

God's Plow or Sorrow.

BY ROBERT CLARKSON TONGUE.

God's plow of sorrow! Sterile is
The field that is not turned thereby;
And but a scanty harvest his
When the great Ploughman passeth by.
God's plow of sorrow! All in vain
His richest seed bestrewn the sod;
And spent for naught the sun and rain
On glebes that are not ploughed of God.
He ploweth well, he ploweth deep,
And where he ploweth angels reap.

God's plow of sorrow! Gentle child,
I do not ask that he may spare
Thy tender soul the unweeded,
Nor turn it with his iron share,
Be thine his after-rain of love;
And where his heavy plow hath passed
Many mellow furrows bear above
A holier harvest at the last!
He ploweth well, he ploweth deep,
And where he ploweth angels reap.

God's plow of sorrow! Farrowed brow,
I know that God hath passed thy way;
And in thy soul his heavy plow
Hath left its token day by day,
Yet from the torn and broken soil,
Yet, from thy loss, and from thy pain,
He hath due recompense of toil,
Be sure he hath not plowed in vain.
He ploweth well, he ploweth deep,
And where he ploweth, angels reap.

God's plow of sorrow! Do not think,
Careless soul, that thou shalt lack
A field, he will not shrink—
God is afield, he turns not back.
Deep driven, shall the iron be sent
Through all thy fallow fields, until
The stubborn elements relent
And lo, the Plowman hath his will!
He ploweth well, he ploweth deep,
And where he ploweth, angels reap.

—Independent.

Religion and Character.

What is the relation between religion and character? Many seem to think that there is no very direct or close relation; that character is one thing, religion another; that character is the man, religion the garment which he may wear or not, and the difference between him who wears it and him who does not is not essential; that religion is a matter of observance and church-attendance. One cannot attentively observe the language of men in our time without finding that sentiments like these are in the air. They are heard on the lips of the average man of the world.

But one must not admit the truth of this contention. How true it may be that many professedly religious men fail to fulfil the real ideal of religion; it is not true that between religion and character there is no close and inseparable connection. On the contrary, when they are comprehensively viewed religion and character are absolutely one and inseparable. Religion means primarily righteous character. It has for its end the perfection of man in all the departments of his life, and it has no end which is not embraced within this comprehensive purpose. The Bible has one ultimate aim, one only—the development of true, pure, strong character. Religion is God-likeness, and God-likeness is perfection. Whatever belongs to the essentials of the Christian religion takes its place in this conception of its nature and object. All that God has ever done for us, he has done for the sake of perfecting our characters. Christ came to save us to our best life. The ultimate end of the Bible is to guide us to a holy life. All Christian worship, knowledge, and service, have this as their final aim. Religion is indeed many-sided. It has many duties, many truths, many joys; but they all focus upon this one great aim—the perfection of the human character.

What does the life of Christ mean to us? He is the perfect revelation of God, the perfect disclosure of God's will and nature, the perfect representation of what human life can be when it is restored to the perfect image of God. This is but to say that he is the perfect character, the divine model for human life. The Christian religion means the transformation of life into Christ-likeness and this means holy character. "He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps." "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "Grow up in all things into him."

Here we see the New Testament idea. Christ-like character is the supreme end of all. Christ's coming into our human life means that; his saving work for us means that; justification, faith, and forgiveness, all mean that. They mean nothing that is real and practical for us if they do not mean the production of holy character, if they are not an aid to the development of personal character.

Christian people have not always held this so clearly and firmly as they ought. Elements of religion have often been made ends in themselves which should have been regarded as means to the ends of righteous character. Theological and ecclesiastical theories have sometimes contributed to the popular divorce of religion and character. Outward forms of service and theoretical statements of doctrine have sometimes been regarded as the

essentials of religion. Thus ritual or intellectual belief has been made central. This was the case among the Jews in our Lord's own time.

Even the doctrine of salvation by faith has sometimes been so interpreted as to favor this separation. The requirement to believe has been understood to mean that all which was demanded of us is that we should entertain certain intellectual convictions, that it does not matter essentially what we are. But when one considers the New Testament conception of faith, surely no such conclusion as this is warranted. To suppose that we are saved on the basis of intellectual belief alone, irrespective of a change in the purposes, motives, and spirit of our lives, is to condition eternal life upon the possession of correct opinions. Such a view is quite irreconcilable with the doctrine of the New Testament. Faith is, above all things, something which goes to the roots of character. It is the heart's acceptance of Jesus Christ by which we make the spirit of his life that of our own. Intellectual belief has little ethical or spiritual value apart from this deep-seated principle of a new life reigning within. There is no religion in mere belief as such. The Apostle says that "the devils believe and tremble," but they remain devils still. We must always insist upon the idea that faith involves the adoption of the mind of Christ as the basis of character.

It is therefore essential to maintain this real test and standard of what religion is. We should call every man a Christian whose life is shaped in conformity to Christ's life and spirit. We should call no other man so, no matter what his professions or performances. Though he should give all his time to religious observances, though he should fast twice in the week, and even give tithes of all that he possesses, though he should give all his goods to the poor, this would be nothing without the love which is the principle and root of a true religious character.

If, therefore, we say that ritual observance or church-membership makes a man a Christian, we are setting up an unreal standard, and are inviting the criticism of the world. It is this failure to insist upon the true nature of religion which often occasions the idea that religion and character are different and separable. Of course, it should not be maintained that perfection of Christian life can be secured in a moment, and that very imperfect men may not be true Christians. We should judge the Christian man according to the tendency, the motive, and the ideal, of his life. Religion begins in the birth of a new character, and cannot all at once attain its completion; that can only come with time and experience. The Christian life is a growth; hence its beginning is properly called a new birth; but growth must follow birth before the perfected manhood can be attained. While, therefore, we must not expect too much either of others or of ourselves, we have the right to expect that the Christian man will grow in completeness of character. When we see a boy go to college, we expect him to improve in the intellectual life, because the college is a place where such improvement is made the primary object. If we see a young man go to West Point, we expect that he will improve in gait and bearing, because that is a place where the business is physical discipline. The world is not unfair in expecting as much of the Christian man. If it sees none of our high ideals realized in character, it may continue to respect the ideals, but not us. Christians must know that if they put anything else above character grounded in principle, and shaped in the perfect pattern of Christ's life and spirit, they are putting the formal before the essential, the accidental before the substantial, the symbol before the reality, and are favoring a superficial conception of religion. There is but one thing that is really religious, and that is a true, pure, Christ-like life; and all other things called religious are so only as they spring out of this. Religion is a life. If men live that life, there need be no fear that the world will not feel the influence and power of it.—S. S. Times.

Keeping Back Part of The Price.

BY REV. S. G. HASTINGS.

Barnabas and Ananias—what a coupling of names! what a difference in destiny! Yet these two men, who reached such a difference in character and destiny, stood side by side one day, facing the same question, with the same paths open before them. The same opportunity that permitted Barnabas to come first to favorable notice in the sacred record, gave Ananias a footing from which to plunge into the blackness of darkness forever. And the difference between the two men as they faced their question—in what did it specially lie? Was it not in

this, that Barnabas chose to please God and to be all that he seemed to be something other and better than he really was?

Let us try to define the sin of Ananias. It would appear from the questions Peter asked him that he knew he was under no absolute obligation to sell his possession for the benefit of his associates; that he knew, even after the sale made, that he could keep back the whole price if he desired to do so. But though he knew he was not absolutely required to contribute to the common fund, still some motive induced him to bring a part of the price of his possession and offer it in lieu of the whole sum which he had obtained. Perhaps we ought not to venture a very positive statement; but his motive would seem to have been a wish to acquire a name, a standing, a reputation among his associates as the possessor of a character which was not really his. While falling miserably short of unselfish devotion to Christ, he wished to rank, in the esteem of his fellow disciples, with such men as Barnabas and others who were sincerely devoted. His keeping back part of the price of his possession was due to having failed to reach the character which he wished to seem to have reached. He desired to win a name without sustaining the character which justified the same.

Peter declared that, in acting as he had, Ananias had not lied to man, but to the Holy Ghost. This was so because it was only by the Spirit's presence in their hearts that the companions of Ananias would be led to value and praise such devotion as he seemed to possess. He aimed to induce them, under the lead of the Spirit as they were, to credit him with a saintly fullness of devotion to Christ, while in reality he was devoted only to his own selfish interest. This was his lie to the Holy Spirit. And for having attempted such a deception, he was abandoned by the Spirit even before his body fell dead at Peter's feet.

All good names have their price. The full price of any good name is that one shall bear the character which the name indicates. Any man who desires to bear a name better than his real character merits, is keeping back part of the price of the name, and falling into the sin of Ananias. A number of years ago a wealthy man gave a great sum of money for a certain public use. Immediately his name was heralded from one end of our land to the other as that of a great philanthropist. Congress took flattering notice of his gift. One day, while in conversation with a number of men who had been intimately associated with this wealthy man in business, I referred to his great benevolence. To a man, they emphatically denied that he had ever shown any benevolence. He had, they said, been a hard, exacting employer. As for his great gift, they declared it was a mere bid for a name. These men may have been mistaken. It is to be hoped they were. But what they said served, at least, to illustrate the possibility of one's making a bid for the name of philanthropist who has no real title to that name in the character he sustains. And what if a man really gave a vast sum of money for a name which his real character did not merit, would he be a larger, a truer, a better man for that? Such keeping back part of the price of the name he would have, must shiver him to his marrow dimensions and smite him with some degree of such death as befell Ananias. The price of a good name is to be fit to bear the name.

Every spiritual achievement has its price. Did Peter say nothing for the leading part he took in preaching Jesus and the resurrection on the Day of Pentecost? He was paying his part of the price, or a portion of it at least, when, in his earlier days, he committed Old Testament Scripture to memory. He buckled on the sword of the Spirit before the Spirit came to help him to use it. Effective preaching has its price in careful Bible study and prayer. A good prayer meeting has its price in thought and arrangement. Whatever spiritual result is thought desirable for a part of its price earnest work on man's part. Yet we keep back much of this part of the price and wonder at the small results we see.

There was need of the dead body of an Ananias across the threshold of the Church to impress upon us all that in Christian work there is risk of death in some degree in looking for a name, or for results in the salvation of souls and the strengthening of Christians, while consciously keeping back part of the price of character or of work which has been placed upon such results.—The Examiner.

When there shall be no distress to be relieved, no injuries to be forgiven, no evil habits to be subdued, there will be a Creator to be blessed and adored, a Redeemer to be loved and praised.

The Blessing of Discipline.

There is a divine ministry in sorrow, suffering, and disappointment, which is manifested in the disciplining of the soul and the strengthening and developing of character. On the assumption that the divine Father is all-wise and all-loving, and will not needlessly afflict His children, it is not difficult to believe that He puts humanity into the world in order that, out of the processes to which we are subjected, such as pain, sorrow, temptation, etc., the manifestation of the sons of God may be wrought. How can we be brought up into the light and liberty of the sons of God, we are weak, sinful, stubborn, and selfish, except by some process of purifying and refining? Sorrow, adversity, disappointment—these, to the trustful and faithful child of God who understands their significance, are "the gifts of a divine manhood," bestowed upon us for our edification in spiritual things.

Character—good, approved, purified character—is one of the essentials to entrance into the kingdom of God. Character varies, as metals do, in strength and efficiency; but, under the hand of the divine Artificer, a process of development is constantly going on. God is endeavoring, by one process or another, to fashion the characters of those who have allied themselves unto Him into similitude with his own glorious character. To do this requires the burning and purging away of all dross.

It is no small thing to develop a perfect character, especially after it has been abused and deformed by years of service to the world, the flesh, and the devil. It takes time, and may necessitate the employment of desperate measures. It is expected that the builder of the locomotive will select his materials with the greatest care, put every separate portion of the engine to the severest test, and then subject the completed work to the same rigorous treatment. The bridge builder must be sure to use only the best and most durable materials, and his work is not accepted until heavy trains have put the bridge to a series of tests many times greater than those to which it will be subjected from day to day when in actual service. Nearly everything in our daily concerns is brought to the touchstone for testing. Will it be thought strange, then, that God should test and develop the characters of His children, and make them fit for His eternal kingdom?

Some one has said that whatever is best and noblest in character is molded by the touch of suffering, and then likens this suffering to the stroke of the sculptor's chisel upon the block of marble. A slight touch will not fashion the rough block into beauty. It must be chiseled. The useless part must be cut away. Michael Angelo never would have enriched the world of art with his masterpieces of sculpture without the vigorous use of mallet and chisel. The great blocks of marble give solidity to the temple if placed in the foundations, but it is the chiseled marble that beautifies and adorns, and brings fame to the temple, and fills it with admiring multitudes.

Human character, undeveloped, like the marble in Mount Pentelicus, possesses untold possibilities; but under the skilled hand of the Great Sculptor, submitting graciously to the discipline of the chisel and the mallet, it may become a product of divine genius such as will command the admiration of men and the approbation of the Great Ruler Himself. But in order to this result the marble—the individual soul—must be submissive, so that the Master Sculptor may work out His plans under circumstances the most favorable for the achievement of a magnificent result. The soul that is in harmony with God, and is submissive under the stress of discipline, becomes a co-worker in the development of the highest and best character, and is sustained by an unflinching trust in the ultimate purpose of God. The confidence manifested by this prayer of Ben Jonson gives him peace even under the severest trial:

"Hear me, O God!
A broken heart
Is my best part;
Use still thy rod,
That I may prove
Therewith Thy love.

"If Thou hadst not
Been stern to me,
But left me free,
I had forgot
Myself and Thee."
—Chris. Advocate.

Gifts.

Our gifts to God must be given every day, since His gifts to us come every day.

"We give him but his own," whatever we give; and the loving acknowledgment that it is His giving is one of the best gifts of all.

There is but one riches, and that is the wealth that comes from giving.

Let Us Be Social.

It is surprising how many years good people can go to the same church and not know each other. In our larger city churches those who sit on one side of the church may be as much strangers to those who sit on the other side as though they did not belong to the same congregation. It is also true that in some of our churches strangers may drop in from time to time and never hear a word of welcome, and never receive an invitation to come again. There is special danger in this respect in regard to young people and strangers in humble life who frequent our churches.

There ought to be a radical change in many of our places of worship in regard to the treatment of strangers. First of all the pastor should set an example of cordial sociability. Let him learn the happy art of greeting strangers kindly, and shaking hands with them in a genial courteous manner. He need not gush—in fact he ought not to do so, but he can be really and truly interested, and should treat the poor and the rich with equal consideration.

If this be the duty of the pastor none the less is it the duty of the people. Every church member whether young or old ought to feel a personal responsibility for the strangers within the gates. How many hearts would be cheered by a kind word. A lone-some feeling fills the heart when away from home. This is true in the case of the one who enters for the first time a house of worship where all is unfamiliar and where all faces are strangers. Why do not all Christian people watch for such, and take the pains to speak to them, find out their names and their residences, and then call on them, and ask the pastor to do the same. Our people are nomadic, they are going about from one end of the country to the other. They are in danger of becoming strangers in a strange land. They must be noticed and cared for when they come into our churches. Let every church member do his or her full duty and there will be no longer cause for complaint. We plead for more friendliness and more sociability in all our congregations. This is one of the sure ways to fill our houses of worship, and build up enduring congregations.—Baltimore Methodist.

Let no day pass without personal secret communion with God.

Have on your heart some person or cause for which you are pleading God's blessings each day.

Begin each day by taking counsel from the Word of God, if but one verse while you are dressing.

Put away all bitter feelings, and brooding over slights or wrongs, no matter from whom received.

Always Felt Tired.

"I suffered with severe headache and loss of appetite and I always felt tired. I concluded to try Hood's Sarsaparilla and after taking one bottle my headache disappeared. I continued taking it until now I am never troubled with headache and my appetite is good." LAURA GARLAND, 247 Claremont St., Toronto, Ont.

Hood's PILLS act easily and promptly on the liver and bowels. Cure sick headache.

CANNOT BE BEAT.—MR. D. Steinbach, Zurich, writes:—"I have used Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil, in my family for a number of years, and I can safely say that it cannot be beat for the cure of croup, fresh cuts and sprains. My little boy has had attacks of croup several times, and one dose of Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil was sufficient for a perfect cure. I take great pleasure in recommending it as a family medicine, and I would not be without a bottle in my house."

Away Down East.

From east to west people have heart trouble. This causes violent headaches, neuralgia, nerve trouble and prostration. Says Mrs. Somers, of Moncton, N. B.: "I tried many remedies but never found anything to give me such prompt relief as Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills have done. I suffered from the above symptoms, but now gladly testify to the cure these wonderful pills have made in my case, and I hope all sufferers will try them."

SLEEP FOR SKIN-TORTURED BABIES

And rest for tired mothers in a warm bath with CUTICURA SOAP, and a single application of CUTICURA (ointment), the great skin cure. CUTICURA REMEDIES afford instant relief and point to a speedy cure of torturing, disfiguring, humiliating, itching, burning, bleeding, crusted, scaly skin and scalp humors with loss of hair, when all else fails. Sold throughout the world. POTTER DRUG AND CHEM. CO., 202 N. 2nd St., Boston. "How to Cure Skin-Tortured Babies," free. CUTICURA SOAP.



Before Retiring....

take Ayer's Pills, and you will sleep better and wake in better condition for the day's work. Ayer's Cathartic Pills have no equal as a pleasant and effectual remedy for constipation, biliousness, sick headache, and all liver troubles. They are sugar-coated, and so perfectly prepared, that they cure without the annoyances experienced in the use of so many of the pills on the market. Ask your druggist for Ayer's Cathartic Pills. When other pills won't help you, Ayer's is

THE PILL THAT WILL.

OUR JUBILEE.

We are the original editors of plain figures, straightforward marking of goods and take the credit of pulling down prices.

33 Years ago this month we initiated our plan. The people approved of it, appreciated our efforts, patronized us, and here we are to-day. We carry an original and up to date stock of house-furnishing goods in every department. Deal with us, we study your interests as well as our own.

Car load lots arriving frequently. Large quantities of Chairs, Bedsteads, Chamber Suites and wire beds now landing. 25 Sample Parlor Suite made up. Ready to take your order for any style or shade of covering. Our stock comprises everything necessary to furnish the humble cottage or the stately mansion.

JAMES G. McNALLY

DR. F. W. BARBOUR

New Dental Offices,

COR. QUEEN AND YORK ST

Every kind of Dentistry by latest methods. Painless extracting by Halo method, Gas, Ether or Chloroform. Young lady in attendance. Open evenings at present.

AGENTS. Second edition "Queen Victoria" exhausted.

Jubilee Edition on press. Best history of the Queen and Victorian Era published. The only Canadian work accepted by Her Majesty. Sales unprecedented—knock the bottom out of all records. Canvasers coming in money. Even boys and girls sell it fast. Big commission or straight weekly salary after trial trip.

THE BRADLEY GARRET SONCOLO LTD. Toronto, Ont.

The Temperance and General Life Assurance Co.

Full Government deposit for security of policy-holders. Not the BIGGEST company but

THE BEST.

Policies indisputable after two years; non-forfeitable after three years premium have been paid. Special advantages given to

TOTAL ABSTAINERS.

Don't be backward about asking the agent for information before incurring elsewhere; get a copy of Our Advocate and the Report for 1896. Call and see the policies in issue.

E. R. MACHUM, St. John, N. B. Manager for Maritime Provinces. W. L. MCGEE, Agent at Fredericton.