

Selected.

REPENTANCE.

If we have understood salvation rightly, it will be easier to understand repentance, and its connection with salvation.

When the apostles went forth to proclaim deliverance to all the world, and men asked them, "What shall we do to be saved?" the answer is first, "Repent ye!"

For already, evidently, they believed. They could not, otherwise, have asked the question. They must have accepted the story—have believed the preaching—or they could not have reached the point of saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

"Repent ye!" comes next,—Change your minds; alter your purposes; turn right about; reverse your aims, your motives, and your lives. This is the real meaning of the full and comprehensive Greek expression translated "Repent." When a man repents, it does not mean merely that he is sorry for a mistake; that he regrets an error; that he is annoyed and chagrined at his own loss of self-respect from a moral fall.

All these may exist, and the man's feelings may be very much agitated, very intense, and very deep, and yet there may be no repentance.

Sorrow, therefore, is not repentance; deep contrition and anguish of heart are not repentance. A man may seek, as Esau did, "a place of repentance carefully and with tears," and may, like him, find none. And no depth or intensity of sorrow or contrition is repentance. That is, repentance is not merely a more intense degree of sorrow.

Sorrow and anguish of soul may be attendants upon repentance. They may lead to it. But, likewise, they may not. There is no necessary connection.

But to insist on them as essential, to judge of the sincerity of a man's repentance by the intensity of his sorrow, or the abundance of his groanings, is utterly to mistake the Gospel, and to mislead the man.

A man is going on the road of ruin. He is the slave of sin. It is eating the heart out of him. He is asleep, or blind, or deaf, in mere slavery to the world, the devil, or his own flesh.

To such a man the Gospel comes. It reveals his ruin, and the road of safety from that ruin. It shows him how utterly blind, stupid, and mean his life and purposes are. It points out separation from God as the one bitter curse; sin, as the one evil against which he and all men are to struggle. It tells him how he can struggle successfully now,—how he can, by the help secured, have good hope of victory.

He believes the story. He has been a deluded man so far. In the light of the story of the life and death of the Lord, his life is madness, and its end confusion.

So he repents. He turns right about; that is, changes his notions, his purposes, his aims. What he loved, he now abhors. What he once considered harmless, he now flies as the pestilence. A new light has broken over human life; a splendor from heaven has baptized the world and the world's walks. He sees things as they are now. He begins to measure things at their real value, to understand them in their real connections. He reads the riddle of life backward no more. He begins at the right end. He turns right about to live in the new light, and by the new knowledge in which he believes, and thus repents.

It may come, this reversal of his course, in bitterness of soul, in anguish and sore agony, in grim wrestle with the devil. It may come with the triumphant joy of self-conquest, with the calm repose of determined self-control. It may come in

blinding grief for a past that has been wrong and false, or in high hope for a future that, by God's grace, shall be right and true.

But, come as it will, the repentance is the turning about, the reversal of a man's position toward God, the changing of his whole mind about himself, his Maker, and the universe.

And, clearly, this is not a thing done once, and ended. Repentance, from the nature of man, is not an act, but a state. It lasts, like faith, through life. A man begins his Christian course with repentance, and ends it with repentance. In all Catholic liturgies repentance is a perpetual accompaniment of every act of worship, a necessary preparation for every sacrament. The young beginner professes repentance at the very threshold. The oldest bishop, gray in the Christian service, professes it with the palms and the crown before his dying eyes. It is the poor shallowness and weakness of popular Christianity, that it has utterly lost the very knowledge of repentance, and its place in the Christian life. St. Augustine repents all his life. Athanasius—spotless and clear, calm, stern and fearless, like one of God's armed archangels—prays as a penitent all the fifty years that, in the Lord's holy name, he fights the world. In our own times and in our own Church, Ken, the saintliest soul in England, dies a penitent, as he had lived. And all the great and holy, all the heroes of Christianity, all the stainless names that flame along the story of the Church Catholic in all lands and times, all lived and died penitents, repentance and faith their companions to the end. It is left for the poor emptiness of modern religionism to make repentance a half-hour's hysterical excitement in a hot meeting-house, under blazing gas-lights.

A man is to live all his life in repentance. He is not only to turn about, but to stay turned; not only to change his mind, but to keep it changed.

Repentance, therefore, is a part of that state in which a man lives and holds himself with relation to God. Faith is one part. He must believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of such as diligently seek Him. Repentance is another. He must stand as God's servant, as God's son.

Sin is his ruin professed. Evil is his curse. Lies are his destruction. He faces these things as deadly foes. Once they were friends; once he looked for good from them. Heaven's light has come down upon him and the world. He has opened his eyes and looked at things in that light, and is cheated no more. He now stands, consciously to himself, the sworn enemy of sin. He can make no compromise. He can strike hands with it in no truce. The wrong thing, the false thing, the foul, the bad thing in himself and in the world, is the thing utterly detestable and hateful to him, utterly ruinous to him and all men.

He has turned about, changed his mind, under the brightness of "the light that lighteneth all men," and holds that relation to these things, and insists that they shall hold it towards him. It is a world-long war between him and these henceforth.

Toward God the relation is changed also. He now looks toward God as the only fit Master for man. He looks to Him for hope, for strength, for reward. He turns heart and hands and eyes toward his King and Captain. Salvation lies in that direction. Damnation lies in the other.

And all this is not changed because this struggling soldier of God may be again and again beaten down, trampled on, and bruised into the dust. That the soldier is ridden down by overwhelming enemies in the fierce charges of the battle, does not make his foes any less his foes, or himself any less their enemy. Wounded or captive, he is not their man on that account. He belongs to the other side still.

It is not, by any means, an easy position to hold; and yet it is the very foundation of Chris-

tian life that a man do hold it; that under no circumstances he changes his opinion about sin, wrong, falsehood; that under no temptation he fail to recognize these as the one curse and ruin to be fought with to the end.

From its first inception to its perfect triumph, repentance, we need scarcely say, is represented in the Gospel as the gift of God. The whole illumination of mind which leads to it—the convincing of sin and righteousness, and of a coming judgment—is the work of the Holy Spirit. And the strength to hold the conviction to the end, the "light to see his fellowman's face," and the power to stand armed and facing him are the gift of the same Spirit.

That we all take along with us. But we seek here to be clear as to what this foundation is. We want to tell men, seeking repentance under a mistake laid on them by an emasculated popular religionism, what repentance really is.

The Gospel squares with human nature's needs and life's necessities. When we clear it of the technical phrases of metaphysical theology, and reduce it to plain English, as it was preached eighteen hundred years ago in plain Greek, we find it recommends itself to practical and reasonable men still.

The man who seeks repentance has to turn round on his sin, and strike at it with all his power. His sorrow, his internal struggle, his bitterness of grief, may be less or more. The point is, that he shall know his friends and know his foes, and, in God's name, take his place as a redeemed man.

He has but to rise, and, looking at the ruin that is dragging him down, face it, as God's man, for just what it is, utter ruin to him; and fight it, and, if needs be, die fighting it, knowing that to be the only course of salvation for him or any being made, as he is, in God's image, and not the devil's, in this world, or in any world, where the Lord is King.

BAPTISM.

[Synopsis of a sermon preached in Central Christian church, Chicago, by Prof. W. F. Black, Sunday morning, June 1st.]

Ephesians iv. 5: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

It has been suggested that there are three forms of baptism. It may be argued with equal scriptural propriety that there are three faiths, for the same Scripture of unerring inspiration which declares that we have "one Lord and one faith," also says that we have "one baptism." One; not three nor many. And it is insisted, notwithstanding specific statements, that baptism may be performed in a number of ways.

Before we can determine in how many ways it can be performed, we must determine what baptism is. In Paul's letter to the Romans (vi. 17) he says it is the form of the doctrine; not that it is the doctrine, but it is the form of the doctrine, and we cannot determine of what is the form without we know what is the doctrine itself. In II Cor., xv:1-5, he says that the doctrine is the burial of Christ for our sins; and in Romans, vi. 17, it is said it is the form of the burial and resurrection of the Son of God.

In the text there is one baptism, and this one is the form of the burial and resurrection of our Saviour. In Romans, vi. 4-5, the apostle Paul, in his address to the Roman brethren, says: "we are buried with him by baptism, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life," and in the fifth verse he says: "We are planted in the likeness of the resurrection." The Syriac text—and this is substantially the text of our Saviour—reads: "For we are entombed or sepulchered with him by baptism." Our English text reads: "We are buried with Him by baptism."