

day, still would there be no instance where forgiveness and regenerating grace were withheld. Moreover, after the thousandth act of forgiveness, in the same individual, this party so accepted would be as certainly prepared for the coming of the Lord as at the first similar experience of converting grace.

Granted that there is a vast difference between the *believer* in his efforts to live godly, and the man who has never come to Christ for pardon, nevertheless, every act of forgiveness must, in essence, be similar, no matter whether in the life of reputed saint or sinner.

When a professed follower of Christ fails to retain converting grace, no matter how apparently trivial, the act which brings condemnation, it must be a fact that he does so fail, and who, with this thought in view, will point to the individual who has kept converted during every moment of even one entire year?

Nevertheless, intense longing after such a continuous experience is everywhere exhibited, prompting to all forms of labour after its securement.

WAS IT KNOWN IN THE EARLY CHURCH?

We refer now to the Church of the first centuries, as depicted in the writings of the early fathers, that is, leaving out, in the meantime, the writings of the New Testament Scriptures.

We have lately gone over all these writings to discover how this subject was treated by them. In the first place, we found no *second blessing* literature anywhere in all their voluminous writings. No second crisis in the believer's experience corresponding to that now represented by the blessing of holiness, or of being cleansed from inbred sin, is anywhere taught by them, or even referred to, so that, as far as these writings and the experience of the early post-apostolic Church is concerned, the modern teaching on this subject is entirely different.

Those writers, then, who are responsible for this second crisis literature had, perforce, to skip over all the writings of the second and following centuries to discover it in the New Testament alone, if they did discover it there.

The teaching of this early Church was

that the sinner repenting of his sins should be baptized for their remission; then the bishop laid his hands upon him, when he was supposed to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It is easy to see how the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and the formal rite of confirmation grew out of this practice, when the witness of the Spirit was gradually lost sight of as a necessary part of conversion, but the fact that the teaching of the New Testament concerning forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Ghost was thus universally preserved in all the early churches, makes significant the fact that there is no rite or doctrine found which even remotely points to any second blessing teaching as ever existing in the early Christian Church. We emphasize this fact for a purpose which will appear further on.

But there is abundant evidence, in the writings of the fathers, that keeping converted, after the New Testament idea, was a lost art so early in the history of the Church that the time of its disappearance cannot be traced. All their exhortations concerning this matter refer to strict observance of the rites and ceremonies of the Church, implicit obedience to the bishops, and the observance of minute rules concerning fasting, prayer, and works of mercy.

Moreover, they all allude to failure on the part of Christians to keep converted as a something to be expected. Leading writers allude to their own frequent failures in this matter as something not to be apologized for, as a simple matter of course. Hence, Cyprian, as voicing the general belief of his time, wrote: "We are hindered by the devil from obeying with our thought and deed God's will in all things;" and Tertullian, when writing about *patience*, declares that he writes about it somewhat as a sick person would write about health, he himself being, as he ingenuously confesses, habitually impatient.

When it is understood that one of these represents the second century and the other the third, it will be seen at once that thus early in the history of the Church a blameless walk with God was one of the lost arts. So completely