

Sunday Reading.

A Song of Hope.

BY NELLY H. BUTLER.

Because the little lamp, which shone Across thy path, hath lost its glow, And thou art left to walk alone...

Was John the Baptist a Gospel Minister?

BY REV. M. STONE, D. D.

It has been asserted with great positiveness that John was not in the gospel kingdom and that his baptism was not gospel baptism.

It is sometimes said that there were not baptized according to the formula in the commission, in the name of the Trinity.

Whether the other names must be included to make the baptism valid, we may not know, we have a right to believe that Peter spoke by the Spirit, and that the baptism that followed was valid.

In John 1: 35-37 we find two of John's disciples leaving John and joining Christ, and in the 40th verse we learn that one of these was Andrew, Peter's brother.

How different are the sufferings of the sinner and those of the saint! The former are an eclipse of the moon by which the dark night becomes still blacker and wilder.

So far we find the ministry of John and Christ coinciding. The commission given to the disciples is the same, to be fulfilled after his departure. Who will

deny that the baptism of Jesus was Christian baptism, or that he submitted to it as an example for his disciples? Some have ventured to say that it was to initiate him into the priest's office.

It is sometimes said that there were not baptized according to the formula in the commission, in the name of the Trinity.

Whether the other names must be included to make the baptism valid, we may not know, we have a right to believe that Peter spoke by the Spirit, and that the baptism that followed was valid.

In John 1: 35-37 we find two of John's disciples leaving John and joining Christ, and in the 40th verse we learn that one of these was Andrew, Peter's brother.

How different are the sufferings of the sinner and those of the saint! The former are an eclipse of the moon by which the dark night becomes still blacker and wilder.

So far we find the ministry of John and Christ coinciding. The commission given to the disciples is the same, to be fulfilled after his departure. Who will

Whosoever would be sustained by the hand of God, let him constantly lean upon it; whosoever would be defended by it, let him patiently repose himself under it.—Calvin.

Mr. Reid's Lay Member.

A TRUE STORY

Mr. John Reid was the Congregational clergyman in a secluded Ohio village. He was Massachusetts born and bred, but he had been called to be pastor to his somewhat small and scattered flock, and there he was, about ten o'clock one spring morning with his hand on the gate of his white picket fence, ready to unlatch it and go in.

Popsy came dancing out of the front door and slipped her hand into her father's.

He woke from his meditation at that, swung her to his shoulder with a laugh and a kiss, and carried her up stairs to mother's room.

'Well, Maria,' said he, 'I've been all over the barn, and down to the store, and there isn't a fresh egg to be found. Our hens won't lay, apparently, and Crabbe says the farmers won't bring in their supply until day after to-morrow. I'm sorry. I don't see but we'll have to tempt your appetite with something else. Wouldn't some broiled steak taste good, or some vegetables of fruit?'

'Mercy, John, toast is all that I've been able to touch for a week, and an egg is the only thing besides that I can bear to think of at this present moment. But there, dear soul, don't worry about me. Bridget will get me my toast and tea, and you go and sit down to that sermon, so as to finish it before twelve o'clock Saturday night. I shall get on all right, and you've certainly done your best for me. Popsy, dear, get the brush and smooth mother's hair for a little while, and, John, please go straight to your study.'

Thus besought, Mr. Reid put on slippers and dressing gown, and with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.—Proverbs iv. 23.

Popsy climbed on a chair, took the brush from the bureau, and with a little wrinkle of sympathy in her forehead, began to soothe the aching head.

Though Popsy was little, she knew that sick people like to be quiet, so the room became still, and nothing was heard but the ticking of the clock.

Suddenly, and without warning, came a noise, startling in its proximity, unmistakable in its nature.

Had a pistol been shot off at her ear, Mrs. Reid could hardly have been more startled, nor could Popsy have given a louder scream. Not two feet away from them, they had heard the cackling of some triumphant hen, proud in the acquisition of her newly-laid egg.

What did it mean? Where, in the name of common sense, could it come from? Mrs. Reid was not in the habit of keeping hens in her bed-room.

Mr. Reid, having just reached a point in his sermon where he was stating that the day of miracles is now past, was brought to earth by Popsy's vigorous pulling at his sleeve.

With a laugh at her nonsense, he followed her to her mother's room, just in time to hear a final cackle,—so clear and full that even he was forced to believe his ears.

The head of the bed stood against an unused door. The door led into a closet leading from that room into the next. The closet was used only in connection with the other room.

Finding no other possible solution of the mystery, the bed was finally rolled away from the door and the bolt hastily drawn. Mr. Reid fairly started, and Popsy danced up and down with surprise.

There, in the middle of the bare closet floor, with no hen in sight, lay a fresh egg! There was plainly nothing to be done but to prepare it as daintily as possible for the invalid for whom it was evidently intended, though Mrs. Reid declared that she disliked such spiritualistic proceedings, and was half afraid of it.

ed, she sat patiently awaiting the fateful moment.

Soon, in the distance, came the patter of light steps, and straight into the room where Popsy was hidden, walked—a hen. One of their own hens it was, too, old Bet, that Mrs. Reid had once cared for when it was cold and sick. Nor did she leave the closet until another egg was deposited upon the floor, precisely as upon the previous day. Then, with exultant cacklings, she retraced her steps with greatest dignity, Popsy, all a-tremble with excitement, bringing up the rear on tiptoe.

Through that room, across another, along a back hall, down the stairs, through a lower entry, over a piazza, down the garden and into the henry, went that orderly and remarkable fowl. Popsy saw it all with her own eyes. Next day, the farmers brought their supply of eggs to town, and that day no hen appeared.

Never before had such a thing occurred, nor ever afterward did old Bet show the least desire or intention of performing such an extraordinary feat.

Mrs. Reid recovered rapidly, and the hen became a nine days' wonder.

Dr. J. G. Holland, who was a friend of the family, stopped with them for a short time not long after. On hearing the story, he remarked that Mr. Reid should ever consider that hen the most valuable lay member of his congregation.—Good Cheer.

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884. FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson VII.—NOVEMBER 16, 1884.

SOLOMON'S SIN.

1 Kings xi. 4-13.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 9, 10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."—Proverbs iv. 23.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. The Lord's Warning to Solomon. 1 Kings ix. 2-9.

T. Solomon's Wealth and Luxury. 1 Kings x. 14-29.

W. Solomon's Foreign Wives. 1 Kings xi. 1-3.

T. The Lesson.

F. God's Law Concerning Kings. Deut. xvii. 14-20.

S. The Law Against Intermarriage with Other Nations. Deut. vii. 1-4.

S. The Kingdom Rent from Solomon's House. 1 Kings xii. 16-20.

ANALYSIS.—I. The Sin, Vs. 4-8. II. The Punishment, Vs. 9-12.

QUESTIONS.—What tended to lead Solomon astray?

Vs. 4-8.—About how old was Solomon at this time? What two commands of God had he disobeyed in his marriages? How many wives had he? Was polygamy ever approved by the Lord? Into what sin did his wives lead Solomon? What special duties is he said to have gone after. What is meant by a high place? Upon what hill was the altar to Chemosh built?

Vs. 9-13.—How was the Lord affected by Solomon's sin? Is the anger of God passionate and vengeful? How does he look upon sin? For what special reason was God angry with Solomon? When had the Lord appeared to Solomon, and for what purpose? Are we warned against sin? What special command of God's to Solomon is here mentioned.

The unbounded prosperity of Solomon tended to lead him astray. Notwithstanding the warnings of the Lord, twice given (1 Kings iii. 14; ix. 4), he grew over-confident in his own wisdom and strength, and dared to disobey God's plainest commands. Adulation, luxury, worldliness, and sensuality, turned him aside from the simple service of the Lord; and we find, in this lesson, adding idolatrous worship to his sin.

NOTES.—Vs. 4.—When Solomon was old. Solomon could not have been much over fifty years of age at this time, but luxury and indulgence had added the weight of years. His wives turned away his heart after other gods. A king was forbidden to multiply wives to himself, lest they should turn away his heart. See Deut. xvii. 17. But Solomon disobeyed, and the result foretold happened to him. In vs. 3, we are told that "he had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines." The law forbade matrimonial alliances with certain nations specified (Deut. vii. 1-4), but Solomon "loved many strange women," and among them women from the nations under ban. Thus, in a two-fold way, he directly and flagrantly disobeyed God's commands. He sought to blend together the worship of Jehovah and the worship of idols. His heart was not perfect with the Lord . . . as was the heart of David his

father. Grievous as were David's sins, he never fell into idolatry. While Solomon never ceased to hold theoretically that Jehovah was the true God, he practically apostatized by endeavoring to make a compromise, and to worship at the shrine of Jehovah and of the false gods also.

Vs. 5, 6.—Went after. This phrase, common in the Pentateuch (Deut. xi. 28; xiii. 2; xxviii. 14), carries the idea of joining in the idolatrous worship. Ashtoreth. The female divinity of the Zidonians or Phoenicians, who also worshipped Baal as the male divinity. Ashtoreth, or Astarte (as her name is sometimes written), corresponded to Venus in the Greek and Roman mythology. Her worship, which was probably accompanied with sensual observances, was wide-spread and exceedingly popular. Her natural symbol was the moon, or the planet Venus, as the sun was the symbol of Baal. Zidonians. The inhabitants of Zidon or Sidon, an ancient and wealthy city of Phoenicia, and of the plains surrounding it. They were idolaters, and worshipped Ashtoreth as their tutelary goddess, as well as the sun-god Baal. Milcom. Aramaic for Molech. Ammonites. The descendants of Ben Ammi, the son of Lot, and so closely allied by race to the descendants of Abraham. Did evil. How much evil, and with what fatal effects to the kingdom, he little knew. In the sight of the Lord. As all evil is done. Solomon may have thought it a stroke of wise policy to engraft idolatry upon the stock of Jehovah worship; but God's estimate is the standard. Went not fully after the Lord. But tried to "serve God and mammon." As did David. Caleb and David have the singular honor of being spoken of as following the Lord fully. See Numbers xiv. 24.

Vs. 7.—High place. The altars for idol worship were built upon eminences or hill-tops, as if nearer heaven. They were generally surrounded with groves. Chemosh. The supreme deity of the Moabites, worshipped also by the Ammonites. Moab. A nation descended from, and bearing the name of the eldest son of Lot. The Moabites, unlike their brethren the Ammonites, appear to have been pastoral, and builders of cities. The land of Moab was east of the Jordan, and extended from the southern end of the Red Sea northward from thirty to fifty miles. The hill that is before Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives. Solomon made his sin open and conspicuous. Molech. Or, Moloch, the chief deity of the Ammonites, and essentially identical with the Moabitish Chemosh. Molech was one of the fire gods of ancient times, before whom children were offered as burnt offerings. The image of Molech was of brass—hollow within, and with the head of a calf. Fires were kindled within it, and children laid in its hot, extended arm. Not unfrequently persons were made to pass through the fire, in honor of the hideous deity.

Vs. 8-10.—For all his strange wives. Hence, the hills about Jerusalem were crowned with altars to false gods. The idols of all nations were represented, offered incense and sacrifices were openly offered to every false deity. Angry. God's anger is not a malevolent emotion, but the eternal and necessary opposition of holiness to sin. Because his heart was turned away. The change was not in the Lord, but in Solomon. Twice. With words of promise and warning. See 1 Kings iii. 5, and ix. 2. Having been twice waited upon by the Lord, Solomon was inexcusable for his sin. To whom much is given, of him much is required. Concerning this thing. God had given him specific commands in the interviews alluded to, against idolatry, and Solomon could not plead a misunderstanding of their meaning. He sinned deliberately, and with information of the consequences; and his sin was as high treason against the government of Jehovah.

Vs. 10-13.—Forasmuch as thou hast not kept. . . . I will rend the kingdom from thee. See fulfillment, in 1 Kings xii. 16-20. But though the occasion of the rupture of Israel was the pride and arrogance of Rehoboam, the cause is here stated to be Solomon's sin. Give it to thy servant. The one thus designated was Jeroboam, son of Nebat, an Ephraimite, who became king of the ten tribes that revolted from Rehoboam. See announcement of this dignity to him by Abijah the prophet, in this chapter, verses 25-39. In thy days. Two limitations were made to the threatening to take the kingdom from Solomon. 1. It should not be in his day, and that not for Solomon's sake, but for his father David's sake. 2. The whole kingdom should not be taken from him, but one tribe should remain to his son—the tribe of Judah, with "little Benjamin" also, as merged into Judah. The other ten should be irrevocably wrested out of his hands. Notice

that this second limitation was not only for David's sake, on account of promises made him; but also for Jerusalem's sake, the chosen city of Jehovah and the seat of his house, the Temple.

SUGGESTED LESSONS.

We see the depths of evil into which even a good man may fall. The contrast between Solomon uttering his dedicatory prayer at the Temple, and Solomon building an altar for the impure and cruel Moloch, is such a teaching as says to us: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The only way to follow the Lord is as Caleb and David did.—fully.

Liberalism in religion is no new thing. Solomon was so liberal and broad-minded that he began to patronize idolatry; but his liberality was exercised at a fearful cost.

The Lesson for the younger Ones.

Is it enough to know that a thing is right, without doing it? How much better are we, after all, than the heathen, if we who know about the true God, do not serve and obey him?

Did Solomon know about God? How do they know that he did? Encourage answers to this question. Did he worship the true God, of whom he knew so much, and who had twice spoken to him? Can you imagine any one that knew about God, worshipping an ugly looking image?

Tell the sad story of Solomon's sin. Show that he did not get so bad all at once. He built the beautiful Temple, to honor God. The same God who made him so wise, would have filled his heart with his Holy Spirit so full that sin could not get in, if Solomon had only let him.

Teach these six sins of Solomon, explaining each:

He loved God's gifts more than the Giver.

He got into bad company.

He did not ask God to keep his heart for him.

He did not serve God fully.

He turned after other gods.

He did not heed warnings.

There are three things necessary:

First, ask God to create in me a clean heart; second, ask him to keep my heart; third, remember to watch, lest sin enter and crowd out the Holy Spirit. The first two God will do. The other is our part.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

MY MOTHER'S BEEN PRAYING.—In February, 1861, a terrible gale raged along the coast of England. In one bay (Hartlepool) it wrecked eighty-one vessels. While the storm was at its height, the "Rising Sun," a stout brig struck on Longear Rock, a reef extending a mile from one side of the bay. She sank, leaving only her two top-masts above the foaming waves. The life-boats were away rescuing wrecked crews. The only means of saving the men clinging to the swaying masts was the rocket apparatus. Before it could be adjusted one mast fell. Just as the rocket bearing the life line went booming out of the mortar, the other masts toppled over. Sadly the rocket men began to draw in their line, when suddenly they felt that something was attached to it, and in a few minutes hauled on to the beach the apparently lifeless body of a sailor boy. Trained and tender hands worked, and in a short time he became conscious. With amazement he gazed around on the crowd of kind and sympathizing friends. He looked up into the weather beaten face of the old fisherman near him, and asked: "Where am I?" "Thou art safe, my lad." "Where's the cap'n?" "Drowned, my lad." "The mate, then?" "He's drowned, too." "The crew?" "They are all lost, my lad; thou art the only one saved." The boy stood overwhelmed for a few moments, then he raised both his hands, and cried in a loud voice: "My mother's been praying for me! my mother's been praying for me!" and then he dropped on his knees on the wet sand, and hid his sobbing face in his hands. Hundreds heard that day this tribute to a mother's love, and to God's faithfulness in listening to a mother's prayers.—Ex.

When people get so spiritualized that they lose capacity for practical life, they grow away from religious good health. Piety and common-sense should never be separated.—United Presbyterian.