

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

OCTOBER, 1994

GROW UP!

Are you a spiritual wimp?

Are you a 250-lb. weakling, morally?

Are you a babyish adult, an immature veteran?

Then Grow Up!

Are you a recent convert to Christ Jesus?

Welcome! Let's grow together.

Are you a growing disciple?

Wonderful; but let's press on **more and more.**

Mark and Candy Garrett Senegal, W. Africa Sept. 1994

Early June 21st, a thunderstorm announced the start of the rainy season here in Senegal. But being in the middle of labor, Candy wasn't too thrilled about it. Candy checked in to the Clinic in Dakar at 12:30 pm and one hour later, our second child was born. He weighed 8 lbs, 13 oz. and has been "growing like a weed" ever since.

Bryan is making a lot of changes in our lives, but not as many as we are making in his. We change him at least 50 times a day! We sleep less but the joys of a new baby in the house are worth it.

Eight days after a baby is born here, there is a naming ceremony and a party. This custom is called "Ngente." To celebrate Bryan's birth we hosted a modified "Ngente" in our courtyard. We prepared Senegalese food and invited the believers to spend the day with us. It was both a celebration and an opportunity to demonstrate and teach Christian principles.

First we explained to everyone our responsibility as Christian parents and the meaning of our son's name. Bryan means "strong, sincere." Elliott means "faithful to God." Then we dedicated him to God in prayer. Then there was music. A "Ngente" in Senegal must include a dance, so Candy and I showed them how to clog, Bluegrass style!

Our "Ngente" also opened up a discussion about Jesus with one Muslim neighbor that very night. He was very curious about why we wanted everyone in the world to know about our Lord!

It was music to our ears. We found a small Toyota station wagon in great condition at a bargain price. A missionary in Dakar had left it for sale here when he relocated to the USA. The gifts we have received so far put our car fund at 53%. Gifts should be directed to our ministry account and designated for our car fund. Thanks to all who have given so far!

We are now in the middle of rainy season (flash flood season!). Each time a storm blows up, Candy and I form the rain brigade. "Close the windows! Get out the mop rags!" The same cracks in the windows that had let in dust during dry season also let in water. Two weeks ago it rained so hard that we wondered about building a dike in front of the door. But we are glad for rain. Our dusty land has turned a beautiful green.

If you want to receive their newsletters, send your name and address to 399 College St., Winchester, KY 40391.

See page 311 for the Ashleys' newsletter.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

The Word and Work (USPS 691-460) is published monthly except December under the auspices of the Portland Ave. Church of Christ, Inc., Louisville, Ky. Subscription: \$6.00 per year; bundles of 10 or more to one address = \$5.50 per subscription. Address correspondence to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Avenue, Louisville, KY 40212. Second class postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212.

Vol. LXXXVIII

OCTOBER, 1994

No. 10

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THEME: *GROW UP!*

SPIRITUAL MATURITY: CRISIS OR PROCESS?

Compiled by Alex V. Wilson

"Six days after my conversion I became a mature Christian," claimed a youthful believer several years ago. What a sad misunderstanding he showed of what maturity is and how it is achieved.

Various Christians disagree about the entire subject of growth and maturity. Some, like the new convert just mentioned, expect full growth all in one big spurt--instant maturity. John Stott comments, "They are looking for a second crisis comparable to the new birth, and are hoping that by it God will accomplish for them suddenly what He has ordained will grow gradually." The result of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives is called "fruit," and fruit ripens over a period of time--not overnight.

A second error is worse than the first. It is smug selfcontentment, with no concern for maturity. Some folks are satisfied to stay as they are, so long as they'll get to heaven (they hope). They are petrified saints. Their motto is, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." They don't want to grow, for growth means change. Such outgrowing of old attitudes and habits does not interest them in the least. Are such people really saved? Only God knows! But He warns us that "faith" minus works is dead.

Far distant from these two extremes lies the true path of holiness. It is the way of *hunger* of heart, of deep *yearning* after the Lord Himself, of forgetting what is behind and *pressing on* toward the goal (Matt. 5:6 & Psa. 106:9; Psa. 42:1, 2 & 63:1; Phil. 3:12-14). It means *growing* in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and *abounding more and more* in love (1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Thes. 3:12; 4:1,10).

Let's examine the important question briefly mentioned already. After a person is saved, should he then *seek some kind of crisis experience* in addition to the justification and new birth he has received? The following quotations provide much food for thought on this recurring question.

Various Types of Crisis Experiences

Keneth Prior, in a balanced book entitled *The Way of Holiness* (published by Inter Varsity Press), clarifies the problem for us. The following excerpts are direct quotations from the chapter called "Crisis on the Way":

The Christian life normally makes progress by steady growth, and this is what Scripture encourages us to expect. What then do we make of the Christian who claims to have experienced a sudden and decisive change subsequent to his conversion, which has resulted in his Christian life being victorious to a far greater degree than before?

As experience of this kind is not necessarily incompatible with the steady growth which, as we saw, is a prominent feature of the Christian life. It is feasible that there will be times in a Christian's life when he will make more progress than at other times What can be misleading, however, is to assume such an experience to be a normal part of every Christian's life, and think that any Christian who has not had it ought to see it . . .

*Some examples of "Second Blessing": a) **Recovery from Backsliding.** It is not surprising that some outstanding experiences in Christian life are a recovery from backsliding. The Holy Spirit is grieved by sin (Eph. 4:30) and ceases to fill the backslider. Repentance is then the only road to recovery. If the members of the church at Ephesus heeded the charge, "You have lost your first love" (Rev. 2:4), this would have involved them in a decisive turning-point in their Christian lives--a crisis experience.*

*b) **A Crisis of Discovery.** Sometimes great blessings attend the discovery of a neglected truth. For example, many Christians look back warmly on their discovery of the sovereignty of God and other truths connected with it. Verses like "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (Jn. 15:16) have filled them with a sense of wonder at the grace of God, that He should take the initiative in bringing them to salvation in Christ.*

*c) **An Awareness of the Cost of Discipleship.** Many who grow up in Christian homes find it easy to make a Christian profession, perhaps less costly than resisting the gospel! So for a time the young Christian is oblivious to some of the issues of bearing the cross. Then he goes into the world where living for Christ is no longer the easy thing it was in the shelter of his Christian home. The matter of discipleship now must be faced, and such an experience can involve a real crisis.*

d) **Full Assurance.** *There is a difference between a faith which is enough for salvation, and that which is sufficient for full assurance. Not every Christian has the latter. It is for this that we are to seek diligently (Heb. 6:11).*

e) **Crisis of Guidance.** *A young person's discovery of God's will for his life and his appropriate reaction can be a decisive step, with far-reaching effects in the quality of his life.*

How then shall we summarize all this? That Christians do have crises no one can deny. They can often be beneficial. But we should not err by insisting that every Christian needs a crisis experience following salvation. Then, too, observe the way these crises vary. We have mentioned only a few. (End of excerpts from Prior.)

The Three-Fold Function of Scripture

James Philip's booklet, *Christian Maturity* (published by Inter-Varsity Press), gives additional insights that will help us. Ponder these quotations:

According to the Scriptures, conversion and consecration are simultaneous, in the sense that no conversion ever really takes place that does not involve a true consecration to Christ. One does not give part of one's allegiance to Christ at conversion, then at a later stage make a complete surrender to Him called consecration. One does not enter into the kingdom at all except on terms of unconditional surrender. This, in fact is what conversion means.

But--and this is important--a believer may lose the keen edge of his consecration and fall away from that attitude to total commitment which marked his entrance into the kingdom of God. If he does so, then a new consecration is necessary, and sometimes this is quite as clear-cut and decisive as a conversion experience--a crisis indeed. But it is necessary to be clear about what has happened. It is not an advance to another stage of experience so much as a return to the previous one. A great deal depends on realizing this. For obviously, if a believer does not fall away from his first consecration, but follows on to know the Lord ever more deeply, he does not require to renew it again (except in so far as our consecration is renewed day by day and hour by hour, which is not the point at issue here).

Now the ministry of the Word may be said to have a threefold function. It can be (1) illuminative, in that it enlightens the minds of those who are ignorant or confused in their understanding of the gospel. It can be (2) therapeutic, in that it is medicine for those who are spiritually sick. It can be (3) edifying, in that it provides

food for those who are spiritually healthy and growing in the spiritual life. It is certainly true that spiritual illumination can take place suddenly. "I see it now," a man may cry, as the truth comes home to him with all the force of a new revelation, and from that point onwards there is marked difference in his life. A crisis has come, so to speak, in his spiritual thinking.

It is true in the same way that a crisis can take place when the action of the Word on a man's soul is therapeutic, in the sense that it comes to convict and challenge him concerning things that ought not to be in his life. The pressure of the Word and Spirit of God may be such that a crisis--involving a specific thing or person--is precipitated in his heart. Jesus said: "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." That is crisis indeed in the believer's experience, in that it demands drastic action to put matters right. Similarly, in the sphere of medicine, appendicitis is a "crisis" requiring immediate surgical intervention to safeguard life and health. But this drastic "crisis-action" in the spiritual realm is therapeutic, and in one very important sense only preparatory to the real business of Christian growth. It removes the hindrance to growth, and makes it possible, but it is not the growth itself, just as surgery removes the cause of illness and makes possible better health in the future.

If a man undergoes a crisis in his spiritual experience, this is likely to be what has happened to him. We should be glad, of course; but we must not misunderstand or misinterpret it, or confuse it to mean that spiritually speaking he has "arrived". On the contrary, he has only now set out on the real road of advance. Now he can begin to grow, when the hindrances have been removed. But to insist, as is sometimes done, that every believer must have a crisis experience before he can know the fullness of God in his life, is as misleading and erroneous as to say that everyone must have his appendix removed before true health is possible. A man who has not slipped back from his first consecration, but has progressed steadily in the spiritual life, does not need the therapy of the Word in this sense, but its nourishment, to build him up and lead him on to maturity. The therapy of the Word merely brings us to the point where new life and development are possible, and this is the beginning not the goal, of true spiritual life.

Real, effectual Christian experience, it must be insisted, does not begin properly until the believer comes to the obedience of faith in terms of total consecration to Christ. This needs to be underlined in a time when it is all too readily assumed and taught that Christians should be striving towards consecration of life as an ideal or goal, instead of beginning from it as a base, as did all the heroes of faith whose lives are recorded in the Scriptures. Abraham

did not aspire to obedience; be began with it (Heb. 11:8), and nothing else can explain the vitality of his walk with God. From the outset Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself," and this alone accounts for the undeviating faithfulness of his witness throughout a long and testing experience. (End of quotation from Philip; emphasis added by AVW.)

George Mueller's Experience

One of the outstanding Christians of all time was George Mueller. He was a man of great faith and prayerfulness, who for decades ran an orphanage in England. Every believer should read his biography. After he reached ninety years, he gave the following testimony. Evaluate it in the light of the principles we have studied:

"I was converted in 1825 but I only came into the full surrender of my heart four years later. It was then that my love for money was taken away, and my love for position and for worldly pleasures. God, God alone became my portion: I found my all in all in Him. And by God's grace this condition has remained and has made me an exceedingly happy man. I read a little of the Bible before, but preferred other books. But since that time God has wonderfully revealed Himself to me and I can say from my heart, God is an infinitely lovely Being.

"God showed me that His word alone is to be our standard in spiritual things, and that it can only be explained by the Holy Spirit--that He is the Teacher of His people. The work of the Holy Spirit I had not understood in my experience before that time. Understanding that point especially had a great effect on me. The first evening that I shut myself into my room to pray and meditate over the Bible I learned more in a few hours than I had learned in the previous several months. But the particular difference was that I received real strength in my soul as a result of doing this. The change was so great that it was like a second conversion.

Our generous Father can give enriching and exciting "second blessings"--like Mueller's, perhaps--to people today, when He so chooses. Maybe *you* need one! He knows our needs and how to meet them. But not just a "second blessing"; He delights in imparting third and fourth blessings, and twentieth, and one hundredth as well. His mercies are new *every morning*.

But let's remember He uses endless variety. He never takes a cookie-cutter approach. He is not mass-producing Christians on an assembly-line. He is a creative artist who handcrafts each product individually. Yet His goal for us all is the same: to make us holy.

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO GROW

Summary of a sermon preached by John Stott

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; for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. (1 Peter 2:1-3 RSV)

Some of Peter's readers, both ancient and modern, may well be surprised to find themselves likened to "newborn babes." Yet the reason for Peter's choice of metaphor emerges in 1:23, "you have been born anew." It is the new birth which makes us resemble newborn babies.

Now the major desire of parents for a newborn child is that he will grow into maturity. Just so, when God our heavenly Father begets us by his Word and Spirit, he has the same expectation. Like newborn babies we are to grow up.

Birth and growth belong together. Growth is impossible without birth and indispensable after it. Yet birth and growth must be distinguished from each other. For birth is an almost instantaneous event. Of course the embryo develops for months during the period of gestation, and labor may last a few hours. But birth itself, the child's emergence into independent life, is a sudden and dramatic event. Growth, on the other hand, is a slow and steady process. It takes only a few hours for a baby to be born; but it takes 18 years to attain legal majority, and to attain full physical and emotional maturity may take perhaps 25 years.

The pattern is similar in the Christian life. The new birth (when God begets us or imparts to us a new, spiritual and eternal life) is instantaneous, whether we are conscious of it or not. But it is followed by a lifetime of growth into maturity. It is this responsibility to grow which is our theme today.

Yet the very notion of Christian growth is distasteful to many. Some have such a static view of the Christian life that they neither grow nor expect to grow; they are at a standstill. Others are looking for a second crisis comparable to the new birth and are hoping that by it God will accomplish for them suddenly what he has ordained will grow gradually. So we need to consider carefully what Scripture teaches about the nature and conditions of Christian growth.

1. The Nature of Christian Growth (what it is)

Everybody understands *physical* growth, and most people have some grasp of the stages of *emotional* development. But many people have only the haziest concept of what is meant by *spiritual* growth.

The New Testament authors write of our need to grow in several areas of our Christian life--in *knowledge* ("grow in . . . the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"), in *faith* ("Lord, increase our faith"), in *love* ("we exhort you to love one another more and more") and especially in *holiness* ("we . . . are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another").

It is this last kind of growth on which the apostle Peter concentrates. His desire is that we "may grow up to salvation." Some people are puzzled by this expression. "Surely," they say "when we came to Jesus in penitence and faith, he saved us? Surely, we may claim (humbly but definitely) that we have already received salvation? How then can Peter write of growing up to salvation?" The answer to this question is that "salvation" is a big, broad and embracing word. It means not only deliverance from the penalty of sin and the judgment of God upon sin, but from the dominion and power of sin as well. In a word "salvation" includes holiness.

So in the first verse of this chapter Peter urges his readers to put away everything inconsistent with their profession to be God's children--"all malice" (or ill will), "all guile and insincerity" (any form of deceit, pretence or dishonesty), "envy" (harboring jealous thoughts), "and all slander" (backbiting, gossip and speaking evil of people whether to their faces or behind their back). We are to be entirely rid of all these things in thought, attitude, word and deed. "Put them away," Peter writes, and instead "grow up to salvation." So these sins are marks of Christian immaturity. Malice, guile, envy and slander are babyish. If our lives are still characterized by such things, it means that we have never grown up.

By contrast, the chief mark of maturity in Christian character is love. "Love one another earnestly from the heart," Peter has been urging (1:22). This is only logical, because God is love. If God is love, and if by the new birth we have become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), then of course we must exhibit this new nature in our character and conduct. Jesus said so in the sermon on the mount. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and

the unjust." In other words, since God is himself a peacemaker and loves his enemies, we must be the same. How can we claim to be God's children, partakers of his nature, if our lives are not marked by love? All self-centeredness, preoccupation with our own silly little selfish ambitions, the inability to relate to other people and the reluctance to give ourselves to serve them are signs of immaturity, if not that we have never been born again. The maturity into which God wants us to grow is the maturity of love.

2. The Conditions of Growth (how it happens)

The two principal conditions for the growth of a child are diet and discipline. Both are stressed in the New Testament.

a) Diet. The first condition for the healthy development of a newborn baby is the regularity of a right diet. It must be right (milk) and regular (every four hours).

Now newborn babes in Christ also need milk. Indeed, we continue to need it even when we are grown up. This milk is not material but "spiritual," milk for the mind not the body, for the soul not the stomach. Or the Greek word may mean not "spiritual" but "rational," the milk of the Word. Already in 1:23 the apostle has shown that the God-ordained means of the new birth is "the living and abiding word of God" which he later identifies as "the good news which was preached to you" (v. 25). Now this same "word" (God's revelation of himself in Christ and in Scripture) is the means of growth as of birth. God's Word is seed causing birth and milk causing growth.

Nothing is more important in the process of Christian growth than the regular, thoughtful assimilation of God's Word, the disciplined practice of Scripture meditation. We need to learn to sip, savor and digest it every day, indeed to "long for the pure spiritual milk." The verb "long for" is a strong one, indicating intense desire. It was used, for example, in the Greek version of Psalm 42:1 "as the deer pants for the flowing streams, so my soul thirsts for you, O God." One commentator suggests that the apostle Peter is wanting to describe "the ardor of the suckled child." He goes on to say that "you have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (quoting Psalm 34:8). He seems to be saying that if we have had a taste, we must go on to get a thirst.

One of today's most tragic phenomena is the jaded appetite of the average churchman. Once he may have tasted the graciousness of the Lord Jesus. Once he savored the Word of God and found it to be milk and honey. But now? His spiritual palate has become insensitive. He has lost his sense of taste. He no longer thirsts for the pure,

spiritual milk. Yet the only people God promises to bless are those who hunger and thirst. If we are conscious of a jaded appetite, there is only one thing to do. We must humble ourselves before God and cry to him to stimulate our appetite until again our mouth begins to water and we thirst for the milk of His Word.

b) Discipline. There is no direct reference in my text to our heavenly Father's discipline of his children, but it is very plainly taught in Hebrews 12:3-11. Here we are reminded that our heavenly Father loves His children and therefore wants to do them good. He is determined to nurture them so that they grow to maturity, and to this end he disciplines them.

Divine discipline may take a wide variety of forms. Sometimes it is a privation by which he denies us something we want to have, and sometimes a frustration by which he denies us something we want to do. Or it may be physical sickness or pain, or a psychological problem, some "thorn in the flesh" which (although in origin a messenger of Satan) is permitted by God in order to humble us, to make us aware of our dependence on his grace, and to convince us that his strength is perfected only in our weakness.

We must not despise the discipline of the Lord, or allow it to discourage us. When our Father disciplines us, He is treating us like sons. He is disciplining us for our good. True, it is painful for the moment, but "later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have trained by it."

This willingness to suffer and to be disciplined by suffering is a good test of the strength of our longing for holiness. We say we want to be holy. We talk piously about becoming like Jesus. But are we willing to pay the price? Are we prepared for our heavenly Father to discipline us? Have we reached the point where we can say: "Father, I am in Your hands, like clay in the hands of the potter. Do to me anything You wish, however painful, if only I know that it will do me good, refine my character and transform me into the image of Christ."

God's purpose (eternal, historical and contemporary) is not only to beget us so that we experience a new birth, but that we may grow up to salvation or grow into maturity. It is also the crying need of the church and of the world. My deepest impression in my travels overseas is the urgent need of the church for leaders, men and women who are mature in understanding, faith, love and holiness.

But the most neglected means of growth is that despised and even (at least to some modern young people) dirty word "discipline"—our own self-discipline in daily prayer and Bible reading, and the Lord's discipline of us whatever form it may take. There can be no development without discipline. It is by discipline that we shall grow into maturity and so be able to serve God, his church and his world.

MARKS OF A SPIRITUAL MAN

A.W. Tozer

The concept of spirituality varies among different Christian groups. In some circles the highly vocal person who talks religion continually is thought to be very spiritual. Others accept noisy exuberance as a mark of spirituality. And in some churches the man who prays first, longest and loudest gets a reputation for being the most spiritual man in the assembly.

Now a vigorous testimony, frequent prayers and loud praise may be entirely consistent with spirituality, but it is important that we understand that they do not in themselves constitute it nor prove it is present.

True spirituality manifests itself in certain dominant desires. These are ever-present, deep-settled wants, sufficiently powerful to motivate and control the life. For convenience let me number them, though I make no effort to decide the order of their importance.

(1) *First is the desire to be holy rather than happy.* The yearning after happiness found so widely among Christians professing a superior degree of sanctity is sufficient proof that such sanctity is not indeed present.

The truly spiritual man knows that God will give abundance of joy in His own time, after we have become able to receive it without injury to our souls. But he does not demand it at once. John Wesley said of the members of one of the early Methodist societies that he doubted that they had been made perfect in love because they came to church to enjoy religion instead of to learn how they could become holy.

(2) *A man may be considered spiritual when he wants to see the honor of God advanced through his life, even if it means that he himself must suffer temporary dishonor or loss.*

Such a man prays, "Hallowed by Thy name," and silently adds, "at any cost to me, Lord." He lives for God's honor by a spiritual reflex. Every choice involving the glory of God is for him already made before it presents itself. He does not need to debate the matter with his own heart: there is nothing to debate. The glory of God is necessary to him; he gasps for it as a suffocating man gasps for air.

(3) *The spiritual man wants to carry his cross.* Many Christians accept adversity or tribulation with a sigh and call it their cross, forgetting that such things come alike to saint and sinner.

The cross is that extra adversity that comes to us as a result of our obedience to Christ. This cross is not forced upon us; we voluntarily take it up with full knowledge of the consequences. We choose to obey Christ and by so doing choose to carry the cross.

Carrying a cross means to be attached to the person of Christ, committed to His Lordship, and obedient to the commandments of Christ. The man who is so attached, so committed, to obedience, is a spiritual man.

(4) *Again, a Christian is spiritual when he sees everything from God's viewpoint.* The ability to weigh all things in the divine scale and place the same value upon them as God does is the mark of a Spirit filled life.

God looks at and through, at the same time. His gaze does not rest on the surface but penetrates to the true meaning of things. The carnal Christian looks at an object or a situation, but because he does not see through it he is elated or cast down by what he sees. The spiritual man is able to look through things as God looks and think of them as God thinks. He insists on seeing all things as God sees them even if it humbles him and exposes his ignorance to the point of real pain.

(5) *Another desire of the spiritual man is to die right rather than to live wrong.* A sure mark of the mature man of God is his nonchalance about living. The earth-loving, body-conscious Christian looks upon death with numb terror in his heart. But as he goes on to live in the Spirit he becomes increasingly indifferent to the number of his years here below, but increasingly careful of the kind of life he lives while he is here.

He will not purchase a few extra days of life at the cost of compromise or failure. He wants most of all to be right and he is happy to let God decide how long he shall live. He knows that he can afford to die, now that he is in Christ, but he knows that he cannot afford to do wrong, and this knowledge becomes a gyroscope to stabilize his thinking and his acting.

(6) *The desire to see others advance at his expense is another mark of the spiritual man.* He wants to see other Christians above him and is happy when they are promoted and he is overlooked.

There is no envy in his heart; when his brethren are honored he is pleased because such is the will of God and that will is his earthly heaven. If God is pleased, he is pleased for that reason, and if it pleases God to exalt another above him he is content to have it so.

(7) *The spiritual man habitually makes eternity-judgments instead of time-judgments.* By faith he rises above the tug of earth and the flow of time and learns to think and feel as one who has already left the world and gone to join the innumerable company of angels and the general assembly and church of the First-born, which are written in heaven. Such a man would rather be useful than famous and would rather serve than be served.

And all this must be by the operation of the Holy Spirit within him. No man can become spiritual by himself. Only the free Spirit can make a man spiritual.

QUESTIONS ASKED OF US

Carl Kitzmiller

In becoming Christians do people repent of sin or grow out of sin?

My initial answer to this question is: "Both." But it is an answer that needs an explanation.

The one asking the question is concerned that some people in coming to Christ seem to have the idea that they can hold on to certain wrong things in their lives with the thought that they will eventually grow out of them. Certainly there are those who treat conversion very superficially who often leave repentance out of the "what-to-do" teaching given to inquirers. It is popular in some quarters to call for a commitment to Christ which seems to ask for or expect little more than a signature on a card or a confession that "I want to be recognized as a Christian." There are those asking for decisions for Christ who do not seem to realize that this also involves a decision against sin.

Let it be said very clearly that repentance toward God is a necessary part of our response to the gospel of Christ if we are to be saved. And our repentance is not of some sins, part of our sins, or even most of our sins--it is repentance of sin, whatever is wrong in our lives, whatever misses the mark and is not in the will of God. The very moment we begin to reserve some corner of our life and want to be rid of all sin except such-and-such, we show that we are trying to repent selectively and that is not repentance of sin. What wife wants to hear that her husband has decided to stop committing adultery with

six different women, that he has "repented" and now only intends to do so with just one other woman? True repentance is not selective but covers every known area of sinning.

Moreover, repentance is a prerequisite of the new birth. New Testament messengers included repentance in their message (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21). From the beginning to the end of the Bible repentance precedes the forgiveness of sins. It is not something added to faith as a work of merit; it is one of the activities of true faith in a God who abominates sin. But it is there. There is not even a hint that God forgives known sin in responsible persons without repentance.

Now, without retracting even one iota of the above, let us understand that prospective Christians and new Christians do not always recognize some things to be sin which are sin. New Christians are babes in Christ and immature in their thinking. Every Christian in his growth becomes more aware of the terribleness of sin and likely comes to see things as sin which he may not have earlier understood to be so. In this sense he might be said to grow out of sin.

Let us illustrate. A young man believes that Jesus is the Christ and, repenting of his sinful life, confesses Christ and is baptized into Christ. It is a genuine conversion to Christ. Let us say however that he has not had much pre-Christian training as to what the Bible teaches and so he does not as readily recognize specific sins as others might. In spite of his immature state, such a one is a genuine Christian. Now let us say that this young man in his life has picked up some language which is not wholesome. He continues to use that language. That proves, does it not, that he never repented of sin? No, it does not. He may have repented of sin as a principle, but his understanding may not have caught up with his principles. He does not intend to do wrong, but he does, without being aware that it is wrong. Now, as a further development, someone declares his language to be wrong without giving a solid basis for it in God's word. He may be deterred a bit, but does that person know what he is talking about? Let us not confuse faith in an individual's judgment with faith in Christ. Finally, he is shown from the word of God that his words are wrong. Now he must repent of this sin. He has not grown out of it, but he has grown in his understanding so that he now includes it in those works of darkness he wants out of his life. Suppose we even go a step further. His words have been spoken by habit, and a habit is not easily broken. He no longer intends to use those words, but he slips. It was not that he had not repented. He temporarily lost a battle with the flesh. But now that he knows this to be sin he cannot shrug it off. Repentance is called for. And if he is living in touch with Christ as he ought to be, it will be done.

There is a sense, then, in which repentance is primarily a matter of the heart. We do not say there is not also a practical side. Some

wrongs are so evident that it is foolish in any normal case to talk about repentance while one continues in the acts. Nor are we talking about playing games with God, pretending an ignorance which we do not have. God knows our heart. What we are saying is that it is possible for a person who has repented of sin in his heart to continue doing some things because of ignorance or immaturity which will be recognized as sin by the more discerning. Now we know that when there is a willingness to do the Lord's will (John 7:17), darkness does not persist. We must be fair, however, and recognize that sins of ignorance can only be repented of in the sense of ceasing from them when we come to know them to be sins. And this is often a process of growth.

Another danger to be avoided is this--confusing a human standard with God's. Some there are who are ready to pronounce a cup of coffee or a glass of Coke sin. Nevertheless, that person who drinks these refreshments is not necessarily an unrepenting sinner; he may simply see that there is no solid ground on which such an interpretation stands. I have some neighbors and friends for whom holiness is a particular style of clothing and hair style. Am I unrepenting in rejecting this arbitrary standard which they have adopted? I do not like to see Christians using tobacco. I think it hinders their testimony. I can even make the possible connection that it harms the temple of God. I'd like to see no Christians ever using the stuff in any form. But I have known and know some Christians for whom I have a high regard who use it. It is just not an issue with them. They reject my application of scripture which makes it a sin. They reject my standard, but they do not believe God has made it an issue. Preachers, elders, teachers and others have been known to be wrong in what they declare to be sin before God. Those persons are not necessarily wicked sinners before God who reject human judgments and applications. Even when the judgments and applications are right, it may involve growth in spiritual understanding to recognize it.

Now for a statement or two in closing. We are not saying that only that is sin which a person recognizes to be sin. God's word, in specific declaration and in principle determines sin. We are saying that there can only be an active repentance of that specific sin when it is known. Surely this is one area where the continual cleansing of sin for the one abiding in Christ is such a precious truth (1 John 1:7). Again, we are not suggesting that one can deal with *known* sin by growing out of it and that it is to be tolerated until such is achieved. We may grow in strength to overcome (or in our awareness of the provision for strength in Christ), but known sin must be repented of or else our whole outlook on sin is defective.

HEART - STIMULATORS

about Pursuing Holiness Wholeheartedly

Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve
And press with vigor on;
A heav'nly race demands thy zeal,
And an immortal crown.

—Philip Doddridge

"It is time for us to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are 'defeated' by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient! . . . When I say I am defeated by some sin, I am unconsciously slipping out from under my responsibility. I am saying something outside of me has defeated me. But when I say I am disobedient, that places the responsibility for my sin squarely on me. We may, in fact, be defeated, but the reason. . . is because we have chosen to disobey. We have chosen to entertain lustful thoughts, or to harbor resentment, or to shade the truth a little.

—Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*

* * *

My soul, be on thy guard; ten thousand foes arise;
The hosts of sin are pressing hard to draw thee from the
skies.

O watch and fight and pray; the battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day, and help divine implore."

—George Heath

"The fight of the Christian is with the world, the flesh and the devil With a corrupt heart, a busy devil, and an ensnaring world he must either 'fight' or be lost.

"He must fight *the flesh*. Even after conversion he carries within him a nature prone to evil, and a heart unstable as water. To keep that heart from going astray, the Lord Jesus bids us 'watch and pray.' He must fight *the world*. The love of the world's good things, the fear of the world's laughter or blame, the secret wish to do as others in the world do--all these are spiritual foes which beset the Christian continually on his way to heaven, and must be conquered. He must fight *the devil*. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve he has been 'going to and fro in the earth' striving to achieve one great end--the ruin of man's soul. An unseen enemy, he is always near us, spying out all our ways

"We may take comfort about our souls if we know anything of an inward fight and conflict. It is the invariable companion of genuine Christian holiness. The child of God has two great marks about him: HE MAY BE KNOWN BY HIS INWARD WARFARE, AS WELL AS BY HIS INWARD PEACE." (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3; Eph. 6:11-13; Lk. 13: 24; Matt. 10:34; 1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Tim. 1: 18-19)

—J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*

A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky.
To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill;
O may it all my power engage to do my Master's will!
Arm me with jealous care, as in Thy sight to live,
And O, Thy servant, Lord, prepare, a strict account to give!

—Charles Wesley

"The new Christian is like a man who has learned to drive a car in a country where traffic moves on the left side of the highway and suddenly finds himself in another country and forced to drive on the right. He must unlearn his old habit and must learn a new one and, more serious of all, he must learn in heavy traffic. He must fight his old acquired reflexes and learn new ones, and he has no time or place to practice."

--A. W. Tozer, *Of God and Men*

I want a principle within of watchful, godly fear,
A sensitivity to sin, a pain to feel it near.
Help me the first approach to feel of pride or wrong desire;
To catch the wandering of my will, and quench the kindling fire.

From Thee that I no more may stray, no more Thy goodness
grieve,
Grant me the filial awe, I pray; the tender conscience give.
Quick as the apple of an eye, O God, my conscious make!
Awake my soul when sin is nigh, and keep it still awake.

Almighty God of truth and love, to me Thy power impart:
The burden from my soul remove, the hardness from my heart.
O may the least omission pain my reawakened soul,
And drive me to that grace again, which makes the wounded
whole.

—Charles Wesley

"A farmer plows his field, sows the seed, and fertilizes and cultivates--all the while knowing that in the final analysis he is utterly dependent on forces outside of himself. He knows he cannot cause the seed to germinate, nor can he produce the rain and sunshine for growing the crop. For a successful harvest, he is dependent on these things from God.

"Yet the farmer knows that unless he diligently pursues his responsibilities to plow, plant, fertilize, and cultivate, he cannot expect a harvest at the end of the season. In a sense he is in a partnership with God, and he will reap its benefits only when he has fulfilled his own responsibilities. Farming is a joint venture between God and the farmer. *The farmer cannot do what God must do, and God will not do what the farmer should do.*

"We can say just as accurately that the pursuit of holiness is a joint venture between God and the Christian. No one can attain any degree of holiness without God working in his life, but just as surely no one will attain it without effort on his own part. God has made it possible for us to walk in holiness. But He has given to us the responsibility of doing the walking; He does not do that for us.

—Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*

Is it hard to serve God, timid soul? Hast thou found
Gloomy forests, dark glens, mountain-tops on thy way?
All the hard would be easy, all the tangles unwound,
Wouldst thou only **desire** as well as obey.
For the lack of **desire** is the ill of all ills;
Many thousands through it the dark pathway have trod.
The joy, the delight of regenerate souls
Is a jubilant pining and longing for God.
God loves to be longed for, He longs to be sought,
For He sought us Himself with such longing and love:
He died for desire of us--marvelous thought!
And He yearns for us now to be with Him above.

--Frederick Faber, altered

For prospective missionaries *and all other disciples--*

MATURE DISCIPLESHIP

By R. Kenneth Strachan,
former director of the Latin America Mission

One of the greatest needs in the Christian today is maturity. It is the key to success, the foundation for spiritual growth, a chief requisite for meeting the tests and challenges of life. It is the basis of morale in the missionary.

By maturity, I mean that quality of tried discipleship which shows up in a settled attitude of obedience and trust in the Lord and in a positive acceptance of life with its laws and responsibilities. Because the mature disciple knows that the Lord is ruler over all and that his life is in His hands, he can co-operate in an organization, and work under authority. He is pliable yet constant and can alter his own desires according to time, persons and circumstances. He has learned to see a job through, to wait patiently, to live and let live.

It is this lack of maturity that is chiefly responsible for the young missionaries who return defeated and disillusioned from the mission field. And behind much of the frustration which plagues us on the field are those same traits against which we must carry on unceasing, exhausting fight.

Under fire or pressure, the immature individual cracks up; he can't take it, and unconsciously seeks to run away. Where no special emergency or pressure is brought to bear upon him, he manifests his immaturity by a general lack of self-discipline in life--in work, personal habits, social relationships, spiritual culture, witnessing, etc.

You say, but isn't maturity a matter of growth and won't that come in due time--as a result of experience on the field? Yes, to some extent it is a matter of growth. But there is a foundation that has to be laid long before one ever gets to the mission field, and it's because so many of us did not lay down this foundation properly that we have such a hard fight now--and some of us have given up. It frightens one to see so many child adults today in full-time Christian work. (Child adults beget child adults--spiritually as well as physically.) That is why I cannot think of anything more important in your preparation than this laying down of foundations for maturity.

Then how can I grow up?

You ask how one can go about this? What courses should you take? Or to whom should you go for counsel and help? That's just the trouble! Today our whole educational set-up is one that breeds immaturity because it babies and nurses the individual along, spoon-feeding him a smattering of knowledge, sheltering him from facing alone, as he ought, the major decisions of his life, and rationalizing failure for him by putting the blame for everything upon his childhood environment and upbringing. You can't expect to get maturity as a premium for attending a two-hour semester course, and personnel counselors, while possibly helpful, can't give it to you either. It's up to you alone!

The first foundation stone for you today is an act of self-determination (if you haven't come to it before) to really yield your life to the Lord and to take His cross into your bosom and His yoke upon your shoulders. Having thus seriously committed your life and recognizing that you can make it good only through the Holy Spirit who dwells in you for that purpose, your next step is to provide for a daily ratification of this major decision. And right here the cross and the yoke cease to be merely heroic symbols and become hard but healthy realities that start you on the road to adulthood.

But how do you go about this daily ratification? Just as an undisciplined life is a hallmark of immaturity, so a life of self-discipline (enabled thereto by the Holy Spirit) is the only road to maturity.

Therefore, as you analyze yourself and consider the various phases of your life and work, you will soon see where discipline needs to be applied. You will recognize that both your curricular and extra-curricular activities (carefully chosen) are God's means for your training, and you will impose upon yourself all the necessary discipline for giving the most to those activities and thus getting the most out of them. It isn't necessary for me to go into detail--but you should, as you thrash this thing out for yourself.

But let me suggest that you give priority to three points--because you will find these things of greatest need on the field and because you will probably have your principal battles over them.

A three-point formula

The first has to do with *prayer*. Do you know how to pray? I mean, have you had definite dealings with the Lord? Do you know what it is to wait upon Him in prayer to claim specific things and ex-

act guidance, to wrestle with God, to pray through until the request is granted and the blessing received? It is indispensable that you learn.

It is hard for us, accustomed as we are to walk by sight, to realize that the chief weapon in our missionary walk and warfare is prayer, and that prayer is a hard discipline which--if not begun early in the Christian life--will rarely be mastered later on. But after you get out to the field and come to realize the invisible nature of our warfare and the stubborn strength of Satan's strongholds and your own weakness and need, you will see the place of prayer and will long for the ability to lay hold of the Lord. And you'll discover that prayer is not learned in one easy lesson--not even in the hour of need; it is the product of long practice and discipline.

So lift your heart right now to God and ask Him to teach you to pray, and set yourself right away to begin that discipline of prayer.

The second point concerns *self-denial*. You ask me if it isn't a bit out of date to talk of self-denial? Doesn't it verge on medieval asceticism? Do you want me to wear a hair shirt? Time enough for that when one gets to the mission field.

Of course there's no special virtue in self-denial for its own sake; as a matter of fact, it can lead to spiritual pride and pharisaism. But can you suggest some better way of discipleship than that which our Lord took and commanded? And can you suggest any better way of learning to deny self than by putting it to practice in the little things now? And don't you know that it is just as easy, perhaps easier, to indulge yourself on the mission field than it is at home? Therefore how are you going to develop that self-control and that ability to endure hardness as a good soldier unless you begin now?

Well, then, if it is necessary how do you go about it, you ask? Here again this is something for you to determine for yourself. But it shouldn't be hard, if you'll let the Lord point it out. You'll have no trouble determining in what ways to practice self-denial if you really mean business.

Let me warn you, however, against becoming a queer duck. You don't have to wear a hair shirt for all the world to see. You don't want to become a fanatic. But by the same token you don't have to drift along with the soft and self-indulgent crowd.

Discipline for witnessing

Finally there is *witnessing*. While seeking every opportunity for experience in the work to which the Lord is apparently calling, re-

member that the fundamental activity and chief end of all Christian service is to win souls to Christ and to establish and edify the Church which is His Body. Therefore you will impose upon yourself the discipline of habitual witnessing and you will seek opportunities to learn and practice the art of personal evangelism, house-to-house evangelism, street evangelism, rescue mission work, and other work of this sort.

But you say that this is what you find most difficult and that you are not really gifted for this type of work. Isn't it all too true! The fact is that practically all of us feel just the same way. But this work is basic to the missionary enterprise, and the weakness of the Church both at home and abroad is precisely this, that too many of us are concentrating on secondary, behind-the-lines activities in order to escape the discipline of in-season and out-of-season witnessing.

But you say that you don't know how? Well, it's up to you to learn. And how do you go about learning anything? How did you learn to walk? How did you learn to swim? How did you learn to play golf? And don't you see it's in the exercise of self-discipline right here--forcing yourself into the very activity which is normally so difficult--that you lay the foundation for your future work and become an adult?

One final word of advice. If you're like some of us, you may fall down on this job of self-discipline at times. With each failure will come the temptation to give up the whole business and follow, as everyone else seems to be doing, the course of least resistance. But remember there is no other way, no short cut, no substitute road to maturity. *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me."* So when failure comes there's only one thing to do. Set your face to it and come right back, and keep coming back, to this life of discipline. For it is only as we learn to take the cross and bear the yoke that we will lay the foundation of maturity for any successful and satisfying life-work.

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VOICES from the FIELDS

Karen (& James) Ashley

Solomon Islands

Sept. 1994

A lot has happened since our last newsletter--four months of translation and teaching in the village, our group conference in Honiara, a New Testament dedication on the island of Isabel and our (temporary) incarceration in the administrative office.

One of our ancient computers had been suffering from arthritis ("stricktion" in computerese) which James was treating with daily doses of vigorous blows on the hard disk. Eventually this ailing computer complained of the medication and suffered hard disk failure, inexplicably revived for one week, and then went totally brain dead. We desperately attempted life support systems and even organ transplants from other computers in order to prolong its life, but nothing helped. We are presently limping along with our oldest computer, while our typist uses an even older more primitive one donated by a team on their way back to the land of computer stores and Pentium chips. We are hoping to remedy this situation soon.

We were also plagued by several other break-downs over the months. We would have been completely disheartened if it hadn't been for the encouraging things happening in the translation project and the spiritual life of the village. We are absolutely thrilled to report that **SPIRITUAL RENEWAL IS REALLY BEGINNING IN SA'A!** Every Friday night James met with a group of people to sing choruses and have a Bible study. These folks are hungry to learn, and they are **full of questions**. Most of them don't even begin to know where to look for the answers. Pray for them to continue to meet to encourage one another and to search the scriptures together. The Friday night group then began house-to-house visitation twice a week to share the plan of salvation in every household in Sa'a. They met with some opposition and ridicule, but also had some positive responses. One of the greatest benefits has been to see those doing the visitation grow in their understanding of their **own relationship to the Lord and develop the confidence to talk about what they believe**.

Meanwhile James and I have also been continuing our own three-family Bible study with the typist Jonathan, his wife Pam, and our handyman Haluwate and his wife Sandra. It has been special to see them discover truth from the Bible and learn to pray from their hearts instead of repeating memorized forms.

Another two nights a week I was busy teaching a beginning reading class to a group of young girls. Some knew the basics of reading, but four of the girls were complete beginners. I used the literacy materials I have been revising and found them to be really helpful. Now ready for printing as funds become available are five booklets of selected stories from Genesis and a Bible study booklet on Philipians. We hope to use the Genesis stories as readers in the literacy program. The Philipians booklets will supply much needed materials for the renewal meetings in Sa'a, as well as other small groups throughout the island.

BAPTISM: GOD'S COMMAND, MAN'S INTERPRETATION

Alex V. Wilson

All *bona fide* Christians are our brothers or sisters. We should acknowledge them as such, and work together with them whenever it is 1) practicable, and 2) possible without compromising vital Biblical truth.

Such were the opinions we set forth in four recent articles. Probably many readers would be inclined to agree with such a view, *if* we mean cooperating with fellow-believers who are immersed followers of King Jesus.

But we mentioned groups like the Gideons and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, and those organizations do not limit their membership to immersed believers. So how can we defend participating in those and similar ministries? Does not such participation in itself compromise vital Biblical truth? Perhaps even last month some readers exclaimed to themselves, "Aha! I knew it would lead to this—I could see it coming in those earlier articles. He's downgrading the importance of baptism! Next thing you know he'll say it doesn't matter."

Whoa—hold on! You're jumping to wrong conclusions. In fact, my desire in this article is just the opposite. Any open-minded reader of the New Testament can easily see that our Lord orders everyone who turns to Him to be buried with Him in baptism without delay. No doubt 99% of *Word and Work's* readers are very familiar with the many Scriptures that plainly teach this. But for the sake of the 1%,

here are some of the basic Scriptures on the topic of baptism: Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-41; 10:44-48; 16:29-33; 22:16; Rom. 6:14; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21.

Objections

Some folks don't like the teaching of those passages. They either neglect such verses or try to explain them away. A man once told me, "There isn't a single drop of water in Romans chapter six." He believed it refers to baptism in the Holy Spirit rather than water baptism.

Other people say to us, "Oh, that's just the way *you* interpret those verses. You Church of Christ people see baptism everywhere and you mis-interpret the Bible to make it fit your ideas." For this reason, we would like to share with you quotations from several competent Bible scholars who are not from "the Restoration Movement" or any "Church of Christ denomination," as people sometimes put it. These quotes may be useful to share with people who claim we mis-interpret such passages as those listed above.

Quotations

F. F. Bruce, world-renowned New Testament scholar and author, on Romans 6: " ' Listen,' Paul says; 'do you not remember what happened when you were baptized?' From this and other references to baptism in Paul's writings, it is certain that he did not regard baptism as an 'optional extra' in the Christian life, and that he would not have contemplated the phenomenon of an 'unbaptized believer'. We may agree or disagree with Paul, but we must do him the justice of letting him hold and teach his own beliefs, and not distort his beliefs into conformity with what we should prefer him to have said.

"In apostolic times it is plain that baptism followed immediately upon confession of faith in Christ. The repeated accounts of baptism in Acts give ample proof of this. Faith in Christ and baptism were indeed, not so much two distinct experiences as parts of one whole." (*Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary).

Richard Dowsett: "No serious reader of the Bible can honestly pretend that baptism does not matter. It is mentioned more than eighty times in the New Testament . . . Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize all those who became Christians (Matt. 28:19), and so it is hardly surprising to find the apostles speaking about baptism in their evangelistic messages and counselling (Acts 2:30; 8:36-38). In the new Testament, baptism was always administered to all who made an intelligent profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, at the time of their conversion, and not months or years later. The early Christian atti-

tude to baptism is well illustrated in Rom. 6:4, where it is likened to a funeral or burial. Just as a funeral always followed close upon death, so baptism followed close upon conversion. A delayed baptism was as unusual as a delayed funeral. Baptism is not graduation to stage #2 in the Christian life. It is enrolment--always associated with the beginning of life in the fellowship. A burial settles it for everyone that a person is really dead and gone. So baptism, in the apostles' thinking, made it clear that a person had really just died to sin and was now alive to God." ("Baptism," a paper published by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of the Philippines).

Michael Green, well-known anglican evangelist, scholar and author in Britain: "The apostles challenged men to do something about the message they had heard Men must do three things. They must first and foremost repent, change their attitude to their old way of life, be willing to let go their sins Together with repentance goes faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ The third condition incumbent upon all who wanted to begin the Christian life was, of course, baptism. It was the seal both on God's offer of forgiveness and the Spirit, and on man's response to that offer in repentance and faith. It signified entry into the Christian society (The New Testament makes) it abundantly clear that baptism and conversion belong together; it is the sacrament of the once-for-allness of incorporation into Christ. In the early days of the Church, baptism was administered straight away on profession of faith and repentance. The Philippian jailer was baptized without delay; so was Paul himself; so were the Corinthians; so was the Ethiopian eunuch." (*Evangelism in the Early Church*; Eerdmans).

Again, in another book, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (an excellent volume, also published by Eerdmans), Green writes as follows. "The New Testament knows nothing of believers in Jesus who do not get baptized. Neither does it know anything of Christians who get themselves rebaptized. For baptism is the sacramental expression of Christian initiation (Baptism) is associated with repentance, entry into the Kingdom, forgiveness of sins, reception of the Spirit and union with Christ in his death and risen life. It appears to be the expression in an outward ceremony of the new birth, justification, becoming a son of God; it is the mark of the new life.

"Many Evangelical Christians see justification by faith as the very antithesis of the sacrament of Baptism. Paul sees them as the outside and the inside of the same thing. Baptism, like justification, is *done for us*. No man can justify himself. No man can baptize himself. In contrast to the proselyte baptism of the Jews when the candidate washed himself, Christian baptism is always in the passive. It is something done for you by another, as if to remind you that your sal-

vation is entirely a matter of grace, and not something to which you make any active contributions. Secondly, baptism, like justification, is *once for all*. It is unrepeatable Thirdly, baptism, like justification, speaks of incorporation into Christ. At the end of Galatians chapter 3, in successive sentences Paul can say 'Christ came that we might be justified by faith,' 'In Jesus Christ you are all sons of God through faith,' and 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (verses 24, 26, 27). Being justified by faith, becoming sons of God, and being baptized into Christ are three ways of describing the same thing--the beginning of the Christian life. . . .

"Luke appears quite uninterested in providing a theology of Christian initiation. Those who have gone to him for tidy theological schemes have been disappointed. Sometimes reception of the Spirit follows baptism (e.g. Acts 2:38ff); sometimes it precedes baptism (e.g. Acts 10:44-48); and sometimes a man is baptised who has no part nor lot in the Christian thing, and whose heart is still fast bound in wickedness (Acts 8:21). As Augustine realized, baptism sometimes precedes regeneration, sometimes follows it and sometimes never leads to it for lack of faith." (pages 128-133).

James Stifler, Baptist Bible teacher of a former generation, writing on Rom. 6:1-4, says: The Christians in Rome "died to sin, the hour of that death being the time when they entered the waters of baptism Baptism involved, among other things, oneness with Him in His death to sin. In the ordinance they declared their acceptance of Him as Savior and so came "into" Him.

"But must it not be said that Paul has now abandoned his theme, salvation by faith, in substituting the word 'baptism'? Why did he not say, 'All we who believed into Christ, believed into His death'? The difficulty arises from the modern wrong conception of the New Testament meaning of the word 'baptism'. The New Testament writers never separated it from the faith which it embodies and expresses. It is the fixed sign for faith. Hence Paul can say that Christ was 'put on' in baptism, and Peter does not hesitate to declare that 'baptism doth also now save us.' To refuse to be baptized is to reject God, and the opposite is to accept Him (Luke 7:29-30). Every one of these passages--and there are more like them--would teach salvation by a rite, salvation by water, but that the word for baptism is used as a symbol of faith. Faith so far is not one thing and baptism another; they are the same thing. The faith that accepted Christ in Paul's day was the faith that showed its acceptance in baptism. The water without the preceding faith was nothing. The faith without the water could not be allowed. Believers were baptized into Christ or they were not considered to be in Him."

What I Practice, What I Recognize

So Scripture clearly tells us to teach and practice baptism, though *always* in the context of God's *grace* and Christ's *cross*. In an article reprinted in *Word and Work* (August 1975), A. Christianson gave a fourfold summary of Scriptural teaching: 1) Baptism is commanded in the Great Commission. 2) The word means immersion. 3) Various passages show there is a relationship between baptism and salvation. 4) There were no unimmersed Christians in the early church.

But Christianson then goes on to make further observations which are relevant to our present study. He points out what he calls a "second line of Bible teaching," as follows: 1) The attitudes of faith and repentance have *always*, from Adam till now, been essential for salvation, but the outward actions required to *express* those attitudes have varied from age to age (animal sacrifices of the patriarchs; Levitical offerings and the Day of Atonement under the law; baptism now). The attitudes are more basic than the actions, apparently. 2) "A man's heart-attitude toward God may be right even if the outward expression of it is unknowingly deficient (Rom. 2:26-29). 3) God gave Cornelius and his household the gift of the Holy Spirit before they were baptized (Acts 10:45-47; 11:17) That was an exception to His usual practice, . . . but God's word records that He has made exceptions to His rules on a number occasions." The writer then lists about eight other examples recorded in Scripture of God in His sovereignty allowing exceptions to his requirements. The article concludes,

"In the light of these things, especially the two lines of Biblical teaching, I distinguish between what I practice and what I recognize. I *practice* immersing without delay those who repent and trust in Christ, upon their confession of faith in Him as divine Lord and Savior, for such is the Bible's command and precedent. At the same time I *recognize* there are a number of unimmersed disciples of Jesus who are Christians, for they trust in Him, seek to obey Him and to the extent of their knowledge do obey Him in everything."

Personally I feel this last distinction is very important. If it is valid, then let us neither modify our *practice* because of what we recognize, nor forsake the above-mentioned *recognition* because of our practice. To modify our practice would be compromise of God's truth. To forsake the recognition would result in isolating ourselves from fine brethren and important ministries which the Lord is using for His glory. Those of us who participate in trans-church organizations are tempted to the former. Those who minister in our churches only are tempted to do the latter.

Immersing converts upon their confession of faith in Jesus Christ is very important. Acknowledging as brethren all of our Father's children is very important. Can we not do both?

Carl Vogt Wilson, 1903-1994

MY DAD, C. V. WILSON

By the Editor

My father was not perfect, of course. He had weaknesses, as we all do. Nevertheless he was an outstanding man, and I am very grateful to God to be his son. As I consider his life and character, seven areas stand out in my mind.

1. **A PERSONAL SAVIOR** is the first thing. He loved the Lord Jesus Christ very much, and sought to please Him. In the early years of his life he was religious, but in a mainly self-righteous manner. He was active in church and helped other people in various ways, but he was not really close to the Lord. He was centered around what he did rather than what Christ did for him (and all of us) in His saving death and powerful resurrection. But later, as he heard the simple "good news" (mainly from Brother R.H. Boll), he placed his trust in the Savior, and formed a close personal relationship with Him that developed more and more.

2. **PARTNER AND PARENT:** As a husband and father Dad was an ideal role model. He was a real romantic, never allowing the fire of his affection for Mom to die down. They were happy lovers to the very end, when she went to be with the Lord in 1976. As a father he upheld high ideals, gave practical instruction, and was lots of fun. Though he had a quick temper, especially in his earlier years, he was quick to come back and apologize for words he wished he hadn't said.

3. **PRAYER:** Dad became very disciplined in prayer. He and Mom spent much time praying together, especially after he was called to the preaching ministry (but before then, too). And as my brother and sister and I grew up, our parents regularly took time for family Bible reading, memorizing, and praying. I am so glad for that legacy! Later he encouraged many people to fast and pray regularly for Portland Christian School and Southeastern Christian College. And after he and Mom made a trip around the world visiting several "mission fields," he began putting out an annual list of prayer requests from missionaries--urging members of churches here to intercede for them. (Victor Broaddus now carries on this valuable ministry.) Dad firmly believed, with the poet, that "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

4. **PEOPLE:** Dad was a "people-person" if there ever was one! He loved mixing with people in public or visiting them in their

homes. He was an ideal master of ceremonies, the life-of-the-party type who loved to converse, joke, recite a poem, or sing. After he retired from preaching he was appointed chaplain at PCS. He learned the names of all the students and went out of his way to talk to them and show interest in each one. He really loved people.

5. POETRY: Back in his high school and college days he began memorizing poems, lots of them. He knew at least 63 by heart, including some really long ones like "The Highwayman." At his peak he could recite them for an hour or so without opening a book. Some were nonsense ("Jabberwocky"), others humorous ("The Boogah Man"), and others serious ("King Robert of Sicily"). Poetry nights in our home were lots of fun. And English teachers invited Dad to perform for their classes, so students could see that poetry is neither boring nor sissy, but an interesting window into life.

6. PIANO: Dad loved to play the piano, too. He didn't sight-read much, but mainly played "by ear." Well; he used his hands, too, of course, but he would pick out the melody and chords to go with it, and then be able to play it from then on. He used to know some classical pieces, but his real love was for the golden oldies like "Red Sails in the Sunset," "Aloha," "On the Road to Mandalay," "Indian Love Call," "Sleepytime Gal," and other gems from past decades. My sister compiled a list of over 400 songs he could play. Of course he liked spiritual songs, too, like "Without Him, How Lost I Would Be," and "If I Have Wounded Any Soul Today." It was wonderful growing up in a home filled with music. And he used his skill to minister to others, too. For many years he would go weekly to Maple Manor Adult Home to play "for the elderly folks over there"--many of whom were younger than he was!

7. PORTLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL: Much to his astonishment, after being a member at the church for about twenty years, Dad was called to be its pulpit minister. He was a successful businessman at the time, and had never dreamed of being a fulltime pastor-teacher! But the Lord verified the church's call to him, so he "took the plunge." He nearly had a nervous breakdown during his first year, but his heavenly Father pulled him through, taught him vital lessons even from that experience, and used him to help others in various ways. His influence on the school was also great, as he served for many years as chairman of the Board, often spoke in chapel and later became chaplain.

Much more could be said, but this is enough. I am thankful indeed for the privilege of having such a father. May we imitate the faith and good attributes of those who have gone before us. But to **God** be the glory: **He** is the great Savior and Enabler of His people.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

A New Nakahara

Michiya and Tomoko have a son, their first child, born Oct. 5. We have not learned his name yet. Pray for the Nakaharas and their ministry in Shizuoka City, Japan.

Pray For The Ashleys

Pray extra hard during Nov. and Dec. for James and Karen, in the Solomon Islands. A 3-week workshop on 1st & 2nd Corinthians will be held, with 16-19 national translators attending. Karen will be in charge of their accommodations and food. Then the Ashleys must vacate their present house by Dec. 5, moving not only their stuff but another missionary family's too. They are housesitting for that family, now on furlough, so they could return to the same residence. At least that was the plan, till the landlord decided he wanted his son to have it.

20th Annual Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship

Remember this conference at Glemora, Nov. 14-17. Its theme is THE SUPERIOR ONE--Studies from Hebrews. It runs from Mon. night through Thurs. night. For the full schedule see last month's W & W. For housing or information call Dennis of Melva LeDoux, 318:748-4243

WHEN IT COMES TO DOING GOOD, SOME PEOPLE WILL STOP AT NOTHING.

Gateway Church, Westville, NJ (suburb of Philadelphia)

We are having a mini revival among the youth. We have had over 20 teens and young adults come into the Kingdom this month! We also have had several re-commit their lives to the Lord. Pray for these believers. Several of these are on fire for the Lord, hungry for His Word, and serving Him at school and in their jobs. Please also pray for the Lord to send us some workers to help disciple them. --Joe Domico, Box 170, Westville, NJ 08093.

Pre-1957 W & W's Sought

I am looking for as many issues of W & W from 1956 and before as possible. My goal is to obtain a complete file of the magazine all the way back to 1916. I am only looking for one complete issue of each month (including covers). I am willing to pay.

My purpose is to preserve our history. R. H. Boll is a major figure of the first half of the 20th century. Most of the bound volumes of W & W were bound without covers, but I need to have a set with covers. I am also interested in those volumes that include the S.S. quarterlies. Ultimately my hope is to index W & W and catalog the writings of Bro. Boll. I am also looking for the Gospel Advocate 1909-16, and for a copy of Grace and Truth by Bro. Boll.

--Terry Gardner, 4926 Candy Spots Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46237.

Old Hymnals Sought

The 60th printing of Great Songs of the Church Number Two with Supplement has just come from the press. I am so happy that we are able to deep this noble work in print and that I have a part in its continued publication. I am still searching for several older printings of Great Songs Number One and Number Two for my collection of hymnals. Perhaps you could find space for me to request the following years: Number One--1923, 1924, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1932, 1933. Number Two--1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1945, 1950, 1951. If anyone has any of these books and would part with them, I will pay any reasonable asking price.--Forrest M. McCann, P.O. Box 8252 ACU, Abilene, TX 79699.

Lilly Dale Church, Gatchel, IN

It has been a busy summer for us. We started off by having a going away dinner for an exchange student from Germany. The teens went camping one weekend, and another weekend they went to Kentucky Kingdom for a concert. We had a good attendance at VBS. The 3rd and 4th grades went on a hike at Patoka Lake. We had an interesting Revival with Stan Broussard. Then the whole church got involved in a hayride, supper and an outside evening service. We had 6 baptisms and 2 rededications this summer. We have sent several children to Woodland and Antioch Bible Camps. We are going to have an SBS Class taught at church starting in January. The subject will be Christian Growth and Development. The teens are getting involved by getting a letter writing campaign going for those that have fallen away from church. --Sharle Sutcliffe, reporter.

Maple Manor Christian Home

The activities department is responsible for planning and carrying out on a daily basis all of the activities: Bible studies, prayer group, shopping trips, eating out, exercises, spelling bees, crafts, etc., and many types of entertainment. They also take care of obtaining volunteers who wash and roll the ladies' hair on Wednesday. They advertise when we need lap robes, quilts, shampoo, conditioner, Kleenex, etc.

You who read the newsletter have been so very good to help! So we are thanking the Senior Citizens Camp from Louisiana for lab robes, the Ladies of the Turkey Creek Church of Christ for quilts and lap robes, Mr. and Mrs. Bud Schardein for a donation to the activities department, and Mrs. Marie Menges for a card table and toiletries. These gifts mean so much to our residents. They add a personal touch that helps us keep our "home-like" atmosphere.

Portland Church, Louisville

Budget Report

As Brother R. H. announced last Lord's Day, about 27% of the funds given to the Lord's work during 1993 was given to MISSIONS, if you include the money given to Portland Christian School--and the school surely is engaged in the "mission work" of evangelizing and discipling young people along with their academic work.

It's commendable that that high a percentage of our giving is directed to work beyond our four walls, as it were. May the Lord always help us to have a vision and burden for the whole world. And may He enable us to increase our giving. PCS' board of directors stepped out in faith to give our

teachers a long-overdue raise. Now let's all pray and give so that the school will not go into the red as a result of this increase.

Southeast Church of Christ

If you are interested in going on a mission trip in the summer (July) of 1995, then please be in prayer about that possibility. With the Lord's help we hope to take a maximum of 10 teenagers and 5 adults to the mission field for two weeks. Thank you for your prayers!

What a blessing it was to hear from Tim Yates last Sunday evening as he shared his plans to go to Malawi, Africa, in missions. The special offering was \$200.00. Pray for Tim and Dawn.

Gallatin Church of Christ

Special Congratulations to a special girl goes to Megan Allen who was selected for the Principal's Award at Vena Stuart School. Only one girl and one boy are chosen annually from each grade. Additionally Megan was honored as "Citizen of the Year" from her classroom. Megan uses a motorized scooter and a special computer & printer to do her assignments in class and homework. She did not miss a spelling word all year, achieved a 98%

score in Math and read about four books per week (about 50 pages a night!)

May God continue to strengthen and challenge this impressive and amazing little girl and her family.

Ingallwood Echoes

Vol. 6, No. 3, Oct. 1994

A newsletter from Christian Youth Encampment, DeRidder, LA

You must read this newsletter. I would like to put it in News and Notes. Sorry, not enough room. Write to the above address and ask for this issue. It will thrill you by the way God has blessed and is blessing so many by this ministry.

-Jack Blaes

A Call to Pray

Bro. Douglas Broyles of Jennings, La. was badly burned in an accident. He mistook gasoline for diesel fuel and received second degree burns on his arms and face. God continues to heal Bro. Doug, who is slowly but surely mending. He is grateful to those who have shown concern through calls, visits, cards and prayer. Pray for him to avoid infection during this healing process.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION: 1. Publication Title: Word and Work, 2. Publication No. 691-460; 3. Date of filing: Oct. 3, 1994; 4. Frequency of Issue: Monthly; 5. No. Issues Pub. Annually: eleven. 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$6.00. 7. Mailing Address: 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, Jefferson, Kentucky 40212; 8. Address of General Business Office of Publisher: Same; 9. Publisher: Alex V. Wilson, 231 So. Galt Ave., Louisville, KY 40206; Editor: Same; 10. Owner: Portland Ave. Church of Christ; 11. Bondholders, Mortgagees, etc.: None; 12 NA. 13. Publication Name: Same as above; 15. Circulation: A. Total copies: 1155 (average preceding 12 months), 1120 (issue nearest filing date); B(2). Pd.-Hand Delivered: 923 (average preceding 12 months), 839 (issue nearest filing date); C. Total Paid Circulation: 923 (average preceding 12 months), 839 (issue nearest filing date); F. Free Distribution: 97 (average preceding 12 months), 93 (issue nearest filing date); G. Total Distribution: 1020 (average preceding 12 months), 932 (issue nearest filing date); H. Copies Not Distributed: 135 (average preceding 12 months) 138 (issue nearest filing date). I. Total: 1155 (average preceding 12 months), 1120 (issue nearest filing date); 17. Signature: Louise C. Wells - Business Manager, 10/4/94 (signed).

True Pleasure Continues

The tide recedes but leaves behind
bright seashells on the sand;
The sun goes down, but gentle warmth
still lingers on the land;
The music stops, and yet it echoes
on in sweet refrains . . .
For every joy that passes,
something beautiful remains.

--M. D. Hughes

GROWTH

Until I learned to trust,
I never learned to pray,
and I did not learn to fully trust
Till sorrows came my way.

Until I felt my weakness,
His strength I never knew;
Nor dreamed till I was stricken
That He could see me through.

Who deepest drinks of sorrow
Drinks deepest too of grace;
He sends the storm so He Himself
Can be our hiding place.

His heart, that seeks our highest good,
Knows well when things annoy;
We would not long for Heaven
If earth held only joy.

-- Barbara Cornet Ryberg