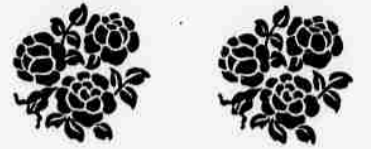




EDITORIAL



MANASSEH.

THE WHOLE story of sin and redemption is compassed by his life. This is indeed true of every life that is ever saved at all; but it is strikingly true in this case. Manasseh was a great sinner. He was thrust into a most responsible position at the early age of twelve. Of course he was not personally ready for the responsibilities of royalty, and he evidently fell into the hands of evil counsellors. Not all of Hezekiah's court had ever been of his mind with reference to the religious reforms which he had inaugurated, but he had dominated them. When the king had given the order, it was for them to obey; but now that Hezekiah was dead, and an irresponsible boy upon the throne, the opportunity for the reactionaries had come. During his minority period, he was but little, if any, more than a tool in their hands; but it must be admitted that he proved an apt scholar. His life clearly shows that piety is not transmissible from father to son. Hezekiah was one of the best kings that Judah ever had; Manasseh, his son, was the worst.

It was bad enough for him to restore the worship of idolatry in the kingdom of Judah. His father had waged a courageous and persistent battle against it. The altars of baal upon the hill-tops had been torn down, and the vile practices of heathen worship had been outlawed. Jehovah had been given his rightful place in the temple service, and the people were urged to give Him the worship of their hearts. But Manasseh reversed all this. The high places were re-established, and the people flocked to them to indulge in all the vile practices that gathered around the worship of baal and asarte together with the lesser deities associated with them.

But not satisfied with this, he added the Assyrian worship of all the host of heaven. The deification of the heavenly bodies had long been familiar to the Assyrians, and it may be that Manasseh thought to placate them by the introduction of their forms of worship into Israel. He was thus using religious forms merely to further his political schemes. He had evidently thrown religious convictions to the winds, and prostituted the high purposes of worship to the furtherance of political intrigue and machinations. It is a sad day in the life of any man when he loses a sense of the high sanctity of religious things and becomes willing to use the religious impulses of men to further his common earthly interests.

But Manasseh is not yet satisfied. He builds the altars to these false deities in the sacred precincts of the temple itself. It was bad enough that they should be given a place on the hill-tops, but you are conscious of the shock felt by the sacred historian, as he records the fact: "He built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord." It was of this place that the Lord had said: "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever." There was a feeling that the fitness of things had been outraged by the establishment in this holy place of the vile idolatries that were so hateful to God. And thus the stain of his sins was made a shade darker.

But the climax was reached when he caused his own children to pass through the fire to Moloch. In this he surpassed the evil record made by all the wicked kings of Judah and Israel. Human sacrifice was not indeed unknown in the heathen worship of that age, but Israel had never so far fallen before since the days of Abraham. God had taught them better things; and that Manasseh should have fallen so low is a demonstration of the depths of infamy to which the principle of catering to popular vices will lead. It is not surprising that the faithful record adds: "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom

the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel."

This is the picture of his sin, and it could hardly be made blacker; yet his case was not beyond the reach of God's saving power. Two methods were employed to effect his salvation. God first spoke to him and to his people. He used persuasion and he doubtless also used words of warning. He made what appeal it was possible for even God to make directly, and sought thus to win Manasseh from his evil ways. This was in keeping with the divine love. But, when this method had failed, then the record says: "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon." Some people will not learn except in the school of affliction. How often we force the divine hand to measures that are seemingly harsh! We are deaf to the persuasive voice of his appeals. While we are in peace and prosperity, we throw conviction far from us. We will not stop and consider. The smiting hand must be felt, or we will let the blandishments of sin blight our eternal possibilities. Then God is forced in mercy to make us pass under the rod. We may, indeed, become rebellious in the midst of these experiences, and ultimately exhaust the possibilities of God in our behalf; but He does see to it that we are at some time convicted of sin. Manasseh bethought himself in the hour of his affliction, and the record closes with a ray of light upon the otherwise dark picture of his life: "He besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem unto his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God."

GOLDSBORO.

(Editorial Correspondence.)

THE MAN who travels in the steps of Rev. D. H. Tuttle may expect to move at a lively pace. Whatever happens, he never allows things to drag about him; and he does not neglect any phase of the Church's work wherever he is assigned. And when he reaches the end of his tether and must needs take a little rest, he does not spare the people. They must not forget the way to the sanctuary on the Sabbath day, even if he has to rope in the editor for service as his substitute. We have been round about Goldsboro somewhat for years, but it had never been our privilege to preach to the saints there until last Sunday, when we occupied the pulpit at St. Paul's at the morning hour and at St. John's in the evening. Judging from the names of their churches, they believe in the saints there; but they do not worship the saints—they only worship with them. This they do in the Spirit and with the understanding. Despite the unusual warmth of the day, good congregations greeted us at both places, and gave respectful and attentive hearing to the Word. About a year ago we noted the only complaint that Brother Cole has sounded in all his wanderings. It was about the size of his congregation at St. John's. We are glad to report progress for this faithful company, or else Brother Cole is harder to satisfy than we believe he is. Brother Frizelle, like Mephibosheth, was lame in his feet. His wife is away from home, and he is boarding; the reader can form his own conclusion as to whether his lameness is from gout or not. We are not a physician and would not venture to say; but we trust that his good wife will return in time to prevent the case becoming serious.

The Advocate has a good list at Goldsboro, and one of the beauties of it is that it is a growing list. We like that kind. Brother Tuttle keeps it in

such fine shape that there was not a great deal for us to do, but we gathered in one here and there whom he had not found yet. The Sunday-school work is in fine shape. We were wheeled out to the Elm Street Sunday-school at the morning hour where Bro. T. C. Etheridge holds sway. He was anxious that the editor should have a full day (and it was the Tuttle measure of a full day), so he would introduce us and have us make a few remarks. It is against our religion to brake into the short half-hour that the teacher has with the class, and so we made it short—which was the chief merit. At St. Paul's they are having Sunday-school at six in the afternoon during the mid-summer, and are omitting the evening service. In matters of this kind what will work at one place will not always work at another, but this plan seems to be working well at Goldsboro. It has largely increased the attendance at Sunday-school. They are accustomed, however, to having the Sunday-school in the afternoon, and this may account for the 6 o'clock hour working so well.

Among the younger men of the Methodist Church in Goldsboro, Bro. Chas. B. Miller is one that you may keep your eye on. You will not find him doing anything to make you ashamed of him, which is more than you can say for some people, and you will find him doing many things to make a good man feel better. He believes in his Church and in her institutions. It goes without saying that he is a staunch friend of the Advocate. He is aggressive in his views, and yet by no means radical. He has caught the connectional idea of Methodism and believes in keeping step with the advance army. He and his good wife go with the children to Sunday-school, and we noticed that each of them had a class; and then the children go with them to the church service. We think that an admirable arrangement. We have seen nothing better. The Church will be wise to use Brother Miller in a yet wider sphere. Our stay in Goldsboro was made delightful by the companionship of this hospitable home.

MINISTERIAL SUPPORT.

OCCASIONALLY we read of some preacher leaving the pulpit because of insufficient remuneration. If for any cause the minister chances to be of some prominence, the press generally takes advantage of the occasion to institute comparisons between the remuneration of the minister and men of equal capacity engaged in other vocations. Such comparisons are easy, and they always result one way. Our pastors are hard worked men, and are poorly paid in this world's goods for their services. We are in full sympathy with the contention that they ought to be better paid. Why should a minister be forced to live for a year upon a stipend which many of his luxury-loving parishioners would squander upon their self-indulgence in a month—many of them, indeed, in less time? Such people may occupy front pews in the church, though they are seldom there except upon special occasions, but they scarcely have any place in the spiritual Kingdom of God. They certainly have not caught the spirit of the Man of Galilee. At the same time we are not anxious for the time to come when the ministry will be sought from mercenary motives. The man who will leave it because his salary is not so large as it might be in some other calling, is generally a man whom God has never called into the ministry. A comfortable support for one's self and family is certainly desirable, but God's ambassadors can never make these temporalities the controlling motive in their lives.

Another thing that is often mentioned in this connection does not appeal to us. The small salary of the pastor is rarely, if ever, due in our judgment to the presence of too many churches in