

Relations.

THE RELATIONS OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

Repentance and Faith have certain relations which must be remembered by those who would understand both. Each precedes, while each consummates, the other; and they are united, whether in the preliminaries of salvation or in the mature Christian life.

Faith
before Re-
pentance.

1. There is a faith which precedes repentance: belief in God's existence and revelation generally, and of the threatenings of His Word in particular, must precede supplication for His mercy. But this is the belief that lies at the root of all religion; and may be altogether independent of trust in the Gospel, or any apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ: unless indeed we import here the distinction between implicit and explicit faith. There must be a belief in God, that *He is* before there can be a belief that *He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*; there is a faith in the Gospel as a general economy of grace before the personal appropriating reliance on its provisions. Hence all the appeals which in Scripture enforce contrition are based upon a pre-existing knowledge of the Lawgiver and of sin and of the penalty of transgression. And every appeal to every class of sinner must needs assume the existence of faith in the righteous judgment of God against his offence.

Following
it
Mark i
16.

2. But repentance precedes the faith which brings salvation. *Repent ye and believe the Gospel* is the formula that never will be displaced. Though the Spirit's conviction is based on the belief that Christ is, and that He is a Lord and a Saviour, into Whose hands every man's destiny is committed, yet the trust which places the mercy of the Saviour before the authority of the Lord must be preceded by deep sorrow in His presence. Saving trust cannot spring up save in the contrite heart: sorrow on account of the evil of sin, anxiety to be delivered, despair of delivering oneself, and a deep feeling of Christ's atoning sorrows, must co-exist in the soul which is encouraged to rely on the Redeemer's work. The same may be said of all genuine saving faith. It

cannot exist where there is not humility of heart ; sorrow for sin is the soil out of which it grows.

3. Repentance and faith mutually aid if they do not actually spring out of each other. The soul when touched with true penitential grief is as it were naturally disposed to rely on the great Deliverer. There is but a step between entire self-renunciation and the acceptance of the Saviour, Who fills the void of self : in fact, where the penitence is perfect, purged of all traces of its two opposite errors, despair and carelessness, trust may be said to lie at the very door. All repentance becomes in its last Evangelical analysis sorrow for the rejection of Jesus, Who in this very sorrow is accepted. But that grief arises from the Spirit's application of Christ's dying love, which is in such a state of heart really believed though it may not yet be appropriated with assurance. This faith may be, and is in some theological treatises, called ILLUMINATION ; and its combination with repentance is perceived or felt in such a passage as this : *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*, where it is hard to say when the one office of the Spirit passes into the other.

Mutual
Relations

Eph.v.14.

4. Lastly, repentance and faith enter hand in hand into the new life of covenanted salvation. Legal penitence is transformed into Evangelical ; and the trust that comes to Christ is the faith that abides in Him and works by love. This repentance in regenerate souls is the fellowship of our Lord's sorrow for sin. It is the interior mortification which is the crucifixion of the flesh. Strictly speaking, it is the only perfect repentance, which feels the sinfulness of sin as it never could be felt before, and more effectually than ever renounces it. Then it becomes the very mind of Christ in the believer concerning the evil of sin. This faith which unites the soul to Jesus keeps the soul in Him, and is therefore the permanent condition and instrument of all grace : deriving from their Supreme and Sole Source all the treasures of His life and power and salvation.

Continued
after
Regeneration.