

## CHAPTER XI

ARTICLE X.—*Of Faith and Repentance.*—We believe that faith in Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive Him, trust in Him and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the Gospel, and that this saving faith is always accompanied by repentance, wherein we confess and forsake our sins with full purpose of and endeavor after a new obedience to God.

In considering the beginning of the new life in the soul, we must be careful not to draw an unreal distinction between the Divine and human aspects of the great experience. The Divine aspect is Regeneration, the spirit of God working beneath the levels of consciousness. But it would be mere superstition to suppose that there could be a work of God on or in the human spirit that left it passive and inactive. The Divine action evokes the human action. Regeneration as a Divine operation has, as its equivalent in the activity of the human spirit, Faith and Repentance. To speak of Regeneration, as something separable from faith and repentance, is to deceive ourselves with words. Regeneration, as known in experience, consists in Faith and Repentance. These two must never be separated. They constitute one action, in which, to use old familiar phrases, a sinful man receives Christ as his Saviour, or gives himself to Jesus. It is one action; but it may be considered from the point of view of that *to which* or rather of Him, *to whom* the sinner moves in surrender and dedication, or from the

point of view of that *from which* the sinner turns with an energy of definite abandonment. Spiritually inseparable, faith and repentance must always be preached together. A faith, that did not include repentance, might easily become unethetical, intellectualist or emotional. A repentance, that did not include faith, might easily become legal, hard, distrustful, bitter, and would probably not realize at its real magnitude, the sin and need of man. (1) Faith. In one sense, Christianity is Christ, not any dogma about Him, but simply Himself, the historic and living Lord, making His own appeal, His own claim, His own promise. In another sense, it may be said that Christianity is Faith. It is that attitude and action which is the full and proper response of the human spirit, to this Christ, who is the revelation and the vehicle of Divine redeeming love. The exercise of faith may be described in various ways. Fewest words are best, and these the simplest. In Christ, the infinite love of God is offered freely to man. In faith, man makes the only possible response (unless he definitely refuse the gift) namely, he receives the love, and yields himself absolutely to it; he receives Christ, and gives himself to Him. The verbs used in the Article, echoing the Shorter Catechism, are *receive, trust, rest*. Any words will do, if they carry out the idea of that double giving and receiving, which is the heart of Christian experience: Christ gives Himself for us and to us, and receives us to Himself; we give ourselves to Him and for Him. On the one hand, Christ in His

fulness; on the other hand, man both in his powers and his need; and between these a mutual pledge, made on each side, in uttermost loyalty, and sealed by the gift of the Spirit. This is the "great salvation" offered in the Gospel, not a thing, but a Person, and a living fellowship with Him. Too often has evangelism made salvation turn on a dogma, to be assented to by the intellect. Salvation goes far deeper than the intellect. It is realized in that act in which we admit Christ to our hearts in His redeeming sovereignty as our Lord and Master, and commit ourselves to Him, "unreservedly, unconditionally and for ever." This faith is, indeed, a "saving grace"; and to the exercise of it we are "persuaded and enabled" by the Holy Spirit. But it is worthy of remark, in passing, that we must not so present faith that it is, as it were, a substitute for Christ. "Jesus saves"; and "faith saves," only because in it we apprehend Christ. Hence, in time of doubt, when we scarce know whether we are Christians or not, our hearts are reassured less by thinking about our faith, than by contemplating Christ as Saviour, and letting the constraint of His love bind us to a new surrender and a more confident reliance. (2) Repentance. Saving faith has, as its invariable concomitant, the grace of repentance, the two being inseparable. The description of repentance given in the article has another echo of the Shorter Catechism. (a) Oddly, and yet significantly, it puts confession of sin first. No doubt the intention is to note that sin is felt most deeply



when the soul stands before God whom we have grieved by our sin, and whose redeeming love compels even a hardened sinner to know his unworthiness. We feel that, whatever the form of our sin, its darkest and worst feature is that it is trespass against the holy love of God. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned," is the agonized and yet not despairing utterance of the awakened and penitent soul. (b) The second element in a true repentance is the forsaking of sin, and of all sins, the determination to be done with sin, as the darkest, deadliest thing in the universe. This is an act of will; but it can scarcely be performed without a great stirring of heart, grief that we should so have grieved God, and hatred of the thing that has wrought such woe in us and in the world. (c) The third element is the resolution that our habit of sinning shall be replaced by a "new obedience to God." It will be new in motive and aim, not the legal obedience, which serves slavishly, but the obedience which serves the heavenly Father with filial confidence and joy; an obedience, therefore, which is never itself our ground of confidence, being, as it is, itself the outcome of God's good Spirit working in us. But, though the enabling power is God's, obedience is none the less the act, the duty, the responsibility of man. Therefore, the new obedience requires on our part a "purpose" full and sincere, and an "endeavor," strenuous and unremitting. Two remarks may be added. First, repentance is indispensable to forgiveness. It is not the ground of

forgiveness; but, as has been said, it is "of such necessity to sinners that none may expect pardon without it." Second, repentance is followed by forgiveness. As it has been put, "There is no sin so small, but it deserves judgment—no sin so great that it can bring judgment upon those who truly repent."

Take these two together, Faith and Repentance—for indeed they are one and they are comparable to death and resurrection. Read carefully Rom. 6: 11; 2 Cor. 5: 14; Col. 3: 1-3. The Christian life is spiritually and really a dying and rising again. And the life to which the Christian rises is not an individual achievement or possession. It is his in union with Christ. He lives, and yet in the most glorious sense, it is not he, the frail mortal who lives, it is Christ that lives in him. Christ is his life. He has died. He lives a life, of which the world has not understanding, a hidden life, "hid with Christ in God."