

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

BY J. T. GRACEY, D.D.

Ashtoreth belonged to the Pantheon of the Phenicians. The religion of the Phenicians centered in the worship of the sun as the giver of life and light, and as the stern god of fire and of summer heat who must be appeased by human sacrifice. The sun-god had many representative forms, and by the side of each stood the female double or reflection—the masculine and feminine elements appearing in most of the mythologies of Asia. Baal, "the Lord" had Baalath, "lady," commonly called, however, by a distinct name, Ashtoreth, who was also identified with the moon. Reference to this survives in Greek literature—the Phenicians colonized in Accadia. Ashtoreth appears in Greek mythology as Iō and Europa.

Milcom was Moloch or Molech, another form of Baal. Molech is the same as Malik, the common Semitic term for king. Molech was fierce and cruel, and demanded the best and dearest the worshiper could grant, and parents were required to sacrifice their firstborn son, though it were the only son. The cries of the victim were drowned with the noise of drums and flutes. Sayce, in *Ancient Empires of the East*, reminds us that "when Agathokles defeated the Carthaginians, the noblest of the citizens offered in expiation three hundred of their children to Baal-Moloch." He says, too, that "in later times a ram (or hart) was substituted for the human offering, as we learn from the Phenician tariffs of sacrifices found at Marseilles and Carthage. The priests scourged themselves, or gashed their arms and breasts to win the favor of the god, and similar horrors were perpetrated in the name of Ashtoreth. To her, too, boys and maidens were burned." . . . "The character of Phenician religion and of the people who held it was at once impure and cruel. It reflected the sensualism of nature. Intoxicated with the frenzy of nature-worship under the burning sky of the East the Canaanite destroyed his children, maimed himself, or became the victim of consecrated lust."

Solomon's sin was in allowing the erection of "high places," with his sanction to these abominations. They did not originate in his time, nor did Israel have its first connection with them in his day, but Israel had always combated them. Solomon caused these "high places" to be erected to Molech on the Mount of Olives. The image of Molech was heated redhot, it being a brazen statue of the god, and the child brought for sacrifice was laid on its outstretched arms, when it fell into the fire in the furnace beneath, amid great noise of shoutings and instruments. The image was set within seven chapels; those offering fine flour were only admitted to the first of these chapels; those bringing turtle doves and young pigeons were allowed to enter the second chapel; those offering a lamb

entered the third chapel; those bringing a ram did so in the fourth chapel; those offering a calf entered the fifth; those bringing an ox were admitted to present it in the sixth chapel; but the seventh chapel was reserved for those bringing their sons for sacrifice. It is supposed that the secret shrine in which the god was concealed contained the bones of the children sacrificed, and that these bones were used for magic arts.

Chemosh, too, required human sacrifices as god of war. He is depicted on coins with shield, lance, and sword, and also two torches at his side. According to Jerome his symbol was a black star. A black stone was his symbol in Arabia. At Dibon an inscribed black stone has been recently discovered, which is full of the praises of Chemosh as the giver of martial success against Israel. "Ashtar Chemosh" is mentioned on the Moabite stone, and thus connects the Moabite and the Phenician worship.

By Way of Illustration.

BY JENNIE M. BINGHAM.

The influence of Solomon's wives. Solomon gave to each wife the privilege of worshiping the god of her own country; a privilege which made these women mightier for the propagating of their various religions than the combined power of each nation represented. One woman as Solomon's wife did more to establish her nation's peculiar faith than all the men and women of her land. Esther at Ahasuerus's court saved all her people from the sword, while the wives of Solomon turned away the king's heart from Jehovah, and made the builder of God's temple a worshiper of Baal and Molech and Chemosh. A terrible apostasy, second only to that of Judas—to use his influence against the One who had made him what he was.—S. C. Bushnell.

"His heart was not perfect." A physician says that two characteristic symptoms of an imperfect heart are continual weariness and low vitality, which render the patient a prey to every passing disease, and so reduces the power of resistance that every evil germ finds congenial soil in which to grow. So it is with him whose spiritual heart-life is imperfect. He grows weary of good works and drops his duties one by one, "tired of going to church and Sunday school and prayer meeting." And his vitality is so low that he catches every contagion of doubt and disloyalty that is in the air about him. His resisting power is gone.—C. S. Schofield.

Solomon's sin. A sad ruin in Athens is a beautiful Corinthian pillar of the temple of Jupiter which lies prostrate on the ground. Around it stand fourteen of its fellows, which have stood tempest and war and earthquake. What caused the downfall of this one? An insidious foe; namely, a little ant which worked in the cement between the pedestal