fears, needs, and ambitions. Because we, as persons, are complex beings, our moral values and perceptions cannot be reduced to a few simple formulas. In a very real sense, then, we cannot understand the moral values and judgements of others until we first come to understand the roots of our own moral values and judgements.

It is not long before the parents awake with a jolt to the fact that their little angel can also act like a little devil! We have already seen in the previous chapter that a child's early years are characterised by self centredness. Inevitably unacceptable behaviour is displayed which has to be countered by the parents. The stage is set for confrontation and so begins a long process of attempts to modify and re-direct the child's behaviour and attitudes. Verwoerd (1988 : ii) comments that: "The purpose of the disciplinary function is to allow the child to make choices in relation to new challenges and
experiences within the frame-work of his family's value system". That value system is, of course, predominantly determined by the parents. Rich (1982: 6) points out that "The child's first confrontation with authority is in the home, and authority patterns established there can be highly influential in the student's attitudes toward school authorities". In the previous chapter we looked at the different aspects of authority i.e. as expert, counsellor, role-model, legislator and disciplinarian - all of which relate to parents. Parents are to use their God-given authority to, "Train a child in the way he should go" so that, "When he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22: 6 N.I.V). In the final analysis, the goal of parenting is the autonomy of the child as a responsible adult in his own right one day. The parents will achieve this to a great extent through the disciplining process described in the previous chapter. The specific questions we turn to now are:

- should corporal punishment be administered in the home situation?
- if so, how should it be administered?
- what are the effects of corporal punishment on children?

Should Corporal Punishment be Administered in the Home?

While statistics are obviously not available because of the privacy of individual homes, it seems that there are still very few modern parents who do not resort to physical punishment at one stage or another of the child's life (see the results of the interviews conducted below). In the introduction and chapter one of this dissertation, I alluded to the fact that the world has changed dramatically over the past twenty years or so, although historically there has been an awareness of the need for change from an autocratic and unjust society. Today, ours is the age of democracy and individual human rights, and people can no longer treat others as they wish, as they may have done in the past. This is also true of parents as they relate to their children. Some have begun to question the old methods of disciplining children such as the use of physical punishment, and are seeking alternative solutions. Yet, despite the liberal society that has emerged, the majority of parents still seem to give hidings to their children (see the results of the interviews conducted with Christian parents as described in the following pages).
The use of physical punishment is usually particularly used during the child's earlier years. This is invariably because it is not possible at that stage to "use psychology", bargain, reason or appeal to better behaviour. I have often (with some amusement) watched parents try to do these things with very young children. When all else failed, a hefty whack finally settled the matter and produced the required response. At this point I am not condoning this action, but merely describing the de facto situation. Thus the issue for most parents is not whether or not to spank, but rather at what age or stage in the child's development to stop using corporal punishment. Eventually, of course, the child in most cases becomes just too big physically to punish and common sense tells most parents that a change in policy is required. In the previous chapter we looked at the developmental models. In chapter four I reproduce a model from Sprinthall et al (1994) which attempts to match pupil discipline at schools, with their respective stages of development. I will comment further on this model in chapter four but at this stage I refer to their acknowledgement that at the first stage the use of physical means to require compliance is appropriate. What the physical means should entail is debatable as is the question of when the use of those physical means should cease. White South African parents, the majority of whom have some Christian background, have tended to use smacking in the main to achieve their objectives, and this can often continue until the teenage years.

In order to assess the attitudes and practices of modern-day white Christian parents to corporal punishment, interviews were conducted with ten fathers and nine mothers. The interviews were conducted with parents resident in Secunda (my former place of residence) and in Edenvale where I now reside. I selected parents whom I knew and thought would be willing to be interviewed on such a sensitive subject. I was convinced that interviews were more suitable than impersonal questionnaires and would yield more complete and honest responses. Of those interviewed, six couples and one father are Baptists, two couples are Methodists and one couple Catholic. I deliberately chose some parents outside of my own denomination and those so chosen indicate a uniformity of attitudes and practice when compared with my fellow Baptists. The parents interviewed are all from the middle class strata of society.

The first interview was conducted on 17 August and the last on 23 October 1996. The total time spent on the interviews was approximately eight hours. I had intended
interviewing more parents but time constraints on my part as well as the unavailability of prospective interviewees did not allow for this. Several were not available for a week or so, others were too busy to see me at all, and one parent refused outright as he felt he had “not got it right” and felt too embarrassed to discuss the subject of corporal punishment. In the event the results were conclusive, and I did not feel that further interviews would have substantially influenced the conclusions reached in this dissertation. The interviews are not the core of the dissertation, being designed simply to gather empirical evidence to substantiate perceived attitudes and practices of white Christian parents in the past. Only white parents were interviewed because the result of empirical studies reported in works consulted in this study, indicated a clear pattern in the black community at large (see below).

A semi-structured approach was adopted in that a questionnaire was used which allowed latitude for the parents to talk freely. The questions that were asked are reproduced below:

Questions for a semi-structured interview conducted with certain Christian parents

Definitions given for Clarification:

Corporal or physical punishment - the intentional affliction of physical hurt on the body of the child, with a view to punishment and/or discipline.

Discipline - a loosely organized set of methods used by parents, teachers and other caretakers to manage the behaviour of children. Discipline includes but is not limited to punishment.

1. Were you physically punished in the home as a child?

   1.1 What form did this take?

   1.2 Who punished you?

   1.3 How often were you punished?
1.4 Why were you so punished?

1.5 How did you feel about it then?

1.6 Did you accept it as part of the discipline process?

2. How do you now feel about corporal punishment in the home?

3. Do you/have you physically punished your own children?

3.1 If yes what physical punishment have you used?

4. Up to what age/developmental stage do you think physical punishment should be used?

5. Were you physically punished at school?

5.1 What form did this take?

5.2 Who punished you?

5.3 How often were you punished?

5.4 Why were you so punished?

5.5 How did you feel about it then?

5.6 Did you accept it as part of the discipline process?

6. How do you now feel about corporal punishment at school?

7. How do you feel about the ban on corporal punishment now in force in South African schools?
8. Do you think that corporal punishment has adverse psychological and social effects on children?

9. What would you say is the difference between corporal punishment and corporal abuse?

10. With hindsight, would you have adopted a different policy in bringing up your children?

11. Do you have any other feelings/thoughts about corporal punishment that you would like to share?

The results of the interviews demonstrate clearly that virtually all parents were themselves physically punished at home and that they in turn physically punished their own children. Only one father was not so punished by his own father who apparently was a most unusual man who often left his naughty children waiting in suspense for a hiding which never materialised! Two of the mothers interviewed were also not physically punished that they can recollect, and they attribute this to the fact that they were very compliant with their parent’s wishes. The parents who were punished in the home were hit with straps, belts, or an open hand. One father was hit with fists by his father who was a drunkard. The offences which led to these punishments included disobedience, cheek, lying, dishonesty, swearing, smoking and coming home late from school. Most were punished by both father and mother but some by only the father or the mother. One father who was removed from a broken home received hidings from his grandmother and uncle. On the whole, fathers were more frequently given a hiding than mothers. In the vast majority of cases, both parents accepted their physical punishment as justified and part of the disciplinary process. The father with the drunk father felt bitter about unfair punishments which turned him against his father. One mother who grew up with a stepfather who punished all the children when one was naughty, felt that this was very unfair. She accepted punishment for her own misdemeanours but not for those of others. All parents now feel that there is still a place for corporal punishment but most would only use it as a last resort when all other means to achieve discipline have failed. All parents had also physically punished their own children with hand slaps, a cane or a slipper. Most felt that physical punishment is only
appropriate up to the beginning of the teenage years, although one father felt it could continue while the child was still at school if need be. One couple stopped spanking their children at age seven but this happened in an unplanned way.

The school situation revealed a similar pattern although here the mothers were physically punished far less frequently than the fathers and mainly by means of being hit with a ruler on their open palm. One mother was hit on the bottom with a hairbrush, one had her ears twisted on occasions and one was punched on the shoulder by a particular teacher. Two fathers were subjected to sadistic punishments such as hair pulling, nose and ears being twisted and being whipped with wire. Punishment was carried out by headmasters, deputy headmasters, teachers and in the case of one father who was at boarding school, by school prefects. The majority of both fathers and mothers were physically punished infrequently for offences such as talking, being disobedient or insolent, not doing homework, being late for school or playing truant. Two fathers and three mothers were punished for poor academic results. The great majority of fathers and mothers accepted their physical punishment as being deserved and justified. One mother felt resentful and that it was not justified and another felt the same on occasions when she was emotionally unstable due to her unhappy home situation. Surprisingly, all fathers and mothers still felt that there is a place for corporal punishment in schools. There were, however, some qualifying remarks such as making corporal punishment a last resort and the recognition that children are different and need to be punished differently. One mother did not disagree with the principle of corporal punishment at school, but felt that far too many teachers were sadistic and needed to be educated and controlled in their use of punishment. Needless to say, all parents felt that the imminent ban on corporal punishment in South Africa schools is a mistake. Half felt that it is a serious mistake that will lead to a break-down in school discipline.

When asked whether they thought that corporal punishment has adverse psychological and social effects on children, all parents interviewed replied that they did not believe this to be the case. One father and two mothers felt that there could be a problem in a tiny minority of cases, where the child was abnormally sensitive, or abnormal in some other way. All the parents interviewed believed that punishment must fit the crime and that excessive punishment could be classified as abuse. All parents also stated that
they would follow the same discipline policy (including corporal punishment) if they had their lives over again. One couple said they would however be slightly more cautious before making decisions. Other thoughts from some parents were that boys and girls need to be punished differently, corporal punishment helps children understand how strongly parents feel about wrongdoing, punishment must have a teaching aspect and be done in love, corporal punishment is biblical, children must learn to "take their knocks in life" and more discipline for children is needed in South Africa in general. The father who made the last remark also stated strongly that the death penalty should be brought back.

This gives an indication of current practice by and belief of some white South African Christian parents regarding corporal punishment. It certainly confirms my general knowledge, understanding and experience of the situation, and I believe is representative of this group. Black South African parents also support corporal punishment extensively. Sihlangu (1992) found that the majority of both parents and teachers in the rural areas support the use of corporal punishment. Monyooe (1986) found the same in both secondary and high schools in Lesotho. What about other countries? A study on crime in Australian schools in 1987 showed significant support from parents for corporal punishment, and Elrod and Terrell (1991 : 189) mention that, in America: "Administrators and teachers point out that parents and other members of the community exert pressure to ensure that corporal punishment remains as a threat to students who misbehave frequently". But what about the deontological ethical question - is it right for parents to physically punish in the home? Rich (1982 : 14, 15) answers this question as follows:

Parents have the right to corporally punish their children so long as the punishment is reasonable and does not harm or injure the child. What is reasonable punishment would depend on the age of the child and the nature of the penalty.

I tend to agree with Rich, although many others might disagree. I indicated in the previous section on external authority discipline that parents have a natural responsibility for their children. I also pointed out in the section on recent resistance to corporal punishment, that punishment is a coherent moral principle which recognizes the differences between right and wrong. I believe, then, that the foregoing principles
give parents the right to corporally punish their children in a reasonable manner, and that such a position is consistent with Christian ethical principles.

As mentioned in the last chapter, in the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, there is no definition of "abuse", and Article 9 allows for the removal of children from their parents in the case of abuse. Would corporal punishment ever be regarded as abuse? This seems to be a distinct possibility in the future, in the light of developments in our world today. For quite some time, interested parties have voiced concern over child abuse at home and even the fact that corporal punishment is used at all, however mild. Some have expressed the view that the practice of children being spanked by their parents was akin to bullying someone smaller and should be stopped in the light of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child. However, unless we reach the stage of the scenario sketched in George Orwell's "1984" where the State monitors private households by means of closed-circuit TV, it would be well nigh impossible to enforce such a ban, which would be a radical step for any state to take. Apart from the impracticality of such a ban, I do not believe that it would be right, for the reasons already stated. Parents would still be responsible for their children but with an important power to enforce discipline removed from them. This argument appears to be lost on people who seem determined to prevent parents from physically punishing their children. As a current example, the following article appeared in the Star Newspaper of 9 September 1996:

Smacked boy challenges parents in court

London - a 12 year old British boy was launching a legal bid in the European Court of Human Rights today, challenging the right of his parents to smack him.

If he is successful, the case could result in smacking and other forms of beating being outlawed in British homes, bringing the nation into line with other European countries.

The boy, who cannot be named for legal reasons, is basing his case on an incident three years ago when he was beaten with a cane by his stepfather after trying to stab another child.

His stepfather was taken to court on charges of assault but was acquitted.
Lawyers acting for the boy are expected to argue that the British government failed to protect the child's human rights.

The boy's mother defended her right to punish her son, saying he had been "totally out of control" since a toddler.

The boy now lives with his natural father who is backing him in the case.

Corporal punishment is illegal in British schools, but courts have frequently acquitted parents who have beaten their children at home.

In this case, the fact that the boy tried to stab another child seems to be totally lost in the obsession with his own individual rights. The July 1996 edition of the Evangelical Times in Britain sheds light on what is happening there regarding the attempt to stop all physical punishment of children. The paper reports that at the end of November 1995, the Commission on Children and Violence called for a ban on all physical discipline of children. It further noted that twelve out of seventeen members of the Commission are associated with EPOCH (End Physical Punishment of Children), either as personal sponsors or as senior officers in organisations who have publicly identified themselves with the campaign to end "all physical punishment by education and legal reform". The article quotes the former Chief Rabbi, Lord Jakovits, who wrote in a national newspaper at the time.

The use of loaded emotive phrases such as "hitting people" and "violence" reveals the biased agenda of the commission.... There was not a person on the commission serving as an ordinary parent, the sort who knows in their bones that a smack is not a perverse act of hatred or brutality but a way of forcing a disruptive child to get a grip before it is too late".

His description of what ordinary parents think ties up with my summary of the views of those South African white Christian parents who were interviewed. The article also mentions that:

Local authorities have imposed rules to exclude from fostering, any couple who will not provide a blanket undertaking never to smack a fostered child. As a result, caring and potentially
valuable foster parents are being prevented from taking children into their homes, children who would no doubt benefit from the love and stability provided by a safe and secure family environment. Some authorities exclude from their list of approved child-minders anyone who will not provide a similar undertaking.

If this whole movement succeeds in its aims the position of parents in their task of bringing up and disciplining their children will indeed be an unenviable one. At present, parent education and the operation of watchdog organisations would seem to be the best options in the detection and prevention of parental child abuse. This will be commented on further in the next section.

At this point I would postulate that as it is the right of parents to have and raise children, it is also their right to discipline them, and this would include physical punishment. However, the operative principle is "reasonable" punishment, and this leads us into a discussion as to how corporal punishment should be administered in the home.

How Should Corporal Punishment be Administered in the Home?

Where physical punishment is to be used, it must above all be reasonable. For it to be so, I would like to suggest that the following principles should be observed.

- parents should not strike a child in uncontrolled anger;
- parents should only use their open palm or a safe instrument to strike a child, which should be on a safe part of the body, i.e. arm, leg or buttocks, never the head;
- the punishment should match the crime; this is a principle of our legal system;
- corporal punishment should only be used for wilful disobedience, never for mistakes or minor infringements of rules;
- corporal punishment should be used as a last resort, i.e. after the child has been requested to modify its behaviour and a warning has been given. (However, it is important that parents are consistent and that they do carry out threats of punishment, which otherwise become meaningless. How many children have not learned that only after say the fifth or sixth threat, and on the parent's voice attaining a particular high pitch to it, that now they had better listen!)
- the father and mother should preferably agree on a strategy for all punishment, and present a united front, so that the one is not "played off" against the other.
- corporal punishment should be only one part of an overall disciplinary strategy which should include alternative forms of punishment and an appropriate reward system. (Alternative forms of punishment could include confining the child to the house for a period, withdrawal of privileges, penalties on pocket money, additional household chores and so on. Giving children a choice of punishments can also have a positive effect in that it gives them some responsibility in the disciplinary process). Parents must always remember that each child is different and will respond differently to various forms of punishment.
- corporal punishment should certainly be phased out as the child gets older. At exactly what age, will depend on the individual child and home circumstances. Corporal punishment becomes physically difficult and more risky to the parent, as the child gets older and should be re-evaluated, certainly by the end of stage two in Kohlberg's developmental model when the child would be ten years old. This is because older children, particularly boys, may be tempted to fight back and also because of the unbearable humiliation that they may experience.

On paper it all seems easy, but as most parents know, it is anything but easy! However, as the challenges on parents increase, so do the resources to meet those challenges. The spotlight that is on parents can be very helpful and seen in a positive light. Parents are no longer being left to their own devices with little outside help and little accountability. More parental counselling is available, as are more books and lectures on parenting techniques. However, some parents may not make use of or even agree with the new situation. It is largely up to them, but one thing is certain - there is no excuse for them to be uninformed or to repeat some of the serious mistakes in parenting that have been made in the past. The issue of corporal punishment is pivotal here. Parents have been made aware of the dangers and social unacceptability of physical child abuse and they ought also to be aware of the alternative forms of punishment and other techniques to achieve discipline. However, it is obvious that a lot more education of parents is required. This could be done by state departments and welfare groups making pamphlets available in public places particularly doctors' waiting rooms and maternity hospitals. Advertisements of help available could also be placed in newspapers, magazines and on television and radio.
Parents certainly need a lot of help and encouragement. Here the Christian church can make an important contribution. Through well-chosen sermons and subjects for Bible studies, parents can be taught the essential components of a balanced disciplining process, and reminded that it should always be done in love and with the child's best interests at heart. Children can be ministered to in Sunday School and encouraged to be obedient and thus contribute toward the whole process. Sensitive church leaders can counsel parents and children who are hurting, both individually and together. As Christian parents make full use of the human tools available to them, they should also remember that they are not alone in their task of parenting. God has given His Holy Spirit to guide and give wisdom and strength. One day they will have to give account to Him as to how they have fulfilled their parenting responsibilities. They would do well to remember the passages in the Gospels which warn that causing a child to stumble is worse than having a millstone tied around one's neck and being cast into the sea. (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2).

The Psychological and Social Effects of Corporal Punishment in the Home

No consideration of the corporal punishment of children would be complete without considering the possible result of such a policy on both the child and society. We are thus dealing here with issues of teleology. Here we enter a realm where there are again many varying opinions and conjectures. Studies have been conducted to try to assess the effects of corporal punishment on an individual in later life but here again the interpretation of the data and the conclusions drawn are open to debate. At the heart of the debate is the question as to whether or not corporal punishment is detrimental to children and, thus, to society in both the short and long terms. The other side of the coin, of course, is the question as to whether not punishing children may have an adverse affect on them. As many writers deal with both the results of corporal punishment in the home and school situations, it is difficult to separate them into watertight compartments. They are, of course, inextricably linked. Thus, although this section deals primarily with the results of corporal punishment by parents, it will also contain references to corporal punishment by teachers. The sub-section in chapter four will then expand on this one and deal with further situations specific to the school situation.
Those in favour of corporal punishment deny that it has a detrimental effect on children. They admit that there have been abuses and that these obviously are bad for children and for society. But, they would say, the abuse situation is not under discussion. They claim that responsible corporal punishment, as described earlier in this discourse, never did anyone any harm. The immediate result for the child is unpleasant and obviously painful, but then it is intended to be. There may be anger, resentment and a host of other emotional responses against the parent or teacher at the time, but these are not likely to last long. Deep down, the child accepts the punishment and benefits from the disciplining process. It follows then, that they deny any adverse long term effects on either the child or society. Vockell (1991 : 278-9) summarises this position as follows:

Even the most ardent opponents of corporal punishment should be willing to acknowledge that there are at least superficial benefits to that disciplinary technique. Even if corporal punishment is usually harmful, it must be admitted that a very large number of well-adjusted, normal adults have received corporal punishment during their formative years, and nearly all of these people can identify at least some occasions when it "did them some good". The real question is whether the disadvantages outweigh the advantages.

He gives the three main advantages of corporal punishment as being that it is perceived by the recipient as being unpleasant, it can be administered quickly, and that it is a very clear, specific, and obvious consequence (no ambiguity).

Dr James Dobson (1982 : 13) says of a wilfully disobedient child, " .... your daughter, if not properly disciplined, would be in a 'high risk' category for antisocial behaviour later in life." He goes on to say, "... but children who know no law higher than their own passing fancy become trapped by their own appetites" (1982 : 155). When confronted with the proposition that corporal punishment teaches children to hit and hurt others, Dobson (1982 : 155) retorts:

How ridiculous it seems to blame America's obsession with violence on the disciplinary efforts of loving parents! This conclusion is especially foolish in view of the bloody fare offered to our children on television each day. The average sixteen-year-old has watched 18 000 murders during his formative years, including a daily bombardment of knifings, shootings, hangings, decapitations, and general dismemberment. Thus, it does seem strange that the psychological wizards of our day search
elsewhere for the cause of brutality and eventually point the finger of blame at the parents who are diligently training our future responsible citizens. Yet this is the kind of "press" that has been given in recent years to parents who believe in spanking their disobedient children.

Dealing with another claimed result of corporal punishment, Dobson (1982:158) says:

The fourth argument against the judicious practice of spanking comes from those who see it as damaging to the dignity and self-worth of the child. Suffice it to say at this point that a child is fully capable of discerning whether his parent is conveying love or hatred. This is why the youngster who knows he deserves a spanking appears almost relieved when it finally comes. Rather than being insulted by the discipline, he understands its purpose and appreciates the control it gives him over his own impulses.

Supporters of corporal punishment often point to behaviourists' studies. Greven (1990:115,6) quotes Newson, Favell and Rincover's conclusion that:

At the present time, there is simply insufficient evidence to conclude that punishment, as commonly used in homes, schools, and clinical settings, produces maladaptive behaviour patterns that might be considered to indicate emotional disturbance. Note the qualification, "as commonly used". Those attributing the most damaging effects to punishment often confuse punishment as used contingently by parents, teachers, and therapists with child abuse, the excessive use of painful stimuli in a generally non-contingent manner. Little progress in resolving the question of a possible connection between emotional disturbance and punishment is likely until this distinction is widely understood.

Here behaviourists seem to join fundamentalists and other religious advocates of physical punishments in insisting that "punishment, as commonly used in normal homes, schools, and clinical settings" cannot be associated with "maladaptive behaviour patterns" or "emotional disturbance".

But although there may be many ordinary people who would support the views, expressed above, probably the great majority of psychologists, sociologists and educators are beating an entirely different drum. The claims made regarding the varied adverse effects of the corporal punishment of children, are quite staggering. Let us look at some of these.
Cherian (1989: 96 - 98) in a questionnaire experiment on Xhosa-speaking girls and boys in the Transkei (age range 13 - 17), demonstrated that: "... the academic performance of pupils decreased as the frequency of punishment of different intensities increased in all but two (0.2%) cases ..., " and concluded, "... the results in Table 1 suggest that there is a negative relationship between parental punishment and the academic performance of children ..." The context of the study, i.e. the Transkei, cannot be representative because as he states, "In Transkei, the Xhosa man, as head of the family, wields the rod and wields it lustily. Xhosa children, boys in particular are brought up strictly - they must obey their parents, stick to etiquette in adult company and honour tribal customs and traditions (Eliot 1970:16)". However, there have long been claims by both parents and teachers, as to the negative effect of corporal punishment on pupils' academic achievement. Rice (1987: 5,6) sums up past research and conclusions as follows:

There exists overwhelming scientific evidence contra-indicating punishment and corporal punishment, and its effect on the learning process and behaviour (Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1953; Thorndike, 1931; Watson, 1924). Furthermore, substantial research results have produced a disturbingly endless list of undesirable side effects which are caused by these strategies.

Hentoff (1973) notes that punishment causes a deterioration in the learning process, leading to the inhibition of learning rather than the acquisition of skills; and Holdstock (1985) argues that fear of punishment can affect the autonomic nervous system, which may result in psychosomatic symptoms. Azrin, Hake, Holz & Hutchinson (1965) and Boren & Coleman (1970) report punishment to cause a generalized averseness to the total school situation, with resultant behaviour such as tardiness, truancy, dropping out of school, and distant student-teacher relationships; while other supportive research indicates that punishment may actually maintain and reinforce such undesirable behaviour (Azrin & Hotz, 1966; Bongiovanni, 1977; Skinner, 1953). Therefore, while research has indicated the ineffectiveness of punishment in decreasing the occurrence of a response (Hill, 1981; Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1948; Solomon, 1964; Tolman, Hall & Bretnall, 1932), and has emphasized the power of punishment to evoke other competing responses (Skinner, 1948, 1953; Solomon, 1964); corporal punishment has, moreover, been found to produce and maintain the following alarming effects.

Field studies clearly indicate that, not only has physical punishment been found to give rise to avoidance behaviours, but it enhances rather than inhibits aggressive behaviour (Eron,
A near perfect correlation between the amount and severity of physical punishment endured by a child from two to twelve, and the amount and severity of antisocial aggressiveness that s/he displays during adolescence, is indicated by work in progress (Button, 1973; Welsh, 1974). In addition, by striking a student, the teacher provides a living model of aggressive behaviour (Bandura & Walters, 1959).

Welsh (1979: 127) agrees that severe parental punishment causes aggression and an inability to cope with stress. "Sears, Maccoby and Leven (1957) found that mothers who severely punished aggressive behaviour in their children had more aggressive children than mothers who lightly punished aggression". He defines "severe" as being the use of a stick or belt and the frequent withholding of privileges. However, the sample used was of delinquent children including whites, blacks and Puerto Ricans and of the total group, 60 percent had at least one alcoholic parent. Elrode & Terrell (1991: 189 - 90) state:

Acknowledging the fact that some students are singled out for corporal punishment due to ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, anti-social behaviour or handicapping condition only exacerbates the many far-reaching problems, both physical and psychological, associated with a punitive and dehumanizing form of punishment. Educators who are advocating alternative procedures cite relationships between corporal punishment and school vandalism, severe physical punishment early in life and social delinquency, early child abuse and the resultant commission of violent crime in adulthood, as well as severe punishment and an escalation of inappropriate behaviour (Maurer & Wallerstein).

None of the leading theories or disciplinary models advocates corporal punishment ...

Holdstock (1985: 5 - 8) agrees with the findings that corporal punishment causes "educational impairment" and psychological damage "... enhancing aggression and violence". He also adds many other effects, including sociological effects ("school corporal punishment acts as an incitement to rebellion and generally criminal behaviour. There is a direct relation between the frequency and severity of physical punishment and school vandalism. A similar relation exists with assaults on teachers"), psychosomatic effects ("skin problems, sleeplessness, nightmares, headaches, muscle tension, stomach upsets and listlessness have all been reported in response to corporal
punishment"), sexual deviations ("corporal punishment directed to the buttocks is a significant factor in the emergence of sexually deviant behaviour"), moral atrophy ("The violation of body space and invasion of children's privacy which occur during corporal punishment, convey to them the message that adults have special authority over their bodies, including the right to inflict pain") psychological conditioning ("... the effects of a single caning results in a long term association between aspects of school and hyperactive autonomic functioning"), interpersonal harm ("Punishment drives out the love, trust and intimacy from adult-child relationships in the home and in the classroom. It does not prepare children to become cooperative, productive and self motivated adults") and lastly, physical injury. Greven (1990 : 122 - 272) also has a long list of the consequences of corporal punishment and these are listed without elaboration - anxiety and fear, anger and hate, bad effect on empathy and apathy, melancholy and depression, obsessiveness and rigidity, ambivalence, dissociation, paranoia, sadomasochism, domestic violence, aggression and delinquency, crime in adulthood and authoritarianism. And so one could go on quoting writer after writer who is saying virtually the same thing in different words. However, we will stop here, as the picture painted by these writers is clear. The question is, are their claims true?

This is a very difficult and complex question to answer. Although many of the studies appear to be supported by empirical evidence, others appear to be rather fanciful generalisations upon which unfounded conclusions are drawn. The empirical evidence is not always clear, and can often be interpreted in different ways. The samples are often taken from dysfunctional families and not representative of society as a whole. The parents sampled often use only corporal punishment to achieve discipline and as bad role models, they exacerbate the problem. The varying intensities of punishment and their effect on different individuals, is a complicating factor. The punishment referred to in many of the above samples is acknowledged to be severe physical punishment which borders on or is actually corporal abuse. In the school situation, the punishment examples used often relate to punishment associated with education i.e. poor academic progress by the pupil. I reject this as being a misuse of punishment at school as argued in the next chapter. In other words, the type of punishment described by writers like Welsh, Elrode & Terrell, Hodstock and Greven, does not meet the requirements of reasonable corporal punishment which is part of an overall disciplinary process. From the extreme, unhealthy family situations sampled by them, it is surely
unreasonable to conclude that all corporal punishment is bad and immediately call for a total ban. Yet that is precisely what they do!

While it is fairly easy to see all the above negative symptoms in people, it is not always easy to diagnose the causes thereof. These can be a complex combination of many different life factors. Parents continue to be amazed at how different their children turn out - one is easy-going, cooperative and accommodating, the other is obstinate and rebellious. Yet both receive the same love, affection and privileges! Who really knows the answer to this mystery? Furthermore, as indicated, many of the studies concentrate on the results of obvious child abuse through severe physical punishment inflicted by low I.Q., indifferent, substance-abusing and cruel parents. In fact, if one takes any sample from a cross-section of society, one is likely to encounter a high percentage of dysfunctional families as there are so few normal families left i.e. with the original husband and wife still together. This is especially true of South Africa with its exceptionally high divorce rate. Discipline and punishment of children in these families is invariably distorted because of rejection, resentment and jealousies on the part of both the parent(s) and children. Does balanced and regulated corporal punishment by loving parents and responsible educators cause the same consequences? Most of those opposed to corporal punishment seem to take the view that all physical punishment is bad *per se*, and do not acknowledge that there are some situations that are better than others. This seems to me to be a very good example of the “Don’t disturb me with facts, my mind is already made up” type of thinking! On the other hand, those in favour of corporal punishment, like Dobson, as we have already seen, reject most of the long list of negative consequences of corporal punishment. Many of the latter group would agree that the negative consequences can definitely be caused by physical abuse and too severe punishment. The question can again be asked, what constitutes physical abuse? They would deny that responsible corporal punishment constitutes abuse. This whole issue of the consequences of corporal punishment is thus not an easy one, where the arguments of one side can be summarily dismissed out of hand by the other side. My personal view is that corporal punishment which is reasonable (we have previously discussed what this means) and part of an overall discipline strategy, is not detrimental to the child and thereby to society. I have already argued that this view does not violate any Christian ethical principles. I fully agree,
however, that child abuse and physical punishment that is harsh and borders on cruelty, has adverse effects on both. Let us look now at the school situation.
As we turn our attention to the school situation, we need to bear in mind that although many of the principles involved may be the same, there is a radical difference between the group dynamics operative at a school and the dynamics of the home situation. Children often behave completely differently in the two situations and the motivations for their behaviour also differ vastly.

Should Corporal Punishment be Administered in Schools?

This question can be asked in two ways. First of all, is it right to physically punish children in the school situation - this is really the same as asking whether capital punishment is right per se. In that sense the basic principles are not much different from the home situation, which we have already looked at. Secondly, we can consider another ethical question - is it right for a third party, such as a teacher, to physically punish another's child? The question is both an easy and a difficult one to answer. First of all, assuming that corporal punishment in some form is accepted, and that the schools rules allow for it, by sending their children to that school, the parents consent to the principle of corporal punishment. They thereby give the teacher the authority to physically punish their child. Within the above assumptions and circumstances, I do not see any real ethical problem, and neither do I see any Christian prohibition, provided that there is no abuse. The real problem therefore reverts to the question as to whether corporal punishment per se is right. If it is, then there would not appear to be any problem in delegating the task to somebody else who has custody, control and responsibility for the child while at school. However, if corporal punishment is wrong, then it would seem to be doubly wrong to allow a teacher, a third party, to punish one's children. In the previous chapter I have already expressed qualified support of reasonable corporal punishment of young children. I would also support reasonable corporal punishment at schools. However, as stated earlier, the situation at schools is a "whole new ball game" which is directly impacted by legislation in the particular country. In South Africa (as in most other countries - see the table later in this section), corporal punishment is about to be banned throughout the country. It has already been
banned in Gauteng province by the Gauteng Education Act of 1995. The National Education Bill of 1996, which is currently before parliament, declares corporal punishment to be unconstitutional, and forbids it. I do not agree with this decision and I shall argue later in this chapter that corporal punishment of children at schools is appropriate in certain circumstances. However, it is useful to review the situation which pertained in this country before the ban and to note the reasons why it was imposed. We will then look at the situation in the rest of the world.

Previous Practice regarding Corporal Punishment in South African Schools

In South Africa, corporal punishment at schools has been traditionally practised, particularly amongst male teachers, and there have been many reported cases of abuse. Corporal punishment at schools in this country, was regulated by Section 64 of the Education Affairs Act No.70 of 1988, Regulation R704 of 1990 as amended by GN R298 of 1992 and the common law. Teachers were also bound by the Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct. Furthermore, the South African Teachers' Association fairly recently issued a pamphlet on Discipline and Punishment for the guidance of teachers. Although these regulations have now become obsolete with the prohibition of any form of corporal punishment in South African Schools, their provisions are considered for interest sake and because they are relevant to the whole issue of corporal punishment at schools.

The abovementioned Act emphasises the need for "constructive discipline" which is "fitting and proportionate to the crime", before setting out comprehensive rules for corporal punishment. Regulation R 704 as amended gave the most up-to-date position and is reproduced below.

**Corporal Punishment**

(1) Corporal punishment shall be administered to pupils only -

(a) on account of serious neglect of duty or disobedience, recalcitrance, wilful damage to property, theft, dishonesty, lying, assault, bullying, indecency, truancy or any other misconduct of a serious nature;
[para (a) amended by GN R298 of 24 January 1992]
(b) after the guilt of the pupil had been proved to the satisfaction of the principal in a full enquiry during which the pupil shall be afforded the opportunity to state his case;

(c) by the principal or by a person authorized thereto by him in writing, or by another teacher in the presence of the principal or the said authorized person;

(d) in the office of the principal or a place indicated by him, or, in the absence of the principal, in the office of the teacher in control of the school or a place indicated by him;

(e) on the buttocks covered with normal attire, with a cane or smooth switch and to a maximum of five strokes; and

(f) with consideration of the age and physical condition of the pupil.

(2) Corporal punishment shall not be administered -

(a) to pupils in pre-primary schools, pupils in levels one to three or female pupils;

(b) to a handicapped pupil whose parent has handed in to the principal a certificate by a medical practitioner, in which it is certified that corporal punishment may have a detrimental effect of the pupil; or [para (b) substituted by GN R298 of 24 January 1992]

(c) in the presence of other pupils

(3) In every case where corporal punishment was administered, the principal shall record in a punishment register the name and age of the pupil concerned, the reason for the punishment, the number of strokes inflicted, the date upon which and the name of the person by who the punishment was administered, and this register shall at all times be available for inspection by the superintendent of education.

The Act of 1988 commences the section on corporal punishment as follows:

Corporal punishment is to be handled with utmost care, bearing in mind that the punishment should

- make an impression;
- follow as soon as possible after the transgression;

- 75 -
- bring about the desired effect;
- be administered compassionately; and
- be circumspect as punishment cannot be undone once it has been administered.

Corporal punishment may only be administered once all other methods of punishment have been considered and the principal, using his discretion, considers corporal punishment to be educationally justifiable and the best method in the particular circumstances in that it would be detrimental to the pupil were corporal punishment not to be administered.

It can thus be seen that the government regulations strictly controlled corporal punishment in South Africa. The South African Teacher's Association pamphlet on Discipline and Punishment is rather generic and largely summarises the government regulations although it does elaborate to some extent on the concept of punishment. In summary it does not seem possible to have legally regulated corporal punishment in schools more effectively than was done in South African schools. The legislation was clear, and all the important aspects are covered. And yet there were still cases of abuse being reported, although many believe that they are a very small minority of cases. An article in the 3 March 1994 edition of "YOU" magazine chronicled a list of cases where boys were regularly severely caned for minimal infractions. Most occurred at a particular boarding school, where caning was a tradition. It seems that boarding schools lend themselves particularly to abuse because prefects and dormitory monitors have more power and house masters are subject to less stringent controls. Pupils are also less likely to complain, as they usually only see their parents at holidays and they are afraid to complain for fear of retribution. But the article also mentioned cases of abuse at day schools and undoubtedly it does still happen due to lack of self control or by teachers' ignoring of the school's rules. Since few cases are reported, it is impossible to say how often it does occur. One could say, however, that while the guidelines were clear, they were not being followed as they should have been. This is particularly true of schools in outlying areas, especially black schools where there was little order, discipline or effective administration. The present strong move away from corporal punishment can thus be seen as a reaction against the non-compliance with the regulations as much as it can be seen as being against corporal punishment per se. It seems to me, however, that non-compliance with the regulations was happening less and less due to the fact that teachers are generally more enlightened and also that it was becoming more difficult for delinquent teachers to get away with abuse.
Many educationist and political groups lobbied hard for the abolition of corporal punishment in schools on the grounds that it contradicts proposals for the Bill of Human Rights and also the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, dealt with in the previous chapter. They pointed to the abuse situations and vilified the whole concept of hitting someone smaller, claiming that in any case it did not solve but rather exacerbated discipline problems. They have now almost succeeded in having corporal punishment banned in South Africa. Well, in theory, anyway. The following letter appeared in the 20 July 1995 edition of "YOU" magazine.

Farewell Performance

At school last month we heard a decision had been passed to abolish all forms of corporal punishment at educational institutions in South Africa. This led to such a great celebration that next day almost my entire class was caned. Confused, Natal

Some news takes a while to filter through! In fact there have been further reports during 1996 of continued corporal punishment at black schools in the rural areas, and the education authorities have threatened prosecution of culprits. Moslems in South Africa have on television expressed opposition to the new legislation, as their religion requires the physical punishment of recalcitrant children. No doubt there are other groups and many individuals who do not support the new law either. However, despite all this, the new law remains in force in Gauteng (and soon throughout South Africa), and violation of it is a criminal offence.

The Practice in Schools in the Rest of the World

The situation at schools in the rest of the world is interesting. I have already referred to the fact that in the United States of America, controlled corporal punishment is permitted in many public schools, with some twenty states having outlawed it. There is, however, ongoing lobbying to have corporal punishment at schools banned at national level. Holdstock (1985:1) summarises the situation in other countries as follows (although as stated the position in South Africa has now changed):
South Africa, the United States, England and her former dominions, are the only Westernized nations that still legalize the educational use of corporal punishment. Not one country in continental Europe permits its use in schools. In Sweden and Japan, both highly advanced technological nations, teachers are not allowed to humiliate students by verbal means, let alone hit them. Despite, or perhaps because of these restrictions on teacher conduct, Japanese and Swedish teachers do an excellent job.

All Eastern European and Communist bloc countries have prohibited physical punishment of school children as well. In the Soviet Union corporal punishment was abolished as far back as 1917. Even a third world country like Mozambique, has recently outlawed its use in schools. China, as well as several countries in South America and the Middle East are also reported to have outlawed its use in schools.

Countries which have outlawed corporal punishment with the date of abolition known, are:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Never condoned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>Never condoned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1783</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1820's</td>
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<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1860</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>Austria</td>
<td>1870</td>
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<td>France</td>
<td>1881</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1890's</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
<td>1917</td>
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<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1923</td>
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<td>Norway</td>
<td>1936</td>
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<td>Rumania</td>
<td>1948</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1950s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1958</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1967</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (Fed Rep)</td>
<td>1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep. of Ireland</td>
<td>1982</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In Australia the Minister of Education in the then Labour government gave notice in 1986 of a change in policy to abolish corporal punishment in schools within five years. Previous policy allowed for corporal punishment under strict guidelines. The decision to give time to phase in the new regulations seems to be a wise one. Some schools made the change almost immediately, whilst others took longer. Whereas the rest of Europe has long since abolished corporal punishment in schools, Britain and the Republic of Ireland still permit teachers to beat children in private schools (corporal punishment was outlawed in state schools by the 1986 Children's Act). It must be noted, however, that certain authorities such as the Inner London Education Authority, have independently abolished corporal punishment in schools falling under their jurisdiction. Organisations such as the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical...
Punishment (STOPP) continue to campaign for a national ban on the use of corporal punishment in schools.

This brief survey on corporal punishment in schools in South Africa and the rest of the world gives a clear message. Countries continuing to permit corporal punishment in schools are out of step with the majority of the world's nations. South Africa is now close to being part of the majority. This does not of course mean that the majority view is the correct one. The main reasons cited for abolishing corporal punishment in schools can be summed up in the new emphasis on individual human rights and dignity, as well as a broader view of discipline. The abolition of corporal punishment is not synonymous with the abolition of punishment. The majority of educationists still appear to support punishment in alternative forms which will be considered a little later. The results of the ban on corporal punishment in schools do not appear to be encouraging.

The Evangelical Times (1996: 4) already referred to gives the following picture of British Schools:

Increasing concern in the education system for the growing numbers of excluded pupils ought to be seen as a consequence of the modern trend of liberal attitudes towards discipline in the home and at school. More children have been permanently excluded from primary schools in the last year than at any other time before. Even nursery children are proving uncontrollable using current methods of discipline and restraint. Parents are being told not to bring their child back to nursery! In a recent study at a West Midlands nursery a researcher from Birmingham University found that 'aggression and talking out of turn are what caused teachers most concern in the three-to-five age range'. He found that 48% of nursery school teachers believed they were spending more time than ever controlling pupils. A teachers' union leader said, 'I have been warning of this for the past two or three years. My members are now refusing to teach disruptive under-fives'.

The same paper carries a heart-rending lament by a teacher concerning her attempts to control classes of pupils aged eleven to sixteen in a secondary school. She describes a situation of "pupils talking, calling out, swearing, arriving late, throwing things at and to each other, leaving their seats, even chasing each other around the class." From my contact with a number of British parents in the past, this situation certainly does not seem to be an isolated one. They, as with their South African
counterparts, see this situation as being a direct result of the ban on all corporal punishment.

We now turn our attention to how corporal punishment should be administered (if in fact it is permitted).

**How Should Corporal Punishment be Administered in Schools?**

I realise that this is somewhat academic as far as South African Schools are concerned, but we should consider it for the sake of completeness in dealing with the whole issue. The summary provided concerning the past regulations and practice in South Africa has already given much insight on this matter. If corporal punishment is to be administered in schools, it has to be fair, be strictly regulated and subject to checks and balances. Teachers and school administrators must be always accountable for their actions.

There is a further point which I want to emphasize, that I have already mentioned in dealing with corporal punishment in the home, i.e. corporal punishment should only be administered for disciplinary offenses. In the past, corporal punishment has been administered for learning problems and failures, in other words it has been associated with education and used as an aid to education. In my opinion, this is a gross misuse of punishment *per se*. Monyooe (1986 : 13) quotes Stones as saying:

> If a child is punished whenever he makes a mistake in a given learning process, the effect will be to decrease his overall motivation. Should the punishment be excessive the child will eventually withdraw and cease to try.

I agree with this assessment. When my own sister was taking piano lessons at school many years ago, she used to receive a rap on the knuckles whenever she played a wrong note. She eventually refused to continue with the lessons. However, I do not agree that all corporal punishment at schools is associated with education. Monyooe (1986 : 14) quotes various authorities who:

> further challenge the moral ethics for the administering of corporal punishment on the basis that schools are educational agencies and consequently the practice of punishment in any form bears a questionable relationship to education.
I cannot agree with this statement as it stands without any qualification. If a child receives a caning for hitting another pupil, or stealing or being wilfully disobedient, this has nothing to do with education and it is mischievous to make the association. The child just happens to be at school. Another point that I feel strongly about is that a child should only be punished for its own misdemeanours. The past practice of punishing the whole class for the infractions of one pupil, is grossly unfair and has been viewed as such by most children - see the results of the interviews with parents in the previous chapter. Let us look now at the effect of corporal punishment in schools.

The Psychological and Social Effects of Corporal Punishment in Schools

The discussion in the last chapter on the effects of corporal punishment by parents, is largely also applicable to its use by teachers and school administrators. It again needs to be emphasised that most of the negative results attributed to corporal punishment in schools in fact refers to abuse situations or misuse of corporal punishment for educational purposes. Monyooe (1986 : 58) in his "Study of Corporal Punishment and Its Effects on Learning at Secondary and High Schools in Lesotho", states that corporal punishment is regularly inflicted for petty infringements such as "failing to answer the question correctly". His conclusion that "corporal punishment affected academic achievement" is thus distorted by these misuses of corporal punishment to try to achieve better academic results. Put simply, it seems to me that if a child is physically punished for academic failure, slow learning or something related to education, academic achievement may well be adversely affected. However, if it is physically punished for a serious discipline problem, I am not convinced that academic achievement will necessarily suffer. In any case, academic achievement could just as well be adversely affected by alternative methods of punishment as by corporal punishment. In the previous chapter we discussed the long list of the adverse consequences of all corporal punishment which is claimed by those who oppose corporal punishment. In the case of the school situation, my main point of disagreement with them is that they do not distinguish between the various reasons that children are punished or the severity of the punishment. I have made the point already that children are individuals and as such they react differently to different forms of punishment and discipline. This seems a good stage to look briefly at alternatives to corporal punishment.
Alternatives to Corporal Punishment in Schools

People who oppose corporal punishment in schools, are divided into two camps - the majority who allow some form of punishment, and the minority who oppose punishment per se favouring rather conflict resolution and a reward system.

Those who allow for alternative punishment would agree with Major (1986:76) that "... punishment is a natural part of human existence, an important and unavoidable fact of life". He goes on to warn that wrong behaviour can be made worse by using the wrong punishment on the wrong student, and that fairness in punishment is of crucial importance. So what alternatives are there to corporal punishment? Some of the main methods that have been used at various schools in the past, are listed in random order:

The writing of punishment essays, or repetitive lines "I must not.....";
Detention during break or after school or on a Saturday;
Some form of manual labour, e.g. tidying the classroom or garden;
Some form of humiliation, e.g. standing in the corner or on the desk;
A letter being sent to the parents to advise them of the child's bad behaviour;
Withdrawal of some form of privilege, e.g. exclusion from an outing.

Major's (1986 : 76) point about using the right punishment for the right pupil is very important. It can only be achieved through great sensitivity and wisdom being exercised by the teacher. Unfortunately many teachers lack these qualities. Hence Peacock (1987:40) pleads for, "..... proper and adequate pre-service education for teachers", and the close monitoring of the progress of new teachers. In fairness to teachers, the context within which they often are forced to work needs to be mentioned. Teachers who are over-worked or badly trained may find it difficult to have the time and energy to enforce discipline in a variety of ways. Also, teachers who have classes of about fifty or sixty children obviously face a severe problem in terms of exercising discipline efficiently. It seems that over-crowding in South African schools will be a serious problem following the amalgamation of the previously separate racial schools. Many new pupils have also been admitted for the first time. Balson (1987:15) complains that: "..... students are often not consulted in the planning of disciplinary programs", and he believes that better teacher/student relationships will assist the discipline situation at
schools. Experiments have been conducted at various schools, in which pupils have had an input into disciplinary procedures for certain offenses. Punishment is better accepted where the views of pupils are canvassed. The views of pupils regarding the effectiveness of different types of punishment, have also been sought. Following a survey of British secondary school pupils, Houghton, Merrett and Wheldall (1988:213) report:

With regard to punishment, 'a letter home complaining about you' and 'being put on report' were seen by all pupils as most effective with detention also scoring quite highly. The effectiveness of an unfavourable letter home may result from the concomitant parental disapproval and the material consequences that can follow it. Being put on report and detention are effective because they impose closer supervision and restrict the activities of pupils in school.

It is also interesting that a number of studies have shown that where they are given a choice, boys often choose a caning to "get it over with". Short, sharp pain is apparently preferable to a drawn out punishment like detention or the loss of other privileges. One could argue this both for and against corporal punishment. Some would say that it proves that other punishments are more effective and "hurt" the pupil more than physical punishment. Others claim that all that this indicates is that most boys accept the principle of caning and although it may be preferred to detention, it is definitely not enjoyed! (Except in a few exceptional cases for a macho image). On the basis of the principle that pupils should be consulted regarding punishment, boys should be allowed to choose a caning if they prefer it. In concluding the issue of alternative punishment, it should again be noted that some educators favouring alternative punishments, would still allow corporal punishment as a last resort, if all else fails. The group that do not allow for punishment at all, put forward a number of alternatives. An obvious one is the teaching of self-discipline. This has already been dealt with in Chapter two where I expressed doubt that very young children are capable of disciplining themselves. There is no doubt that there are many useful and effective alternatives to corporal punishment that can be used in the classroom situation. If teachers are better trained and supported, they may be able to more effectively use these alternatives.
Another possibility is the concept of conflict resolution. Susan Plunkett (1987:69, 73) carried out research:

..... to test the hypothesis that ....... 'following a six week course on conflict resolution fifth grade children will display a positive improvement in their understandings of personal options available to them on resolving conflicts ...' The overall aim of the program was to `empower' the children with options, skills and strategies that would allow them to resolve problems with increasing autonomy and with developing satisfaction.

Amongst other benefits, the results show an encouraging decrease in aggression and withdrawal and an increase in win/win behaviour.

The final alternative to punishment that I want to mention, is the reward system. Wise (1979 : 374 - 381) defines reward as "A positive incentive capable of arousing pleasure or satisfying a drive". Working on the premise that "A reward approach to behavioural management focuses on appropriate behaviour", he goes on to develop his argument that rewards ".... shape and strengthen new or appropriate behaviour incompatible with inappropriate behaviour." Undoubtedly many students will respond to a reward system, but not all will. Houghton's (1988 : 213) survey of British secondary school pupils, already referred to produced a surprising result regarding rewards" .... rewards and praise are considered by pupils to be more appropriate for academic than for social behaviour." Perhaps the pupils themselves accept that they do not deserve praise for merely behaving as they should.

Sprinthall et al (1994 : 558 - 9) have an interesting model for pupil discipline related to the stages of development. They state that their model "outlines stages of moral development in relation to disciplinary methods. Most important, the table includes examples of what can be considered to be positive techniques versus negative disciplinary techniques within each stage".
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>NEGATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage I</strong></td>
<td>Helen Keller's teacher in <em>The Miracle Worker</em>.</td>
<td>Punching, kicking, breaking bones to teach a child a lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of physical means to require compliance.</td>
<td>Placing an out-of-control child in a time-out room. Holding the arms of a child in the middle of a temper tantrum. Walking up to a child, standing over him or her. Making eye contact. Nonverbally indicating that the behaviour is unacceptable.</td>
<td>Locking a child in a dark closet. Punching the child with fists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience because of unequal power. Generally effective only in short-term.</td>
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</table>

**Stage II**

<table>
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<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>NEGATIVE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of materialistic consequences such as rewards or withdrawal of privileges for acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. Generally effective in the short run while the reinforcers are in effect (either positive or negative).</td>
<td>The Premack principle (see Chapter 10). Use of Skinnerian positive reinforcers such as a token economy. A balance between positive reinforcers and negative reinforcers (withdrawing privileges). Selective positive reinforcers. Positive teacher comments exceeding negative by 2:1. Positive reminders and cues on classroom rules.</td>
<td>Exclusive use of aversive conditioning. Exclusive use of negative reinforcers (withholding food or restricting rations, e.g., bread and water; use of criticism, sarcasm). Predominant use of negative verbal statements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Stage III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of social group (peer and adult pressure) to promote individual conformity to group norms and classroom rules. Concern for feelings of the group.</th>
<th>Setting classroom rules with group participation.</th>
<th>Turning the class members into a collective to scapegoat an individual child.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting classroom rules with group participation.</td>
<td>Running classroom meetings to discuss general effects of misbehaviour.</td>
<td>Using the group to shame or shun a pupil publicly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running classroom meetings to discuss general effects of misbehaviour.</td>
<td>Use of positive peer pressure.</td>
<td>Using a group to make individual pupils feel like outcasts (making a pupil sit in a &quot;dunce chair&quot;, standing the child in the wastebasket and having others throw trash in, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of positive peer pressure.</td>
<td>Rewarding the group as a whole to promote cooperative learning.</td>
<td>Promoting group cohesiveness: &quot;Our class - our team - our group&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Promoting group cohesiveness: &quot;Our class - our team - our group&quot;.</td>
<td>Cooperative learning materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting group cohesiveness: &quot;Our class - our team - our group&quot;.</td>
<td>Cooperative learning materials.</td>
<td>Using I - messages</td>
</tr>
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<td>Using I - messages</td>
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### Stage IV

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Governance and sanctions according to legal standards. Individual responsibility and choice are stressed. Inner direction and individual decision making toward rules and laws. Can be highly effective over long time periods.</th>
<th>Careful observance by both adults and other pupils of each person's individual rights. Clear understanding of reasons for school laws. A point and contract system for grading. Understandable and reasonable consequences known to all for misbehaviour. Teaching children self-management skills, such as self-directed behaviour modification. Assertiveness training.</th>
<th>Excessive reliance on individual competition for grades. Exclusive stress on individual achievement. Narrow interpretation of laws and rules without regard to principles behind them.</th>
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The stages referred to in the table relate to Kohlberg's development model - see chapter two where the developmental approach to discipline was considered. The positive and negative columns reflect what they consider to be acceptable and unacceptable responses to bad behaviour respectively. It would take too long to explain the technical terms reflected in the model and such explanations are not necessary for the purposes of this dissertation. The model has been reproduced simply to demonstrate the use of a developmental discipline approach in a learning situation and to indicate what are regarded as good and bad disciplinary actions.

The model does, however, show a strong bias against corporal punishment. It is noteworthy that while they accept the "use of physical means to require compliance" in stage 1 the positive column describes holding the arms of a child during a temper tantrum, whereas the negative column lists punching, kicking and breaking bones. Why the extreme actions on the negative side compared with the mild action in the positive column? This seems to be an attempt to equate corporal punishment with abuse. Why not simply compare holding the child's arms, with giving the child a sharp slap to break
the temper tantrum. Many parents and teachers would have more easily been able to identify with such an action. Otherwise, the model is useful, and an ideal for which to strive - but it is definitely idealistic and not easy to achieve.

In this chapter we have considered whether corporal punishment should be administered in schools, and if so, how. The past practice of corporal punishment in South African schools was explained. We also looked at the psychological and social effects of corporal punishment in schools, as well as alternatives to corporal punishment. I concluded that corporal punishment should still be allowed to counter bad behaviour by pupils, but not against educational non-performance. Many alternative forms of punishment can effectively be used at schools. Limited use of reasonable corporal punishment would not necessarily have bad psychological and social effects on children as claimed by many psychologists and educators. If we accept the basic need for discipline, including punishment, then Christian ethics should be able to accommodate a comprehensive strategy that would include punishment in various forms as well as rewards, where appropriate.

This concludes our discussion on alternatives to corporal punishment in the classroom. Indeed, it also concludes the final chapter of this dissertation, and it is now time to try to draw the strands together and attempt a conclusion regarding the corporal punishment of children.
CONCLUSION

A Theological - Ethical Evaluation of the Corporal Punishment of Children

As I conclude this dissertation, let me summarise what we have covered. Corporal punishment was defined as the intentional infliction of physical hurt on the body of the child, with a view to punishment and/or discipline. In considering traditional Christian teaching on the subject, we looked at relevant verses in the Old Testament, mainly the Book of Proverbs, and concluded that it appears to clearly advocate the use of the rod where necessary. The New Testament, on the other hand, while not dealing with corporal punishment as such, does emphasize the need for discipline. The approach is nevertheless softer than in the Old Testament and several verses emphasize the great value of a child's life in God's eyes. As we then reviewed church history, we saw that right up to recent times, the Christian church has taught the need for corporal punishment to discipline children, and it has been practised by Christian parents. In modern times, the use of corporal punishment in a controlled way and as part of an overall disciplinary process, has been defended by persons such as Dr James Dobson and his Focus on the Family Organisation.

We next described recent resistance to corporal punishment which has chiefly come about as a result of the democratisation of the world and the emphasis on individual human rights, including children's rights, formalised in the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, which forbids the abuse of children. However, abuse is not defined and it is not clear whether corporal punishment would be classified as abuse. Nevertheless, the Convention is a first step in the right direction. The response of Christians to all this was then dealt with. Should Christians change their traditional interpretation of the Old Testament? The whole subject of the theological ethical interpretation of the Bible was dealt with. We saw that there is a difference between the Old and New Testaments and that there is a principle of progressive revelation in the Bible whereby God deals with his people differently at various stages in history. We also noted the fact that the principles of the New Testament need to be contextualised to the changed situation today. Christians are therefore at liberty to re-assess their attitude to corporal punishment. They should ask whether it is right and what are its goals, motives and consequences. This led us into a brief discussion on deontological
and teleological ethics. Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses although I personally would tend toward a deontological approach.

In chapter two we looked at the relationship between discipline, punishment and abuse. Discipline was defined as a loosely organised set of methods used by parents, teachers and other caretakers to manage the behaviour of children, particularly their social behaviour. Authority is related to discipline and can be exercised as moral persuasion, coercion and power. Coercion can be further divided into reward and punishment, and the latter in turn can consist of corporal punishment or other forms of punishment, such as withdrawal of privileges. Some authorities advocate external authority discipline, whereas reformers like Gordon Thomas insist that only internal or self-discipline has any worthwhile effect in the life of a child. The debate is whether children are capable, at an early age, of disciplining themselves. I concluded that external authority discipline could be used initially, with parents/teachers progressively trying to teach children to discipline themselves at later stages in their lives. This led us into a discussion of the developmental theories of morality and faith and the discipline model related to these stages. Basically, discipline should be geared to the stage of development of the child. We then recognised the horrors of child abuse (physical abuse only) and that punishment can easily become abuse which amounts to maltreatment of a child by physical violence. Terrible physical abuse of children has taken place in both private homes and schools. However, these situations are vastly different to reasonable, regulated corporal punishment which is one facet of the whole discipline approach. I concluded that abuse per se is not a reason to reject corporal punishment.

Chapter three dealt specifically with corporal punishment in the home. We saw that parents have the right to bear children, bring them up and thus discipline them. This includes reasonable corporal punishment which should be cautiously applied together with other forms of punishment. Corporal punishment should be phased out as the child gets older. Parents need education, practical help and encouragement to parent effectively. The church can help in this through its teaching and pastoral ministry. We turned then to the psychological and societal results of corporal punishment. Here we encountered claims that it has adverse consequences for both, and counter-claims that it does not. We noted that many of the writers who claim adverse effects are really referring to abuse situations rather than to reasonable corporal punishment. My
conclusion was that such reasonable corporal punishment should not have adverse
effects on the child individually or society collectively, as the majority of children would
accept such reasonable corporal punishment as part of the whole disciplinary process.
This is borne out by the results of the interviews conducted with parents.

The final chapter focused on corporal punishment in schools. Here the situation is both
similar and dissimilar to the home situation. South Africa previously had elaborate
regulations controlling corporal punishment in schools, and yet there were still abuses.
Corporal punishment was declared unconstitutional in 1995 by the Constitution Court
and banned by the Gauteng Education Act of 1995. It is also forbidden by the
Education Bill of 1996 which will soon be made law throughout South Africa. I stated
my disagreement with this decision as it has not been proved that corporal punishment
related to bad behaviour has negative psychological and social results. In the rest of
the world, corporal punishment in schools has long since been abolished in most
countries. In the United States it is allowed in certain states. Many abuses have taken
place in American schools. I stated that if corporal punishment is to take place, it must
be strictly regulated and controlled to prevent abuse situations. It must also only be
used for discipline and not to try to improve learning. When we looked at the
psychological and social effects of corporal punishment in schools, we saw a similar
situation as with the home, i.e. claims and counter-claims. We also saw that the cases
claiming adverse effects also relate largely to situations of abuse and the misuse of
corporal punishment for educational purposes. We looked finally at alternatives to
corporal punishment and also at a model of pupil discipline relative to stages of
development. This indicated that different punishments are appropriate at different
stages of development.

In the light of all the evidence considered, I can only conclude that the corporal
punishment of children by parents satisfies the criteria of both the deontological and
teleological approach to theological ethics. It is "right" in the sense that it is biblical and
natural and is most often the only way to discipline a young child. Its goal is the good
of the child, i.e. to teach the child right principles in life and correct social behaviour. I
am not convinced that it has adverse consequences if correctly applied. However, it
must meet the discussed criteria of being reasonable, be used alongside other forms
of discipline, and be phased out sooner rather than later. The child should be taught and encouraged to discipline itself as it grows older.

Any attempt to forbid parents the right to physically punish their children would lead to an impossible situation and could only be enforced with great difficulty. Parents should be educated and supported by society, the State and the Church so that they fulfil their great God-given task of raising their children to His glory.

As far as the corporal punishment of children by teachers and school administrators is concerned, I come to a similar conclusion. However here the situation is more complex. With the best rules in the world, abuse can still take place. With a third party doing the punishing there are further complications such as prejudice and favouritism. The school situation in South Africa today is very volatile and undergoing a period of radical change. It is also difficult in other parts of the world where child rights are emphasised. Nevertheless, reasonable corporal punishment of children in schools in South Africa could have been made to work through education of teachers and strict control of the classroom situation. I sincerely hope and pray that the implementation of alternatives to corporal punishment will be successful in schools and will produce disciplined people in society. At this point in time, however, I have strong doubts that it will. From all my research in this dissertation, it seems to me that not only does controlled physical punishment not have negative psychological and social effects on children, but not to punish them may well have such negative effects.

May God bless all parents and teachers in their work of raising and teaching children!
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