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Walter William Harms

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, waltpast@aol.com

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AN ANALYSIS OF CHRISTIAN MATURITY

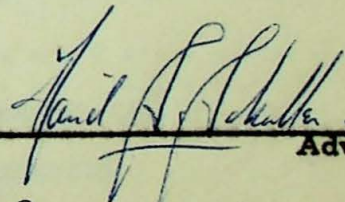
A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

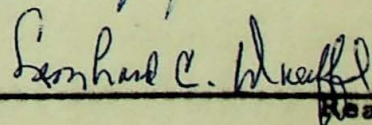
Walter William Frederick Harms

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Approved by:



Advisor



Reader

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The main burden of this thesis is to sharpen the lines of Christian maturity in contrast to psychology. It is not intended to be a definitive explanation of how the mature Christian reacts in a given situation but to determine the guiding principals in a mature Christian's life.

The first problem is to determine exactly what psychological and Christian maturity is. The second problem is to determine the distinctive differences. The third area is to determine exactly how Christian maturity fits into those areas about which psychology is concerned.

The only source for the definition of Christian maturity which was used is the Scriptures in the Revised Standard Version. It was felt that only here could the distinctive nature of Christian maturity be found.

The conclusion which was reached is that there is a difference between psychology's view and Scripture's view of maturity. It was chiefly the view from which man is seen. Psychology thought of the mature man from the view of man to man. Scriptures thought of the mature man as God wants him and then in his relationships between man and man. Psychology thought of maturity as a socialization of

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Christian maturity is often spoken of in preaching and other discussions. The problem of this thesis is to distinguish exactly what the nature of Christian maturity is in contrast to psychology's view. This is to result in the display of the distinctive character of Christian maturity.

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man's drives, while Scripture thought of man in his relationship to God.

Psychology agreed with Scripture that maturity is a constant state of developing. However, Scripture would also state that it may be a developed state. For Scripture, God was the cause of maturity taking place while in psychology man is alone responsible for maturity.

In the areas in which psychology is interested, the physical, personal, social, and intellectual, Scripture puts a definite curb on the free expression of every desire and drive. The rule for this is the fact that God's will must be done. What psychology would do in this area is not mentioned because that is not the purpose of this thesis.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MATURITY

Maturity as Developing

Psychology considers maturity as a constant state of developing. "Maturity is not to arrive at a final goal where we settle down with accumulated possessions."¹ There is no state of having "arrived" in maturity. Cattell points this out:

The clinical studies of neurotics indicates that during the individual's lifetime, the innate propensities continually move on and change, especially with respect to the nature of their goals but also in the motor responses to these goals.²

The common criteria of age or social position fall by the side if maturity is a continuing process of change and adjustment.

Maturity involves the entire life of the person, the past life as well as the future. Johnson states:

Maturity is no static goal that can be dated by chronological age, or crossed like a threshold from one room to another, after which the door is closed with no return. Persons achieve maturity at different ages and by unique integrations or styles of life. Maturing is a dynamic process of growing capacities to realize the whole meaning of one's life in the present, and yet to continue in the direction of future goals. A mature person acknowledges his past but is not determined by bondage to it. He accepts the present for what it means but is not satisfied to settle down with no more adventures. He plans for the future and reckons the time required for the unfolding of such purposes, but he does not deny the good of the present in overanxiety about future goals. Past, present, and future are held together in the larger perspective of

¹Paul E. Johnson, Personality and Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 80.

²Raymond B. Cattell, Personality, A Systematic Theoretical and Factual Study (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1950), pp. 183-84.

maturity.³

Maturity is a developing of the individual. As such it has recognizable patterns of growth. Maturity, generally speaking, follows these avenues of development.

First, there is the avenue of widening interests by which one may extend the range and enrich the meanings and values of his life as an expanding self. . . . The second avenue of maturing is the ability to see oneself more objectively, with insight and detachment. . . . A third characteristic of maturity is the avenue by which the diverse interests of our kaleidoscopic existence may be brought into essential unity.⁴

Psychologists see in these avenues of development their ability to aid in the developing of the mature person. Only by recognition of where it is leading and what the final goal is can they facilitate the arrival of maturity. They feel so strongly about maturity that they see in this the only hope for the prevention of neuroses, crime, and war.⁵

Maturity according to psychology involves a developing of the person along the avenues of enlarging of insight, viewing oneself objectively, and arriving at some kind of integration of all forces into a unified package. It is not chronologically determined. It is not a static state. Finally, it offers the solution to most major problems as neuroses, crime, and war.

³Johnson, op. cit., pp. 77f.

⁴Ibid., p. 79.

⁵Leon J. Saul, Emotional Maturity, The Development and Dynamics of Personality (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1947), p. 19.

Maturity as Socialization

Three general definitions will be offered. They will be examined to determine the underlying principles involved in each case and in the group as a whole.

Saul offers this definition. "One of the most obvious pathways of development . . . is from the parasitic dependence of the fetus to independence of the parent."⁶ He continued, "Intimately bound up with the organism's development from parasitism on the mother to relative independence from the parents is its increased productive capacity and its increased receptive needs."⁷ Saul adds, "A third characteristic of maturity is relative freedom from the well-known constellation of inferiority feelings, egotism, and competitiveness."⁸ Another aspect he states consists "in the conditioning and training necessary for socialization and domestication."⁹ To this he adds, "The mature adult is parental and creative and is not destructive toward himself and other."¹⁰ His final statement is, "Another characteristic of maturity is flexibility and adaptability."¹¹

⁶Ibid., p. 7.

⁷Ibid., p. 8.

⁸Ibid., p. 9

⁹Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹Ibid., p. 15.

The basic characteristics of Saul's maturity seem to be: (1) The individual is free from complete dependence; (2) The individual is able to contribute to society while continuing as a recipient of society's aids; (3) The individual is a socialized creature; and (4) The individual has the ability to adapt his needs to the needs of other individuals. To break this down more completely would be to say that the mature person is completely independent while being dependent on society. The needs and drives of the person are fulfilled only as far as they do not interfere with the drives of others.

Cole offers this statement of what the mature person should be.

1. An adult is (a) one who is able to see objects, persons, and facts (reality) in terms of what they are, cleansed of all infantile investiture; (b) one who is under no compulsion to do or not to do, but who is free to act in accordance with the reality of any given situation; (c) one who is able to adjust to an unalterable situation with a minimum of conflict. 2. An adult is a person who is successful (a) in functioning as an independent unit with gratification of his desires in terms of the culture in which he lives; (b) in establishing satisfactory and acceptable biologic and social interaction with other people; and (c) in finding self-expression, self-extension, and self-objectivation in his social milieu. 3. An adult is one who (a) has an integrated personality; (b) has sublimated or socialized his basic impulses and drives; (c) can accept reality, tolerate frustration, inhibit his impulses, accept his own inadequacies and unavoidable pains, humiliations, and losses, and is free from excessive anxieties, worries, or fears; (d) can solve the common problems of living; (e) is happy in his work; (f) accepts responsibility for his own actions; (g) can establish and maintain satisfactory and lasting relationships with other people; and (h) is able to feel strong emotions but also able to control their expression.¹²

In this statement the expressions, "adjust," "in terms of his culture," "social interaction," "social milieu," "socialized," and "relationships with other people," offer the clue to her basis for maturity.

¹² Luella Cole, Psychology of Adolescence (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1957), p. 665.

The mature person for her is able to face reality, his own drives, and common problems without breaking through social custom and without being anarchistic in his social relations.

This has a basic relationship to Saul's definition. The key word seems to be socialization. It means that the mature person is to participate in his cultural situation without destroying the accepted norms. The mature person takes his drives and making them subservient to the greater drive of society whatever and wherever it might be.

In reading the third definition of maturity, the idea of socialization should be kept in mind. Soloman gives as his definition of the mature adult:

(1) An intensification of the superego; (2) an easing of pressure for sexual gratification; (3) a beginning of an appreciation for the values presented by the parents; (4) a focusing of interest on a single object choice.¹³

He continues his definition:

To say that a person has a balanced sense of values, is to say essentially that we are dealing with a mature, well-integrated person.

Furthermore, he adds:

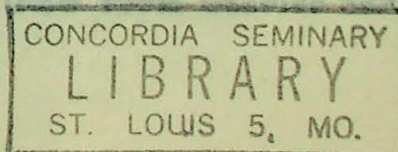
The ability to integrate and furthermore the ability to recognize forces that need to be integrated constitute a part of the concept of maturity.¹⁴

Finally, he states:

What we consider as real maturity involves the efficient organization and integration of experience with all the problems that are

¹³Joseph C. Soloman, A Synthesis of Human Behavior, An Integration of Thought Processes and Ego Growth (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1954), p. 171.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 197.



inherent in all the areas in which man operates. ¹⁵

In his definition the term, integration, is prominent. By definition of the term, he means to bring into a whole or unit. The individual is to unify his drives and ambitions under one head. He does not state what this final unit is to be. It involves what he calls values. Since values are established by the society or culture in which he lives, the deduction can be made that the person is to become socialized. This is substantiated by the fact that the adult person begins to accept the values of his parents. The concept of unity in maturity is voiced also by Johnson. ¹⁶

Another psychologist substantiates that maturity consists in adjusting ourselves completely to what society wants and demands.

Thus we may say; The equilibrium of consciousness and power constitutes the desirable type of character which history, as far as we know, wants us and almost compels us to develop. ¹⁷

History is composed of people. Since people are to mold the person, it means the individual is to become socialized. This, he states, is maturity.

Our duties toward ourselves and toward our social environment coincide. Indeed there is only one duty, namely: to grow mature. To find ourselves, our center, our highest values, means to find our group, our spiritual home and our positive relationship to God. ¹⁸

The added factor in the last statement is that the mature person

¹⁵Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁶Johnson, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁷Fritz Kunkel, In Search of Maturity, An Inquiry Into Psychology, Religion, and Self-Education (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 189.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 191.

arrives at a positive relationship with God. This means that when adjustment to society has taken place, a relationship with God is achieved. When adjustment to our fellow man is reached, then God is happy with the individual and a correct relationship with Him is established.

A listing of neurotic and mature ego traits at different stages of life bears out the idea that maturity is socialization. For example, in the young adult a neurotic trait is conceit. Conceit shows that the person considers himself better than others in his society. He has not as yet adjusted to the fact that society wishes him to be tolerant. Another example of maturity as socialization is the trait of fidelity in the mature adult. If the person is faithful, he considers the needs of others before he acts. In this way he has become socialized or mature.¹⁹

Johnson presents this statement as further evidence that for psychology, maturity is socialization.

When a religious person seeks primarily to satisfy the need for comfort or pleasure, his motives are immature. But when he seeks primarily to grow through enlarging relationships in responsible living, his religious motives are maturing.²⁰

He is writing about religious maturity and not general maturity, but it is here that his interest is centered. He speaks of enlarging relationships in responsible living. This means the person wishing to achieve maturity in his religious drives is to become a responsible person in his relationships with others. Maturity rests, then, on socialized drives.

¹⁹Soloman, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

²⁰Johnson, op. cit., p. 133.

Kunkel adds a new thought to the idea of maturity.

The Gospel of St. John expresses the same idea in the words ". . . that they may be one, even as we are one--I in them and thou in me--that they may be made perfectly one" (John 17:22-23, Moffatt). Thus the mature personality is on the one hand free, independent and self-responsible; he represents his group and the whole humanity in his own unique way, and makes his special contribution in his own manner--that is individualism, and on the other hand he remains and indeed becomes more and more an essential part of the whole. The more his maturity develops the more he sees how dependent he is.²¹

The new idea is group responsibility with the addition that the individual is dependent on the group. The mature individual must be dependent when it is considered that he is conforming to the group and considering their needs when they come to his attention.

Maturity actually in its strongest form would make of the individual the epitome of mankind.

The egocentric person, the immature individual, disappears. He perishes or he outgrows his handicaps. . . . To grow up, however, means to become oneself and that means to become the epitome of mankind, namely to become conscious of human nature--through the images.²²

The mature individual is not seen as he makes up the larger group. The perfect representative of society is the mature person. This is what is meant by the person coming into a world of wholes. The mature person does not let his drives rule him but he either unconsciously or consciously views the person's problem, drive, or opportunity as to what will be best for the whole of society.

²¹Kunkel, op. cit., pp. 192-93.

²²Ibid., p. 192.

Maturity as Defined in The

Physical, Emotional, Social, and Intellectual Areas

Maturity occurs in various areas of life. Generally, the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual areas are considered. Psychologists are reluctant to say what are the specific mature reactions in these areas. This is because maturity would have to vary in different cultures, by way of their definition.

Physical maturity is the easiest to define. The specifics are of no interest here. It is almost certain to arrive. Only extreme privation or deficiency will prevent its arrival. It is the one type of maturity which is not affected by any type of social contact.²³ The physical apparatus of the mature individual is in full functioning order. The evidence for the degeneration of the organism is also plainly evident by the time maturity is reached.²⁴

In the area of the emotions, the mature individual does not become angry over superficial social situations, no longer depends on older people or members of his own sex, does not take things personally, and does not run away from reality. He has selected his permanent mate or has substituted other drives for his sexual drive. He is able to evaluate himself objectively. He plans his life and practices a great measure of self-control.²⁵ Sexual maturity fits into this category.

²³Cole, op. cit., p. 666.

²⁴Soloman, op. cit., p. 197.

²⁵Cole, op. cit., pp. 666ff.

Of this maturity, Saul makes the case quite evident for socialization.

When the sexuality and the rest of the personality mature together, the two are integrated in a proper balancing of the needs for love, the self-love, and the self-interest with a high degree of enjoyment of the loving, activity, interest and responsibility involved in the relationship to lover, work, and friends.²⁶

Soloman likewise sees the social effects of marriage.²⁷

The interrelation of people is dealt with under social maturity. "Blind loyalty to friends and blind prejudice against anyone," Cole considers adolescent. While there is complete emancipation from the home, there is not callous indifference. In all social relations the mature person feels secure. He does not imitate others in a clanish fashion, and he is not dependent on a small group for his social relations.²⁸

Intellectual maturity and moral maturity are considered together. The moral and intellectually mature person is stable and has a satisfying attitude toward life. He generally has established ideals by which to conduct himself. He does not accept the present moral or social situations without considering the possibility of change, but does consider them a fact. The interests of the adolescent are gone. This includes the idea that the world can be reformed. He is not bigoted in religious, racial, or ethical matters. He is liberal and tolerant.²⁹

²⁶Saul, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁷Soloman, op. cit., pp. 199-200.

²⁸Cole, op. cit., pp. 670-71.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 674-75.

Maturity as Socialization of Drives

In reviewing the specific types of maturity mentioned, various drives of the person may be noticed. It has been mentioned several times that psychologists consider maturity as a socialization of drives. While the purpose of this thesis is not to determine what psychologists consider maturity in each and every drive of the person, it should be seen that socialization of drives leads to maturity. Maturity is the process of putting curbs on the drives. The standard which psychology sets are the standards of society.

In proof of the statement that drives are to be socialized in the mature person, the words of Cattell are offered.

In the last resort, the very existence of the body, or its existence in some degree of intactness, is necessary for the satisfaction of most drives, so that the individual is restrained from damaging it under the impulse of one powerful drive because of the associations that arise through the demands of other drives.³⁰

The degree to which the person is mature is based on the control which he has over his drives.

A final step is to offer a definition of a drive. This will offer evidence that it is the drives of the individual which must be adjusted to society. A drive is:

An innate psycho-physical disposition which permits its possessor to acquire reactivity (attention, recognition) to certain classes of objects more readily than others, to experience a specific emotion in regard to them and to start on a course of action which ceases more completely at a certain specific goal activity than at any other. The pattern includes also preferred behavior subsidiation paths to the preferred goals.³¹

³⁰Cattell, op. cit., p. 654.

³¹Ibid., p. 199.

Drives are innate, which means they are present at the start of the person's life. After experiencing a reaction, they begin on a course of action. This has to reach a certain goal. If that goal is not reached, some type of adjustment must take place. How well the organism adjusts within the limits of society defines how well the person has matured. For example, the person has the drive for sexual expression. He sees a girl which puts his drive into action. If he goes through the normal process of dating, engagement, and marriage in order to express his drive, he is mature. If he rapes the girl, he is unadjusted and immature.

Summary of Psychological Definition of Maturity

Maturity is developing rather than a static state. It is not determined by age or social position. It has a course of development which can be aided by knowing the direction which it takes. Maturity is, or at least may be, the answer for social catastrophes as war, crime, and neuroses.

Maturity involves the socialization of drives. The drives of the mature person are to conform to the whole of society. The individual is independent in so far as he is able to make the decision for this type of conformity and dependent in so far as he needs society to make the standards. At its very best and viewed from a religious standpoint, maturity puts the individual into a positive relationship with God.

The specifics of what the mature person does are in many cases unidentified because society changes and its demands change along with it. Maturity can be identified by saying that it must always be the state

in which society will approve the actions of the individual. The mature person is a self-willing creature. Particularly in religious matters the person is not bigoted, but liberal and tolerant.

In judging the maturity of a person, it is necessary to know the degree to which he conforms his drives to the standard demanded by society. Various types of behavior are characteristic of the immature person. They show the degree to which a person has been able to adjust his drives to the demands of society.

Maturity as an Unsustainable State

Maturity in the New Testament is a state to which no man can possibly attain. St. James writes that the man who makes not mistakes is a perfect, mature person. However, he knows all make mistakes, even the apostles.¹ Therefore, all persons, even Christians, are immature.

Heaven is the place where people are made perfect. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. (Hebrews 12:22-26)

The people or spirits are of just men, that is, justified men. It is in heaven that the justified are perfected. The relation between

¹ James 3:1-2.

CHAPTER III

DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN MATURITY

Maturity by etymology is a Latin word. Because the New Testament was written in Greek, the words which bear the same or close meaning to the concept of full development, ripeness, or maturity will have to be used. The translators of the Revised Standard Version sometimes used the term, mature, and often the expressions, perfect or perfection. These will be used, together with the ideas of growth, in the context of growth to perfection or maturity.

Maturity as an Unattainable State

Maturity in the New Testament is a state to which no man can possibly attain. St. James writes that the man who makes not mistakes is a perfect, mature person. However, he knows all make mistakes, even the apostles.¹ Therefore, all persons, even Christians, are immature.

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The people or spirits are of just men, that is, justified men. It is in heaven that the justified are perfected. The relation between

¹ 1 James 3:1-2.

justification and maturity will be shown later.

In speaking about martyrs, who certainly have been strong in their faith, Scripture does not use the term perfected or mature.² Perfection is for all Christians. It is not for a certain class of Christians.

Maturity--A Demanded, Present, Attainable, Desirable State

Scripture does not speak only of maturity or perfection in terms of the future life in heaven, but also as a present condition at least at times on the part of individuals; and as a state which all Christians should strive to attain.

Jesus does not hesitate to speak of perfection in the present life. He makes it an obligation upon the person. "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) It, therefore, is a necessary condition for the Christian.

Christ, in dealing with the rich young man, provides for him the way to reach perfection.

Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." (Matthew 19:21)

It might have been impossible for the man to achieve maturity because of his sinful condition, but the possibility for him cannot be denied.

Likewise, the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of maturity for the Christian as an available state.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's Word. You need milk, not solid food; for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid

²Heb. 11:40.

food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

While his readers were not ready for the food which would make them mature, it does speak of the possibility of receiving food which would cause maturity. If the author did not know of maturity as an attainable state, he would not have told them that they were still immature. St. Paul states that the possibility for maturity is present for the Christian.

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, (Eph. 4:11-14)

This passage does, however, leave the possibility open that Christians do not become mature because there are always apostles, pastors, and teachers in this world.

The thought that the state of maturity is attainable is suggested by St. James. Trials were to make the Christian perfect and complete.

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:4)

St. Paul suggests that the preaching of Christ will make men mature.

Him we proclaim, warning every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me. (Col. 1:28)

Both of these passages have the thought that maturity is an attainable state. With this type of background, the message of the Letter to the Hebrews to go on to maturity, is readily understandable.

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, (Hebrews 6:1)

Scripture speaks of maturity as the state of all who have faith. In this case maturity becomes a present state for the Christian. "For by a single offering he was perfected for all time those who are sanctified." (Hebrews 10:14). The offering of Jesus has made all mature; St. Paul is correct then when he calls the Colossian Christians mature.³

Maturity for the Christian can be a present state. In summary, Christian maturity is a demanded state on the part of the Christian. It is presented both as a state which is attainable by the Christian and as a state which has been attained.

The Nature of Maturity

Christian maturity as an attainable, unattainable state deals with our relationship with God and then with the fellow man. The emphasis is on the relation with God, first of all, and then with society.

Christian maturity concerns the will of God.⁴ It is in the doing of God's will that man stands mature. The Christian is, therefore, subject to God's will in his maturity.

Doing God's will is not the habit of man, but man is called into that state. Man does not ask God to call him, but God calls the Christian into a state of maturity. St. Paul says he was striving to attain to the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. At the same time, St. Paul has already received this call and by faith has

³Col. 4:12.

⁴Col. 4:12. Note that "standing mature" and "assured in all the will of God" are considered together.

accepted it. Because of this he can say that he is mature.⁵ Christian maturity is then submission to the will of God, which has been made known to us through His call to us.

Christian maturity as an attainable state is not a static one but calls for growth.⁶

Maturity is growth in grace and the knowledge of the Savior. The knowledge of the Savior and growth in grace is a relationship with God primarily. Maturity is a deepening of our relationship with God. St. James also presents this picture when he speaks of growth.⁷

The concept of maturity as a relationship with God is endorsed by St. Peter. He speaks of salvation, which is the relationship of one who saves and the saved one. Into this the Christian is to grow.

Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation; for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. (1 Peter 2:2-3)

Maturity is the state of growing more and more into a relationship with God, in the salvation concept.

Since Christian maturity is a growing state of the relationship with God, St. Paul can correctly tell his readers to grow into a relationship with God.⁸ His readers were to be unblameable in holiness before God. They were to grow into a relationship with God. Maturity for the Christian involves being in a state of holiness before the Holy One.

⁵Phil. 3:14.

⁶2 Peter 3:18.

⁷James 1:21.

⁸2 Thess. 3:11-13.

The mature Christian grows in holiness.

One of the strongest factors for showing that maturity is a relationship with God and more specifically with Christ, is in the Letter to the Colossians.

Him we proclaim, warning every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. (Col. 1:28)

To be in Christ definitely involves a relationship with Him. It is an involvement of the entire person into Christ. The mature Christian is now a participant in the entire life and work of the Savior. St. Paul uses the expression, man of God, for this relationship.⁹ It is only the man of God, the one in Christ, that can be complete, mature.

The picture of maturity in the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians is evident, although it is not actually spoken of as maturity.

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; when we were children, we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe. But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir. (Gal. 4:1-7)

The Christian is no longer a child but a mature individual. This is called the adoption of sons. The mature Christian inherits all the blessings of God as His son. The relationship of the mature Christian to God is one of being an obedient and willing son of God. This picture of the mature Christian as a son, a relative of God, is heightened when

⁹2 Tim. 3:17.

mature manhood is equated with the stature of the fullness of Christ.¹⁰

The mature Christian has, therefore, experienced the fullness of Christ. He responds with love for God, as St. John wrote:

He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:4-6)

In the perfected, mature person, the love of God is met by the response of love toward God which involves also the obedience to God.

This is caused by a complete change in the mind of the person.¹¹ It makes the person ready to do what is good and acceptable, what is mature action.

At this point the mature Christian broadens his view from vertical only to the horizontal. He takes people into consideration. He knows what will hurt them. He knows that is evil and what is good.¹² Distinguishing good from evil necessitates knowing what will hurt the fellow man and what is good for him. In this section mature Christians reflect the love which God has given them so that they begin to live in harmony with their neighbors. St. Paul calls for harmony of a perfected nature.

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Col. 3:14).

Thus, the mature person begins to enter into a relationship of love with the neighbor.

¹⁰ Eph. 4:13.

¹¹ Romans 12:2.

¹² Hebrews 5:14.

This is what Christ meant when He spoke to the rich young man:

"If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (Matt. 19:21)

He thought he was mature because his relationship with God, as far as he could tell was correct; but in his relationship with his society he was a babe. Christian maturity involves a relationship with society which is based on God's love for him and the rest of mankind.

It is in this connection that maturity is thought of by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews:

Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2)

The relationship to God is basic, but it is only the first step in man's maturity as a Christian. It involves a relationship of love to the fellow man also. Since all of the primary Christian doctrines are considered here as being for the immature, the necessity of some degree of maturity as far as service toward men, is almost required.

Christian maturity as a relationship with God and people involves the will of God for man. The Christian enters into a relationship by the call of God. This relationship is nurtured by God's grace and knowledge. It is a deepening through faith of the bond between the Savior and the saved. Being in Christ, enjoying the position as sons of God, having the fullness of Christ are pictures of mature Christians in their relationship with God. This gracious relationship is met with the response of love on the part of the Christian; love for God and then man. God's will is for all men, and the Christian's love is for all men. The

Christian who is mature is thoughtful of his society and each member of it because of the love of God for him.

To remain with the relationship of man to God is not mature Christianity. The mature Christian is not necessarily the person who has full knowledge of doctrine but one who practices the love of God among society.

Maturity Produced by Grace and Good Works

Christian maturity is the result of the grace of God and the resultant sanctified life of the Christian. No clearer evidence for this is given than that of the rich young man who found it impossible to carry out Christ's commands for perfection.¹³ Man by himself is unable to reach Christian maturity.

It takes God's gift of other Christians to lead men to the source of maturity. St. Paul knew that God's gifts

were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood. . . . (Eph. 4:11-13)

By the work of the ministry in its bringing the person to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, Christians are first of all offered birth and then mature manhood. It is completely God's choice. This birth and growth is purely God's decision.¹⁴

In fact, before Spiritual food had been given which could cause

¹³ Matt. 19:21-22.

¹⁴ Col. 1:27-28.

growth to maturity, God had already made everyone perfect and mature. It was a single offering of His Son, Jesus, that performed this.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14)

Through this offering all people became Christ's own; and, therefore, candidates for maturity. The continued growth in the matured state is a matter of grace.¹⁵ Grace is always a gift, or it would not be grace at all.

This is accomplished through the implanted word.¹⁶ The implanting of the word is always grace. God has moved through His word to make the mature Christian completely fitted for his role. St. Paul could tell Timothy:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:17)

Certainly this is grace as much as our very first taste of that heavenly food through the Holy Spirit, our participation in the power of God, and the powers of the age to come.¹⁷ This was God's plan, done under His grace and His direction.

With an appreciation of the grace of God in his maturity as a Christian, the prayer of St. Paul for an increase in the abundance of love for the fellow man is understandable.¹⁸ With Christians loving

¹⁵₂ Peter 3:18.

¹⁶₂ James 1:21

¹⁷ Hebrews 6:1-6.

¹⁸₂ Thess. 3:11-13.

the fellow man, social sins are gone because they do not show love.

St. Peter could tell his readers:

So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander. Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation (1 Peter 2:1-2)

The love for and by the individual, as God has loved him, shows the true character of the mature Christian.

Maturity on the Christian's part is not necessarily met with friendliness on the part of the world. God's own Son in bringing man to maturity was himself made perfect through suffering.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2:10).

In fact, the presentation of the perfect is compared to a living sacrifice of the bodies of the individuals.¹⁹ In this sacrifice the Christian is performing the will of God. In doing the will of God, the quintessence of Christian maturity is reached.

Summary of Scriptures' Definition of Maturity

Christian maturity is a present state; it is an attainable state, and it is an unattainable state. It is present in so far as the Christian has reached the state of being under God's grace and leading the life of sanctified person. It is unattainable in so far as the Christian is still a sinner and does not lead the wholly sanctified life here on earth. It is an attainable state in so far as Christians will be perfected completely in heaven both in faith and life, and it is attainable here in so

¹⁹Romans 12:1-2.

far as the Christian is under the sway of God's grace and leads the sanctified life.

Christian maturity is a relationship with God. It involves submitting the entire person to the will of God. This happens through God's calling of men by His grace extended through the word from men. It is coming into a complete relationship with God through His Son the Savior. It means having faith, being in Christ, having the fullness of God. It means experiencing the love of God for the sinner.

At the same time Christian maturity is a relationship with the fellow man. It involves the loving disposition to the neighbor which God has given to the Christian by his arrival in the fullness of God. It is the relationship in which the love of God and the doing of His will are the supreme factors in the Christian's life.

Christian maturity is entirely a matter of God's grace. Without it the Christian could not enter into a relationship with Him and could not lead the sanctified life.

This definition of Christian, Scriptural maturity is the one which Richard R. Caemmerer considers as correct, as seen in his article, "The Mature Christian," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIV (September, 1953), 653-664. He uses many of the same passages to construct a definition which is basically the same as this one.

On the other hand, E. Stanley Jones, Christian Maturity (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), reflects a definition of maturity which starts with the definition, which is basic to the psychological approach, and builds Christian maturity on that definition.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SCRIPTURAL DEFINITIONS

Both psychology and Scripture speak of maturity as a state of developing. Maturity is a constant factor in the life of the individual. As such, it is not bound by any age or social position of the person. It would be correct to think of children under both definitions as being mature, at least in certain areas.

In this connection there is a difference between the definitions. Psychology speaks of maturity always as a developing state. Scripture also speaks of it in this way. It, however, also speaks of it as a completely developed state. This is true both of this life and of the life in heaven. Since this is true, Scripture is also able to speak of maturity as a state which cannot be reached here on earth. All three conditions must be in the concept of Scriptural maturity, while only the one is spoken of in psychology.

The basic difference concerns the nature of maturity. Psychology calls maturity a socialization of the innate drives of the person. Scripture thinks of maturity as the establishment of a relationship with God and then with society. Psychology starts with the relationship of man to man and ends with man to God relationships. Scripture starts with God to man relations and continues with man to man relationships.

This difference is caused by a different set of standards with which each works. Psychology views the mature person as the one who is able to live in society with a minimum of radical distinction. Scripture

views the mature person as the one who has been brought into a right relationship with God and man. The standard for psychology is set by society while the standard of Scripture is set by God. In psychology, the mature person has drives and makes them conform to the society in which he lives. Holy Writ takes man and conforms him, with his drives, to the will of God. The mature Christian may meet the standards of society or he may violently disagree with them.

This distinction is a natural one. Psychology starts with man and, therefore, must end with man as the standard for maturity. Scripture starts with God's will and ends with God's desire for man. This distinction must be kept in mind for any criticism of the definitions of maturity.

The greatest difference lies in the area of the ability to achieve maturity. Christian maturity is achieved by that which is outside of itself; namely, the grace of God and the sanctified life. Psychological maturity is the responsibility of man. Man is the cause of maturity. The final responsibility with the psychologist for man's failure or success in reaching maturity rests with man. In Christian maturity the responsibility is with God in His grace and man's acceptance of that grace. It does not mean that every Christian is mature, because man is still an element in Christian maturity.

While the promise of psychology is the end of neuroses, crime, and war, if people are mature, Christianity does not hold out these promises because man is involved in maturity. When man is involved, maturity itself is never assured. It is for this reason that the definition in Scripture of maturity as an unattainable state is used.

In both Scripture and psychology man is viewed in parts and as a whole. The interests of both are that the parts of man become a mature whole. Neither one wants only certain parts of the person mature. Both are able to see certain parts mature, but the encouragement of both is that more maturity take place in the parts so that a mature whole will appear.

A definition of Christian maturity has been developed on the basis of Scripture. At the same time from the psychological definition it is recognized that maturity takes place in various areas--the intellectual, social, personal, and physical. These areas were not specifically touched in the chapter on Christian maturity. In order to understand Christian maturity, the concept of Christian maturity will be applied to these areas. This will result in a greater clarification of the practical aspects of Christian maturity, specifically in those areas in which psychology sees maturity developing.

The specifics under each area is called drives. By drive is meant the desire or wish to arrive at a certain goal. They may be innate or they may not be. The choice of drive under each category is purely arbitrary. Any textbook on general psychology will provide a person with a list of drives.

The Scripture which will be used is the First and Second Letters to the Corinthians. This, again, is an arbitrary choice. This Scripture is used primarily on the basis of the first three verses of the third chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians.

But, I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving like ordinary men?

CHAPTER V

CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL MATURITY

Introduction

A definition of Christian maturity has been developed on the basis of Scripture. At the same time from the psychological definition it is recognized that maturity takes place in various areas--the intellectual, social, personal, and physical. These areas were not specifically touched in the chapter on Christian maturity. In order to understand Christian maturity, the concept of Christian maturity will be applied to these areas. This will result in a greater clarification of the practical aspects of Christian maturity, specifically in those areas in which psychology sees maturity developing.

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Here, St. Paul calls the Corinthians baby Christians. This book should provide a picture of immaturity on the part of the Corinthians as well as a picture of St. Paul's maturity and his words of how they may also become mature.¹

The Second Letter which was written sometime later will provide another look at St. Paul's own maturity and the growth of the Corinthians in their own maturity.

It is granted that these books are not arranged in the order in which the various areas are treated. Likewise, the letters do not always speak directly to certain specifics under the general areas and in some cases not at all. Again it should be stated that the purpose in using the two letters is primarily to illustrate the mature Christian's reaction in these various areas.

By definition, Christian maturity is the relationship between God and man and then man to man. A prerequisite to this relationship is the belief in something outside of himself, namely God. This is part of the intellectual area. The intellectual area will, therefore, be studied first.

The intellectual area will be treated under three major drives. They are the drives to think maturely, to work for a goal, and to believe in something outside of the person.

¹ Both James Moffatt, "The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," The Moffatt New Testament Comments (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n. d.), p. 36, and John Short, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," The Interpreters' Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1957), X, 43 state that the concept of maturity for St. Paul was one of the basic concepts in his life. They also state that it was a well-known concept in the ancient world. This would make the matter of using the Two Letters to the Corinthians for a study of Christian maturity a legitimate usage.

Each of these will be considered individually because the drives cannot be considered as being parts of a whole but rather parts which fit under the general heading of intellectual maturity.

To each of these drives the definition of Christian maturity will be applied. That definition is that Christian maturity is having the right relationship with God and then the correct relationship with the fellow man.

The Drive to Believe in Something Outside Himself

The drive to believe in something outside himself is to have the desire to have some greater being, cause, or drive to which man may look in fear, hope, confidence, for direction, or just look. It is commonly associated with the belief in a god of some type.

This drive comes closest to reaching the center of Christian maturity. Because Christian maturity must involve Christ, it automatically has the basis of the belief in something outside of man. Scripture is very definite on what this belief should be. The important thing to realize is that this drive forms the basis for all the rest of what could be said about the mature Christian.

The Christian believes in something outside of himself by God's grace.² All depends on the revelation of God in His grace. Without this, nothing but complete chaos can ensue.

The state of grace is where the Christian finds himself in the correct relationship with God.³ Being washed, sanctified, and justified is

²1 Cor. 15:10.

³1 Cor. 6:11.

being in the correct relationship with God by the Holy Spirit's work. The mature Christian believes that he is dealing with a gracious, merciful God.

Man may not have just any faith. St. Paul entreats his readers, "Do not be idolaters as one of them were" (1 Cor. 10:7) Idolaters are not Christians and are thus in the darkness which does not permit faith. Man may not believe in what he wants but in what God wants. The mature Christian may only believe in the merciful God who forgives him his sins and has made him a partaker of the glory of God, because this is establishing the right relationship with God.

In the Second Letter, St. Paul urges:

Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "at the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation," Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry (2 Cor. 6:1-3)

People must believe in order to be in a correct relationship with God. If they do not believe, they have failed in everything. There can be nothing without faith. Not some abstract belief in God, but only the grace of God accepted by faith will suffice for salvation.

God alone can make man complete.⁴ God makes us workers for Him. Without belief in God, there can be no work for Him and no maturity. God offers us full maturity when He gives us reconciliation with God. For this St. Paul pleads:

We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we

⁴2Cor. 3:4-6.

might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:20-21)

The start of maturity is in the belief that God has made us His own through Christ.

This requires a constant examination to see whether this faith is still present. St. Paul knew that faith might slip away from the readers as he wrote:

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you fail to meet the test. (2 Cor. 13:5)

If the Christian fails to meet the test, all that has been said and will be said about the life of the mature Christian may as well be forgotten. The mature Christian realizes this drive is important and constantly makes tests to see if he does believe in the reconciling work of Christ for him.

The entire life of the Christian is gauged by his faith. When St. Paul became concerned about death he remembered that "we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. 5:7) The Christian in his actions has faith as his guide. Without faith, man's life is completely dark; and for the Christian it would be utter foolishness. The aim of the life of a mature Christian is to please God, to do God's will. Having faith is a prerequisite to mature living.

The drive to believe in God is necessary when we view the earthly life.⁵ If faith were absent, the Christian's life would be miserable and our sighs of anxiety would be the only thing possible. The entire conflict and affliction which the Christian must endure because he is mortal

⁵2 Cor. 5:1-3.

and because he is a Christian, only serves as a preparation for the eternal glory which will be his. St. Paul knew this and told his readers:

For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

The necessity of faith is evident from this passage.

This faith and only this faith is to be believed. Other faiths, St. Paul knew, were being taught.⁶ All other faiths, while readily accepted, will only destroy the present faith and with it all changes of maturity.

The drive to believe in something outside of himself is fulfilled by the faith which he has in Christ Jesus. By viewing the present situation, the necessity of this kind of faith is obvious. It must be faith in Jesus as the One who has brought us back to God. Any other faith means destruction of pure devotion to Christ. This can only mean the end of any hope for the person to become mature as a Christian.

The Drive to Think Maturely

The individual has the drive to think maturely. It means that the person wants to be considered as intelligent and correct in this thinking. The person wants to have enough knowledge to function properly in this world.

At the same time the person who is Christian will want to conform his thinking and knowledge to his relationship with God and his fellow man. In his thinking he will have to carry out the will of God both

⁶2 Cor. 11:1-4.

toward God and toward his neighbor, if he wants to be a mature Christian. Not the wisdom of this world but the secret and hidden wisdom of God is imparted. This is the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Savior. This is the wisdom which makes the Christian mature. It brings him into a correct relationship with God.

With the knowledge of the Christian comes the ability to judge all that happens.

The unspiritual man does not receive the gift of the Spirit of God for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. (1 Cor. 2:14-15)

The mature Christian is able to tell whether his actions or any other actions are good or evil. He establishes the right relationship with his neighbor.

To pride oneself in being wise according to this world's standards is not being mature or a Christian, St. Paul warned the Corinthians. St. Paul has to tell the Corinthians, "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature." (1 Cor. 14:20) It was not mature Christian thinking, when evil resulted. He is not doing God's will.

Christian maturity is not simply a matter of knowing what is correct. Knowledge has to be coupled with love: "'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up." (1 Cor. 8:1) St. Paul informs them the mature Christian does have knowledge. He knows what is correct and what is wrong. At the same time he practices love in what he does. This is establishing the correct relationship with the neighbor. The mature Christian receives his wisdom from the Gospel.⁷

⁷1 Cor. 2:6-8.

Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. (1 Cor. 3:18-19)

All the wisdom that God could possibly see in this world is knowledge of His will. The foolishness of God is the wisdom of this world. It is the foolish of this world that God makes wise. To be mature in thinking according to Scripture means to be foolish by this world's standards.

The Corinthians had advanced by the time St. Paul wrote the Second Letter:

Now as you excel in everything--in faith . . . in knowledge. . . . (2 Cor. 8:7)

They now excelled in knowledge. They had become wise in God's will which was the way of salvation and the way of love toward the fellow man.

St. Paul's hope for the Corinthians was that they would increase in this heavenly wisdom. He writes,

For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand; I hope you will understand, fully, as you have understood in part. . . . (2 Cor. 1:13-14)

They understood in part and now were to grow in understanding.

The Christian is not a babbling idiot, hardly able to communicate in this world. The Christian possesses enough knowledge to put across the wisdom of God. St. Paul knew this when he wrote, "Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge; in every way we have made this plain to you in all things."⁸ The Corinthians could never say that they had not understood the plan of God for them. They had been dealt

⁸ 2 Cor. 11:6.

with in a straight forward manner.⁹ The mature Christian will be artful in his speech but not cunning so that the people are deceived by the fine words but do not receive the message of God's plan for them.

In this drive the mature Christian realizes that pure wisdom is from God and concerns the will of God for him. He realizes that what is wisdom in this world is foolishness to God. He attempts to spread God's plan for others, not in the wisdom of this world but in the knowledge which God has given to him.

The Drive to Work toward a Goal

Every individual has the drive to reach a certain goal in life. The person wishing to arrive at a certain desired point in his life has this drive.

The mature Christian will work for a goal which will conform to his relationship with God and his fellow man. The mature Christian will have to work for the goal of carrying out the will of God in his life. This is the message of the Two Letters to the Corinthians on this matter.

The Christian also has this drive. It is to tell the Gospel. St. Paul put it this way, "I do it all for the sake of the gospel. . . ." (1 Cor. 9:23) St. Paul was willing to do anything so that the Gospel would be spread. He worked for this goal because it conformed to mature Christianity. He carried out the will of God.

For the Christian the beginning and goal of life is the same. It is Christ Jesus.

⁹2 Cor. 4:2.

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundations with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble--each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:11-15)

If man attempts to build on anything else, than Jesus, the final goal will be disillusionment and disappointment. The one who builds on Christ will be saved. The mature Christian does not work for any goal, but strictly for the goal of having Christ and aiding His work.

The goal is one which has been assigned to the Christian by the Savior. St. Paul informs the Corinthians, "Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches." (1 Cor. 7:17) God calls the person into that relationship and for the goal of working for Him. This goal is performed in whatever station of life that might be. It is always done by the assignment and call of God.

The example of St. Paul is noteworthy.

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:2-5)

St. Paul knew his goal and worked for it. Regardless of the circumstances that surrounded him, his goal was always before him. God gives the Christian strength to carry out this goal. St. Paul worked so that the faith of the Corinthians would be true and pure. It made no difference how poorly his job seemed. The Spirit was present, and he reached his goal. God's will was done. He was acting as a mature

Christian.

The matter is made just as clear in the Second Letter. Under extreme circumstances of afflictions, St. Paul could say, "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart." (2 Cor. 4:1) The goal would be reached regardless into what the apostle ran. God would see that the goal was reached since He had given it to him.

The Christian is willing to go through anything for his goal.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Cor. 4:7-12)

Even death itself might be necessary to preach Christ, to explain God's will to men, but that is reaching the goal; God's will is being done.

In summary, the Christian has as his aim in life, the performance of God's will in himself and others. Regardless of the cost this goal must be reached by the Christian. It can be reached in whatever social position the Christian finds himself. It involves preaching the Gospel, the wisdom of God.

For the Christian, this drive is one which must take a secondary place to the greater will of God. The will of God which is the establishing of God's will on earth takes priority over this drive. The mature Christian, St. Paul, views himself as a man sentenced to death.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIAN MATURITY IN RELATION TO BODILY NEEDS

The second area to be discussed is the area of bodily needs. This involves the drives for life, relaxation, and the drive to overcome handicaps. This area is discussed in this place because, after the primary basis for Christian maturity has been discussed under intellectual maturity of the Christian, this area is most vital to the discussion. It involves the drives which permit man to go on living.

The mature Christian's attitude toward these drives will have to conform to his relationship toward God and his fellow men. In each of these drives man will have to carry out the will of God or he cannot be mature.

The Drive for Life

The drive for life is that innate propensity for wanting to live. It might be called the desire to survive. It includes all drives directly connected with living, such as the drive for food, drink, and rest. Such things as aid in the preservation of life are also included here, as proper clothing and shelter.

For the Christian, this drive is one which must take a secondary place to the greater will of God. The will of God which is the establishing of God's will on earth takes priority over this drive.¹ The mature Christian, St. Paul, views himself as a man sentenced to death.

¹1 Cor. 4:9-14.

This is the opposite of living. St. Paul does this because he is doing the will of God. The drives for food and drink are limited in their fulfillment because of the mission for which St. Paul was sent. Even the necessary aids to the preservation of life, as clothes and home, St. Paul is willing to do without so that the will of God might be accomplished.

At the same time, St. Paul considers life and the body as precious to God.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are. (1 Cor. 3:16-17)

It is wrong to destroy the body as some of the Corinthians were still doing because they were not carrying out the will of God.² Over indulgence in food actually caused the body to be destroyed. In committing immoral acts the body became diseased; and thus, the body was destroyed. In view of God's high regard for the body, these were to be stopped because they did not carry out the will of God, even if the will of God resulted in the killing of the body or extreme privation.

The correct usage of the drive for life is not to let the drive have its full sway. This would be submitting to the will of the person and not to God's will.

Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:26-27)

St. Paul advocated the proper control of the passions of the body and even some privations, so that the will of God might be accomplished.

²1 Cor. 6:13.

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, where St. Paul should be speaking to a more mature group of Christians, he speaks of the desire of the Christian for living as wanting to be with the Lord and not with the present body.³ He does, however, not advocate some kind of departure from the body. Our duty is to please Him regardless whether we are on earth or in heaven.

This drive to be with the Lord, St. Paul puts into a spiritual sense in his Second Letter.⁴ Actually, the fear of losing his life, for the Christian, is not something to be dreaded because he has a building from God, which is eternal. In fact, Christians who are mature long to have the present physical life taken away so that they may put on the true life which is guaranteed them by the Spirit's presence.

To sum up the mature Christian's attitude toward his drive for life, St. Paul says that it is a matter of values. Eternal life is of greater value than this life.⁵ The glory of eternity is certainly to be the governing interest. It is another way of saying that God's will is to be the most prominent drive in the mature Christian's life.

The Drive for Relaxation

By this drive is meant the desire to have time to do those things which are not directly necessary for the fulfillment of other drives. For example, the person has a desire to go swimming. This desire is part of the drive for relaxation. This is not part of the work he does

³2 Cor. 5:6-8.

⁴2 Cor. 5:1-5.

⁵2 Cor. 4:16-18.

in order to live or to fulfill any of the other drives he has.

The First Letter to the Corinthians does not make mention of this drive in any form. In the Second Letter, the following passage may be a reference to this drive.

For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest but we were afflicted at every turn--fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus. (2 Cor. 7:5-6)

St. Paul may have meant one of two things. He may have meant that he wanted to relax, but because of the extreme pressures of his work he was not permitted. On the other hand, it may mean that St. Paul was simply tired and needed rest but could not find the time because he was met by adversaries at his arrival in Macedonia. If the former is true, it would mean that the mature Christian could never have time to be away from his duties. In this sense no Christian would want to relax, and therefore, this interpretation is suspect.

The Drive to Overcome Handicaps

The drive to overcome handicaps is the innate propensity to overcome those things with which man is either born or which occur to man that hinder him from a participation in a normal sense with the rest of mankind.

St. Paul, in speaking about his handicaps, whatever they were, does not view them as a hindrance to his maturity as a Christian. They did not and could not hinder him because the will of God could be and was carried out through him with notable success.⁶ St. Paul did

⁶1 Cor. 2:2-5.

not and could not overcome his handicaps but viewed them as God given and enduring and even put them to good advantage in his mature state.

The clearest example of the mature Christian in relation to his drive to overcome handicaps is in the Second Letter.

And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

St. Paul who suffered from a handicap and who viewed its departure as an aid to his life as a mature Christian discovers it is an aid. It will cause God's grace to become powerful in him. It resulted in St. Paul's happiness over the weakness rather than any kind of sadness. The mature Christian is content even with handicaps as long as God's will is advanced among men and in himself.

St. Paul met with more than the usual amount of handicaps to normal living. They were not all physical but had much to do with his body. These he does not look upon as hindrances but as a recommendation of his determination to carry out God's will, the essence of maturity.

Handicaps, be they inborn or induced later, always produce comfort for the Christian.⁷ Handicaps and afflictions are always a reminder of the suffering of Christ. Though the handicaps were, no doubt,

⁷2 Cor. 1:3-7.

afflictions brought on as the direct result of the Christianity of the Corinthians, the comfort is always there. For the mature Christian all afflictions can be calmly viewed that they are meant for his good. In fact, they will produce the praising and blessing of God, which is maturity.

In summarizing the mature Christian's attitude toward bodily needs, there is no basic difference between the Two Letters to the Corinthians. St. Paul is concerned in both instances with their recognition that the uppermost concern in their life be the performance of the will of God. The drive for relaxation, life, and the overcoming of handicaps is subordinate to the greater drive of carrying out the will of God both in relationship to God and to the fellow man.

The mature Christian views life as a precious gift from God. It is to be used for the service of God as He wills that service. Should God's will be in conflict with forces that the Christian meets, that his life is demanded to carry it out, he willingly gives up his life. While living, the desire to be with Christ, which means physical death for the Christian, is to be uppermost because the Christian would like to be where God's will is perfectly carried out.

For the Christian there can be no relaxation from the primary duty of doing the will of God.

In the matter of handicaps the mature Christian sees in their presence the opportunity to perform God's will more perfectly. They are a blessing and their presence or removal should always be viewed as a further opportunity to carry out God's will. God gives His special comfort to those who are afflicted which comes by remembering the sufferings of Christ.

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIAN MATURITY IN RELATION TO PERSONAL NEEDS

The third area which will be exemplified from the Two Letters to the Corinthians is the personal area. This area involves the emotions. After dealing with the drives which are necessary for life, the inward feelings are next in importance.

This area involves the drives to be normal, have possessions, be loved, feel secure, escape blame, have sexual expression, and be independent.

To the emotions the concept of Christian maturity will be applied. The Christian's relationship to God and his fellow man must be brought to bear on his emotions. The emotions themselves must carry out God's will in order for the Christian to be mature.

The Drive to Be Normal

By this drive is meant the person's desire to be considered as an equal to others. It is the drive to conform to other's standards and actions. As such, it is closely linked with the drive to imitate others.

Corinth was a city in which the mature Christian would find it hard to be normal. St. Paul does not consider that this drive is to be fulfilled.¹ The emphasis of St. Paul is on the fact that they have been removed from the immoral conditions of their fellow citizens into a relationship with God. They are washed, justified, sanctified Christians.

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

Even according to worldly standards the Corinthian Christians were never normal but always rather weak foolish persons.

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

This drive is not easily subjected to God's will. In order to substitute for this drive, St. Paul points out that it is God's choice that they rise to heights which put those whom they once considered normal into a shameful position. This is God's plan so that man would not have the audacity to boast in His presence.

Normality is not something which the Christian can hope to find if he is looking for it in the eyes of his fellow beings. In fact, just the opposite is true. The mature Christian can expect to be the butt of jokes.

For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to me. We are fools for Christ's sake. . . (1 Cor. 4:9-10)

All the normal reactions of men are not considered to be normal for the Christian.

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul speaks about his own drive for normality. He says,

I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I am not at all inferior to those superlative apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in patience, with signs, and wonders and mighty works. For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong! (2 Cor. 12:11-13)

Here he attempts to show that he is equal to the other apostles. At the same time he knows that he is inferior because he is making a fool of himself before his readers. For the Christian the drive to be normal is met with difficulty as St. Paul's case shows. In certain cases the drive has a legitimate right. It is where the will of God is being challenged. All Christians have the right to be considered as normal. Under grace there is normality for all. In the case of the apostles, there was difficulty because some were considered inferior. However, St. Paul shows that the will of God was being carried out by stating first, that he is really nothing, and secondly, that he wants his readers to forgive him. The drive is subjected to God's will. It was God's will that St. Paul does what is considered wrong. Only the desire to carry out God's will is evident.

The Christian is not in his old relationships any longer.² It is the new state which is now normal. Being under Christ sets the standard for the drive for normality. Under grace there is little distinction between people. Grace is a leveling factor. The drive is gone because all are in an equal position under God's grace in Christ.

The Drive to Have Possessions

The drive to have possessions means that the individual wishes to have physical properties which he may call his own. The desire to have control over property is another way of defining this drive.

The mature Christian has this drive. Concerning this drive, St.

²2 Cor. 5:16-17.

Paul wrote in his First Letter to the Corinthians,

I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed . . . not even to eat with such a one. (1 Cor. 5:11)

It is wrong to let this drive go out of control so that greed and robbery became a part of the Christian life. This is permitting the drive to have its own way instead of God's will being done. The mature Christian does not permit this drive to control him but rather his relationship to God.

St. Paul gives his own example of what the Christian may have to do with this drive. His own mission in life, doing God's will, took complete preference to this drive.

To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless . . . we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all things. (1 Cor. 4:11-13)

For the Savior's sake he did not even possess good clothes and had no property at all, except the poor clothes that he wore. The mature Christian may surely own property, but he may never permit the desire to own possessions to interfere with God's will.

After dealing with the Corinthians, St. Paul in the Second Letter, speaking now to a more mature group of Christians, tells of his own robbery.

Did I commit a sin in abasing myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel without cost to you? I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. (2 Cor. 11:7-8)

He does not mean actually taking by force here, but rather appropriating the generous support of other congregations when the Corinthians should have been giving him support. For God's Gospel, St. Paul was willing

to do this. It was not for himself, but for God that he took their support. This was being mature because he was doing God's will.

The mature Christian does not permit this drive to have its way because that is making man's will the authority for life instead of God's will. The Christian may actually have to do without possessions because of the obedience he has to God's will. On the other hand the Christian will use property, which is freely offered, for the sake of the Gospel, even when it should have been provided by another group of Christians.

The Drive to Be Loved

The drive to be loved involves the desire to have people look upon the person with a certain degree of love. There are many kinds of love. People who have a feeling of strong personal attachment induced by sympathetic understanding of the individual are loving. It is not the love of one sex for the other that is meant here.

In Scripture there are three kinds of love; the kind of love defined above, sexual love, and Christian love. Christian love is involved in the first of these. It contains this added component that even where there is not sympathetic understanding which leads to personal attachment, there is still love. The cause of Christian love is always God's grace. In the Letters to the Corinthians, the kind of love which is used and spoken of is the third kind, Christian love. Since it includes the term, love, the definition as given above will be meant.

In relation to this desire, St. Paul turns the desire from being loved to outgoing love. In this respect, the thirteenth chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians is noteworthy.

Love is to guide the mature Christian.

Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual especially that you may prophecy. (1 Cor. 14:1)

Love brings the person into a correct relationship with God and then with men. It is having maturity. The Christian will have his desire to be loved fulfilled because other Christians will be loving him.

Loving is the mature Christian expressing himself.³ God knows us as His own if we love Him. Then the Christian is in a correct relationship with the fellow man. In the matter of eating food offered to idols, love was to be the guiding principle. This was leading the sanctified life; it was being mature.

Christian love is to be the guiding principle in all actions of the mature Christian. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "Let all that you do be done in love." (1 Cor. 16:13) Instead of being loved, the Christian who is mature is a loving creature in all his actions to his fellow men. Instead of insisting upon actions which may be correct in themselves, the mature Christian is rather to show love.⁴ Loving builds up the neighbor. It is entering into the correct relationship with the fellow man. It is being mature.

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul says that they are the recipients of love, by calling them beloved.⁵ They were beloved by him, not because they had some special quality about them which made them lovable, but it was because God had made them as persons to be

³1 Cor. 8:1-3.

⁴1 Cor. 10:23-24.

⁵2 Cor. 7:1.

loved. Thus, they were fulfilling their desire in a mature Christian way.

The Corinthians were to love all men. They were growing mature in this respect because they were loving people instead of only desiring love.⁶ They had entered into a right relationship with their neighbors. They now had grown to the point where God's love was filling them more and more. In this sense they were becoming more mature.

The desire to be loved in these letters reflects that the drive is to be turned from wanting love to giving love. In this manner the desire was fulfilled and maturity was resulting. Love is the guiding rule in the Christian's life. The emphasis is on the Christian's loving rather than on being loved.

The Desire to Feel Secure

This drive may be defined as the desire to have events flow in a predictable fashion. It is the wish that the future will be provided for as well as the present. Security involves having the wants of the body and mind taken care of without worry and anxiety.

As was seen in the drives for life and to have possessions, the Christian may or may not be provided with the necessities of life. At the same time the security of the Christian under these drives need not be the concern of the Christian. The Christian is secure in his final destiny and in God's plan for his life. The relationship with God is of first importance.

⁶2 Cor. 8:24.

The Corinthians were people who wanted to feel secure. They felt that they were secure both in physical as well as spiritual affairs. They openly showed their security.⁷ St. Paul tells them to be careful. It takes only a little fear to undo all of their boasting. The mature Christian is humble in his feeling of security. He knows that God has given him the security and alone can keep him assured of it.

This is the feeling which he expresses in the last verses of the First Letter.

Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.
Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Cor. 16:13)

Security in faith demands watchful attention. If they were firm in their faith, they could have courage which is one of the characteristics of being secure. They could be strong because they knew that what was at hand, trials and afflictions, as well as whatever the future would bring could be met with their trust in God's protecting grace. They would then be mature because their relationship with God would be secure.

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul expresses his own confidence in the Corinthians when he says, "I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you." (2 Cor. 7:16) He knows that they are secure both in their faith and life, and rejoices in their condition. They are now mature; they were doing God's will.

The secure person is not blind to what lies before him. The mature Christian is confident because he knows that he is Christ's. With

⁷1 Cor. 5:6.

God in him, the present and future have been secured.⁸

The security of the person depends also on the life he leads. He may not feel secure in his life if it is not in conformity with Christ.⁹ The maturing Christian may not feel secure at all if he still does what is evil. He is not leading the sanctified life. However, when the forgiving grace of God is his constant companion, his doubts will disappear. Also when this grace becomes more and more active in his life, he will see that this life is becoming more and more the life of the man of God. He will see his maturity developing.

The secure mature Christian takes the long view of life. The mature Christian may not feel secure if he has enough physical possessions to satisfy his present and future needs. He does have the assurance that his final outcome rests with God. With this in mind he will feel secure regardless of what happens to him. He knows he is under grace and even his sinful life can be viewed with confidence because of the forgiving grace of God. If his relationship with God is correct, then he may feel secure and be mature.

The Drive to Escape Blame

The drive to escape blame may be defined as the innate desire to be correct in all circumstances. The individual does not wish to be wrong. This implies some kind of inferiority on his part. He desires to make no mistakes in any of his actions.

⁸ 2 Cor. 10:7.

⁹ 2 Cor. 5:10.

To illustrate how the drive was handled by St. Paul, three passages will be cited. They are from the Second Letter. The first one tells that it was God in Christ who has taken upon himself our mistakes.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:19)

Man does make mistakes and trespasses. God has taken away these wrongs by not counting them. Man is free from blame. The obligation of the Christian is to tell others of this message so that they too may have this drive fulfilled. The center of Christian maturity rests in the fulfillment of this drive, because it centers in the correct relationship with God. Scripture's chief message concerns the fulfillment of this drive.

The mature Christian realizes that he is to blame for his mistakes.

The godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! (2 Cor. 7:10-11)

The wrongs committed by the Christian lead him to repentance and salvation. Actually, the feeling of blame is good for the Christian. It leads to the correct relationship with God. This was defined as part of the maturity of the Christian.

Mature Christians are concerned about their mistakes and do wish to avoid them if at all possible. Every Christian attempts to correct his own life and also tries to prevent his fellow Christians from making mistakes.

But I am sending the brethren so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we be humiliated--to say nothing of you--for being

so confident. (2 Cor. 9:3-4)

St. Paul wants the Corinthians to escape blame. Therefore, he warns them to be prepared for the coming of those who were going to receive their gifts for their fellow Christians. This was showing love to the neighbor. It was being mature, having the correct relationship with the fellow man.

The mature Christian can fulfill this drive only by applying to himself the reconciling work of Christ. At the same time the Christian knows he is guilty. This leads to establishing the correct relationship with God and also with the fellow man by warning him of the mistakes he may make. Both of these aspects make up the actions of the mature Christian, as he desires to fulfill this drive.

The Drive to Have Sexual Expression

The drive for sexual expression is the desire to have physical sexual relations. It involves the organs of the body which are used for reproduction. Under this heading marriage will also be treated because marriage is concerned with sexual expression.

The First Letter to the Corinthians devotes the entire seventh chapter to this drive. The drive needed considerable attention in order to bring it into compatibility with Christian maturity among the Corinthians. By contrast, it receives only slight attention in the Second Letter.

Immorality was rampant in Corinth. Prostitution ran wild. St. Paul issues the warning that immorality excludes the person from the

body of Christ, and therefore, from maturity.¹⁰

By permitting this drive to be fulfilled in this manner, man's will was having its way. Because the body is God's temple, it was to carry out the will of God; it was to be mature. The Christian could not fulfill his drive through immorality.

How was the Christian to fulfill this drive? St. Paul says that the fulfillment of this drive is not important, but because of the impending distress, it was better to forego this drive to be prepared.¹¹ He does not say it is wrong to marry but simply to act as if the Lord were coming soon. The married person is to act as though the spouse is not the most important but rather the relationship to God. This was St. Paul's advice for all undertakings in life.

He says that marriage is for those who have no control over this drive.

To the unmarried and widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. (1 Cor. 7:8-9)

Marriage is better than being aflame with passion. In this marriage, God's will could be done; the person could be mature.

Marriage, says St. Paul, is to last as long as the husband lives.¹² After the death of the spouse the other is free to marry. Marriage should not be ended by separation or divorce.¹³ Reconciliation should

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 6:15-20.

¹¹ 1 Cor. 7:25-27.

¹² 1 Cor. 7:39-40.

¹³ 1 Cor. 7:10-11.

take place or the spouse should remain single in cases of broken marriages. In marriage the will of God must be done or the Christian is not mature.

In the state of marriage the conjugal rights of both parties are to be freely offered to the other.¹⁴ The only time when this may not be done is when time is being taken for prayer. St. Paul's desire was that the Christian not marry at all. Because of immorality he concedes that marriage should take place. Marriage is a gift and celibacy is also. The Christian in marriage loves his partner. In doing this he shows his maturity as a Christian in his relationship with the closest of his fellow man.

How well the advice of St. Paul was taken by the Corinthians is stated in a passage from the Second Letter.

I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned before and have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced. (2 Cor. 12:21)

St. Paul fears that the sexual sins have continued among them. The drive for sexual expression was most difficult for the Christians in Corinth to control as God would want them. It was hard for them to enter into the God demanded relationships with their fellow man.

In summary, the Christian at the height of maturity is one who does not marry but devotes himself to the Lord. At the same time, marriage is pleasing to God; it should be watched so that the cares and worries of marriage do not interfere with the primary drive of pleasing the Lord.

¹⁴1 Cor. 7:1-7.

Immorality is not found in the mature Christian. It excludes him from the body of Christians and his relationship with God is severed. The immoral Christian is to be excluded from the rest of the Christians.

In the state of marriage the conjugal rights are to be freely given. These rights may not be withheld except for a temporary dedication to the Lord for prayer. Marriage is lifelong, and its breaking ends only with death. All these items constitute the married life of the mature Christian.

In any usage of this drive, the mature Christian is to remember that, first of all, God's will should be done either in marriage or outside of it. In marriage the love for the spouse should be standard for conduct. This love comes from the fact that the body is the temple of the Savior.

The Individual Wishes to be Independent

To be independent means that the person is free from dependency of any kind. It is the drive to be self-sufficient. It includes the wish to be free from any obligation which might result from being dependent on other people.

The Corinthians could not be independent. They needed to depend on the advice and admonition of leaders like St. Paul. They were children.

I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. (1 Cor. 4:14-15)

As children they could feel the drive to be independent, but this would

lead to complete immaturity on their part if they became independent. They would not have the correct relationship to their fellow Christians. The complete manhood for the Christian only arrives when he fully understands the ways of God, as God understands his ways at this present time. ¹⁵ This happens in heaven, and we must wait for it there.

The desire to be independent often leads to quarrels and disputes.

I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. (1 Cor. 1:10)

In the life of the mature Christian, there is unity. Unity implies a dependence rather than independence. It implies a right relationship between Christians; and thus, maturity. To quarrel and to be jealous are signs of immaturity.

But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving like ordinary men. (1 Cor. 3:1-3)

Disputes make Christians like ordinary men who want to be independent, who want to have their own rights come first, who want to have a personality all their own, without regard for others. Christians cannot be mature and still independent from other Christians.

Mature Christianity must be brought into this drive. The Christian may not be independent because this shows his lack of concern for the fellow man and his immaturity. The Christian must take

¹⁵ 1 Cor. 13:11-12.

into consideration at all times the fellow man. As such he cannot be free to act as he will.

The Christian's drive for independence must be turned into a drive for dependence upon the body of Christ, if he wishes to be mature.

For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:12-13)

The illustration of members of one body indicates that the Christian can not be independent any more than a member of the body can be. Without the dependence there is immaturity; there is no relationship to God or the fellow Christian.

The Christian is warned that when he thinks he is independent, self-sufficient, and able to stand as a Christian by himself, he should be careful that he does not fall into temptation.¹⁶ God is able to help the Christian who is tempted to be independent. God provides the way out of even this kind of temptation. The Christian who has tried independence will acknowledge that he must rely on God and not on himself. Then he will be mature because he has the correct relationship with God.

The mature Christian is dependent on God for everything. When the Christian realizes his complete dependence on God, he comes very close to being mature.

Quarreling, strife, jealousy, and disputes are signs of immaturity. The consideration of the fellow man as a member of the body of Christ makes a man mature. It also makes man dependent.

¹⁶1 Cor. 10:12-13.

In summary, it must be stated that all the personal drives must conform to man's relationship with God and his fellow Christian. The Christian's emotions must carry out the will of God.

In his drive to be normal, man must do God's will rather than the will of others if he wishes to be mature. Man becomes normal under God's grace and has the correct relationship with God; he is mature.

In his drive to have possessions, the mature Christian realizes that all possessions are to be used to carry out God's will. This will happen only when man has the correct relationship with God and his fellow men.

The person's drive to be loved is selfish and does not show a concern for doing God's will. It has to be changed from the desire to be loved to the desire to love. Loving results from experiencing the correct relationship with God. This is the mature Christian's fulfillment of this drive.

In the drives to feel secure and escape blame, only the correct relationship with God can give a Christian security and provide the way to escape blame. It, likewise, means that the Christian must be mature before he can have these drives fulfilled.

The correct relationship with the fellow man can be the only solution to the fulfillment of the drive for sexual expression. If man is not in the correct relationship with God, man cannot love the fellow man. Man cannot be mature in this drive unless the correct relationship with God has been established.

In man's drive to be independent, the correct relationship to God and the fellow man can only result in dependence. This is maturity

because man is then doing God's will.

In these drives, man must do the will of God or immaturity will result. Man can do God's will only if the correct relationship with God has been built.

In the discussion of the previous area man already was seen to be reaching out in social contacts.

Involved in this area are the drives for friendship, leadership, praise, and the drive to avoid opposition and coercion. These involve man's relationship with other people.

To these drives the definition of Christian maturity will be applied. Man's relationship to God and man in its correct form will constitute the basis of the discussion on maturity for the Christian in these areas.

The Drive for Friendship

The drive for friendship is the desire to have friends and be a friend. It is related to the desire to be loved. It is different in the fact that the emphasis here is on the companionship which friends offer. It involves the desire to be associated with people who are likable and who like the individual.

The Christian does not use this drive for his own gratification. This would not be maturity as God's will is always primary. The Christian uses this drive to work for God and His Gospel.¹ St. Paul became a friend to all people. He did this so that he might save them. His own interest in having friends was fulfilled because these people

¹ 1 Cor. 9:19-22.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL MATURITY

The final area to be discussed under Christian maturity is the social area. In the discussion of the previous area man already was seen to be reaching out in social contacts.

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¹ 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

became Christians. As Christians they were friends to St. Paul.

The Christian has his drive fulfilled in a very grand way. He has friends wherever there are Christians. St. Paul was with the Corinthians, who were,

called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.
 . . . (1 Cor. 1:2)

The quality that makes people friends is their common relationship with God, their maturity.

In showing how they may become friends with all men and in particular with people who are Christians or another race, St. Paul gives this advice,

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me as I am of Christ. (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1)

The Christian gives no offense. The advice of St. Paul is that, when friends are wanted, then imitation of Christ is necessary; the correct relationship with God must be established.

How the Corinthians should treat a friend is also stated by St. Paul.

When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. So let no one despise him. Speed him on his way in peace, that he may return to me; for I am expecting him with the brethren. (1 Cor. 16:10-11)

They were to encourage him, and they were to be at peace with him.

They were not to despise him, but were to put him at ease. These actions toward a man make him a friend and mark the doer as a mature Christian, one who is doing God's will.

A Christian could not be a friend to a man who causes him to sin.

Likewise, he will not do that which will cause the fellow Christian to do evil.² It is always for the love of the Brother for whom Christ died that any action is undertaken. It is the love that wants to bring the brother into the correct relationship with God. If that is not present, Christians are not friends and are not mature.

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul tries to make friends with them, as it were.³ He tells what a friend does. A friend does not take advantage of the other, a friend is concerned, a friend is proud of his friends, and he has confidence in them. All of these points illustrate the mature Christian concern for the maturity of the fellow man. The desire to have friends will be fulfilled if these qualities are found in the individual, and the person will be doing God's will, and thus, will be mature.

These qualities are not simply desired so that the Christian might have friends. The Christian does not have friends for friends' sake.⁴ Love for God is the controlling desire in our drive to have friends. The Christian who is mature wants his friends to do God's will. The Christian does not live for himself, but for God. He thus carries out the will of God and is mature.

The Christian who is thus minded will suffer so that his friends may share the grace which comes through Christ's suffering. St. Paul relates how he had gone through all of the afflictions as well as com-

²1 Cor. 8:8-13.

³2 Cor. 7:2-4.

⁴2 Cor. 5:14-15.

fortings so that they might experience the grace of God.⁵ In this sharing of experiences, he also becomes a friend by telling how the Corinthians will be comforted when they suffer.

In his First Letter, St. Paul advocated the exclusion of a member who was sinning. This was a deed of kindness. Now St. Paul says that the true friend will receive the repentant sinner back.⁶ A true friend, who is a mature Christian, is primarily interested in the individual's relationship to God.

A mature Christian can actually only be a friend with those who are Christians.

Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14)

There is no common meeting ground here. There is no desire on the Christian's part to share in evil. A friend does the will of God. This type of relationship would only destroy God's plan for man, and thus also his maturity.

The drive to have friends on the part of the mature Christian means that he is willing to have friends and make friends, for the sake of doing God's will in himself and in others. He attempts to make the other person a recipient of the grace of God. In doing so, the mature Christian carries out the will of God in his relationship to other people.

The mature Christian has all Christians as his friends because they are all called to the same purpose. As such the mature Christian will

⁵2 Cor. 1:6-7.

⁶2 Cor. 2:5-8.

do nothing which will cause the fellow Christian to fail in his performance as a child of God. He aids his friends through prayer and good example.

Finally, the mature Christian cannot be a friend to those who destroy the body of Christ. He cannot associate with these as friends any more than light can associate with darkness.

The Drive for Leadership

This drive is broken down into the desire to be a leader, to follow a leader, to control others, and to imitate others. By this drive is meant that the person wishes to have an authority, be one, control others by authority, and imitate those who have authority.

Christians need leaders. They need mature men to lead them. Some Corinthians felt that St. Paul was their leader, while others did not want to accept his leadership. This is the main content of the third chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians. In this chapter St. Paul points out that he was not a leader but simply a caretaker of their spiritual life.

Some of the Corinthians became arrogant against St. Paul. They wanted to take his place. They spoke boldly against him.⁷ St. Paul shows that true leadership in the kingdom of God consists in having power. If they had the power from God, they would certainly be leaders, but if they did not, they might as well stop talking.

St. Paul urges the Christians to be subject to the first converts.

⁷1 Cor. 4:18-20.

Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. (1 Cor. 16:15-16)

These people could qualify as leaders because they had devoted themselves to the work of the Lord. They were mature. Here the job of the leader is shown not to be all glory, but the leader is a worker and laborer. By working they had not controlled the others, but had given the example of the mature Christian life.

This drive is fulfilled by the Christian by having the same gifts as the others have.⁸ They could be leaders as well as St. Paul because they had the same gifts. As was pointed out under the drive to be normal, the Christians were all equal under God. All are mature. So then all Christians are leaders, and all are followers.

Included in this drive is the desire to imitate others. St. Paul asks them to be imitators of him. "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Cor. 10:33) St. Paul is really asking them to imitate Christ. As the mature Christian, they may imitate St. Paul when it is realized that the mature Christian is filled with the fullness of Christ.

In his drive the mature Christian remembers that as he has been called by Christ, he should look to Christ for leadership.⁹ Although following Christ seems like foolishness, the call of Christ has brought the Christian wisdom and power. If the Christian desires to control others, he should look to the preaching of Christ for power, and even then he may do it only for the sake of God. He may only do it when he

⁸1 Cor. 1:4-8, 25.

⁹1 Cor. 1:22-25.

is mature.

The final words of the Second Letter form the basis for the Christian's fulfillment of this drive.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. (2 Cor. 13:11-13)

The Christian is to heed the appeal of St. Paul which was to follow Christ, agree with one another, and live at peace. This speaks to the point of leadership. It also speaks of a correct relationship with the fellow man. By following the admonition of St. Paul, they would be making Christ their leader and would not seek to control others. If this happened, then God and His love and peace would be with them. They were to make Christ their leader and lead others through Christ to God.

The Corinthians had apparently followed the advice of St. Paul in the First Letter for he writes,

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Cor. 3:2-3)

It was the Spirit whom they had followed. They were like a letter written by the Spirit. They were what St. Paul wanted them to be. They had come into the correct relationship with God and with their fellow men. The mature Christian then is the person who follows the Savior, has Him as his leader, and imitates Him.

They were still weak. They still permitted others to take advantage

of them. They followed the wrong people.¹⁰ The mature Christian does not attempt to control others simply to have them in his power but only leads and controls so that they will be directed to Christ and be controlled by Him.

In dealing with his drive for leadership, the mature Christian remembers that he leads and controls others so that the Gospel may be proclaimed. He follows Christ in this and imitates Him in His actions. The definition of Christian maturity includes these things: the establishment of the right relationship with God, and then with the neighbor for the fulfillment of God's will. By imitating God and following Him, the Christian comes into the correct relationship with Him, and by leading others he brings them under the ruling hand of God.

The Drive for Praise

By the drive for praise is meant that the individual wants praise. He wishes others to praise him for his actions and words. Wishing to be noticed and praised for what calls attention to him is another way of defining this.

The mature Christian knows that he has nothing in him which is worthy of praise. All praise is for God and His grace.

By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. (1 Cor. 15:10-11)

It makes no difference what is done for Christ or the fellow man or

¹⁰ 2 Cor. 11:20-21.

accomplished, God alone deserves the praise. This runs counter to the individual's drive. On the other hand the person is mature who acknowledges that God alone is the cause of everything which is worthy of praise.

Those who have served faithfully, however, deserve praise. St. Paul says, "Give recognition to such men." (1 Cor. 16:18) It is because they have carried out God's will. They have been mature. The Christian may be praised that God has chosen him to do great things for the Savior.

In the Second Letter, St. Paul is ready to tell the Christians that they have excelled in many ways.

Now as you excel in everything--in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us--see that you excel in this gracious work also. (2 Cor. 8:7)

He praises them for doing God's will. The encouragement to continue is a part of the mature Christian's fulfillment of this drive.

More often though, the Christian needs to know that he does not deserve praise but blame. St. Paul saw much more to be criticized in the Corinthians. He did not want to visit them until they were more mature.¹¹ It is part of the mature Christian's attitude that he restrains from praise as well as blame. It is because he is in the correct relationship with the neighbor. Instead of blame the Christian encourages so that the true praise of the One who alone deserves praise may be found.

The mature Christian realizes that the praise of all good things

¹¹2 Cor. 2:1-4.

done belongs to God. On the other hand the Christian may be praised for his work for the Savior. The mature Christian does not blame others but encourages them to carry out God's will.

The Drive against Opposition and Coercion

The individual does not wish to be opposed or coerced into doing anything. This is an innate drive. It is related to the drive for independence.

In the life of the Christian all things may be done. He is not forced or coerced into doing anything. There may be times when for the sake of the brother certain things should not be done. Then the Christian should not do them.¹² It shows that man has the correct relationship with God and the fellow man.

Some of the Christians at Corinth were slaves. They were coerced and forced to do those things which they did not want to do. They were not to escape from this, but use their position as an opportunity to serve God. They were to do God's will.¹³

St. Paul warns that the Christians should not go to civil authorities to coerce their fellow Christians.

When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare to go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? (1 Cor. 6:1)

It is better to permit the fellow Christian to have what he wants than to go to court. This going to court was immature action because it showed

¹² 1 Cor. 6:12.

¹³ 1 Cor. 7:20-24.

they did not have the correct relationship with God and their fellow Christians.

In the matter of church practices, St. Paul simply states, "If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God." (1 Cor. 11:16) While it is the church here that is giving the final word, St. Paul considers it the same as if God were doing it. Maturity demands that the will of God be carried out, also as it is decided by the Church.

The concern of St. Paul for the Corinthians shows how far their maturity had gone.

For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. (2 Cor. 12:20)

These are marks of the immature person in relation to this drive.

The mature Christian is ready to submit to others and their wishes as long as the will of God is done. He attempts to be happy with his position when it is a constant state of coercion and opposition. The mature Christian never permits civil authorities to settle disputes. He would rather give in than do that.

In the area of social drives, maturity can be consistently defined as permitting God's will to have its way in all these drives. It means that friends are made and kept so that God's will may be done among them. This concern reflects the mature Christian's correct relationship to God as he works in his relationship with his fellow Christian.

The drive for leadership is fulfilled by the mature Christian when he realizes that all his actions are to carry out God's will in the lives of other people. He does not lead for personal advantage. His guide

for leadership comes from his imitation of Christ. It immediately involves the correct relationship with God. It marks the man as mature.

Both in the drive for praise and in matters of opposition and coercion, the mature Christian knows that God alone is worthy of praise and can coerce us. This results from the correct relationship with God. At the same time the Christian may receive praise because he has done the will of God, because he has been mature.

Such actions as going to court and criticizing people are acts of immaturity because they show that the person has not established a relationship of love with his neighbor.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

In this thesis the following points were made:

1. Psychology views maturity as the developing and socializing of the drives of individuals. It starts with the relationship of man to man, in the area of his drives, and continues to the area of man to God relationships.
2. Scripture views maturity as the state of man which is produced by God's grace and good works. As such, that state may be attainable or unattainable. At all times it is a demanded state for the Christian. Scripture starts with man's relationship to God and ends with man's relationship to man.
3. The basic difference between the two views is their approach to the matter of maturity. Psychology must start with man and must end with man because of its very nature. Scripture starts with God and sees the whole concept of maturity from God's view.
4. In the application of maturity in the life of the Christian which was done on the basis of the Two Letters to the Corinthians, it was seen that the definition which was offered for Christian maturity actually works out that way or should work out that way in the life of the Christian. In all areas which were considered, the intellectual, the bodily, the personal, and the social, man's first concern is with his relationship to God. Then man's relationship to other men is considered.

The study of Christian maturity was of value because it makes the individual consider his own life and judge his own maturity as he studies the basic differences between the two views as they show themselves in the individual life.

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