

EXTRACT FROM A CHAPTER IN "GOD'S METHOD WITH MAN"

By B. W. Gorham, one of the old school Methodists.

The Second Blessing. Let us further consider this subject of growth in grace, in its due connection with the successive religious states into which Christians enter who "go on."

In God's order, the first great blessing after conversion is entire sanctification. This should be reached very soon after the convert has entered on his new life. I have found it much easier to lead a new convert of a few weeks old in grace into this precious experience than to lead old professors into it. Our fathers had it right when they called perfect love "**The second blessing.**" Charles Wesley's phrase is, "Speak the second time, 'Be Clean.'" This grace is necessary to complete the Christian character, and thus fully qualify its subject for Christian work, and for shedding the clear and steady light of a holy life upon the world. To dissociate it from conversion in our thought and teaching by a long intervening period is, I am convinced, exceedingly unfortunate and hurtful. Grace has not the complete and sole occupancy of the heart till sin is all cast out by perfect love. And while any forces remain in the heart antagonistic to grace the Christian is not at all adequately prepared for the race or the conflict. In the nature of things, therefore, there is likely to be little progress in grace till the deliverance from sin be complete.

I do not doubt there are many persons who sincerely question the above statement, and believe their own experiences to be a sufficient refutation of it. Nothing, it seems to me, is easier than for a man to make a mistake on this question of his own growth in grace. Let us consider this subject just here with a little care.

Twenty years in the Church. To facilitate our inquiry after the truth touching it, let us fix upon some Christian, say of twenty years' standing in the church, who has lived those years confessing without the enjoyment of perfect love. Now pastors tell me, and my experience as a pastor tallies with the statement, that not more than a small fraction, often as low as one-fourth of their members appear to be maintaining a healthy spiritual life, such as to make them available for steady church work. Suppose our subject to be, not an average Christian, but one of this small minority of the more excellent ones. He joined the church at twenty years of age, and he is forty now. Immediately on becoming a church member, he addressed himself to Christian reading and to Christian work. He steadily attended Church services and social meetings, and has continued to do so. He has for twenty years been a steady Sabbath School worker. He married two years after his conversion, and has maintained family prayer from the time of his marriage. He has studied the Bible with some care and has become adequately acquainted with the history, doctrine and discipline of his church. He has borne a part in the social meetings, and has learned to be an effective worker in promoting church inter-

ests. Now nothing is more clear than that this man has become a valuable church member, worth many times more to her than he was at the beginning. He has learned the theory. He can pray better, and teach better—better by far than he could twenty years ago. But the question is, how much has he grown in grace? He is conscious that he has been improving in all the facts stated above; and nothing is more natural than that he should conclude in all candor, that therefore he must have made great progress in grace.

But has he grown in Grace? I submit that these facts are not conclusive of the case, and that the truth as to his growth in grace can only be ascertained by pressing our inquiries touching another class of facts. Is his peace of mind deeper and more constant than it was twenty years ago?

Is his conscience more tender? Is he more afraid of sin? Is he more benevolent according to his means? Has he greater self control? Is he more marked by meekness and quietness of spirit? Is he more patient, more prayerful, more forgiving, more heavenly minded? Does he bear opposition and contradiction better? Is he more zealous for the salvation of men? Does he converse more freely with wife and children than he used to on the subject of his own and their personal religious state? Do the truths of the Bible impress him and penetrate him more deeply than they did? Does he mourn less over temporal losses and rejoice more over spiritual gains? Has he greater spiritual light on the deep things of God? In a word, has his character been growing less and less earthly, more and more heavenly? When these questions, and others like, are answered, the question will be answered, whether this exceptionally active Christian has in twenty years made any notable progress that deserves to be called "**growth in grace.**"

My own impression is, that the patient examination of many cases, taken indiscriminately from even the better class of Christians, will but confirm the observation that in God's order the first great blessing after conversion is entire sanctification.

(To be continued)

THE MUSIC ANGELS LIKE TO HEAR.

The brothers in a monastery "somewhere in France" long ago were beloved throughout the countryside for their loving sympathy and kind deeds; but as it happened, not one of them could sing.

Try as hard as they would, the music in their services was a failure and it became a great grief to them that only in their hearts could they "make melody to the Lord."

One day, however, a travelling monk came by and asked for entertainment, and he proved to be a wonderful singer. High and sweet and clear his voice soared over all the other voices. And one by one the rest of the monks stopped singing to listen, until finally the visiting brother sang alone.

No envy, however, filled the hearts of the good brothers in the monastery. Instead, they rejoiced with each other that

now at last they could have beautiful music in their chapel services, and they planned to keep the traveller with them always.

But that night an angel came to the Abbot in a dream.

"Why was there no music in your chapel tonight?" he asked. "Up in heaven we always listen for the beautiful music that rises from the services in your monastery; and tonight we were sadly disappointed."

"Oh, you must be mistaken!" cried the Abbot. "Ordinarily we have no music at all that is worthy of your hearing; but tonight we had a trained singer with a wonderful voice. He sang the service for us, and it was so sweet that we all stopped to listen. For the first time in all these years our music was beautiful."

The angels smiled. "And yet, up in heaven we heard nothing," he said softly.—Sel.

RELIGION PRACTICAL.

Christianity is the most practical thing of earth. The only trouble with it is that so many folks talk about it who fail to put it into practice.

But anything that will affect life as definitely as does the religion of Jesus Christ is practical.

When a religion takes a drunkard and makes him sober, a thief and makes him honest, a wicked man and makes him good, then it is practical. And, after all has been said, this it is what counts most in the extension of the kingdom of God among men.

We are living in an age when all theories must be severely tested. The scientist takes his speculations into his laboratory and puts them to the test. It is there that they stand or fall.

So it must be with our religion. It must stand the test in the laboratory of the world. In the life that it produces does it proclaim its worth. It is good to realize that it thus meets the requirements of the age.—Ex.

ANOTHER YEAR IS DAWNING.

Another year is dawning!
Dear Master, let it be,
In working and waiting,
Another year with Thee.
Another year in leaning
Upon Thy loving breast,
Of ever-deepening trustfulness,
Of quiet, happy rest.

Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace;
Another year of gladness,
In the shining of Thy face;
Another year of progress,
Another year of proving
Thy presence 'all the days.'

Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier works above.
Another year is dawning!
Dear Master, let it be
On earth, or else in heaven,
Another year for Thee!
Frances Ridley Havergal.