

enough on this point I wish to remind you of what St. Peter said to Simon who had been guilty of the crime of offering to buy God's gifts with money. Surely *he* was not one of the "saved," because he was declared to be in the *gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity*. But St. Peter wished him to become a righteous man, and what does he say? "*Repent, therefore of this thy wickedness and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.*"

I do not know that anything could be plainer than this. Here we have a man caught in a crime, a crime which from him was afterwards called "Simony," and he was declared to be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, and yet he is told to *repent and pray to God*. These preachers would have said, "Believe, believe and you are all right; but you cannot repent and above all you must not pray, for your prayers would be but laughter for devils." Now which is the right thing, what St. Peter did, or what these *brethren* do? Which is the *natural* thing? Is it a natural thing for a man all burdened with sin to be suddenly hoisted among the saved, the chosen *brethren* simply because he cries with excitement and vigor, "I believe, I believe?" Is it not more natural for a man first of all to have contrition, the broken heart, the contrite spirit, and then offer humble confession to Almighty God, and prayers (weak though they be) that God will forgive him? You would be surprised to see a plant which you considered almost dead suddenly spring up and hold its head as high as those that have been growing steadily around it for weeks; and so you might be as much surprised to see a man who yesterday was plunged in riotous living, to-day calling out he is happy because he "believes." Our blessed Saviour taught us the theory of *gradual growth in grace* when he said, "There is *first* the blade; *then* the ear, and *then* the full corn in the ear." At the same time we cannot deny that there is such a thing as a sudden conversion or awakening; but I say that if a man is indeed thoroughly awakened his first *natural step* will be *repentance* and earnest prayer that God will forgive him, and that natural step I have shewn to be supported by plain and outspoken texts of Scripture. The poor Publican who simply smote upon his breast and said "God be merciful to me, a sinner" (how wrong of him, according to Brethrenism, to utter any prayer in his sinful state), went down to his house justified rather than the self-righteous Pharisee who, with *faul confidence* made his long, cold prayer to God. And this, alas! is often the case now.

It may be, my brethren, a comfortable belief that we can get on in the world without repentance, and that faith is a perfect substitute for it. It may suit those who have fierce ungovernable